



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

Date: 03/11/2025

His Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary

His Majesty's Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services

6th Floor Globe House

89 Eccleston Square London

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Dear Andy Cooke, QPM,

I write to you in response to your Annual State of Policing Report dated 10 September 2025. I welcome your assessment, acknowledge the findings and observations outlined within your report and will be discussing its key themes in detail with the Chief Constable. I reaffirm my commitment to ensuring Leicestershire Police responds in full to the concerns and challenges you have highlighted.

The themes you raise within your report, ranging from investigative timeliness and workforce resilience to public trust and digital capacity-resonate strongly with our experiences locally in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. I am under no illusion about the scale of the challenges facing policing as a whole, but I am equally encouraged by the progress we continue to make locally, and the willingness of officers and staff to embrace change in the interests of the public they serve.

Firstly, I am particularly pleased to note your endorsement of the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee, and acknowledgement of its significance in building confidence, whilst holding a clear expectation that every community should have access to a named officer and PCSO. In 2025, Leicestershire was confirmed as one of the first forces to nationally to meet the Guarantee, with every community now served by a named, contactable officer and PCSO. This roll out was underpinned by the deployment of 35 additional police officers and 21 police community support officers (PCSOs) across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland, supported by the Home Office uplift funding and local strategic planning.

The continued implementation of community engagement events has further ensured that community concerns are reflected in operational delivery. Over the Safer Summers Campaign alone, 84 community events were held, including beat surgeries, patch walks, and public gatherings. This was alongside 37 business-focused engagements, including 9 Safer Action Business Advice) days, strengthening community trust, increasing visibility, and reinforcing collaborative policing.

However, I also understand actions reliant on building trust and confidence in communities requires much greater efforts than simply engagement and visibility. Forces must also be seen to really understand the people they serve and deliver for them. Positive outcome rates must be driven up and barriers removed. I will be having some detailed conversations with the Chief Constable about how we can work strategically to build trust and confidence across our force area.

I also note your concerns regarding workforce experience and morale, notably the proportion of officers lacking experience, which has subsequently impacted the fragility of morale in many forces. In Leicestershire, approximately 42% of officers now fall within this early-career bracket, reflecting national uplift trends. While this expansion has brought welcome capacity, it does present challenges concerning supervision, retention and operational resilience, as training needs are significant, and experience will inevitably improve an officer's confidence and knowledge of the Force area from a policing perspective. Having said this, concerning retention, we are pleased to highlight that as of March 2025, there were 2,248 officers in Leicestershire, a 0% change year on year. This is a positive outcome, with more than half of forces (27) having experienced a year-on-year fall in officers.

I welcomed the news last week that there is going to be a commission into the state of leadership in British policing from operational to Chief Officer level. I wrote to the then Home Secretary earlier this year regarding the challenges in recruiting a high calibre Chief Constable and the restrictiveness of the criteria, that may well be foiling to introduce new innovative leadership into our Forces. I believe that leadership also extends to your role in HMICFRS and in the College of Policing. I also note your announcement regarding finishing in your role in 2026, and along with others, I thank you for your service over the years. I will be writing to the Home Secretary to urge her to ensure that your replacement is recruited using an open and transparent process and that the widest possible search terms are used to bring fresh ideas and leadership into the inspectorate. We could learn a lot from our counterparts overseas.

I wholly echo the necessity to prioritise safeguarding and vulnerability; this includes your call for policing to do more to protect victims of domestic abuse and child exploitation. We have ensured statutory partners and community organisations are consistently working together to address these issues. We have focused on commissioning efforts on Out of Court Resolutions (OOCRs), which offer restorative justice for low-level offences while considering victim impact. One contracted OOCR, delivered by New Dawn, New Day, supports female offenders-many of whom are also victims of domestic abuse - with holistic interventions and onward support.

Unfortunately, however, Leicestershire has experienced a 4.2% reduction in funding for the Victims Grant by the MoJ. As a result of this cut, by 31 March 2025, I can confirm ten projects ended. These included projects that provided onward counselling and support to specific groups such as men affected by domestic abuse. The reduction was due to MoJ funding from which police and crime commissioners commissioned practical and emotional support services for victims, based on their assessment of local need. The reduction in funding would therefore have an impact on victim-support services nationally. I have written to the Government regarding the impact that the reduction on funding would have on services and victims.

Leicestershire Police also launched the “Don’t Play Their Game” campaign to raise awareness among 13–19-year-olds about the dangers of Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE), especially linked to gangs and drug dealing. The campaign uses youth-focused messaging and visuals to educate and direct young people to the Live Safe website for support and anonymous reporting. It is backed by local partners and includes digital and offline resources to reach as many young people as possible.

I remain concerned, nationally, about the prevalence of CSE and grooming gangs. I have raised this with my Chief Constable on a number of occasions and received robust reassurance on the approach Leicestershire Police are taking. However, the national approach feels lengthy as we wait for recommendations and action plans to be created by national bodies. I am determined that we will not fail victims in Leicestershire and Rutland because the wheels of national bureaucracy turn too slowly.

I welcome your continued focus on standards and culture. Your report rightly calls for stronger and more ethical leadership, warning that poor leadership must be challenged consistently and effectively. I have reviewed IOPC performance data for Leicestershire Police, which highlighted that in quarter 4, 2024-2025, 78% of complaints were resolved within 30 working days, which I am pleased to say are above the national average of 72.4%. However, I am aware there is room for improvement, and I will ensure Leicestershire strives to increase this figure over time. Leicestershire are also continually undertaking reviews of police officer conduct, scrutinising body-worn footage using a dip-sampling approach. This occurs quarterly and intends to ensure a high level of transparency, and standards are met across the force, providing opportunity for behaviours to be challenged where necessary. These findings have informed my scrutiny of internal conduct and the embedding of Code of Ethics across the organisation.

I do also wonder about the effectiveness of the role out of this Code of Ethics programme, as I understand that the training package deployed by the College of Policing takes under three hours to complete. I believe in order to embed a new culture of policing, nationally, would require a much more robust programme. I understand the nature of enabling Forces to take local activity to thoroughly embed. However, that will naturally bring in inconsistencies throughout the country and differing levels of focus dependent on individual force leadership.

I acknowledge your assessment which highlights the need to improve data and performance frameworks. In Leicestershire we have been reviewing recent data management and performance monitoring. In response, the Force has implemented enhanced digital forensic systems, improved audit oversight, and launched a strategic performance framework under the Police and Crime Plan 2024–2029. This includes expanding the Public Confidence Tracker to incorporate quarterly survey data, complaint volumes, and engagement metrics, now capturing feedback from over 2,000 residents per quarter to inform planning and policing priorities.

A rigorous complaints review is also underway, addressing data inconsistencies between the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) and the Centurion database. The Force is investigating these discrepancies. Capacity concerns were raised about the Professional Standards Department, which handles approximately 1,521 complaints with a team of 12, which reflects a national challenge. A recent paper on complaint handling noted a significant rise in complaints, primarily related to service delivery and police powers. Leicestershire's figures align with national trends, with diverse complainant demographics. These developments directly address the original concern by reinforcing data integrity, enhancing performance oversight, and improving complaint handling, providing a stronger foundation for public accountability and trust.

Leicestershire Police had already begun learning from earlier unrest, notably Operation Energy, a police response to tensions that flared up as a result of the September 2022 disorder. The operation sought to a thorough, proportionate, and ethical investigation into the events, whilst building and maintaining public confidence via the investigative process. Following this disorder linked to community tensions, the force developed a prevention and response plan within a wider partnership recovery strategy. This focused on community identity, collaboration, infrastructure challenges, and service improvement. Neighbourhood policing remains central, supported by the Key Individual Network and a dedicated Community Cohesion Unit that monitors tensions and informs frontline teams.

This approach meant that Leicestershire Police had robust plans in place when other areas were experiencing the dreadful riots of Summer 2024. Thanks to the levels of community engagement that had been built and the networks they were able to leverage misinformation was quickly identified and quashed. As a result, we had no riots across our region.

I welcome your continued efforts focussing on victim experience which remains central to public confidence and legitimacy, with the report rightly observing that 'work with victims is often not to the expected standard'. In Leicestershire, I have prioritised improvements in victim and support. As of September 2025, concern was raised that 4.6% of victim/survivors of domestic abuse and 14% of victim/survivors of sexual violence withdrew from engaging with the criminal justice system (CJS) despite the support available. I acknowledged this concern and emphasised that this issue was being witnessed nationally.

In response to your concerns regarding national delays and digital evidence handling, I have supported operational improvements including the rollout of triage tools and investment in forensic capacity. These issues have been prioritised by both myself and the Force, notably through the Forensics Improvement Programme (FIP) which intends to transform the capacity and capability of the Forensic Investigation Unit (FIU) as a pivotal role in achieving outstanding investigations, positive outcomes and improving victim satisfaction. This transformation includes The Triage Tools project which accelerates the early detection of illegal content on seized digital devices. Initially, devices faced delays of up to 18 months before forensic examination.

However, innovations now identify risks sooner, aiding victim safeguarding and speeding up investigations. Phase one has cut wait times to just 5 weeks, paving the way for on-scene service delivery. I will ensure to continue to hold the Chief to for improving digital forensics, ensuring faster evidence processing, which we understand directly strengthens investigations and reduces deals for victims and will ultimately improve victim confidence, support safeguarding decisions and help deliver justice more promptly and transparently in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.

I continue to share your concern regarding funding pressures, notably concerning the absence of capital grants and the limitations of the current funding formula continue to constrain investment in infrastructure and technology'. In early 2025 I raised concerns during the Police and Crime Panel's budget scrutiny session, noting that Leicestershire Police face a £9.3 million shortfall for 2025-2026 despite 14 million in savings already delivered. For 2025-2026, the Force and OPCC are operating with a budget of £254.65m, only 56% of which is being met by government grant, leaving 44% to local taxpayers. I have continued to raise the funding pressures that are facing policing at the highest levels in Westminster.

While we continue to use precept increases where there is an evidence base for community benefit, efficiencies and reserves to manage pressures, these measure alone cannot deliver the scale of investment required. We will therefore continue to advocate for a ring-fenced capital fund and reform of the funding formula. With inadequate external support, the continued absence of capital grants and the constraints of the current funding formula risk slowing Leicestershire Police's ability to modernise its technology and estate, undermining long-term efficiency and resilience. Reliance on local precept funding and reserves is not sustainable, creating financial pressures that could affect service delivery, operational capability and staff morale.

There are two points of notable concern to which I would like to draw your attention. The first regards the number of areas where there is a single point of failure in a supply chain. There seem to be a number of services which the police commission, where there is only a single supplier or a very small number. I don't believe it would take much for a supply chain failure in such circumstances to lead to severe difficulties for the UK police. My second concern is the police's insufficient focus on crime prevention. There was a time when the UK police not only

believed that proactive prevention patrols were an effective means of driving down crime but undertook such patrols on an extensive basis. However, today this no longer appears to be the case, with the UK police seemingly continuing to distance themselves from such responsibilities.

In closing, I appreciate your rigorous assessment. Leicestershire demonstrates key strengths, advancing prevention, visible leadership, improved victim contact, and a committed workforce. Yet, as your report rightly shows, complacency is not an option. Its focus on investigative quality, workforce resilience, safeguarding, public confidence, and digital capability aligns with our local priorities.

The challenges ahead are significant, but with strong oversight, collaboration, and ambition, we can achieve more equitable policing outcomes. I remain committed to delivering my Police and Crime Plan for 2024–2028, supporting the Chief Constable, upholding service standards, and ensuring vital support for victims across Leicester, Leicestershire, and Rutland.

Yours sincerely,

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

**Rupert Matthews**

**Police and Crime Commissioner for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland**