



Commissioner's response to Staffordshire Police latest PEEL Inspection

The publication of HMICFRS's latest PEEL inspection report provides an important opportunity to reflect on Staffordshire Police's performance, recognise progress made and maintain focus on those areas where further improvement is required. Staffordshire Commissioner Ben Adams is committed to maintaining transparency and ensuring that residents of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent are fully informed about how their Police force is performing. Public Performance Meetings play a vital role in enabling open scrutiny, providing assurance to communities and demonstrating how the force is responding to both successes and challenges identified through independent inspection.

1. HMICFRS PEEL Inspection Report 2025-2027

1.1. Overview of inspection findings and headline judgements

Welcoming the publication of the PEEL inspection report, the Commissioner emphasised the importance of independent scrutiny in providing transparency and accountability to the public. While acknowledging the concerns identified by HMICFRS, particularly in relation to responding to the public, the report also highlighted areas of strong performance including neighbourhood policing, safeguarding, ethical use of powers and victim outcomes. The Commissioner sought assurance from Acting Chief Constable Becky Riggs that robust plans were in place to address all recommendations and areas for improvement.

1.2. Areas of outstanding practice

Positive findings relating to problem-solving approaches to retail crime, support for officers who experience assaults and improvements in victim outcomes were welcomed by the Commissioner. These examples were highlighted as evidence of the benefits that can be achieved through sustained investment, innovation and a focus on continuous improvement.

1.3. Areas requiring improvement

Attention then turned to those areas requiring improvement, including response performance, investigations, fraud and aspects of leadership and force management. Particular focus was given to recommendations that have appeared across successive inspection cycles, with an emphasis on demonstrating sustainable improvement rather than short-term recovery measures.

1.4. Acting Chief Constable's response to the inspection findings

The Acting Chief Constable welcomed the opportunity to discuss the inspection findings publicly and emphasised that PEEL inspections should be viewed within the context of an evolving inspection framework. She noted that direct comparisons with previous inspection reports can be difficult due to the introduction of new assessment areas, including fraud, and changes to HMICFRS methodology.

Acknowledging the concerns identified by HMICFRS, particularly in relation to responding to the public, the Acting Chief Constable stressed that an 'inadequate' grading should not be interpreted as a failure to provide a policing service. Rather, it reflected the force not consistently achieving the performance standards set by HMICFRS in areas such as emergency call answering, non-emergency call abandonment rates and incident attendance times.



A candid assessment of the force's position was welcomed, particularly the acknowledgement that many of the issues identified by HMICFRS had already been subject to scrutiny through Public Performance Meetings. The Commissioner noted that recent performance reports had demonstrated improvements in contact handling and response performance, while recognising the need to evidence that such improvements are both sustainable and embedded over the longer term.

In response, the Acting Chief Constable provided assurance that improvement activity had been underway for several months prior to publication of the report, including investment in the Contact Centre, additional response capacity and enhanced governance arrangements. She reiterated the force's ambition to achieve outstanding performance and confirmed that detailed plans were in place to address every recommendation and area for improvement identified within the inspection.

2. Leadership and force management

2.1. How leadership, governance and performance oversight support improvement

Discussion focused on the impact of leadership changes during the inspection period and the arrangements now in place to provide stability and oversight. Actions undertaken to stabilise leadership structures, strengthen succession planning and improve organisational oversight were outlined by the Acting Chief Constable. The progress made was welcomed, while recognising the importance of maintaining momentum and organisational stability.

3. Attracting, developing and retaining a diverse and inclusive workforce

3.1. Workforce capacity, capability and wellbeing

Recognising that workforce capability and wellbeing underpin every aspect of operational performance, the Commissioner sought assurance that sufficient capacity and resilience were in place to meet increasing demand while continuing to support workforce development.

In response, the force described the significant work undertaken to stabilise leadership structures, reduce reliance on temporary appointments and strengthen leadership development programmes across the organisation. Wellbeing support available to officers and staff was also highlighted, including initiatives recognised within the PEEL report such as support provided following officer assaults.

The Commissioner welcomed the focus on workforce wellbeing and diversity and reiterated the importance of building a workforce that reflects and understands the communities of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent. He emphasised that supporting staff wellbeing and professional development remains critical to delivering effective policing services.

4. Preventing and deterring crime and anti-social behaviour

With anti-social behaviour continuing to feature prominently in community feedback, the Commissioner sought reassurance that it would remain a priority despite increasing operational pressures and ongoing national policing reforms. He acknowledged the force's strong problem-solving approach, which had been recognised by HMICFRS, and stressed the importance of maintaining a visible neighbourhood policing presence within local communities.



Ongoing investment in neighbourhood policing, hotspot patrol activity and problem-solving initiatives was highlighted as part of the force's preventative approach. It was noted that Staffordshire has not experienced the same level of increase in anti-social behaviour seen nationally, with targeted patrols and partnership activity helping to mitigate demand and improve community confidence. Further discussion focused on the PCSO review, with the force explaining changes to deployment patterns that would increase visible presence during those periods when anti-social behaviour is most likely to occur.

The Commissioner welcomed the force's commitment to maintaining a Staffordshire-focused approach to neighbourhood policing and reinforced the importance of community safety partnerships in reducing crime, preventing anti-social behaviour and improving public confidence.

5. Responding to the public

Given the level of public interest following publication of the PEEL report, responding to the public formed a central part of the discussion as one of the core priorities within the Police & Crime Plan. While the inspection findings reflected historical performance, recent scrutiny activity had already identified encouraging trends in response performance.

The Acting Chief Constable acknowledged that the force had not consistently achieved HMICFRS performance expectations for emergency call answering, non-emergency call abandonment rates and attendance at incidents. She explained that the force had recognised these issues during 2025 and had responded through additional investment in the Contact Centre, enhanced supervision arrangements and the introduction of Operation Freshwater - the force's emergency response improvement programme. The force reported that emergency response performance had improved significantly since the inspection period and further improvements were expected through Project Maximus, a transformation programme designed to improve public contact and the management of investigations at the earliest stage.

While welcoming the improvements already achieved, the Commissioner emphasised the importance of demonstrating sustained performance over time. Discussion focused on HMICFRS concerns regarding incident regrading. The force explained that while risk reassessment forms part of normal operational practice, additional supervisory oversight has now been introduced to ensure decisions are appropriately recorded and justified.

6. Investigating crime

The Commissioner noted that effective investigation remains fundamental to victim confidence and public trust. While welcoming the improvements recognised by HMICFRS in positive outcomes for victims, he acknowledged that the report identified ongoing concerns around investigation quality, timeliness and supervision. Details were provided of the work already underway to improve investigative quality, including revised crime allocation processes, investment in specialist capability and a stronger focus on allocating investigations to appropriately trained personnel. The force explained that the increasing complexity of offending, particularly within the digital environment, has created additional investigative challenges but highlighted continuing improvements in outcome rates and specialist investigative performance.

Progress in this area was welcomed, however the Commissioner reiterated that victims must continue to receive a consistent and high-quality service throughout the investigation process.



7. Safeguarding children and adults at risk of harm

The Commissioner welcomed the positive findings within the PEEL report regarding safeguarding and recognised the significant investment made in public protection services over recent years. He noted that safeguarding remains central to the Police & Crime Plan and stressed the importance of maintaining strong partnership arrangements at a time of wider public sector reform.

Strong partnership arrangements with local authorities, health services and safeguarding agencies were identified as a key factor in the force's approach to protecting vulnerable people. The Acting Chief Constable described safeguarding as a shared responsibility and explained how multi-agency arrangements support the identification of vulnerability and management of risk. The force referenced previous investment in specialist safeguarding teams and highlighted improvements in child protection, domestic abuse and vulnerability management.

Maintaining these well-established arrangements through future local government changes was highlighted as a key requirement, with a continued focus on protecting vulnerable people through strong multi-agency working.

8. Managing fraud

The Commissioner highlighted fraud as an increasingly important area of policing, recognising both the scale of the threat and the impact on victims. He noted that fraud now forms a significant proportion of overall crime demand and sought assurance that improvements identified by HMICFRS were being addressed.

It was noted that many fraud offences originate outside Staffordshire and frequently involve regional, national and international offenders, creating additional challenges for investigators. The force outlined improvements already implemented, including a revised crime allocation policy, increased specialist support and enhanced training for both investigators and contact centre staff. Positive improvements in fraud outcomes were also reported, alongside increased collaboration with regional and national partners. The progress described was welcomed, alongside the force's commitment to ensuring that victims of fraud receive the same level of service, support and investigative focus as victims of other crimes.

9. Using powers fairly, appropriately and with justification

9.1. Legitimacy, ethics and public confidence

HMICFRS findings that Staffordshire Police continues to use its powers ethically and appropriately while maintaining strong governance and external scrutiny arrangements were welcomed. The Commissioner highlighted the importance of public confidence and noted that legitimacy underpins the relationship between policing and the communities it serves.

Discussion also considered the governance arrangements supporting stop and search, use of force, body-worn video and the introduction of emerging technologies, including the use of facial recognition technology, artificial intelligence and automation, with the force emphasising the importance of transparency, ethical governance and public scrutiny. The force's measured approach to emerging technology and commitment to maintaining public confidence through transparency and appropriate governance was also welcomed.



Support for workforce diversity and inclusion was reaffirmed, recognising the importance of maintaining a policing service that reflects and understands the communities it serves.

10. Areas for improvement and force improvement plan

10.1. Force Improvement Plan

The Commissioner sought assurance that all areas identified by HMICFRS are supported by robust improvement plans with clear governance, ownership and accountability arrangements.

The Acting Chief Constable confirmed that detailed improvement plans are in place across the force and that many actions had already commenced prior to publication of the report. Existing governance arrangements, performance boards and oversight mechanisms are being used to monitor progress and ensure delivery.

10.2. Milestones and timescales

The force explained that several improvement programmes, including Operation Freshwater and Project Maximus, are already delivering measurable benefits and will continue throughout 2026. Further operational and structural improvements are expected to be implemented during the autumn and winter as part of wider service transformation activity.

The Commissioner emphasised that improvements must be evidenced through sustained performance improvement and measurable outcomes rather than short-term recovery activity.

10.3. How progress will be monitored and reported publicly

Progress against PEEL recommendations will continue to be monitored through Public Performance Meetings, regular performance scrutiny and engagement with HMICFRS. Maintaining transparency and keeping the public informed of both progress and challenges was highlighted as a key principle of the Commissioner's scrutiny approach.

The force welcomed continued public scrutiny and reaffirmed its commitment to openness, accountability and continuous improvement. The Acting Chief Constable reiterated that Staffordshire Police remains focused on delivering an outstanding service to victims, communities and the wider public.

11. Closing remarks

The Commissioner thanked the Acting Chief Constable and Chief Officer Team for their openness throughout the meeting and welcomed the detailed responses provided. While acknowledging the areas requiring improvement identified by HMICFRS, he recognised the significant progress already achieved and the clear commitment demonstrated by the force to continue improving services for the public.

In closing, the Commissioner reiterated that the priorities set out within the Police & Crime Plan remain unchanged: supporting victims, protecting communities, strengthening neighbourhood policing and maintaining public confidence through ethical and effective policing. Ongoing progress against both the Police & Crime Plan and the PEEL improvement programme will continue to be subject to public scrutiny through future performance meetings.

Date of next routine Public Performance Meeting

5 November 2026 10:00-12:00, Oak Room, County Buildings, Stafford