

# **A report into the effectiveness of vetting arrangements in Greater Manchester Police**

# About us

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) independently assesses the effectiveness and efficiency of police forces and fire and rescue services, in the public interest. In preparing our reports, we ask the questions the public would ask and publish the answers in an accessible form. We use our expertise to interpret the evidence and make recommendations for improvement.

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# 1. Introduction

## **Vetting: no graded judgment**

In September 2021, HMICFRS changed the way it reports on how effectively police forces manage vetting and counter-corruption.

Previously, we inspected these areas as part of our [police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy \(PEEL\)](#) programme and provided our findings in the inspection report.

The new arrangements mean we will inspect each force separately to PEEL, although we will continue to use the same methods and produce a report containing our findings, graded judgments and any areas for improvement or causes of concern. The report will be accessible via a web link from the most recent force PEEL report.

In July 2021, we inspected Greater Manchester Police to examine the effectiveness of its vetting. Senior officers in the force were briefed at the end of the inspection.

This report publishes our findings. As our inspection took place more than 12 months ago, we provide no graded judgment in this area. The report includes an area for improvement identified during the inspection, but we recognise that the force may have addressed it.

## 2. How effectively does the force vet its officers and staff?

We found that Greater Manchester Police has a vetting management IT system, but this system didn't link to its human resources (HR) system. As a result, it was not possible to automate the notification process between the [force vetting unit \(FVU\)](#) and HR teams for individuals leaving, joining or moving within the organisation. It had to be done manually. This was a time-consuming process necessitating checks across a spreadsheet of over 14,000 entries, which leaves room for human error. It creates the potential for the vetting team to be unaware of the movement of personnel within the force and the HR team to be unaware of individuals' vetting clearance.

The force's vetting data return contained several errors. The force would benefit from an automated electronic solution to manage the link between the HR and vetting IT systems.

The force understood what level of vetting was required for each role in the force. It had a list of [designated posts](#) that required enhanced [management vetting](#). The force had reviewed the list of 1,301 designated posts and found that 142 (over 9 percent) of postholders did not have the correct level of vetting.

In addition, the review found 72 further people in non-designated posts who did not have the most basic level of vetting clearance. We were satisfied that prior to our inspection the FVU had contacted all 214 people who required vetting to start the process.

We found the FVU faced a high workload due to increases in the workforce and the national programme to recruit more officers. However, the FVU appeared organised and had plans to reduce the number of people without up-to-date clearance by October 2022. The FVU contacted officers and staff three months in advance of the expiry date of their vetting to start the renewal process. Despite the increased recruitment, there were not excessive numbers of people awaiting renewal.

The force was making progress towards monitoring potential disproportionality in vetting decisions. It had purchased an updated version of its vetting management system that will automate this process for candidates who declare information regarding protected characteristics. The force expected to be fully compliant with the requirement to monitor and understand disproportionality in its vetting decisions in the months following our inspection.

In our 2019 PEEL spotlight report [\*Shining a light on betrayal: Abuse of position for a sexual purpose\*](#) we made a national recommendation:

“All forces that are not yet doing so should immediately comply with all elements of the national guidance on vetting. By July 2020, all forces that haven’t yet done so should vet all personnel to the appropriate standard. Forces should also have a clear understanding of the level of vetting required for all posts, and the level of vetting held by all their officers and staff. Forces should make sure all personnel have been vetted to a high enough level for the posts they hold.”

While Greater Manchester Police had previously shown some progress in meeting this recommendation, we found it still needed to improve the management of its vetting and accordingly we identified this as an area for improvement.

### **Area for improvement**

The force should improve how it manages the vetting of its workforce to make sure that post holders have valid clearance for the role undertaken.

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