



## NORTHUMBRIA OPCC MINUTES

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**Title**

Business Meeting

**Date**

11<sup>th</sup> December 2025

**Location**

Middle Engine Lane

**Duration**

14.00 – 15:40

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**Present:**

Susan Dungworth – Police and Crime Commissioner  
Ruth Durham – Chief of Staff (OPCC)  
Jayne Meir – Deputy Chief Constable  
Clare Penny-Evans – Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner  
Tanya Reade – Corporate Governance Manager (NP)  
Nicola Seymour – Superintendent Staff Officer  
Gail Thompson – Joint Chief Finance Officer (CFO)  
Joscelin Lawson – Assistant Chief Officer (Corporate Services)  
Steve Wykes – T/Assistant Chief Constable (Force Innovation)  
Elizabeth Higham – Minute Taker (OPCC)

**Apologies:**

Vanessa Jardine – Chief Constable (CC)

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### **OPEN SESSION**

**1. Minutes of the Open Session of Joint Business Meeting for 9 October 2025.**

The minutes were agreed as a true record.

**2. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

**3. National Issues Impacting on Policing**

Chief Constable's Strategic Update

The Deputy Chief Constable provided an update regarding police reform.

The Home Office have begun conversations that suggest a transition to merge police forces. The Deputy Chief Constable added that they do not have information on how this will develop in Northumbria however updates will be provided to the OPCC when this information becomes available.



The Deputy Chief Constable echoed the concerns of police staff who fear job security if teams were to be merged into one across police forces.

The Police and Crime Commissioner raised concerns around the strategic approach of a potential merge and if this decision would improve efficiency or improve police response, for example.

#### Police and Crime Commissioner's Strategic Update

The Police and Crime Commissioner shared that she will soon be meeting with the North East Mayor soon to discuss a possible transition following the announcement of the abolition of the Police and Crime Commissioner role.

The OPCC have recently had funding confirmed from the Ministry of Justice to commission victim services. This equates to a 2% uplift compared to the previous financial year.

The Police and Crime Commissioner added that the OPCC will meet with Northumbria Police to support the decision in allocating funding to specialist victim services.

It was updated that the government's Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) strategy has not yet been released. It is anticipated that this will be announced by the end of the year.

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport notified the OPCC that they had not been allocated as a pilot area for the Future Youth Hubs. The Police and Crime Commissioner shared that they have queried the decision and will provide an update once a response has been received.

At the last Scrutiny meeting, it was agreed that the next Business Meeting would include a 'deep-dive' into a specific crime issue. The Chief of Staff requested if the 'deep-dive' could be postponed to the next Scrutiny meeting due to personnel change which has delayed the work needed to be completed in advance of the meeting.

The Deputy Chief Constable agreed to the request.

#### **4. HMICFRS: An inspection of the effectiveness of the police and law enforcement bodies' response to group-based child sexual exploitation in England and Wales. A Progress report**

ACC Wykes presented this report.

Between 2015 and 2022, the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) published a number of reports setting out the extent to which institutions have failed in



their duty of care to protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation. There was evidence of extensive failures by police forces and local authorities.

In March 2022, HMICFRS were commissioned to carry out an inspection into the policing of this harmful form of criminality.

In January 2025, Baroness Casey of Blackstock led a three-month, rapid national audit on group-based child sexual exploitation and abuse (GBCSEA). This reported the lack of reliable data to identify the scale of child sexual exploitation.

HMICFRS have reported that the progress made by forces since previous inspections is encouraging, and the Police and Crime Commissioner echoed that the report had a lot of positives.

The report highlighted the following headlines.

Not all bodies have made enough progress to adopt a common definition of group-based child sexual exploitation

ACC Wykes shared that training has been delivered, supported by internal communications, to promote the use of the SE markers. This is supported by staff within the Prevention Department who undertake additional assessment of SE markers and manage the Vulnerability Assessment Tracker.

Police forces who use the Hydrant Programme template develop better strategic assessments of child sexual exploitation

Northumbria Police are currently undertaking a CSE problem profile utilising six years' worth of data. Significant work has been undertaken to review crime reports to ensure all relevant offences are included in the problem profile. It is anticipated that this product will be available in April 2026.

Despite efforts by many forces to improve how they identify and flag child sexual exploitation cases, a robust national solution is still needed

Forces do not use flags consistently and they do not always link with the overall intelligence picture of crime threats in the force. Hydrant Programme analysts correct these errors manually.

The complexities of GBCSE investigations make this a challenge.

Forces use intelligence models to help tackle group-based child sexual exploitation



Organised Crime Groups (OCGs) and Priority Individuals (PIs) whose criminality is linked to CSE or GBCSE are MORILE scored and monitored through closed tactical coordination groups and serious organised crime governance.

The Force currently has one relevant OCG which is managed by the SOC Exploitation Team and three relevant PIs.

National police training to improve the police response to group-based child sexual exploitation is still being developed, but all forces have invested in Hydrant Programme specialist training specialist training and development.

Operation Hydrant were consulted when proposals for the SOC Exploitation Team were being developed. The review service provided by Op Hydrant has been used within relevant major investigations.

The Hydrant Programme provides training opportunities through continuous professional development input as well as the knowledge hub. Their twice-yearly lessons learnt bulletin is accessed by staff engaged in relevant work.

The quality of police investigations into group-based child sexual exploitation is improving

Operation Sanctuary began in 2014 and resulted in significant changes to Force structures and partnerships to deliver CSE and GBCSE investigations.

In 2024, the SOC Exploitation Team was created which provides dedicated resources to exploitation themes including CSE and GBCSE. ACC Wykes indicated that there remains some challenges in respect of identification of relevant offences and appropriate use of SE markers however work is ongoing to deliver improvements within the force and with partners.

The police are making efforts to eradicate victim-blaming language

Appropriate language toolkits have been shared with learning and development and are incorporated into training delivery. Feedback is provided by the multi-agency safeguarding hub where appropriate.

The broader vulnerability training plan will incorporate appropriate language within it and it is a feature within the current communications regarding the voice of the child.

Forces need to adopt Operation Makesafe consistently to maximise its preventative effects



ACC Wykes shared that Op Makesafe is utilised throughout the Force. It is in the process of being refreshed and delivered across businesses, hotels, leisure venues and with SIA staff.

Previously, neighbourhood policing teams have been used to brief partners and provide posters to relevant locations.

The work is complemented by Op Everet which is led by NEROCU and focuses on disruption activity in vape shops.

#### **5. HM Inspectorate of Probation with HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services: The effectiveness of diverting children from the criminal justice system: meeting needs, ensuring safety, and preventing reoffending**

ACC Wykes presented this report.

This report looks at out-of-court (OoCDs), an alternative to formal prosecution, for children designed to divert them away from the criminal justice system by addressing behaviour early and offering support to prevent further offending.

Since the previous inspection in 2018 there has been an increase in the use of OoCDs for children. The profile of children receiving OoCDs has also changed with many having more complex needs and repeated contact with services such as the police and children's social care.

ACC Wykes shared that in response to the recommendations outlined for Chief Constables, Northumbria Police have reviewed and updated its position and mitigation strategies in consultation with the Youth Justice Service local partners.

#### Formal Data-Sharing with Youth Justice Services (YJS)

Northumbria Police share data on all children linked to crimes, regardless of outcome or investigative pathway. This is updated monthly and will eventually be a rolling twelve months.

This data-sharing began in July 2025.

Monthly data-sharing with the YJS enables earlier identification and support. Further work is also ongoing with the LCJB to access new performance measures from local authority YJS teams, with plans to share insights with Area Commands.

The Chief of Staff (OPCC) would share the findings of the report with staff who contribute to the work of the LCJB.



### Consistent and Appropriate Use of Outcomes 20 and 21

In Northumbria Police, there is some evidence of inappropriate use of Outcome 20 and 21 based on local dip sampling.

ACC Wykes added that Outcome 21 are currently managed and finalised locally, predominantly by Area Commands.

The recommendation is all Outcome 21 decisions should be reviewed with the YJS PC prior to finalisation to ensure youth-specific considerations are applied.

Outcome 20 cases, most often linked to safeguarding investigations, will be flagged for review by the Safeguarding SLT to ensure appropriate oversight.

### Use of NPCC Child Gravity Matrix and Recording of Rationales

ACC Wykes provided reassurance that Northumbria Police have strong compliance with the matrix when it is going into the OOCDFC processes.

However less than 50% of Community Resolutions are referred to the YJS PC.

Decision-making panels and escalation processes have been reviewed to improve rationale recording. Area Commands are being supported to review Community Resolution appropriateness.

### Senior-Level Joint Decision-Making with YJS

Panel structures are in place with an escalation process where agreement is not reached at the panel.

ACC Wykes added that there will be more oversight by Area Command supervisors to ensure community resolutions for children are in line with the Child Gravity Matrix and that YJS advice is sought concerning the suitability and content of the outcome.

### Support for Children with Complex Needs

YJS leaders report sufficient support for OOCDFC interventions, but gaps exist earlier in the pathway, particularly around Early Help engagement.

Monthly data sharing is helping identify children earlier.

Collaboration with the YJS ensures data informs intervention pathways and Prevention Panels are being developed with the VRU to strengthen links between Early Help, YJS, social care, and third-sector services.



The Police and Crime Commissioner also referenced initiatives such as SAIL that contribute to work in supporting children with complex needs.

## **6. Capital Monitoring Q2 – 2025/26 – as of 30 September 2025**

This report was presented by the Joint Chief Finance Officer.

The capital programme of £64.585m was approved on 27 March 2025 as part of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and Capital Strategy 2025/26 to 2028/29.

The Capital Outturn Report for 2024/25 reported slippage of £0.786m into 2025/26 financial year, bringing the capital programme 2025/26 to a total of £65.371m.

As of Q2, most projects have commenced however some are still at planning stage and awaiting the outcome of reviews or progressing through the tender process.

The Joint Chief Finance Officer highlighted the key budget areas: Building Works, Digital Policing and Digital Transformation, NEROCU Schemes.

The capital forecast for 2025/26 of 30 September 2025 is £42.720m.

The capital programme will be financed by capital receipts, capital grant and contributions and reserves, and prudential borrowing.

## **7. Group Revenue Monitoring Q2 – as of 30 September 2025**

This was report was presented by the Joint Chief Finance Officer.

The overall Group revenue budget for 2025/26 was agreed at £405.444m which has now been revised to £400.780m, an overall budget reduction of £4.664m.

Within the approved 2025/27 budget adjustments have been provided for: budget reductions identified after the original budget was approved, additional budget pressures, approved investment, capital expenditure moved to revenue and additional income, and the impact of the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee delivery profile.

The overall group position is a forecast underspend of £0.570m.

The Joint Chief Finance Officer advised that no actions are recommended at this time.

## **8. Forward Plan**

The forward plan had been noted.

## **9. Any Other Business**

There was no other business to discuss.

## **10. The next Scrutiny Meeting will be held 15 January 2026, 14:00 – 16:00, at the OPCC Training Room, Victory House.**