



17.05.18

Police and Crime Commissioner West Midlands response to the publication of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary's and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) report **PEEL: police effectiveness 2017 – West Midlands Police**

Overall rating for West Midlands Police	Requires Improvement
Number of recommendations	1

On 22 March 2018 HMICFRS published its PEEL police effectiveness 2017 national report and individual police force reports. Under the interim risk-based approach to inspection in 2017 West Midlands Police was assessed against 3 of the 5 PEEL effectiveness questions as set out below. For the remaining 2 questions judgements from 2016 inspections remain in place.

How effective is the force at preventing crime, tackling anti-social behaviour and keeping people safe?	Good (2016 inspection result)
How effective is the force at investigating crime and reducing re-offending?	Good (2016 inspection result)
How effective is the force at protecting those who are vulnerable from harm, and supporting victims?	Inadequate
How effective is the force at tackling serious and organised crime ?	Good
How effective are the force's specialist capabilities ?	This area is not graded, however, the report noted that WMP has the necessary arrangements in place to ensure that it can fulfil its national policing responsibilities.

Police and Crime Commissioner David Jamieson said: "The independent inspectorate identifies West Midlands Police as 'good' at crime prevention, investigation and tackling serious and organised crime. The force is rated as 'inadequate' for vulnerability. I find the final grade disappointing, but reflective of demand, a factor outside of the force's control.

"However, I am pleased at the recognition of the innovative work the force are doing to tackle gangs through injunctions.

"In the wake of unprecedented demand and terrorist incidents last year, a backlog of calls developed in the West Midlands. As an area of significant threat this was more acute in the West Midlands than many other places.

"I shone a light on this, to highlight the pressures forces like the West Midlands faced. Senior police officers are right to question why the inspection has focussed on the scale of demand rather than why it was challenging to manage, despite inspectors rightly recognising that policing is under significant stress."

Under the Policing and Crime Act 2017 PCCs must publish a response to HMICFRS reports, together with any comments submitted by the Chief Constable, with 56 days of the report being published. Where reports include recommendations the response must include an explanation of the action the PCC proposes to take in response.

The recommendation from the HMIC PEEL effectiveness 2017 report and the response from the WMP and the PCC are set out below.

The PCCs Police and Crime Plan is available at:

www.westmidlands-pcc.gov.uk/your-commissioner/police-and-crime-plan

How effective is the force at protecting those who are vulnerable from harm, and supporting victims?

Inadequate

HMICFRS's report states that WMP:

- Is good at identifying vulnerable people, including people with mental health conditions, and understanding the nature and scale of vulnerability
- Has worked hard to ensure the new call grading model is fully understood and applied by call handlers
- In the main, has good safeguarding of victims and developed effective multi-agency arrangements in relation to vulnerable people
- Has enhanced partnership working to provide a more effective service to support people with mental health conditions
- Generally investigates crimes involving vulnerable victims to a good standard and the force has taken steps to balance workloads for specialist officers across the force.

While the forces approach to missing and absent children had improved since 2016 HMICFRS said that there was still room for improvement in the way the force categorises cases as either missing or absent as well as the initial investigation of missing persons cases.

HMICFRS's report highlighted:

- There were 2,400 incidents 'open' on the command and control system at the time of inspection, following a period of exceptionally high demand
- That in a small number of cases the force response to some incidents that presented a high level of risk to victims was inadequate. In the majority of these incidents when examined by HMICFRS the level of risk to victims had not been reassessed to allow control room staff and officers to decide who needed most urgent attention
- Concerns that immediate safeguarding of victims is not always conducted in a timely manner due to a lack of resources
- That the constraints of WMP's old command and control system mean it is not always easy to identify repeat callers and the application of vulnerability and repeat victims 'flags' is inconsistent. The command and control system is due to be replaced in 2019.

Cause of concern

The force is failing to attend incidents promptly, putting some vulnerable victims at risk of harm

Recommendation

The force should immediately take steps to:

- Fully understand the risk contained within the backlog of open incidents logged by the control room, and prioritise these cases for action
- Ensure that victims – particularly those who are vulnerable – receive an appropriate response when they contact the force for safety reasons.

WMP response:

Following the HMICFRS Inspection in September 2017, immediate steps were taken to ensure that learning was implemented with a specific and relentless focus on helping our Control Room colleagues manage consistently high volumes of demand and prioritise service to the most vulnerable. At a strategic level, this focus was reflected as one of our top 4 Force Contact Ambition Plan priorities during the period September 2017 to March 2018 with the unequivocal direction that 'we will focus on the vital contribution our control rooms make to managing demand'. This focus has carried forward into the Force Contact Ambition Plan 2018/19 in that 'we will focus on helping our control rooms help the public'. More widely the West Midlands Police Ambition Plan 2018-2020 makes explicit reference to 'improving our response to calls for service, ensuring effective call handling, dispatch and investigation' as a key contributor to the theme of 'strengthening communities and growing the economy'.

At an operational level, Force Contact and wider West Midlands Police have taken steps since September 2017 to address the recommendation made and improve service to victims, as detailed below.

- 1) The Force has worked with colleagues in Control Rooms to review ways of working, and provide clarity on responsibility and accountability in the range of Control Room roles. Some minor changes to the operating model have focussed on breaking down the amount of incident logs that staff were holding into more manageable amounts. The changes to the model have meant that instead of all of the outstanding incident logs being held between 2 terminals, they are now split between 4 or 5 terminals. This means that instead of one person routinely managing in excess of 200 incident logs, terminals will now be holding between 20 and 50 incident logs at any one time. This has resulted in dispatchers being better able to review and prioritise deployment to incidents.
- 2) Doctrine was developed with colleagues and introduced for escalation of vulnerability, volume demand, and the closure of incidents. This doctrine was tested and then introduced across the three Control Rooms in November 2017. The purpose of this

doctrine is to support staff to make decisions to close incident logs and to ensure that where necessary, there is a process in place for colleagues in Control Rooms to escalate incidents that contain risk and vulnerability and where resourcing is a challenge.

- 3) In February 2018, West Midlands Police reintroduced scheduled appointments with attendance within 3 days. This means the Force can offer members of the public a morning/afternoon/evening slot on a specific date, when officers will visit and deal with their concern. This includes low risk DA incidents where a victim has requested a visit around set times e.g. while children are at school. West Midlands Police offers over 200 opportunities a day for victims to be seen by scheduled response officers drawn from a number of different West Midlands Police teams.
- 4) In March 2018, a Resolution Team pilot involving Force Contact and Response colleagues was set up. The Resolution Team help manage and prioritise all areas of demand, including Domestic Abuse and wider vulnerability. They routinely review the oldest incidents to identify opportunities to deploy appropriate officers or resolve incidents in the most effective way using Authorised Professional Practice, THRIVE+ methodology (which is the WMP risk assessment tool) and WMP doctrine both for escalation and incident closure. This team help ensure that victims of crime are being supported and opportunities to bring offenders to justice are expedited.

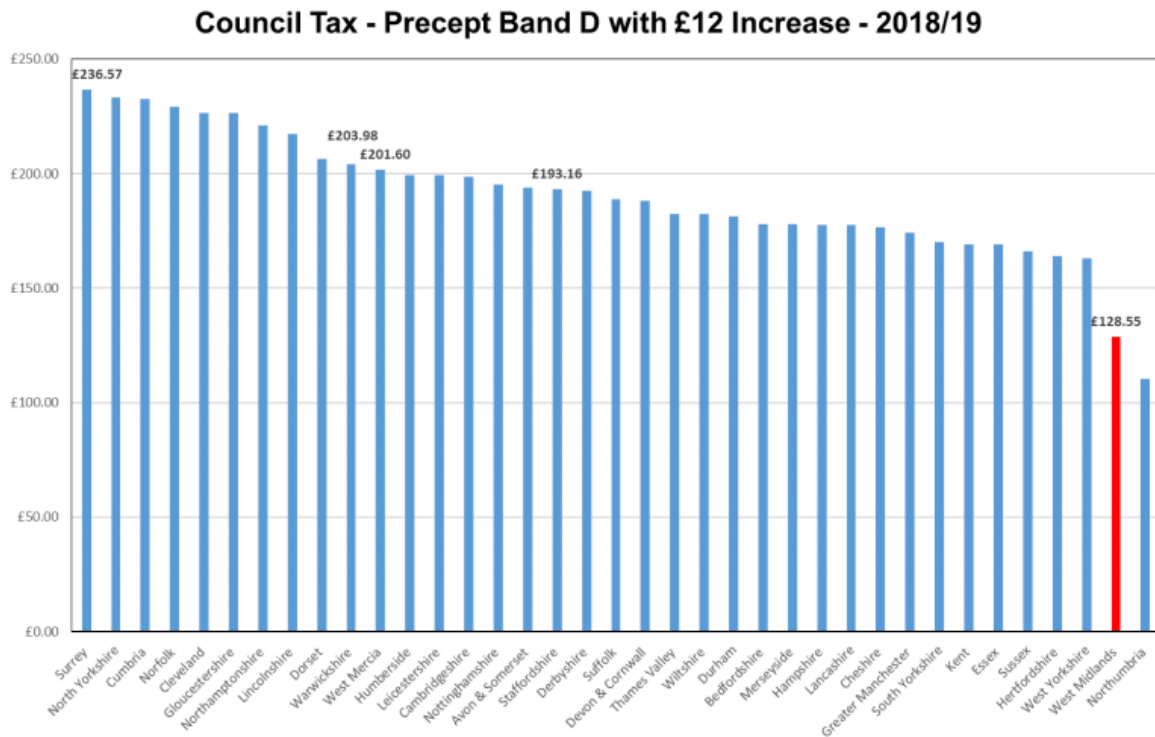
As a result, open logs have reduced and incidents involving vulnerability are prioritised effectively.

PCC response

WMP has taken immediate action to address the issues identified by HMICFRS in this inspection. I have asked my office to provide a regular update on the performance of force contact and response to myself and the members of my Strategic Policing and Crime Board, including the number of outstanding logs. This will be particularly important over periods of peak summer demand. I will also be requesting that the force report regularly on how well the doctrine introduced in November 2017 is embedded and performing.

My Strategic Policing and Crime Board helps me continue to hold WMP to account in delivering the best possible service for the people of the West Midlands. West Midlands Police dealt with 38,775 additional 999 calls in 2017/18 compared to 2016/17 and HMICFRS' Value for Money Profile shows the force receives the highest number of 999 calls per capita (232 per 1,000 population compared to the England and Wales average of 131). The profiles also show that between 2010 and 2017 the number of police officers in the West Midlands has fallen from 3.30 per 1,000 population to 2.17. This is despite raising the council tax precept by the maximum amount allowed each year.

It should be noted that the amount raised by increasing the council tax in the West Midlands brings the lowest amount per head in the country, meaning we are disadvantaged compared to other areas. The graph below shows the Council Tax precept Band D levied across all English forces for 2018/19 if all Police and Crime Commissioners had increased their precept by £12. The graph demonstrate that the precept for West Midlands is significantly lower than our nearest neighbours, both in terms of size (e.g. Greater Manchester Police) and location (Staffordshire, Warwickshire and West Mercia).



We must recognise that in periods of exceptional demand, and with ever reducing resources, an unusually high level of backlog may be unavoidable. Whilst I am sure that the Chief Constable will share my disappointment at this, we can only strive towards the continued efficient use of available resources; including to minimise backlogs and effectively manage risk held within those open logs.

I will continue to hold the force to account in this regard while continuing my campaign for fair funding for police forces to ensure funding reflects demand.