

South Yorkshire Police judged as 'requires improvement' in how legitimately it keeps people safe and reduces crime – HMIC

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

- should improve how it seeks feedback from the people it serves about their experiences of how the police has treated them;
- is acting effectively to ensure that its workforce behaves ethically and lawfully; and
- should improve how it communicates the action it has taken in response to issues identified by the workforce.

HM Inspector of Constabulary Mike Cunningham said:

"South Yorkshire Police has been judged as 'requires improvement' in how legitimately it keeps people safe and reduces crime. This is disappointing as in 2015 we judged the force to be 'good'. Although treating people fairly is a stated priority for the force, recent changes in the way it operates are preventing it from both effective involvement with local communities and improving the morale of its workforce.

"An area the force is performing well in is how it ensures its workforce behaves ethically and lawfully. The force clarifies and reinforces acceptable behaviour standards, and also has a good understanding of the risks to its integrity. The force also recognises police abuse of authority for sexual gain as serious corruption and has highlighted this to the workforce and public. The force has systems to ensure the integrity of the organisation and its workforce is not compromised by inappropriate business interests or associations. The force vets new recruits effectively, but needs to ensure that the whole workforce is vetted to an appropriate standard in line with national guidance.

"The force also needs to improve its understanding of workforce wellbeing issues. Although it has a number of methods to achieve this, we found that these are applied infrequently and inconsistently. It has developed a new personal assessment system, which is aimed at development and wellbeing, but it is too early to say if this will be successful. I will monitor closely this and the other areas HMIC has identified for improvement, and expect to see progress made."

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.