

# Trust and Confidence in Essex Police

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## A Follow Up Report

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## Introduction

Following our initial Trust and Confidence Event on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2023, all commands across Essex Police were tasked to identify how their teams would respond to the challenges outlined in our self-assessment against Baroness Casey’s review of the Met Police.

Commands were asked to consider each of the five core themes that were highlighted from our assessment, which were: i) Leadership, ii) Misconduct and Grievance, iii) Discrimination, iv) Specialist Commands, and v) Resourcing and Understanding Communities. And from there, outline the steps they have been taking, and will continue to take to improve or enhance our existing position.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2023, we held a follow up Trust and Confidence Event attended by SLT membership and external partners, to consolidate progress across the Force and to reiterate our approach going forward, which is for this activity to progressed as normal business by commands. In preparation, all commands submitted updates on their progress to date and presented back on key aspects at the event itself. Throughout the event, a panel consisting of SLT members and external partners considered the evidence and probed further on key points.

This paper outlines the broad thematic activity that is now underway, highlighting where this is proving beneficial as well as where we still have work to do.

## Thematic Overview of Progress

### High Level Observations: a people-focussed approach

There are similarities in the approach being taken to address the five thematic areas across the Force, with a strong focus on people (both our own, and those we serve) and this covers issues such as representation, having a voice, training, and our broader culture.

This people-focussed approach was highlighted equally by those leading staff *and* officer commands and shows the universal understanding that supporting and developing our workforce is key to avoiding the challenges faced by the Met Police.

## Leadership

*Visibility and engagement of senior leaders is considered key to improving in this area.*

Commands/Directorates consistently referenced their intention and efforts to improve the visibility and engagement of their SLT, recognising the opportunity this presents for understanding the challenges their staff face and the role they can play in supporting them with those. Similarly, the importance of effective succession planning and development opportunities for staff to feel well-led and able to access leadership roles themselves. This is not just being addressed by commands but also at Force level, with the continued roll out of leadership courses to support first line and middle managers in both staff and officer roles.



### **Promising Practice:**

The HR directorate are implementing a series of 'learning walks' which will involve their senior leadership team being out and about with their staff in their day jobs, with a view to increasing their visibility whilst gaining a better understanding of how their teams work together.



### **Further work:**

We still need to improve how we capture workforce feedback, which several commands have addressed themselves through localised surveys. This will no doubt improve as the visibility and engagement of senior leadership teams improves however we should consider options for capturing force wide workforce sentiment.

#### **Misconduct and Grievance**

*Development and delivery of training packages as well as circulation and reformatting of guidance.*

Commands/directorates routinely emphasised their ambitions to refresh and personalize training that addresses misconduct and grievance. The aim being to improve awareness within their teams of the processes and expectations, as well as to build preventative capability such as addressing challenging behaviours and having difficult conversations. Senior leaders had either already received valued inputs from Professional Standards Department or were planning on doing so, and there was a lot of interest in how the Fair Play Advisers could assist. Overall, there is shared agreement that the quality and reach of training in this area is essential, which will be complemented by the work the media and communication team will do to promote the new code of ethics once it is launched nationally.

To assist those who have been impacted by misconduct or grievances, new guidance material has also been created to ensure their voice is heard.



### **Promising Practice:**

The Serious Crime Directorate are considering how best to share anonymised grievance outcomes to encourage learning. There is good engagement from Human Resources and the SCD Senior Leadership Team on those plans, and a plan to conduct an impact assessment for rolling this out wider.



### **Further work:**

With several commands looking at developing and using training packages in this area, we need to ensure there is consistent in the quality, content, and delivery of the material. Alternatively, a force wide solution should be considered.

## Discrimination

*Reinvigoration of Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion Boards and the use of surveys proved most popular in this space.*

Several commands highlighted their intention to make changes to their internal Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion Boards, or signposted to changes that had already been made. This is with a view to broadening representation across each command. In all cases, the refreshed remit of the boards was to ensure they reflect all key Professionalism, Trust, and Confidence workstreams and to encourage the appointment of command SPOCs to drive progress in those areas.

A review of internal processes, policies, and practices is ongoing to assess for equality impact, and to ensure language is inclusive.

Internal culture surveys are also being conducted across the Force to detect areas of concern and to target areas that need the most attention, including where we can do more to understand and enhance the experience of officers and staff (including probationers) from minority backgrounds. Particularly with a view to addressing any identified procedural disproportionality.

Supporting this is the ongoing success of our ‘we value...’ campaigns which continue to have a positive impact internally and externally, including with our recruitment from underrepresented groups.



### **Promising Practice:**

The North LPA have taken swift and positive action to address concerning cultures and behaviours at specific locations within the command which related to sexism and misogyny. The action taken included recirculation of guidance around the Code of Conduct and arranging inputs from the PSD Prevent Team. Feedback from a subsequent command survey has been promising where a transparent and supportive working environment is now promoted, empowering staff and officers to raise concerns when needed.



### **Further work:**

As changes to command-level Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion Boards take effect, it would be worthwhile for commands to monitor the impact of those changes on cultures and awareness of discrimination. There would also be value in sharing those improvements between commands and identifying opportunities for there to be consistency between key messages and initiatives.

## Specialist Commands

*Prioritizing collaboration internally and externally with Specialist Commands.*

As well as the Operational Policing Command, and Serious Crime Directorate, other functions within the Force such as IT, and Continuous Improvement and Analytics also acknowledge the challenges and opportunities that come with identifying as a specialist command. There was an emphasis on the value of outreach opportunities to help improve understanding of those areas, and to help address the challenges with recruiting and retaining staff.

Operational commands have begun inviting their CID colleagues to attend LPT and CPT briefings where possible and has been replicated in other areas such as Local Policing Support Unit where colleagues from the RET, Licensing, and IOM are encouraged to attend.



### **Promising Practice:**

Both operational and non-operational Commands have increased the capacity for collaboration between departments and the wider Force by promoting opportunities for attachments/secondments, coffee mornings, and drop-in sessions. In all cases this enhances understanding of roles and identifies future collaborative opportunities.



### **Further work:**

Resourcing and workloads can present a blocker to regular and effective collaboration between commands, particularly where the collaboration itself might generate additional demand. Where it is not possible to offer formal collaboration opportunities, the use of internal communication could be enhanced to help identify opportunities for informal co-working or knowledge sharing.

## Resourcing and Understanding Communities

*Interaction in various forms with victims, the community of Essex and Independent Advisory Groups were a key theme in improving resourcing and understanding.*

Overall, operational commands are actively engaged with communities through Independent Advisory Groups (IAGs) in a variety of contexts, with a shared ambition to extend this further. The support from IAGs has also been important in our review of recruitment processes to ensure a career with Essex Police is accessible to all.

In addition, we have recorded an increase in the number of subscribers to newsletters and in our attendance at community support groups and schools within Essex, and we are securing feedback directly from victims through new initiatives.

Open days have been held in collaboration with NHS and CSPs for both outreach and recruitment purposes, and commands who are not ordinarily public facing are keen to be involved in these, particularly where they struggle to attract candidates for specialist roles. There are, however, ongoing challenges with the volume of pre-employment checks which limits our ability to be fully resourced at times.



### **Promising Practice:**

The Crime and Public Protection command have developed a Victim Closure Document (VCD), which is now undertaken with all victims of high harm offences, with the aim of ensuring they can share their experiences. This will help us understand and remove blockers to improving victim satisfaction and to ensure that when we promote the good service our victims receive, that it has their endorsement.



### **Further work:**

There was real positivity around our appetite for spotting potential for improvement in understanding our communities, but to maximise this we need to be comfortable being uncomfortable in our learnings. This means deliberately engaging with communities on matters that are difficult or uncomfortable to understand. In doing so we will be able to demonstrate a much richer understanding of the challenges they face and therefore the role we play in supporting them. This ultimately carries the opportunity to improve trust and confidence among our communities.

## Feedback Panel Overview

The panel provided invaluable perspective on the progress we have demonstrated across the Force, and on the work that is still to be done. This included perspectives on leadership, understanding our communities, and misconduct and grievance.

In relation to leadership, the panel were keen to understand how the chief officer group had addressed the same task as their SLT in identifying and embedding improved practice in the five key areas - and how this had been shared with the wider Force. Throughout this programme of work, the Chief Officer Team have been engaged at all levels by firstly drawing together our understanding of the position in Essex Police following the Casey Review, through to supporting each of their SLTs in delivering the enabling work strands. Most of all, the Chief Officer Team have been clear on the culture we should expect from Essex Police which encourages and support our workforce to raise concerns, and to have those heard and addressed. It was evident in several command inputs, that this is beginning to be felt, although an acknowledgement that there is still some way to go.

In relation to community understanding, the panel made a strong suggestion that it would be more accurate for us to refer to this as 'understanding our communities'. Putting the emphasis on our responsibility to be proactive in this space. For this to happen, the panel suggested that it could be beneficial for there to be greater engagement between probationers and their local communities so that this curiosity is embedded at the start of their policing career. This is in addition to making sure we are creating and maximising opportunities to share stories with our communities and for them to see, for themselves, the work that we undertake. For this, IAGs play a crucial role and there is potential for this to be extended further to involve community members with lived experiences to support us in our work.

In relation to misconduct and grievances, the panel's focus was on the importance of taking learning from tangible examples of case management as well as being cautious about our threshold for explaining behaviours as 'culture' rather than misconduct. For this, we need to ensure we are continuously challenging our own assumptions as to what works well, or not.

In addition to those points, the panel also highlighted our collective responsibility in ensuring that those we engage with professionally (such as other partner agencies, or our suppliers) share our values, so that we can be confident that a promising culture in Essex Police extends beyond our immediate operations to our interactions across a much wider system.



## Next steps

Essex Police will continue to embed this activity within normal business. There remains a responsibility on all leadership teams, including the Chief Officer Group, to ensure that the activities we have begun to undertake, are embedded within their respective areas of business, and that there is a point made of monitoring progress regularly.

This includes continuing to make good use of all data available to us, particularly where staff share their views and in our aspirations to better understand our own data on disparities in the workforce and in our misconduct and grievance processes.

By doing so, we stand a strong chance of progressing our culture internally, and externally (with our stakeholders), to achieve high levels of trust and confidence among all our communities. And to demonstrate the qualities of an effective police force as a result.

In making this normal business, we will not establish a bespoke strategy or governance process, however we will continue to engage enthusiastically with our stakeholders on all aspects of our culture and commit to being open to learning in all respects- including on topics that are uncomfortable for us.