RESPONSES BY THE PCC TO HMIC INSPECTIONS OF MERSEYSIDE POLICE

INSPECTION DETAILS

Title of Inspection: PEEL: Police legitimacy 2015 - An inspection of Merseyside Police
OPCC Log Number: N/A
Date Inspection Published: 11/02/2016
Deadline for Response: 24/03/2016

Type of Inspection: ☑ Merseyside specific ☑ National
☐ Follow up ☐ Thematic
☐ Partner Inspection

Is Merseyside Police quoted? ☑ Yes ☐ No

Recommendations? ☑ National ☐ Local

FORCE RESPONSE:

The importance of acting with integrity, and treating people fairly and with respect, has been a consistent message emphasised throughout the Force. We expect high standards from our staff and do our upmost to uphold them. I am pleased to note, therefore, that in all aspects of this inspection, Merseyside Police is judged as ‘good’ by HMIC.

HMIC acknowledge how a strong ethical culture is ‘well embedded throughout the Force’ and that ethical standards and behaviours expected of staff are clearly understood by all. The majority of officers and staff treat people fairly and with respect and understand the impact of doing so on public confidence.

HMIC also found complaints from the public are dealt fairly and appropriately and that the exercise of police powers relating to stop and search, and Taser are used fairly and proportionately.
This is a largely positive report which reflects well on Merseyside Police. However, we are not complacent. Sustained effort is required to maintain and uphold high standards of behaviour. We welcome this report and will take the necessary steps, where it is appropriate to do so, to ensure further improvements are made in the way we engage with the communities we serve and the way in which we exercise police powers entrusted to us.

**PCC RESPONSE TO THE REPORT:**

It was pleasing to read HMIC’s inspection report on police legitimacy and note the considerable efforts made by Merseyside Police’s officers and staff in this important area that have contributed to an overall judgement of ‘good’.

This inspection covered a range of issues that can all significantly impact upon public confidence in their police force.

During the inspection, HMIC identified a ‘strong ethical culture’ amongst officers and staff which I believe is the result of years of hard work from Chief Constable Sir Jon Murphy and chief officers who have strived to implement a professional approach to areas such as complaints, the use of Stop and Search as well as public engagement with the ‘Just Talk’ philosophy.

Effective community engagement is essential to building and maintaining trust with communities across Merseyside. The Force’s efforts in making use of social media and working with independent community advisory groups is commended by Her Majesty’s inspectors.

Further to this, HMIC were ‘impressed’ by the Force’s creative use of ‘flash-mob’ campaigns.

HMIC also sampled call handlers work and observed enquiry office staff to assess how well they engaged with the public. Inspectors were satisfied that officers and staff in Merseyside Police are treating people fairly and with respect when they come into contact with them.

In terms of how fairly the police deal with complaints and misconduct, which again is a critical area affecting public confidence, HMIC were reassured that the length of time complaints took to be resolved was consistent with other similar Forces. Inspectors also commented on how the number of complaints where the service provided by Merseyside Police was judged not to have reached a reasonable standard (11% of 1,284 allegations) was consistent with other similar Forces. The
Inspectorate’s commented that Merseyside Police ‘dealt with complaints and misconduct fairly and consistently’ and that ‘good governance’ is in place.

Although Merseyside Police’s use of Stop and Search is recognised by HMIC as being above average when compared to other similar police forces, the public can take confidence from the processes established by the Force to independently review these events. Currently, Merseyside’s Independent Advisory Group reviews footage captured via Body Worn Camera’s in order to provide evidence of the behaviour of the officer. This process will now also extend to include my Youth Advisory Group to provide young people with the same opportunity to see evidence of police conduct.

Merseyside Police’s use of Stop and Search was also judged as compliant with the national ‘Best Use of Stop and Search scheme’ in all aspects, except the publication of data. I will seek further reassurance on this matter, although I am aware that data is available on the Force’s website but not in a format that satisfies inspectors.

An overall judgement of ‘good’ from HMIC indicates Merseyside Police’s strong performance in this national inspection on issues which quite rightfully capture the public’s attention. Nevertheless, from reading comments from Merseyside Police’s Deputy Chief Constable, I am reassured both officers and staff will take the necessary steps to maintain and improve their already high standards of conduct.

Jane Kennedy, Merseyside Police and Crime Commissioner

DATE RESPONSE SENT: 24th March 2016

(Responses to be sent to sofs.section55responses@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk & PCC@hmic.gsi.gov.uk)