

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

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

- treats the people it serves with fairness and respect;
- should improve how its workforce understands the issues identified from lessons learned; and
- is to be commended for the investment it has made in understanding the workforce perceptions of fair and respectful treatment.

HM Inspector of Constabulary Zoë Billingham said:

"I am pleased to report that Thames Valley Police has performed well in this wide-ranging inspection of police legitimacy. We found that the workforce understands the importance of treating the people it services fairly and respectfully, with positive examples of the force dealing with complaints. This area could be further improved by the force by seeking feedback, specifically from members of the public on how they feel they have been treated. As it

stands, it was clear to me that the force is working hard to improve public trust and confidence, which is important for it to police with consent of the public.

"The force does need to improve how it reinforces ethical and lawful behaviour in the force, although I stress that this is more around the processes it has in place, rather than any suggestion of widespread wrongdoing. For instance, despite dealing with misconduct well, the force could do more to improve how it gathers information on potential corruption from external sources and its own IT systems. I was pleased to find that the force and its workforce clearly recognise abuse of authority for sexual gain (taking advantage of a position of power to exploit vulnerable victims of crime) as serious corruption.

"I am very pleased to find that workforce wellbeing is taken seriously by the force, as evidenced by the particular support available for those with mental health issues.

"Overall, I have judged Thames Valley Police as 'good' at how legitimately it keeps people safe and reduces crime. I will continue to monitor how the force improves in this area, and will inspect again in 2017."

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.