

Gloucestershire Constabulary judged as 'requires improvement' at how legitimately it keeps people safe and reduces crime - HMIC

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) has assessed how legitimate Gloucestershire Constabulary is at keeping people safe and reducing crime. This is the second year running HMIC has carried out inspections of this kind, which makes up part of HMIC's annual PEEL inspections.

HMIC considers a police force to be legitimate if it has the consent of the public, and if those working in the force consistently behave in a way that is fair, ethical, and within the law.

To assess this, HMIC has inspected how well forces treat the people they serve; ensure their workforce acts ethically and lawfully; and treat their workforces with fairness and respect. The findings of this inspection are included in a report, published today.

This inspection also included, for the first time, an assessment of how well forces tackle the problem of abuse of authority for sexual gain by members of its workforce. This serious form of corruption betrays the trust of the public and, while we identified some examples of good practice, there remain significant areas where forces must improve. The service needs to be more proactive in seeking out and preventing this form of corruption, and referring cases of abuse of authority to the IPCC.

HMIC found that Gloucestershire Constabulary:

- gathers feedback from communities in a number of ways, however does not systematically analyse the information it receives;
- acknowledges that confidence in the 'fairness at work' and grievance policies has been eroded and that not all staff perceive the process as being fair and effective; and
- seeks feedback and challenge from its workforce, however there are concerns about whether lessons are learned in response.

HM Inspector of Constabulary Wendy Williams said:

"I have judged Gloucestershire Constabulary as 'requires improvement' following our inspection into its legitimacy. Last year we judged it as 'good', and it is disappointing to see its performance drop.

"There were some areas of good practice. We found the force has clearly defined values and behaviours, and that the chief constable has invested a considerable amount of effort in developing and maintaining an ethical culture. I was pleased to see an improvement in public satisfaction over the last 12 months. Overall the force needs to improve how it analyses feedback, both from staff and the public it serves, in order to identify issues it might need to address, as well as further improve confidence.

"The force needs to improve how it ensures its workforce operates ethically and lawfully. In particular it needs to improve how it audits its IT systems for signs of suspicious behaviour. It also needs to develop a specific process for addressing the abuse of power for sexual gain by members of its workforce.

"It could also improve its personal performance assessment process as we found it was used inconsistently across the force and was seen by some officers and staff as having little value."

HMIC has also published individual assessments of the leadership within each police force in England and Wales. These, along with individual reports on the legitimacy of all forces in England and Wales, are available on HMIC's website.