

Report to Police & Crime Panel PEEL 2023-25: An inspection of Hertfordshire Constabulary

Report of: Police & Crime Commissioner
Contact officer: Gavin Miles, Deputy Chief Executive, gavin.miles@herts-pcc.gov.uk

Summary

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services published their 2023-25 PEEL (Police Efficiency, Effectiveness & Legitimacy) inspection of Hertfordshire Constabulary on 16th October 2024.

The fieldwork for the inspection took place between December 2023 and June 2024.

Hertfordshire Constabulary was graded in nine inspection areas as follows:

Outstanding	Good	Adequate	Requires improvement	Inadequate
	Preventing crime	Police powers and public treatment	Responding to the public	Recording data about crime
		Managing offenders	Investigating crime	
		Developing a positive workplace	Protecting vulnerable people	
			Leadership and force management	

HMICFRS also inspected how effective a service the Constabulary gives to victims of crime but don't make a graded judgement for this area.

The previous inspection for PEEL 2021-22 which was published in February 2023 was graded 2x Good, 5x Adequate and 1x Requires Improvement.

The full report can be found at the following link:

[PEEL 2023–25: Police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy – An inspection of Hertfordshire Constabulary](#)

HM Inspector's summary is attached at Appendix A.

Commissioner's initial response

The inspection report provides the PCC with a useful external assessment of how the Constabulary is performing early in his term of office. The PCC will use the report as part of his holding to account role and in his strategic work on the Police & Crime Plan and budget setting.

There are clearly sections of the report which are a concern and where the PCC wants to see improvements made at pace. Prior to the publication of the report, the PCC had already been scrutinising the Constabulary's performance in a number of areas identified by HMICFRS

through his public Accountability & Performance Meetings and wider governance arrangements the PCC has put in place. These include responding to the public, safeguarding and protective powers, the approach to investigations and protecting vulnerable people.

The Constabulary is working to make improvements, and this is already visible in crime recording data being shared with the PCC, but there is significant work ahead. This will include a return visit of HMICFRS early next year to review progress on crime recording. The PCC and Chief Constable have agreed that, prior to this return visit, the Constabulary will seek a peer review of crime recording practices from a police force currently graded as Outstanding in this area.

The report also reflects areas of positive performance, particularly in preventing and deterring crime, the use of police powers and maintaining a strong neighbourhood policing model. HMICFRS has also identified areas of promising and innovative practice in areas such as improving court attendance by suspects, knife crime prevention work with young people, the Chrysalis Centre's work on domestic abuse perpetrators and the referral processes in place when adults with Alzheimer's or dementia go missing.

Next steps

The PCC will share a verbal update and his reflections on the HMICFRS report at the Panel's meeting.

The HMICFRS report and the Constabulary's response will be a single agenda item for the PCC's Accountability & Performance Meeting scheduled with the Chief Constable for 14th November. This meeting will be webcast to the public.

As the Panel would expect, the Constabulary is preparing an action plan for the Areas for Improvement and the PCC will be considering and scrutinising this in due course. The PCC is also giving careful consideration to the implications of the inspection findings for the Police & Crime Plan, budget setting and the work of the OPCC.

The PCC is required by legislation to provide a formal response to HMICFRS and a copy of this will be shared with the Panel when it is available.

Recommendation

The Police & Crime Panel is recommended to note the Commissioner's update on the HMICFRS inspection and make any observations

Appendix A – HM Inspector’s summary

I have concerns about the performance of Hertfordshire Constabulary in keeping people safe, reducing crime and providing victims with an effective service. I have serious concerns about crime data integrity. In view of these findings, I have been in contact with the chief constable, as I don’t underestimate how much improvement is needed.

Hertfordshire Constabulary is good at preventing crime. Since our last inspection, and for the first time in at least ten years, it has reviewed its structure and processes. The review resulted in little change. But some elements of the operating model don’t provide an efficient and effective service. At the time of our inspection, the constabulary was doing more detailed work in relation to its safeguarding specialisms. This has delayed its ability to understand what changes it could make to safeguard its communities.

I have some concerns about how the constabulary investigates crime. I am concerned that it doesn’t always investigate crime thoroughly. And I am concerned that not all victims get the support they need and the most appropriate outcomes. I will continue to monitor performance in this area and consider any impact of improvements the constabulary makes to its crime recording.

In most cases, the constabulary records reasonable grounds for using stop and search. This is a significant improvement from when we last inspected. However, it needs to make sure its officers understand and record reasonable grounds for using force.

The constabulary continues to pursue its prevention first strategy. We found innovative examples of early intervention and diversionary activity. This diverts young people away from crime and reduces the harm caused by some offenders. But the constabulary needs to improve some areas, including its analysis and assessment of problem-solving.

The constabulary’s control room still has challenges in responding to the public. The constabulary isn’t answering 999 calls within the timescales set by national call handling standards. And it isn’t attending non-emergency calls within set times. But senior leaders have insight into performance data and are already addressing these issues.

The constabulary also needs to make sure that it operates effectively across all teams. Senior leaders need to get better at communicating with and listening to the workforce. This includes clear messaging about the reasons for their strategic decisions. They should consider any interdependencies in their strategic decisions, policies and processes to avoid negative consequences.

The constabulary needs to make effective use of its data systems in managing performance and workloads. This was particularly an issue in the safeguarding command. There were risks that senior leaders didn’t fully understand or know about. We alerted the constabulary to this problem during our inspection. Since then, the constabulary has started to address our concerns. I will continue to monitor how Hertfordshire Constabulary performs in this important area that keeps people safe from harm.

Roy Wilsher
HM Inspector of Constabulary