

HMICFRS PEEL Inspection 2021/22

Victim service assessment

(Not Graded)

1. The victim service assessment reviewed the victim's journey from reporting a crime, through to the outcome stage. A review of crime files was undertaken in June 2021 focusing on six areas: call handling; deployment and response; crime recording; crime screening and allocation; investigations; and outcomes.
2. The findings from the crime review informed the wider core questions within the PEEL assessment framework. As a result, the narrative provided under this section is duplicated later, therefore further detail is provided within the relevant sections for the purpose of this summary.

Crime data integrity

(Outstanding)

3. HMICFRS graded the Force outstanding at recording crime for a second consecutive assessment, with a compliance rate of 96.7%.
4. The report praises the work undertaken to accurately record domestic abuse and recognises the importance of identifying and safeguarding potentially vulnerable victims from further abuse, ensuring they are referred to support services. The recording of crime within 24 hours was also referenced and continues to be effective, ensuring investigations commence promptly.
5. The Force was reported to have strong governance and leadership for crime recording with senior officers reviewing compliance and regularly emphasising to staff the importance of recording crimes correctly, creating a culture that recognises its contribution to supporting victims and providing an effective service.
6. The report identifies one area for improvement (AFI) which centres around the collection of victim's protected characteristics. This is a national issue with all forces having a similar recommendation set by HMICFRS as part of thematic reports into both rape and violence against women and girls. As a result, a significant amount of work is being conducted to produce a nationally agreed position on protected characteristics in police systems. The Force is reviewing current working practices and will progress this AFI in line with the national direction.

Engaging with and treating the public with fairness and respect

(Good)

7. Kent was praised for its work with communities and working proactively with other organisations to identify vulnerable victims, taking action to reduce risk and harm and using a range of prevention and enforcement measures.
8. The Problem-Solving Taskforce were highlighted as innovative in the report. This team, funded by the PCC target areas where crime issues have been identified and work within the community increasing engagement and providing reassurance when required.
9. Regular ward surgeries were found to take place with dedicated Community Liaison Officers building relationships with people from diverse and vulnerable communities to better support, prevent and detect crime.
10. In respect of stop and search and use of force, Kent Police were found to treat the public fairly and with respect. The communication programme provided to new recruits was found to be effective, enhancing knowledge, skills and understanding of human interaction including non-verbal communication and how attitude affects behaviour. In addition, the Independent Police Advisory Group (IPAG) were noted as having a diverse membership and providing scrutiny to the stop and search process.
11. The report identifies one AFI in respect of surveying victims of crime and assessing public satisfaction. The Force has effective processes in place to obtain feedback from victims of hate crime, domestic abuse and rape and this is positively referenced in the report. Wider surveys of the public take place more informally such as the Force open days in which thousands of members of the public are surveyed. The Force is considering the implications of this AFI in respect of cost, benefit, and current provision to determine next steps.

Preventing crime and anti-social behaviour

(Good)

12. The Force was assessed as good at preventing and deterring crime. The Force's proactive work with repeat vulnerable callers, known as Op Engage, was highlighted as innovative. The Force ensures through continued oversight by a dedicated PCSO, that appropriate referrals are made to partner agencies to ensure support is provided.
13. The Force prioritisation of prevention, anti-social behaviour and vulnerability was commended. The operating model of the Force was recognised for its ability to identify the most vulnerable and reduce risk and harm. The positive work with young people to identify and prevent harm or criminality through dedicated schools' officers was cited as a positive addition and the introduction of the three multi-agency taskforces which tackle crime, prevent violence, and safeguard those most vulnerable in the community was recognised for the excellent work undertaken.
14. The multi-agency approach taken by the Force, which includes co-located teams with councils, ensures a joint response to anti-social behaviour and was found to be highly effective. The use of volunteers and the Special Constabulary was also favourably referenced.
15. The one AFI set out the need for a structured training programme for neighbourhood policing officers and staff. The Force currently provides a three-tier structure of training for neighbourhood officers dependent on their specific role with an ambition to develop this further. The Force is currently undertaking a review to ensure it can deliver the strategic aims of the recently published Beating Crime Plan, Serious Violence Duty Statutory Guidance and Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy. The demand, resources, and training of those involved in neighbourhood policing will be reviewed as part of this.

Responding to the public

(Requires Improvement)

16. The Force was assessed as answering calls for service (both emergency and non-emergency calls) promptly and regularly achieving or exceeding the standards set nationally. The specialist support and response to domestic abuse victims through the Vulnerability Hub was also highlighted, enabling the provision of early advice and immediate evidence capture. The working hours of the Vulnerability Hub are being expanded as part of further improvements being made to the investigation of domestic abuse which will provide a greater service to more victims.
17. Officer awareness of vulnerability and knowledge of safeguarding responsibilities when attending incidents was commented on positively. Once a crime is reported, it was found to be allocated to an appropriate department for investigation and HMICFRS reported officers were conscientious in keeping victims updated.
18. The wellbeing provided to those involved with or responding to emergency calls was recognised. Trauma management processes, availability of counselling, internal culture boards and the priority afforded to officer safety were a few of the examples detailed in the report.
19. Four AFIs were identified which focused on identification of vulnerable repeat callers, provision of crime prevention and scene preservation advice, response to incidents and capacity and capability of response officers.
20. Whilst the Force acknowledges the findings from the report, processes, governance, and scrutiny are well established in respect of identifying repeat callers and HMICFRS found positive practice. Further enhancements in respect of quality assurance and professional development have been undertaken since the conclusion of the inspection which has strengthened the position further.
21. The Force complies with the National Contact Management Strategy and National Contact Management Learning Programme. Basic crime prevention and scene preservation advice is provided where appropriate and detailed information is available on the Kent Police website. The recently launched 'My Community Voice' which is a web-based product that people can sign up to at no cost, will also provide crime prevention advice.

22. Of paramount importance when responding to calls is safety of the victims and witnesses, the wider public on the roads of Kent and the officers being sent. HMICFRS found that in the majority of cases attendance times were acceptable and the prioritisation and response to calls for service were appropriate to the circumstances of the caller and incident. The Force will continue to monitor this.
23. The Force recognises the need to review the capacity and capability of response teams and work is underway to review current resources against the allocation model in line with demand and performance. Officers within response teams perform an extraordinary job day in and day out, keeping people safe, supporting victims, and bringing offenders to justice.

Investigating crime

(Requires Improvement)

24. HMICFRS reported that Kent Police understands how to carry out quality investigations on behalf of victims and their families through effective crime investigation policies and governance, which reviews performance against a clear set of standards.
25. Six AFIs are set out within the report focused on resourcing, allocation, investigation plans, evidence led prosecution, victim needs assessment and auditable records when a victim withdraws support from a prosecution. The Force, for some time, have been progressing a variety of initiatives to improve the quality of investigations. A monthly Crime Management and Investigative Quality Board chaired by the Assistant Chief Constable for Crime focuses on raising investigative standards, developing, and supporting the investigative workforce and setting clear standards. The introduction of the Quality Assurance Framework whereby an assessment is made on the quality of over 400 investigations a month is now well established. This offers extensive guidance and support to officers and supervisors to ensure they have the knowledge and skills with which to undertake quality investigations. This has resulted in improved performance.
26. The Force responded promptly to concerns raised by HMICFRS at the conclusion of their inspection in respect of the resourcing of the Vulnerability Investigation Teams (VITs) who investigate domestic abuse. A detailed review of high-risk domestic abuse reports was undertaken to ensure the investigations were effective and safeguarding had taken place. This review concluded that the risk to victims was appropriately managed. Similarly, detective capacity was increased within the VITs with further growth generated by those on the detective pathway.
27. The current time to allocate an investigation is one day. Latest Force data (March 2022) shows in 457 (93.5%) reviews, the assessors determined the crime was allocated in a timely manner. Likewise, investigation plans were created on 403 (82.4%) of the reviews.
28. A significant amount of progress has been made in pursuing opportunities to prosecute an offender when the victim disengages, known as evidence led prosecutions (ELP). The use of ELP is increasing and is tracked through the Crime Management and Investigative Quality Board. Current data highlights a significant step change in performance when reviewed against the 1.2% referenced in the report. The latest data indicates that an ELP was considered and either pursued or deemed not appropriate in 59.4% of domestic abuse, 50.0% of hate crime, 51.0% of stalking and harassment and 73.6% of rape investigations. The Force continues to work on improving this further.
29. Kent Police has undertaken a significant amount of work with regards to enhancing the position in respect of victim needs assessment. A recent review highlighted that whilst officers were conducting victim needs assessments the recording of action taken was not in line with Force policy and remedial action is now taking place through senior leaders. Discussion took place with HMICFRS regarding the recording of victim's wishes when they withdraw support from a prosecution to seek clarity on the evidence required. As a result, the Force has updated the relevant policy and adjusted training.

Protecting vulnerable people

(Adequate)

30. The Force is recognised for the strong governance in place at both a strategic and local level to ensure vulnerability and risk are at the forefront of service delivery. The Force operating model is built with vulnerability at its core with the flex to evolve and continuously improve. As a result, the Force is reported to be able to effectively safeguard and support vulnerable victims.

31. The report highlights many positive areas such as the introduction of a new risk assessment tool for victims of domestic abuse known as DARA (Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment) which provides the opportunity to identify patterns of behaviours and crimes such as stalking and coercive and controlling behaviour. Kent pioneered the introduction of DARA with many other forces now adopting it.
32. Also highlighted are the multi-agency stalking prevention panels (MASIP) in place; the Force having the highest use of stalking prevention orders; the work of the Missing Child and Exploitation Teams in protecting children and young people; the County Lines and Gangs' Teams; and Op Encompass, the process of notifying schools of domestic abuse incidents affecting a child, which has been nationally recognised.
33. Two AFIs linked to the use of protection orders and wellbeing of staff working with the most vulnerable were highlighted.
34. During the last six months (November 2021 to April 2022) the Force issued 107 domestic violence prevention notices (DVPNs) to offenders across the county with 100 domestic violence protection orders (DVPOs) granted by the court. Work will continue in this area to further increase the number of DVPNs and DVPOs in order to ensure victims continue to be protected.
35. As detailed in the report, a wide range of support is available to staff working with the most vulnerable victims. The Force recognises the role these officers undertake on a daily basis and the impact subject matter can have. Engagement with staff is taking place to understand what more can be done to support them.

Managing offenders and suspects

(Requires Improvement)

36. The Integrated Offender Management (IOM) programme is well established and highlighted in the report as being effective. Concentrating on a cohort of offenders and working with key partners, the programme looks to supervise offenders in the community using rehabilitative interventions and enforcement where necessary.
37. Reference is also made to the well-established governance in place for managing offenders along with predictive analytical data that allows the Force to focus on offenders that cause the most serious harm. The Force has developed substantial capability and capacity through the County Lines and Gangs Teams, the Chief Constable's Crime Squad and Criminal Investigation Departments. The Chief Constable's Crime Squad take on and remove from circulation those hardened criminals who inflict significant harm on local communities by committing serious acquisitive crime offences, most notably residential burglaries, and robberies. Similarly, the County Lines and Gangs Team target those individuals who supply Class A drugs in Kent, often exploiting the most vulnerable members of our communities. These teams are responsible for significant increases in charge rates and therefore management of offenders.
38. Three AFIs focus on use of Bail and released under investigation, the management of registered sex offenders (RSOs) and digital capability and capacity in the area of online child abuse.
39. Kent Police has a comprehensive Bail Management policy and clear governance in place. The management of suspects released under investigation is a concern to all forces and a new Bail legal framework is due at the end of 2022. In line with this legal change, the Force will review processes and make the necessary amendments to ensure improvements continue to be made.
40. The management of RSOs is effective, and the report highlights the Force adherence to authorised professional practice (APP), use of sexual harm prevention orders and good awareness of RSOs by local community teams. In order to ensure the provision is as effective as it can be, a review of the structure, resources and capability is being undertaken. This review will also consider the digital capacity and capability of these teams.

Building, Supporting and Protecting the Workforce

(Good)

41. The understanding of ethical policing amongst officers and staff is described as excellent with positive commentary provided on the Force's Ethics Committee, Culture Boards and the clear mission, vision, values and priorities, all of which contribute to a positive culture.

42. The Force's commitment and approach to both physical and mental wellbeing is highlighted along with the excellent support provided to staff and this is well documented in the report. The development of officers and staff is identified as effective along with the introduction of the Diversity and Inclusion Academy and the work of the well-established support groups.

43. No AFIs were identified.

Strategic Planning, Organisational Management and Value for Money (Good)

44. The findings of how efficiently the Force operates are positive. Reference is made once again to the positive governance, scrutiny and planning in place, aligned to the Force priorities.

45. The Force's Innovation Task Force ensures the infinity principles, which aim to remove boundaries that inhibit innovative thinking, are embraced and alongside evidence based policing techniques seek ways to improve the service provided to the public. In addition, the change management programme known as Zenith, effective collaborative arrangements and use of Microsoft 365 technology means the Force is continually achieving efficiency savings and improving productivity.

46. One AFI is made regarding the allocation of resources to meet demand. This is linked to the AFI within the core question relating to responding to public and therefore activity detailed within this section would apply.

PEEL Governance.

47. In order to ensure a robust and transparent regime of governance against the 19 AFIs identified within the report, there will be the following tiers of scrutiny:

- a) Through the existing Force Improvement Board (FIB), chaired by the DCC, progress against the PEEL Improvement Plan will be routinely discussed, with updates being presented by Business Owners and overseen by a Chief Officer lead;
- b) Following each FIB, a 'Chief Constable's PEEL Oversight Board' will be held, with representation consisting of both Deputies, ACC Ayling, Mr Harper (OPCC Chief Executive) and the Force Inspectorate Leads. This will allow the Chief Constable to scrutinise the evidence presented and test outcomes against the AFIs;
- c) At the 6-month point, an extraordinary Chief Constable's Oversight Board will be held whereby all Business Owners and Chief Officers will discuss the PEEL Improvement Plan in detail, allowing for further scrutiny and questioning of the Business Owners directly by the Chief Constable; and
- d) In addition to the OPCC being represented at the Oversight Boards, the PCC will receive bespoke briefing notes and updates routinely, with a view to an input at a future Performance & Delivery Board as required.

48. The Force remains wholly committed to continuous improvement, utilising the Infinity Principles and its priorities of providing a quality service, putting victims and witnesses at the heart of everything we do, and to always do the right thing, as the guiding principles as it moves forward.