

Hampshire Constabulary is 'good' at legitimately keeping people safe and reducing crime - HMIC

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) has assessed how legitimate Hampshire Constabulary is at keeping people safe and reducing crime. This is the second year running HMIC has carried out inspections of this kind, which makes up part of HMIC's annual PEEL inspections.

HMIC considers a police force to be legitimate if it has the consent of the public, and if those working in the force consistently behave in a way that is fair, ethical, and within the law.

To assess this, HMIC has inspected how well forces treat the people they serve; ensure their workforce acts ethically and lawfully; and treat their workforces with fairness and respect. The findings of this inspection are included in a report, published today.

This inspection also included, for the first time, an assessment of how well forces tackle the problem of abuse of authority for sexual gain by members of its workforce. This serious form of corruption betrays the trust of the public and, while we identified some examples of good practice there remain significant areas where forces must improve. The service needs to be more proactive in seeking out and preventing this form of corruption, and referring cases of abuse of authority to the IPCC.

HMIC found that Hampshire Constabulary:

- officers and staff understand the importance of treating the public with fairness and respect;
- is good at identifying risks posed by misconduct and corruption, and has satisfactory arrangements for the initial vetting of staff; and
- is committed to treating its staff fairly and to their wellbeing, although its efforts in these areas have been hindered by a slow response to occupational health referrals and the absence of an effective personal development review system.

HM Inspector of Constabulary Zoë Billingham said:

"I have judged that Hampshire Constabulary as 'good' at legitimately keeping people safe and reducing crime. In 2015, when we last reported on the legitimacy of force, the force was also judged to be good.

"We found that the force is good at treating the public it serves fairly and with respect. This is in no small part thanks to the force's commitment to the Code of Ethics, which is reflected in the force's values and mission. It's a very positive sign that the force actively seeks feedback from the public and is working hard to improve how it responds to feedback. I would like to see this done more consistently across the force, as it can be a great way to improve public confidence in its work.

"I was pleased to find that the force takes the issue of misconduct seriously, and works hard to ensure its workforce behaves ethically. It regularly clarifies what unacceptable behaviour looks like, which enables staff to identify issues and report them.

"It takes seriously any abuse of power for sexual gain (taking advantage of a position of power to exploit vulnerable victims of crime) and has improved staff awareness of this issue. The force also appreciates that transparency in these areas is vitally important in maintaining and improving public trust, and makes public the outcomes of misconduct proceedings. I would like to see more attention given to the standards expected of its work force when supporting vulnerable people, specifically victims of domestic abuse.

"The force does need to make improvements to how it ensures the wellbeing of its workforce. Although Hampshire Constabulary is committed to fair and ethical treatment, it is let down by the systems it has in place which prevent it from fully understanding staff welfare and performance issues. While the force is good at engaging generally with its workforce, the grievance process it has in place lacks credibility. I look forward to seeing how the work the force is undertaking to improve these important areas progresses."

HMIC has also published individual assessments of the leadership within each police force in England and Wales. These, along with individual reports on the legitimacy of all forces in England and Wales, are available on HMIC's website.