

PEEL: Police legitimacy 2015

An inspection of Essex Police



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Overview – How legitimate is the force at keeping people safe and reducing crime?

Overall judgment¹



Good

Throughout 2015, HMIC's PEEL legitimacy inspection programme has assessed the culture within Essex Police, and how this is reflected in the force's public engagement, use of Taser and compliance with the Best Use of Stop and Search scheme.² Essex Police had a strong ethical culture that supported and encouraged staff to do the right thing. There was effective support for staff welfare and the complaints processes. The force successfully engages with the public through a variety of methods. The majority of the Best Use of Stop and scheme elements have been implemented, and Essex Police's use of Taser is fair and appropriate.

This is the first time HMIC has graded forces on their legitimacy, so no year-on-year comparison is possible.

Summary

Essex Police had a strong ethical culture that supported staff to do the right thing. The chief constable was the driving force behind the work to instil this ethical culture. The force had initiated wellbeing days across each of the local policing areas. Despite two separate processes, operated by different departments, the complaints system was viewed as fair by all staff and the force was striving to eradicate any inconsistencies.

When HMIC looked at how well the force understands and successfully engages with all the people it serves, we found that the force uses an extensive range of methods to ensure it engages effectively with local people, and is able to demonstrate that outcomes or solutions are achieved. The force demonstrates an understanding of its local communities and it is able to provide effective means by which priorities and concerns can be raised and addressed. Stop and search and Taser are two ways that the police can prevent crime and protect the public. However, they can be intrusive and forceful methods, and it is therefore vital that the police use them fairly and appropriately. Many of the elements of the Best Use of

¹ Outstanding, Good, Requires improvement or Inadequate – see Annex A.

² *Best Use of Stop and Search Scheme*, Home Office, 2014. Available from www.gov.uk/government/publications/best-use-of-stop-and-search-scheme

Stop and Search scheme have been implemented and there is effective independent oversight. Use of Taser is subject to monitoring at a number of levels within the force although there is a lack of independent oversight. There is effective oversight of stop and search in Essex, and Taser is used fairly and appropriately.

To what extent does practice and behaviour reinforce the wellbeing of staff and an ethical culture?



Essex Police had a strong ethical culture that encouraged staff to do the right thing and supported those that did. The chief officer team had clearly set out Essex Police's vision and values for the force and a strong ethical culture was evident as a result. The chief constable personally led work to bring about this ethical culture and was well-respected by the workforce.

The force initiated wellbeing days across each of the local policing areas. The Essex support forum enabled welfare professionals and managers to discuss the cases of individual

How well does the force understand, engage with and treat fairly the people it serves to maintain and improve its legitimacy?



In Essex Police there is a clear understanding across the force of the importance of effective engagement with the public. A new corporate communications strategy is being developed to support its current policing plan.

Neighbourhood profiles are available and enable the force to understand the issues which are of concern to local people and the impact of local problems. Locally-based officers have a good understanding of their communities.

The force uses an extensive range of methods to ensure

To what extent are decisions taken on the use of stop and search and Taser fair and appropriate?



Essex Police is complying with the majority of elements in the Best Use of Stop and Search scheme. Data on stop and search are reviewed and published locally on the force website.

Independent oversight and scrutiny of stop and search data is provided by a Youth Panel. Officers use stop and search effectively and fairly.

Complaints are fully investigated and monitored and discussed during scrutiny panel meetings. The dedicated internet page includes information about making a complaint and provides an opportunity for persons stopped to complete an

members of staff who had pressing welfare concerns. The force responded positively to concerns that the occupational health unit did not have the capacity to support the workforce.

The Code of Ethics was only partially incorporated into the force's policy and practice and more needed to be done before officers and staff were fully aware and had a good understanding of the code.

Essex Police had a complaints system that was acknowledged as being fair. It dealt with complaints and misconduct fairly and consistently and investigations were free from bias. There was ongoing work to improve a perception of inconsistency and unfairness between police officer and police staff outcomes.

effective engagement with local people. Each neighbourhood policing area has its own dedicated page on the force website providing information about the local policing team responsible for the area.

The force has been successful in recruiting support from volunteers into a number of different roles. The opportunity to use volunteers to extend its reach and improve community engagement is recognised.

Through the training given on the National Decision Model the force ensures that officers have the knowledge and skills required to treat members of the public fairly and with respect.

anonymous online survey.

Revised authority levels for Section 60 authorisations have been implemented and these are reflected in force policy.

Taser-trained officers are trained to the right standard with a good understanding of the National Decision Model and the Code of Ethics, although the code is not always clearly recorded. The use of Taser is monitored at a senior level and reviewed by qualified staff and is reported in accordance with national guidance, although there is a lack of external, independent oversight. Taser is used fairly and appropriately by Essex Police.

Force in numbers



Ethnic diversity

Percentage of BAME in workforce 31 March 2015

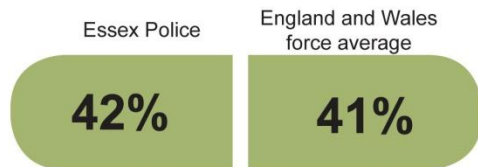


Percentage of BAME in local population, 2011 Census



Gender diversity

Percentage of females in overall workforce 31 March 2015



Percentage of females by role, Essex Police



Percentage of females by role, England and Wales force average

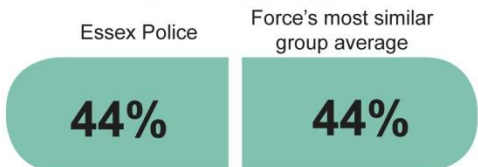


Public complaints

Number of allegations made by the public that have been finalised 12 months to 31 March 2015



Proportion of finalised allegations investigated 12 months to 31 March 2015



Proportion of finalised allegations upheld after investigation 12 months to 31 March 2015

Essex Police

Force's most similar group average

26%

19%



Stop and search

Number of stops and searches carried out 12 months to 31 March 2015

5,356

Stops and searches per 1,000 population 12 months to 31 March 2015

Essex Police

Force's most similar group average

3.0

6.3

Change in number of stops and searches 12 months to 31 March 2014 to 12 months to 31 March 2015

Essex Police

Force's most similar group average

-42%

-40%



Tasers

Number of times a Taser was used 12 months to 31 December 2014

110

Number of times a Taser was used per 10,000 population 12 months to 31 December 2014

Essex Police

Force's most similar group average

0.6

1.5

Tasers 'discharged' (as proportion of overall use) 12 months to 31 December 2014

Essex Police

Force's most similar group average

20%

16%

Data: for further information about the data used in this graphic see annexes B and D in this report and annex B in the national legitimacy report.

Introduction

Throughout 2015, HMIC has assessed the extent to which police forces are legitimate in how they keep people safe and reduce crime. This is one strand of the PEEL (police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy) all-force inspection programme.

A police force is considered 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, reasonable, effective and lawful. The force must also generate the trust and co-operation of the public.

To reach a judgment on each force's legitimacy, HMIC examined three areas:

Spring 2015 inspection

- To what extent does practice and behaviour reinforce the wellbeing of staff and an ethical culture?

Autumn 2015 inspection

- How well does the force understand, engage with and treat fairly the people it serves to maintain and improve its legitimacy?
- To what extent are decisions taken on the use of stop and search and Taser fair and appropriate?

This report provides the main findings for Essex Police.

Methodology

During our inspection we interviewed relevant senior leaders, collected data and documentation from forces, surveyed the public to seek their views of the force, held focus groups for those at different grades and ranks, and undertook unannounced visits to individual police stations to gather evidence and speak with officers and staff.

Prior to inspection fieldwork we also reviewed a small number of Taser deployment forms and stop and search forms; and listened to calls for service from members of the public.

This work was informed by research on the two principal characteristics of a legitimate organisation – organisational justice and procedural justice.

Organisational justice³

Every day, people respond to the actions and decisions made by their organisation that affect them or their work. Research shows that an individual's perceptions of these decisions (and the processes that led to them) as fair or unfair can influence their subsequent attitudes and behaviours.

In a policing context, staff who feel they are treated fairly and with respect by their force are more likely to go on to treat the public with whom they come into contact fairly and with respect. This will increase the public's view that the police act legitimately.

Procedural justice

Research⁴ has shown that for the police to be considered legitimate in the eyes of the public, people need to believe that the police will treat them with respect, make fair decisions (and take the time to explain these decisions), and be friendly and approachable. It also indicates that the way officers behave is central to policing as it can encourage greater respect for the law and foster social responsibility.

There is also an economic benefit for a force which is seen as legitimate by the communities it serves. The more the public provides support to the police through information or intelligence, or becomes more active in policing activities (such as Neighbourhood Watch or other voluntary activity), the less the financial burden on police forces.

³ *It's a fair cop? Police legitimacy, public cooperation, and crime reduction*, Andy Myhill and Paul Quinton, National Policing Improvement Agency, London, 2011. Available from: http://whatworks.college.police.uk/Research/Documents/Fair_Cop_Briefing_Note.pdf

⁴ *Ibid.*

To what extent does practice and behaviour reinforce the wellbeing of staff and an ethical culture?

Introduction

As organisational justice has a direct relationship to procedural justice (we treat others as we are treated), it is critical that the culture inside police forces is an ethical one, where challenge and continual improvement are encouraged. It is also crucial that all officers and staff feel that they and others are treated fairly and consistently (for example, when an allegation is made against them by a member of the public or a colleague). Even if a system or process is fair, if people do not believe that it is, then organisational justice will not have been achieved.

Officers and staff who feel they are treated fairly and with respect by their force, are more likely to go on to treat the public with whom they come into contact fairly and with respect. This will increase the public's view that the police act legitimately.

In spring 2015,⁵ HMIC made an assessment of police force culture. The inspection asked:

1. How well does the force develop and maintain an ethical culture?
2. How well does the force provide for the wellbeing of staff?
3. How well has the Code of Ethics been used to inform policy and practice?
4. How fairly and consistently does the force deal with complaints and misconduct?

In addition, HMIC also considered the number of females and black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) people at different ranks and grades, to determine the extent to which the diversity of the force reflects that of the communities it serves.

Gender and black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) breakdown in Essex Police

A breakdown of the full-time equivalent (FTE) workforce⁶ in Essex Police as at 31 March 2015 is shown below.

⁵ The inspection took place between March and June 2015.

⁶ Workforce comprises officers, staff and police community support officers (PCSOs).

Figure 1: Breakdown of full-time equivalent (FTE) workforce in Essex Police, 31 March 2015

FTE	Total	Of which	
		Female	BAME*
Total workforce	5,145	2,145 (42%)	116 (2%)
Total officers	3,069	897 (29%)	65 (2%)
Constables	2,359	744 (32%)	55 (2%)
Sergeants	486	115 (24%)	9 (2%)
Inspecting ranks	195	32 (17%)	2 (1%)
Superintendents and above	29	6 **	0 **
Staff	1,813	1,094 (60%)	45 (2%)
PCSOs	262	153 (59%)	6 (2%)

Note that numbers may not add up to totals because of rounding.

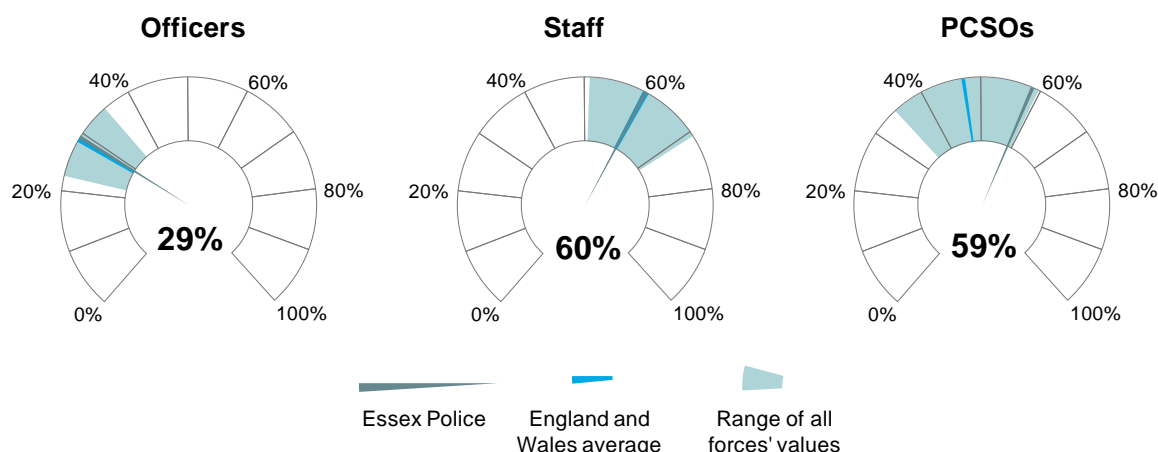
* Individuals are not required to record their ethnicity. As a result, BAME totals and percentages exclude officers/staff/PCSOs where the ethnicity is not stated.

** Where totals are very small, percentages have not been included.

Source: Home Office Police Workforce statistics.

The figure below shows how the percentages of female officers, staff and PCSOs in Essex Police compared with the averages of all forces in England and Wales. It shows they were similar for both officers and staff yet higher for PCSOs.

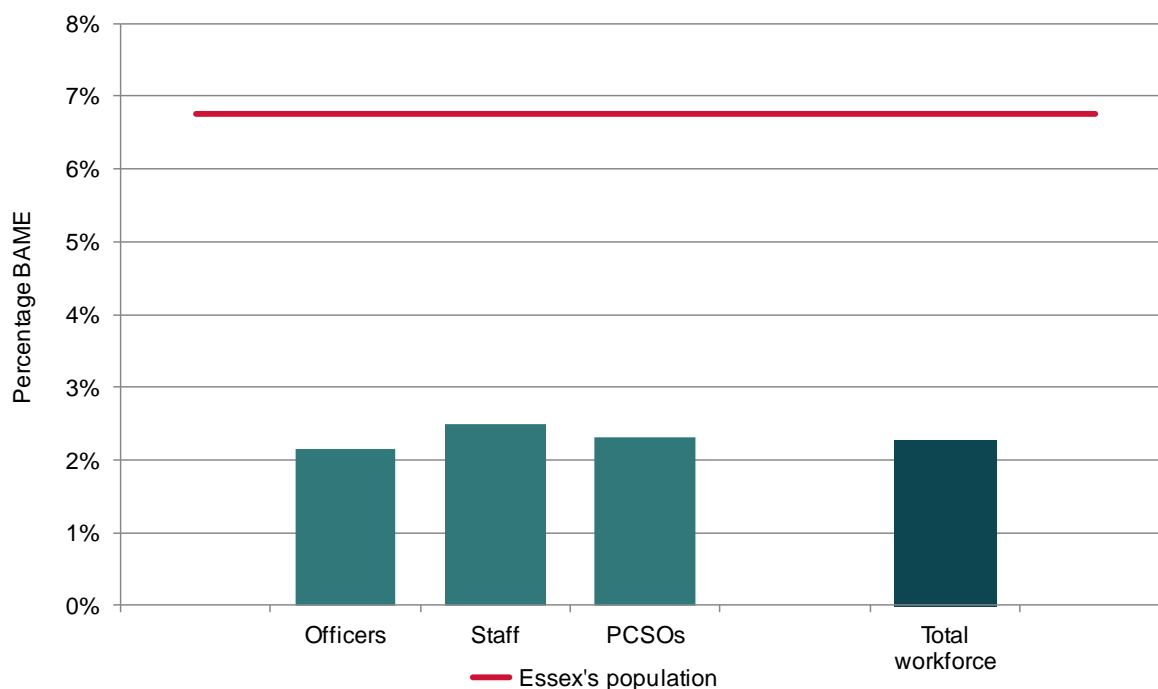
Figure 2: The percentage of female officers, staff and PCSOs in Essex Police compared with the force average for England and Wales, 31 March 2015



Source: Home Office Police Workforce statistics

We compared the percentages of (i) BAME officers, (ii) BAME police staff and (iii) BAME PCSOs in each force with the proportion of BAME people living in the force area. In Essex, around 7 percent of the local population were BAME. The figure below shows these comparisons. There was a statistically significant under-representation of BAME people in Essex Police's overall police workforce, as well as separately for officers, staff and PCSOs.

Figure 3: Percentage of BAME people within Essex Police’s workforce (as at 31 March 2015) compared with its local population



Sources: Home Office Police Workforce statistics and Office for National Statistics 2011 Census

Police forces in England and Wales have experienced large reductions in their total workforce since the October 2010 spending review.⁷ HMIC also examined how the percentages of BAME officers and staff, and females within the workforce had changed over this period.

Across all police forces in England and Wales, total workforce numbers decreased by 15 percent between 31 March 2010 and 31 March 2015. However, the percentages of BAME people and females within the overall workforce increased during the five year period. Most notably, the proportion of female officers increased over 2 percentage points to 28 percent, and the proportion of BAME officers increased by nearly 1 percentage point to just under 6 percent. In contrast, the proportion of BAME PCSOs decreased by nearly 2 percentage points to just over 9 percent.

The figure below shows how these volumes and proportions have changed in Essex Police over the spending review period.

⁷ Spending Review 2010, HM Government, October 2013. Available from: www.gov.uk/government/publications/spending-review-2010

Figure 4: Change in Essex Police’s workforce (overall volume and the percentage of female and BAME people), 31 March 2010 to 31 March 2015

	Total change		Percentage point change	
			% female	% BAME
Total workforce	-1,058	(-17%)	+1	0
Officers	-537	(-15%)	+2 •	0
Staff	-338	(-16%)	0	0
PCSOs	-183	(-41%)	+4	0

Note that numbers may not add up to totals because of rounding.

• Denotes there has been a statistically significant change in the proportion (see Annex B for details).

Source: Home Office Police Workforce statistics

There were no statistically significant changes in the percentages of either females or BAME people within Essex Police's overall workforce between 31 March 2010 and 31 March 2015. However, there was a statistically significant change in the percentage of female officers – around a 2 percentage point increase.

Overall, compared with other forces, as at 31 March 2015, the percentage of females within Essex Police's workforce was similar for both officers and staff yet higher for PCSOs. By ethnicity, there was an under-representation in BAME officers, staff and PCSOs and there was no statistically significant change in the proportions between 31 March 2010 and 31 March 2015 for any of these groups.

How well does the force develop and maintain an ethical culture?

It is critical that the culture inside police forces is an ethical one, where challenge and continual improvement are encouraged and where staff feel that they and others are treated fairly and consistently. If it is not, the service provided to the public may be equally unfair and inconsistent. HMIC therefore considered the extent to which people at all levels and all ranks (or equivalent) were creating and maintaining an ethical culture.

The chief officer team had clearly set out Essex Police’s vision and values in respect of maintaining and developing an ethical culture. The force’s ‘Plan on a Page’ document set out its core values, principles and priorities and was one of the main ways the message was shared. The chief constable was well respected by his staff, and was widely seen as approachable. We were given a number of examples where officers and staff had been happy to contact him directly with their concerns or ideas.

Significant effort was being made by the chief officer team to engage with the workforce. Examples included the chief constable road shows, the highly-regarded chief's blog, and the weekly 'back to the floor' days, where the entire chief officer team met with staff in their own stations. The force's vision for the future, promoted by the chief constable, was supported by governance arrangements that included an integrity and anti-corruption board, which looked at a number of issues to support an ethical culture, such as gifts and hospitality and business interests. It was chaired by the deputy chief constable. Importantly, officers and staff described an ethical culture in the force and a clear message for them to do the right thing at all times.

Two staff surveys had been completed recently, one in 2013 and the latest in March 2015. The survey showed that the majority of staff wanted to continue working for Essex Police, two thirds were happy in their role, 80 percent said they were treated with dignity and respect by senior colleagues and 93 percent knew how to challenge inappropriate behaviour. Officers and staff reported that they had seen positive changes in the force as a result of the survey.

How well does the force provide for the wellbeing of staff?

Police forces need to understand the benefits of having a healthier workforce – a happy and healthy workforce is likely to be a more productive one, as a result of people taking fewer sick days and having a greater investment in what they do. This inspection was concerned with what efforts were being made in forces to consider, and provide for, the wellbeing needs of their workforce.

The force had a clear understanding of the views of the workforce in respect of their wellbeing, and opportunities to make improvements were taken and communicated to the staff. The majority of officers and staff we spoke to acknowledged the support offered by the force. Wellbeing days were held and were seen as a great success by staff. The Essex support forum, with membership from the professional standards department, human resources and occupational health met to discuss individual cases of concern, including those staff subject to misconduct and disciplinary investigation emanating from public complaints. This ensured that appropriate support was in place for the individual.

The performance improvement unit was an established team and there had been a number of successful interventions, which resulted in either improved performance or attendance or both. The unit enhanced its unsatisfactory performance process by ensuring a consistent approach to setting improvement plans for officers. The work they did was valued by both supervisors and senior leaders.

There were concerns regarding the capacity and capability of the occupational health unit to support the workforce. This issue was also identified in the staff survey. Officers and staff described difficulties in obtaining occupational health services; the provision of a poor service; and having to pay for their own counselling for work-

related stress as only a small number of sessions were provided by the force. There was some poor communication between the occupational health unit and supervisors. The force had responded to the issues raised by allocating increased resources to the occupational health unit, but this had not yet alleviated the concerns of the staff.

The force recognised the importance of the wellbeing of officers and staff and had implemented a series of actions to support and improve this area of business.

How well has the Code of Ethics been used to inform policy and practice?

In April 2014, the College of Policing launched the Code of Ethics.⁸ This sets out nine policing principles that should be applied by all officers and staff: Accountability; Integrity; Openness; Fairness; Leadership; Respect; Honesty; Objectivity; and Selflessness. These principles should be used to underpin the decisions and actions taken by officers and staff.

This inspection considered the extent to which officers and staff were aware of the Code of Ethics, and how the force was working to embed the code into policy and practice.

The force used the Code of Ethics to inform some day-to-day decision-making. This was checked occasionally by managers. The code underpinned some training and development opportunities. Details of the code were available to officers and staff on the force intranet site and some publicising of the code had taken place including use of posters and repeated references to the code in the chief's blog.

The force had a clear commitment to implement the Code of Ethics and it featured in some training sessions, including the firearms and public order training. However, the force made a decision to delay any further training, and the full launch of the code, until the force's new 'Athena' integrated computer system was implemented completely. The chief constable had planned seminars in the autumn of 2015 to launch the code properly across the force but, as a consequence of the delay, there was mixed level of knowledge and understanding of the Code of Ethics across the force.

The Code of Ethics had informed policy and practice although more needed to be done before officers and staff were fully aware and had a good understanding of the code.

⁸ *Code of Ethics – A Code of Practice for the Principles and Standards of Professional Behaviour for the Policing Profession of England and Wales*, College of Policing, London, July 2014. Available from: www.college.police.uk/What-we-do/Ethics/Documents/Code_of_Ethics.pdf

How fairly and consistently does the force deal with complaints and misconduct?

Complaints made by the public against police officers, police staff, contracted police staff, and force procedures are recorded by individual police forces. Each complaint may have one or more allegations attached to it. For example, one complaint that an officer was rude and that they pushed an individual would be recorded as two separate allegations.

Each allegation can be dealt with, or resolved, in a number of ways. Some complaints, such as rudeness or incivility, may be dealt with through the local resolution process. The way these complaints are resolved should be adapted to the needs of the complainant – for example, they may involve an apology or an explanation of the circumstances in writing or in person. If the complaint is more serious, and assessed as not suitable for local resolution, it must be investigated by an appointed investigating officer who will produce a report detailing findings against each allegation. Under certain circumstances, some complaints do not proceed. These use processes known as disapplication or dispensation (for example, if the matter is already the subject of a complaint or if the complaint is repetitious or vexatious), discontinuance (for example, if the complainant refuses to cooperate or it is not reasonably practicable to investigate the complaint) or if they are withdrawn by the complainant.⁹

In the 12 months to 31 March 2015, Essex Police finalised 1,463 allegations from public complaints that were made against its officers and staff. Of these, 44 percent had been investigated and 34 percent had been locally resolved. These proportions were broadly in line with the average of Essex's most similar group of forces.¹⁰

In the 12 months to 31 March 2015, the average time Essex Police took to complete a local resolution was 54 days, broadly in line with the average of its most similar group of forces (58 days). Over the same period, the average time a local investigation took to complete was 152 days, broadly in line with the average of its most similar group of forces (150 days).

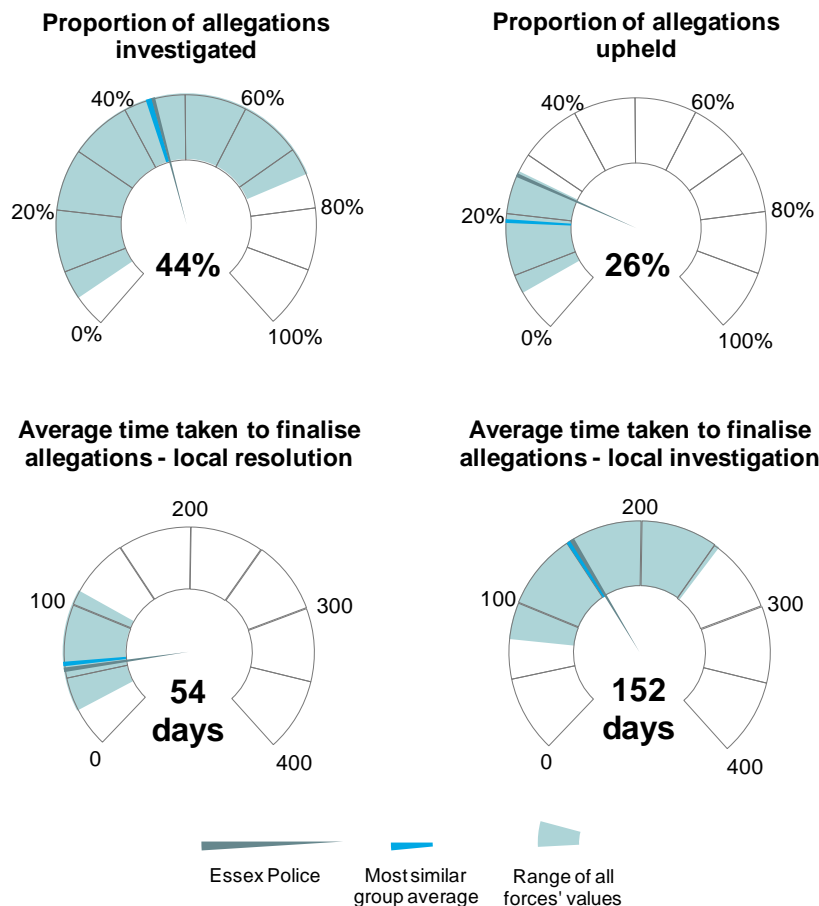
After local investigation, Essex Police closed 651 allegations in the 12 months to 31 March 2015. Of these, 26 percent were upheld, where it was concluded that the service provided by the police officer or police staff or the service as a whole did not reach the standard a reasonable person could expect. This was greater than the

⁹ For a more complete outline of the definitions and potential outcomes resulting from public complaints, please see the Independent Police Complaints Commission's website: www.ipcc.gov.uk.

¹⁰ Most similar groups are groups of local areas that have been found to be most similar to each other using statistical methods, based on demographic, economic and social characteristics which relate to crime. See Annex B.

average of Essex's most similar group of forces of 19 percent. The following figure shows how these values compare.

Figure 5: Proportion of allegations investigated, proportion upheld, time taken to finalise allegations by local resolutions and investigations by Essex Police, 12 months to 31 March 2015



Source: Independent Police Complaints Commission

Overall, in the 12 months to 31 March 2015, Essex Police finalised 44 percent of allegations by investigation. The proportion of allegations it upheld after local investigation was greater than the average of its most similar group of forces. Compared to its most similar group of forces, Essex took a similar amount of time to complete both local resolutions and local investigations.

Are officers and staff, particularly those with protected characteristics, treated fairly following a complaint or allegation against them?

While it is very important that public complaints and allegations of misconduct or corruption are taken seriously, it is also important that those subject to these allegations or complaints are treated fairly and consistently, and that there is no bias or discrimination involved in any aspect of the decision-making process.

Building on the findings of HMIC's Police Integrity and Corruption inspection,¹¹ this inspection considered if public complaints and misconduct investigations were dealt with in a timely and consistent manner. The inspection also considered whether investigations were conducted fairly and whether officers and staff, particularly those with protected characteristics,¹² felt that they would be treated fairly following a complaint or allegation against them.

Before the fieldwork stage began, HMIC conducted a file review of 65 public complaints and internal misconduct allegations, to assess whether they had been considered fairly and consistently. We examined further the outcomes of the review during our fieldwork.

While not necessarily representative of all cases, in the small number of files we looked at we did not find any evidence of any bias in how complaints and internal misconduct allegations were dealt with, in respect of gender, ethnicity or rank.

The force had differing approaches to dealing with complaints and misconduct for police officers and police staff. The professional standards department oversaw and dealt with cases against police officers while the human resources department dealt with all cases against police staff, unless a criminal investigation was required. This had the potential to lead to inconsistent decision-making and therefore inconsistency and unfairness in respect of the results of the cases.

The force was making efforts to standardise the way in which staff and officer discipline matters were handled. Monthly meetings took place between human resources and the professional standards department to discuss cases, although there was an acknowledgement that the different regulations for officers and staff sometimes led to different conclusions in cases. Officers and staff were satisfied that the complaints and misconduct process was fair and consistent when compared to each other.

The force published details of disciplinary cases and the chief constable commented on cases in his blog. This was broadly welcomed by officers and staff, however there was little evidence that the force learned lessons from the investigation of complaints and misconduct. There was some evidence of a recently introduced system to gather learning points, but this was in its infancy.

¹¹ Integrity Matters – An inspection of arrangements to ensure integrity and to provide the capability to tackle corruption in policing, HMIC, London, 2015. Available from: www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/publications/integrity-matters/

¹² Under the Equality Act 2010, it is against the law to discriminate against anyone because of: age; being or becoming a transsexual person; being married or in a civil partnership; being pregnant or having a child; disability; race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin; religion, belief or lack of religion/belief; sex; or sexual orientation. These are called 'protected characteristics'.

The force dealt with complaints and misconduct fairly and consistently and investigations were free from bias. There was ongoing work to improve the perception of the inconsistency and unfairness between police officer and police staff outcomes.

Summary of findings



Good

Essex Police had a strong ethical culture that encouraged staff to do the right thing and supported those that did. The chief officer team had clearly set out Essex Police's vision and values for the force and a strong ethical culture was evident as a result. The chief constable personally led work to bring about this ethical culture and was well-respected by the workforce.

The force initiated wellbeing days across each of the local policing areas. The Essex support forum enabled welfare professionals and managers to discuss the cases of individual members of staff who had pressing welfare concerns. The force responded positively to concerns that the occupational health unit did not have the capacity to support the workforce.

The Code of Ethics was only partially incorporated into the force's policy and practice and more needed to be done before officers and staff were fully aware and had a good understanding of the code.

Essex Police had a complaints system that was acknowledged as being fair. It dealt with complaints and misconduct fairly and consistently and investigations were free from bias. There was ongoing work to improve a perception of inconsistency and unfairness between police officer and police staff outcomes.

How well does the force understand, engage with and treat fairly the people it serves to maintain and improve its legitimacy?

Introduction

The negative effect of poor police and community relations on public perceptions should not be underestimated. People who already have a poor opinion of the police are more likely to perceive their contact with the police as a negative experience. On the other hand, perceptions of fair decision-making and positive public interaction and engagement can improve perceptions and increase trust, leading to improved or enhanced police legitimacy. This, in turn, helps efforts to reduce crime by encouraging greater respect for the law and fostering social responsibility, by making people more likely to help the police and not break the law.

Community engagement should influence every aspect of policing. For engagement to be effective, the organisation should focus on the needs of citizens and be committed to ensuring that the results from engagement work are integrated into service design and provision, and that communities participate in that provision.

In autumn 2015, HMIC made an assessment of the extent to which police forces understand and engage with the people they are there to serve. Based on the College of Policing's Authorised Professional Practice on Engagement and Communication,¹³ the inspection asked:

1. How well does the force understand the people it serves and the benefits of engaging with them?
2. How well does the force engage with all the people it serves?
3. To what extent are people treated fairly and with respect when they come into contact with police officers and staff?

Before the fieldwork stage of the inspection, HMIC commissioned Ipsos MORI to survey the public in each force area, specifically seeking their views about their force. While the findings of the survey may not represent the views of everyone living in the force area, they are indicative of what the public in that police force area think.

¹³ *Authorised Professional Practice on Engagement and Communication*, College of Policing, 2015. Available from www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/engagement-and-communication/?s

How well does the force understand the people it serves and the benefits of engaging with them?

HMIC's inspection considered the extent to which forces understand the relationship between positive public engagement and increased public confidence in the police. We also assessed the extent to which, at local and force levels, the force understands the needs and concerns of the people it serves.

The importance of effective engagement is clearly understood at a senior level within Essex Police and is also reflected in the police and crime commissioner's (PCC) own 'Engagement Charter', which sets out the PCC's vision of how he will listen to the public of Essex and ensure there is democracy and accountability in policing in the county. The chief constable personally sets an example in the importance of openness and transparency by the way he engages with staff. His weekly blog, which is popular among staff, is recognised as being 'upfront and honest' and this approach continues in his frequent visits to police stations across the force.

Public engagement is a key element of the force's policing plan and a new corporate communications and engagement strategy is currently under development to support the plan. The public and partner agencies, including local authorities have helped to inform the strategy, which is being drafted to reflect current best practice. The force's Independent Advisory Group (IAG) has recently been re-established to ensure it properly reflects all sections of the community. This group is made up of independent members who advise the force on a range of matters, including community issues.

Members of staff are aware that they are expected to engage with communities and a number of local officers and police community support officers (PCSOs) are trained in the use of social media to enable them to do this more effectively. As part of their initial training, recruits complete at least 80 hours of engagement activity with a local organisation, community group or charity. They present their experiences to their colleagues in order to share learning.

There are neighbourhood profiles, which contain a broad range of local information about the profile and make-up of communities, to enable the force to understand the issues which are of concern to local people and the impact of local problems. However, it is unclear how they are reviewed and updated or how they are made available on a shared database. Locally-based officers and staff understand their communities although they do not all make use of the neighbourhood profiles to record this information. As part of a way to better understand domestic abuse and child sexual exploitation the serious crime directorate have developed neighbourhood profiles to enhance the understanding of communities.

There are data on the socio-economic profiles of communities and their likely concerns or attitudes available on a system called Mosaic, however this system cannot be used by all staff.

The force uses community impact assessments, which are documents that assess the likely impact of an incident on a community. The community impact assessments examined were clearly documented and used a structured template which ensured that the necessary information, at the correct level of detail, was recorded. The assessments were discussed and reviewed as part of daily management meetings and local briefings to officers and staff.

Of the 994 survey responses from the area covered by Essex Police, 43 percent agree that the police understand the crime and anti-social behaviour issues within their force area and 16 percent disagree. The remainder neither agree nor disagree or do not know. Although not directly comparable because of the small force sample size, of the responses from all forces across England and Wales, 49 percent agree versus 14 percent who disagree.

Officers and staff have a good understanding of the people they serve, and this understanding is written down. Community impact assessments are used to assist the force in managing incidents that affect communities.

How well does the force engage with all the people it serves?

For the police to find the most cost effective and efficient ways of communicating with the public, they should tailor their methods of engagement in a way that meets the needs and preferences of those they serve. The police should ensure they overcome any barriers to successful engagement (for example, social exclusion, location, low confidence in the police) to seek the views of all the people they serve and keep them informed.

From the survey, fewer than 10 percent of respondents report that they have, within the previous 12 months, been asked about their views on crime and anti-social behaviour issues that matter most to them where they live. Similarly, in most forces, fewer than 20 percent of respondents have been told, within the previous 12 months, how their force is tackling these issues. Our inspection looked at the different ways that forces engage with their communities.

The force uses a wide range of methods to support formal and informal engagement with local people. These include traditional face-to-face meetings, the force website and social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter. It is also planning to expand digital engagement as a response to financial constraints.

Formal public scrutiny meetings, known as the 'Essex Police Challenge', are attended by the police and crime commissioner (PCC) and the chief constable and are held throughout the county on a quarterly basis.

Each neighbourhood policing area has its own dedicated page on the force website providing information about the local policing team responsible for the area.

The dates, times and places of planned community engagement meetings are provided, and these include 'street meets' where PCSOs engage with the public on their local streets. Local policing priorities are listed together with the activity being taken. Feedback to the public in relation to police operations is provided at local community meetings and community safety partnership meetings.

While PCSOs are required to record the outcomes of the monthly 'street meets', we found no evidence that these are recorded on any central neighbourhood database where they could be shared with other team members.

The force made an early decision to adopt the use of social media to enhance its engagement activities. It now has a 'reach' on Facebook of around 700,000 people and around 70,000 followers on Twitter. Individual officers and staff are encouraged to manage their own work-related Twitter accounts although the force maintains an overview of the accounts to ensure standards of professionalism. Social media is used to good effect, for example by mobilising people to help search for missing people.

Essex Community Messaging is a free service providing two-way text and voicemail messaging to between 7,000 and 8,000 registered users. Messages can be targeted at specific locations or communities. Future plans include the use of geo-coding to enable targeted messages, on issues such as crime prevention, to be sent to specific geographic areas.

There are good examples of the force engaging with young people, the '2Smart' initiative which gives young people advice about bullying, alcohol, drugs and knives via music, dance, sport and drama and the 'Young People' web page on the force internet shows the force's commitment and ability to engage with this group.

There is an active Special Constabulary and a recently launched police cadet corps. The cadet corps has 90 members with 20 percent of these coming from troubled families. The force recognises the importance of the cadets in supporting its youth engagement.

The value of volunteers is recognised and there is a vibrant street pastors' scheme which supports vulnerable people around the night-time economy. Volunteers also deliver crime prevention leaflets and are sometimes used to offer low-level crime prevention advice in areas of high burglary incidents. The force also has active neighbourhood watch, horse watch and dog watch schemes.

Essex Police uses innovative methods to engage with the people it serves, but there is little evidence of targeted engagement for protected groups.

From the survey, 28 percent of the respondents from the area covered by Essex Police speak highly of the police in their local area while 17 percent speak critically. The remainder have mixed views or do not know.

Although not directly comparable because of the small force sample size, of the responses from across all forces in England and Wales, 32 percent speak highly and 16 percent speak critically.

Essex Police engages and communicates with most of the communities it serves and the involvement of local people in policing activities is positive. However, it needs to have an approach which ensures the force engages and works closely with all the people it serves.

To what extent are people treated fairly and with respect when they come into contact with police officers and staff?

Public bodies (including the police) are required to consider all individuals when carrying out their work, and understand how different people will be affected by their activities. The duty requires the police to show evidence of this in their decision-making.

This inspection looked at whether all members of the public (including those with protected characteristics) are treated (and perceive that they are treated) fairly and with respect by the police. We also assessed the extent to which officers understand the National Decision Model,¹⁴ the framework by which all policing decisions should be made, examined and challenged. The Code of Ethics is a central component of the National Decision Model.

The police have thousands of interactions with the public on a daily basis. Research indicates that the quality of the treatment received during encounters with the police is more important to individuals than the objective outcome of the interaction. Before we began our fieldwork activity, we listened to 39 calls made from members of the public to the 101 (non-emergency) and 999 (emergency) numbers to assess the quality of the treatment received. To determine the overall quality of the call, we considered criteria such as whether the call-handler remained polite, professional and respectful throughout the call, whether he or she took the caller's concerns seriously, appropriately assessing the risk and urgency of the call, and how well he or she established the caller's needs, managed the caller's expectations and explained what would happen next.

Although not necessarily representative of all calls responded to by Essex Police, from the 39 calls assessed, call handlers are polite, respectful and effective. They were good at obtaining a clear picture about the circumstances of the call, especially with more vulnerable callers.

¹⁴ *College of Policing – Authorised Professional Practice on National Decision Model*, College of Policing, December 2014. Available from: www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/national-decision-model/?s

During our fieldwork we also observed the way that staff at front counters deal with the public and in all cases a quality service is provided. Staff are consistently polite, respectful and deal with the issues in a sensitive and effective manner.

There is a clear commitment from senior officers within Essex Police to fully incorporate the National Decision Model (NDM)¹⁵ within the force's policing style, with a number of policies and procedures referencing the model. Officers and staff have a good understanding of the model, helped by it being included in the mandatory annual officer safety training.

There is a strong commitment to ensure that members of the public are treated fairly and with respect, and customer care teams undertake call-backs to victims of crime. Beyond this there is limited evidence of systems or processes which enable the force to review encounters and understand how members of the public are being treated.

The force is using body-worn video cameras with 400 currently available, primarily for use by response officers. These may present an opportunity for the force to review encounters to ensure that action taken is fair and carried out with respect.

While there is a reduction in the number of complaints of incivility reported, recent data from the national victims of crime survey reflects a decrease in levels of satisfaction in some areas. The force has commissioned an academic study by a local university to assess levels of public confidence and this will report the results later this year.

From the survey, 51 percent of respondents from the area covered by Essex Police agree that the police in their local area treat people fairly and with respect versus 7 percent who disagree. The remainder neither agree nor disagree or do not know. Although not directly comparable because of the small force sample size, across all forces in England and Wales, the figures are 54 percent and 7 percent respectively.

Officers and staff in Essex Police treat people they come into contact with fairness and respect. There is good understanding of the NDM across the force helped by it forming part of the mandatory annual officer safety training.

¹⁵ *College of Policing - Authorised Professional Practice on National Decision Model*, College of Policing, December 2014. Available from: www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/national-decision-model/?s

Summary of findings



Good

In Essex Police there is a clear understanding across the force of the importance of effective engagement with the public. A new corporate communications strategy is being developed to support its current policing plan.

Neighbourhood profiles are available and enable the force to understand the issues which are of concern to local people and the impact of local problems. Locally-based officers have a good understanding of their communities.

The force uses an extensive range of methods to ensure effective engagement with local people. Each neighbourhood policing area has its own dedicated page on the force website providing information about the local policing team responsible for the area.

The force has been successful in recruiting support from volunteers into a number of different roles. The opportunity to use volunteers to extend its reach and improve community engagement is recognised.

Through the training given on the National Decision Model the force ensures that officers have the knowledge and skills required to treat members of the public fairly and with respect.

To what extent are decisions taken on the use of stop and search and Taser fair and appropriate?

Introduction

Fairness, and the perception of fairness, is crucial to police legitimacy. It is therefore important that fairness is demonstrated in all aspects of policing, including the use of police powers. Some of the most intrusive powers available to the police are those involving stopping and searching people and the use of Taser.¹⁶

In autumn 2015, HMIC assessed the use of Taser and stop and search powers (specifically, compliance with the Best Use of Stop and Search scheme¹⁷ and how well reasonable grounds were recorded) to determine whether officers were using their powers fairly and in accordance with legal requirements and Authorised Professional Practice.

The inspection asked:

1. To what extent does the force ensure that it complies with the Best Use of Stop and Search scheme?
2. To what extent does the force ensure that Tasers are used fairly and appropriately?

To what extent does the force ensure that it complies with the Best Use of Stop and Search scheme?

Background

The primary role of the police is to uphold the law and maintain the peace. Unfair, unlawful or unnecessary use of stop and search powers make this task harder, with one of the direct consequences being a reduction in public trust and police legitimacy, and people being more likely to break the law and less willing to co-operate with the police. The purpose of stop and search powers are to enable officers to dismiss or confirm suspicions about individuals carrying unlawful items without exercising their power of arrest. The officer must have reasonable grounds for carrying out a search.

¹⁶ *College of Policing: Authorised Professional Practice on armed policing – legal framework and Taser*. Available from: www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/armed-policing/conducted-energy-devices-taser/

¹⁷ *Best Use of Stop and Search Scheme*, Home Office, 2014. Available from: www.gov.uk/government/publications/best-use-of-stop-and-search-scheme

In our 2013 inspection on stop and search,¹⁸ HMIC concluded that few forces could demonstrate that use of stop and search powers was based on an understanding of what works best to cut crime and rarely was it targeted at priority crimes in their areas. Forces had reduced the amount of data collected, to reduce bureaucracy, but this had diminished their capability to understand the impact of the use of stop and search powers on crime levels and community confidence.

The report was clear that, for a stop and search encounter to be effective and lawful, a police officer must have reasonable grounds for suspicion (based on specific and objective information) that a person is in possession of a stolen or prohibited item. Those grounds should be fully explained to the person being stopped and searched, and the person should be treated with fairness, courtesy and respect. In such circumstances, finding the item and arresting the offender or, alternatively, eliminating the suspicion and avoiding an unnecessary arrest are both valid and successful outcomes.

Following HMIC's 2013 inspection, on 26 August 2014 the Home Office published guidance to police forces on implementing the Best Use of Stop and Search scheme.

The principal aims of the scheme are for the police to establish greater transparency and community involvement in the use of stop and search powers and make sure that the powers are used in an intelligence-led way to achieve better outcomes for the public.

All police forces in England and Wales have signed up to the Home Office's Best Use of Stop and Search scheme. This inspection considered the extent to which forces are complying with the scheme.

Use of stop and search in Essex Police – Stop and search by volume

In the 12 months to 31 March 2015, Essex Police carried out 5,356 stops and searches. The table below shows this number per 1,000 population for Essex Police and the average of its most similar group of forces, as well as the change from the 12 months to 31 March 2014. The figures indicate that the force's use of stop and search powers is currently less than the average of its most similar group of forces.

¹⁸ *Stop and Search Powers – are the police using them effectively and fairly?*, HMIC, July 2013. Available from: www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/media/stop-and-search-powers-20130709.pdf

Figure 6: Number of stops and searches per 1,000 population carried out by Essex Police compared to the average of its most similar group (MSG) of forces, 12 months to 31 March 2015, and the percentage change from the 12 months to 31 March 2014

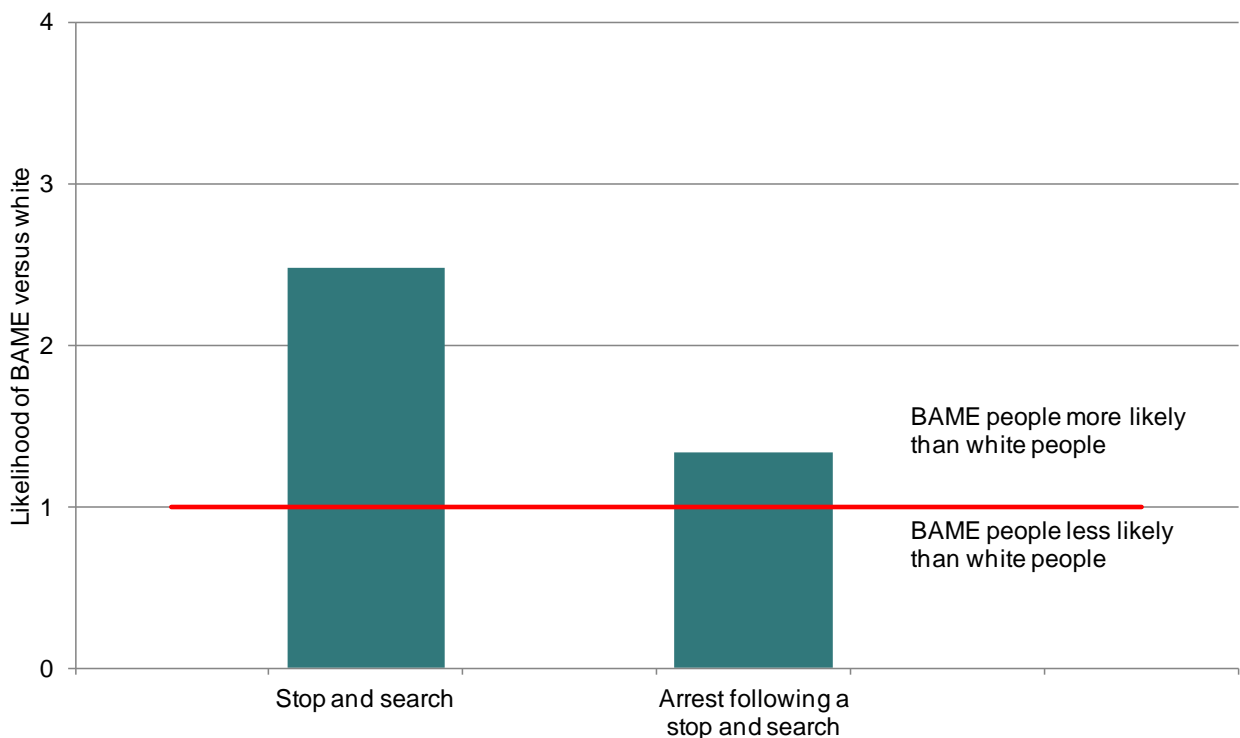
	Stops and searches per 1,000	Change from previous year
Essex	3.0	-42%
Essex's MSG average	6.3	-40%

Sources: Home Office Stop and Search data, Police Powers and Procedures 2014/15 and Office for National Statistics mid-2014 population estimates

Use of stop and search in Essex Police - Stop and search by ethnicity

HMIC looked at the published data on stops and searches by ethnicity and compared them with the most recent local population data by ethnicity (the 2011 Census). The data suggested that BAME people were statistically more likely to be stopped and searched by Essex Police than white people. Also, of the individuals who had been stopped and searched, BAME people were statistically more likely to be arrested by the force than white people.

Figure 7: A comparison between the likelihood of BAME and white people being stopped and searched and, separately, arrested following stop and search by Essex Police, 12 months to 31 March 2015



Sources: Home Office Stop and Search data, Police Powers and Procedures 2014/15 and Office for National Statistics 2011 Census

Caution needs to be taken before drawing assumptions from these data, especially where they might appear to suggest that forces are unfairly targeting particular ethnicities in their use of stop and search powers. Although that is one possible explanation, there are a number of other factors which could result in any disparity, including:

- the 2011 ethnicity figures no longer being representative of the force's local population;
- the difference between the ethnicity of the street population available to be stopped and searched at any given time with the general force population;
- stops and searches being carried out on people who are not resident in the area (and so are not counted as part of the population);
- disparity in the crime rates between different ethnicities;
- disparity in the number of repeat stops and searches carried out on individuals by ethnicity; or
- difficulties with the recorded data by ethnicity (while forces always record ethnicity when arresting a person as a result of being stopped and searched, they do not always record it when the encounter does not involve an arrest).

It is important that forces understand their data along with reasons for any apparent disparity to ensure that their use of the powers is fair.

Recording reasonable grounds for suspicion

In our 2013 inspection, we were concerned to see that, of the 8,783 stop and search records we examined across all forces in England and Wales, 27 percent did not include sufficient reasonable grounds to justify the lawful use of the power.

For Essex Police, the 2013 inspection showed that 61 of 200 records reviewed (31 percent) did not have sufficient reasonable grounds recorded.

For this inspection we reviewed 100 stop and search records provided by the force. As in the 2013 inspection, we reviewed the records to determine if reasonable grounds were recorded. In Essex Police of the records we reviewed 91 had been endorsed by a supervisor. We found that 8 of the 100 records (8 percent) did not have reasonable grounds recorded all of which had been endorsed by a supervisor. This suggests that some officers, and some supervisors given the task of reviewing records, do not understand fully what constitutes reasonable grounds.

While the forms we reviewed may not be representative of all stop and search records completed by the force, the result indicates that still some records do not have reasonable grounds recorded.

Compliance with the Best Use of Stop and Search scheme

There are several aspects to the Best Use of Stop and Search scheme (BUSS). As part of this inspection, HMIC considered the extent to which the force complied with each aspect of the scheme. Our analysis is set out in the table below.

The force adopted the BUSS scheme¹⁹ in August 2014, and complies with most of the elements of the scheme. Awareness of the strategic elements of BUSS among staff remains inconsistent, but this does not impact on their ability to use stop and search fairly and in accordance with the law. It is clear that officers and staff have an understanding of the NDM, and instruction on the model is included as part of the annual officer safety training.

A dedicated stop and search page is available on the force's external internet site and this contains general information about the relevant powers and links to the operational data collected by the force. It also provides a link to the Home Office consultation document on stop and search. The force also makes available its stop and search policy and procedure to the public on its internet site.

There is independent oversight of stop and search encounters through a youth scrutiny panel which meets every two months. The panel is currently made up of 10 young people, aged 16-25 years old, from diverse ethnic and social backgrounds. Panel members are invited to review all stop and search records from a number of local policing areas and the panel also has access to body-worn video recordings where these are available. Feedback from the scrutiny panel is provided to individual officers and their supervisors. The force report an improvement in the quality of the stop and search records since the independent scrutiny began.

Apart from new recruits, and some recently-promoted supervisors, officers do not receive any formal training in relation to the BUSS scheme. At the time of its adoption, officers were informed of the scheme through a personal email and this has been supported by further information on the force intranet site. However, it is clear that these messages are not successful and there is limited awareness of the strategic elements of BUSS among frontline officers.

Stop and search encounters are recorded on the force intelligence system in one of three ways: through a mobile data terminal; on a desktop computer at the police station; or through a telephone call to a central recording team. There is effective supervision of stop and search records which are automatically sent to the officer's supervisor for checking.

The knowledge of officers regarding the Best Use of Stop and Search scheme is inconsistent. The force is complying with most elements of the scheme.

¹⁹ *Best Use of Stop and Search Scheme*, Home Office, 2014. Available from: www.gov.uk/government/publications/best-use-of-stop-and-search-scheme

Feature of Best Use of Stop and Search scheme	HMIC assessment of compliance
Recording and publishing the outcomes following a stop and search	The force complies with this feature of the scheme. The force records the full range of outcomes, and also records whether an item is found and whether that item is linked to the item originally searched for. There is a dedicated stop and search page with links to the police.uk website, on which this stop and search data can be found.
Providing opportunities for the public to observe officers using the power	The force does not comply with this feature of the scheme. The force has not yet introduced a 'ride along' scheme to provide an opportunity for members of the public to view police activity first-hand. However, the youth panel provides independent oversight of stop and search encounters and makes use of body worn video in its review process.
Explaining to communities how the powers are being used following a 'community complaint'	The force complies with this feature of the scheme.
Reducing the number of people stopped and searched without suspicion under Section 60 ²⁰ of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994	The force complies with this feature of the scheme.
Monitoring the impact of stop and search – particularly on young people and black, Asian and minority ethnic groups	The force complies with this feature of the scheme. Disproportionality and the possible negative impact this can have on the BAME community and young adults is recognised. Data is provided to district commanders on a monthly basis for discussion at local management meetings and is raised at the youth scrutiny panel.

²⁰ 'No suspicion' searches are provided for under section 60 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994. Available from: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1994/33/section/60

To what extent does the force ensure that Tasers are used fairly and appropriately?

Background

Taser is a device designed to temporarily incapacitate a person through use of an electrical current which temporarily interferes with the body's neuromuscular system. This usually causes the person to freeze or fall over, giving officers time to restrain them.

It projects a pair of barbs or darts attached to insulated wires which attach to the subject's skin or clothing. The device has a maximum range of 21 feet and delivers its electrical charge in a five-second cycle which can be stopped, extended or repeated.

Taser is one of a number of tactical options available to police officers when dealing with an incident where there is the potential for harm – to potential victims and/or the public, the police officers themselves, or the subject.

The way a Taser is used by police officers is categorised into a range of escalating actions from drawing the device, through to it being 'discharged' (that is, fired, drive-stunned or angled drive-stunned). A table in Annex D outlines the definitions of the different levels of use.

When police are required to use force to achieve a lawful objective, such as making a lawful arrest, acting in self-defence or protecting others, that force must be reasonable in the circumstances. If it is not, the officer is open to criminal or misconduct proceedings. It may also constitute a violation of the human rights of the person against whom the force was used.

HMIC has not previously inspected how Taser is used either in, or between, forces. This inspection considered whether chief officers understand how Taser is being used across the force area, to satisfy themselves that it is being used fairly and appropriately, and whether Taser-trained officers are acting in accordance with the College of Policing's Authorised Professional Practice and the legal framework each time it is used.²¹

Use of Taser in Essex Police

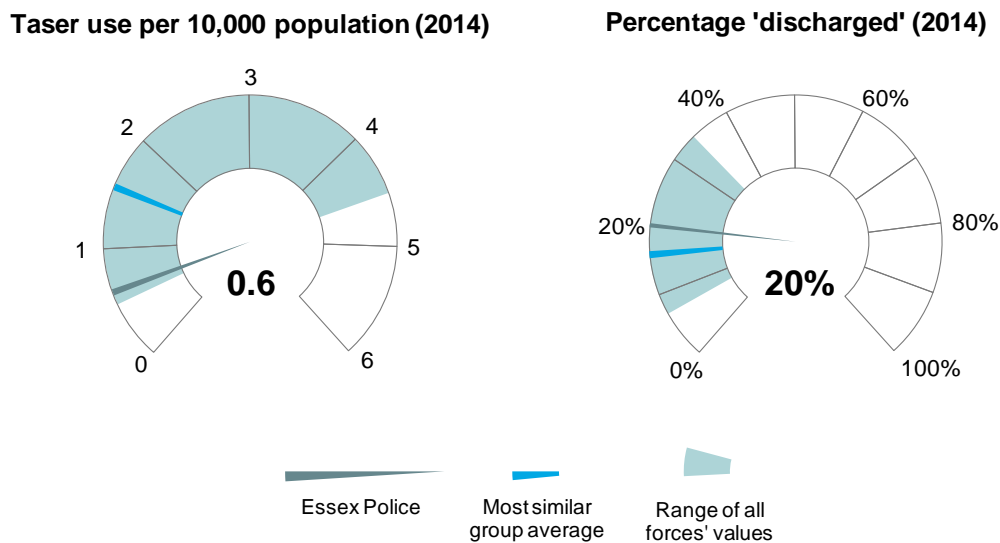
Every time a Taser is used in some capacity (this includes a full range of use from being drawn to being 'discharged') a police officer makes a record of its 'highest use' on a Taser deployment form.

²¹ *College of Policing: Authorised Professional Practice on armed policing – legal framework and Taser*. Available from: www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/armed-policing/conducted-energy-devices-taser/

Between 1 January and 31 December 2014, Taser was used in some capacity 110 times by Essex Police, representing 0.6 times for every 10,000 people in the force's area. This was less than the average for Essex Police's most similar group of forces, which was 1.5 times per 10,000 population.

During the same time period, Taser was 'discharged' on 22 occasions (out of the 110 times it was used in some capacity). This equated to 20 percent of overall use, greater than the force's most similar group average of 16 percent. The following figure shows the comparisons.

Figure 8: Use of Taser per 10,000 population and the proportion 'discharged' by Essex Police, 12 months to 31 December 2014²²



Sources: Office for National Statistics mid-2014 population estimates and Home Office Police use of Taser statistics

The Taser deployment form is a national document for gathering research information about the operational effectiveness of the Taser device, and any medical implications of its use. If officers fire the Taser, or if they use it in drive-stun or angled drive-stun mode, they are required to complete the full form, including a detailed description of the incident from commencement to resolution. The National Decision Model (NDM) is used on the form as a structure for officers to record this description. For any other use, such as 'drawn', 'aimed', 'red-dotted' or 'arced', officers are only required to provide brief details of the incident. A detailed description, structured around the NDM, is not required.

Before the fieldwork stage of the inspection, HMIC conducted a review of 20 Taser deployment forms provided by Essex Police.

²² City of London Police data was removed from figure 8 because of the very low number of times Taser was used by the City of London Police in 2014.

Although the findings of this review are not necessarily representative of all Taser forms completed by the force, they do provide an indication of the force's Taser activity. The forms showed that Taser had been fired once, red-dotted 12 times, aimed twice, and drawn five times.

Overall officers used Taser to protect themselves or others from a range of weapons, including several knives, a meat cleaver, an axe, and a machete.

The 'brief details' and the NDM sections of the forms provided us with evidence to suggest that the use of Taser was fair, lawful, and appropriate in 19 of the 20 cases reviewed. The one exception did not record sufficient information in the 'brief details' section to explain why the officers had to enter a property to confront a man rather than negotiate with him from outside.

Where officers had been required to complete the NDM section of the form, none of them contained any mention of the national Code of Ethics for the police service which is at the heart of the NDM, and should be considered at each stage, particularly under the 'Powers and Policy' section. This appears to be a national issue and is considered in our national Legitimacy report.

In Essex Police, the use of Taser is reported as part of the daily briefing process. The deployment of Taser and its use are also monitored through the force strategic firearms meeting. An increase in the availability and usage of body-worn video will increase opportunity for review.

The use of Taser is recorded in accordance with national guidance and is reviewed by the force's chief firearms instructor to ensure the use is both fair and appropriate. There was evidence that feedback was being given, where necessary, following this process, with issues being addressed through training or other interventions. There is evidence that officers have been removed from the list of authorised Taser users following handling errors such as accidental discharge.

The force's Taser training, and annual re-qualification, complies with College of Policing guidance and includes detailed consideration of the NDM. A process is in place for the selection of officers for Taser training. This includes a pass or fail assessment, and it is clear that trained officers understand the importance of applying the NDM to their use of Taser. These officers also explain that they are kept up-to-date with learning on the use of the device.

While officers are able to self-authorise their use of Taser in appropriate circumstances, the deployment of Taser is generally authorised by the control room supervisor or in pre-planned events by a qualified firearms commander.

Unlike stop and search, there is no independent scrutiny or oversight of Taser use. The force does not routinely make information on Taser use available to the public and the force does not provide a link to enable members of the public to access national data.

The force could be more transparent about how it uses Taser; both for individual high profile cases, and for use overall. This could enhance public confidence in the use of this tactic.

Based on our assessment of the Taser forms and our fieldwork findings, Taser is being used fairly and appropriately by Essex Police.

Summary of findings



Good

Essex Police is complying with the majority of elements in the Best Use of Stop and Search scheme. Data on stop and search are reviewed and published locally on the force website. Independent oversight and scrutiny of stop and search data is provided by a Youth Panel. Officers use stop and search effectively and fairly.

Complaints are fully investigated and monitored and discussed during scrutiny panel meetings. The dedicated internet page includes information about making a complaint and provides an opportunity for persons stopped to complete an anonymous online survey.

Revised authority levels for Section 60 authorisations have been implemented and these are reflected in force policy.

Taser-trained officers are trained to the right standard with a good understanding of the National Decision Model and the Code of Ethics, although the code is not always clearly recorded. The use of Taser is monitored at a senior level and reviewed by qualified staff and is reported in accordance with national guidance, although there is a lack of external, independent oversight. Taser is used fairly and appropriately by Essex Police.

Annex A – HMIC judgments

The categories are:

- outstanding;
- good;
- requires improvement; and
- inadequate.

Judgment is made against how legitimate the force is at keeping people safe and reducing crime, it is not an assessment of the overall legitimacy of policing. In applying the categories HMIC considers whether:

- the legitimacy of the force is achieving is good, or exceeds this standard sufficiently to be judged as outstanding;
- the legitimacy of the force requires improvement, and/or there are some weaknesses; or
- the legitimacy of the force is inadequate because it is considerably lower than is expected.

Annex B – Data methodology

Please note the following for the data.

- The sources of the data are provided in each section. For the force in numbers data, please see the relevant section.
- Workforce figures (based on full-time equivalents) were obtained from the Home Office annual data return 502. Most of these are available from the Home Office's published *Police workforce England and Wales statistics*, although figures may have been updated since the publication.
- Police staff includes section 38 designated officers (investigation, detention and escort).
- Data from the Office for National Statistics 2011 Census were used for the number and proportion of black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) people within each force area. While the numbers may have since changed, more recent figures are based only on estimates from surveys or projections.
- HMIC has been made aware of updates from particular forces on their Taser and stop and search data. However, for fairness and consistency, we have presented the data as published by the relevant sources.

Please note the following for the methodology applied to the data.

- Comparisons with most similar group of forces – In most cases, comparisons are made with the average of the force's most similar group (MSG) of forces. These are forces that have been found to be the most similar to the force in question, based on an analysis of demographic, social and economic characteristics which relate to crime. The following forces are in Essex Police's MSG: Hertfordshire, Avon and Somerset, Hampshire, Staffordshire, Leicestershire, Sussex and Derbyshire.
- Comparisons with averages – For some data sets, we state whether the force's value is 'below', 'above' or 'broadly in line with' the average. To calculate this, the difference to the mean average, as a proportion, is calculated for all forces. After standardising this distribution, forces that are more than half a standard deviation from the mean average are determined to be above or below the average, with all other forces being broadly in line.

In practice this means that, very approximately, a third of forces are above, a third are below, and the remaining third are in line with the average for each measure. For this reason, the distance from the average required to make a

force's value above or below the average is different for each measure so may not appear to be consistent.

- Statistical significance – When commenting on statistical differences, we use a significance level of 5 percent.

Ipsos MORI survey

The national survey was conducted with a sample of 26,057 people aged 16 plus across England and Wales, between 15 July and 6 August 2015. All interviews were conducted online through Ipsos MORI's online panel.

The Ipsos MORI online panel consists of a pre-recruited group of individuals or multiple individuals within households who have agreed to take part in online market and social research surveys. The panel is refreshed continually using a variety of sources and methods.

Respondents to this survey were recruited using an email invitation including a link to the online questionnaire. The survey invitations were managed to achieve robust numbers of interviews in each force area in order to provide indicative results at a force level. Final numbers of responses per force area ranged from 353 to 1,278.

Responses are based on all participants completing the relevant survey question. Results are weighted within the force area to the local age, gender and work status profile of the area, and an additional weight has been applied to the overall total to reflect the population breakdown by force area.

Annex C – The Best Use of Stop and Search scheme

The scheme includes a number of features with the aim of achieving greater transparency, community involvement in the use of stop and search powers and supporting a more intelligence-led approach, leading to better outcomes.

Recording and publishing outcomes

The Best Use of Stop and Search scheme requires forces to record and publish the following outcomes from the use of stop and search powers:

- Arrest;
- Summons/charged by post;
- Caution (simple or conditional);
- Khat or cannabis warning;
- Penalty notice for disorder;
- Community resolution; and
- No further action.

Forces adopting the scheme should therefore be providing the public with a much richer picture of how their use of stop and search powers are enabling them to reduce crime rates. The scheme also requires forces to show the link, or lack of one, between the object of the search (what the officer was looking for) and the outcome. This link helps to show how accurate officers' reasonable grounds for suspicion are by showing the rate at which they find what they were searching for during the stop and search.

Providing opportunities for the public to observe stop and search encounters

A core element of the scheme is the requirement that participating forces will provide opportunities for members of the public to accompany police officers on patrol when they might use stop and search powers.

It is important for the public, particularly young people and people from black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, to be able to see the police conducting their work in a professional way. Equally, it is also important for the police to understand the communities they serve – as this enables more effective policing through community co-operation and exemplifies 'policing by consent'.

By introducing 'lay observation', a process of two-way learning can take place, bringing the police closer to the public.

Implementing a community trigger for complaints

The scheme requires forces to implement a community complaints trigger to signpost the appropriate mechanism for members of the community to raise any concerns or complaints that they have with the way that a stop and search has been carried out by their police force. When the trigger is activated, the scheme requires forces to explain the use of the powers to community scrutiny groups.

Authorising searches under section 60 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994

Section 60 stop and search powers are among the most controversial of all such powers by virtue of the fact that individual police officers can stop and search a person without the need to have reasonable grounds for suspicion.

Once a section 60 authorisation is in place, officers do not need to have suspicions about a particular individual prior to stopping them; though an officer must explain to an individual who has been stopped that a section 60 authorisation is in place. This can lead to a large number of searches which result in community and police tensions. The scheme introduces a set of requirements that, when combined, will ensure that participating forces improve their use of this type of stop and search power. These include raising the authorisation level from inspector to senior officer (assistant chief constable or above), restricting the time a section 60 authorisation can be in force to 15 hours and communicating the purpose and outcomes of each section 60 authorisation in advance (where possible) and afterwards.

Monitoring the use of stop and search powers

The scheme requires forces to monitor the use of stop and search powers, in particular to determine their impact on black, Asian and minority ethnic people and young people.

Annex D – Types of use of Taser

Type of use Definition²³

Fired	The Taser is fired with a live cartridge installed. When the trigger is pulled, the probes are fired towards the subject with the intention of completing an electrical circuit and delivering an incapacitating effect.
Angled drive-stun	The officer fires the weapon with a live cartridge installed. One or both probes may attach to the subject. The officer then holds the Taser against the subject's body in a different area to the probe(s), in order to complete the electrical circuit and deliver an incapacitating effect.
Drive-stun	The Taser is held against the subject's body without a live cartridge installed, and the trigger is pulled with no probes being fired. Contact with the subject completes the electrical circuit which causes pain but does not deliver an incapacitating effect.
Red dot	The weapon is not fired. Instead, the Taser is deliberately aimed and then partially activated so that a laser red dot is placed onto the subject.
Arcing	Sparking of the Taser as a visible deterrent without aiming it or firing it.
Aimed	Deliberate aiming of the Taser at a targeted subject.
Drawn	Drawing of Taser in circumstances where any person could reasonably perceive the action as a use of force.

Tasers that have been 'discharged' are those that have been fired, angled drive-stunned or drive-stunned.

²³ *Police use of Taser statistics, England and Wales: 1 January to 31 December 2014*, Home Office, 2015. Available from www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-use-of-taser-statistics-england-and-wales-1-january-to-31-december-2014.