

Rt Hon Priti Patel MP
Home Secretary
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

section55responses@homeoffice.gov.uk

Kelvedon Park, London Road, Rivenhall,
Witham CM8 3HB

Telephone: 01245 291600
Fax: 01245 291601
E-mail: pfcc@essex.police.uk
<http://www.essex.pfcc.police.uk>

Your Ref: n/a
Our Ref 20210816 SH
Date: 16 August 2021
Enquiries to: Suzanne Harris
E-mail: pfcc@essex.police.uk

Dear Home Secretary,

I write in response to the HMICFRS Review of Policing Domestic Abuse during the pandemic.

I acknowledge the recommendations made in this report and understand that recommendations 1, 2 and 3 (listed in appendix A for reference) are applicable to all Forces, including Essex Police.

I support the robust approach to ensuring that those affected by Domestic Abuse receive the highest level of service possible.

The Chief Constable has provided a detailed response to me regarding each of the recommendations relevant to Essex Police. This assures me that senior officers within Essex Police have already reviewed policies and procedures in accordance with the recommendations made.

Supporting victims and reducing domestic abuse are key priorities in Essex, and as part of our commitment to this agenda Domestic Abuse Problem Solving Teams (DAPST) were formed in March 2021, following a highly successful trial. Furthermore, a Domestic Abuse Scrutiny Panel is being established within one of our Local Policing Districts, with the aim of identifying learning from Domestic Abuse Investigations that have been finalised as Outcome 16 or 15.

I will continue to monitor the work of Essex Police in this regard, and to hold the Chief Constable to account, including through the monthly Performance and Resources Scrutiny Board.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Roger Hirst', enclosed within a light grey rectangular border.

Roger Hirst
Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner

c.c. Ben-Julian Harrington, Chief Constable, Essex Police.

Appendix A – Recommendations

Recommendation 1

- We recommend that if forces continue to adopt online contact methods in respect of victims of domestic abuse, they should **immediately** introduce an effective supervision and monitoring framework. The framework should assess the suitability of such contact methods, ensuring that victim needs are at the forefront of decisions around their use and appropriate onward action is taken in all cases.
- We recommend that forces **immediately** review their use of a telephone-based initial response to any domestic abuse incidents and crimes and ensure that it is in accordance with the strict parameters set out by the College of Policing.

Recommendation 2

We recommend that forces **immediately** review their capacity to provide ongoing support and safeguarding to victims of domestic abuse whose case is awaiting trial at court. This should:

- ensure there are sufficient resources available to maintain contact with victims to keep them up to date with the progress of their case; and
- enable the offer of access to specialist support services as well as opportunities to address concerns victims may have regarding continuing to support a prosecution through the delays.

Recommendation 3

We recommend that all forces **immediately** review their use of outcome 15, outcome 16 and evidence-led prosecutions. This is to ensure that:

- domestic abuse investigations guarantee all attempts to engage victims are explored, and that all possible lines of evidence are considered so that in all cases the best possible outcomes for victims are achieved;
 - there is regular and effective supervision of investigations that supports the above point to be achieved; and
 - the use of outcomes 15 and 16 is appropriate, and the reasons for using them, including auditable evidence of victim engagement, are clearly recorded.
-