

27.04.17

Police and Crime Commissioner West Midlands response to the publication of
Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary's (HMIC) reports
PEEL: police effectiveness 2016 – West Midlands Police and
PEEL: Police effectiveness 2016 – a national overview¹

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|---|-----------------------------------|
| Overall rating for West Midlands Police | Good (unchanged from 2015) |
| Number of recommendations | 2 |

On 2 March 2017 HMIC published its PEEL police effectiveness 2016 national report and individual police force reports. The reports form part of the PEEL programme which draws together evidence from annual all-force inspections and cover effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy.

The aim of the effectiveness inspection is to address the question

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

To answer this question HMIC explores five 'core' questions which are set out below alongside the individual gradings for WMP.

¹ <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/publications/peel-police-effectiveness-2016-west-midlands/>

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|--|---|
| How effective is the force at preventing crime, tackling anti-social behaviour and keeping people safe? | Good |
| How effective is the force at investigating crime and reducing re-offending? | Good |
| How effective is the force at protecting those who are vulnerable from harm, and supporting victims? | Requires improvement |
| 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 effective specialist capabilities |

Police and Crime Commissioner David Jamieson said: "I welcome this report showing that West Midlands Police is effective at keeping people safe, preventing and reducing crime. I recognise that there are improvements that need to be made to safeguarding and will work the force bring them about."

Under the Policing and Crime Act 2017 PCCs must publish a response to HMIC 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 recommendations from the HMIC PEEL effectiveness 2016 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

Yours sincerely

David Jamieson – West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner

Recommendation 1 (West Midlands report)

The force's response to domestic abuse is a cause of concern to HMIC. The force policy which allows an officer discretion to complete a DASH risk assessment in some crimes and incidents does not provide confidence that risk is always assessed appropriately. This is an enduring cause of concern from HMIC's report on vulnerability in 2015 and is one of the recommendations from HMIC's report on its domestic abuse inspection in 2014 that still needs to be implemented. In cases where a DASH risk assessment is not completed the officer should record an assessment on the crime management system. HMIC found that officers are not consistently completing a DASH in circumstances where force policy requires that they should do so. This means that some victims of domestic abuse who may be at risk of harm are not being appropriately risk-assessed.

Recommendation

To address this cause of concern, HMIC recommends the force should immediately take steps to ensure that:

- there is effective supervision of the initial risk assessment process, specifically in relation to the completion of DASH risk assessment in appropriate cases

WMP response

West Midlands Police operates a policy where the completion of the DASH risk assessment in some circumstances is discretionary. Discretion only applies to non-crime incidents and crime incidents between family members who are not intimate partners. The exception to this is honour based abuse and forced marriage cases, where the DASH risk assessment is always mandatory.

In addition the Force is currently awaiting the results of a national pilot into the use of a revised DASH form. Once this has concluded WMP will consider the national recommendations and update policy and guidance accordingly.

PCC response

I will continue to do more with partners to prevent and detect 'hidden crimes', including domestic abuse. I have made a huge investment in the force's Public Protection Unit and that focus on intervention, prevention and protection will continue with a further review of the PPU operating model now underway. Sentinel is the force's flagship policy to improve awareness and training for officers and staff, as well as encourage victims to come forward. I will work closely with the Preventing Violence against Vulnerable People programme to ensure it delivers real changes across the public sector to protect victims. I am also supporting a local Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programme and, with the local Victims Commission, ensuring effective services are in place to support victims of domestic abuse.

Once the results of the national pilot on the use of a revised DASH form are available I will discuss the recommendations with the Chief Constable and, if a policy and guidance

update is to be implemented, will monitor the implementation of such updates through my regular holding to account meetings.

Recommendation 2 (West Midlands report)

The force's response to missing and absent children is a cause of concern to HMIC. HMIC found that the assessment of risk for children who go missing from home was inappropriate in some cases. We found some instances where children were classed as 'absent' when they should have been recorded as 'missing', and risk levels for missing children were sometimes incorrectly assessed at a lower grade. We also found incidents where the risk had not been identified, even where good information was available on the police database. In some cases there was information to indicate that children were at risk of sexual exploitation, but this did not influence the assigned risk and categorisation. Children were incorrectly graded at a lower level and could have been exposed to an increased risk of harm. This is an enduring cause of concern from HMIC's report on vulnerability in 2015.

Recommendation

To address this cause of concern the force should immediately review its approach to reports of missing children and take steps to ensure that:

- call takers understand and use the missing and absent category appropriately;
- call takers and frontline staff have the necessary knowledge to identify risk factors associated with child sexual exploitation and how to respond to such cases; and
- supervisors provide the correct oversight of missing person enquiries and direct appropriate and timely investigative and safeguarding action.

WMP response

Nationally the use of the absent category is being removed. A number of reviews have been undertaken to look at the use of absent and missing in WMP. Call takers have been given training in the new THRIVE+ Risk assessment tool, the use of which is being monitored.

During transition state 1, the first stage of the Force change programme, the force piloted a new approach to missing with the introduction of a Locate team. The aim of the pilot was to test whether a dedicated unit with expertise in locating, protecting and preventing vulnerable people from going missing was a more effective and efficient way to manage the demands of missing episodes on the force. The pilot was a success with more people being located and in a shorter time period and as a result the approach is being rolled out across the force later this year.

PCC response

I will monitor the success of the introduction of THRIVE+ in relation to missing children and the success of the Locate approach as it is rolled out across the force.