

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

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

- recognises importance of treating people fairly and respectfully, in order to maintain public confidence;
- is good at ensuring that its workforce behaves ethically and lawfully and has made good progress in responding to the issues we identified in the 2014 Police Integrity and Corruption inspection; and
- understands the importance of workforce wellbeing, and provides a range of services address the wellbeing needs of its staff.

HM Inspector of Constabulary Zoë Billingham said:

"Following our Legitimacy inspection, I have judged Suffolk Constabulary as 'good'. It has continued its good work in this area since our last inspection in 2015.

"I am pleased to find that the force takes seriously the feedback it receives from the public it serves, and ensures that it responds by improving where it needs to. It communicates well with specific communities across Suffolk, however it could do more to demonstrate more widely how it is responding to public concerns. The work is being done; the force just needs to highlight this as doing so can increase public confidence.

"The force is also good at ensuring its workforce operates both ethically and lawfully. This is evident in how Suffolk Constabulary regularly reinforces acceptable standards of behaviour to its workforce. There is an issue with the vetting of a number of people within its workforce having expired, however the force is addressing this.

"Corruption is taken seriously by the force. It works hard to identify and intervene in potential corruption at an early stage, which is proving effective. The force recognises abuse of authority for sexual gain (taking advantage of a position of power to exploit vulnerable victims of crime) as serious corruption. Work is underway to help the workforce and partner organisations to recognise inappropriate behaviour by police officers and staff.

"It is clear that workforce wellbeing is of great importance to Suffolk Constabulary, and I am pleased that there are a range of effective services aimed at supporting staff. The officers and staff we spoke to are proud to work for the force, and are complimentary about the support provided to them. I would like the force to do more to fully understand and take appropriate action to address the relatively high levels of short and medium-term sickness among officers.

"Although there are some areas we would like to see Suffolk Constabulary improve upon, the force should be commended for how it currently approaches legitimacy. I will monitor how the force continues to improve."

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.