

Kent Police is 'outstanding' at legitimately keeping people safe and reducing crime - HMIC

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) has assessed how legitimate Kent Police 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 Kent Police:

- has an exceptionally strong ethical culture that emphasises understanding of the Code of Ethics and the importance of fair and respectful treatment;
- can identify, understand and manage risks to its integrity, and it deals effectively with corruption-related intelligence; and
- is outstanding at treating its workforce with fairness and respect, as well as a commitment to welfare and wellbeing.

HM Inspector of Constabulary Zoë Billingham said:

"I am delighted to report that Kent Police has again achieved an 'outstanding' grade in our 2016 Legitimacy inspection. It has continued its fine work in this area since our 2015 inspection. The force's approach to communicating with the public is impressive. It works hard to identify and communicate with those identified as have less trust and confidence in the police. The force deserves

praise for the way it speaks to young people - in particular those involved in gangs and other activities that put them at risk.

"Kent Police has developed a strong ethical culture, which encourages and enables its workforce to act both with integrity and lawfully. It ensures that the outcomes of misconduct cases are published, which is important to help increase public confidence. Another area where the force is performing well is its management of corruption-related intelligence. Its anti-corruption unit monitors a range of activities, including inappropriate access to force information. This enables the force to identify and address inappropriate behaviour early. Officers and staff understand the seriousness of the abuse of authority for sexual gain (taking advantage of a position of power to exploit vulnerable victims of crime) and the force treats it as serious corruption.

"The force also excels in how it treats its workforce. We found evidence of positive examples of the workforce being included in decisions around wellbeing and ethics. We also found that supervisors had a good understanding of their wellbeing responsibilities.

"I would like to commend Kent Police on again achieving such a high standard in the area of Legitimacy that we inspected. The people of Kent can be assured that their police are operating fairly and respectfully, underpinned by strong ethics and integrity."

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.