



Agenda Item 06

JOINT AUDIT COMMITTEE

22 December 2021

HMICFRS UPDATE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide members of the Committee with oversight of HMICFRS Inspection activity and recommendations.

2. WEST MIDLANDS POLICE PEEL INSPECTION

The 2021 PEEL programme reviewed how good West Midlands Police (WMP) are in thirteen areas of policing. Of the thirteen areas, eleven graded judgements were made; WMP's ability to meet its obligations under the strategic policing requirement, and how well it protects the public from armed threats, were the two areas where graded judgments are not made by the Inspectorate.

The grading system used by HMICFRS in 2021 has altered from the previous four gradings of 'Outstanding, Good, Requires Improvement and Inadequate' to include a fifth category 'Adequate'. The definition of Adequate states '*The force has demonstrated some of the characteristics of good performance, but we have identified areas where the force should make improvements*'. This means direct comparisons cannot be drawn with previous PEEL reports on gradings alone.

The PEEL 2021 report has awarded the below gradings across the eleven business areas.

Outstanding	Good	Adequate	Requires improvement	Inadequate
	Preventing crime	Responding to the public	Investigating crime	
	Recording data about crime	Managing offenders	Supporting victims	
	Treatment of the public	Developing a positive workplace	Protecting vulnerable people	
	Disrupting serious organised crime			
	Good use of resources			

The report and gradings are publicly available on the [HMICFRS website](#), so we do not intend to repeat every observation made from the inspection in this paper. Instead, we will highlight some areas of the report where the Inspectorate identify we have made good progress, or where they have observed new challenges we need to address.

Business Area Summary

- **Recording Data about Crime Treatment of the Public – Graded: Good**
And
- **Providing a Service to Victims of Crime – Graded: Requires Improvement**

The force standards of crime recording have improved with 95.49% of all crime being accurately and quickly recorded. The force has invested significant time into ensuring that the standards for crime recording are improved and recommendations from the 2018 PEEL Inspection were addressed.

The force identified and HMICFRS confirmed that the force isn't investigating crime well enough due to a lack of capacity and capability in investigation teams. This causes delays in allocating cases, lack of supervision or missed investigative opportunities. A review of staff and their professional capability to complete their role effectively was already being undertaken by the force. Where issues have been identified, there has been a short-term transfer of suitably qualified staff from other core roles. This has created an immediate improvement in capability whilst longer-term solutions, such as Police Now and the Detective Academy, address the future capability requirements. Alongside this we are carrying out a number of process improvement projects to enhance investigations end-to-end.

- **Engaging with and Treating the Public with Fairness and Respect – Graded: Good**

HMICFRS found that WMP had made significant improvements in recording stop and search data, training staff and understanding the disparities in recording whilst also sharing these with the community for scrutiny. HMICFRS recommended that the force should continue to develop its understanding of how it uses stop and search, and use of force, to make further improvements.

The report confirmed that West Midlands Police engages with its communities well and it seeks their views to understand what matters most to them using a variety of approaches to ensure accessibility to all. They particularly highlighted our use of social media, community-based events and the multitude of volunteering opportunities.

They observed that introduction of the Citizen Charter has given a clear commitment to the public for expected standards and this has been further enhanced by openness through body worn video, reflective practise and audits of stop and search. They also highlighted the training we provide in unconscious bias to raise officer self-awareness, as well as the 'Brave Spaces' we run for exploratory conversations around bias.

- **Preventing Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour – Graded: Good**

HMICFRS found that WMP is good at prevention and deterrence and the force works closely with other organisations to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour, and to protect those who are vulnerable.

HMICFRS commented that the force's operating model reflects its commitment to effective neighbourhood policing over the longer term, with dedicated neighbourhood teams tackling

local problems, although they also observed that staff had also been used to support investigation teams for a period of time. On receipt of the early findings from PEEL, the force worked with HMICFRS to provide additional evidence which addressed a misconception about how we flex our capabilities and reinforced our commitment to the prevention of crime and anti-social behaviour – this resulted in the ‘Good’ grading.

The force also acts on an evidence-based policing methodology, and its use of data complements this well. HMICFRS found this was particularly apparent in the force’s approach to tackling violence affecting younger people. WMP works with young people and partners on the root causes of crime that can lead to gang-related violence through Project Guardian.

HMICFRS also picked out the introduction of DDI (Data Driven Insights), predictive analytics and real-time search capability to enhance our response to policing problems.

- **Responding to the Public – Graded: Adequate**

HMICFRS recognised that the force has introduced new systems, new ways of contacting the force and training so that control room staff can identify risks more accurately when members of the public make contact, with particular emphasis on THRIVE – to ensure that calls are resourced appropriately with an emphasis on ensuring that vulnerability is identified and supported appropriately.

Finally on this topic, HMICFRS said the force recognises levels of unprecedented demand and the impact this has on performance. Whilst working to address the demand, the force understands the need to balance the implications demand has on the wellbeing of staff and actively promotes wellbeing and a work/life balance.

- **Investigations – Graded: Requires Improvement**

HMICFRS found that force’s FMS shows that we understand the obstacles to investigating different types of crime, including serious and complex crime. The force’s commitment to providing better services for victims is documented in the Citizen Charter.

WMP has committed professional staff and aspires to give a good service to the victims of crime. HMICFRS felt that the force standards were not met due to the sheer demand for service. Amongst other things, HMICFRS saw this is being addressed through the improvement in forensic capabilities and the new CONNECT ICT system, along with a review of staff and their capabilities.

The allocated grade incorporates the area for improvement (AFI) identified in the section ‘Providing a service to the victims of crime’ including findings from both the ‘Investigating crime’ and ‘Protecting vulnerable people’ sections of the PEEL report. The Deputy Chief Constable (DCC) has implemented a strategic plan to ensure these business areas continue to improve in terms of identification of vulnerability, maximisation of investigative opportunities and appropriately trained staff to support victims along with partnership agencies.

- **Protecting Vulnerable People – Graded: Requires Improvement.**

HMICFRS found that the force understands the nature and scale of vulnerability in the communities it serves through its analysis of a wide range of information. We are pleased that HMICFRS also recognised that WMP has unprecedented levels of demand and it can’t meet the demand for its services in protecting vulnerable people with the resources it has.

The force recorded the highest rate of firearms offences, knife crime and domestic abuse-related incidents across other forces. Both funding and resourcing are stretched to meet this demand consistently.

HMICFRS said the force's This Work Matters strategy reinforces the importance it places on protecting the most vulnerable. The THRIVE+ risk assessment used by WMP ensures that hidden vulnerability is identified and supported by work through the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) to protect young people. The force faces significant difficulties in responding to domestic abuse, child abuse, child sexual exploitation, crimes of rape and other sexual offences, modern slavery and human trafficking, hate crime and reports of missing people. But it has made progress against several of the HMICFRS long-standing recommendations with a supported plan to continue this work.

The force provides safeguarding and support for vulnerable people including those at risk of exploitation and work with a wide range of partners to support vulnerable people. There is a strong governance and daily review programme to ensure serious cases remain managed to support victims and pursue perpetrators. HMICFRS commented on the effectiveness of the MARAC & MASH teams across the force.

- **Managing Offenders and Suspects – Graded: Adequate**

The force has improved how it manages offenders and has invested in training for offender managers following HMICFRS recommendations made in 2020. Training for Integrated Offender Management (IOM) has been reviewed and staff work closely alongside partners to ensure an effective intelligence flow and comprehensive decision making.

There is a wide range of schemes to help reduce the likelihood of further offending. These include programmes for the perpetrators of domestic abuse.

HMICFRS found that the force apprehends and manages suspects and offenders effectively to protect the public from harm through the daily management meetings. There is a good relationship with other agencies through the MAPPA meetings, however, HMICFRS suggested the force should review how it manages sex offenders to make sure it has the capacity and capability to mitigate the risks they pose to the public.

- **Disrupting Serious and Organised Crime – Graded: Good**

The force works well with the regional organised crime unit (ROCU) and its partners to respond to threats and disrupt serious organised crime (SOC) using a range of tactics. There are eight local responsible officers (LROs) across the force who manage known organised crime groups. The LROs have access to advice and support, including specialist gangs teams who identify and disrupt emerging gangs and work to deter young people from joining them.

The force is committed to a 'whole system', long-term approach to tackling SOC. It identifies good practice and improvement opportunities. HMICFRS noted that the force has a consistent and structured approach to identifying people at risk of being drawn into SOC or whose offending is likely to become more serious. HMICFRS recognised the next phase of our work includes SOCEX hubs in Birmingham, Wolverhampton and Coventry.

- **Meeting the Strategic Policing Requirement (SPR) – Not Graded**

The PEEL inspection found that West Midlands Police understands the threats in the strategic policing requirement (SPR) and prioritises them alongside local policing objectives.

They said: the force prioritises the threats listed in the SPR and it works with neighbouring forces and other organisations to address them. HMICFRS found that WMP has an established plan to address future gaps in its capabilities and uses priority-based budgeting (PBB) to determine which functions it must allocate resources to. It is using the policing uplift programme to build capacity in critical operational areas, including child sexual exploitation and child abuse, by allocating resources to these threats.

- **Protecting the Public Against Armed Threats – Not Graded**

HMICFRS found that West Midlands Police is well prepared to respond to incidents requiring armed officers and has sufficient well-trained firearms commanders to meet the regional demand. The commanders have a good understanding of specialist capabilities, including those who are available to take part in complex and high-threat firearms operations. Non-firearms officers are also trained in how to respond to a terrorist incident. The force armed policing strategic threat and risk assessment (APSTRA) was found to be initially lacking in certain details, but has now been updated to meet the national standards.

- **Building, Supporting and Protecting the Workforce – Graded: Adequate**

HMICFRS observed that the force's values, its 'This Work Matters' strategy, and the Citizen Charter are an explicit commitment to providing better, fairer public services. Engagement helps to encourage a culture of learning and development and 'WMP Conversations' are regular discussions about performance, aspirations and wellbeing at all levels within the organisation with an emphasis of reflective practise and positive outcomes for the public.

HMICFRS found good strategic oversight, governance and resources dedicated to equality, diversity and inclusion with an emphasis on fairness and belonging supported by academic research. Recent work on procedural and organisational justice has resulted in the force identifying and promoting greater numbers of female candidates, and BAME candidates. The force's 'Inspire' programme offers mentoring, coaching and lessons in leadership to develop officers from ethnic minorities with further work to follow. The force is using a range of measures to help create a workforce that reflects its diverse communities.

Wellbeing is taken seriously in WMP and the force has identified the need to maintain staff wellbeing. Measures are taken to ensure staff views are sought through wellbeing surveys and access to support through the Occupational Health Team, Oscar Kilo and Vivup are promoted in force. This Work Matters strategy acknowledges the importance of sustaining a healthy, capable and engaged workforce and WMP acts on this.

HMICFRS found the force had made significant progress in meeting the national recommendations around vetting of staff from the 2018-19. The force has automated many of its vetting processes to improve efficiency and has drastically reduced the number of individuals not vetted to the appropriate extent. There is a timely and achievable plan to complete this recommendation.

- **Strategic Planning, Organisational Management and Value for Money – Graded: Good**

HMICFRS found the force 'This Work Matters' three-year plan aligns the priorities of our community and the new PCC Police and Crime plan with clear governance through senior leaders.

The WMP medium-term financial plan describes a balanced position, but budgetary pressures mean the force has drawn on its reserves repeatedly to fill gaps. The force uses its reserves prudently and, despite significant cost pressures, can balance its budget.

PEEL follow-up

The PEEL report generates a series of AFIs or refers to existing outstanding recommendations from thematic or previous PEEL inspections. The PEEL 2021 has eighteen AFIs (including 'soft' AFIs in the text). New AFIs are RAG rated and where appropriate added to the force risk register. They are allocated to business area leads and monitored through governance boards, supported by the force HMICFRS liaison team. The time frames for completion vary according to the AFI and completion criteria are defined by HMICFRS. Existing recommendations are actioned, monitored and where required, HMICFRS Force Liaison Lead guidance requested to achieve completion. Recommendations are then submitted to the DCC for internal scrutiny before submission to HMICFRS for sign-off.

3. THEMATIC INSPECTIONS

A National Thematic Inspection is an in-depth examination of a specific policing matter. These matters are usually identified through HMICFRS monitoring processes or as a result of a commission from the Home Secretary. Thematic Inspections tend to identify areas of strong or weak practice in specific forces, but result in recommendations that are relevant to the police service as a whole. Fieldwork for the National Thematic Inspections usually take place in about six forces, but it can involve all 43 forces in England and Wales.

Since the last JAC report was produced there have been no direct National Thematic Inspections of West Midlands Police. However, as a Force we have received notifications of inspections in February 2022 for:

- i. Thematic Inspection Relating to the Online Sexual Abuse and Sexual Exploitation of Children – Week Commencing 7th February 2022.
- ii. Serious Youth Violence – Week Commencing 21st February 2022.

4. PUBLISHED INSPECTION REPORTS

Since the last JAC report, one National Thematic Inspection report has been published by HMICFRS; A joint thematic inspection of the criminal justice journey for individuals with mental health needs and disorders. West Midlands Police was inspected as a noted force.

The following recommendations have been made:

- i. The police service should ensure that all dedicated investigative staff receive training on vulnerability which includes inputs on responding to the needs of vulnerable suspects (as well as victims). This should be incorporated within detective training course.
- ii. The police service should dip sample (outcome code) OC10 and OC12 cases to assess the standard and consistency of decision making and use this to determine any training or briefing requirements and the need for any ongoing oversight

- iii. Review the availability, prevalence and sophistication of mental health flagging, to enhance this where possible, and to consider what meaningful and usable data can be produced from this.
- iv. Assure themselves that risks, and vulnerabilities are properly identified during risk assessment processes, particularly for voluntary attendees. They must ensure that risks are appropriately managed, including referrals to Healthcare Partners, Liaison and Diversion and the use of appropriate adults.
- v. Police leadership should review MG (manual of guidance) forms to include prompts or dedicated sections for suspect vulnerability to be included.

These have been incorporated into the recommendations register and shared with Portfolio Leads for ownership and management through the existing governance structures. Recommendations are regularly reviewed in conjunction with the HMICFRS Liaison to ensure progress has been made and where learning is identified, recommendations embedded.

This report is submitted for the information of the Committee. The Committee are asked to note the contents of the report.

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BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

HMICFRS 2021 PEEL REPORT