

23<sup>rd</sup> September 2020

Dear Sir/Madam,

Some of you may be aware of posts circulating on social media relating to concerns about people acting suspiciously around children, especially in the South of our county. As you will know, posts on social media can be widely shared and quickly reach a large number of people, and Essex Police is aware of the escalating concern among members of our community.

As a parent myself, I completely understand why people are anxious, and I am therefore writing to you to offer some clarity on the situation as we currently understand it.

At this time, no criminal offences have been reported to Essex Police relating to these issues. We have received some reports relating to suspicious behaviour, and a number of calls where people have seen posts on social media and want to understand more information.

In addition to matters that are directly reported to us, our intelligence teams review social media platforms on a daily basis. There is no link between the locations, descriptions of people or the actions being reported, and based on the intelligence picture we have currently, we do not believe there to be a risk to the general public. Any threat assessment is dynamic and will be continuously reviewed on receipt of new information.

My requests of you are as follows -

- If you have a concern about a person behaving suspiciously, please report it to police as soon as possible with as much detail as you can. The sooner it is reported, the greater the chance is that we will be able to get officers to the location while the person is still there to investigate
- Please take the usual safety precautions that you ordinarily would with your child (i.e be clear on how they are travelling home, when they should arrive, what they should do if they are approached by someone they don't know etc)
- Please be assured that Essex Police will absolutely prioritise the safety of children and our wider community, and will robustly investigate any offences that are reported to us
- Please do understand that not everything that is reported to us or observed on social media will necessarily amount to a criminal offence that can be pursued
- Be aware that we have dedicated teams who specialise in safeguarding and risk management
- Try and resist sharing or commenting on social media posts if you are unaware of the accuracy of them- there is a possibility of putting people at risk who have not committed any offences

Yours Sincerely,

Superintendent Bonnie Moore  
Operations, South Local Policing Area