

HMICFRS: JASC Update

Report March 2022

13/03/23 – Inspector 1169 Pilkington

About HMICFRS:

The principle role of HMICFRS is to promote improvements in policing and fire & rescue services to ensure the public are protected from harm. This is achieved through inspecting, monitoring and reporting on the efficiency and effectiveness of the police and FRSs with the aim of encouraging improvement.

In devising its policing inspection programme for the Home Secretary's approval, HMICFRS considers the risks to the public, service quality, public concerns, the operating environment, the effect which inspection may have on a force, and the benefits to the public of improvements which may follow inspection.

It is for chief constables (who have operational independence and autonomy within their respective forces), police and crime commissioners (with powers to set local priorities and budgets) and, in extreme cases, the Home Secretary (who has ultimate democratic responsibility for policing) to take action as a result of HMICFRS's recommendations contained within reports produced following inspection activity.

These reports may be force specific as a result of individual inspection activity such as the Police Effectiveness, Efficiency and Legitimacy (PEEL) programme and National Child Protection Inspections; or they can be national "thematic" inspections whereby inspection activity in a selection of forces will be used to address a theme in policing, but then with all forces subject of any subsequent recommendations. The most prominent thematic report recently-"Vetting, Misconduct and Misogyny" and associated recommendations, continue to receive intense scrutiny from the NPCC and HMICFRS.

Where HMICFRS identify significant issues, this can result in the publication of a cause for concern with associated recommendations to address this. All causes for concern, recommendations and areas for improvement (AFIs) identified within reports are published on a National Monitoring Portal. Each force has access to this electronic database through which updates on progress can be

submitted to HMICFRS for assessment with a view to demonstrating sufficient evidence to achieve completion and closure of these records.

The current West Mercia position in relation to open Causes of Concern, Recommendations and AFIs is as follows (correct 13/03/23):

Causes of Concern	7
Recommendations	85
AFIs	40

This can be compared to the national position and our most similar group (MSG) position. (MSGs are groups of police force areas that have been found to be the most similar to each other based on an analysis of demographic, social and economic characteristics which relate to crime – West Mercia is one of 8 forces in its MSG as below).

	D&C	Glouc	Norfolk	North York	Suffolk	Warks	West Mer	Wilts	Average
CoCs	6	14	7	2	6	6	7	9	7.125
Recs	82	103	99	43	115	119	85	124	96.25
AFIs	27	41	19	8	14	52	34	36	28.875

National averages:		MSG averages:	
Causes of Concern	6.6	Causes of Concern	7.1
Recommendations	84.6	Recommendations	96
AFIs	25.41	AFIs	28.9

- *As can be seen from the current figures, West Mercia have an average number of open causes of concern, having previously been higher than the national average. West Mercia's AFIs remain slightly higher compared to the national average, albeit focus has been on clearing outdated or recommendations that have been satisfied. This means we are in a much stronger position than most of our MSG forces recommendations wise.*
- *Recommendations and AFIs are also now graded 1-4 by HMICFRS, with 4 being the most severe and often used for "engage" forces where there are serious issues. We have no level 4 recommendations or AFI's and roughly a 50% split between level 2 and 3 recommendations/AFIs. Level 2 can be signed off with appropriate oversight by the Chief Constable within forces. Level 3's can be recommended for closure, but ultimate sign off still rests with HMICFRS. Other forces nationally have a higher number of level 3 recommendations (around 65% of their totals). This is positive for West Mercia.*
- *West Mercia (in collaboration with our FLL) have focused on clearing the number of open recommendations to a manageable level now the chief officers sign off process has been implemented. This has put us in a healthy position with focus to now move to AFI's. This ensures focus and activity being driven towards meeting the most relevant and time critical areas - investigation management, misconduct and outcomes, for example.*

In addition to inspection activity HMICFRS also collect data from all forces to build an understanding of statistical analysis and forces who may be outliers at either end of the scale indicating potential failings or good practice. Access to the data collected and various analytical products is provided to forces via PEEL Digital Analysis Packs within Microsoft PowerBI.

The latest round of data taken from the Autumn 2022 is due to published mid to late March.

West Mercia Response:

The West Mercia structure for responding to HMICFRS reports and recommendations remains as outlined in the previous updates to JASC with internal tracker documents produced for each report and "steps to green" populated by the strategic leads.

These are reviewed by the FLO as and when updates are provided to assess the efficacy of the measures introduced or changes made in light of the recommendations.

When deemed appropriate and with the advice of the HMIC force lead liaison officer , the updates are then added to the national portal for HMIC scrutiny and sign off. A more streamlined approach has been adopted, meaning the updates produced for SIB (service improvement board) will be added directly to the portal to ensure a record of action and appropriate scrutiny.

Chief Officer sign off for level 2 and 3 recommendations (explanation provided above in recommendations commentary) went live at the end of January 2023 and has allowed closure of 34 recommendations with pre existing rationale. This was highlighted as good practice at the recent HMICFRS national conference.

Current Activity:

PEEL 2021/22 – The force response to this report (16 AFI's, 2 recommendations) is well underway with progress being monitored via the Service Improvement Board. The report's only cause of concern regarding investigations is receiving specific focus through Op Reset led by Ch Supt Crowther. A meeting with the HMICFRS FLL 14th of March will look to sign off 2 AFI's.

Custody – A re inspection of the custody action plan took place in January 2023. Whilst progress was judged as "adequate" against the plan by HMICFRS, there was a strong desire to see qualitative results of audit alongside quantitative. This is now in place and being led by Supt Webster to ensure continued improvement. It is not expected we will be re inspected until 2025.

Vetting, Misconduct and Misogyny thematic – This report and forces associated response continues to receive close scrutiny across all areas given the national focus on police standards. A monthly report on progress and RAG ratings is made to the NPCC.

Of the 24 recommendations, latest assessment shows we RAG rate our position as:

- Being wholly compliant (green) with 9.
- 13 sit at amber level where there is ongoing work to meet the recommendation and this is overseen by the Head of PSD.
- 2 currently sit at red "RAG" status where we will not achieve the HMICFRS deadline to implement.

One of these relates to IT software that won't be available until September (budget expenditure signed off), the HMICFRS deadline being April. The other relates to a review of all conduct and prejudicial complaints in the last three years, with only 3 persons within the PSD team (AA) authorised to carry out this review. Again the HMICFRS deadline is April- it is likely to take longer than this. Other forces report difficulties in meeting this deadline due to the sensitive nature of the work and volume.

The force response to this report is better in most areas than comparable forces with most struggling to achieve a "green" status on more than 6 recommendations.

- West Mercia hosted HMICFRS to carry out a force specific vetting review on the 3rd of March and await results, albeit initial comments were favourable, given the strict adherence to national APP.

PEEL report force ranking- An internal piece of work where each element of the respective forces PEEL report is assigned a numerical value (Inadequate=1- Outstanding=5) which allows a ranking or comparison across the country. This allows forces rated as outstanding in a particular area to be easily identified such that good practice can be identified and shared. This only applies to forces with a recent report graded under the new assessment outcomes.

Given the delay in the publication of the most recent 6 PEEL reports, a graph is not included at this time as it is likely to give a flawed representation. Best estimates based on condensed feedback would rate West Mercia in 20th position out of a total of 30 forces with reports published.

Forthcoming Activity:

We have been notified of the force specific SOC and new ROCU joint inspections to take place in June of 2023. Planning activity is now underway and joint working group for the ROCU specific inspection formed which uses the experience of previously inspected ROCU's under the new inspection criteria.

Super Complaints:

- West Mercia sent their in depth response to the NPCC regarding the "How the police respond to victims of sexual abuse when the victim is from an ethnic minority background and may be at risk of honour-based abuse" super complaint. No further reporting is required.
- We are aware at this time that a super complaint in relation to Section 60 stop and search authorisations is in the evidence gathering phase and is likely to be published imminently.