



**POLICE & CRIME
COMMISSIONER**
for Leicester,
Leicestershire & Rutland

Your Communities - Your Commissioner

Date: 28th April 2023

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 Mr Wilsher,

I write to you on behalf of the Police and Crime Commissioner Rupert Matthews, in response to your inspection of how well the police tackle serious youth violence, published on 2nd March 2023.

I found the report an interesting read for a number of reasons. I was disappointed to learn for example that Outcome 22 persists as an issue across the force's inspected, with officers continuing to be evidently unclear on their understanding of this power. I will ensure this is followed up with the Chief Constable in Leicestershire. I was also interested to learn about the issues faced by school liaison officers in terms of resistance from schools, and capacity to reach young people effectively across large counties. As part of Mr Matthew's police and crime plan, we strongly believe that there are many positive, long term benefits by having police officers engage with young people from an early age, which is why the PCC launched the mini-police programme in Leicestershire, and also endorsed a team of school liaison officers who have an active role with young people in our communities. I believe positive experiences with local police forces at a young age can deter young people from crime, and enhance trust and confidence between the police and young people in their communities. I am pleased to say that the Violence Reduction Network (VRN) has recently commissioned an independent evaluation to assess the impact of school liaison officers which I look forward to receiving in light of your report.

As mentioned in your report, section 8 of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 introduces the serious violence duty, which legally requires police and partner organisations to collaborate to analyse serious violence in their areas and respond to it with a coordinated approach.

During his tenure, the PCC in conjunction with the Home Office, has continued to provide funding for the VRN who have been working alongside Leicestershire Police since 2019. During this time, they have provided immeasurable support to the police force who have utilised this network effectively to reduce serious violence across the county and have recently received the highest rating of 'mature, examples of good practice' which reflects the very positive progress this approach has on young people. Around the same time of the establishment of the VRN, Leicestershire Police also received Surge funding to provide additional resource for suppressing violence – funding that the VRN has secured continuously since. In conjunction, these resources allow for the development of a comprehensive, data driven and evidence-based response to violence affecting young people locally.



The VRN in Leicestershire is not police-led, but importantly the police are a committed and active partner, having worked closely with the Director and multi-disciplinary team since the establishment of the network. The VRN initially involved the secondment of a Detective Inspector but has since largely collaborated with Leicestershire Police's Violence and Complex Crime Unit (VCCU) which involves officers at a number of levels such as Chief and Senior Officer level and has developed a Children & Young Person's strategy in line with the child centred policing framework.

A large part of why Leicestershire's VRN is so well-regarded is that it is a broad, inclusive partnership which works at a system level and includes membership beyond the statutory sector, such as senior officers from Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations, and a dedicated Community and Young Person Involvement Officer. These voices allow for meaningful input from individuals who have a comprehensive knowledge on issues faced in their areas and ensure the VRNs work is with and for communities. For example, the VRN and VCCU undertake street-based outreach, among much other work, which utilises street-based community navigators within hotspots to divert people away from criminality and address underlying vulnerabilities.

As highlighted in your report, collaboration between partner organisations and a coordinated response is essential for effectively reducing youth offending. One finding within your report notes that strategic analysis is not informing day to day practice, however I am pleased to report that the VRN in Leicestershire are an excellent exception to this finding. The VRN have secured data sharing protocols across the partnership such as police, health, social care, education data, probation and youth justice which provides a rich source of data for identifying risks and issues across the board. Alongside an annual strategic need's assessment, the team have also designed a successful multi-agency Power BI dashboard which can be directly accessed by all partners. As a result of this work, local data products drive all work undertaken locally and the police have played a central role in this, collaborating with the VRN and inclusive partners for hot-spot mapping and wider problem-solving work.

Furthermore, the VRN has partnered with Barnardo's for the past 18 months to deliver comprehensive trauma-informed training offered to all partners, including community-based organisations. All members of our office are under-taking the training, and it has also been well received by Leicestershire Police who have implemented it into their learning and development programme - this training is invaluable for understanding behaviours in young people and how experiences could affect an individual's perception of the police, and other authorities.

Within the OPCC, the Commissioner has been regularly involved in visiting schools and gaining a first-person scope on the requirements and impact the school liaison officers have in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. The OPCC has also provided funding to Warning Zone since 2018, a service which is dedicated to teaching life-skills and safeguarding children, equipping young people with the knowledge that they are responsible for their actions, behaviours and decisions.



Please be assured that regardless of Leicestershire's position on a number of the findings, all recommendations highlighted in your report will be presented to the Chief Constable, and the Commissioner and I will ensure to get a response on every aspect and monitor these commitments closely.

Yours sincerely,

Rani Mahal
Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland