

To: Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel

Subject: HMICFRS PEEL 2023-25 – update

Date: 10 October 2024

Introduction:

1. One of the Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCC's) key duties is to be democratically accountable for the provision of an efficient and effective police force by holding the Chief Constable to account.
2. However, the PCC does not judge progress based on targets as he recognises that they can skew behaviour and that often, despite Kent Police's best efforts, it is not always possible to protect the public or bring offenders to justice. The PCC does though consider other feedback, including His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) reports, other independent publications, anecdotal examples of frontline service delivery and feedback from staff and local communities.
3. Further to the report that was submitted to the 6 February 2024 Panel meeting, this paper provides an update on Kent Police's progress in addressing the findings from HMICFRS' PEEL 2023-25 Inspection and how the PCC continues to hold the Chief Constable to account.

Background:

4. HMICFRS independently assesses and reports on the efficiency and effectiveness of police forces and fire & rescue services – in the public interest. HMICFRS asks the questions that it believes the public wish to have answered, and publishes the answers in an accessible form, using expertise to interpret the evidence and make recommendations for improvement.
5. PEEL (police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy) is HMICFRS' regular assessment of police forces in England and Wales. HMICFRS use inspection findings, analysis and professional judgment to assess how good forces are in several areas of policing.
6. The core questions that make up the PEEL assessment do not remain the same for each cycle of inspections. They adapt to changing priorities and circumstances; for the 2023-25 cycle they were as follows:
 - How good is the force's service for victims of crime? (This question is not graded)
 - How good is the force at treating the public fairly, appropriately and respectfully?
 - How good is the force at preventing and deterring crime, ASB and reducing vulnerability?
 - How good is the force at responding to the public?
 - How good is the force at investigating crime?
 - How good is the force at protecting vulnerable people?
 - How good is the force at managing offenders and suspects?
 - How good is the force at disrupting serious and organised crime?
 - How good is the force at building, developing and looking after its workforce and encouraging an ethical, lawful and inclusive workplace?
 - How good is the force at leading and managing its services to make sure they are efficient, effective and sustainable?
 - How effectively does the force vet its officers and staff?
 - How effectively does the force protect the information it holds and tackle potential corruption?
7. It should be noted that due to changes in the assessment criteria and approach to inspection, HMICFRS make it clear that it is not possible to make direct comparisons between the grades awarded in the 2023-25 cycle and those from previous PEEL inspections.

PEEL 2023-25 – An inspection of Kent Police:

8. On 17 November 2023, HMICFRS published Kent’s inspection report – the [full report](#) can be viewed on their website.
9. The inspection assessed how good Kent Police is in 11 areas of policing and HMICFRS made graded judgements in 10 of these. They also inspected how effective a service Kent Police gives victims of crime, but do not make an overall graded judgment.
10. The findings followed eight months of continuous assessment consisting of document and data requests, chief officer interviews, strategic interviews, focus groups with frontline staff, extensive reality testing and a Victim Service Assessment requiring the review of a number of calls for service, investigations, and subsequent outcomes.
11. The following is an overview of HMICFRS’ graded judgements in the 10 areas of policing:

Outstanding	Good	Adequate	Requires	Inadequate
	Preventing crime	Managing offenders	Investigating crime	
	Police powers & public treatment	Tackling workforce corruption	Responding to the public	
	Protecting vulnerable people			
	Disrupting serious organised crime			
	Developing a positive workplace			
	Leadership & force management			

12. As a result of the inspection, the force received 14 Areas for Improvement (AFIs).
13. While the AFI in respect of improving the recording of victim’s protected characteristics from the previous PEEL Inspection was not referenced due to ongoing national work, the force carried this forward. As a result, the total number of AFIs is 15.
14. Although crime recording was not assessed, Kent Police’s grade of ‘Outstanding’ from the previous PEEL 2021/22 inspection still stands and so the force continues to lead the field nationally with one of the highest levels of accuracy.

Progress Update:

15. As reported previously, following the inspection, Kent Police created an Improvement Plan. Progress is monitored at the Future Improvement and Development Board chaired by the Deputy Chief Constable and Chief Officer Management Board chaired by the Chief Constable.
16. While HMICFRS will not formally sign off AFIs until the next PEEL assessment (due to commence in 2025/26), the force maintains regular engagement and where appropriate, provides evidence in support of early closure. As a result of evidence provided, the following three AFIs were recently reviewed by HMICFRS and closed because of the positive progress:
- The force doesn’t always answer emergency calls quickly enough.
 - The force needs to reduce the number of non-emergency calls the caller abandons because they aren’t answered.
 - The force needs to make sure that call takers give appropriate advice on the preservation of evidence and crime prevention.
17. The force has also self-assessed two AFIs as discharged - the development of serious organised crime (SOC) local profiles and the introduction of a disproportionality panel to monitor and respond to vetting decisions.

18. Work on the remaining 10 AFIs continues, with extensive workstreams for each. Attached as Appendix A is a summary of current progress prepared by Kent Police.

Holding to account:

19. The PCC acknowledges the appearance of two areas being graded 'Requires Improvement' and that there is work to do to improve outcomes for victims, but also that overall the inspection shows a more positive outlook for Kent Police.

20. The PCC is also pleased that three AFIs have already been closed by HMICRS and reassured that the remaining AFIs are being progressed, as evidenced by Appendix A.

21. Through his quarterly Performance & Delivery Board, the PCC continues to monitor the AFIs closely and holds the force to account for delivering their responsibilities under the Victims Code, getting the right outcomes and bringing offenders to justice. He also continues to scrutinise the roll out of the Neighbourhood Policing model so that it delivers for residents.

22. Open to Panel Members and the public on a non-participating basis and also live streamed, the meeting is chaired by the PCC and papers are submitted by the force in advance and published [here](#). The Chief Constable is required to attend the meeting in order to present and discuss the papers and answer questions about delivery of the [Making Kent Safer](#) Plan and policing generally in the county.

23. The 'Inspections, Audits & Reviews' paper routinely reports on HMICFRS activity and regularly includes updates on progress against the force's Improvement Plan.

24. Progress updates are also reported at the [Joint Audit Committee](#) and the PCC continues to hold the Chief Constable to account via their regular weekly briefings. In addition, he receives bespoke updates from the force and is represented at the periodic Chief Constable Oversight Boards by his Chief Executive.

25. Whilst the PCC recognises that the force has work to do to ensure it consistently provides a first-class service, he would like to thank the officers, staff and volunteers of Kent Police for their continued diligence and dedication to service and doing their best for local neighbourhoods and victims of crime.

Recommendation:

26. The Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel is asked to note this report and agree to a further update at their February 2025 meeting.

HMICFRS PEEL 2023-25 – progress update

On 17 November 2023, HMICFRS published their PEEL inspection of Kent Police. Following publication, the force put in a place a plan to progress the 14 areas for improvement (AFIs) issued by HMICFRS. The AFI in respect of improving the recording of victim's protected characteristics issued in PEEL 2021/22 was not referenced in the most recent report however the force has carried this across into the improvement plan to ensure continued monitoring. This brings the total number of AFIs to 15. Details of all the gradings are provided below.

Outstanding	Good	Adequate	Requires improvement	Inadequate
	Preventing crime	Managing offenders	Investigating crime	
	Police powers and public treatment	Tackling workforce corruption	Responding to the public	
	Protecting vulnerable people			
	Disrupting serious organised crime			
	Developing a positive workplace			
	Leadership and force management			

HMICFRS will not formally sign off AFIs until the next PEEL assessment due to commence in 2025/26 however continued engagement takes place and where appropriate evidence is provided to request early closure. This has been the case with three AFIs recently reviewed by HMICFRS which have been closed as a result of the positive progress made in respect of answering 999 calls, 101 attrition and providing crime prevention and scene preservation advice to callers (further detail below). The force has also self-assessed two AFIs as discharged regarding the development of serious organised crime (SOC) local profiles and the introduction of a disproportionality panel to monitor and respond to vetting decisions.

The remaining 10 AFIs continue to progress in line with the anticipated completion dates. A summary of current progress is below.

- Victim Service Assessment Ungraded (1 AFI carried over from PEEL 2021/22)

The force continues to await the national guidance in respect of recording all protected characteristics. Gender and age are above 99% compliance. Improvements in the recording of ethnicity continue to be made however further work is needed to ensure a positive trajectory. Guidance has been provided to staff to reinforce the requirements with oversight and scrutiny to drive improvements provided by the Investigative Quality Board (IQB) chaired by the ACC Crime.

- Preventing, Deterring Crime and ASB and Reducing Vulnerability Good (1 AFI)

Problem-solving plans are now stored on the force crime recording system, providing an easy search function, and facilitating the sharing of best practice. Training has been provided to neighbourhood staff and work is underway to ensure officers and staff in wider teams such as Local Policing and Vulnerability Investigation Teams also receive this. Once this training is complete the AFI will be ready to discharge.

- Responding to the Public

Requires Improvement (4 AFIs: 3 Closed)

Following assessment in July 2024, the following AFIs have been formally closed by HMICFRS.

- **The force doesn't always answer emergency calls quickly enough.**

HMICFRS stated "the force has made sufficient process to satisfy this AFI". The force has consistently exceeded the 90% target for answering calls within 10 seconds set out by BT since January 2024.

- **The force needs to reduce the number of non-emergency calls the caller abandons because they aren't answered.**

HMICFRS reported "Twelve-month data provided by the force shows clear and maintained improvements in the way the force is able to answer 101 calls from the public. This is as a result of the work to understand and balance the availability of increased staff to answer both 101 and 999 calls from the public. Data for the twelve months to June 2024 show the 101-abandonment rate for the force is 6.01%. It is clear the force has shown sufficient progress in addressing this AFI which should now be closed down." In addition to the comments made by HMICFRS, the force has consistently had a monthly 101-attrition rate of under 5% since November 2023.

- **The force needs to make sure that call takers give appropriate advice on the preservation of evidence and crime prevention.**

HMICFRS stated "Crime prevention guidance, where appropriate, is provided at the first point of contact as part of a follow up text on most occasions and on the phone when more appropriate to do so. The Investigation Management Unit send a letter or email to all crime victims that do not receive attendance, and this includes the link to force crime prevention page. This also covers contact made via Single Online Home. In total this is in the region of 350 a day. Attending police officers will routinely provide crime prevention advice at the scene as part of victim care. Google Analytics data which monitors website traffic indicates around 30 hits on the crime prevention page per day. The Call Evaluation Team continue to dip test compliance with the provision of crime prevention advice by call takers. Scene preservation advice is provided as part of the phone call by the call taker. This is supported by pages guidance and question sets, that prompt the call taker. The Call Evaluation Team continue to test compliance with the provision of scene preservation advice by call takers. The force has made sufficient progress for this AFI to be closed."

The remaining AFI relates to the monitoring and reassessment of outstanding calls for service that require a priority of attendance. The reinstated RETHRIVE process ensures a timely response and repeated review of risk is provided. Ongoing work is taking place to ensure improvements in line with the AFI to ensure attendance is timely.

- Investigating Crime

Requires Improvement (3 AFIs)

The Investigative Improvement Plan continues to progress in line with the actions set across the four pillars overseen by the ACC Crime. The current charge rate for victim-based crime for the rolling year is over three percentage points above that referenced in the PEEL report which demonstrates the positive trajectory the force is on. Nationally, Kent is above the England and Wales average charge rate, however work continues to address the associated AFI.

Immediate action was taken when HMICFRS made the force aware of issues with the administration of outcome 21. The Data Audit Team continue to review compliance and have seen the use of outcome 21 reduce significantly which would indicate it is now being consistently and appropriately assigned.

Work continues to agree a long-term solution for recording victim need assessments (VNA) on the force crime recording system. Whilst this is awaited, improvements in recording continue as a result of training, oversight, and scrutiny.

- Protecting Vulnerable People

Good (1 AFI)

Repeat domestic abuse offenders are targeted by proactive teams who work closely with partners across several agencies to reduce offending and break the cycle of abuse. Work continues to ensure that protective orders are being considered when appropriate and this is monitored at Force Performance Management Committee chaired by the DCC. In addition, policy has been reinvigorated, and training delivered. Whilst national comparator data is awaited, the year ending data for March 2024 shows Kent as having 9.7 DVPOs per 1,000 population (up from 7.9 in the PEEL 2023/25 report). Furthermore, the force continues to use bail with conditions to safeguard victims from offenders.

- Managing Offenders and Suspects

Adequate (2 AFIs)

The force is confident that overdue active risk management system assessments are identified through supervisory reviews however the AFI from HMICFRS in this regard was noted and a formal monitoring process established to provide assurance. The Divisional Policing Review will see the management of active risk assessments aligned centrally which will further enhance the supervision and performance, at which point the AFI will be considered for discharge.

The force has introduced a new digital forensics structure which seeks to improve current performance and address the AFI given. The new structure is well established, and the 'legacy' mobile phone work is now clear. Delivery of the digital forensics' platform solution is critical to support further performance improvement and discharge this AFI, delivery is anticipated September 2024.

- Disrupting Serious and Organised Crime

Good (1 AFI: Closed)

This AFI has been self-assessed as completed and discharged by the DCC. SOC local profiles are in place. The Regional Organised Crime Threat Assessment (ROCTA) reports Kent's performance in respect of disruptions to be positive. The force is second in the region and demonstrating a marked improvement in other disruptions.

- Tackling Workforce Corruption

Adequate (2 AFIs: 1 AFI Closed)

Since the inspection took place, the force has made changes to meet the demands placed on the Force Vetting Unit as described in previous papers. This AFI remains ongoing to ensure improvements are sustained however performance is significantly improved. Consultation for the revised Authorised Professional Practice (APP) closed in March 2024 and the force awaits publication. Once published this will be reviewed to ensure the force remains compliant and consideration will be given to discharging the AFI.

The AFI in respect of monitoring and responding to disproportionality in vetting decisions has been self-assessed as completed and discharged by the DCC.

Governance

Progress of the improvement plan will continue to be monitored at the Future Improvement and Development Board (FIDB) chaired by the DCC and Chief Officer Management Board chaired by the Chief Constable to ensure scrutiny at the very highest level. In addition to FIDB, regular reporting of progress will continue take place at both the PCC Performance and Delivery Board and the Joint Audit Committee.