



**POLICE & CRIME
COMMISSIONER**
for Leicester,
Leicestershire & Rutland
Your Communities - Your Commissioner

Date: 22/01/2025

Dear Michelle Skeer, OBE, QP,

I am writing in response to your inspection report regarding the police and law enforcement response to group-based child sexual exploitation (CSE). I wish to acknowledge the issues and recommendations raised in your letter, to confirm that the Chief Constable has and continues to undertake steps to address many of the matters identified in this report. He will also continue to be held accountable for sustaining improvements and ensuring that these matters are fully addressed.

I recognise both the national and local complexity surrounding group-based CSE. Alongside national inquiries having shown that in some high-profile cases such as Rotheram, perpetrators were identified as predominantly men of Pakistani heritage, reviews have also highlighted that inconsistent and incomplete ethnicity data limits the strength of any firm conclusions. However, evidence of localised over-representation in certain areas must be examined transparently without fear of criticism. In Leicestershire, these issues sit alongside wider challenges of community trust and cohesion, evident during the East Leicester Disturbances in 2022 where subsequent independent analysis identified the role of misinformation, identity-based tensions and a historic lack of confidence in public services.

Local data further indicates a disproportionate impact on black communities, with both victimisation and offending rates higher than expected, relative to Leicestershire's general population, suggesting systemic vulnerabilities, and possible overrepresentation within the criminal justice data. By contrast, Asian communities appear under-represented as both victims and offenders, falling well below population rates in Leicestershire, which may reflect underreporting or cultural reluctance to engage with authorities. White communities broadly align with population expectations, though at slightly lower levels in both victim and offender categories. Understanding the drivers behind this disproportionality is essential and I will continue to hold the Chief

accountable so that responses of group-based CSE are evidence-led, victim centred, culturally competent and command public confidence.

The report rightly highlights the seriousness and scale of group-based CSE and the need for consistent practice across all forces. In Leicestershire, the Force has established a Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) Hub which brings together police officers, social workers and health workers and health professionals. This hub has already improved the consistency of safeguarding decisions and ensured that disruption activity is coordinated across partners. The hub has also provided clearer line of accountability, ensuring that cases escalated quickly when risks are identified.

You emphasise the importance of problem profiles and understanding prevalence. Leicestershire Police has produced a force-wide problem profile on child exploitation, which is updated and shared with safeguarding partners. This profile has informed targeted operations in identified hotspots and has been used to brief local authority boards on emerging risks. By combining police data with information from social care and health, the profile has given a more holistic understanding of exploitation patterns in the county.

The report also raises concerns about intelligence collection and information sharing. In Leicestershire the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) has been strengthened, with clear protocols for recording and sharing intelligence. Weekly tactical meetings are held, where police and partners jointly review intelligence and agree disruption activity. These meetings have already led to earlier intervention in several cases, and they have improved confidence among partners that intelligence is acted upon promptly.

You highlight the need for early identification and referral pathways for victims. In Leicestershire, frontline officers and PCSOs have received training on recognising indicators of exploitation, and schools have been engaged through the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnership to improve referral routes. As a result, referrals from education settings have increased, and children at risk are being identified sooner. I understand this has helped ensure that children are safeguarded before exploitation becomes entrenched.

The report rightly highlights the importance of victim-centred practice. Leicestershire Police has embedded specialist victim advocates within its safeguarding hub, ensuring

that children receive continuity and support. Trauma-informed interview protocols are now used, and feedback from victims has shown improved confidence in police processes. These advocates have also played a vital role in bridging communication between victims and investigators, reducing attrition in complex cases.

You note that disruption tactics are not always used effectively. In Leicestershire, the force has made use of civil orders, licencing checks, and housing enforcement powers to disrupt suspected offenders. These tactics have been applied in several recent operations, reducing opportunities for exploitation in identified locations. The use of civil orders has been particularly effective in restricting access to vulnerable children and licencing checks have closed premises linked to exploitation.

The report identifies challenges in securing and exploiting digital evidence. Leicestershire police has increased its digital forensics capacity, introducing fast-time triage for devices seized in child protection cases. This has reduced delays and ensured that evidence is available earlier in investigations. This investment in digital capability has also allowed officers to respond more effectively to online harms, which are increasingly linked to group-based exploitation.

I acknowledge the report's concerns about workforce skills and supervision. In Leicestershire, a tiered training framework has been introduced, with mandatory awareness training for all officers and specialist courses for investigators. Supervisory reviews are now embedded at key points in CSE investigations, improving case quality and oversight. This has ensured that frontline staff are better equipped to recognise exploitation, while specialist investigators receive the depth of training needed for complex cases.

The report calls for stronger performance management and data quality. Leicestershire Police has developed a dashboard for child exploitation cases, which tracks referrals, disruption activity, and safeguarding outcomes. This dashboard is reviewed monthly by senior officers and shared with my office to support scrutiny. The dashboard has already highlighted areas where referral timeliness can be improved, allowing corrective action to be taken quickly.

There is also emphasis on the importance of multiagency safeguarding arrangements and strategic leadership. In Leicestershire, the Children's Safeguarding Partnership has

adopted a standing agenda item on child exploitation, and the Chief Constable has designated a senior officer with responsibility for coordinating the force's response. This has strengthened oversight and ensured that exploitation remains a priority across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland, with clear accountability for delivery.

Finally, you highlight the need for resource allocation and sustainability. In Leicestershire additional posts have been created within the exploitation team, and resources have been prioritised to ensure that safeguarding and disruption activity can be sustained. This investment has provided greater resilience, ensuring that improvements are not dependent on short-term funding or temporary staffing. However, for long lasting and sustainable changes to be implemented, police funding needs systemic change. Leicestershire is one of many forces nationally who are adversely affected by the police funding formula. I have written to the Government on 6 separate occasions this year to highlight the issue, with no resolution being offered by the Government. Until forces are funded adequately and fairly, policing will continue to have to make difficult choices regarding resource allocation and sustainability.

I am grateful for the report's findings and recommendations. Please be assured that the Chief Constable will be held fully accountable for delivering the necessary improvements and that my office will continue to provide rigorous oversight to ensure that children in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland are protected from group-based child sexual exploitation.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rupert Matthews', with a long, sweeping underline.

Rupert Matthews,

Police and Crime Commissioner for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland