OPCC
Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner for Gloucestershire

Gloucestershire Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) response to inspections of Gloucestershire Constabulary published by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS)

Section 55 of the Police Act 1996 (as amended by section 37 of the Policing and Crime Act 2017) requires local policing bodies to respond to recommendations in inspectors reports within 56 days

Title of inspection:	State of Policing: The Annual Assessment of Policing in England and Wales 2025–26			
Link to inspection report:	https://hmicfrs.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/publications/state-of-policing-the-annual-assessment-of-policing-in-england-and-wales-2025-26/			
Date of publication:	08/09/26			
Type of inspection:	Gloucestershire Specific		Regional	
	Follow up		National	✓
	Partner inspection		Thematic	
	Spotlight report		Joint inspection	
Is Gloucestershire quoted in the report?	Yes		No	✓

Summary of report

The annual State of Policing report concludes that, while policing retains many strengths, it is under significant strain and requires substantial reform. HMICFRS strongly supports the Government's police reform programme, describing it as a "once-in-a-generation opportunity" to improve policing. The inspectorate warns that maintaining the status quo presents increasing risks to policing effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy, given the significant changes in crime, public expectations and operational demand since the current policing structure was established in the 1960s.

The most significant areas of concern identified in the report are:
- Crime investigation
- Safeguarding vulnerable people
- Workforce wellbeing and resilience
- Fraud capability
- Uneven performance across forces

HMICFRS's overall judgment is that policing remains staffed by committed and capable people, but the system is struggling to keep pace with modern crime and demand. The report argues that major structural reform should proceed, while forces simultaneously improve performance in the areas that matter most to the public, particularly investigations, safeguarding and service to victims.

Key findings

1. Policing remains resilient but is under growing pressure

The inspection acknowledges that police officers and staff continue to demonstrate professionalism, courage and commitment to public service. Forces remain capable of responding effectively to major incidents, national emergencies and serious threats. [

However, forces face increasing pressures from:
- Online and technology-enabled crime.
- Rising fraud, now one of the most common crimes experienced by the public.
- Serious and organised crime.
- Terrorism.
- Growing vulnerability-related demand, including domestic abuse, child sexual exploitation, sexual violence and mental health-related incidents.

2. Strong support for police reform

The report supports the proposals in the Government's policing white paper, including:
- Creation of a National Police Service (NPS).
- Reduction in the number of territorial police forces.
- Changes to police funding arrangements.
- Greater focus on neighbourhood policing.
- Increased emphasis on performance and productivity.
- Improvements in leadership and workforce capability.

HMICFRS concludes that the present 43-force model creates:
- Duplication.
- Inconsistent service delivery.
- Fragmented specialist capabilities.
- Barriers to effective collaboration.

3. Leadership remains one of the biggest determinants of performance

The report finds that leadership quality influences force performance more than organisational size. It highlights:

- The importance of ethical leadership.
- Gaps in leadership capability across policing.
- The need to implement recommendations from the Police Leadership Commission.
- Support for stronger arrangements for chief constable appointments.

4. Workforce concerns remain significant

The report identifies:

- Low morale.
- High workloads.
- Fatigue.
- Wellbeing concerns.
- Skills and supervision gaps.

HMICFRS welcomes plans for a national policing workforce strategy to address future capability and workforce planning.

PEEL inspection findings

The report draws together findings from the first cycle of the new PEEL 2025-27 inspections.

Areas of relative strength
Most forces continue to perform reasonably well in:

- Preventing and deterring crime and anti-social behaviour.
- Treating people fairly and appropriately using police powers.
- Custody provision.
- Initial efforts to improve response services.
- Developing responses to fraud.

Areas of concern
HMICFRS identifies several recurring weaknesses:

Area of concern	Commentary
Crime investigation	One of the strongest messages in the report is that: Forces must make urgent improvements to how they investigate crime and secure justice for victims. Common issues include: • Poor investigation quality. • Backlogs. • Delays. • Failure to pursue all reasonable lines of enquiry. • Inconsistent victim contact and support.
Safeguarding vulnerable people	Many forces still struggle to: • Identify vulnerability quickly. • Assess risk consistently. • Protect vulnerable adults and children effectively. • Manage safeguarding demand.
Contact and response	Although some improvements have been made, the quality of service received by the public remains inconsistent and often falls short of expectations.

Findings from thematic inspections

The report highlights several national themes from thematic inspections over the year:

Area of concern	Commentary
Police integrity and misconduct	HMICFRS reports improvements in integrity arrangements following extensive national scrutiny, but stresses that further work is required to rebuild public confidence.
Serious and organised crime	Police forces remain committed to tackling serious and organised crime, but performance and capability remain inconsistent across forces.
Child protection	The inspectorate remains concerned about the quality of child protection work in many forces and notes that significant improvement is still required nationally.
Child sexual exploitation	Police responses have improved but are still not consistently effective, particularly in identifying risks and safeguarding victims.
Firearms licensing	One of the strongest conclusions in the report is that: The legal framework and governance arrangements for firearms licensing need a complete overhaul.
Safety Advisory Groups and major events	HMICFRS found confusion over the role and responsibilities of Safety Advisory Groups and recommends greater clarity nationally.

PCC response

As Police and Crime Commissioner for Gloucestershire, I welcome the publication of the State of Policing: The Annual Assessment of Policing in England and Wales 2025–26 and the response provided by Katy Barrow-Grint, Deputy Chief Constable of Gloucestershire Constabulary.

The report provides a comprehensive assessment of the challenges facing policing nationally and reflects many of the pressures experienced locally, including increasing demand associated with vulnerability, safeguarding, complex investigations, serious and organised crime, fraud and technology-enabled offending. HMICFRS is clear that policing continues to benefit from the commitment and professionalism of officers, staff and volunteers, but that significant reform is required if the service is to meet the changing needs and expectations of the public.

I support the broad direction of the Government's police reform programme and recognise the opportunities it presents to strengthen leadership, improve consistency, enhance specialist capabilities and make better use of technology and innovation across policing. However, any reform must continue to recognise the importance of local policing, local accountability and a strong understanding of the needs of Gloucestershire's communities. The residents of Gloucestershire rightly expect a police service that is visible, responsive and focused on the issues that matter most to them.

Above all other aspects of reform, I believe that effective leadership is the single most important factor in determining the success of policing. HMICFRS rightly identifies leadership as fundamental to organisational performance, culture, public confidence and the ability to deliver sustained improvement. Strong leadership is essential at every level of the organisation, from frontline supervisors through to chief officers. It is also critical in creating a positive culture, supporting the workforce, driving innovation and ensuring that victims and communities receive the service they deserve.

For this reason, strengthening leadership capability remains a key priority for me as Commissioner. I will continue to work closely with the senior leadership team to ensure that the force develops capable, ethical and visible leaders who are equipped to meet both today's challenges and the demands of the future. This focus aligns closely with the findings of both HMICFRS and the Police Leadership Commission.

The report's findings regarding crime investigation, safeguarding vulnerable people and workforce wellbeing are particularly important. These are areas that directly affect public confidence and the experience of victims. I note the work already underway within Gloucestershire Constabulary through its Whole Constabulary Review, workforce planning activity, investment in organisational learning and ongoing efforts to improve performance and victim outcomes. These areas will continue to form part of the scrutiny and assurance arrangements that I maintain on behalf of the public.

I am also encouraged by the Constabulary's commitment to improving its use of technology, automation and data-led performance management, as well as its willingness to seek support and learning from national policing bodies where appropriate. These are important enablers of future improvement and align with HMICFRS's vision for a modern and effective police service.

I welcome the Constabulary's intention to consider the findings of this report through its Recommendations, Improvements and Learning Board and will continue to monitor progress through established governance arrangements. Although the report contains no formal recommendations requiring a statutory response, its findings provide a valuable contribution to ongoing discussions about the future of policing and the changes needed to ensure the service remains effective, efficient and trusted by the public.

Having considered the report and the Constabulary's response, I am satisfied that the findings have been reviewed and that appropriate arrangements are in place to consider the implications for Gloucestershire. I will continue to support both local improvement activity and wider national reform, while maintaining a clear focus on delivering the best possible outcomes for the people of Gloucestershire.



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To

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Chief Executive to PCC

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Date: 02 November 2026

SENT VIA EMAIL

Re: HMICFRS Report – State of Policing 2025-26

I write now with the aim of assisting you to meet the requirements of Section 55(1) of the Police Act 1996, albeit it is noted that there are no recommendations within this report.

The report provides a clear and evidence-based overview of the challenges and progress across policing nationally. These themes are reflected within Gloucestershire's own strategic assessment of risk and future demand. The State of Policing report also highlights opportunities for the police service, and it is encouraging to see a continued commitment to transparency and improvement.

The constabulary continues to operate within an increasingly complex environment, characterised by rising demand associated with vulnerability, safeguarding, serious and organised crime, online offender and cyber-enabled activity. While traditional crime remains important, a growing proportion of police activity involves protecting vulnerable people and responding to issues requiring intensive investigation and multi-agency intervention. This aligns with HMICFRS's observation that crime, threats and public expectations continue to evolve and place additional strain on policing services.

This is something that as a constabulary we are working to address through Whole Constabulary Review. This is following internal feedback and the need to ensure that victims of crime are at the heart of our work. The new model will prioritise areas facing the greatest strategic risks and will ensure we have the right people in the right place through effective workforce planning.

The report highlights the importance of measuring performance and understanding outcomes for the public. Gloucestershire supports this approach and continues to develop its performance, insight and organisational learning arrangements to better understand areas of strength, identify emerging risks and improve services to communities. The

We are committed to being an anti-discriminatory organisation. This means not only acting in a non-discriminatory way, but addressing systemic inequalities, disadvantage and discrimination.

constabulary has also taken opportunities of support from the College of Policing and the Home Office to address outstanding performance issues and address cultural change.

The direction of police reform and enhanced national oversight aligns with the broader ambition to modernise and unify policing standards. Investment in technology, data management, and innovation is essential, and the emphasis on scaling successful practices across forces is particularly timely. As a constabulary we have made progress in this area since the 2024/25 report but continue to enhance our AI and automation capability.

Finally, effective partnership working across organisations and agencies remains essential in addressing prevention and long-term demand. The constabulary therefore supports a whole system approach, extending beyond policing itself.

I am pleased to confirm that the high-level findings of this report will be presented to senior officers at the constabulary's Recommendations, Improvements and Learning Board at the end of October.

My thanks go to all those who contributed to this assessment. I remain committed to supporting the continued development and improvement of policing to ensure we deliver the best possible outcomes for the communities we serve.

Yours sincerely,

Katy Barrow-Grint

Deputy Chief Constable