

The Rt Hon Suella Braverman KC MP
Home Secretary
Home Office
2 Marsham Street
London

Our ref:TP/VS

10 October 2022

Dear Home Secretary

RE: HMICFRS PEEL inspection of Suffolk Constabulary

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this inspection. Suffolk Constabulary has provided an update on the recommendations via a public report to my Accountability and Performance Panel and which is attached.

I am pleased that the force was graded 'good' in most areas and that there was only one area which was graded as 'requires improvement', and where the abandonment rate for calls was highlighted as a concern. I am pleased that the HMICFRS has recognised the important investment that has been made in this area through funding from the precept and understands the plans over the next year to provide additional resource into the CCR. I am content these plans are progressing well, but the rise in the volume of 999 calls remains a major challenge. Specifically, many of these calls are not directly related to crime but arise through concerns for the safety and well-being of children and adults in our county. These present significant resourcing challenges for not just the police but for wider Suffolk partners, and I invite your assistance in ensuring that the safeguarding and mental health systems and provision are sufficiently resourced in Suffolk by an appropriate level of government funding.

I will, as part of my oversight role, monitor the activity to respond to the recommendations and concerns expressed by HMICFRS but am very pleased there are so many areas where Suffolk Constabulary has been recognised by HMICFRS as doing a good job for the people of Suffolk.

Yours sincerely



Tim Passmore, Police and Crime Commissioner for Suffolk

ORIGINATOR: CHIEF CONSTABLE

PAPER NO: APP22/41

SUBMITTED TO: ACCOUNTABILITY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL – 16 SEPTEMBER 2022

SUBJECT: HER MAJESTY’S INSPECTORATE OF CONSTABULARY AND FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES (HMICFRS) POLICE EFFECTIVENESS, EFFICIENCY AND LEGITIMACY (PEEL) 2021/22– AN INSPECTION OF SUFFOLK CONSTABULARY

SUMMARY:

1. In August 2022 HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) published its report following its inspection of Suffolk Constabulary as part of the Police Effectiveness, Efficiency and Legitimacy (PEEL) programme.
2. This report provides:-
 - an overview of the HM Inspector’s observations;
 - an overview of the judgements;
 - details of ‘good/innovative practice’ and ‘areas for improvement’ with an update regarding progress;
 - details of work already underway across the force to prepare for the next HMICFRS PEEL Inspection.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. The Police and Crime Commissioner is asked to consider the content of this report.

DETAIL OF THE SUBMISSION

1. OVERVIEW OF HM INSPECTOR'S OBSERVATIONS

- 1.1 The full report can be found at [PEEL 2021/22: Police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy – An inspection of Suffolk Constabulary \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/peel-2021-22-police-effectiveness-efficiency-and-legitimacy-an-inspection-of-suffolk-constabulary/)
- 1.2 HMICFRS found that Suffolk Constabulary has improved in many areas since its last inspection in 2019.
- 1.3 HMICFRS congratulated Suffolk Constabulary for the way in which it has responded to the challenges it has faced over the past year, and on its performance in keeping people safe and reducing crime.
- 1.4 HMICFRS acknowledged that Suffolk Constabulary is amongst the lowest funded forces in the country, and recognised its effectiveness at managing funding and resources is notable.
- 1.5 HMICFRS inspectors identified the following as areas where the force needs to improve, as below:-
- Improving how well the force answers 101 calls from the public;
 - The supervision of investigations;
 - The identification and protection of vulnerable people.

2. HMICFRS JUDGEMENTS

- 2.1 HMICFRS assessed Suffolk Constabulary in 12 areas of policing, and made graded judgements in 10 of these 12 as follows :

Outstanding	Good	Adequate	Requires improvement	Inadequate
	Preventing crime	Investigating crime	Supporting victims	
	Treatment of the public	Responding to the public		
	Disrupting serious organised crime	Protecting vulnerable people		
	Managing offenders			
	Developing a positive workplace			
	Good use of resources			

3. AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT AND GOOD/INNOVATIVE PRACTICE

3.1. This section takes each PEEL judgement category in turn and outlines HMICFRS statements, around areas for improvement and good/innovative practice. In the majority of the PEEL judgement categories there were no formal 'areas for improvement'.

3.2. PROVIDING A SERVICE TO VICTIMS OF CRIME

3.3. HMICFRS judged that Suffolk Constabulary requires improvement at providing a service for victims of crime.

Area for Improvement

3.4. The HMICFRS report stated the following:

“The force should improve how well it answers calls from the public on the 101 number, and reduce the abandonment rate and wait times

Force data HMICFRS reviewed showed that every year the Constabulary fails to answer around 32 percent (40,000) of 101 calls in the Contact and Control Room (CCR). There are also very long wait times for less urgent calls. For example, people seeking advice and guidance can sometimes wait for more than an hour.

This means that:

- *the public are not able to easily contact the force; and*
- *the force is failing to provide the public with a good enough service.”*

Constabulary Plans

3.5. The Constabulary has created a CCR Improvement and Transformation Programme Board led by an Assistant Chief Constable to improve performance regarding non-emergency public contact. This extensive programme is reviewing staffing levels, operating models as well as the use of technology. Chief Officers have agreed a plan using additional funding from increases in the policing element of the council tax to fund these improvements.

Innovative Practice - Call Handling Management

3.6. The HMICFRS report stated the following:

“The Constabulary has a telephone system that allows switchboard staff to assess a call and place it into a number of different call queues. These queues are risk-related. This means that a call to report a crime will be in a higher priority call queue than a call related to an advice and guidance request. The system places all calls into a single queue that the CCR Call Handlers work from, but the system ensures that higher priority calls are at the top of the queue and lower risks at the bottom.”

3.7. ENGAGING WITH AND TREATING THE PUBLIC WITH FAIRNESS AND RESPECT

3.8. HMICFRS assessed the Constabulary as good at treating people fairly and with respect. There were no formal 'areas for improvement', however the report contained many positive comments about ongoing work as well as observations that the Constabulary will consider to continuously improve.

3.9. PREVENTING CRIME AND ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

3.10. HMICFRS assessed the Constabulary as good at prevention and deterrence. There were no formal 'areas for improvement', however this section of the report contained many positive comments about ongoing work as well as observations that the Constabulary will consider to continuously improve.

3.11. RESPONDING TO THE PUBLIC

3.12. HMICFRS assessed the Constabulary as adequate at responding to the public.

Area for Improvement

3.13. **The HMIC report stated:**

"The force should improve how call handlers provide advice, including on preserving evidence

Call handlers are polite, professional and show empathy to callers in almost all cases. Despite the force providing training and direction, in too many cases Call Handlers are missing the opportunity to provide advice to the caller. Such advice includes how to prevent crime and preserve evidence.

This could lead to evidence being lost or victims facing further harm."

Constabulary Plans

3.14. Work to address this is already underway and being overseen by the CCR Improvement and Transformation Programme Board chaired by the Assistant Chief Constable. Crime scene awareness and crime prevention has already been introduced into new Call Takers training. Furthermore, an internal scrutiny group of volunteers has been set up to review the quality of calls and improve customer service.

3.15. INVESTIGATING CRIME

3.16. HMICFRS assessed the Constabulary as adequate at investigating crime.

Areas for Improvement

3.17. **HMICFRS stated: "The force should reassess the crime training it has provided to its workforce**

Despite the force's effort to improve the quality of supervisory oversight and investigations, supervision is still variable. And in too many cases, investigative opportunities aren't taken. These include significant lines of enquiry and relate to crimes where witness statements weren't taken and named suspects weren't arrested or interviewed. This means that on some occasions, investigations may fail, victims will be let down and offenders may evade justice.

But it is clear that the force has responded positively to our critique of the quality of investigations after our last inspection in 2019. Investigations are now being carried out effectively in most cases.

Structured governance supports the force's efforts to improve its crime investigations. This governance considers and comments on areas such as investigation plans, supervisory reviews, victim safeguarding, and updates and lessons learned.

As a result:

- *officers are now routinely using an investigation plan to structure their work; investigations are conducted in good time; and*
- *supervisors mostly review progress when necessary.*

Constabulary Plans

- 3.18. An Assistant Chief Constable chairs an Investigations Standards Board, and work has already commenced to address the issues identified in this 'area for improvement' from HMICFRS. Further training sessions have been created for new supervisors and work is underway to create an improved audit regime to ensure investigative opportunities are not missed. It is also recognised that where supervisors direct investigations cannot progress there is a need for better recording of the decision and the rationale.
- 3.19. **HMICFRS stated: "The force should review its practices to ensure that victim needs assessments are completed in all relevant cases"**

There is good evidence that the force follows the [Code of Practice for Victims](#) and agreed levels of victim contact, with clear entries on the investigation logs. But in too many cases, there is no evidence of the victim needs assessment being completed, or enhanced services considered. And there are too many cases where a victim's personal statement is not being taken. This could lead to victims no longer engaging with investigations, not supporting prosecutions, and losing faith in the criminal justice process."

Constabulary Plans

- 3.20. The force response to victims continues to be managed through a variety of mechanisms and departments within the Constabulary and in particular the Supporting Victims Sub Group, chaired by the Head of the Justice Services Command. This Sub-Group has responsibility for ensuring compliance with the Victims Code of Practice, and working with partners to ensure services are available to support victims.
- 3.21. A detailed report on current activity and progress to ensure effective support to victims has been submitted for the September Accountability and Performance Panel.

Good Practice

- 3.22. HMICFRS Inspectors reported on two areas of notable good practice in this PEEL category.
- 3.23. **"Digital support officers are adding significant support to officers and value to investigations"**

The force has employed a number of Digital Support Officers (DSOs). Their role is to support investigators by helping to triage devices at scenes (including with warrant activity), and downloading data from CCTV and phones. Officers are reporting very positively on the effect the DSOs are having. The force reviewed the posts after six months and concluded that the DSOs had completed a total of 3,340 digital enquiries. As a result, the force is now expanding the DSO team."

3.24. ***“Community Resolutions Guidance Document***

The force has published (on its intranet) a two-page THRIVE-linked guidance document on community resolution. This is easy to understand and use.

The document is intended to help officers make the right decisions and make sure they involve victims in decision-making.”

3.25. **PROTECTING VULNERABLE PEOPLE**

3.26. HMICFRS assessed the Constabulary as adequate at protecting vulnerable people.

3.27. There were no formal ‘areas for improvement’. However, this section of the report contained many positive comments about ongoing work in the Constabulary as well as observations that the Constabulary will consider to continuously improve.

3.28. **MANAGING OFFENDERS AND SUSPECTS**

3.29. HMICFRS assessed the Constabulary as good at managing offenders and suspects.

3.30. There were no formal ‘areas for improvement’. This section of the report contained many positive comments about ongoing work as well as observations that the Constabulary will consider to continuously improve.

3.31. **DISRUPTING SERIOUS ORGANISED CRIME**

3.32. HMICFRS assessed the Constabulary as good at managing serious and organised crime.

3.33. There were no formal ‘areas for improvement’. This section of the report contained many positive comments about ongoing work as well as observations that the Constabulary will consider to continuously improve.

3.34. **MEETING THE STRATEGIC POLICING REQUIREMENT**

3.35. HMICFRS does not grade forces on this. However, the report contained many positive comments about ongoing work as well as observations that the Constabulary will consider to continuously improve.

3.36. **PROTECTING THE PUBLIC AGAINST ARMED THREATS**

3.37. HMICFRS does not grade forces on this. However, this section of the report contained many positive comments about ongoing work as well as observations that the Constabulary will consider to continuously improve.

3.38. **BUILDING, SUPPORTING AND PROTECTING THE WORKFORCE**

3.39. HMICFRS assessed the Constabulary as good at building and developing its workforce.

3.40. There were no formal ‘areas for improvement’ but two areas of notable good practice were reported.

Good Practice

3.41. ***“The force is good at how it recruits and deploys its direct entry detectives***

The force is making extensive use of direct entry detectives. Due to a shortage in detectives, it completed a rigorous recruitment process for direct entry detective constables. An initial recruitment process brought 24 successful candidates with further recruitment campaigns planned for. The force noted that the candidates that it attracted to the scheme would likely not have applied to join the force if they had to complete the normal uniformed probationary period.

Each direct entry detective has a mentor and completes initial training alongside uniformed colleagues. Officers describe the direct entry course as being intensive, but manageable. Participants must pass the detectives exam and meet other requirements, whilst managing their day-to-day workloads. Many of the direct entry detectives are working in the safeguarding units dealing with abuse and sexual offences. They would benefit from a more obvious welfare support network, given that they are new to policing and managing difficult, impactful and complex cases at an early stage in their careers.

The approach taken by the force means that it is quickly building up a core of detectives whose career pathway is defined and whose skill set is matched to their role. This is likely to benefit victims.”

3.42. ***“The force works with the families of new officers to help them understand the issues of living with a police officer***

The force is working with the families of new officers to help them understand what it is like living with, or being a family member of, a police officer. And it helps them understand the pressures that this can cause to both the officer and their family. Currently, family members are invited to attend online evening sessions where the issues of living with a police officer are discussed. This means that new officers are more likely to be positively supported at home, with reduced stress for them and their families.”

3.43. **STRATEGIC PLANNING, ORGANISATIONAL MANAGEMENT AND VALUE FOR MONEY**

3.44. HMICFRS assessed Suffolk Constabulary as good at operating efficiently.

3.45. There were no formal ‘areas for improvement’ but two areas of notable good practice were reported.

Good Practice

3.46. ***“The force’s Continuous Improvement and Innovation Strategy to 2025 Project (Project 2025) provides the basis for excellent governance and leadership***

Project 2025 sets out the high-level principles for how the force intends to operate. A transformational change team ensures that innovation is embraced and that the focus remains on the PCC and force strategic plans and priorities as regards investment.

Current and planned workstreams of the project include redesigning the performance framework, and bespoke pieces of work on increasing productivity, prevention, investigation standards and better use of technology. The force benefits manager is closely linked to the project to advise and oversee the identification and recording of benefits and drawbacks. The project has already completed much work, including writing the force’s newest three-year plan, the digital support officer project, and design of the neighbourhood policing partnership teams, commercial roads team and overall neighbourhood policing structure.

Project 2025 uses an internship scheme. This will bring in 12 people to complete projects for the force over the next 12 months at the cost of £30,000.

The workforce can put forward their ideas to the Project 2025 team. These are considered, with the best being taken to the quarterly Kesgrave Day strategic innovation seminars led by the Chief Constable.

The Project 2025 team provides the force with an excellent innovation hub. It helps to ensure that focus and funding follow priorities and that tangible improvements are made to how it provides services.”

- 3.47. The second area of good practice which HMICFRS highlighted under this category was: ***“The force’s development and use of data visualisation software and its use of partner data is resulting in increased excellence in its understanding and management of its overall performance***

The force is making excellent use of data from its own systems and from partners, via the county data warehouse. Using the data visualisation software, the force presents detailed data to its senior and operational leaders in a way that allows them to comprehensively understand demand, risks and opportunities. Display screens show 12 months of rolling data gathered from numerous sources in a clear and detailed way, and specific datasets can be easily linked to.

Other enhancements include working with partner organisations such as local authorities to better manage the collected data.”

4. CONTINUING TO IMPROVE AND PREPARING FOR THE NEXT PEEL ASSESSMENT

- 4.1. On the whole this is a good report and reflects the hard work and commitment of the Constabulary.
- 4.2. On Page 2 of the PEEL inspection report HMICFRS outline changes they are making to move to a more intelligence-led, continual assessment approach, rather than the annual PEEL inspections used in previous years .
- 4.3. The Deputy Chief Constable chairs the Constabulary’s HMICFRS Steering Group meetings, and work is already underway to ensure the Constabulary understands and is fully prepared for its next inspection under this new framework which could be as soon as 2023.
- 4.4. This HMICFRS Steering Group will continue to lead and co-ordinate activity across the Constabulary, to ensure that the Constabulary addresses the areas for improvement but also considers and responds to observations and comments in the report that present an opportunity to improve further.
- 4.5. In December 2022, the Constabulary will hold a seminar for senior leaders to ensure that the organisation is prepared for the next inspection.
- 4.6. The Constabulary will continue to report on the action taken and progress made to the Police and Crime Commissioner.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. There are no financial implications to note.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

6.1. There are no other implications and risks to note.