



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

01 June 2026

His Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary
His Majesty's Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services
6th Floor Globe House
89 Eccleston Square
London
SW1V 1PN

Dear Ms Skeer,

I write to you on behalf of the Police and Crime Commissioner in response to your HMICFRS Report: 'The Policing Response to the Investigation of Online Child Sexual Abuse and the Management of Registered Sex Offenders'.

I welcome this report which provides an assessment of a policing area that continues to evolve in scale and complexity. It offers an opportunity to understand the pressures and expectations shaping current practice and hold the Chief to account. The findings set out a clear picture of the pressures facing forces nationally, particularly around the robustness of supervision, the timeliness of digital forensics, and the consistency of managing registered sex offenders. These issues do not simply highlight gaps in performance; they point to deeper challenges in achieving reliable, high-quality practice across complex and high-risk areas of work.

In holding the Chief Constable to account, my focus will be on ensuring that the force addresses the areas where local and national findings align most clearly. This includes strengthening supervision so that it consistently drives the progression and quality of investigations; ensuring that digital forensic demand is managed proactively with clear risk-based prioritisation; and improving the consistency of risk assessment and management in relation to registered sex offenders. I will expect to see clear evidence of progress against the recommendations set out in this HMICFRS report, including measurable improvements in timeliness, oversight and outcomes.

I will also ensure that the force continues to build on its strengths. The ability to deliver complex investigations, the effectiveness of partnership working, the commitment to

prevention and the continued investment in specialist capabilities such as digital forensics and online investigation all provide a strong foundation. The priority now is to ensure that these strengths are embedded across all areas of practice, so that outcomes are not dependent on the scale or visibility of an investigation but on consistent, high-quality delivery.

Achieving this will require a more deliberate and sustained approach to how performance is understood and managed. As your report notes, 'It is not enough to know that good work is taking place; there must be a clear line of sight from leadership through to frontline delivery.' Strengthening internal governance, improving the quality of supervision and ensuring that learning from inspections, audits and operational experience is translated into tangible change will be essential.

The challenges outlined in the report are not short-term pressures but significant, enduring issues that cannot be resolved through isolated interventions. They reflect a continuing shift in both the nature and volume of offending, particularly online, and require a response that is equally sustained and adaptive. I remain committed to ensuring that Leicestershire Police approaches this with the urgency and discipline the issue demands, and that the force continues to strengthen its ability to protect children and manage those who present a current risk-not only in response to inspection but as a matter of embedded and enduring practice.

The force's proven ability to deliver complex, resource intensive investigations demonstrate what can be achieved when activity is prioritised and coordinated effectively. Operation Guarding, launched in February 2024, resulted in more than 90 arrests, safeguarded children, and involved the examination of over 1,200 digital devices and 640 digital exhibits within only four months. It showed the organisation's ability to act on intelligence at scale, disrupt offending networks and pursue offenders through arrest and charge. I intend to use the learning from Operation Guarding as a benchmark for the standards of pace, coordination and oversight that should be present in everyday investigative work.

Partnership working across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland remains a notable strength. Joint working between police, local authorities, health services and probation has been recognised for its effectiveness in identifying and responding to child sexual abuse, particularly within family settings. This integrated approach aligns with national recommendations that safeguarding responses must be coordinated and multi-agency in nature. I will continue to champion this partnership model, ensuring that its benefits are fully realised through improved internal consistency in risk management.

There is evidently a need for improved training and professionalisation of those working in online child sexual abuse investigations, notably the absence of a nationally accredited framework and variability in expertise across forces. While local inspection

findings do not explicitly identify a lack of training provision, the variability in investigative quality suggests that capability is not yet consistent across the force. This reinforces the importance of ensuring that training, accreditation and ongoing professional development are prioritised both nationally and here in LLR.

There are further areas of positive practice within Leicestershire that should be maintained and strengthened. Preventative activity which includes awareness campaigns, targeted interventions during County Lines Intensification Weeks, and broader safeguarding initiatives, reflects an understanding that prevention, early intervention and education are essential in carrying out an effective response to online harm. The Pol-Ed programme plays a central role in this preventative landscape, providing schools with expertly designed educational resources that build awareness of risk, citizenship and the law. Its materials address priority policing areas such as sexual violence and harassment, child-on-child abuse, grooming and young people's perceptions of the police. These resources support early intervention by equipping young people with the knowledge and confidence to recognise and report harmful behaviour.

This preventative work is further supported by the LLR Prevention Strategy 2025–2029, the Serious Violence Prevention Strategy (2023–2028) and the Police and Crime Plan, all of which highlight the importance of early intervention, targeted prevention, community resilience and the reduction of vulnerability. Together, these strategies reinforce the need for a whole-system approach that combines enforcement with education, safeguarding and long-term prevention. I will continue to support investment in these preventative approaches, ensuring they are matched by strong investigative fundamentals.

I do, however, acknowledge that further improvements are required. The inspection highlights several areas where greater consistency and clearer and stronger supervisory direction are needed, and I take these findings seriously.

Many of the themes identified nationally are evident within Leicestershire Police, particularly in relation to investigative consistency and supervisory oversight. Local inspection findings have shown that 'supervision has not always ensured that investigations are progressed with the necessary pace or direction,' and that safeguarding opportunities have at times been missed. The alignment between national and local findings is significant, as it demonstrates issues identified in Leicestershire are neither isolated nor incidental. Instead, they reflect weaknesses that are also evident across policing nationally, particularly in relation to supervision, investigative consistency and risk management. As a result, these issues have a direct impact on the force's overall effectiveness in responding to online child sexual abuse.

Furthermore, effectiveness cannot rely on periodic large-scale operations. While proactive operations are often delivered to a high standard, routine investigative practice does not yet demonstrate the same level of consistency. Cases too often progress slowly and without sufficient supervisory direction. My expectation is that the discipline, structure and clarity of purpose seen in major operations become embedded across all investigations. I will be asking the Chief Constable to set out how this will be achieved, including clearer supervisory standards and regular auditing of compliance.

Delays in investigative timeliness stem not only from capability but from volume, prioritisation and inconsistent day-to-day practice, something that was also highlighted within the Leicestershire 2023–2025 PEEL inspections. The national findings show that without effective triage and risk-based prioritisation, even well-resourced digital forensic units can become overwhelmed. Although Leicestershire is not currently experiencing a backlog, this does not lessen the need for continued and sustained focus. As your report notes, ‘effectiveness cannot rely on periodic large-scale operations alone,’ and the standards seen in major operations must become the norm across all investigative activity.

The management of registered sex offenders also requires continued and deliberate attention. National concerns around the consistency of risk assessment, the strength of oversight and the alignment between offender management and investigative activity are reflected locally. While multi-agency structures are well established, inspection evidence indicates that the application of risk assessment and the quality of recording are not yet as consistent as they need to be. As the report states, ‘This is not a question of framework, but of practice.’ Strengthening supervisory insight and ensuring that risk is actively and regularly reassessed will form a key part of my ongoing scrutiny.

I will ensure that the Chief Constable is held to account for delivering improvements in these areas, and for embedding the standards of pace, supervision and consistency that the public rightly expect.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'OBryan', with a large circular mark at the beginning.

Oliver Bryan,

Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland