

<b>Report title:</b> Professionalism, Trust and Confidence in Essex Police	
<b>Report to:</b> Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel – Ethics and Integrity Sub-Committee	
<b>Report author:</b> Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner	
<b>Date:</b> 20 September 2023	<b>For:</b> Noting
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<b>County Divisions affected:</b> All Essex	

### 1. Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to summarise for members of the Ethics and Integrity Sub-Committee the key findings of Baroness Casey’s independent review into the standards of behaviour and internal culture of the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), and how these are being responded to in Essex.

### 2. Recommendations

The Ethics and Integrity Sub-Committee is invited to note the contents of the report, identifying any areas that require further clarification or comment.

### 3. Context / Summary

In October 2021, following the rape and murder of Sarah Everard the previous March by a serving Metropolitan Police Officer, along with various other high-profile incidents, the then Home Secretary commissioned Baroness Louise Casey to examine the force’s culture and operations. Casey’s review found significant and widespread cultural and organisational failings and echoed the findings of racism and discrimination in previous reports. The review team also found institutional sexism, misogyny and homophobia in plain sight, along with systemic failings in the way the service is run and its ability to protect and serve Londoners. Among other things, the review concluded that:

- Whilst there has been improvement in the gender mix and ethnic diversity of officers, the MPS has not done enough to make its workforce reflect and represent the community it polices, particularly at the higher ranks.
- There is widespread bullying within the MPS, particularly of those with protected characteristics. Nearly a quarter of staff and officers (22%) reported

experiencing bullying. This had been experienced more acutely by women and those who were LGBTQ+, disabled or from ethnic minorities.

- 46% of black and 33% of Asian officers and staff told the review they had personally experienced racism at work. Casey described ethnic minority officers as being “doubly isolated: Isolated at work by virtue of their colour; and isolated in their community by virtue of having joined the Met.” Black and Asian officers and staff leave the organisation at a faster rate and were far more likely than their White colleagues to raise a grievance.
- Black officers and staff were 81% more likely to be subject to a misconduct case than their white counterparts, while Asian officers and staff were 55% more likely, and Regulation 13 notices (which are served on officers deemed to be “unsuitable for policing”) are disproportionately served on black, Asian and ethnic minority probationers. Allegations against black and Asian officers and staff were more likely to result in a “case to answer” decision than those against their white counterparts.
- Within the community, force is used much more widely on black Londoners than on other groups, and Casey concluded that the MPS “under-protects and over-polices” black Londoners.
- Female recruits resign at four times the rate of all probationers, with over a third (36%) of female probationers resigning in 2020/21 and 2021/22. A third of the women surveyed by the review team reported that they had personally experienced sexism at work, with 12% reporting directly experiencing sexual harassment or assault. Allegations relating to sexual misconduct and other discriminatory behaviours are less likely than other misconduct allegations to result in a “case to answer” decision. The proportion of domestic abuse allegations resulting in a “case to answer” decision is also substantially lower than for all case types.
- The MPS has “a systematically biased misconduct system”. Concerns raised through misconduct and complaints processes are not well recorded and are more likely to be dismissed than acted upon. The prevailing culture in the MPS does not encourage reporting of wrongdoing; rather those who experience it fear being ostracised, moved or removed for speaking out. This has meant that patterns of behaviour and escalating incidents which are the hallmarks of predatory behaviour have not been identified.
- Recruitment and vetting systems are poor and fail to guard against those who seek positions of power in order to abuse them.
- The MPS does not make ethical standards sufficiently clear, does not ensure that staff and officers adhere to them, and has not demonstrated clear consequences for those who do not. In particular, the MPS is not clear about what constitutes gross misconduct and what will be done about it.
- The MPS sees scrutiny as an intrusion. It has held the Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) at arms-length, and not shared information and data with it, whilst MOPAC has not provided the strategic oversight function that governance of the MPS requires. Similarly, internal audit is viewed by the force

as a process to get through rather than as an assurance function that can be used to drive improvement.

As a result of all this, public trust and confidence in the MPS has fallen to its lowest ever point, particularly amongst black and ethnic minority groups.

The review found deep seated cultures that need to be tackled if the MPS is to affect sustainable change, including:

- Too much hubris and too little humility –A “we know best” attitude means that, too often, the MPS acts in its own self-interest rather than in the interests of the communities it serves.
- Defensiveness and denial – A cultural shift is required for the MPS to become a reflective and learning organisation that invites scrutiny, challenge and assurance. Currently, an aversion to accepting criticism means that the organisation has not acknowledged or learnt from its mistakes. Racist, misogynistic, homophobic and other discriminatory behaviour has been tolerated, ignored or dismissed as “banter”.
- An optimism bias, which blames individual “bad apples” rather than identifying and addressing systemic issues. Its processes do not effectively root out bad officers, help to tackle mediocre officers, or truly support and develop good officers. The absence of basic management practices and supervision has created a culture in which poor practice is tolerated and those who work hard are not recognised.
- Elitism – Valuing and prioritising specialist units whilst deprioritising neighbourhood policing and public protection has meant that staff in Borough Command Units (BCUs) report lower levels of satisfaction than those who work in other areas, and that staff turnover is significantly higher in the BCUs than in other commands. As well as generating a sense of elitism within some parts of the service, this has reduced levels of experience and knowledge within the BCUs and has weakened connections with long-established communities.

Whilst the focus has been on the MPS and its response to Casey’s report, it has necessarily affected all police forces. Casey’s observations of the dysfunctional relationship that had developed between MOPAC and the MPS also have implications for other police and crime commissioners and their electoral mandate and role in holding their Chief Constables to account.

In Essex, the Chief Constable has adopted the approach of acknowledging the report and its findings, taking the time to understand the strengths and weaknesses within the force by listening to colleagues and stakeholders, and then communicating the findings and next steps. Casey’s report and the extent of its applicability to Essex has been the subject of discussion within the PFCC’s Senior Management Team (SMT), the Chief Constable’s Chief Officer Group (COG) and Senior Leadership Team (SLT). The Chief Constable and Deputy Chief Constable have engaged directly with the Chairs of the Independent Advisory Groups (IAGs), staff support networks and unions. Relevant data sources have also been considered.

In May 2023, the force hosted a Professionalism, Trust and Confidence Conference for the force’s most senior levels of leadership - which was also attended by

representatives of the PFCC, IAGs and other “critical friends” - to examine, check and challenge the emerging findings. This was followed up by further work and action planning within individual commands.

The report attached at Appendix 1 summarises the findings of all the work undertaken in this regard by Essex Police. Overall, the report concludes that Essex Police does not face the same gravity of challenge identified by Casey, but it still has work to do.

The report identifies many areas of strength, including:

- Essex Police staff and officers have the highest rate of job satisfaction across all forces surveyed by Durham University.
- Staff and officers spoke positively about the local strategy and vision (which is also supported by strong findings from the most recent staff survey results<sup>1</sup>) and recognised that there are strong and positive relationships between the force and the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner’s office.
- The Essex Police workforce generally experiences high levels of inclusivity within their work teams, supported by a culture of valuing individuals and respecting their differences.
- Essex Police has doubled the ethnic diversity of the force in three years, and gender diversity has also improved, with the proportion of female officers being the highest ever on record. However, it still has some way to go to be truly representative of both.
- Whereas Casey found a lack of confidence among black and female members of the community in London, the opposite can be found in Essex, where confidence among ethnic minority groups and females is increasing and, in some cases, higher than amongst white or male groups. 79% of ‘non-white’ respondents report having confidence in Essex Police, compared to 75% of white respondents. 76% of females report having confidence in Essex Police compared to 74% of males<sup>2</sup>. In addition, while only half of black Londoners are confident in the MPS’s ability to reduce or prevent crime, non-White British and Irish respondents surveyed in Essex are more likely than White British respondents to agree that Essex Police is dealing with crime and ASB in their area. Whilst Casey found black Londoners to be less confident than white Londoners in being treated fairly by the MPS if they reported a crime, non-White British and Irish respondents in Essex are more confident of receiving a good service if they reported a crime or incident than their white British and Irish counterparts. These are sentiments that were repeated by our IAG representatives, meaning we can be confident in their reliability.
- Essex Police follows strict processes for assessing the suitability of applicants wishing to join the force, and in 2022 rejected 119 individuals at the vetting stage, meaning that those with concerning backgrounds or behaviours were denied entry into our force.
- The force’s communications around acceptable standards of behaviour and the need to overcome prejudice are regarded by the workforce as being clear.
- The workforce reports high levels of ethical leadership from line managers across the force and the positive impact this has on team inclusivity.
- Contrary to what Casey found in London, Essex Police has significantly

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<sup>1</sup> Essex Police staff were found to have the highest level of vision clarity than all other forces surveyed.

<sup>2</sup> Public Views and Experience of Policing and Criminal Justice in Essex Q3 2022/23 Survey Results.

enhanced the officer resources allocated to areas such as child abuse, adult abuse, offender management, and mental health. A proactive order enforcement team was introduced in 2022, and the force's domestic abuse capabilities have grown.

Despite these areas of strength however, the report also acknowledges that:

- Discrimination exists for some of the Essex Police workforce - although we may struggle to see and hear it - and we could use data more effectively to understand this. Our challenge now is ensuring we hear about all discrimination within the force so that we are in a position to address it and support our workforce effectively.
- There is less disproportionality in Essex than in London in relation to the use of stop and search, but there is more to do to meet our aspirations of removing disparity in line with the force's Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Strategy. Although an internal audit found reasonable assurance that stop and search is used in a proportionate and legitimate manner, and of the engagement that the force has with communities to provide assurance on those activities, individuals in Essex who self-identify as black are 2.6 times more likely to be stopped than white individuals<sup>3</sup>, which is slightly lower than the figure of 3.5 for the MPS<sup>4</sup>.
- Ethnic minority individuals are just over 1.5 times more likely to be arrested than white individuals, rising to 2.3 times more likely for black individuals.
- The proportion of individuals who have been subject to the use of force also continues to be higher for ethnic minorities compared to the rest of the community in Essex. During 2022/23, 9.3% of subjects were recorded as black, which is 5.9 percentage points above the 3.4% black resident population in Essex.
- The Essex Police workforce reported similar frustrations to those felt in the MPS about resourcing levels and the impact this is having on their ability to deliver the service they aspire to, particularly within local and community policing teams. Whilst we can be reassured by the positive views of our IAGs, and by our robust governance and decision-making around resourcing and deployment, we must not lose sight of the impact of those decisions on community understanding and confidence.
- Similar to what Baroness Casey found in the MPS, the focus in Essex on police officer numbers has led to high vacancy levels being held in police staff posts (at 13% compared to 1.8% for police officer posts), which has impacted the support those teams can give both to the front line and to the force more broadly. This is particularly noticeable in specialist roles (e.g. analysis, IT, and project management) where we face additional challenges from industry competition. As the national Police Uplift Programme (PUP) winds down, we anticipate that this disparity will begin to be addressed.
- There is a perception within Essex that experience is more valued in specialist commands than in local and community policing teams, leading to high levels of turnover in those teams compared to the longer retention of officers in specialist commands. This perceived loss of experience on the front line is felt to be impacting the force's connection with the community. Concerns were

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<sup>3</sup> Stop and search data Q3 2022-23

<sup>4</sup> Note that the figure for the MPS uses population data preceding the 2021 census data.

raised about the relative inexperience among sergeant ranks as a consequence of being newer in service, and therefore the lack of organisational and operational awareness to drive high standards.

In light of these findings, the force has identified a number of future risks, challenges and opportunities including:

- Ensuring that it can consolidate and understand feedback about discrimination more effectively, and access and utilise relevant data routinely and effectively.
- Improving the confidence of the whole workforce to report grievances and misconduct, and trust that these processes will resolve them effectively and in a timely manner.
- With approximately 40% of the workforce having less than five years' service, future leaders will be less experienced. This may mean that behaviours and actions that fall short of the expected standards occur more frequently. The force must therefore ensure that sufficient training and support is available to help first line managers succeed in supporting their young-in-service officers.

The force has identified five key recurring themes within its findings:

1. Use of data and information - The importance of improving our use of data and information to understand fully our current and future challenges and make informed decisions.
2. Maximising employee feedback - A more dynamic and frequent approach to gathering staff feedback would complement other data and information in helping the force to understand how effectively it is delivering policing, as well as the employee experience.
3. Supporting our leaders, especially first line managers.
4. Learning lessons - There was a strong sense that there is a time-limited opportunity to be seen to learn from Casey's findings, and to use this opportunity to enhance our 'brand' as Essex Police, and to contribute to re-building the policing brand across England and Wales.
5. Understanding our business - Whilst we already do well in this area, we need to maintain a tight understanding of how demand management, governance, and business processes interact across the organisation, which will support us in effective and adaptable decision making and drawing out efficiencies across the organisation.

The progress made in addressing these areas will be reviewed at a second Senior Leadership Team (SLT) seminar in November 2023.

Following consideration of the report, the PFCC's Senior Management Team has also agreed several actions arising from the learning, including:

- Continuing to receive and scrutinise regular progress reports on the implementation of the force's Professionalism Strategy via the PFCC's Performance and Resources Board.
- Continuing to scrutinise the results of the independent victim satisfaction and

public confidence survey on a quarterly basis.

- Scrutinising the results of the latest Essex Police staff survey.
- Continuing to receive and scrutinise a quarterly report from HR (covering recruitment, retention and turnover, sickness and attendance management and staff performance), including through the lens of the findings of the Casey Review.
- Through budget setting and monitoring, as well as scrutiny of the regular HR and Force Growth Programme reports, ensuring a full understanding and proper scrutiny of the level of deployable resources available to the force and how they are deployed.
- Continuing to meet quarterly with the Professional Standards Directorate to understand fully the themes arising from complaints and misconduct cases and how these are being addressed.

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Professionalism, Trust and Confidence in Essex Police