

Policing inspection programme and framework 2020/21

An inspection programme and
framework under Schedule 4A to the
Police Act 1996

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Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services independently assesses and reports on the effectiveness and efficiency of police forces in the public interest.

We ask the questions that we believe the public wish to have answered, and publish our findings, conclusions and recommendations in an accessible form, using our expertise to interpret the evidence. We provide authoritative information to allow the public to compare the performance of their police force against others, and to determine whether performance has improved or deteriorated over time. Our recommendations are designed to bring about improvements in the service provided to the public.

Foreword

This is an extraordinary inspection programme, for an extraordinary year.

The original consultation on our plans for policing inspection activity in 2020/21 was published on 6 March 2020 – just before lockdown restrictions were imposed as a result of COVID-19. One week later, we suspended appreciable inspection activity, and offered to return seconded officers and staff to their home forces, to better allow policing to focus on its response to the pandemic.

While national lockdown restrictions are now easing, policing in England and Wales continues to adapt and respond to the challenges of COVID-19. Local restrictions add to the complexity of the response required. We have therefore revised our original plans for inspection in 2020/21 to ensure that everything we do:

- reflects these unprecedented circumstances; and
- promotes improvements in keeping people safe and reducing crime and disorder, without imposing unnecessary demands on forces.

The safety of our staff, our inspected sectors and the public is of paramount importance. We will therefore inspect remotely whenever practicable while the requirement for social distancing remains in place. All plans will also be kept under review to ensure that they remain right and relevant.

Introduction

This document provides details of HMICFRS's inspection programme and framework for policing for 2020/21.

Types of inspection in 2020/21

PEEL assessments

PEEL is the inspection programme in which we draw together evidence of the effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy of the police. Its principal aim is to promote improvements in policing. It provides direction for forces on the areas they need to improve, while providing a 'health check' assessment for the public.

National thematic inspections

Our thematic inspections are in-depth examinations of particular policing practices or processes, or of the policing response to specific offences. Themes are identified through monitoring. They are generally chosen because:

- there are current acute problems in policing practice, which are harming or are likely to harm the public interest;
- there are inconsistencies in outcomes across England and Wales, which force-level work cannot adequately explain; or
- further improvement in practice would benefit the most (or the most vulnerable) victims.

Expanding on the force-specific information from PEEL inspections and force management statements, inspectors build a national picture of police efficiency and effectiveness in the selected area through a combination of:

- all-force data and responses to document requests;
- interviews with national, regional and local policing, government and other interested parties;
- case file audits and reality testing in forces; and
- a victim, offender or witness focus.

Thematic inspections tend to identify areas of strong or weak practice in specific forces but result in recommendations that are relevant to the police service as a whole.

Commissions from the Home Secretary and local policing bodies

The Home Secretary may, at any time, require us to carry out an inspection of a police force, part of a police force, or particular activities of one or more police forces.

Similarly, local policing bodies may, at any time, ask us to carry out inspections or reviews of the police forces they oversee.

Inspection of national agencies and other non-Home Office forces

We have a statutory responsibility to carry out inspections of the following national agencies and non-Home Office forces:

- the National Crime Agency;
- the Police Service of Northern Ireland;
- the British Transport Police;
- the police forces of the armed services;
- the Ministry of Defence Police;
- the Civil Nuclear Constabulary; and
- HM Revenue & Customs.

Also, at the request of the relevant dependency or overseas territory, inspections may take place of forces in British Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies, such as Jersey, Guernsey and Gibraltar. Similar voluntary inspection arrangements are in place with the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority.

Joint inspections

We work with other organisations to conduct joint inspections. Such inspections allow us to inspect the police response to a particular type of crime or problem as part of a wider assessment of the service provided by all the relevant agencies and organisations.

For instance, as part of our joint targeted area inspections, we work with Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission and HM Inspectorate of Probation to examine how local authorities, police, probation and health services work together to help and protect children.

We work most frequently with the other criminal justice inspectorates: HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate, HM Inspectorate of Probation and HM Inspectorate of Prisons. This allows us to assess police efficiency and effectiveness in both contributing to, and being affected by, the wider criminal justice system. The joint inspection work we conduct with these inspectorates is detailed in the separate [Criminal Justice Joint Inspection Plan for 2019–21](#), which was published in August 2019.

State of Policing report

HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary published his annual State of Policing report for 2019 in July 2020. Insight from our subsequent inspections will contribute to his next State of Policing report, which we will publish later in 2021.

An overview of HMICFRS's inspection programme for policing 2020/21

Thematic inspection topics in 2020/21

This programme and framework is being published at the end of 2020/21. Some of the inspection activity listed below has been completed or is largely complete.

The policing response to COVID-19

We engaged closely with the Home Office, the National Police Chiefs' Council, the College of Policing and other organisations to ensure that our inspections in this area complemented the work they did to support policing in its continuing response to COVID-19.

The thematic inspection identifies and assesses the following:

- how policing is responding to COVID-19;
- what is working well and what is being learnt;
- how the sector is dealing with the problems it faces; and
- opportunities to make sustainable improvements to the service.

And it does so in the following areas:

- preparedness, partnerships and strategic leadership;
- policing themes – vulnerability, investigations, reporting (requests for service), enforcement (and wider 4Es approach¹) and wellbeing; and
- police custody.

We highlight good practice, identify areas for improvement and make national recommendations.

Joint inspection of the investigation and prosecution of rape cases

This inspection is required to supplement the wider cross-government review of how rape cases are handled across the criminal justice system. Conducted jointly with HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate, it assesses policy, practice and victim/survivor experience.

¹ Engage, Explain, Encourage, Enforce.

Serious organised crime: completion of regional organised crime units inspection

This inspection of the activity of regional organised crime units was paused at the midway point when appreciable activity was suspended in March 2020. The fieldwork has been completed and the final report was published in February 2021.

Sensitive intelligence inspection

This is an inspection of the management, dissemination, and use of sensitive intelligence by law enforcement agencies. We may publish a report summary, rather than the full report, due to the sensitive nature of this inspection.

Fraud thematic revisit

This is a revisit of our 2018 fraud inspection. This inspection will assess our 2018 findings, recommendations and areas for improvement. We will report on the extent to which the service has responded to these and improved how it deals with fraud, including victims of fraud.

Follow-up force inspections in 2020/21

Assessments of some forces' progress against recommendations from previous inspection reports

Inspections are bespoke and focus on progress against previous recommendations in PEEL, child protection or commissioned inspections. Forces are selected through our monitoring processes.

Resumption of rolling programmes of policing inspections

We have restarted elements of our rolling inspections, to ensure the smooth resumption of our full inspection programme in 2021/22.

PEEL inspections

Each PEEL cycle will result in a formal assessment and a report for every force. This will be based on everything known about that force up to the point that we make our judgments. Our intelligence-led continuous assessment approach makes greater use of evidence collected throughout the year.

Child protection inspections (single agency and joint)

National child protection inspections

Our national child protection inspections examine the efficiency and effectiveness of the police at each stage of their interactions with or for children, from initial contact and early identification of children who are at risk through to investigation of offences against them.

Joint targeted area inspections (England)

We work with Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission and HM Inspectorate of Probation to examine how well English local authorities, police, probation and health services work together to help and protect children.

Joint inspection of child protection arrangements (Wales)

We work with the Care Inspectorate Wales, Healthcare Inspectorate Wales, Estyn and HM Inspectorate of Probation to examine how Welsh local authorities, police, probation and health services work together to help and protect children.

Custody suite inspections

This programme was established to meet the UK's UN Convention Against Torture obligations to inspect all places of detention. The focus is on leadership; pre-custody; in the custody suite; the custody cell; and release and transfer. The programme started in 2008 and all police forces in England and Wales and (then) UK Border Agency and customs facilities were inspected by 2014.

Criminal justice joint inspections and inspection programmes

Details of joint inspections are set out in the separate joint inspection business plan. Topics include youth offending services; serious youth violence; and the multi-agency response to suspects and offenders who have mental ill health. Timings for joint work are agreed with the other criminal justice inspectorates.

Other inspection and super-complaint investigation activity

Inspection of national agencies and other non-Home Office forces

The inspection of national organisations and non-Home Office forces is undertaken on a statutory basis. The purpose of these inspections is to promote improvements that help protect the public. When it is possible to do so, the inspection activity is designed to support judgments on the ability of the organisations involved, and law enforcement as a whole, to respond to issues affecting the public.

Initial scoping of potential thematic inspections for 2021/22

We gather data and engage with interested parties in developing intelligence-led proposals for thematic inspections in 2021/22. The themes to be considered will include issues of race and disproportionality. Activity this year includes assessing the current climate and examining how our PEEL programme approaches these topics.

Super-complaint investigations

A super-complaint is a complaint made to HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary that a feature, or combination of features, of policing in England and Wales by one or more police forces is, or appears to be, significantly harming the interests of the public. Although each super-complaint must be made first to HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary, we will decide with the College of Policing and the Independent Office for Police Conduct whether it is eligible for consideration. If it is, we will jointly investigate it.

We received super-complaints during 2020/21.

Inspectorate capacity

This inspection programme and framework is predicated on there being a full complement of inspectors of constabulary, working full-time on the affairs of the inspectorate, during the inspection year in question. To the extent that this is not the case, and subject to the requirement for consultation specified below, this inspection programme and framework will have effect for such period and with such modifications as the chief inspector of constabulary shall specify and publish.

Before the chief inspector of constabulary makes any such modifications, he must first have consulted the Home Secretary and those local policing bodies and chief officers, and such other law enforcement bodies and policing institutions, as he considers likely to be affected by the modifications he proposes to make, and have taken into consideration their observations and representations timeously made.

HMICFRS's inspection framework

PEEL 2020

The PEEL inspection programme is an [assessment of the effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy of police forces in England and Wales](#). In 2018, HMICFRS developed its approach to PEEL with the introduction of the Integrated PEEL Assessment (IPA) programme. This brought together the three PEEL pillars (effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy) into a single inspection. We also introduced a risk-based approach, to concentrate on areas of the greatest risk.

We will continue the evolution of PEEL in 2020/21 towards an intelligence-led continuous assessment model. This means making greater use of the breadth of evidence we already collect on a force throughout the year to come to an assessment of performance. Evidence sources include:

- the relevant police and crime plan;
- force management statements;
- findings from thematic and joint inspections;
- crime data integrity inspections;
- progress against causes of concern and areas for improvement;
- routine data collections;
- force liaison lead knowledge; and
- insight evidence collection.

There will be less reliance on an intense onsite fieldwork period, with the intelligence-led approach determining the need to collect further evidence during this period.

This will provide us with a more dynamic view of current force performance across a range of policing functions. Causes of concern will be highlighted to a force as soon as they are identified, not just as part of the PEEL onsite evidence collection. This could trigger monitoring activity sooner and help forces improve their own performance by taking rapid action where improvement is needed. It will also support local policing bodies in holding their chief constables to account and assist the public in holding their local policing bodies to account.

Local policing bodies' priorities

In the design of each inspection, and before carrying out fieldwork in each force, we examine and review in detail the local policing body's police and crime plan for the force, in order to be clear on its established local priorities. The police and crime plan is also used as a material source of information about the local circumstances and characteristics of the force, the police area in question, and the factors that affect considerations of public protection, crime and disorder, including demand – latent and patent – for police services.

Force management statements must also be sensitive to, and reflective of, local conditions and circumstances. They must show clearly how the chief constable discharges his or her statutory duty to have regard to the local policing body's police and crime plan.

College of Policing standards

College of Policing standards are of great importance to the improvement of policing and the achievement of consistency in practice. We always consider the College's current standards in the design of inspections and our assessments of forces.

Methodology, monitoring, assurance and insight

HMICFRS's monitoring process

HM Inspectors of Constabulary (HMIs) routinely and continuously monitor all police forces to promote improvements in police practice. If an HMI identifies a cause of concern about police practice, it is raised with the chief constable and the local policing body so that they can take action.

Our routine monitoring activity is an integral part of continuous assessment. It is the process that provides assurance that performance is improving, when necessary by ensuring that causes of concern are being addressed. Onsite evidence collection is just one source of information that we use to assess and monitor force performance. Other sources of evidence that we use are force management statements, thematic inspections, and the knowledge and insight of our inspection staff throughout the year. We use this information to understand progress that forces are making against causes of concern using our digital monitoring portal. This helps to make our monitoring activity more effective.

Follow-up from previous inspections

We conduct several follow-up activities throughout the year. These range from formal revisits (for instance, as part of the child protection inspection programme and aspects of our PEEL programme) to offering support to forces in responding to our findings (for instance, in the custody inspection programme). We also track the progress that forces have made against the recommendations in our reports.

Approach to PEEL judgments

In previous PEEL inspections, we used a four-tier structure for judgments: outstanding, good, requires improvement and inadequate. We also gave judgments at the pillar level (effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy) and at the level of our core inspection questions.

In relation to each force, the 12 core questions are concerned with:

1. the quality of the service the force provides to victims of crime;
2. the quality of the force's engagement with the people it serves and the extent to which they are treated fairly, appropriately and respectfully;
3. the quality of the force's work to prevent and deter crime and anti-social behaviour, and its work in respect of vulnerable members of the public;

4. the force's response to the public;
5. the quality of the force's investigation of crime;
6. the quality of the force's protection of vulnerable people;
7. the management of suspects and offenders;
8. the force's work to disrupt serious and organised crime;
9. the quality of the force's compliance with the *Strategic Policing Requirement*;
10. the quality of the force's work to protect communities against armed threats;
11. the establishment, development and care of its workforce, including in respect of an ethical and inclusive working environment; and
12. the efficient planning and management of the force, and the extent to which it achieves and is likely to achieve value for money.

In consulting on this programme and inspection framework, we asked the public and interested parties for their opinions of our proposed changes to our PEEL judgments.

As a result, we are changing to a five-tier structure, and will give judgments at a core question level only. This aims to make it clearer where we consider improvements are needed, and better reflect force performance, by adding more nuance to judgments. The new structure will separate the very good from the barely good. It will encourage those forces who are currently stable in 'good' to continue to improve in line with our principal aim for PEEL.

Following public testing, the descriptors for the five tiers of judgments will be:

Tier	Descriptor
Outstanding	The force has substantially exceeded the characteristics of good performance
Good	The force has demonstrated substantially all the characteristics of good performance
Adequate	The force has demonstrated some of the characteristics of good performance, but we have identified areas where the force should make improvements
Requires improvement	The force has demonstrated few, if any, of the characteristics of good performance and we have identified a substantial number of areas where the force needs to make improvements
Inadequate	We have causes for concern and have made recommendations to the force to address them

We intend to test and evaluate the five-tier approach as part of our pilot activity in three forces. This will enable us to test the methodology across a range of geographic, social and operational contexts.

In addition to judgments, PEEL inspections will report on whether forces are meeting the legitimate expectations of the public in respect of the prevention and detection of crime and disorder, bringing offenders to justice and protecting vulnerable people. This will take the form of a narrative assessment, considering evidence across our inspection activity in each force.

HMICFRS's assurance obligations

As well as our statutory obligations to inspect and report on the efficiency and effectiveness of police forces and certain other bodies, we monitor and provide assurance about other aspects of policing. These include matters such as compliance by chief officers with the requirements of the Police National Database's statutory code of practice, and the *Strategic Policing Requirement*. We continue to conduct monthly reviews at force level to monitor statistics relating to the usage of the Police National Computer.

Advisory and reference groups

We regularly convene reference groups and advisory groups involving experts who have specific skills and experience in the areas that are inspected. We use their knowledge and advice to establish a sound methodology for inspections.

Group members are drawn from a wide range of relevant organisations, including several universities, the National Police Chiefs' Council, the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, and the College of Policing.

Our Technical Advisory Group (TAG) helps to design inspection programmes, so they are as effective and efficient as possible. TAG members include representatives of the National Police Chiefs' Council, the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, the offices of police and crime commissioners, the College of Policing, the Home Office, the Office for National Statistics, staff associations, police forces and other specialist agencies.

Our Academic Reference Group (ARG) provides expert advice and discussion on the design and ethical considerations of new research projects that support inspections, the development of methodologies, and the evaluation of inspection methodologies and outcomes. The ARG members include academics from several universities with specialities in policing, research leads from other inspectorates (including the Care Quality Commission, Ofsted and HMI Probation), the Home Office, and other policing bodies including the College of Policing and the Police Foundation.

We also have other programme-specific reference groups covering, for example, our overall approach to PEEL inspections, and specific aspects such as child protection.

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