



Mr Roy Wilsher OBE QFSM
HM Inspector of Constabulary
His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Service
6th Floor – Globe House
89 Eccleston Square
London
SW1V 1PN

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HMICFRS – Improving the response to organised immigration crime

I write in respect of the recently published findings from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) following your inspection report into improving the response to organised immigration crime and have carefully studied the constructive recommendations contained within.

I recognise the comments made in the report that *"despite the efforts of successive governments to prioritise and tackle organised immigration crime, it remains a serious and persistent problem for the United Kingdom (UK)."*

HMICFRS found that organised immigration crime poses unique challenges for the police and other law enforcement agencies in terms of identifying and tackling the organised criminals who make possible illegal immigration, with many opportunities to address these crimes currently being missed.

The report also highlighted that the number of activities undertaken by UK law enforcement agencies to disrupt organised immigration crime groups has increased substantially since 2021, although I note that there were *"very few examples of forces and regional organised crime units proactively targeting these criminals."* I share the views expressed by HMICFRS in the report that whilst the response of law enforcement agencies has improved in recent years, more needs to be done to realise the Government priority to reduce illegal migration.

I was disappointed to note that the inspectorate found that the agencies involved in tackling organised immigration crime cannot always share intelligence with each other as effectively as they need to, including a lack of access to the Police National Database and automated facial-recognition technology to support the routine comparison of migrants within the custody and crime scene facial imagery it holds. It is imperative that these agencies have access to the systems and technology required to strengthen the collective response to organised immigration crime locally, regionally and nationally.

I know from my discussions with Chief Constable Shiner that Sussex Police is continuing to work closely with the National Crime Agency (NCA), UK Border Force, His Majesty's Coastguard and Home Office to respond to any potential threat to the borders of Sussex from air, land or sea. This has included the development of specific plans to respond to any potential threat to the ports, harbours, marinas and beaches along the [approximately] 140 miles of coastline in Sussex – from Chichester Harbour to Camber Sands.




Sussex Police support Project Kraken – a joint initiative delivered by the NCA, Border Force and police force areas in England and Wales – which aims to increase public reporting of unusual or suspicious activity near the coastline and strengthen the general maritime industry's response to these threats. The Force has simplified reporting channels to make it easier for people across the country who live or work near the coastline and waterways, or who take part in water-based activities, to contact them directly or to report these concerns to Crimestoppers anonymously. Further information can be viewed through the following link: <https://www.sussex.police.uk/advice/advice-and-information/wsi/watch-schemes-initiatives/pk/project-kraken/>

I plan to discuss the report and the Sussex Police response to organised immigration crime with Chief Constable Shiner at my weekly catch up meeting, alongside some of the more specific findings contained within the four areas of the inspection report. This will include looking at the governance and direction; initial response, information and intelligence; enforcing the law and disrupting the activities of organised immigration crime groups, and organisational learning, including training officers and staff.

I will also ask the Chief Constable to provide me with an update regarding the assessment of and progress made against each of the four recommendations specifically identified for chief constables in the report [recommendations 2, 4, 8 and 9]. This will include discussions about how Sussex Police can improve its processes for migrant identification and intelligence gathering, alongside maximising opportunities to investigate and disrupt identified organised crime groups to address each of the recommendations within the prescribed timescales.

I am confident that the implementation of these recommendations will contribute towards improvements in how organised crime groups are identified and tackled which should, ultimately, result in fewer lives being lost entering the UK in extraordinarily dangerous ways.

In my role as Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner, I will continue to hold the Chief Constable to account for the performance of the Force in this area to ensure that the police and other law enforcement agencies take all opportunities to investigate and disrupt identified organised crime groups and their associated organised immigration crimes and offences. This position is essential to maintain the trust, confidence and support of local communities in the collective abilities of law enforcement agencies to respond effectively.

Yours sincerely


Katy Bourne OBE
Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner