

**To: Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel**  
**Subject: HMICFRS PEEL 2023-25 – An inspection of Kent Police**  
**Date: 6 February 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. HMICFRS independently assesses the effectiveness and efficiency 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.
4. This paper provides an overview of Kent Police's HMICFRS PEEL 2023-25 Inspection, and also outlines how the PCC will hold the Chief Constable to account.

### **Background:**

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. Most of the areas then receive one of the following grades:
  - Outstanding – the force has substantially exceeded the characteristics of good performance
  - Good – the force has demonstrated substantially the characteristics of good performance
  - Adequate – identification of an appreciable number of areas where the force should make improvements
  - Requires improvement – identification of a sufficiently substantial number of areas where the force needs to make improvements
  - Inadequate – HMICFRS have causes of concern and have made recommendations to the force to address them.
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 are 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. For this cycle, HMICFRS is assessing police forces against the characteristics of good performance as set out in the [PEEL Assessment Framework 2023-2025](#). In force reports, HMICFRS also provide a narrative assessment that focuses on leadership based on the College of Policing leadership expectations, which are:
- Inspiring common purpose
  - Developing and valuing people
  - Building an inclusive workplace
  - Leading across boundaries
  - Performance and improvement
  - Understanding self and others
8. It is important to note that as a result of forces being assessed against the criteria set out in the PEEL Assessment Framework 2023-25 and a move to a more intelligence-led, continual assessment approach, rather than the annual PEEL inspections used in previous years, HMICFRS state:

*‘it isn’t possible to make direct comparisons between the grades awarded in this PEEL inspection and those from the previous cycle of PEEL inspections. This is because we have increased our focus on making sure forces are achieving appropriate outcomes for the public, and in some cases we have changed the aspects of policing we inspect.’*

**PEEL 2023-25 – An inspection of Kent Police:**

9. On 17 November 2023, HMICFRS published Kent’s inspection report – the [full report](#) can be viewed on their website. The PCC notified the Panel Chair of its publication on 20 November.
10. 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.
11. The findings follow 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.
12. The following is an overview of HMICFRS’ graded judgements in the 10 areas of policing:

Outstanding	Good	Adequate	Requires improvement	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			

13. Currently, of the nine reports HMICFRS have published under the 2023-25 cycle, Kent is the only force to have received a ‘Good’ grading for protecting vulnerable people.
14. In summary, HM Inspector of Constabulary Roy Wilsher said:

*‘I am pleased with the performance of Kent Police in keeping people safe, reducing crime and giving victims an effective service. But in order to provide a consistently good service, it needs to improve in some areas.’*

*“It was pleasing to note that since our last PEEL inspection, the force has taken steps to improve how it communicates with communities to identify problems and gather intelligence. It also continues to work effectively in partnership with a wide range of other organisations on problem-solving, crime prevention and early intervention.*

*“I was also pleased to find that since our last PEEL inspection, the force has worked hard to improve the quality of its investigations. The force has effective governance arrangements for investigative standards. This results in thorough and well-supervised investigations. Investigators look for opportunities to bring offenders to justice even when victims are unwilling to proceed. They use bail effectively to protect vulnerable victims and reduce further crime. But these improvements haven’t yet resulted in more positive outcomes for victims.*

*“Since our last PEEL inspection, the force has also improved the way it records information about children or vulnerable adults to better support multi-agency risk assessments. The number and quality of referrals have increased, which allow the force and partners to intervene more effectively to protect those at risk.*

*“Kent Police has an average level of funding per 1,000 population in England and Wales. But the use of this funding doesn’t always result in a good service for the public in some important areas, such as its initial response to calls. The force doesn’t always answer emergency and non-emergency calls in a timely way. And it doesn’t always attend calls for service as quickly as it should. The force has tried to address these problems by increasing the number of call handlers and by improving the range of alternative ways to contact the force. But it needs to do more to meet the public’s needs.*

*“The force had a change in leadership in the year leading up to our inspection, with the appointment of a new chief constable and deputy chief constable. The new leadership team has reviewed the force’s operating model and how it uses its funding. This has resulted in changes to the way it provides neighbourhood policing. But at the time of our inspection, the force had only just made these changes, so they weren’t fully developed. It will take time to have the effect the leadership wants.*

*“We hope the changes to the way the force operates result in further improvements that help it meet the public’s needs. We will be monitoring its progress closely.”*

15. As a result of the inspection, the Force received 14 Areas for Improvement (AFIs) and has created a new Improvement Plan.
16. HMICFRS also agreed that 14 of the 19 AFIs issued in the previous PEEL 2021/22 inspection could be closed, with four of the remaining five being superseded. The remaining AFI in respect of improving the recording of victim’s protected characteristics is not referenced in the most recent report due to required ongoing national work, but the Force has carried this across into its new Improvement Plan to ensure continued monitoring.
17. It is important to note that whilst crime recording was not assessed in this cycle, Kent Police’s grade of ‘Outstanding’ from the previous PEEL 2021/22 inspection still stands and so it continues to lead the field nationally with one of the highest levels of accuracy. The reality is though, with a level of accuracy exceeding 96%, diligence in crime recording results in increased investigative demand and so Kent Police continues to deal with thousands more offences than many other forces who are resourced better and investigating fewer crimes.
18. Attached as Appendix A is a summary of the assessed areas and gradings prepared by Kent Police. Members may also recall that at his informal briefing to the Panel on 22 November 2023, the Chief Constable provided further commentary and context on the PEEL 2023-25 inspection findings.

### **Holding to account:**

19. The PCC is pleased with the improvements made since the last report and that the report recognises the effort of the Force in making the changes required, showing momentum under the new Chief Officer team. The Force is commended for good practice in a number of areas and the commentary overall is more positive.

20. Performance in respect of 999 and 101 call handling was improving whilst the inspection was taking place, and as Members will be aware, it has quite simply got better and better – in recent months, 101 call attrition has been less than 3%.
21. The PCC is pleased the solve rates are increasing and given the extensive work that HMICFRS has rightly done to challenge forces on their crime recording accuracy, believes this context needs to be highlighted given the outcome comparisons used in the report are year ending March 2015.
22. Overall the inspection shows a more positive outlook for Kent Police, but the PCC acknowledges the appearance of two areas being graded 'Requires Improvement' and that there is work to do to improve outcomes for victims.
23. Whilst the Force has already taken some action to address the findings and developed an Improvement Plan, through his quarterly Performance & Delivery Board the PCC will continue to monitor the AFIs closely and hold the Force to account for delivering their responsibilities under the Victims Code, getting the right outcomes and bringing offenders to justice. He will also carry on scrutinising the roll out of the Neighbourhood Policing model so that it delivers for residents.
24. 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.
25. The 'Inspections, Audits & Reviews' paper routinely reports on HMICFRS activity and in the future will regularly include updates on progress against the Force's Improvement Plan.
26. Progress updates will also be reported at the [Joint Audit Committee](#) and the PCC will continue to hold the Chief Constable to account via their regular weekly briefings. In addition, he will routinely receive bespoke briefing notes and updates from the Force and the PCC will be represented at the periodic Chief Constable Oversight Boards by his Chief Executive.
27. Whilst the PCC recognises that the Force has work to do to ensure it consistently provides a first-class service, he would like to acknowledge the effort that has gone into, and progress made since the last inspection. He would also like to thank the officers, staff and volunteers of Kent Police for their continued diligence and dedication to service which they demonstrate every single day in trying to do their best for local neighbourhoods and victims of crime.

**Recommendation:**

28. The Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel is asked to note this report and agree to a further update at their October 2024 meeting.



## Police Effectiveness, Efficiency and Legitimacy (PEEL) 2023/25 – An Inspection of Kent Police

1. On 17 November 2023, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) published their PEEL inspection of Kent Police. The inspections assess the performance of all 43 police forces in England and Wales. Forces are assessed against the characteristics of good performance, set out in the PEEL Assessment Framework 2023–2025. The inspection findings follow 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 in which HMICFRS reviewed a number of calls for service, investigations, and subsequent outcomes.
2. In addition, HMICFRS carried out a force wide staff survey to gather insight into the workforce's experience of working for Kent Police. Responses were received from 2,093 staff members which is estimated to be 33.9% of the total workforce. HMICFRS were highly positive of the return rate and the force was asked to provide the communication and engagement activity undertaken to inform other forces. The survey covers value, leadership, training, career development, workload, wellbeing, conduct and discrimination. The findings of this survey were provided to the force, key headlines include:
  - 70.8% felt a sense of belonging to Kent Police, 77.8% felt proud to be a member of Kent Police.
  - 80.5% agreed they were treated fairly at work.
  - 94.5% agreed that their line manager challenged discriminatory behaviour, 94.1% agreed their line manager created an ethical working environment and 90.3% agreed their line manager created an inclusive working environment.
  - 81.4% agreed the force had equipped them with sufficient training to carry out their role.
  - 86.7% had a formal PDR in the last 12 months, 66.9% agreed they were an effective tool in their development and 74.5% valued the process of these reviews / appraisals.
  - 78.4% agreed their line manager actively checked their workload was manageable.
  - 71.2% agreed working patterns considered individual wellbeing as well as business needs.
  - 90.4% agreed that counselling services were provided following incidents.
  - 93.4% reported not feeling bullied or harassed at work, 90.9% reported not feeling discriminated against at work.
3. The PEEL inspection assessed the force across eleven areas of policing and provided a grading for ten of these. Kent has been awarded six good gradings including treating the public fairly, preventing crime, protecting vulnerable people and serious and organised crime.
4. Protecting vulnerable people is at the heart of the Chief Constable's Policing Pledge and it is reassuring that the work being undertaken in this area whether this is tackling violence against women and girls, safeguarding and supporting vulnerable people or working with partners to ensure victims of domestic abuse are safe has been recognised and the grading improved from the last PEEL assessment. At the time of writing Kent are the only force in the current round of PEEL assessments to have received a good grading for protecting vulnerable people.
5. In addition, the force improved its grading in respect of managing offenders. Whilst not inspected on this occasion the force has continued to ensure crime recording and data integrity is outstanding which is fundamental to being able to effectively address issues affecting our communities. 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			

6. Areas for improvement (AFIs) issued by HMICFRS are an indication of how well a force is performing. HMICFRS have agreed to close 14 of the 19 AFIs issued from PEEL 2021/22. Four of the five remaining AFIs have been superseded. The remaining AFI in respect of improving the recording of victim's protected characteristics issued in PEEL 2021/22 is not referenced in the most recent report as a result of the ongoing national work required to complete this however the force will carry this across into the new improvement plan to ensure continued monitoring and progress.

### **Victim Service Assessment – Ungraded**

7. The victim service assessment (VSA) took place week commencing 10 April 2023 and reviewed 116 case files across a number of crime types. The period reviewed was 9 October 2022 to 9 January 2023 and the assessment reviewed the entirety of an investigation from the initial call through to the outcome.
8. The force demonstrated improvements across 25 of the 29 comparable areas from the VSA carried out in 2021. From the sample reviewed 100% of calls were triaged and graded appropriately, 100% of repeat victims were identified, arrests were made within an appropriate timeframe in 97% of those reviewed, 84% of investigations were judged to be effective and 89% were judged to provide a good level of victim service in line with the Victim Code of Practice (VCOP).
9. Focus on the administration of outcomes was identified and is covered more in investigations, however 88% of victims were found to have been consulted prior to an outcome being administered, 94% took the victims' wishes into consideration and 97% of victims were informed of the outcome.

### **Treating People Fairly, Appropriately, and Respectfully – Good (No AFIs)**

10. Officers and staff were found to understand why and how they should treat the public as a result of effective communication and training programmes which equip them with the necessary knowledge, skill and understanding.
11. Stop and search powers were found to be used fairly and respectfully with 88.5% found to have reasonable grounds recorded (an increase on the previous assessment of 87.5%). In respect of stop and search on people from ethnic minorities this was higher at 91.6% (22 from 24). The force can demonstrate a link between the initial grounds for a search and what was found when compared to other forces (28.7% of stop and searches in Kent had linked outcomes which is higher than the linked

outcome rate across all forces in England and Wales at 22.2%). A review of officer's behaviour during stop and search encounters through a review of body worn video was described by HMICFRS as exemplary.

12. The force has effective oversight of stop and search and use of force through tactical and strategic policing powers boards which provide overview and scrutiny. Ownership and a review process which tests quality, ensures ongoing improvements and developments in stop and search encounters. An external IAG (Independent Advisory Group) provides external scrutiny of stop and search powers.
13. Use of force recording is highlighted for further enhancement. Kent can demonstrate a steady increase in the use of force in line with arrest figures which indicates improvements in the under-recording referenced in the PEEL report. Detailed analysis of use of force is provided and discussed at the tactical and strategic policing power boards detailed above. Work in this area will continue to ensure sustained improvements.

### **Preventing, Deterring Crime and ASB and Reducing Vulnerability – Good (1 AFI)**

14. The report identifies positive practice in respect of the force's management of mental health demand which includes a dedicated helpline, safe havens, and reduction in Section 136 detentions (S136). Mental health incidents continue to rise with rolling year figures (December 2023) at 28,945 an increase of 4.5%. However, S136 detentions continue to reduce with the rolling year figure (December 2023) at 738 which is a reduction of 16.2%.
15. The new neighbourhood model, focused on community engagement, problem solving, and targeted activity has seen the creation of 210 warranted beat officers. The establishment of divisional prevention hubs provides expertise in licencing, tackling antisocial behaviour, designing secure buildings, drug liaison, offender management and community engagement. Child Centred Policing Teams work with partners and other police departments to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour linked to children and young people, with safeguarding at the centre.
16. The model was in its infancy when HMICFRS undertook their final reality testing in force however six months on the model continues to be resourced in line with agreed plans and is embedding into the wider policing model. The previous AFI regarding the training of neighbourhood officers has been closed as a result of the pathway developed as part of the new neighbourhood policing model.
17. The report recognises the effective preventative approaches to VAWG including walk and talk events and best bar none, the high visibility, targeted police patrols in hotspot areas that take place and Operation Engage focused on identifying and supporting repeat callers. The Kent and Medway Violence Reduction Unit successes in reducing serious violence are positively referenced.
18. Problem solving was found to be the responsibility of all, not just neighbourhood teams and activity with partners and other policing departments was recognised. The force was working towards storing all OSARA plans in one central repository during the PEEL inspection therefore progress against the subsequent AFI is positive. Problem-solving plans are now stored on the force crime recording system, providing an easy search function, and facilitating the sharing of best practice. The force is currently migrating plans onto Athena with over 500 completed at the time of writing.

### **Responding to the Public – Requires Improvement (4 AFIs)**

19. The force has increased the capacity and capability of Local Policing Teams and ensured repeat callers and vulnerable callers are routinely identified enabling an effective response to incidents. The work in these areas has addressed three of the four previous AFIs given to the force in the last round of PEEL 2021/22 and these have been closed by HMICFRS.

20. Performance in respect of 999 and 101 calls was adversely affected by significant shortages of police staff call handlers in the Force Control Room however an innovative recruitment campaign has seen the call handler establishment met since July 2023, resulting in improving performance. The data referenced in the PEEL report and the basis for the associated AFI is from the Beating Crime Plan (BCP) in March 2023 (69.4%). The most recent published BCP data (rolling year to December 2023) shows the force answering 84.5% of calls in 10 seconds. In respect of 101 performance, again the report refers to March 2023 data with an abandonment rate of 33.4%, resulting in an AFI. Current performance reflects the improvements made with rolling year to December 2023 reporting an attrition rate of 12.7%.
21. The report highlights the effective application of THRIVE, appropriate grading of calls and ensuring the public have channel choice in making contact whilst still receiving the same level of service and assessment of threat, risk and harm. The increase in Local Policing Teams and the capability of officers is also noted positively.
22. The force has reinstated the RETHRIVE process on all high graded calls across the Contact Handling and Dispatcher Desks, ensuring a timely response and repeated review of risk is provided. Evaluation of this process is underway to ensure improvements in line with the AFI to monitor and reassess outstanding calls for service are taking place.
23. Crime prevention advice and scene preservation advice to callers has improved significantly since the VSA in April 2023. All callers contacting the force on a mobile receive an automatic text message with crime prevention advice and links to additional information. Quality assurance checks are being undertaken routinely, providing assurance that the necessary advice in respect of both crime prevention and scene preservation advice is being provided to the caller. Evaluation will continue to ensure improvements are sustained and remain consistent.
24. The force is recognised for the innovative introduction of rapid video response (RVR) which allows officers to respond swiftly to victims of domestic abuse who do not require an immediate attendance. Using remote video recording technology, victims are spoken to by a trained officer who will work with them to complete an initial safeguarding risk assessment, consider preservation of evidence, and provide safeguarding advice. RVR has been recognised and implemented across a number of police forces, winning awards nationally and internationally.

### **Investigating Crime – Requires Improvement (3 AFIs)**

25. The report narrative reflects the extensive work that has been undertaken in respect of investigations. The force has increased the number of accredited detectives investigating domestic abuse offences, investigations are allocated in a timely manner and to the right teams, investigation plans are evident, and evidence led prosecutions are consistently considered by officers. It is as a result of this work that five of the six areas for improvement given to the force in the last round of PEEL 2021/22 have been addressed and closed by HMICFRS.
26. Despite effective, thorough investigations overseen by good supervision, achieving good results for victims and providing a quality service to victims, charged and solved rates are not as high as the force would want. This is a national issue and was raised by HMICFRS in their 'State of Policing Annual Assessment 2022'. The current charge rate for victim-based crime for the rolling year is 2 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. The force is increasing the number of officers dedicated to investigating domestic abuse including in cases where victims sometimes feel unable to come forward, and these changes and other improvements are pushing charge and solved rates even higher.

27. Immediate action was taken when HMICFRS made the force aware of issues with the administration of outcome 21. An interactive guidance tool has been developed to assist in decision making and approval has been elevated to Inspectors. The Data Audit Team are reviewing compliance on a weekly basis and have seen the use of outcome 21 reduce significantly which would indicate it is now being consistently and appropriately assigned. Rolling quarter data for December 2023 highlights a 92.2% reduction in the use of outcome 21 (575 down to 45).
28. Work continues to agree a long-term solution for recording victim needs assessments (VNA). A single approach to completing a VNA was introduced in February 2023, within the crime recording system. Robust governance has been introduced to monitor force progress, with performance reported into both the Investigative Quality Board (IQB) and Kent Criminal Justice Board (KCJB). Criminal Justice review cases each month to monitor and scrutinise the quality of the VNA. Whilst improvement is required in respect of VNA, the HMICFRS VSA evidenced positive victim support with victim contracts adhered to in 94.2% of cases reviewed and 89.8% of cases reviewed were judged to provide a good level of service in line with VCOP.

### **Protecting Vulnerable People – Good (1 AFI)**

29. The force has moved from adequate to good in this area. The force was found to understand the nature and scale of vulnerability with a focus on early intervention, prevention, safeguarding and management of risk. VAWG and child centred policing are at the heart of the control strategy ensuring that offenders are held to account and victims are safeguarded and supported.
30. Repeat domestic abuse offenders are targeted by proactive teams who work closely with partners across a number of agencies to reduce offending and break the cycle of abuse. These teams use a range of measures to proactively manage offenders and safeguard victims including regular prison release visits and welfare visits. In addition to this, the force is recognised as being at the forefront in the use of Stalking Protection Orders. The force has set up a weekly multi-agency panel to discuss the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (Clare's Law) and make joint decisions whether disclosure is appropriate and how to inform the individual.
31. Work continues to ensure that protective orders are being considered when appropriate in line with the AFI however the force has seen improvements since the last PEEL report which was evident in the VSA findings. In addition to protective orders, using bail with conditions also ensures victims are safeguarded from offenders and the force's use of bail was positively referenced in the PEEL report and said to be effective.
32. Significant work has been undertaken to enhance the range of wellbeing support available to staff to ensure those involved in protecting vulnerable people continue to be supported, this is further explored in the wellbeing section however the AFI previously given to the force in respect of this has been addressed and closed by HMICFRS.

### **Managing Offenders and Suspects – Adequate (2 AFIs)**

33. The force has moved from requires improvement to adequate in this area. The force has undertaken a review of its operating model and the management of registered sex offenders has been further enhanced which is recognised in the report. Bail management policies and processes were reported as providing effective arrangements to deliver swift justice. As result the AFIs given to the force in PEEL 2021/22 have been addressed and closed.
34. Home visits were found to be compliant with Authorised Professional Practice (APP) and a dip sample of risk management plans found well-structured, effective management of offenders. The force is confident that overdue active risk management assessments are identified through supervisory reviews however the AFI from HMICFRS in this regard is noted and a formal monitoring process has been established to provide assurance.

35. The Paedophile Online Investigation Team (POLIT) are ensuring that positive action is taken against suspects of online child abuse and investigations were found to be of a good standard. The establishment in POLIT has been increased meaning there are more officers dealing with investigations of online child abuse, identifying and protecting victims.
36. HMICFRS reviewed a sample of case files for offences linked to domestic abuse where a suspect had been arrested and found these were investigated effectively and promptly with officers seeking to gather enough evidence to charge and remand those offenders who had committed serious or repeat offences or who were particularly dangerous.
37. Promising practice is included in respect of the force's harm intervention tool which seeks to classify offenders according to the level of identified risk and prioritise action on those suspects posing a high risk to the public. The force has introduced a new Digital Forensics structure which seeks to improve current performance in this key area of business and address the AFI given.

#### **Disrupting Serious and Organised Crime – Good (1 AFI)**

38. The inspection of serious and organised crime (SOC) took place in 2022 with the report published in May 2023. The force received a good grading with a positive narrative referencing the effective strategic management and governance arrangements to manage SOC activity and the utilisation of intelligence to identify, understand and prioritise SOC and inform effective decision making.
39. The force was found to be committed to developing staff to respond effectively to current and emerging threats. Kent uses a problem-solving approach to tackle SOC threats and works effectively with partner agencies to safeguard those at risk of being involved in SOC.
40. One AFI was identified relating to the currency of SOC local profiles which outline problems and vulnerabilities for each area of the force. Local profiles are being produced in line with the AFI however through the SOC Strategic Board updates on SOC vulnerabilities are discussed on a quarterly basis with activity agreed on how the police or partner organisations will tackle them.

#### **Building, Supporting and Protecting the Workforce – Good (No AFIs)**

41. The report identifies promising practice in respect of the significant enhanced provision it provides to support members of staff working in high-risk roles.
42. Health and Wellbeing Services have developed an Investigator Wellbeing plan, there is a dedicated area for Investigator Wellbeing on the internal force website. The Counselling and Wellbeing team have regular engagement with POLIT to ensure ongoing contact with this critical investigation team. A peer support programme is in place to promote wellbeing locally and disseminate force-wide activities and initiatives to ensure all officers and staff are aware of the wellbeing support available to them.
43. Support to new recruits, development and investment of leaders, comprehensive PDR processes (95.7% compliance) and a dedicated positive action team are just a few of the positive elements of this section.

#### **Tackling Workforce Corruption – Adequate (2 AFIs)**

44. The inspection of vetting and counter corruption took place in early 2022 with the report published in November 2022. The force received an adequate grading and were given two AFIs, both of which related to vetting arrangements; the management of vetting to make sure all personnel have valid vetting clearance for their role and the introduction of a system to monitor and respond to disproportionately in vetting decisions.

45. Since the inspection took place, the force has made changes to meet the demands placed on the Force Vetting Unit. The force has provided additional resources and introduced a robust risk assessment process for when officers vetted to a lower level are required to move roles for operational reasons prior to their vetting upgrade being completed. This AFI remains ongoing to ensure improvements are sustained.
46. The force has introduced a Disproportionality Scrutiny Panel where anonymised vetting decisions are reviewed by a panel to ensure that decisions are not affected by conscious or unconscious bias. Results of this Panel are shared at the Diversity and Inclusion Board. As a result of evidence provided this AFI has been discharged.
47. The force complies with the Authorised Professional Practice (APP) and there is recognition of the hard work undertaken by officers and staff to ensure that counter corruption measures are robust and rigorous. This includes effective monitoring of IT systems, the use of computer software to develop intelligence, comprehensive counter corruption strategic threat assessment, utilisation of a wide range of investigative techniques and communicating effectively to the workforce on abuse of position for a sexual purpose.

### **Leadership and Force Management – Good (No AFIs)**

48. The force was found to have effective governance and performance management processes in place, using relevant analysis and data to ensure performance objectives are aligned with strategy. The Chief Constable's Pledge has been created using the views of all ranks and feedback from HMICFRS during reality testing was that officers and staff liked and understood the priorities set.
49. Leadership at all levels was found to be inclusive and empowering, supported by effective leadership training and investment. Effective resource planning and change management is recognised and the integration of the Force Management Statement into the strategic planning cycle is seen as positive.
50. The force was found to make best use of its funding with sustainable plans and whilst the significant financial challenges are referenced there is an acknowledgement of the strong governance and plans to achieve the savings required.
51. The report states (within the HMI Summary) that the force receives an "average level of funding per 1,000 population". This has been queried with HMICFRS as the current Value for Money Profiles on the HMICFRS website clearly show that per population Kent is in the bottom quartile, furthermore, within our most similar group we are second bottom funded. The significant strategic areas of importance within Kent such as the ports, counter terrorism and small boat landings has an impact on the management of funding; these areas are not related to population size but geography. The force is required to use the funding received to police these areas as well as the wider county, which other forces without these important areas would not and as such, our resources are stretched thinner.
52. Looking at the value for money profiles and how the force allocates resources, our support services overall are again in the lower quartile meaning we are investing as much of the resource we do have into frontline policing.
53. The use of technology to support operational activities is positively referenced such as the introduction of the Digital Assessment Management System (DAMS) allowing officers to securely share evidence with the CPS and other criminal justice partners, the issuing of laptops to response officers and a self-service data hub which allows supervisors easy access to investigative workloads and performance information.

### **Next Steps**

54. The previous PEEL Improvement Plan has now been closed and a new plan created. Progress will be monitored via the Future Improvement and Development Board (FIDB) chaired by the DCC.
55. In addition to the FIDB, regular reporting of progress will take place to both the PCC Performance and Delivery Board and the Joint Audit Committee. Periodic Chief Constable Oversight Boards will ensure scrutiny at the very highest level.
56. The latest PEEL report is an indicator of how Kent Police is doing, and it is pleasing to see recognition for the exceptional work officers and staff undertake daily and acknowledgement of the significant improvements made, especially in respect of investigation quality.