

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

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) has assessed how legitimate Hertfordshire 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 Hertfordshire Constabulary:

- is good at acting on feedback and learning to improve the way it treats all the people it serves;
- is good at treating its workforce with fairness and respect; and
- has failed to implement recommendations from HMIC's 2014 integrity and corruption report.

HM Inspector of Constabulary Zoë Billingham said:

"I am pleased that officers and staff across Hertfordshire Constabulary understand just how important it is to treat people fairly and respectfully. The leadership of the force has set out clear values and ethics to guide how the workforce should operate, as is evident in its code of practice 'The Herts Way'. The force's alliance with Bedfordshire Police and Cambridgeshire Constabulary is proving to be successful in a number of areas that we have

inspected, allowing the forces involved to share resources, which provides real benefits.

"The force recognises the abuse of authority for sexual gain (taking advantage of a position of power to exploit vulnerable victims of crime) as serious corruption and has taken action to communicate this to its workforce. It has also worked hard to explain to the public how it handles cases of this nature.

"Hertfordshire Constabulary understands and values workforce wellbeing, and is providing improved wellbeing services for its workforce.

"It is not all positive news however. I am concerned that Hertfordshire Constabulary had failed to take action on some of the HMIC Police Integrity and Corruption recommendations made in 2014. It took the collapse of a court case to prompt the force and its alliance partners to address areas of concern we identified.

"Hertfordshire Constabulary uses a wide range of methods to identify and understand the issues that affect the workforce, including surveys, regular engagement with staff representative groups and online messaging. The force has an open culture and it is improving and expanding its workforce wellbeing services. However, some people we spoke with expressed concerns that high workloads, combined with a lack of opportunity to take leave, were leading to stress-related conditions.

"Taking into consideration all the work that the force is doing to engender a culture of legitimacy and respect, and in particular in the way in which officers and staff deal with members of the public, I have judged that overall Hertfordshire Constabulary is 'good' in how legitimately it reduces crime and keeps people safe. I will continue to monitor how the force performs in this area."

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.