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Police and Crime Commissioner West Midlands response to the publication of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Service's (HMICFRS) report **PEEL: Police efficiency (including leadership) 2017 – an inspection of West Midlands Police**

Overall rating for West Midlands Police	Good
Number of recommendations	0

On 9 November 2017 HMICFRS published its PEEL police efficiency 2017 national report and individual police force reports. The reports form part of HMICFRSs annual inspections of police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy (PEEL) and assesses the efficiency and leadership of forces in England and Wales.

The overall aim of the efficiency inspection is to address the question:

'How efficient is the force at keeping people safe and reducing crime?'

To answer this question HMICFRS explored three 'core' questions which are set out below alongside the individual gradings for WMP.

How well does the force understand demand?	Requires improvement
How well does the force use its resources?	Good
How well is the force planning for the future?	Outstanding

Police and Crime Commissioner David Jamieson said: "This report confirms that West Midlands Police receive 74% more 999 calls than the national average.

"Despite the huge pressures the force are facing we are recognised as having a strong record of innovating and ensuring new technology is used to ensure the force is more effective.

"We are dealing with huge cuts to our budget; that is why I am constantly working to ensure we are as efficient as possible."

Under the Policing and Crime Act 2017 PCCs must publish a response to HMIC reports, together with any comments submitted by the Chief Constable, within 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.

There were no recommendations from the HMIC PEEL efficiency 2017 report, however below is a response to the three gradings and a detailed response in relation to the one Area for Improvement highlighted in the report.

The PCCs Police and Crime Plan is available at

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

How well does the force understand demand?

Requires improvement

The rating for West Midlands Police with respect to this question has slipped from 'Outstanding' to 'Requires improvement' between the 2016 and 2017 inspections. This reflects two main concerns: one in relation to crime recording and the other in relation to resourcing of the force's contact centre. A full response has been provided¹ to the issues around crime recording highlighted by the Crime Data Integrity (CDI) inspections and we continue to monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the force's CDI improvement plans. In relation to force contact HMICFRS raised the following area for improvement.

Area of Improvement

The force should ensure that it has sufficient resources available in the control room to fulfil its resourcing model, and so to meet its demand, while also taking into account the wellbeing of its workforce.

Demand

2017 has presented some extraordinary and unprecedented demands upon Force Contact (and WMP generally): 999 calls were up 12.5% compared to 2016, and the final weekend in June saw more 999 calls on each day of that weekend than we had previous had during any 24 hour period; the expected increase in summer demand for policing services considerably exceeded predicted levels; recorded crime has increased across the West Midlands, as has gun crime and other critical incidents; and WMP has supported the national efforts to protect and reassure our communities following the terrorist attacks in London and Manchester.

Despite the challenging operational environment, Force Contact has consistently answered nearly 90% of 999 calls within 10 seconds, improved its effectiveness in answering the non-emergency 101 calls from 20-30% within 30 seconds in the early summer to about 50% in recent months; whilst abandoned 999 calls have reduced to less than 1%, and abandoned 101 calls have halved in recent months.

Staffing

In October 2017, the first time in 18 months, Force Contact were at their agreed establishment level. Whilst some staff are still undergoing initial training for Contact Handling and Dispatch, they are all actively contributing to live demand as part of their training. A recruitment plan has been agreed with People and Organisational Development (POD) in order to maintain staffing levels moving forward, taking into account our anticipated attrition levels.

¹ <http://www.westmidlands-pcc.gov.uk/transparency/hmic-responses/hmic-responses-2017/pcc-response-to-hmic-cdi-inspection-2017/>

The increase in staffing levels within Contact Handling meant that Aug-Oct 2017 there had been a 22% reduction in the amount of 999 calls being answered by our Dispatch staff meaning that they are better able to support incident management and the assistance that they are able to provide to operational colleagues.

The Crime Service Team in the last few months recruited a number of new staff to bring their staffing levels up to the agreed establishment level.

A new scheduling and forecasting system has been introduced within Contact Handling. This will support us to dynamically manage incoming call demand in a much better way. It also enables our staff to see Annual Leave availability by showing how many hours are available to book off at particular times.

Several areas of Contact have been improved over the last 6 months, all of which have received in main, positive feedback amongst staff who are starting to see and feel the changes and work with their leadership team to shape the future.

Wellbeing

Early in 2017, WMP developed its People and Organisational Development (POD) strategy and began to implement new ways of supporting our staff;

- Team Specialists were recruited within POD who are subject matter experts in developing programmes, processes and frameworks in wellbeing, diversity and inclusion, performance and talent management, reward and benefits, learning and development, resourcing, employee relations and workforce planning.
- The introduction of a Business Partner who was aligned to a portfolio working as part of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) providing challenge, insight and solutions on the people agenda. This included driving change supporting WMP2020, workforce planning and recruitment, talent and performance management, communication and engagement activity and leadership development.

Force Contact and POD identified areas of improvement and implemented the following;

Brilliant Basics in Absence Management;

- Return to work interviews completed on first day of return to work. Guidelines issued including timeliness, quality, accuracy and data submission for line managers.
- Open link to the HR Advisor team on wellbeing plans and capability process; a wellbeing group has been set up and overseen by the SLT to ensure consistency and scrutiny across all areas.

Annual Leave Process reviewed (Task and Finish group initiated);

- Focussed on delivering a 24/7 365 day of the year service to the public, balanced with the wellbeing of our people with our approach to annual leave being fair, consistent, transparent, timely and professional.

Line Manager upskilling;

- All Line Managers received a toolkit and the knowledge on how to confidently tackle absence in a fair and consistent way. Removing myths and legends on the process.

Absence Pictures;

- Equipped Line Managers with the absence trending for repeat offenders to have a proactive discussions on wellbeing and reasonable adjustments.
- Link into conduct for patterns of behaviour.
- Links in with Occupational Health who will review restrictions and role suitability.

Long Term Sick;

- HR Advisor team reviewed long term sickness cases over 100 days with prognosis and support for Line Managers.
- 28 day intervention by HRA if Line Manager has not initiated a case.

PCC response

Performance of Force Contact has been considered by my Strategic Policing and Crime Board throughout 2017 and I have been championing the concerns of the West Midlands public. The latest report from the Force² set out the unprecedented and, I emphasise, unanticipated level of demand faced by the service in 2017 and the issues the Force faced in meeting the establishment level. I will continue to request regular updates from the Force about staffing and performance of Contact but also covering the wellbeing of the people in Force Contact who work incredibly hard in a very challenging environment to deliver a good service to the public. I am satisfied that Force Contact, while facing stretching levels of demand, is an efficient and well managed function, which was confirmed by HMICFRS's inspection. Similarly, work to understand and address demand, including early intervention and prevention, continues to be prioritised by my Office and the Force.

However, that HMICFRS chose to make the resourcing of the Contact function an "Area for Improvement" as part of an overall "Requires Improvement" rating for understanding demand is disappointing. HMICFRS is not only well aware of the overall WMP2020 change programme (which includes a number of projects that help the Force better and more efficiently manage business process demand, including access to police services), it is also aware of both the significant increase in policing demand in 2017 and the continued and large reductions in resources available to West Midlands Police since 2010. HMICFRS is also well aware that West Midlands Police does not receive the funding allocation the national police funding formula says it needs. I remain concerned that HMICFRS regards it as appropriate to publish an uncosted "Area for Improvement", implying that there are or should be additional resources available to allocate to a particular function, when this is simply not the case. For this then to form a significant part of an overall finding that West Midlands Police does not "understand demand" as well as it did twelve months ago is, frankly, difficult to accept, and I strongly recommend that HMICFRS reconsider its approach to such analysis.

² <http://www.westmidlands-pcc.gov.uk/media/470773/09-spcb-07-november-17-access-to-services.pdf>

How well does the force use its resources?

Good

The force has maintained its previous rating of 'Good' in relation to how it uses its resources. It is important to see that HMICFRS recognise in this report that forces have finite resources to do an increasingly complicated job. These finite resources are shrinking. The HMICFRS Value for Money profile for the West Midlands³ shows central funding reducing by 7% per head of the population between 13/14 and 17/18 and this does not take into account inflation. In real terms the cut is even more significant.

It is particularly important in these circumstances for forces to be well managed and to work with other organisations in the public sector and elsewhere to tackle crime and reduce harm. This is a priority in the Police and Crime Plan and I am pleased to read in the HMICFRS report that 'West Midlands Police continues to demonstrate a strong commitment to joint working with a range of public and private sector agencies to provide a better service to the public'.

How well is the force planning for the future?

Outstanding

I am pleased to see that the force has maintained its outstanding rating. WMP2020 is an ambitious change programme to help make West Midlands Police a force fit for the challenges of 21st Century policing. I will continue to review the implementation and benefits realisation from the programme.

³ <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/publications/west-midlands-2017-value-for-money-profile/>