

Date: 05 June 2026
Enquiries to: Michael Hadwen
Email: Michael.Hadwen@suffolk.gov.uk



Chief Constable Rachel Kearton
Via email.

Dear Chief Constable,

We are writing following the appalling circumstances of the Henry Nowak case and the body-cam video footage released by Hampshire Police.

No person of conscience could watch those deeply distressing images without feeling profound shock and outrage at what they show. They are shocking not simply because of the unimaginable suffering Henry experienced, but because they raise the most serious questions about the judgement, priorities and the response given by the police to a person clearly in need of help.

The fact that any police officer could place a higher priority on responding to an allegation of racism than on providing immediate, life-saving medical assistance is utterly abhorrent to me, to my Cabinet colleagues and to many people across our county.

As Suffolk County Council's Cabinet, we believe we have a duty to speak plainly on matters of public safety and public confidence. Our residents must be able to trust that, in Suffolk, when somebody is in clear medical need or at immediate risk, the response of public authorities, including the police, will be guided first and foremost by the preservation of life, the protection of wellbeing and the exercise of sound professional judgement.

It is shocking that recent events make it necessary to state this explicitly, but we do so for the avoidance of any doubt: we must be assured that personal characteristics, including the colour of someone's skin, will never influence the nature, timeliness or quality of the help they receive.

We are therefore compelled to seek your clear and unequivocal assurance that nothing resembling the clear failures now under investigation in Hampshire could ever happen here in Suffolk.

That leads directly to our concerns about police training, and whether every aspect of training given to officers supports clear, impartial and confident decision-making in critical situations.

We fully recognise the pressures under which police officers work, and we do not underestimate the complexity of operational policing. However, precisely because policing is difficult, training must be unambiguous in its purpose. It must help officers to act decisively where there is a risk to life. It must strengthen professional judgement, not complicate it. It must direct officers towards the immediate protection of the vulnerable, not create doubt, hesitation or competing priorities at the point of crisis.

It must also reinforce that everyone is treated equally under the law.

We are therefore seeking cast-iron assurance from you that all training provided within Suffolk Constabulary, including training relating to equality, diversity and race awareness, is subordinate to and fully consistent with the overriding duty of officers to protect life, safeguard the vulnerable and respond to urgent need without delay.

We would also welcome your assurance regarding guidance referenced from the National Police Chiefs' Council, issued following the murder of George Floyd in the United States, which promoted the view that racial equality "does not mean treating everyone the same" or being "colour blind".

Given the strength of public concern on this issue, we believe there must now be absolute clarity. We are therefore asking you to confirm that this concept has been fully rejected within Suffolk Constabulary, and that it has been clearly and formally withdrawn from operational interpretation.

Further, we ask you to confirm that all officers are consistently instructed that the law must be applied fairly, consistently and equally, and that every individual should receive the same standard of service and protection, regardless of the colour of their skin or the religion they follow.

In particular, we would welcome your assurance that training consistently and explicitly reinforces:

- threat to life assessment and immediate intervention
- domestic abuse and stalking risk assessment
- intelligence handling and escalation procedures
- supervisory challenge and sound decision making
- victim safeguarding and rapid intervention

These are not secondary matters. They are the core disciplines that prevent avoidable harm and uphold public trust. We would be deeply concerned if any non-statutory training content, however well intentioned, had the effect of displacing, diluting or confusing these operational fundamentals.

At heart, this is about fairness, accountability and the standards the public are entitled to expect.

We cannot, and will not, accept any situation in which policing is, or is perceived to be, unevenly applied. Public confidence depends upon a simple principle: the law must be applied fairly, consistently and equally, and urgent need must be met with urgency regardless of who is involved. No person should receive preferential treatment, and no person should receive a lesser standard of protection. Equally, no officer should feel inhibited from acting to protect life because of concern about how that action may later be interpreted through a political or ideological lens.

An accusation of racism, however serious, cannot be allowed to override or delay the response owed to someone who may be in urgent medical need. The immediate duty to preserve life must come first. It is the minimum standard the public would expect, and rightly so.

I know you will agree with me that this is an issue of profound public importance. It goes to the heart of confidence in policing, confidence in fairness, and confidence that all communities are protected under the same law and to the same standard. We would therefore be grateful for your response as a matter of urgency, and we would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further with you, the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Police and Crime Panel at the earliest opportunity.

Yours sincerely,



Cllr Michael Hadwen
Leader of Suffolk County Council

Philip Faircloth-Mutton
Cllr Philip Faircloth-Mutton
Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care

Simon Alder

Cllr Simon Alder

Cabinet Member for Children and Young People



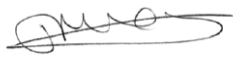
Cllr Vicky Armstrong

Cabinet Member for Finance, Economic Development and Efficiency

Morgan Brobyn

Cllr Morgan Brobyn

Cabinet Member for Food, Waste and Rural Affairs



Cllr Tristan Gale

Cabinet Member for Planning, Devolution and the Fire Service

Tony Gould

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Cabinet Member for Education and SEND

Christopher Hudson

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Cabinet Member for Transport and Highways



Cllr June Mummery

Cabinet Member for Coastal Affairs, Communities and Public Health