

Precept Delivery 2025/26 and 2026/27

Question: Can the Chief Constable confirm how often the drones are deployed by the force in relation to motorcycle disorder and the impact this capability has had?

Northumbria Police use drones extensively across a range of policing activities but currently does not record deployments specifically linked to motorcycle-related disorder. Motorcycle-related activity is generally recorded under broader categories such as anti-social behaviour (ASB) or neighbourhood policing operations. To improve reporting, a specific category for motorcycle ASB will be introduced.

The effectiveness of drones in responding to motorcycle disorder is currently limited by Civil Aviation Authority regulations, which require drones to remain within the pilot's visual line of sight. This restricts their use in fast-moving incidents and means they are not routinely used as the primary response to motorcycle pursuits. However, Northumbria Police is interested in exploring Beyond Visual Line of Sight (BVLOS) capabilities in the future, following developments in specialist capabilities and governance arrangements.

Despite these constraints, drones are being used successfully in a targeted and intelligence-led way to tackle motorcycle-related ASB. They support the monitoring and tracking of offenders, help identify riders and vehicles, gather evidence, and assist enforcement action. Examples include supporting Operation Impact, where drone intelligence led to the discovery of illegally stored motorcycles linked to organised crime, and assisting Operation Dragoon by directing tactical teams to offenders while reducing the need for high-risk pursuits.

Drones also play a key role in Operation Capio across Sunderland and South Tyneside, providing real-time updates to officers on the ground and helping to locate and seize offending vehicles. Drone footage has supported offender identification, informed the deployment of specialist resources, and facilitated the use of DNA Selecta spray, a tactic that allows offenders to be identified later without the need for dangerous pursuits. This approach has already contributed to prosecutions and provides a safer, effective means of disrupting motorcycle-related offending while supporting evidence gathering and enforcement activity.

Question: Is the Chief Constable confident that the single communications centre will improve local responsiveness and how are the force planning for this?

The proposal to move to a single, purpose-built communications centre is expected to improve operational effectiveness, workforce experience, and service delivery.

Key anticipated benefits include:

- **Greater agility and responsiveness** through co-location, enabling better real-time supervision, more flexible deployment of resources, improved decision-making, and more consistent communication when managing incidents and priorities.
- **A modern, inclusive working environment** that helps attract and retain staff by providing better facilities and support, ultimately leading to more consistent, high-quality services for the public.
- **Evidence from other police forces** suggests that single-site communications centres deliver improved service performance and stronger people management outcomes. Some early benefits are expected from co-location, such as streamlined processes, better tasking, and enhanced day-to-day coordination.
- **Implementation will be phased and carefully managed**, with changes to supervisory structures aligned to workforce capacity to ensure service delivery is maintained and strengthened throughout the transition.
- **Strong governance and project management arrangements** are in place, with dedicated working groups and project boards overseeing delivery. Several workstreams are running in parallel, including technology improvements, demand analysis, operating model development, people management enhancements, partnership working, and process simplification.
- **Stakeholder engagement is ongoing**, with opportunities to explain the need for change, highlight limitations of current facilities, and demonstrate how the new centre will provide a more effective, efficient, and modern service.

Overall, the move to a single communications centre is intended to create a more efficient, resilient, and future-focused service while improving the working environment for staff and outcomes for the public. I will continue to monitor its effectiveness moving forward.

Question: Can the Chief Constable provide an overview of what the investment in fraud and online crime has looked like?

Northumbria Police has invested significantly in both fraud prevention and investigation and online child abuse investigations, with a focus on increasing specialist capability, improving disruption activity, strengthening intelligence, and enhancing workforce resilience.

Fraud Investment

Investment in fraud has expanded specialist teams and improved the force's ability to investigate, prevent and disrupt economic crime.

Key developments include:

- Complex Fraud (CF): Dedicated Detective Constable Single Points of Contact (SPOCs) have been assigned to each Area Command, providing specialist advice and guidance on fraud cases. Regular training and engagement sessions help frontline officers and investigators improve their understanding of fraud processes and responses.
- Fraud Investigation Unit (FIU): Additional resources have increased resilience and strengthened the focus on Serious Organised Crime, asset recovery, and Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA) activity. This has contributed to a significant increase in Asset Recovery Incentivisation Scheme (ARIS) income, reaching £620,809 in 2025/26, demonstrating improved effectiveness in recovering criminal assets.
- A dedicated financial researcher now reviews Suspicious Activity Reports (SARs) to identify intelligence opportunities and individuals potentially involved in criminality.
- Economic Crime Management Hub (ECMH): A newly expanded team provides central oversight and coordination of fraud investigations. It manages demand and triage, improves investigative standards, monitors performance, delivers training, and supports backlog reduction. The ECMH has also introduced Fraud Champions

across Area Commands and delivers community engagement aimed at preventing fraud victimisation.

Overall, these investments have created a more structured, coordinated, and effective response to fraud and economic crime, improving both investigative capability and prevention activity.

Investment in Online Crime (POLIT)

Significant investment has also been made in the Paedophile Online Investigation Team (POLIT) in response to growing online threats and a substantial increase in referrals from the National Crime Agency.

Key outcomes include:

- A permanent increase in staffing across intelligence, supervision, and enforcement functions, including additional investigators, intelligence staff, and detective sergeants.
- The uplift followed a 34% increase in NCA referrals, which reached 1,089 referrals in 2025.
- Temporary funding through Operation Matfen supported overtime and enforcement activity until permanent staffing arrangements were established.
- Enhanced resources have strengthened the force's ability to identify and pursue online offenders, manage complex digital investigations, improve safeguarding of vulnerable victims, and increase preventative activity focused on online harms.
- Stronger working arrangements with Area Commands have enabled lower-risk enforcement activity to be managed locally, improving efficiency, developing skills across the force, and reducing community risk.
- Making these additional resources permanent ensures POLIT operates as a sustainable, long-term capability rather than relying on temporary or reactive staffing solutions.

Overall, the investment has significantly strengthened Northumbria Police's capacity to tackle fraud, economic crime, and online offending through enhanced specialist expertise, improved intelligence and investigation capabilities, stronger prevention activity, and a more sustainable operating model.