

Cheshire PCCs Response to His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Police and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Inspections

Title of Inspection	State of Policing: The Annual Assessment of Policing in England and Wales 2023	
Date Inspection Published	19 th July 2024	
Type of Inspection	Annual Assessment	
Recommendations	National	x
	Local	

Report Summary:

As per section 54(4A) of the Police Act 1996, the H M Chief Inspector of Constabulary is to produce an annual report to the Secretary of State on the state of policing in England and Wales. On the 19 July 2024 His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Service (H M I C F R S) published the H M Chief Inspector of Constabulary’s annual report titled ‘State of Policing: The Annual Assessment of Policing in England and Wales 2023’ which is an overall assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of police forces in England and Wales, based on the inspections carried out between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024.

The report states in recent years, trust and confidence in the police have been questioned by a range of misconduct and criminal acts committed by serving police officers and staff. Forces have attempted to tackle these issues by improving vetting, investigating corruption, and tackling inappropriate behaviours but this still requires further improvement.

Too many victims of crime are still being let down by the police and wider criminal justice system because too few criminal investigations are leading to an offender being charged or receiving an out-of-court resolution. It is reported that the criminal justice system is malfunctioning with significant court backlogs and prisons being overcrowded requiring urgent reform.

Other findings from inspections suggest that police officers and staff do not feel appreciated neither by members of public, Government or their force. Workloads can be unmanageable and support lacking. As a result of this, morale of police officers and staff is impacted negatively and retaining good staff may become a concern.

Additionally, police finances are an area of increasing concern. Authors of the report suggest that the Government should aim to provide forces with more stable funding over a period of multiple years and comments on the inflexibility afforded to Chief Constables in workforce management due to the Police Uplift Programme.

Recommendations:

Recommendation 1

By 1 April 2025, the Government should abolish the fixed police officer numbers target in favour of a more balanced performance framework.

Recommendation 2

By 1 April 2026, as part of the next spending review, the Government should provide police forces with a multi-year funding settlement that covers at least three financial years. As part of this, the Government should: • conclude its review of the police allocation formula and make changes to ensure that funding is distributed according to the needs of communities; and • substantially increase the amount of capital funding that it provides to forces.

Recommendation 3

By 1 April 2025, the Home Secretary should develop legislative proposals to grant additional powers to the inspectors of constabulary and they should write to HM Chief Inspector to explain these plans.

Recommendation 4

By 1 December 2025, as part of the next spending review, the Government should increase the funding allocated to the inspectorate to adequately reflect the scope and scale of the work of the inspectorate.

Commissioner's Response:

I welcome the Annual State of Policing 2023 report from HMICFRS. Although the recommendations are for Government and Home Secretary, the report is a helpful document as I develop my Police and Crime Plan for the new term of office.

One of my key priorities is to tackle inappropriate workforce cultures and behaviours and I agree with the findings in the report that it is necessary to restore trust which is essential to be able to police by consent. To support this, I have committed to commissioning a Culture Review here in Cheshire to provide independent reassurance to the public.

I note the report calls for increased powers for HMICFRS as well as additional funding. However, a time of competing priorities due to the financial pressures faced by Constabularies alongside increasingly complex demand it is vital that Police and Crime Commissioners continue to be the voice of their communities, ensuring the Chief Constables balance national objectives while ensuring the service is nuanced to the needs of their individual force area. I value the expertise provided by HMICFRS and alongside I will play my part in holding the Chief Constable to account in meeting the national recommendations and any areas for improvement.

There is no doubt that more needs to be done to support victims. I have committed to reforming the Local Criminal Justice Board in Cheshire to become more effective. By working collaboratively I can deliver on my commitment to preventative activity, targeted to areas where it is needed most.

Whilst I welcome the addition of more officers, I agree with the findings in the report with regards to the constraints placed on workforce structure due to the Police Uplift Programme and support the recommendation that this is abolished, believing the Constabulary need the flexibility to manage its own resources accordingly.

Dan Price

Police and Crime Commissioner for Cheshire