

The Rt Hon James Cleverly MP  
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Your ref: n/a  
Our ref: SH  
Date: 31 January 2024  
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Dear Home Secretary

I write in response to the HMICFRS inspection report: **An inspection of the effectiveness of the police and law enforcement bodies' response to group-based child sexual exploitation in England and Wales.**

I acknowledge the Area For Improvement (AFI) identified and the nine recommendations made in the report and understand that the AFI and four recommendations (recommendations 2, 8 and 9, shown in the appendix to this letter) are directly applicable to Essex Police, and all forces.

The Chief Constable has provided a detailed response to me regarding the four recommendations applicable to all Forces and assured me that they have been added to the force's register of HMICFRS recommendations. I am pleased to see that Essex Police is compliant with recommendation 4 and is and is working towards compliance with recommendations 2, 8 and 9, with an expectation of becoming compliant ahead of the deadline set. Essex Police is also compliant with the AFI.

With regard to recommendation 2 Essex Police are currently exploring how partnership data can be included in future iterations of an internal dashboard, which already collates police data and is shared with partners through Multi Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) Boards on a monthly basis. Essex Police expect to meet the deadline for this recommendation and no concerns about achieving this have been identified.

With regard to recommendation 8, Essex Police has received two presentations from the Hydrant Programme already and expect to meet the deadline for compliance.

With regard to recommendation 9, Essex Police are working towards full compliance. The recommendation asks for effective steps to be taken with immediate effect, and by commencing work on this Essex Police are meeting the requirement. Work underway includes:

- training through the Essex Child Safeguarding Board
- promotion through of a culture for all officers and staff interacting with children to be aware of vulnerabilities using the AWARE principles (promoted through a force wide Child Protection and Safeguarding Board)
- use of force Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Podcasts, which include a real focus on 'lived experiences', and reflection of how impactful language can be where it is unintentionally blaming the vulnerable. Podcasts are discussed within teams to promote learning.

Protecting vulnerable people is a priority in my Police and Crime Plan and 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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Hirst', written in a cursive style.

**Roger Hirst**  
**Police Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex**

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

## **Appendix A – Recommendations and AFI**

### **Recommendation 2**

**By 31 December 2024**, all chief constables should make sure that their forces have problem profiles for child sexual exploitation, each of which should include an assessment of the nature and extent of group-based child sexual exploitation. This should include relevant data from local partner agencies and should be updated frequently, at least annually.

### **Recommendation 4**

**By 31 December 2024**, all chief constables and the relevant business user groups for police record management systems should make sure there are sufficient measures in place to identify group-based child sexual exploitation.

### **Recommendation 8**

**By 30 June 2024**, all chief constables of forces that are yet to receive the Hydrant Programme's continuing professional development offer should arrange it.

### **Recommendation 9**

**With immediate effect**, all chief constables should take effective steps to eradicate victim-blaming language in their forces.

### **AFI 1**

All chief constables should work with their statutory safeguarding partners to review, promote, and make sure that relevant group-based child sexual exploitation disruption and prevention initiatives are implemented effectively in their forces. This should include consideration of options such as the advice given in the Home Office disruption toolkit and an Operation Makesafe (a national police initiative to raise awareness of child sexual exploitation in the business community) type of approach.