

A report into the effectiveness of vetting arrangements in Leicestershire 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 forces manage vetting.

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 September 2021, we inspected Leicestershire Police to examine the effectiveness of the force's vetting. We briefed senior personnel in the force 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, which we recognise that the force may have addressed.

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

The force is effective at vetting its officers and staff. In May 2021, the force's vetting data return showed improvement on the previous year. At the time of our inspection, almost the entire workforce had vetting, with just 22 people waiting for recruit vetting renewal. The force has sufficient resources to manage current and anticipated demand, with the use of overtime.

The force has a vetting management IT system, but this system doesn't link to its human resources (HR) system. The force has secured a contract for another system, which was due to be fully implemented in 2022. The force recognises the additional work involved in moving to the new vetting management system and has recruited additional personnel. But the planned transition will not overcome the necessary links to HR systems, meaning it will remain difficult to extract data for analysis.

The force understands what level of vetting is required for each role in the force. It has a list of [designated posts](#) for enhanced [management vetting](#). The force doesn't deploy officers and staff into designated posts without first obtaining the correct level of vetting.

The [force vetting unit \(FVU\)](#) and HR hold weekly vetting oversight meetings to consider all moves across the workforce. The force annually reviews the designated post list to make sure it applies the right level of vetting to each role. In 2020, it identified 88 additional posts to be designated. The FVU completed the required management vetting for those post holders. At the time of our inspection, the force had 15 management vetting applications in progress.

The FVU relies on HR to inform it when a member of the workforce changes role or their personal circumstances change. Each would trigger a vetting review. We found that in the 12 months before our inspection, the FVU received just 88 change of personal circumstances notifications from HR. The force accepts it needs to improve the workforce's knowledge and compliance in this area. We saw evidence of electronic notification from the HR system when an officer changed their name or address. This triggered the FVU to send out a change of circumstance form for that officer to complete.

The force considers disproportionality in vetting decisions, but against only two protected characteristics, ethnicity and gender. The current system doesn't cater for other characteristics. The new vetting system will collect data on all nine protected characteristics.

The force collects monthly data on its refusal decisions and reviews individual cases. But we found no evidence of the force analysing potential disproportionality in vetting decisions. For example, it doesn't analyse the proportion of rejections for applicants with a particular protected characteristic compared to the proportion of rejections for a control group without that protected characteristic. This means the force has no way of understanding the reasons for any disproportionality, so it isn't taking any action to address it. As a result, we have identified this as an area for improvement.

Area for improvement

The force should introduce a system to monitor and respond to disproportionality in its vetting decisions.

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