

PEEL spotlight report

Diverging under pressure

An overview of 2018/19 PEEL inspections



Foreword

This report gives an overview of our inspection reports into all 43 police forces in England and Wales. This follows the publication of our third and final group of 2018/19 PEEL (police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy) inspections.

We have reported on the performance of a further 14 forces. Most of these forces are performing well. Now these are published, we can reflect on our complete integrated PEEL assessment (IPA) 2018/19 findings to comment on the combined effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy of policing in England and Wales.

Our inspections show that policing across England and Wales is largely good. Forces are providing services under the joint pressures of rising demand and falling resources. And these pressures have not fallen equally across police forces.

Some forces have risen exceptionally well to the challenge. But this generalisation misses some noticeable differences between police forces and the service they provide. And the public are not a single, passive entity. They have a range of experiences of policing, not all of which will be good.

Our inspections show that this service varies across the country, dependent on the local force. Our inspection results allow us to show how the service provided by forces can vary between force areas, sometimes to a significant extent. We can link many of these variations to the pressures facing those forces.

We also show how this affects three different sections of the public: victims of crime, taxpayers and black people. Of course, some people will experience all three of these perspectives of policing. But most will experience at least one. In this way, we aim to show how the public are experiencing policing services that are diverging under the pressures they are facing.



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HM Inspector of Constabulary

7 February 2020

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About this report

PEEL

PEEL is our annual assessment of police forces in England and Wales.

We assess forces in three ways to find out:

- how effective they are at preventing and investigating crime, protecting vulnerable people and tackling serious organised crime;
- how efficiently they manage demand and plan for the future; and
- how legitimately they treat the public, how ethically they behave, and how they treat their workforce.

We judge forces as 'outstanding', 'good', 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate' in these categories (or pillars).

In 2018/19, we adopted an integrated PEEL assessment (IPA) approach. This combines the effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy pillars into a single inspection. We assess forces against every pillar every year. Each individual force report is based on robust evidence.

Emerging themes

Our 2018/19 PEEL inspections of forces are arranged into three groups. With each group of reports, we publish the themes we are identifying through our inspection work. Our first group included only 14 of the 43 forces in England and Wales. As a result, our conclusions had to be tentative. But we saw a system under pressure.

Our second group of a further 15 forces led us to highlight some themes with more confidence, reinforced by our first group of reports. We reported on a workforce under pressure.

We are now publishing our final 14 force reports. That means we can reflect on the findings to consider what these mean for some sections of the public and to look to the future. We are seeing a pattern of divergence under pressure.

Risk-based approach to inspection

As part of the IPA approach, we have looked for ways to reduce the intensity of inspection on forces. Based on our analysis of previous inspections and other information, we have used a risk-based approach, which means that well performing forces are inspected on fewer areas.

We carry out pre-inspection work to inform our risk-based approach. This includes examining investigation file quality, assessing arrangements to tackle serious and organised crime, and reviewing stop and search records. This means we hold information about all forces in many areas.

In this group of inspections, we used a risk-based approach to focus on the following elements in the 14 forces (see Table 1 below).

Table 1: Risk-based assessment of forces in the third group of forces in the 2018/19 integrated PEEL assessment

	Crime prevention	Crime investigation	Protecting vulnerable people	Serious organised crime	Specialist capabilities	Demand management	Future demand	Treating public with fairness and respect	Behaving ethically and lawfully	Treating workforce with fairness and respect
Avon and Somerset	Not inspected	Not inspected	Inspected	Not inspected	Inspected	Not inspected	Inspected	Inspected	Inspected	Not inspected
Bedfordshire	Inspected	Inspected	Inspected	Not inspected	Inspected	Inspected	Inspected	Not inspected	Inspected	Not inspected
Cambridgeshire	Inspected	Inspected	Inspected	Not inspected	Inspected	Inspected	Inspected	Not inspected	Inspected	Not inspected
Derbyshire	Not inspected	Inspected	Inspected	Not inspected	Inspected	Inspected	Inspected	Inspected	Inspected	Not inspected
Devon and Cornwall	Not inspected	Inspected	Inspected	Not inspected	Inspected	Inspected	Inspected	Inspected	Inspected	Not inspected
Gwent	Not inspected	Inspected	Inspected	Inspected	Inspected	Not inspected	Inspected	Inspected	Inspected	Not inspected
Hampshire	Not inspected	Not inspected	Inspected	Not inspected	Inspected	Not inspected	Inspected	Not inspected	Inspected	Not inspected

	Crime prevention	Crime investigation	Protecting vulnerable people	Serious organised crime	Specialist capabilities	Demand management	Future demand	Treating public with fairness and respect	Behaving ethically and lawfully	Treating workforce with fairness and respect
Lancashire	Inspected	Inspected	Inspected	Not inspected	Inspected	Not inspected	Inspected	Not inspected	Inspected	Inspected
Lincolnshire	Inspected	Inspected	Inspected	Not inspected	Inspected	Inspected	Inspected	Not inspected	Inspected	Inspected
Merseyside	Not inspected	Inspected	Inspected	Not inspected	Inspected	Not inspected	Inspected	Not inspected	Inspected	Not inspected
North Wales	Not inspected	Not inspected	Inspected	Not inspected	Inspected	Not inspected	Inspected	Inspected	Inspected	Inspected
Staffordshire	Not inspected	Inspected	Inspected	Not inspected	Inspected	Not inspected	Inspected	Not inspected	Inspected	Not inspected
Sussex	Inspected	Not inspected	Inspected	Not inspected	Inspected	Inspected	Inspected	Not inspected	Inspected	Inspected
West Yorkshire	Not inspected	Inspected	Inspected	Not inspected	Inspected	Not inspected	Inspected	Not inspected	Inspected	Not inspected

Summary of grades for the third group

On **effectiveness**, we graded 13 forces as good, and one as requiring improvement.

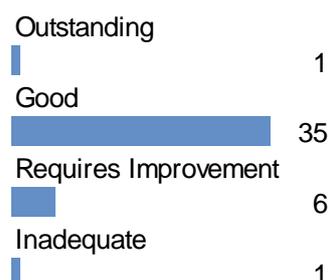
On **efficiency**, we graded three forces as outstanding, eight as good, and three as requiring improvement.

On **legitimacy**, we graded 13 forces as good, and one as requiring improvement.

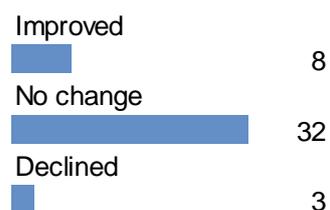
Because we inspect forces using a risk-based approach, it is a realistic possibility that a small minority of these results may be more positive than they would otherwise have been.

Overall grades for IPA 2018/19

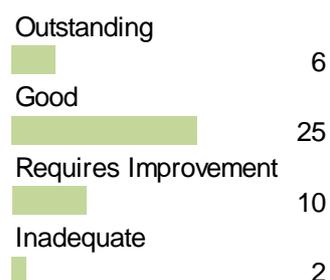
On **effectiveness**, we graded one force as outstanding, 35 as good, six as requiring improvement and one as inadequate.



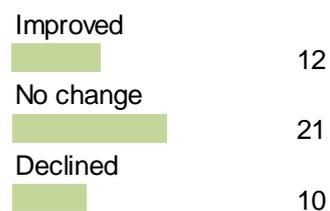
In comparison with our 2017 Effectiveness inspection, eight forces have improved their grading, and three forces have deteriorated in performance.



On **efficiency**, we graded six forces as outstanding, 25 forces as good, ten as requiring improvement and two as inadequate.



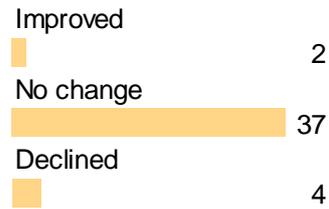
In comparison with our 2017 Efficiency inspection, 12 forces have improved their grading, and ten forces have deteriorated in performance.



On **legitimacy**, we graded one force as outstanding, 35 forces as good, six as requiring improvement and one as inadequate.



In comparison with our 2017 Legitimacy inspection, two forces have improved their grading, and four forces have deteriorated in performance.



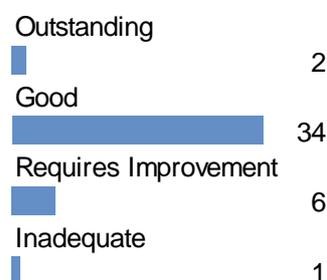
Because we inspect forces using a risk-based approach, it is a realistic possibility that a small minority of these results may be more positive than they would otherwise have been.

Grades by question for IPA 2018/19

Effectiveness

How effective is the force at preventing crime, tackling anti-social behaviour and keeping people safe?

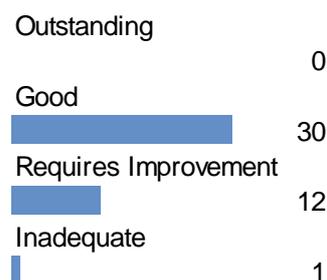
We graded two forces as outstanding, 34 as good, six as requiring improvement and one as inadequate.



Twenty-five forces had good or outstanding grades carried over from 2017 or 2016 due to our risk-based approach. Of the remaining 18 forces, six improved their performance, and seven deteriorated.

How effective is the force at investigating crime and catching criminals?

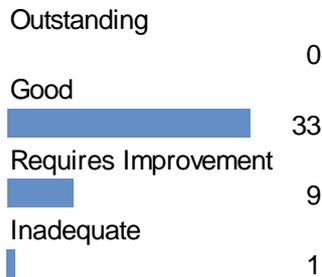
We did not grade any force as outstanding. We graded 30 as good, 12 as requiring improvement and one as inadequate.



Twelve forces had good grades carried over from 2017 or 2016 due to our risk-based approach. Of the remaining 31 forces, four improved their performance and eight deteriorated.

How effective is the force at protecting those who are vulnerable from harm, and supporting victims?

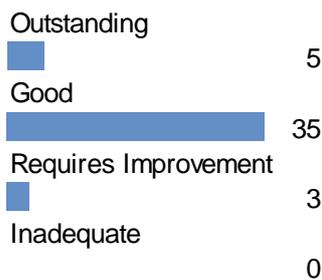
We did not grade any force as outstanding. We graded 33 forces as good, nine as requiring improvement and one as inadequate.



We inspected all forces on this question. Thirteen forces improved their performance, and three deteriorated.

How effective is the force at tackling serious and organised crime?

We graded five forces as outstanding, 35 as good and three as requiring improvement.



Thirty-four forces had their outstanding or good grades carried over due to our risk-based approach. Of the remaining nine forces, four improved their performance and one deteriorated.

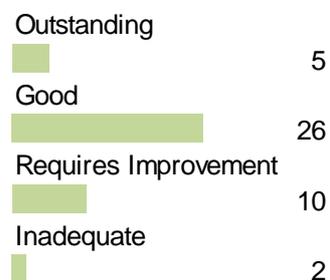
How effective are the force's specialist capabilities?

This question is ungraded.

Efficiency

How well does the force use its resources to meet the demand it faces?

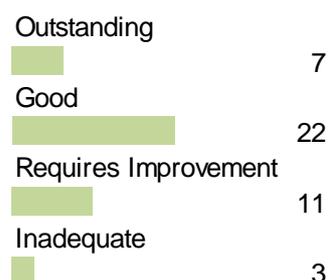
We graded five forces as outstanding. Twenty-six were good, ten required improvement and two were graded as inadequate.



Twenty-two forces had their grading from 2017 carried over under our risk-based approach. Of the remaining 21 forces, eight improved their performance and 11 deteriorated.

How well does the force plan for the future?

We graded seven forces as outstanding, 22 as good, 11 as requiring improvement and three as inadequate.

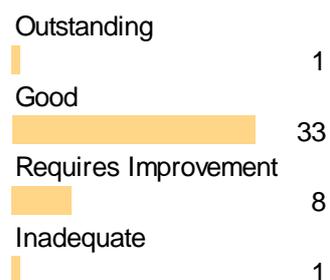


All forces were inspected on this question. Ten forces improved their performance, and 11 deteriorated.

Legitimacy

How well does the force treat the people it services with fairness and respect?

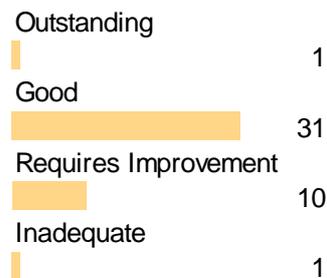
We graded one force as outstanding, 33 as good, eight as requiring improvement and one as inadequate.



Twenty-four forces had their good or outstanding grade from 2017 carried over in our risk-based approach. Of the remaining 19, no force improved its performance, and three forces deteriorated.

How well does the force ensure that its workforce behaves ethically and lawfully?

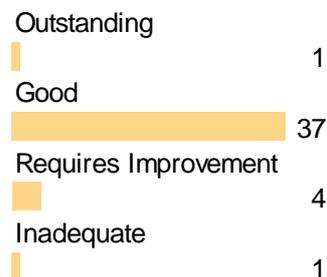
We graded one force as outstanding, 31 forces as good, ten as requiring improvement and one as inadequate.



All forces were inspected on this question. Six improved their performance while eight deteriorated.

How well does the force treat its workforce with fairness and respect?

We graded one force as outstanding, 37 as good, four as requiring improvement and one as inadequate.



Twenty-five had their grades from 2017 carried over under our risk-based approach. Of the remaining 18 forces, nine improved their performance while one deteriorated.

Overview of findings from IPA 2018/19

The effectiveness of forces is improving, but significant risks remain

Forces have greatly improved their ability to protect vulnerable people and support victims. Almost all the frontline staff we spoke to have a good understanding of vulnerability and its importance. Over half of forces attracted positive comment on their understanding of the nature and scale of vulnerability. This area has seen the greatest improvement in grades since our previous inspection.

But we have not graded any force as outstanding. Six forces had causes of concern highlighted. For four forces, these related to assessing risk in the control room and the initial response to victims. One referred to the quality and consistency of assessing risks posed to domestic abuse victims, and one referred to how the force managed registered sex offenders. These are the most serious examples of issues that affect forces more widely. Nine further forces need to address their assessment of risk and initial response. Five others need to improve their assessment of risk posed to domestic abuse victims, and four further forces need to improve how they manage registered sex offenders. These are not the only issues forces need to improve, but they are significant areas of risk. These patterns mean that many vulnerable people are still not getting the protection and support they need.

Forces continue to improve how effectively they tackle serious and organised crime. There is good use of intelligence to prioritise policing against organised crime groups. Forces are increasingly identifying the threats to their communities and are accessing regional and national support as appropriate to tackle these threats. Many forces need to improve their understanding of the effect they are having on organised crime. To do this, forces need to have the capacity and capability to take a longer-term approach to analysis. There is little evidence that forces are using community intelligence to inform this.

We continue to find a lack of capacity in neighbourhood policing to analyse and use intelligence. A lack of analysis and sharing of best practice reduces how effective neighbourhood policing is at keeping people safe. It also reduces its ability to inform the fight against serious and organised crime.

Victims of crime face increasingly divergent experiences of policing

No one chooses to become a victim of crime. And they have no choice as to which police force investigates that crime. There are significant differences between forces in too many areas of investigation. All victims of crime have the right to expect that forces will allocate their crime to someone with the appropriate skills to investigate it. But eight forces need to improve their allocation of crimes to make sure they assign them to appropriately trained staff. A further four forces allocate crimes so poorly that it is a cause of concern. There also needs to be enough capacity for officers and staff to investigate properly. We have said that three forces need to improve this capacity. A further three forces have such limited capacity that it is a cause of concern.

An increasing number of investigations require digital evidence from mobile phones, computers and other electronic devices. These will often belong to victims, who cannot access the devices while they are awaiting examination. All forces have a prioritisation system, but most victims of crime will wait while their device is in a queue. In the best performing forces, this queue may be a few months long. In the poorest performing force, it can take 18 months. Seven forces need to improve their ability to retrieve digital information to reduce delays in these investigations. In a further three forces, the backlogs are so excessive that they are a cause of concern.

Supervision of officers and staff is necessary to maintain standards of investigation. Seventeen forces need to improve the capacity of their supervisors so they can direct and support investigators. In all these forces, there was evidence that their investigations were suffering due to this lack of supervision. Without direction and support, workloads can become unmanageable and the time taken to investigate increases. Investigators may not follow all lines of enquiry and evidence may be lost. For a victim of crime, this means a longer wait to find out if there will be some justice in their case, and less likelihood of there being any justice. This can increase the distress of being a victim of crime and can lead to loss of faith in the criminal justice system. It can mean that victims withdraw from the justice process altogether.

The likelihood of the police bringing someone to justice following a criminal investigation is decreasing. In England and Wales, a suspect was charged in 7.8 percent of recorded crimes last year, down from 9.1 percent the year before. There has also been a notable increase in the proportion of crimes closed because the victim does not support, or no longer supports, a prosecution. This rose to 22.6 percent of recorded crime last year, up from 20 percent the year before.¹ Forces do not do enough to make progress with cases using alternative sources of evidence. And there is limited understanding as to why so many victims seem to be losing faith in the criminal justice system. Ten forces need to improve their understanding of the outcomes of their investigations to ensure they are effectively pursuing justice on behalf of victims.

Overall, there are stark differences in the investigation a victim of crime will receive, depending on the police force responsible for investigating it. This variation has many causes. The number of crimes recorded by police has risen, the complexity of many crimes is increasing, and there are fewer officers and staff to investigate.

¹ 12 months to 31 March 2019 compared with 12 months to 31 March 2018. Data refers to all crime excluding fraud.

These changes have not fallen equally across all police forces. But some have risen to the challenge better than others. Good leadership, management and scrutiny can lead to significant improvements. So, forces need to understand and address this divergence in the experiences of victims of crime.

For this reason, we are introducing a victim service assessment into our PEEL inspections. We will track victims' experiences of a force, including the initial call and response, the recording, allocation and investigation of crime, and the appropriateness of the outcome. This will aid understanding and guide and encourage improvements.

Forces are showing the greatest divergence in their efficiency

When it comes to efficiency, force performance varies widely. We graded six forces as outstanding, and two as inadequate. This variation is greater than in either our effectiveness or efficiency grades. Central to a force's efficiency is its ability to understand the demand for its services and the resources available to meet that demand. Forces that don't understand their current demand often have difficulties meeting it. This results in them experiencing significant difficulties in being effective. In some forces, we identified causes of concern about their efficiency, which also caused concern about their effectiveness.

Efficiency is a thread that runs through every aspect of policing. It is wider than just responding to calls for service. Forces need to have a deeper understanding of demand, which includes improving the quality of service at first contact and making sure their workforces have the skills and capabilities needed to meet their understood and predicted demand. Forces need to improve their understanding of capacity to make sure they are maximising the opportunities that a highly skilled workforce can bring.

The variation between forces becomes starker when considering how well forces are planning for the future. Many forces have a good understanding of how demand may be different in future. But few have sustainable plans in place to meet their predictions. Our [observations on force management statements](#) showed that forces need to be able to identify these predictions so that any future difficulties in meeting demand are anticipated. We expect that the forces that are currently outstanding in their future planning will go on to perform better than those that require improvement or are inadequate. As these are often the same forces currently struggling to be effective, there is a significant danger that future policing services will become increasingly divergent.

All taxpayers should know they are contributing to an efficient police force

Policing is funded by taxpayers' money. There is variation in how forces benefit from the funding they receive. Central grants are funded through general taxation, with local funding coming from council tax payments. The balance between these varies between forces. This can be because of historical funding arrangements, reductions in the central grant, the willingness of police and crime commissioners to raise significant funds through local taxation, and the ability of local taxpayers to afford them.

Our [value for money profiles](#) provide comparative data on how police forces spend their money, alongside a wide range of information about each force's performance. They are also an indication as to how forces allocate their money across their policing priorities in comparison with the forces most similar to them. The value for money profiles therefore show the funding levels for each force, but do not show whether the levels are sufficient to meet the demands of that force. Force management statements and our inspections can provide some more information.

Information and communications technology (ICT) poses continued concerns. There are examples of forces making significant investment in computer systems that are not providing the benefits they should. Worse, for a few forces, these poor systems or difficulties implementing new systems have reduced the forces' effectiveness. There has been some progress on forces working together to share systems. But too many systems are still procured separately, are not interoperable, and have varying benefits for the forces and therefore the communities they are serving. No taxpayer is getting full value for money in this area, but some are paying more than others, and in some cases they are receiving a lower quality service. There needs to be more openness about how forces are spending their investments in ICT and the benefits they are achieving.

Policing has tried to make savings over the past decade through forces collaborating with each other. But there remain significant differences between forces in the range and depth of these collaborations. Savings are important but shouldn't be the main reason for collaborating. Forces must continue to collaborate in the interest of the communities they serve, and to become more efficient and effective. We are concerned that forces aren't always achieving the full benefits of collaborations. Forces continue to review collaborations, and this has led to several of them discontinuing their agreements. There are problems with the ending of a significant strategic collaboration between West Mercia Police and Warwickshire Police, which jeopardises not just the efficiency of both forces but their effectiveness as well.

We are clear that the planned recruitment of an additional 20,000 police officers is welcome but will not solve all the problems we see in policing. The increased numbers will have the most positive effect in forces that understand their demand and know what skills and capabilities they need to meet the policing challenge. More efficient forces have a better understanding of their current and future demand and have mapped their workforce skills and capabilities. These forces will be more able to recruit the officers they need and develop the required skills. But gaining more officers will only mask poorer performance if forces fail to solve long-standing problems or are unable to effectively match resources to demand. On its own, the increase in police numbers will not bring about the transformation in service and performance that some forces need to achieve.

The taxpayer will rightly expect to see a return on this investment in policing. In our next round of inspections, we shall be examining the efficiency of the main services each force provides, as well as assessing the force's overall efficiency. This change will help taxpayers understand how their investment is being allocated to forces and how it is used to improve local policing services.

More effort is required to drive improvements in police legitimacy

We have graded most forces as good for their legitimacy. But it is the pillar with the least movement in grades since our 2017 legitimacy inspection. It takes effort to maintain performance against a backdrop of reduced resources and rising crime. But this also suggests that there is less determination to improve and less innovation in this area. Where policing has focused its attention, it has made improvements. Many more forces are good at treating their workforce fairly, in comparison with our 2017 legitimacy inspections. This change is driven by the leadership and investment aimed at improving the wellbeing of the workforce. Forces have also acted to improve their rates of recruitment of black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) candidates. As of 31 March 2019, 7 percent of police officers in England and Wales identified as BAME. This is the highest proportion ever, but it is still lower than the general population and there has been less progress in attracting recruits with other protected characteristics. And there is still more to do to ensure that this more diverse workforce is retained and able to progress. Only with significant improvements in this area will the police workforce begin to be representative of the communities it serves.

We reported in our PEEL spotlight report, [*Shining a light on betrayal: Abuse of position for a sexual purpose*](#), on how well forces are ensuring their workforce behaves ethically and lawfully. Many forces have invested time and resources in tackling the problem of officers and staff abusing their position for a sexual purpose. They have shown the necessary leadership to ensure a more ethical and lawful workforce. Other forces have much more to do to be proactive in looking for signs of this corruption and having the resources available to tackle it once identified. Ensuring they vet all officers and staff to the correct standard is a serious problem for some forces. It is a cause of concern for three forces and an area for improvement for a further nine forces. Forces not only need to vet their workforces, but also consider how their vetting processes may disproportionately affect people from BAME backgrounds. Twelve forces need to improve how they understand and address this disproportionality, and for one force it formed part of their cause of concern about vetting.

Forces need to do more to address the disproportionate use of police powers

All police forces make efforts to help individuals and communities participate in policing through community engagement. Leaders need to show commitment to make sure that this engagement is effective. This is the case in most forces. When people have positive perceptions of the police – when they consider the police to be legitimate in their use of powers – they are more likely to help them and not break the law. The police then gain more information and intelligence, making them more successful in understanding and acting on the greatest threats to their communities. Getting local communities involved in policing is not a box-ticking exercise but is fundamental to maintaining public safety. And the negative effect of poor police and community relations should not be underestimated.

People who identify as BAME are 4.3 times more likely to be stopped and searched than white people. But the disparity is particularly poor for black people, who are 9.7 times more likely to be stopped and searched than people who identify as white.² This disproportionate effect is long-standing and may be deteriorating as the use of stop and search powers increases. It is important that police forces fully understand the cause of their disproportionate use of stop and search. They need to be able to show that their use of stop and search powers is consistently reasonable and fair. And they have committed to explaining disparity in policing or reforming to remove it.³

In our 2017 legitimacy inspection, this was a cause of concern for policing. We issued a detailed recommendation to make sure that forces understand how and why they are using these powers. We are disappointed that no force has fully complied with this recommendation.

We inspected 19 forces in this area. Together they conducted over 75 percent of all stop and searches carried out in England and Wales. Disappointingly, only nine of these forces had sufficiently trained their officers to recognise and overcome unconscious bias to help them treat people fairly. And while all forces train their officers in conflict management skills, there is little training on communication skills such as showing empathy, listening, and explaining their actions. Investment in these areas would improve the quality of interactions with people the police stop and search and help reduce the need to use conflict management skills.

Independent scrutiny of the use of police powers is the best way to make sure people are being treated fairly.⁴ It makes it possible for people to see how and why the police are using these powers and to assess what effect their use may have had. All forces should have external scrutiny arrangements to provide this transparency and reassurance to their communities. It also helps the force understand the effect of its use of these powers on different communities. Five forces were not monitoring a wide enough range of data to allow them to fully understand how these powers are being used. Six of the forces we inspected had insufficient external scrutiny arrangements. And at the time of our inspections, only ten forces reviewed body-worn video footage of stop and search encounters as part of either their internal or external scrutiny. Forces that don't do this are missing opportunities to demonstrate their professional use of these powers or learn about the realities of the use of the power and the effect it can have on people.

² Data from [Police powers and procedures, England and Wales, year ending 31 March 2019](#), Home Office, 2019. Note about the data: this is calculated using the population for each ethnic group from the 2011 census. There may have been changes to the population over time.

³ [NPCC Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Strategy 2018-2025](#), NPCC, 2018

⁴ [The Lammy Review: An independent review into the treatment of, and outcomes for, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic individuals in the Criminal Justice System](#), The Rt Hon David Lammy MP, 2017

The use of force by police on members of the public is a further area where great harm can be caused to community relations. In 2016, the National Police Chiefs' Council introduced a minimum recording requirement to make sure all forces were recording data about their use of force. All but two of the forces we inspected had complied with this requirement. But nine forces were not effectively monitoring a comprehensive set of data, and nine did not have effective external scrutiny arrangements. This means they cannot show that they use force in a fair and appropriate way. Also, they cannot learn lessons and reduce the likelihood of officers, staff or the subjects of force being injured.

As more data becomes available as to how, why and on whom the police use force, some worrying but familiar patterns are emerging. These [Home Office statistics](#) are experimental and undergoing evaluation for their quality. But they suggest that in incidents involving the use of force, incidents with black people are more likely to involve more serious levels of force than incidents with white people. Forces need to take the same steps for their use of force as we have recommended for their use of stop and search powers. They can then demonstrate that they are consistently reasonable and fair in their use of force and show their communities that they are legitimate holders of the power to do so.

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