



NORTHUMBRIA PCC RESPONSE TO HMICFRS INSPECTIONS OF NORTHUMBRIA POLICE

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NORTHUMBRIA PCC RESPONSE TO HMICFRS

I welcome the inspection report in relation to how effectively the police investigate crime. Northumbria Police have undertaken a lot of work in relation to improving investigative standards in our area and I am pleased with the improvements they have made to date. We are however conscious, that there is further work to be done and this report, combined with our recent PEEL inspection, will enable the force to further identify opportunities to continue this progress.

I am pleased that this report recognises the impact that the erosion of the number of officers has had on the ability for forces to sufficiently investigate crimes. It is clear that long term funding cuts have left forces with real challenges. The uplift in resources in recent years is welcome and will enable us to address some of the issues identified however the positive impact of this will take some to embed due to the number of officers who are young in service.

The forces' participation in the College of Policing pilot to deliver their new PIP1 course demonstrates its' commitment to improving standards within the force reassures me of its' desire to be at the forefront of new developments in this area.

This report has identified that victim's do not always receive the minimum standard as determined in the Victim's Code. Through my office, I provide funding to the core Victim and Witness service which sits within Northumbria Police. In order to improve the experience of victims, and compliance with the code, NVWS are supporting with providing victims with updates on their cases. This is already having a positive impact with improvements in most areas of the code over the last 12 months. We await further guidance in relation to measuring the quality of compliance with the code which will provide additional direction to improve the experience of victims.

In relation to the recommendations, Northumbria Police have updated me on their current position as follows:

Recommendation 3: *By 31 December 2025, chief constables should make sure their force has an effective and efficient end-to-end process to deal with online reports of crime. The process should remove all unnecessary delays in recording, assessing and allocating crime reports, and make*



sure the force consistently complies with its requirements under the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime.

Northumbria Police Position: The force operates a Crime Allocation Screening and Quality Team (CASQT) who are responsible for allocation of all recorded crime, they also conduct independent assessments of crimes which OIC consider suitable for closure following enquiries and prior to allocation. Compliance with VCOP is built into this process which is detailed within the Crime Allocation Process Procedure. This process is currently under review to ensure it is compliant with these recommendations and any necessary amendments will be implemented and communicated through the governance board and via the communications plan.

Recommendation 4: *By 31 December 2025, chief constables should make sure the end-to-end process for receiving, assessing and allocating reports of crime in their force minimises delays in the investigation process and the length of time before investigators contact victims.*

Northumbria Police Position: This process is led by the Crime Allocation Process Procedure and supported by the Crime Investigation Procedure. Currently crimes are screened back into the original officer for further investigation from an RPT perspective unless the crime requires investigation by CID, Safeguarding or an alternative specialist department where they are screened to the duty team, crimes created by TIU appointments are screened into an OIC from the relevant team on duty / commencing duty. There is some risk currently in respect of RPT allocation from crimes created on the last tour of duty before rest days which then wait 4 days for the OIC to return to work. The policy and procedure reviews will seek to address this risk.

Recommendation 5: *By 31 December 2025, chief constables should design and operate a policy that results in their force allocating to investigators crimes that are commensurate with each investigator's level of training, accreditation and experience.*

Northumbria Police Position: The force operates a Crime Allocation Screening and Quality Team (CASQT). All recorded crimes are assessed by the team and allocated to an appropriate team based on the nature of the offence and the skills required to investigate it.

Recommendation 6: *By 30 September 2025, chief constables should make sure their force has a clear policy relating to investigation plans. They should make sure their force communicates this policy to officers and staff. As a minimum, this policy should cover:*

- *when to start an investigation plan;*
- *who is responsible for writing the investigation plan;*
- *what to consider including in an investigation plan;*
- *how supervisors should review and approve investigation plans; and*
- *how the force will monitor investigation plans to check their quality, and to make sure investigators and supervisors have followed them.*

Northumbria Police Position: The existing Crime Investigation Procedure states: At the outset of the investigation the supervisor (usually a Sergeant) will set the investigative strategy/ plan. All package handling team crimes MUST have an investigation plan from the OIC endorsed by the Sergeant within 24 hours of release from custody.



Within the policy timescales are given for sergeant and inspector reviews, all crimes open over 3 months are to be discussed with Chief Inspectors at team performance meetings. The policy describes key lines of enquiry which can be considered. The procedure was extensively reviewed and updated in 2024 as part of the accelerated Raising Investigative Standards (RIS) programme; however it is being reviewed again to ensure appropriate changes are made to fully reflect the recommendations.

Recommendation 7: *By 30 June 2025, chief constables should include in their investigation policies a direction stating that when an image exists, investigators should search it against the Police National Database and any other relevant databases before their force closes an investigation.*

Northumbria Police Position: The NIK platform provides officers and staff with guidance in respect of PND and facial recognition, it is not currently mandated in policy that this activity must occur. This recommendation will be incorporated as part of the broader Crime Investigation Procedure changes.

Recommendation 9: *By 31 December 2025, chief constables should make sure the first supervisory review of a crime investigation takes place early enough for the supervisor to be able to:*

- *review any actions taken, including those to assess and manage risk;*
- *make sure the investigator has put in place the appropriate support for victims, and is complying with the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime;*
- *set or approve an investigation plan;*
- *review the investigator's caseload; and*
- *set a date for a further review.*

Northumbria Police position: The Crime Investigation Procedure states:

At the outset of the investigation the supervisor (usually a Sergeant) will set the investigative strategy/ plan. All package handling team crimes MUST have an investigation plan from the OIC endorsed by the Sergeant within 24 hours of release from custody.

A series of amendments to the Crime Investigation Procedure were discussed at the governance board to reflect this recommendation. The changes are currently being developed and will be supported by a communications plan.

Recommendation 10: *By 31 March 2026, chief constables should:*

- *make sure any member of staff who has a role in supporting the investigation process completes the College of Policing 'Introduction to investigation' learning programme;*
- *satisfy themselves that the content of their force's ongoing investigative training for responders is designed to develop their investigative skills and performance, and to improve outcomes for victims, and that their force gives responders protected time to complete this training;*
- *make sure their force focuses sufficiently on case file preparation when providing professionalising investigations programme level 1 training, while taking into account local procedures and case management systems;*
- *make sure their force gives officers and staff continuing professional development opportunities about preparing case files;*



- *make sure their force keeps accurate records of professionalising investigations programme level 2 accredited officers and staff, and that those officers and staff complete annual continuing professional development to maintain their accreditation, which forces should also accurately record; and*
- *review the investigative training their force gives to supervisors, making sure it equips them to oversee and direct crime investigations effectively.*

Northumbria Police position: All police officers achieve PIP1 qualifications throughout their initial training period. Responders have Protected Learning Days (PLD) as part of their shift pattern, which provides 1 shift per 8-week cycle and a variety of training and development is delivered throughout these sessions. This utilises a combination of centrally driven learning, supported by locally identified CPD, to address any specific areas of concerns.

During the accelerated RIS programme in 2024, all Sergeants were provided with a full day's investigative training which they then cascade trained to their teams. RIS was further supported by aide memoires, fully revised and updated crime investigation procedure and interview advisor clinics where staff could utilise experts to support both suspect and witness interview strategy. All teams were given a CPD input by Senior Investigating Officers.

A series of HYDRA sessions are being provided for front line officers to support and develop skills, the target audience for these sessions are teams and officers identified as requiring development. The session utilises a domestic abuse scenario and within the aims and objectives officers are given guidance on how to continue their own self-generated CPD to support independent learning.

The NIK hosts a crime investigation page with a series of links to articles and guidance in respect of crime investigation, including file quality.

The Prosecution Support Team have delivered extensive training and development to supervisors in respect of file quality standards, including joint training with CPS which continues, with the PSU supporting local CPD and PLDs as required.

The force has recently invested in an extension to the Chronicle recording system and are undergoing a process of converting records to that system to improve recording and maintenance of CPD records and deployments in investigative fields.

The force has recently been selected as a pilot force by the College of Policing to deliver their new PIP1 course, 3 area commands have been identified as the audience for the pilot (South Tyneside, Gateshead and Northumberland).

Recommendation 11: *By 30 September 2025, chief constables should establish and implement a process to monitor the proportion of recorded crime that their force allocates for investigation. This should include a process to make sure a decision not to allocate a crime for investigation is appropriate.*

Northumbria Police Position: Monitoring of crime allocation is available through the Qlik app which supports local and force understanding and provides management information.



Allocation of crime is managed through the Crime Allocation Process Procedure. Governance is through Investigations, CJ & VAWG Board and SPB.

I will continue to monitor the force's progress against these recommendations through my regular scrutiny process.

Yours sincerely,

Susan Dungworth

Police and Crime Commissioner for Northumbria