

Mr Richard Lewis
Chief Constable
Cleveland Police

Cc: Mr Steve Turner
Police and Crime Commissioner
Cleveland Police

2 September 2021

Dear Richard,

CLEVELAND POLICE CAUSE OF CONCERN REVISIT – PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND SCRUTINY

Background

We inspected Cleveland Police, as part of our PEEL programme of inspection, between 20 and 31 May 2019. During the inspection, we identified six causes of concern. One of them was about engaging with the public and external scrutiny of the force. We found that:

“Cleveland Police doesn’t adequately engage with local communities. This lack of engagement means that public expectations don’t sufficiently influence force priorities and changes to the services it provides. The public also has a limited role in scrutinising the force and helping it to improve.

The force should immediately take steps to:

- improve its communication and engagement with the public of Cleveland. This should include: informing them of changes to policing services; communicating the action it has taken to address force priorities; and the provision of community and personal safety advice;
- improve its understanding of local communities, including those who are less likely to complain or those who engage less with the police;
- understand what services its communities want and how the force’s plans and its operating model reflect these expectations; and
- engage the public in the scrutiny of its data and processes, including the use of force and stop and search, to help it improve. This may be through an independent advisory

group or other means. It should ensure that these people have the relevant training, and are provided with sufficient data and analysis for them to scrutinise and challenge in a constructive way.”

2. We reviewed progress against this cause of concern between 7 June and 29 July 2021. Our revisit was conducted both remotely and on-site to allow for reality testing.

3. During the revisit, we interviewed staff from across the force, observed force meetings, and reviewed a range of documents and data. A summary of our findings is below.

Progress against the cause of concern recommendations

Improve communication and engagement with the public of Cleveland – in progress

4. In 2019, we found that the force didn't encourage a culture that values engagement with the public. It didn't use its communication channels effectively. It had an engagement strategy that the workforce didn't widely understand or apply. This meant it wasn't giving local people the opportunity to voice their needs, concerns and preferences.

5. The force has improved the way it communicates with the public. It communicates more frequently and openly, and uses a variety of methods such as local media, blogs, online video-chat and newsletters.

6. The force is more willing to listen to the public and wants to engage in dialogue to understand the needs of local communities. It is using different ways to encourage local communities to engage, but some have been more successful than others.

7. Its new engagement strategy sets out what is expected of officers and staff. The force has a number of officers and staff whose role is to engage with the public. But they still need the skills, information and prioritisation of work to carry out the engagement required.

8. Some engagement is happening through dialogue to understand the needs of local communities. But, often, neighbourhood officers are being extracted from their roles to attend to more urgent work. This means that, at the last minute, they can't attend the engagement meetings they have organised. They understand the importance of these meetings and feel that they are letting the public down.

Improve its understanding of local communities, including those who are less likely to complain or those who engage less with the police – in progress

9. In 2019, we found that the force wasn't trying to find out the needs, preferences and concerns of those communities that traditionally interact less often with, or have lower confidence in, the police.

10. The force is now doing more to understand its local communities and exploring ways it can better communicate and engage with the public. A community engagement working group now oversees the development of this area, with plans in place to make progress. A cultural calendar

promotes awareness of events where there may be an opportunity to engage with communities. There is more focus on those communities who are less likely to interact with the police and less likely to complain. Whilst the force is making improvements in this area, its plans don't yet reflect the specific communities that live there.

11. We found some good examples where staff were trying to improve engagement. But, generally, it has been difficult to improve engagement during COVID-19 as a result of the restrictions in place and the lack of technology available to carry out engagement remotely.

Understand what services its communities want and how the force's plans and operating model reflect these expectations – in progress

12. In 2019, we found that while the force did talk to local councillors about changes in the service provided, it didn't inform local communities. This means that in some areas, local communities were experiencing a reduced service without understanding why. The force didn't consult the public about what they want from their police service or use this information to guide its priorities.

13. The force has since tried to better understand what services and priority areas local communities think are most important to them. It did this through an online community survey. But the number of responses was so low that the force can't use the findings to inform its own plans. It is reviewing its approach and intends to send out a second survey, which will be more accessible and inclusive.

Engage the public in the scrutiny of its data and processes, including the use of force and stop and search, to help it improve. This may be through an independent advisory group or other means. It should ensure these people have the relevant training and are provided with sufficient data and analysis for them to scrutinise and challenge in a constructive way – in progress

14. In 2019, we found that the force didn't adequately use external scrutiny arrangements to seek the public's views and consider what improvements it could make. It should have reported force performance data and information to a strategic independent advisory group (SIAG), but this wasn't happening. No other external scrutiny took place. Attempts had been made for young people to scrutinise stop and search information, but the success of this varied.

15. The force's approach to the local scrutiny of stop and searches has improved. This is now happening consistently through the force's youth scrutiny panel, which rotates between school and youth groups across Cleveland. We observed one of the first adult stop and search scrutiny panels in July 2021, which was positive and provided the force with scrutiny, challenge and feedback. These groups review anonymised body-worn video footage and provide the force with feedback, which is shared with officers for their own learning. Members of these groups have received the required training.

16. The SIAG meeting is responsible for the independent scrutiny of force-level stop and search, and the use of force data. It has now received this data ahead of each meeting. But, at the meeting, we observed members didn't scrutinise it. The force should make sure that members

understand the data enough to be able to scrutinise and challenge the force, to assist in identifying areas for improvement.

17. The SIAG has previously provided independent advice to help the force improve its policies and procedures, and ensure they are more inclusive.

18. The force has data quality issues with its use of force data. Our [2021 custody inspection](#) found that this data is not comprehensive, reliable or accurate. The force should assure the quality of its data before it is provided to an independent group for scrutiny and used as an accurate assessment of performance.

19. Our custody inspection found that the force is open to external scrutiny, and responsive to addressing any concerns raised by its independent custody visitors (ICVs). The COVID-19 pandemic has meant that physical visits to the suite by ICVs have not taken place in the past year. Instead, some custody records have been examined each week. The scrutiny visits are yet to resume. In the absence of these, ICVs could consider speaking to detainees on the phone or remote visits using the technology now available.

Conclusion

20. The force is making progress with this cause of concern. However, I acknowledge that any engagement with local communities, and scrutiny by people outside the force, have been affected by COVID-19 and the restrictions brought in regarding face-to-face contact. While we have continually monitored progress, this is the first time we have formally reviewed the force's results. As a result of our review, all recommendations remain in progress and will be further reviewed as part of our PEEL programme of inspection.

21. This is one of six PEEL causes of concern being monitored. As such, Cleveland Police remains in the engage phase of our monitoring process, at least until our next review period.

Yours sincerely,



Andy Cooke, QPM

HM Inspector of Constabulary
HM Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services