RESPONSE BY THE PCC TO HMIC INSPECTIONS OF CLEVELAND POLICE

INSPECTION DETAILS

Title of Inspection
PEEL: Police Legitimacy 2015 - An inspection of Cleveland Police

Date Inspection Published
February 2016

Type of Inspection:

- ☒ Cleveland Specific
- ☐ Follow Up
- ☐ Partner Inspection
- ☒ National
- ☐ Thematic

Is Cleveland Police quoted in the Report? ☒ Yes ☐ No

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On 11th February, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) published the conclusions of the legitimacy strand of the 2015 Police Effectiveness, Efficiency and Legitimacy (PEEL) annual assessment. To reach a judgment on each force's legitimacy, HMIC examined three areas:

1. To what extent does practice and behaviour reinforce the wellbeing of staff and an ethical culture? (assessed Spring 2015)
2. How well does the force understand, engage with and treat fairly the people it serves to maintain and improve its legitimacy? (assessed Autumn 2015)
3. To what extent are decisions taken on the use of stop and search and Taser fair and appropriate? (assessed Autumn 2015)

The overall judgement was that the Force 'required improvement', with this judgement reached in two of the three areas (core questions 1 and 3) and a 'good' judgement reached in one area (core question 2). The areas for improvement in relation to each of the core questions were as follows:

<u>Core Question 1 – Requires Improvement'</u>

- The force should put measures in place to better understand and address the wellbeing concerns of its workforce.
- The force should ensure that all staff and officers are aware of and understand the principles of the Code of Ethics.

<u>Core Question 3 – Requires Improvement'</u>

- The force should continue with the improvements it has started to ensure that stop and search records include sufficient reasonable grounds to justify the lawful use of the power, and that officers fully understand the grounds required to stop and search a person.

- Supervisors had endorsed all forms that HMIC identified as not having sufficient reasonable grounds. The force should ensure that supervisors properly understand their responsibilities when checking that stop and search is conducted lawfully and fairly, and that reasonable grounds are recorded properly.

FORCE RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS

HMIC have stated the Force "in general treats people fairly and ethically; however there are still improvements to make". Their inspection report concludes that despite there being some good practice the Force needs to improve low morale, which has an impact on the service staff are able to provide.

HMIC found that Cleveland had an ethical culture, and staff knew the standard of behaviour that was expected of them. At the time of their initial inspection in the Spring of 2015 the force was integrating the Code of Ethics into policy and practice. When they inspected again in the summer of 2015, they found that improvements had been made. There was also evidence of low morale and staff not feeling valued by the organisation, which was compounded by work pressures and demand for police services. They state the force has responded by putting plans in place to improve this; however there is still some way to go.

HMIC found the force had processes in place to support ethical decision-making, and ensure fairness and consistency of process. They were pleased to find we are working with Durham Constabulary to form an external ethics board, which will further this work.

They identified we engage well with the public, and we fully understand the relationship between engagement and legitimacy at both a strategic and local level. They are impressed by the commitment of officers to engaging and working closely with their local communities. Officers and staff understand the importance of treating people fairly and with respect and demonstrate a commitment to serving their communities.

Whilst HMIC were concerned to find that a large percentage of the stop and search forms they had assessed from early 2015 did not contain sufficient reasonable grounds to demonstrate appropriate and lawful use, during the fieldwork inspection they found we had made considerable improvements to our processes. HMIC are satisfied we are complying with almost all the features of the Best Use of Stop Search scheme, and that Taser is used fairly and appropriately.

In order to address the areas for improvement highlighted, the Force will focus improvement activity in the following key areas:

- Better understand and address wellbeing concerns of staff,
- Ensure all staff are aware of and understand the code of ethics.
- Continue to improve the recording and understanding of 'sufficient grounds' for stop and search.
- Ensure supervisors understand their responsibility in relation to fair and lawful use of stop and search and the checking and recoding of' sufficient grounds'.

PCC RESPONSE TO INSPECTION

Comment by the PCC:

Despite inspectors concluding that the Force 'requires improvement' in its assessment of legitimacy, there are a number of positive aspects which have been raised in this report which I am encouraged is being recognised.

- Nationally, Cleveland is regarded as 'good' in HMIC's judgement of how well the force understands and engages with the people it serves to maintain and improve its legitimacy.

- HMIC has highlighted the ongoing work by staff and officers, of all levels, to ensure Cleveland Police delivers the best possible service to the public, saying that our workforce "understand the importance of treating people with fairness and respect and how this links to public confidence."

- The report also recognises that the Force uses a range of methods to engage with local communities and organisations and then uses this information to good effect.

- HMIC reported that Cleveland Police's recruitment, complaints and misconduct handling processes were fair and free from bias.

Of course, there are always areas for improvement and it is pleasing to note that where the report identifies such areas, it also makes clear the force is aware of these and that appropriate actions are already underway. I suspect that when it came to deciding on an overall grading the force was right on the cusp between good and requires improvement and HMIC has erred on the side of caution.

I'm confident that the actions which HMIC recognises are already underway will impact positively on future gradings.