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**POLICE & CRIME
COMMISSIONER**

violence
reduction
unit

ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21

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Introduction

This is my first annual report since being re-elected as your Police and Crime Commissioner in the spring. Thank you for choosing me once again to represent the people of our region's views on all things policing and to be in a position where I can build on a lot of the good work that has been started on fighting and preventing crime in our region.

As I reflect on all the work that has happened in the last year it's safe to say Covid-19 caught us all a little off-guard and so many of our strategies and plans needed a re-think, but despite the challenges, it's clear to see we have achieved a lot of good.

It has certainly been a difficult time for so many and I want to have on record just how proud I am of how our police force rose to the challenges thrown their way. Officers, staff and volunteers too - they've all worked so hard keeping the people of our region safe and enforcing rules as required - for everything - I am very grateful.

I'm also proud of the work of my office who, like so many other organisations and businesses, have embraced the home working and been rethinking plans and delivering new ideas within very short timescales. Sadly, we had to put the brakes on big plans to tour the region on an engagement bus to hear your views to inform my Fighting Crime and Preventing Crime Plan. Despite this, our digital efforts paid off. More than 5,670 people shared their views on what they want the police to prioritise for the year ahead. My thanks go to everyone who shared important views and insight representing their local communities. What matters to you, matters to me.

Another key area of work for my office over the last year has been working closely with our commissioned services to ensure support for victims could continue, and to do so safely. Especially for those suffering domestic abuse stuck at home - raising awareness of the support available has never felt so important.

That's why in addition to my community fund and supporting victims fund, we gave more than £300,000 worth of grants through setting up a Coronavirus Response Fund. This was designed to provide crucial funding to support a range of victim and community services in getting through the pandemic and beyond. I was amazed at how the services stepped up to the mark and the determination they had to keep helping those in need.

Looking back at 2020, it's a difficult year to talk about crime figures as the circumstances have been so unusual but I do want to mention the work of the VRU, which is going from strength to strength and the figures showing an 18% reduction fall in knife-enabled serious violence across the Northumbria force area certainly need to be built on.

It's not going to be easy though. Job losses, disrupted education, financial pressures, health worries - there are many factors which mixed together can result in crime rising and this is something I am very aware of as we look to the year ahead. The work supporting our police in preventing crime and improving lives will be so important in keeping our region one of the safest in the country.

And, in order to keep fighting crime and delivering on this we need more police. I know this is what you want to see and we have been determined to make that happen. Together, with the Chief Constable, we agreed on plans to smash Government targets. And so I'm pleased to report that 553 new recruits have joined Northumbria Police since March 2020. Numbers are the strongest they have been in over a decade and I only want this number to grow and will keep updating you on this.

So, thanks for taking the time to read this report. There is a lot of good work happening, a lot of progress being made and lots to build on. The hard work fighting and preventing crime must continue, and you have my word - it will.



Kim McGuinness

Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner

The year at a glance



There are challenges, of course, as crime evolves and policing adapts and modernises. There are also areas where improvement is needed, and I will continue to hold the Chief Constable to account for this. Fortunately, we have a police force that listens and is determined to keep bettering itself. I hope, with my support, our region will remain a safe and welcoming one for everyone.

An overview:

- Total recorded crime reduced by 14% in in the 12 months to March 2021, compared to the previous year.
- Serious crime has fallen by 6%, compared to the previous 12 months.
- ASB Incidents compared to the previous 12 months have increased by 66%. This figure includes Covid breaches and is evidence of the force's strong policing of the restrictions.
- In the 12 months to March 2021, 21% of people felt that ASB was a very or fairly big problem in their neighbourhood. This is consistent with the previous year. Youth ASB and people using or dealing drugs are the neighbourhood issues residents would most like to see tackled.
- Recorded burglaries have fallen 25% in the 12 months to March 21, compared to the previous 12 months.
- Force's national public confidence position (12 months to March 20) - Ranked 1st in the country
- Risk of being a victim of crime in Northumbria - Ranked 3rd best in the country.

Fighting crime



Anti-social behaviour is a concern in many parts of our region; it is one of the most frequent issues reported to the police and undoubtedly impacts on the lives of many people.

The crime figures from the past year are very unique due to the pandemic. There has been a 44% increase in ASB related incidents in the 12 months to April 21. 32% of these, however, are COVID related. ASB (excluding COVID) has increased by 8% and tackling this is a top priority for the year ahead. I welcome the fact that 78% of ASB victims were satisfied with their service as a whole – a figure which has remained relatively stable over time.

We know that to effectively tackle ASB requires working with others is key. This includes local councils, youth services, housing providers, schools and further education providers, businesses and the voluntary sector to understand the causes and intervene to change behaviour. Work therefore is already underway to launch an ASB Taskforce, which involves reviewing and working on the re-development of the ASB Case Review. The OPCC has met with the police and representatives of all six Local Authorities and key opportunities for development have already been identified. We have also been in touch with other forces up and down the country to benchmark what they do and identify any good practice that fits in with our vision. Our new revised process will identify vulnerable victims and provide residents with an easily accessible and transparent route to have a multi-agency review of cases where they are persistently experiencing ASB. This will also be complemented by the ASB Victim Support Network that my office currently contributes £30,000 into across the region.

Supporting Investment in youth services to prevent and divert young people from ASB is also something that is very much underway through my Violence Reduction Unit, Operation Payback Grant Fund and other community grants.

Priority 2: Reducing crime

At the core of my work for the public is a simple aim; I am elected to ensure the police fight crime and keep you safe. I want to ensure the force reduces volumes of crime committed and has the resources, technology and training needed to keep our streets safe.

Drugs and organised crime

The North East Regional Special Operations Unit (NERSOU) provides specialist capabilities to tackle Serious & Organised Crime (SOC), in support of Northumbria, Durham and Cleveland Police forces. The unit is a very strong performing collaboration with a clear mission to relentlessly disrupt serious and organised crime.

Northumbria Police is committed to this and remains the largest employer of staff at NERSOU, employing 61 per cent of the unit's police officers in 2021.

Here are just some examples of NERSOU's success for 2020/21:

- 413 Arrests
- 130 Charges
- 126.85Years Sentenced
- 231 Adults and 381 Children Safeguarded
- 270.5kg, 1228 Cannabis Plants and 300,000+ Class C Tablets Drugs Recovered
- 11 Section 1 Firearms Seized
- 28 Section 5 Firearms Seized
- 359 Rounds Ammunition Seized
- £2,353,213 Cash £86,000 Bitcoin/Crypto Currency Seized
- £7,583,159 Confiscation Orders Granted





Rural Crime

In Northumberland and rural parts of the region we have seen some really successful operations cracking down on theft, illegal poaching and wildlife crime. We've also benefited from the support of our excellent rural policing volunteers - a real asset in the fight against rural crime.

With things being tough during the Coronavirus pandemic, rural communities were a great concern of mine - they can feel isolated and out of help's reach at the best of times. With this in mind, we actively reached out to struggling rural charities and encouraged them to bid to our Coronavirus Response Fund. We recognised the importance of keeping some of these community lifelines up and running and I was pleased to be able to help. Those benefiting included domestic abuse support services and youth services, important provisions which must not be forgotten about in our rural communities.

Our rural communities need the support of a well-funded dedicated police force, and that's what I will be campaigning for in the year ahead.

Over all, in the last 12 month period there have been 517 fewer rural crimes recorded compared to the previous 12 months. Figures show:

- All Burglary is down 47%.
- All vehicle crime is down 35%.
- Theft of Quads is down 70% from 37 to 11.

Lockdown has been a contributing factor in the crime reductions but a range of proactive investigations and prevention work has also contributed to the year's success.

Cyber-crime

With increasing access to the internet and as a result of the lock down, cyber-crime continues to escalate in magnitude and complexity, often committed by offenders overseas.

The cyber specialist team have continued to build upon their training, knowledge and impact since their set up in January 2019. An ever-increasing risk to the force, local education establishments and businesses is ransomware and the dedicated cyber team's training and experience enables them to investigate such incidents and educate around prevention.

Northumbria has also adopted the regional 'Cease & Desist' supportive intervention tool, promoting voluntary engagement with subjects that have been identified as involved in or being on the periphery of cybercrime but not met the threshold for arrest, to prevent possible offending or to stop ongoing offending.

COVID and enhanced pressure on social media platforms worldwide has led to greater reporting of uploads of indecent images of children (IIOC). Investigations are becoming more complex, labour intensive, protracted and often international.

Our Paedophile Online Investigation Team work hand in hand with the Digital Forensics Unit and also with the Regional Organised Crime Unit to deliver against aims of effective justice and raising investigative standards. Further work is ongoing with the Northumbria Violence Reduction Unit to provide education and prevention to target those most at risk of being drawn into Child Sexual Exploitation.

Fraud

Fraud makes up a third of all recorded crime in the UK, and year on year all fraud types are increasing. In Northumbria alone, we have seen an increase in fraud reporting to Action Fraud since 2018. In the last year there were 6711 frauds reported to Action Fraud within the Northumbria area; with 1,378 (21%) of these victims identified as vulnerable requiring safe-guarding and intervention. In addition, across the Northumbria Police area we witnessed the national trend of courier frauds which target elderly victims. This crime is notoriously difficult and resource intensive to bring a prosecution. Positive action is taken wherever possible to maximise investigative opportunities and bring these offenders to justice.

Preventing crime

Priority 3: Preventing violent crime

Violence Reduction Unit Update

My Violence Reduction Unit continues to go from strength to strength and I was pleased to secure a further 12 months funding (£1.6Million) in Government funding to tackle serious violence and its root causes. However, a long-term financial commitment very much is needed.

Since launching, the Unit has contributed to the regions decline in crime, serious violence, including a 10% fall in knife crime – a figure already falling before the pandemic took hold.

Going into the third phase of their work, Northumbria VRU has been supporting the region's most vulnerable young people, providing interventions and diversionary activities, as well as working in the heart of communities to build resilience and relationships.

In the last year, we've invested in a range of direct interventions and programmes, including an expansion of the Community Hub and Link Worker model – taking services directly to communities most in need. The Unit currently fund Hubs in Southwick, Gateshead and Howdon, with a further 3 planned in the coming months.

Funding has meant we have introduced a Link Worker, adding to the already funded programmes currently supporting communities in Gateshead, North Tyneside and Northumberland. The role focuses on building relationships with those in the community at risk of becoming involved in violence, and often use those with lived experiences to mentor those identified from following this route.

The expansion of the programme is due to its success providing vital support services, having already successfully worked with families and individuals around issues including; domestic abuse, drug misuse, anxiety, mental health concerns, school exclusions and housing support.



Headlines from the past year include:

- 103 young people received mentorship, support and interventions from the Newcastle United Foundation through the YOLO project.
- Reduction of 21% in emergency admissions due to an assault (however admissions due to an assault with a sharp object have increased by 34%).
- Knife-enabled serious violence offences have increased by 9% in the 12 months to 30/06/21.
- Robbery offences have reduced by 27% during the 12 months to 30/06/21.
- In the 12 months to 30/06/21 firearm enabled offences have reduced by 22%.

Priority 4: Neighbourhood policing

The Chief Constable and I have agreed that neighbourhood policing is a top priority, alongside working with other organisations such as local councils to help keep our streets safe. I will continue to invest and support neighbourhood policing, whilst engaging with communities to ensure their priorities are being acted upon.



Recruitment

Recruiting new police officers is key to fighting crime. Along with the Chief Constable, we recognise that and, as a result, the force has ran its biggest recruitment drive ever over the course of the last year.

Targets set by the Government don't go far enough to serve our region sufficiently. That's why I approved a force budget that would allow our force to grow. Since March 2020, 533 new officers have joined the ranks to keep our communities safe. The Chief Constable and I both agree that keeping our neighbourhoods safe is the first priority.

In addition to this we have recruited a further 62 new detectives. The Chief Constable had made it clear to me that we needed teams of dedicated investigators to fight organised criminals so we specifically boosted the numbers to make sure we have the right skills in place to tackle serious violence and organised crime at the highest level. This new role is also supporting officers tackling other crimes like cyber-crime and child exploitation.

Improving Lives



Priority 5: Support for victims

Supporting Victims

Crime, and the fear of crime, can cause far-reaching damage both to individuals and local communities. I want to make sure no one suffers alone, and that there is always support available for victims of crime or parts of our region that have been hit by crime. Protecting vulnerable victims is absolutely a priority for Northumbria Police

Making a difference for victims of crime

The OPCC received almost £2.5 million in grants from the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) in 2020-21 to commission victims services, funding which is Improving Lives of victims of crime in Northumbria. In total this funding has meant that we have supported almost 30,000 victims of crime to cope and recover from their experience in the past year, with 74% of domestic abuse victims reporting they are better able to cope with aspects of everyday life.

Supporting Victims Fund

My Supporting Victims Fund was designed to strengthen the overall offer of support to victims in Northumbria and improves and widens the specialist services available to our most vulnerable and priority victims.

This past year we have worked on assessments for the 2021-22 year, which build on our understanding of victim services, demand and need. Our Northumbria wide and local strategic assessments identify levels of crime, new and emerging crimes, issues facing our area where victim needs may arise and also local research and consultation with victims groups, community safety partnerships and service providers.

The key themes within the Supporting Victims Fund have been identified as:

- Domestic abuse
- Sexual assault and abuse
- Young people and child victims
- Victims of hate crime
- Victims with mental health needs
- Victims with other vulnerabilities

Operation Payback

In November 2020, I launched Operation Payback, a competitive funding round made up of money seized from criminals with a view to reinvesting this back into communities at a grass roots level. The aim of the fund is to make a real difference in repairing the harm that crime has caused, and also to prevent people from getting involved in crime and ASB in the first place.

Operation Payback is designed to empower local groups to find solutions to the issues that matter locally and is being used to bring to life new ideas, initiatives and encourage collaboration with others.

In total 104 applications were received and they were all of a very high quality. A multi-agency panel in each of the three area commands, chaired by myself, came together to agree which bids should be supported. The panels were made up of key stakeholders and partners including Northumbria Police, Community Safety Partnership Lead Members and Officers and Northumberland and Tyne and Wear Fire Service who had specific knowledge of the needs of their respective areas and which groups and organisations would be best placed to deliver the greatest impact.

Operation Payback meant that over £350,000 was invested across Northumbria with 24 projects being supported to help with Improving Lives in our communities.

Coronavirus Response Fund

Nearly 100 community groups including those helping vulnerable young people, domestic abuse victims and community projects throughout Northumbria were awarded a much-needed funding boost from the emergency grant fund we set up to help organisations overcome the challenges presented by Covid-19.

We were inundated with applications from across the region and in addition to the £200,000 on offer I managed to source an extra £100,000 in funding from reserves and underspend, bringing the total funding pot to more than £300,000. A total of 186 applications were received from a range of services all seeking new ways to work at distance and continue supporting families and helping prevent crime. Many of the successful project ideas have been about looking after vulnerable and isolated people, particularly in the region's rural communities, including victims of domestic abuse.

Local Criminal Justice Board

The purpose of the Northumbria LCJB is to work in partnership across agencies to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Criminal Justice System and to improve the experience of the victims of and witnesses to crime.

It is therefore of no surprise that Covid had a significant knock-on effect to the process of seeking justice. Trials and hearings were delayed in line with the restrictions, and there was a backlog of delays, echoing the national picture. However, after a huge effort from all criminal justice partners, trials quickly resumed as soon as rules safely allowed, in line with public health advice.

After lockdown measures were introduced in March, members of the Board came together to introduce a number of changes at various stages of the criminal justice system - including police taking electronic statements from witnesses in order to minimise physical contact and the risk of transmission.

This year has also seen audio and video technology play a significant role with new systems installed in courts and at police stations. This has been to allow some remand hearings to be heard via video-link while maximising the safety of the public, counsel and court staff -allowing the business of seeking justice to continue.

Victims Services

This year we implemented key changes to join up and enhance the delivery of victim support services across Northumbria.

I am committed to putting victims at the heart of policing, and following an independent review of local victims' support, we took the decision to move the services and staff of current provider Victims First Northumbria to Northumbria Police. We want to ensure the best possible support is reaching those who have been a target of all types of crime and hope the change will help support more victims.

This is a really positive step for all involved, building on the good work already done by Victims First Northumbria and giving victims of crime an even better, simplified and stream-lined service.

Hate crime

Nobody should be a victim of hate crime but unfortunately, across the region and the rest of the country we've seen a rise in reports of hate crimes. This has been linked to the COVID-19 outbreak, with the increase coinciding with the rollout of restrictions. Hate crime continues to be something we focus on and recent rises only make me more impassioned than ever to bring about positive change. The commitment to educating and where required, enforcing will not stop.

Building on the over-arching theme of preventing crime, Northumbria Police has done some good work through the Hate Crime Tension Monitoring group, where local issues are identified and we try to step in with early intervention work to reduce further offending. In recent years our engagement teams have had a real focus on building their relationships with LGBTQ+, disabled, Eastern European and emerging communities. It's especially important to try and reach out to those who are perhaps uncomfortable contacting the police.

The force continues to roll-out its nationally acclaimed hate champions scheme, when possible, as well as working with our communities to build relationships to make sure people are reporting it - which they seem to be.

The NP engagement teams have been working hard through the pandemic engaging online with community groups, many of whom have missed the face to face contact. Examples of the work that has been happening include:

- Online hate crime presentation for the BAME network at Newcastle hospitals which reached 200 staff
- Working closely with secondary schools and academies to address hate crime and identity based bullying, including under reporting and challenging hate and how to address it.
- Ongoing work with youth groups and schools around hate training and supporting youth organisations. Work with Streetwise to identify potential ASB hotspots and divert young people from locations especially around weekend demo/ protests in City Centre.

Priority 6: Tackling domestic abuse and sexual violence

Domestic Abuse

Staying at home has been an important part of the strategy to prevent coronavirus from spreading and save lives, but for some people home isn't safe. Urgent action has been needed in our region to protect victims of domestic abuse and prevent perpetrators from exploiting the lockdown to increase abuse.

At the start of lockdown we saw a small increase in domestic abuse reports in the North East although the true scale of the problem is hard to measure because many cases go unreported.

Here's some of the good work that has been happening in the last 12 months:

- This year my office was successful in securing Home Office funding for the Northumbria Drive Pilot; a project that focuses on high risk, high harm, serial perpetrators of domestic abuse with the ultimate aim of reducing reoffending and protecting both adult and child victims. By the end of this financial year, my office had supported the recruitment of a skilled delivery team, managed the delivery of information events for partner agencies and ensured that information sharing protocols were in place to ensure that all of the key agencies could work together to support this new intervention. The intervention offers one-to-one support for those who wish to change their abusive behaviour as well as working alongside the police and other partners to tackle the behaviour of those who don't.



- My Violence Reduction Unit has funded two interventions to improve responses around child to parent violence and abuse (CPVA). The first has been to train over 150 frontline professionals to spot the signs of CPVA and how to respond. The second has been a pilot project in Northumberland which started in January and will run for a year. This is trialling a non-violence resistance whole family therapy approach to identify conflict resolution skills within the home. It is identifying healthy coping mechanisms for all parties to reduce family breakdown, reduce the risk of violence and therefore increase safety.
- My office also funded 6 organisations to provide direct support to children and young people impacted by domestic abuse during the pandemic. A total of 483 children and young people were supported to cope and recover from the abuse under this fund. In recognition of the heightened COVID-19 restrictions, safety equipment has also been provided for high risk victims with children and who have been impacted.
- The domestic abuse champions scheme has evolved in lockdown times. In February 2021 the training was launched as a virtual event in response to the restrictions. The first session was a refresher session and we delivered it to 129, already trained champions. We updated on the effects the pandemic had had on domestic abuse and the impact lockdown had on victims and children. To date we have trained 165 new champions since March 2021. A total of 15000 champions have also trained from 380 areas of business within Northumbria

Sexual Violence

- We have bid for and received almost £650,000 from the Ministry of Justice to boost ISVA and IDVA provision across Northumbria. With this funding, we have been able to commission a further 5.5 (FTE) ISVAs and 3.5 (FTE) IDVAs for Northumbria until March 2023 - this includes posts with specialisms in supporting children and young people, black and minority victims, victims with learning disabilities and LGBT+ victims. This funding has also allowed us to fund IDVA training for 8 individuals, including training for 2 children and young people's IDVAs.
- We also received an additional £350k for DA and SV support services for the 2021/22 financial year.
- We are currently jointly commissioning a new regional Sexual Assault Referral Service (SARC) service. This would bring SARC services in the Northumbria, Durham and Cleveland PCC areas together under one provider, ensuring seamless provision for victim-survivors across the region. A procurement exercise is underway and it is hoped that the new provider will be confirmed in October 2021.

There's been great progress in tackling domestic abuse and sexual violence, but we know there is still much more to be done. My office will continue this hard work and develop this priority further in the next Police and Crime Plan.

Funding your force

For 2020/21 the force received £302.527 million, which will go towards the priorities in my Police and Crime Plan. The table below sets out spending based on the 2020/21 budget.

POLICING SERVICES ALLOCATION	RESOURCE
Local Policing	40.4%
Public Protection	9.5%
Investigations	17.7%
Dealing with the Public	10.2%
Criminal Justice Arrangements	6.0%
Intelligence	6.2%
Operational Support	5.0%
Roads Policing	2.1%
Investigative Support	2.4%
Police and Crime Commissioner (includes public insurances etc)	0.5%

How your money will be spent in the coming years

I'm committed to giving the force the funds it needs to fight and prevent crime, and to ensure victims are supported throughout.

As part of that, I authorised an increase in the police precept to ensure Northumbria Police can hire 60 extra detectives. These will ensure we are taking the fight to organised crime in the years ahead.

We'll also continue with record-breaking recruitment, which has seen recruited a total of 793 police officers join since April 2019.

Work will also continue on a major overhaul of the force IT system, an essential step in ensuring the police are equipped to keep us safe.

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Northumbria Violence Reduction Unit

I now have a dedicated Facebook page on the work of my Northumbria Violence Reduction Unit - you can like it here - [@NorthumbriaVRU](https://www.facebook.com/NorthumbriaVRU)