

## Police Efficiency, Effectiveness and Legitimacy Inspection 2018/19 for Devon and Cornwall Police

### Formal response of the Chief Constable of Devon and Cornwall Police

I am very pleased to note the overall 'good' gradings in the three pillars that HMICFRS inspect police services: efficiency, effectiveness and legitimacy.

The report from 2017/18 identified three areas requiring improvement for Devon and Cornwall Police: investigating crime, protecting those who are vulnerable and how well does the force ensure that its workforce behaves ethically and lawfully. Devon and Cornwall Police was graded as good on eight of the nine areas inspected in the new 2018/19 report.

In the latest report, investigating crime was the only area that the Inspectorate graded the force as requiring improvement. HMICFRS acknowledged the high workloads in some of our specialist investigation teams alongside the impact vacancies have on capacity of some teams. Whilst the quality and supervision of our investigations have improved, this remains a primary area of focus, and further improvements will continue to be driven over the next 12 months through our Investigation Standards plan which is led and overseen by a Chief Officer.

We welcome the recognition of HM Inspector of Constabulary Wendy Williams regarding the improvement in our effectiveness and her praise of our performance in keeping people safe and reducing crime. Our ability to recognise and respond to vulnerability is reflective of the commitment of our Officers and Staff to delivering a high standard of service to the public.

The report highlights that Devon & Cornwall Police continue to uphold an ethical culture and is using information on demand to develop sustainable financial and workforce plans for the future. I am pleased the report recognises the progress that the force has made, which provides a strong foundation on which to further improve. Through our culture of continuous improvement, I am committed to ensure that Devon and Cornwall police provide the best service to the communities we serve.

### Formal response of the Police and Crime Commissioner of Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly

I welcome the publication of the Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) integrated PEEL assessment report 2018/19 for Devon and Cornwall Police and am pleased that the Force has continued to improve since its previous inspections.

This inspection considered 3 categories, 'police efficiency, effectiveness and legitimacy'. Each category is made up of separate topics that HMICFRS inspect, and each of those topics receives a 'grade' of either 'outstanding', 'good', 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate'. The combined grades of each topic gives an overall grade for the category.

When I was elected in 2016, Devon and Cornwall Police was graded by the inspectorate as requiring improvement in 2 categories, namely 'effectiveness' and 'efficiency'. In 2017 the force had improved and was graded as requiring improvement in terms of 1 category, 'effectiveness'. Now in the final year of my term of office as Police and Crime Commissioner, I am delighted that the force has achieved 'good' grades by HMICFRS in all three categories of police 'effectiveness', 'efficiency' and 'legitimacy'.

This is an achievement for which I congratulate the Chief Constable of Devon and Cornwall Police, his officers, staff and volunteers. I also recognise the work of my team of staff and volunteers within the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner who have supported me to hold the Chief Constable to account for the discharge of his functions in delivering an effective police force, and to deliver the Police and Crime Plan for Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

**Efficiency**

Meeting current demands and using resources  
Planning for the future

**Overall Grade: Good**

Good  
Good

HMICFRS has recognised that the Force has a balanced budget and that its financial plans are realistic. The statutory role of the Treasurer within my office which is completely independent of the police, has supported this by enabling the robust monitoring and scrutiny of Devon and Cornwall Police's financial strategies and spending.

An issue that has been identified for improvement by HMICFRS is the call-handling performance of Devon and Cornwall Police and 101 call waiting times continue to be an issue of concern for the public. Each year Devon and Cornwall Police receive over 1 million calls from the public. It is vital that the public can contact the police when they need them and I recognise that 101 non-emergency telephone performance has not improved enough. I also recognise that when the public really need Devon and Cornwall Police in an emergency, they can be confident that all emergency 999 calls will be answered, and 90% of those will be answered within 10 seconds.

Since I was elected the issue of 101 has continued to be high on the public's agenda, and in particular the issue of call waiting times. Against a backdrop of the growing complexity of calls and increasing call volumes I have encouraged the Force to take a number of actions to address this matter, including the investment in new options such as email, online reporting and webchat and the introduction of Interactive Voice Recognition which aims to prioritise callers according to priority. However challenges around call waiting times for non-urgent matters continue because the public expectation as we understand it, is more than a 2 minute wait is unsatisfactory. Currently 61% of calls are answered within 10 minutes.

The staff working within the contact centres do an incredibly difficult job and they do it tremendously well – providing assistance and support to people who may be feeling extremely vulnerable when they call. We have aided transparency of call handling to the public by supporting the “Call the Cops” television programme which recently aired on Channel 4. However if Devon and Cornwall Police is to deliver the required improvements in call handling then radical action is now needed. I have prioritised investment in the contact centre within the budget for 2020/21 to enable the Chief Constable to look at the overall capacity and capability within the two contact centres and whether a totally different approach is now required.

Working effectively with others is a skill so I am delighted that effective partnership working has also been recognised, and in particular the work of our new Tri-Service Safety Officers. Doing things differently takes courage as change can be difficult for organisations and communities, so I am pleased that our Tri-Service Officers who are working hard to make a difference every day in our more rural areas, feature within this report. As well as Tri-Service Safety Officers I have also been delighted with the work of our Community Responders (Fire Fighter/Special Constable) and our Police and Fire Community Support Officers who embody innovation in serving our public.

**Effectiveness**

Preventing crime and tackling anti-social behaviour  
 Investigating crime  
 Protecting vulnerable people  
 Tackling serious and organised crime

**Overall Grade: Good**

Good  
 Requires improvement  
 Good  
 Good

The ‘Investigating crime’ section of the report opens with the statement that ‘Devon and Cornwall Police needs to investigate crime better’. Whilst the report has identified a number of issues in this area, they relate primarily to a shortage of investigators (which is a national challenge), the subsequent impact of that on workloads and supervision and the need to improve processes such as the examination of digital evidence. The statement as is written by HMICFRS could be perceived by the public as meaning that individual police officers aren’t investigating crimes well which I would challenge, and I believe a fairer statement would have been ‘Devon and Cornwall Police needs to improve its capacity and processes, in order to better investigate crime’.

Whilst crime investigation was graded as requiring improvement by HMICFRS in its previous inspection, I am satisfied that whilst the grade may have remained static, Devon and Cornwall Police has made improvements in this area and that these are reflected in the inspectorates report, such as the recruitment of 30 Police Staff Investigators and more recently Police Support volunteers. My office will be maintaining a close oversight and scrutiny of the areas for improvement identified by HMICFRS and I am pleased that the report recognises that despite some significant challenges, Devon and Cornwall Police is good at supporting vulnerable victims. Supporting vulnerable individuals and communities sits at the very heart of my Police and Crime Plan and is reflected in my commissioning of over £5.4 million of services for victims of crime each and every year.

Whilst the area of ‘armed response capability’ is never graded, I am pleased that HMICFRS is satisfied that the Force has adequate arrangements in place to meet its national policing responsibilities.

## **Legitimacy**

Fair treatment of the public  
Ethical and lawful workforce behaviour  
Fair treatment of the workforce

## **Overall Grade: Good**

Good  
Good  
Good

The second principle of policing states that ‘the ability of the police to perform their duties is dependent upon public approval of police existence, actions, behaviour and the ability of the police to secure and maintain public respect’ which is why the police have to be able to demonstrate their legitimacy to the public.

This particular area of HMICFRS’ report evidences how Devon and Cornwall Police treats the public and its people and whilst I am pleased that the Force has been graded as ‘good’ I will be encouraging the Chief Constable to explore with HMICFRS what specifically the Force would need to do differently to achieve an ‘outstanding’ in this area.

Every month my office delivers a series of activities to support the police in the area of legitimacy. My independent scrutiny function explores and challenges performance in a range of areas including how the police use force, and how the Force make decisions relating to the use of out of court disposals. My scrutiny panels also carry out in-depth scrutiny reviews into specific issues such as how Devon and Cornwall Police use their power to stop and search individuals, and use spit guards. My office also runs the Independent Custody Visitor Scheme which ensures that there are checks done every month by specially trained volunteers on those individuals who are detained in police custody, to ensure that they are being treated legally and ethically.

An area for improvement identified by HMICFRS under ‘treating the public fairly’ is that ‘the force should ensure that all relevant officers and supervisors understand what constitutes reasonable grounds for stop and search and how to record them’. My office will monitor this specific area for improvement during 2020/21 through my Use of Police Powers Community Scrutiny Panel which is a group I established directly in response to the HMICFRS inspection of the Force’s legitimacy in 2017. That independent scrutiny panel which is comprised solely of members of the public has worked tirelessly during 2019, and I am delighted that this panel’s work has been recognised by HMICFRS in this latest inspection.

## **Concluding remarks**

I am grateful to HMICFRS for its efforts in producing this latest inspection report. Whilst the work of HMICFRS is very different to that of my office, ultimately our two organisations which are completely independent of the police, strive to support improvements in policing. HMICFRS do this through inspection of processes, I achieve this through governance, scrutiny, performance accountability and public engagement.

This report identifies positive issues and things that need to improve in policing. In this latest inspection HMICFRS has identified 10 areas for improvement and my office will be maintaining a close oversight of the Force action plan in response to those areas.

Investment in strengthening police officer numbers remains a priority for Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly and for the communities we serve. Since taking office in 2016 we have prioritised investment in police officer numbers as well as in the development of innovative new approaches such as our blue light Tri Service Safety Officers and Community Responder Fire Special Constables. By 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 we will have increased police officer strength by 317 since 2016, including the 141 additional police officers from the national 20,000 uplift as well as an additional 176 police officers supported through council tax precept investment.

Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly span a vast geography mixing urban, rural and coastal communities. We are the largest policing area in the country and due to our area boasting outstanding natural beauty, we have a population size that erupts in the summer months. Devon and Cornwall Police receives no extra funding from the government to accommodate that which is why my office is still pursuing a Home Office special grant of £17.9 million to recognise these exceptional circumstances and is seeking a long term funding approach from government that recognises these challenges.

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