

SUSAN DUNGWORTH
NORTHUMBRIA
**POLICE & CRIME
COMMISSIONER**

Delivery of The Police & Crime Plan:

**Priority 3: Serious Violence
And Organised Crime**

July 2025

Police and Crime Plan commitment: Carry out robust enforcement action, targeting offenders and locations to disrupt criminal activity.

Question 1

Are our recording methods in relation to corrosive substances consistent with other force areas?
 Are we confident that we fully understand the nature and extent of corrosive substance attacks in Northumbria?

In 2024, a freedom of information request (FOI) was submitted for police data on corrosive substance attacks. The results, published in the media, showed that Northumbria Police had the second-highest number of reported incidents, following the Metropolitan Police. I therefore sought clarification from the Chief Constable in relation to the local recording methodology and extent of the issue.

- Over the past 12 months, a working group has made efforts to understand why Northumbria had such high reported incidents and whether corrosive substance attacks were a particular issue in the region.
- It has been determined that Northumbria's numbers were not disproportionately high compared to other areas. There is no specific Home Office reporting code for these incidents, leading to varied interpretations and inconsistent reporting practices among forces. Northumbria Police's data includes attacks, threats, possession, and damage caused by CS, whereas other forces may only report confirmed attacks.
- Northumbria Police has a comprehensive approach to monitoring all corrosive substance incidents, not just attacks, provides a broader range of intelligence, enabling early identification and opportunities for enforcement and prevention.

- The following data shows the breakdown of incidents recorded by Northumbria Police in 2024:

Type of Incident	Number
Threat	118
Corrosive Attack	106
Unknown Attack	77
Criminal Damage (Corrosive)	41
Possession	32
Total	374

- 'Unknown attacks' refer to incidents where a substance was initially recorded as corrosive but could not be confirmed, many of these may have involved harmless substances.
- Threats of corrosive attacks constitute the majority of incidents however, in most cases, no substance is seen or used, and the crime involves a threat of assault or damage.

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- Most reported cases are linked to ASB, drug disputes, or urban street gangs. Only five reported crimes in 2024 were random, unprovoked attacks. The highest number of crimes occurred in Newcastle (38%), followed by Gateshead (18%).
- Corrosive substance attacks and incidents are reviewed and monitored through various processes with strong governance including the local daily management meeting, Force Intelligence Bureau reviews and a dedicated Inspector reviewing all corrosive substance crimes/incidents for compliance and to inform the reporting requirements.
- Corrosive substance attacks/incidents are now included in the new serious violence dashboard, accessible to all officers allowing real-time searching of current incidents and data.

The update from the Chief Constable has satisfied me that Northumbria is not experiencing a significant issue in relation to corrosive substances and that in fact, has more robust data collection methods than some other areas of the country.



Police and Crime Plan commitment: Continue to implement the public health approach to serious violence prevention, providing early opportunities to divert people of all ages from serious violence.

Question 2

Following on from the Netflix series, Adolescence and the increasing concerns around online influences, is the Chief Constable reassured that there are processes in place to identify and manage potentially dangerous people?

The recent drama series, Adolescence, created discussion locally and nationally about the risks young people are exposed to in ever growing, online environments. I wanted to understand how the force is working to protect young people from individuals who will prey on their vulnerability.

- The Force is confident in its processes to identify and manage potentially dangerous persons (PDPs) or individuals with concerning behaviour.
- Information and intelligence relating to online child sexual abuse and exploitation (CSAE) reach the force through various routes, including local incidental reporting, online justice groups and via national reporting mechanisms.
- Investigations are assessed at the earliest opportunity to safeguard children and adults at risk of harm. The Paedophile Online Investigation Team (POLIT) and the wider force have a responsibility, with key partner agencies, to ensure the immediate and continued safeguarding of all individuals.
- The force has a range of options in relation to managing offenders including the use of orders, referrals into specialist departments and multi-agency pathways.
- Referrals into the Management of Sexual Offenders and Violent Offenders Department (MOSOVO) can be submitted both internally across the Police and externally by partners. Co-location with Neighbourhood Policing Teams (NPT) enables information sharing about offenders and encourages appropriate referrals.
- In cases where the referrer has not exhausted all possible avenues to manage an offender, actions will be set, and guidance provided.
- Violent and knife crime offences of note are monitored through the local Force Tasking and Co-ordination process, discussing any perpetrators at both local and force levels based on intelligence and offending. Tasking around enforcement and diversion is identified at Neighbourhood Policing Team or force level depending on the level of concern.
- There are a range of opportunities and processes to support and divert young people away from crime, particularly knife crime, through primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention programs. This is a scaled approach based on the threat/risk identified.
- Violent ideology is not covered under terrorism legislation or the Prevent/Channel framework however, the Prevent process remains an avenue for referrals concerning radicalisation or serious violence fixation.

I am pleased with this update from the Chief Constable about activity of the force in respect of potentially dangerous people. Further reassurance of the force's activity in this area is provided by the recent PEEL inspection report in which it is identified that the force effectively manages the most dangerous offenders and makes effective use of the preventative orders mentioned above.

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Police and Crime Plan commitment: Protect children from child sexual abuse and child sexual exploitation by raising awareness, increasing reporting, targeting perpetrators, and providing trauma informed support.

Question 3

I recently increased the precept to support the targeting of offenders and prevention of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE). What are the current plans around investment and expected outcomes?

As I represent the voice of the public, I wanted to ensure that the funds generated from the precept increase are used appropriately and lead to improved outcomes. Child Sexual Exploitation was one area identified for this and the Chief Constable provided the following update:

- In May 2024, a business case for new investment in the crime department was approved to establish a dedicated Serious and Organised Crime (SOC) exploitation team. This team represents a significant advancement in addressing serious and organised crime, including Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE).
- The primary focus is on recruiting for the newly formed team, which has an authorised establishment of 35 officers.
- The team will consist of a skilled workforce that will tackle a range of exploitation issues beyond CSE and Group-Based Child Sexual Exploitation (GBCSE). Their efforts will include disrupting offenders, protecting victims, and collaborating with partners to address SOC threats. They will also develop long-term solutions and apply insights from national inspections and reviews to ensure an effective response to CSE, Modern Slavery Human Trafficking (MSHT), and related SOC threats.
- The team will provide comprehensive training and development on CSE across the force and with partners, including tactical investigative advice. They will also engage in Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and specialist training opportunities, offering learning packages to student officers and strategic partners to enhance their understanding of CSE.
- A crucial element is the intelligence unit, which is essential for identifying CSE and Group-Based CSE. There is link-up between other relevant departments and units to ensure a joined-up approach.
- The investment and development of specialist resources, in coordination with partners, is expected to increase the volume of cases investigated, leading to improved outcomes.
- The force acknowledges the recent and significant findings of the Baroness Casey review on CSE. The report has prompted a national public enquiry and calls for decisive actions to address GBCSE whilst emphasising the need for honesty, transparency, and prioritising children's safety, outlining various recommendations which are to be implemented swiftly.
- In response to Baroness Casey's national audit, Northumbria Police has implemented a gold, silver, and bronze structure. This framework will provide strategic oversight to ensure a timely and effective response to the report's recommendations, engaging local partners and stakeholders to strengthen and enhance the force's response to such offences.

The plans outlined by the force show a significant investment in enhanced resources to tackle CSE. I am satisfied that the additional funding is being utilised to fund effective interventions and look forward to understanding more about the impact this is having in the coming months.



Police and Crime Plan commitment: Protect communities from economic crime, tackle fraud and money laundering, and target criminals' assets.

Question 4

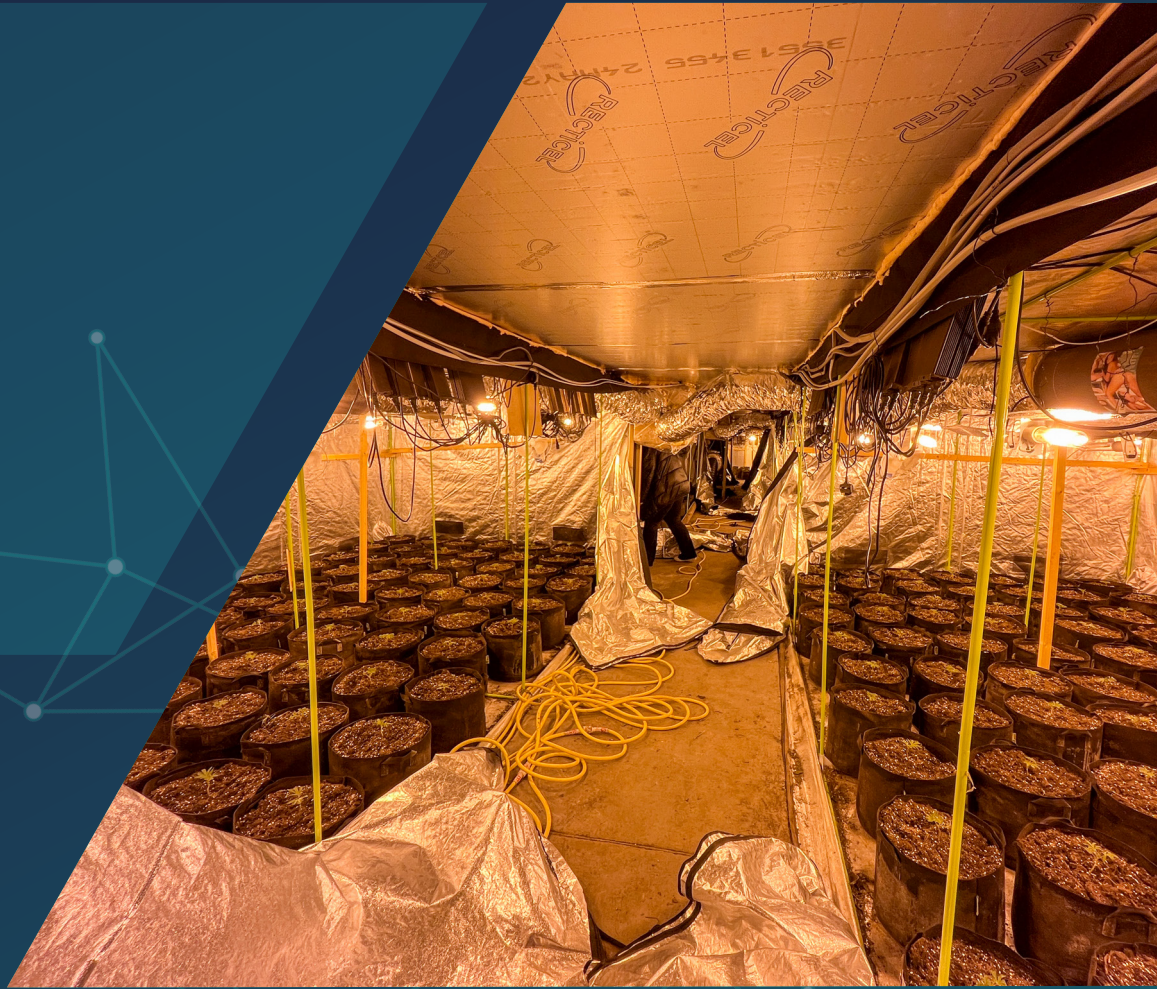
I recently increased the precept to support the tackling of fraud and online crimes. What are the current plans around investment and expected outcomes?

The growth of the digital world has led to a significant increase in the number, and complexity, of fraud and online crimes. A proportion of the precept increase was to support the force in tackling these types of crimes. I sought an update from the Chief Constable in relation to how this funding is being used.

- The 2022 HMICFRS report: An inspection of the northeast regional response to serious and organised crime, highlighted the force's had limited capacity to routinely screen Suspicious Activity Reports (SARs) to effectively investigate criminal finances and identify and seize assets.
- In early 2024, the force identified further areas for improvement and the need for additional investment. The subsequent investment during 2024/25 has facilitated growth in several key areas.
- The financial investigation team has seen an increase in Financial Investigators and the recruitment of a SAR researcher. Additionally, there has been investment to establish an Economic Crime Management Hub (ECMH). The Complex Fraud Team also expanded with the addition of more Serious Fraud Investigators.
- The hub has significantly enhanced force performance by taking full accountability for fraud handling from start to finish. This improvement has resulted in more timely submissions to the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau (NFIB) and a reduction in aged disseminations, particularly those over 25 months old with no outcomes.
- The last HMICFRS inspection and current Area for Improvement (AFI) noted that the force's administrative capability required improvement. The enhanced processes adopted by the ECMH is driving efficiencies and enabling better early identification of fraud victims, thereby meeting the AFI requirements.
- The protect officer conducts safeguarding visits to all courier fraud and banking protocol victims to prevent repeat victimisation. This response will continue to improve services to vulnerable and repeat victims by providing excellent protect advice and enhancing the level of customer satisfaction.
- The investment is also improving the forces capability to tackle serious organised crime (SOC) and has enhanced the forces' capability to utilise the Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA) to ensure asset recovery. We are already seeing some benefits however, it is expected that once the new FI's become accredited, we will see an increase in ARIS recoveries to force.
- The investment in the complex fraud team, ensures continued support to area command CIDs with wider fraud investigations, providing advice and direction to investigators. The uplift of resourcing will release capacity at Area Command CID with a greater proportion of complex crimes being dealt with by the team. It has allowed for increased partnership working and targeted investigations.

This response reassures me that the force has a clear understanding of its' current position and is utilising the additional precept funding to deliver on its' intended purpose, enhancing its' capabilities in responding to fraud and online crimes. I will continue to monitor the use and impact of this area of work to ensure this continues to be the case.





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