



NORTHUMBRIA PCC RESPONSE TO HMICFRS INSPECTIONS OF NORTHUMBRIA POLICE

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NORTHUMBRIA PCC RESPONSE TO HMICFRS

I welcome the State of Policing report 2023, which provides a comprehensive assessment of the efficiency and effectiveness of policing in England and Wales, based on the inspections carried out between 1st April 2023 and 31st March 2024. The report highlights various areas of policing that are in vital need of improvement.

It is reassuring that the Inspectorate continues to recognise the financial pressures forces are facing. Northumbria Police is one of the forces hardest hit by the effects of Government austerity and on-going financial pressures, while having one of the lowest precept rates in the country. As the Inspectorate recognises, the current national funding formula is not fit for purpose and urgently needs to be reviewed, and I am pleased that recommendation 2 calls for the Government to do this, as well as substantially increase the amount of capital funding and provide a multi-year funding settlement.

Whilst the Uplift programme has allowed forces to increase their numbers, albeit not yet to the same levels as in 2010, there has been some major challenges to overcome, which includes a higher proportion of inexperienced officers. As raised by the Inspectorate, ensuring strong leadership at all levels more has never been so important – Northumbria Police are prioritising delivery of their leadership programme, a multi-year ambitious and comprehensive scheme designed to improve leadership capability across all levels across the next 2 to 3 years. Regarding improving diversity in the workforce, focus remains firmly placed on all ranks and grades to increase the number of women officers and officers, staff and volunteers from ethnic minority backgrounds. A five-year plan includes bespoke activity to build further on this ambition, recognising the challenges particularly around race.

I support the Inspectorate's recommendation to the Government regarding abolishing the fixed police officer numbers in favour of a more balanced performance framework. Force's need more autonomy to increase capacity in service areas where uplift is most needed locally.

Restoring public confidence and regaining the public's trust remains a key priority for policing across the country. Northumbria Police continue to work towards improving this through strengthening various key areas of the service including call handling, response times, victim satisfaction, ensuring the right people are within the force, and engaging with communities, as well as many other aspects of the service. I mention some of the key improvements made lately further down in my response. Northumbria was unfortunately an area where the recent civil unrest and disorder took place – the Force responded robustly and have received praise from the public, including from the communities most affected. We strive to build on the confidence gained and continue to show communities that the police are there to protect them.



Ensuring victims are at the heart of everything we do has always been a key priority of Northumbria's PCCs and I continue to support this – we must ensure victims receive the best service we can offer and that they have confidence in the police's ability to support them in achieving justice. The Force implemented a victim satisfaction improvement plan in the summer of 2023. This work will be driven by a new victim satisfaction lead where governance and accountability will be re-invigorated. An internal communication strategy has been developed which seeks, on a rolling programme, to re-affirm these key messages and signpost to various briefings and training. The recent changes in the force operating model have brought about some improvements to satisfaction, which is mentioned in more detail below, with further work ongoing including through the accelerated investigation programme which will also impact on satisfaction.

Northumbria Police have developed a new force operating model which began to be rolled out in April 2024. These changes aim to address many of the challenges facing policing that are highlighted in the report with the strive to deliver the best service we can to our communities with the resources we have. Changes hope to:

- Improve the response to immediate and priority calls and vulnerable victims.
- Improving the quality of crime investigations.
- Promote staff wellbeing through fair distribution of allocated crime enquires across the force.
- Provide more time to officers dealing with the public through more efficient working practices.
- Provide force resilience to respond to force-wide events.

There have been some promising improvements made recently, some which are a direct result of the new force operating model. Improvements include:

- **Positive outcome rates and out-of-court resolutions (OOCR):** An accelerated investigation improvement programme has been launched with a key focus on Plan, Care, Supervise and Prevent in relation to investigating crimes and victim updates, satisfaction being a key element to this drive and focus. Part of this work included delivering face to face investigation training days to all functional sergeants, which has been supported by the development of several online CPD packages and specialist support being on offer to investigators working on live cases. As a result of this, the Force is demonstrating improvements in crime management, better monitoring of offenders on bail and improved case file preparation for court. Alongside OOCR improvements, the force has seen a 21% increase in the number of Transformation Resolution Education Adult Diversion (TREAD) referrals since April 2024 and this is giving more time back to investigators and improving victim centred approach to cases.
- **Call handling:** In the year to May 2024, significant improvements have been made regarding answer times and call abandonment rate. The average answer time for 999 calls has reduced from 11 seconds to 5 seconds and the average answer time for 101 calls has reduced from 2:41 minutes to 1:35 minutes. The percentage of abandoned 999 calls has reduced from 0.43% to 0.12%, and the percentage of abandoned 111 calls has reduced from 14.92% to 7.95%.
- **Incident ownership and response times:** In the new operating model, PIP 1 officers have moved back to Response Policing Teams (RPT) which has enabled clearer ownership for officers and victims particularly for volume crime investigations, as these are now kept by that first attending officer. The increase in RPT officers through the movement of PIP 1 investigators in CID and other measures such as Right Care, right person has also brought about improvements to incident response times. Grade 1 performance has increased from 78% to 82% compared to the same period last year, and Grade 2 from 48% to 62%.
- **Victim satisfaction:** There have been improvements made in some crime types regarding victim satisfaction. This includes initial response for volume crime victim



satisfaction improving from 78.7% in March 2024 to 81%, and overall satisfaction for domestic abuse has increased from 85% to 88%.

There is no denying that significant improvements need to be made regarding the proportion of crime being brought to justice – our low ranking, as highlighted in one of the figures in the report, is unacceptable and the Force continues to implement work to address this. As mentioned above, a key focus of the new force operating model is to further develop the capability and capacity of investigations and a prioritised investment plan has been put in place. The Force has recently agreed several investment models within Safeguarding and Crime departments to enhance capacity and capability within the main Strategic Policing Requirement (SPR) areas.

I will continue to monitor Northumbria Police against key national policing challenges through my scrutiny process.

Yours sincerely,

Susan Dungworth

Police and Crime Commissioner for Northumbria