

Rt Hon Suella Braverman MP
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Your ref: n/a
Our ref: SH
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Dear Home Secretary

I write in response to the HMICFRS inspection report: **An inspection of the eastern regional response to serious and organised crime.**

I acknowledge the three Areas for Improvement applicable to Essex Police (two for the Eastern Region and one for Essex only) that are made in this report.

The Chief Constable has provided a detailed response to me regarding the Areas for Improvement (AFIs) which has been identified as applicable specifically to Essex.

The AFI which is specifically for Essex states that 'The force should improve how it records disruptions on the national database'. It is disappointing that this AFI acknowledges that the force is not recording all of the good work that it does in relation to disruptions. I am assured that the force is working towards full compliance with this AFI. Advice has already been sought from ERSOU and this advice has been adopted. There is already evidence of an increase in the disruptions recorded, which is pleasing to note.

I am aware that the force also needs to play a part in ensuring that the two AFIs for ERSOU are addressed. The force have advised me that they do not consider themselves to be owners of these AFIs. Alongside the force, I will be seeking updates on these AFIs from ERSOU.

It is pleasing to see that Essex is one of the forces which has been graded as 'good', and that the overall region has also been graded as 'good'.

I will continue to maintain close scrutiny of the work of Essex Police in this regard, and to hold the Chief Constable to account.

Yours sincerely



Roger Hirst
Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex

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

Appendix A – AFIs

AFI 1

Area for improvement: Eastern Region Special Operations Unit (ERSOU) and its constituent forces should improve how the region works to tackle serious and organised crime (SOC)

ERSOU, with constituent forces, should:

- improve the effectiveness of the lead responsible officer (LRO) role;
- improve the quality and consistency of 4P plans;
- improve partnership structures across the region;
- improve how SOC disruptions are recorded to accurately reflect regional performance; and
- identify and promote good practice.

LROs should prepare 4P plans to manage SOC threats. These plans are important and should support joint working with relevant partner organisations. The content and quality of the operational 4P plans we reviewed across the region was inconsistent. We found that LROs in some forces were more effective in this area than others.

We found that relationships with partner organisations varied between forces. While some forces appeared to have effective arrangements, others struggled to share information and promote joint working, when appropriate.

ERSOU and its constituent forces record SOC disruption data in different ways. Consequently, it is difficult for the region to fully understand how effectively SOC is being tackled.

ERSOU is good at recording and analysing disruption data relating to its own investigations. It should work with constituent forces to help them improve their recording of disruption data.

AFI 2

Area for improvement: Eastern Region Special Operations Unit (ERSOU) and its constituent forces should improve how they procure and deploy technical surveillance equipment

Technical Surveillance Units (TSUs) provide specialist surveillance equipment to support organised crime investigations. In the eastern region, ERSOU and the constituent forces have retained their own individual TSUs.

Most other regions have collaborated fully on the provision of technical surveillance. This has allowed efficient methods of buying equipment. It also makes sure that equipment is compatible and can be shared across the region.

ERSOU and its constituent forces should consider following the approach of other regional organised crime units, by collaborating in a single regional TSU.

AFI 8

Area for improvement: The force should improve how it records disruptions on the national database

The force is doing a lot to divert people away from serious and organised crime-related criminality and to safeguard the vulnerable. But much of this work isn't being recorded in its disruption reports.

In the year ending 31 May 2022, the force had the highest proportion of pursue disruptions within the region; however, it only recorded 15 prevent disruptions. We think this isn't accurately reflecting all the prevent disruptions it is involved in.