

# HMICFRS: JASC Update Report September 2023

04/09/23 – 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 remains-"Vetting, Misconduct and Misogyny" with the associated recommendations to receive intense scrutiny from the NPCC and HMICFRS. National thematic reports on; performance, leadership, race in policing and firearms also feature within the last six months.

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 04.09.23):

|                   |     |
|-------------------|-----|
| Causes of Concern | 6   |
| Recommendations   | 104 |
| AFIs              | 34  |

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 | 3   | 12    | 3       | 3          | 6       | 6     | 6        | 9     | 6       |
| Recs | 71  | 110   | 93      | 106        | 115     | 108   | 104      | 146   | 106.625 |
| AFIs | 32  | 36    | 22      | 42         | 14      | 49    | 34       | 36    | 33.125  |

| <b>National averages:</b> |      | <b>MSG averages:</b> |       |
|---------------------------|------|----------------------|-------|
| Causes of Concern         | 4    | Causes of Concern    | 6     |
| Recommendations           | 129  | Recommendations      | 106.6 |
| AFIs                      | 27.8 | AFIs                 | 33.1  |

- *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 stronger position than most forces nationally 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.*
- *The "Vetting, Misconduct and Misogyny thematic" has no had updates against all recommendations sent to HMICFRS via NPCC. They make up the largest majority of recommendations within any single report and is hoped they will now start to be signed off bringing overall levels back to sub 80 recommendations.*

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 Spring 2023 returns is due for publication imminently.

### **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 tracking 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) are added directly to the portal to ensure a record of action and appropriate scrutiny.

### **Current Activity:**

**PEEL 2021/22** – The force response to this report (16 AFI's, 2 recommendations) has been in place for some time. A meeting with the HMICFRS FLL in June signed off 2 AFI's (relating to Stop Search and Use of Force), with 2 having evidence of all steps met pending sign off.

**Custody** – A re inspection of the custody action plan took place in Spring 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-** is covered as above and continues to receive high level executive scrutiny.

Three recommendations were not met by the deadline, however there is rationale for reasons as to why not, and NPCC report two of them being an issue for a number of forces, meaning we are not outliers in these areas. Progress is being made, but is outside of the national deadlines. (Review of all conduct cases in last three years, monitoring software, and integrated IT checks on AIHC audits).

- West Mercia hosted HMICFRS to carry out a force specific vetting review on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March and achieved 100% and 98% compliance across the two areas given the strict adherence to national APP.

**The West Mercia specific Serious Organised Crime (SOC)** inspection took place in June 2023, and whilst full results will not be known until October, it is expected there will be numerous areas for improvement. This is being tracked through monthly SOC improvement board meetings at Ch. Supt. level.

**The HMICFRS Victim Services Assessment (VSA)** inspection took place in July to sample 100 investigations (January-March 2023) from point of initial contact through to outcome code. We have gone through the resolution process and have received the workbook to allow initial analysis prior to formal feedback. It anticipated we will receive specific feedback on our cause of concern around investigations from HMI Williams in September/ October 2023. Initial reporting as to results within force directorates has taken place throughout August. There is evidence of improvement across most areas inspected, however there is further work to ensure consistency of standards going forward.

**Super Complaints:**

- A new "Super-complaint into the police response to stalking" has been released for force self assessment due by 8<sup>th</sup> September 2023. Six forces are being inspected in person (Warwickshire and Staffordshire as regional forces included) and we anticipate initial results in the winter months of 2023.
- We are told there is an eligible submission for investigation in the around stalking and "Section 60 Stop and Search" powers this year, however at this time there is no further update.