

The Rt Hon James Cleverly MP  
Home Secretary  
Home Office  
2 Marsham Street  
London

Our ref:TP/VS

5 March 2024

Dear Home Secretary

**RE: HMICFRS – An inspection of the effectiveness of the police and law enforcement bodies’ response to group-based child sexual exploitation in England and Wales.**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this national thematic inspection.

Suffolk Constabulary has advised it accepts the recommendations and has provided an update on its current position, which is attached and will be published on my website.

Despite the good work going on both within the force, and in partnership, to safeguard vulnerable children, there are some challenges in capturing and analysing data in relation to group-based CSE. I will ask for a further update from the force in the Summer with regard its progress.

Yours sincerely



Tim Passmore, Police and Crime Commissioner for Suffolk



## **Response to HMICFRS' report: [An inspection of the effectiveness of the police and law enforcement bodies' response to group-based child sexual exploitation in England and Wales](#), December 2023**

In December 2023, HMICFRS released the national thematic report which detailed the findings of its inspection into police and law enforcement bodies and the effectiveness of their response to group-based child sexual exploitation in England and Wales.

In total, the report makes nine recommendations and one AFI, of which four recommendations and the AFI are for police forces. Suffolk Constabulary accepts these recommendations and the AFI and the below sets out the Constabulary's response to these.

### **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.

*This profile will be completed in 2024. Child sexual exploitation will be covered but the assessment of the nature and extent of 'group-based' child sexual exploitation is more complex as there is no recording mechanism (flag) on Athena identifying 'group-based' and therefore limited data is available. However, partner data sharing through the MACE meeting, reviews of victim data and intelligence reports are processes that will identify group-based child sexual exploitation where it is taking place. The Home Office has recently published Terms of Reference and methodology for recommendations which has included problem profiles to ensure consistency across forces, so we expect to receive more direction of what this profile is to include in the first or second quarters of 2024.*

### **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.

*Suffolk Constabulary does not currently have a method of recording whether the offender is suspected of being involved in a group-based CSA/CSE (Child Sexual Abuse/Exploitation) offence. This was raised to the AUG (Athena User Group) board last year who have advised that there will be no further changes to Athena (to add this flag). All Athena forces are in the same position and are unable to record on the number of suspects for group-based Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE). However, there is a detailed explanation below on how child sexual exploitation is managed by the force, this will include those children at risk of group-based exploitation.*

*The Home Office is aware of our position as they have requested this data as part of ADR149 (Annual Data Return) return for the past year and this coming year. However, it is worth noting that due to the lack of data available within forces this ADR will no longer be mandated to forces from 2025 onwards.*

*The Constabulary does not have a regular product that it circulates in relation to CSE but does have regular workstreams that look to identify CSE. Analysts undertake daily scanning of crimes/CADs/VVOL (Vulnerability, Victim Offender, Location)/Compact (Missing persons) etc. to identify many things, including CSE. If they identify anything of concern, they would either raise this at DMM (Daily Management Meetings)*

*or raise it at the four-weekly MIM (Management of Intelligence / Information Meeting – Tasking Process pre-meet) for consideration for inclusion in the district TTCG (Tactical Tasking Co-ordination Group). If warranted, the analyst will produce further information for the TTCG. This also provides the opportunity for Community Police Officers to raise concerns around children who are at risk of exploitation.*

*A researcher also produces the child vulnerability matrix prior to the MIMs which helps to identify children/juveniles at risk of exploitation (criminal as well as CSE). Any individuals of concern are raised at the MIM.*

*Analysts also have close working relationships with the Missing person advisors and the Child Exploitation PC who is embedded within the MASH, who provide the link into the Multi Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) panels.*

*The County Lines risk matrix, that Suffolk Constabulary maintains, records if a line is known to use CSE, which would increase the threat score of the line.*

### **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.

*The Op Hydrant team was contacted to ascertain what Continuing Professional Development (CPD) material exists in order that it can be adopted locally. This has now been received and planning is with Learning and Development to provide CPD events in summer 2024.*

*Currently, although not Op Hydrant labelled, CPD material exists for Child Abuse, Domestic Abuse, Extortion, Modern Slavery, Rape and Sexual Offences, Vulnerability, Stalking and Harassment.*

### **Recommendation 9**

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

*This recommendation forms part of workstreams set by the Child Exploitation subgroup (first meeting held in December 2022) and is also reflected in a new Child Exploitation Policy (March 2023). Significant work has been carried out in relation to exploitation, with an Exploitation Partnership Officer completing various training inputs to internal and external audiences. In addition to this, several articles have been published on the force intranet to provide advice around policy changes and raise awareness with colleagues. In June 2023, the Superintendent lead for Safeguarding also used local media to raise awareness of child exploitation.*

*Recent action has featured this topic as an element of Missing Children improvements, with direct training inputs provided to all response officers around the use of appropriate language in August/September 2023. Use of appropriate language now features in a monthly missing audit programme conducted by the Constabulary.*

### **Area for Improvement 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.

*The Constabulary works closely with statutory partners to ensure contextual safeguarding is a thread through several partnership strands.*

*Information is utilised from the public, police and partners to produce a child vulnerability matrix. This is used to formulate a child vulnerability profile that is used to focus on individuals, geographic areas and shared with the Partnership Exploitation Team and Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership Child Exploitation Hubs. Together, they and local neighbourhood officers conduct pulse patrols and focussed interventions.*

*Future planning is underway for an Early Intervention and Identification Forum which will ensure those children considered most at risk by agencies are highlighted, and collective agreement is sought as to which children are supported through joint intervention.*

*Police have also introduced a child exploitation policy and completed an initial 6-month review to gauge the success of implementation, understanding and initial benefits realised by the introduction of such a policy.*

*The County Multi-Agency Risk Panel has now started. This is supported by partners from Social Care, Youth Justice Service (YJS) and police. The purpose of the meeting is to identify and discuss children in Suffolk where there has been a significant increase in concern and/or action needs to be taken to reduce the risk of harm.*

*Operation Makesafe is in use across the County. A reviewed Operational Order is being re-written to support community policing teams and Kestrel Teams (proactive neighbourhood teams) to ensure consistent delivery of training and messages linked to Child Sexual and Criminal Exploitation.*

*MACE panels, police and partners across the county utilise the Home Office Disruption Toolkit as directed in the new Terms of Reference for MACE.*