

Sussex Police is 'good' at legitimately keeping people safe and reducing crime - HMIC

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

- treats the people it serves with fairness and respect, and uses public feedback to improve;
- reinforces standards of behaviour publishing outcomes of disciplinary cases and giving clear guidance to staff on expected behaviours about working in the force; and
- has a clear focus on physical and emotional wellbeing, and ensures its workforce behaves ethically and lawfully.

HM Inspector of Constabulary Zoë Billingham said:

“As was the case in 2015, the force has been judged as 'good' in how it legitimately keeps people safe and reduces crime.

"I am pleased to see a clear commitment from the force to promote a culture of fairness and respect. The force is good at seeking feedback on the quality of service it provides, and demonstrates an understanding of the importance of trying to access groups who might have limited trust in the police. Doing so allows the force to improve and adapt its service, so it can raise public confidence across Sussex.

"We found that the force is well prepared to prevent corruption within its workforce, having both good identification techniques as well as robust management of vetting. The force publicises the outcomes of all misconduct and corruption cases, which helps increase public confidence by showing transparency. The force also recognises abuse of authority for sexual gain (taking advantage of a position of power to exploit vulnerable victims of crime) as serious corruption.

"Sussex Police is committed to improving the wellbeing of its workforce. We found examples of a good understanding about the issues that might impact upon staff wellbeing. It is noteworthy that the force has introduced a range of innovative initiatives, such as improving perceptions of mental health issues within the organisation. The force could do more to improve its personal development review process, as we found some inconsistency in how it is completed and valued across the force."

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.