



HMI Zoë Billingham's assessment of Bedfordshire Police

Hello. I'm Zoë Billingham and I'm Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary for Bedfordshire Police. Our role is to inspect police forces on behalf of the public, and I am one of five inspectors appointed by the Queen. We are independent of government and police forces.

This year we are introducing a new way of inspecting the police and reporting our findings to you the public. We have called this approach the PEEL assessments, and this means police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy.

In relation to effectiveness my assessment for Bedfordshire Police in 2014 is in general, the force is good at tackling anti-social behaviour. However, it requires improvement in reducing crime and preventing offending, and it requires improvement in the way it investigates offending. I had some specific concerns about its approach to domestic abuse, although there are now very early signs of improvement since my initial inspection.

In relation to efficiency: the force requires improvement if it is to provide affordable policing in the longer term while keeping the public safe.

In relation to legitimacy: my assessment is that the force is acting to achieve fairness and legitimacy in some of the practices that we examined this year.

Bedfordshire police is a small, very low cost force facing complex policing challenges that are not normally dealt with by a force this size. It is encouraging that the force is working hard with its partners, like local councils, to tackle anti-social behaviour.

However, overall the force is struggling to provide an effective service having cut police numbers to a very low level. The new chief constable has recognised the problems and is grasping the issues but the changes will take time to implement. At the moment I have serious concerns about the force's ability to reduce crime, investigate offending and provide an effective service to victims.

HMIC will be revisiting Bedfordshire in the next 6 months to assess the force again.

Next year we will be seeing how forces have responded to this assessment, and we will give them overall grades so that *you* can see, at a glance, how well *your* force is doing.