



Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Northumbria

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Sent via email

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Dear Gareth,

In 2018 the National Audit Office published its financial sustainability of police forces in the England and Wales report. As Northumbria's Police and Crime Commissioner I am writing to ask what plans the NAO has to further investigate police resources following the conclusion of the Government's Uplift programme to recruit 20,000 new police officers.

I believe the data to date shows the way in which funds for recruitment were allocated by the Home Office to police forces has risked permanently embedding a reduction in headcount in those forces hit hardest by Government austerity measures.

As your 2018 report makes clear, Northumbria Police was one of the forces to suffer most from austerity measures. Around 25% of the force's budget was cut, your report found, with a reduction in officer numbers of around 1,100 as a result.

In 2022 the NAO looked at value for money from the Government's Uplift programme and noted that "it is too early to assess whether the additional officers are delivering the wider aims of Government to improve public safety and help to reduce crime".

It is my belief that those forces with a smaller police precept base have been denied the chance to fully replace the number of officers lost since 2010, and that the allocation of Home Office Uplift funding embeds this cut in headcount for the foreseeable future.

In Northumbria, for example, your 2018 report found us to be reliant upon Government for 81% of our funding. Under uplift we have received funds for an initial intake of 615 officers. This figure was increased by 60 after the Home Office re-allocated underspend. Government withheld funding for the circa 425 extra officers needed to bring Northumbria's policing numbers up to 2010 levels.

This disparity is repeated in forces across the North of England, where the council tax base is often smaller than other areas.

However, last year Essex Police revealed they now have the highest number of officers in their 182-year-history, funded by Uplift and the local precept which makes up nearly half of their funding.

Home Office officials will have known of the differing reliance on central funding when they allocated Uplift targets.

With this disparity in mind, I am writing to ask what plans the NAO has to further consider the impact of Uplift on reducing crime, and whether the bias in Uplift allocation will be considered when measuring impact at a local level.

The Home Office estimated that nationally the additional officers will provide net positive benefits of £4.7 billion over the next 10 years through additional charges, reduced reoffending and deterrents, and will reduce the number of crimes by around half a million a year by 2024-25.

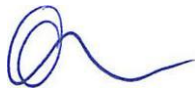
Will the NAO be assessing this return on investment against the criteria, and will it breakdown this assessment on a force by force basis?

I believe the public have a right to see how crime has changed in areas with the most policing investment, and how those denied the ability to recruit to their 2010 headcount levels have seen crime levels change as a result.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours,

Kim McGuinness



Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner