

Rt Hon Priti Patel MP
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Your Ref: n/a
Our Ref 20210831 SH
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Dear Home Secretary,

I write in response to the HMICFRS Interim report: Inspection into how effectively the police engage with women and girls.

I acknowledge the recommendations made in this report and understand that recommendations 16 and 17 (also referred to as the second and third bullet points in recommendation 3) (listed in appendix A for reference) are applicable to all Forces, including Essex Police.

I support the focus on ensuring that Violence Against Women and Girls is recognised and ensuring that an appropriate policing response is provided.

The Chief Constable has provided a detailed response to me regarding each of the recommendations relevant to Essex Police. Essex Police is currently developing a Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy which will be accompanied by an implementation plan. I am assured that whilst the issue remains one of great relevance for our county, Essex Police is working hard to engage appropriately and effectively with women and girls.

Recommendation 16 relates to the recording of the protected characteristics of victims. In Essex this is routinely requested, but it is not currently mandatory for victims to provide it. The Force is already considering ways of improving this recording, and the relevance to the Violence Against Women and Girls agenda will be considered alongside current work.

Recommendation 17 relates to responsibilities in supporting victims and the importance of the voice of the victim. Essex Police is working well in this area, alongside partner

agencies, such as those within the Southend, Essex and Thurrock Domestic Abuse Board (SETDAB). The independent survey commissioned by my office enables the voice of victims to be heard, including those who consider themselves victims but have not yet found the courage to report their experience as a crime.

Supporting a cultural change to remove tolerance of violence against women and girls in society is a key priority in Essex. My commitment to this was highlighted in my Manifesto earlier this year, and it will form the basis of a priority in my new Police and Crime Plan when it is published in the autumn. It is vital that women and girls feel safe and are safe, which means not being subject to harassment or violence, including domestic abuse and sexual violence.

As well as using influence to bring about change I will use funding available to me to support agencies and projects which support change, and support victims.

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', written in a cursive style.

Roger Hirst
Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner

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

Appendix A – Recommendations

Recommendation 3

15. The Home Office and other government departments should provide funding so that an independent advisor/advocate is available to support victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence as they go through the criminal justice system (and should consider this for victims of other crimes that disproportionately affect women). This support should be designed in consultation with the victim and should continue after a perpetrator is released from prison.

16. All police forces should ensure information on the protected characteristics of victims is accurately and consistently recorded.

17. The Home Office and the NPCC should introduce a single national survey to measure victim satisfaction. This should allow for both local and national quality assurance, as well as the identification of any emerging issues, risks or variables that need further action to resolve. Police forces and partner agencies should have clear responsibilities in supporting victims through every stage of the case. The victim's voice should play a central role in shaping this, and their individual needs should be understood and addressed throughout.
