

The Rt Hon James Cleverly MP
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Dear Home Secretary

I write in response to the joint inspection report: **Efficiency spotlight report: The impact of recruitment and retention on the criminal justice system.**

I acknowledge the report makes no new recommendations, but rather refers to recommendations made in previous reports.

The Chief Constable has provided a detailed response to me regarding this report and the risks highlighted.

The risk of staff leavers

Essex Police continue to develop a strong understanding of the reasons why police officers and staff are leaving. The HR department has put in place interventions, processes, and initiatives to help retain experienced and skilled police officers. These interventions include:

- a meeting with an officer or police staff member at least two ranks above at the point of either formal or informal notification to establish the reason and any supportive action which can be taken, as national and local research indicates that retention interventions are most effective at the earliest opportunity before individuals have handed in notice.
- introduction of a Retention Ambassador programme. This enables officers and staff to access independent support, advice and guidance and speak to experienced and motivated colleagues about concerns or issues with their career experience.
- Career Expo events, which have been introduced for new in-service officers. These aim to inspire and retain officers by highlighting the breadth of opportunities and career pathways the force offers.

- HR champion the 1:1 and PDR process, which is vital for enabling line managers to engage with, listen to, value and motivate officers and staff in order to retain them.
- an intuitive 'We Value You' SharePoint webpage has been developed to deliver information, advice and guidance for officers and staff about the options available to support retention. These include, the Financial wellbeing hub; Officer posting exchange; development opportunities; promotional opportunities; pay and remuneration; Recreation Association benefits and flexible/part time working.

The risk relating to caseloads, capacity, capability and productivity

Allocation and the movement of resources are influenced by multiple factors to ensure risks are mitigated and optimum resource levels are achieved based upon force priorities and ability to deliver the priorities set out in the force plan, which supports delivery of the Police and Crime Plan.

The approach is evidence based using data to assess gaps, areas for growth and evaluate competing priorities and the impact of change. Professional judgment and wide consultation play a key role and a robust governance structure through the Force Deployment Board chaired by the Deputy Chief Constable ensures Chief Officer Group (COG) scrutinise and agree resourcing priorities on a quarterly basis.

Additionally, the Force has undertaken a review of its performance management framework and agreed an updated – and evidence-based – set of performance metrics and will be further enhancing our assessment of demand in our next Force Management Statement using innovative forecasts through our new Analytics for Everyone (A4E) forecast dashboards which puts insight straight into the hands on decision makers at all levels across the organisation.

The key ongoing risk of inexperience

The Police Uplift Programme has changed the profile of the Force in terms of levels of experience, and as of January 2024, 37 per cent of officers have less than 5 years' service. This presents a training, development and support challenge to ensure that officers are skilled and enabled to deliver high quality public service. In response to this:

- The HR Directorate is refreshing the overarching People and Learning Strategy for 2024-2027 to deliver business led, professional people practice under the key areas of Attraction, Development, Support and Retention. Through this strategy the aims are to meet the demand for HR services, help the force to be an employer of choice and deliver better work and working lives.
- Learning & Development has continued to be supported with growth posts to meet high levels of recruitment and the subsequent initial and longer-term training needs of officers through their initial training and in other areas such as driver training, officer and staff safety training and leadership.
- The force has introduced a programme called '*Be the Change*' and embedded the College of Policing's Effective Supervision guidelines.

The risk relating to future workforce planning

For 2023/24 the force has agreement to maintain the original police uplift requirement of 3,765 headcount, plus a further 55 officers, totalling 3,820. The demand on HR recruitment and other key stakeholders including Business Services and Vetting remains high to achieve

these numbers, and is managed through the delivery of the agreed recruitment plan. The plan is agile and able to account for attrition fluctuations whilst also ensuring that salary budgets are not exceeded, and the demands of our uplift programme are met.

The risk relating to 20% of the national police workforce being in their first two years of service by the end of 2024-25

Over the period April 2020 to October 2023, nationally, 71.4 per cent of all officer resignations came from those with 0-5 years' service and 51.1 per cent of resignations were from probationers. Essex was marginally higher with 78.1 per cent of resignations from officers with 0-5 years' service and 56.3 per cent from probationers.

In addition to the work outlined above which aims to understand why staff leave, the force is continuously improving its leaver processes. This work includes:

- implementation of a new service manager system to improve the leaver experience and gather information about why people leave.
- being actively engaged with national knowledge sharing forums, implementing the national leaver reasons framework and adopting national best practice from the Police Uplift Hub to deliver a professional and dignified exit for all leavers.

The risk relating to retirement rates and resignation rates

The PUP has changed the profile of the Force in terms of levels of experience, and as stated earlier, as of January 2024, 37 per cent of officers have less than 5 years' service. In tandem with this, the force is experiencing an ongoing shift in generational attitudes and approaches towards work that are broadly more transient and flexible amongst the new officers and challenge the traditional 30-year career view. These changing perspectives do not represent an existential threat to the delivery of police services, but the Force is seeing a higher proportion of resignations from new in-service officers, which is also being seen nationally across all forces and earlier responses demonstrate what the force is doing to understand those reasons and put interventions and support in place.

Additional observations

The force have recognised previously, through the creation of an ongoing strategic risk, the delays in the Criminal Justice System and the Impact on Victims and Witnesses. There is a significant backlog of cases in the Crown Court, causing delays in the criminal justice system. This was exacerbated by the effect of the Covid pandemic, which severely limited the operational capability of the courts. Although Covid restrictions have now been lifted, the backlog that built up remains.

We also note the recommendation from the *Dame Elish Angiolini Inquiry Part 1 - Report* for a visit to the residence of all new candidates and a home visit for every new candidate applying to be a police officer. We recognise the importance of ensuring that the right people are selected to become officers, and the positive impact on public confidence, but note that the force will need to consider the level of investment as this is activity not currently undertaken.

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 over a horizontal line.

Roger Hirst
Police Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex

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