



Foreword

This is my report to the Secretary of State under section 54 of the Police Act 1996.

It contains my assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of policing in England and Wales, based on the inspections we carried out between May 2019 and March 2020.

This report's structure and purpose

Part 1 contains my assessment of the state of policing in England and Wales. In making my assessment, I have drawn on the inspections we carried out over the past year, as well as the findings and reports of other organisations, and other information and analysis available to me.

Part 2 gives an overview of the findings of the inspections we carried out between 3 May 2019 and 30 March 2020, including a summary of our police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy (PEEL) inspections.

Part 3 sets out a full list of our inspections and other work in the year in question.

The results of our individual inspections enable an assessment of the performance of individual forces, or a more general assessment of performance in specific aspects of policing. I hope that people, including the public, who hold policing to account will draw on the overall conclusions in this report just as much as they draw on the specific conclusions we have reached for each force.

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

After it emerged in China in December 2019, severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (the virus that causes COVID-19) spread rapidly to other parts of the world.

This included the United Kingdom, where the first reported cases were in January 2020.

On 30 January 2020, the World Health Organization declared an international public health emergency. In common with most other developed countries, the United Kingdom entered a period of great uncertainty and disruption to everyone's home and working lives, on a scale not seen since the Second World War. It has profound implications for policing and the public, now and for the future.

Most of the commentary in this report relates to policing in 2019, before COVID-19 began to affect the United Kingdom. However, because this report also covers the period between January 2020 and March 2020, I have included some commentary on COVID-19. This covers three specific issues:

- first, my initial observations on the quality of the police response to the emergency (up to May 2020);
- second, COVID-19's longer-term impact on policing, which can reasonably be anticipated to be considerable, including the implications for much-needed police reform; and
- third, COVID-19's impact on our organisation and our inspection programme.

I explore the first two issues later in this report. I will deal with the third now.



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Suspension of the inspection programme

Police force inspections are important, but they are usually not urgent. In March 2020, in consultation with the Home Office, the HMICFRS Board made a series of decisions designed to support the Government's efforts to implement the national coronavirus action plan¹. These included providing support to police forces.

All inspections create administrative work for forces. We always do everything we reasonably can to minimise this, but it can't be eliminated. Because of the extraordinary demands on forces created by COVID-19, we decided to suspend indefinitely all inspection work needing appreciable input from police forces. There were isolated exceptions, where forces asked us to proceed with an urgent inspection visit. We agreed to these while following the social distancing guidelines.



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Staff redeployments

Effective inspections require police experience in the teams carrying them out, so our workforce always includes a cohort of experienced police officers. These officers come to us on temporary secondment from their home forces. While working with us, they inspect police forces other than their home forces.

Because of the urgent need for the police to assemble and deploy extra capacity during the emergency, we offered to support any requests from forces for their seconded police officers to return temporarily. As we anticipated, many such requests followed. Most of our seconded officers returned to their home forces, where their skills and experience were in particularly high demand.

We made a similar decision to support the temporary redeployment of civil servants who work at HMICFRS. Many were temporarily redeployed to other parts of the Government, to support vital work in managing the emergency response. At the request of the Home Office and the National Police Chiefs' Council, we also temporarily redeployed staff to work in the National Police Coordination Centre².

Office closure

As many other organisations did, we temporarily closed our offices. We asked the rest of our staff to carry out their normal duties while working from home. Many did so while looking after their children during school closures, or while caring for vulnerable friends, neighbours or relatives who needed to self-isolate.

With a temporarily depleted and remote workforce, we used the period of suspension as an opportunity to carry out some other vitally important inspection-related tasks. These included the design work for our future PEEL inspections and preparing for our inspection programme to resume.

Because of the extraordinary demands on forces created by COVID-19, we decided to suspend indefinitely all inspection work needing appreciable input from police forces.

Looking ahead, for our PEEL inspections in 2020 and beyond, we intend to adopt an intelligence-led continuous assessment approach.

I would like to place on record my very great thanks to all HMICFRS staff, whether they returned to their home police forces, supported the National Police Coordination Centre, supported the fire and rescue sector or other parts of government, or stayed at the inspectorate. In these extremely difficult and unusual circumstances, they have continued to work hard, support each other and display our values in everything they do.

Changes to our PEEL programme

Since its introduction in 2015, our PEEL programme has continued to evolve. In 2019, we completed the round of integrated PEEL assessments that we started in 2018. Looking ahead, for our PEEL inspections in 2020 and beyond, we intend to adopt an intelligence-led continuous assessment approach. This will involve making greater use of evidence collected throughout the year.

Part 2 of this report describes in more detail the results of the 2018–20 integrated PEEL assessments and our plans for PEEL 2020 (subject to the inspection programme starting again).

HMI Phil Gormley

In March 2020, HMI Phil Gormley tendered his resignation. I pay warm tribute to Mr Gormley for his achievements as HMI with responsibility for inspecting the forces of northern England.

Mr Gormley brought to HMICFRS his substantial experience in policing and put it to very good use here, to the considerable advantage of our organisation, policing and the public.

I wish Mr Gormley every success in his new role as chief executive of East Anglia Children's Hospices, a charity that I know is very close to his heart.

Contributions to my assessment

My assessment is enriched substantially by the contributions of others.

As in previous years, when compiling my assessment, I wrote to chief constables, local policing bodies (police and crime commissioners and their equivalents)³ and other interested parties. I asked them to set out their views. As ever, I am indebted to them for the large number of very helpful responses I received.

Another major contribution to my assessment comes from HMICFRS staff, whose unique, highly valuable perspective comes from their day-to-day work inspecting police forces.

A substantial proportion of our inspection work is carried out jointly with the other criminal justice inspectorates: Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons; Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation; and Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate. Their expertise adds considerable value to our work.

For all these contributions, I offer my warm thanks. I have been struck by the broad consensus across all these groups, particularly on the immense demands faced by the police and other parts of the criminal justice system.

Sir Thomas P Winsor

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary