

# **PEEL 2021/22**

## **Police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy**

An inspection of Northumbria Police

# Contents

<b>Overall summary</b>	<b>1</b>
Our judgments	1
Important changes to PEEL	2
HM Chief Inspector's observations	2
Reducing crime assessment	4
<b>Providing a service to the victims of crime</b>	<b>5</b>
Victim service assessment	5
Crime data integrity	7
Areas for improvement	7
<b>Engaging with and treating the public with fairness and respect</b>	<b>9</b>
Innovative practice	9
Main findings	9
<b>Preventing crime and anti-social behaviour</b>	<b>12</b>
Innovative practice	12
Main findings	13
<b>Responding to the public</b>	<b>16</b>
Areas for improvement	16
Main findings	17
<b>Investigating crime</b>	<b>20</b>
Area for improvement	20
Main findings	20
<b>Protecting vulnerable people</b>	<b>23</b>
Innovative practice	23
Main findings	24
<b>Managing offenders and suspects</b>	<b>26</b>
Area for improvement	26

Main findings	26
<b>Disrupting serious organised crime</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Building, supporting and protecting the workforce</b>	<b>31</b>
Innovative practice	31
Main findings	32
Vetting and counter corruption	35
<b>Strategic planning, organisational management and value for money</b>	<b>36</b>
Innovative practice	36
Main findings	37

# Overall summary

## Our judgments

Our inspection assessed how good Northumbria Police is in ten areas of policing. We make graded judgments in nine of these ten as follows:

Outstanding	Good	Adequate	Requires improvement	Inadequate
	Treatment of the public	Recording data about crime	Responding to the public	
	Investigating crime			
	Preventing crime			
	Protecting vulnerable people			
	Managing offenders			
	Developing a positive workplace			
	Good use of resources			

We also inspected how effective a service Northumbria Police gives to victims of crime. We don't make a graded judgment in this overall area.

We set out our detailed findings about things the force is doing well and where the force should improve in the rest of this report.

For continuity, HMCI Cooke led the Northumbria PEEL inspection through to publication as he was responsible for the first part of its PEEL inspection before he became HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary.

## Data in this report

For more information, please [view this report on our website](#) and select the 'About the data' section.

## Important changes to PEEL

In 2014, we introduced our police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy (PEEL) inspections, which assess the performance of all 43 police forces in England and Wales. Since then, we have been continuously adapting our approach and this year has seen the most significant changes yet.

We are moving to a more intelligence-led, continual assessment approach, rather than the annual [PEEL inspections](#) we used in previous years. For instance, we have integrated our rolling crime data integrity inspections into these PEEL assessments. Our PEEL victim service assessment will now include a crime data integrity element in at least every other assessment. We have also changed our approach to graded judgments. We now assess forces against the characteristics of good performance, set out in the [PEEL Assessment Framework 2021/22](#), and we more clearly link our judgments to causes of concern and areas for improvement. We have also expanded our previous four-tier system of judgments to five tiers. As a result, we can state more precisely where we consider improvement is needed and highlight more effectively the best ways of doing things.

However, these changes mean that it isn't possible to make direct comparisons between the grades awarded this year with those from previous PEEL inspections. A reduction in grade, particularly from good to adequate, doesn't necessarily mean that there has been a reduction in performance, unless we say so in the report.

## HM Chief Inspector's observations

I congratulate Northumbria Police on its performance in keeping people safe and reducing crime. However, it needs to improve in some areas to give a consistently good service.

These are the findings I consider most important from our assessment of the force over the past year.

### **The force works well with other organisations to prevent and deter people from becoming involved in crime**

I am pleased that the force prioritises prevention and deterrence. This is clear in several projects where the force works well with other organisations to steer people away from involvement in crime. My report gives examples of these projects. They include the You Only Live Once project, which works to prevent young people becoming involved in knife crime. The transformational resolutions, education and adult diversion (TREAD) scheme offers pathways to support people away from committing crime.

### **The force works well with communities to understand and respond to their priorities**

Since my last report, I am pleased to see that the force has strengthened its links with local communities. Dedicated neighbourhood support and community engagement teams give effective support to the neighbourhood policing approach. This support has improved the force's understanding of local issues and allows it to respond more promptly to them.

### **The force works well with other organisations to identify and [safeguard](#) those who are most vulnerable**

I was pleased to see many examples of when the force was turning its strategic priority of [protecting vulnerable people](#) into tangible action. Perhaps the best example of this is the multi-agency exploitation hub. This is designed to make sure that public services throughout Northumbria work to a common model to keep [vulnerable people](#) safe.

### **The force has developed comprehensive governance and performance management frameworks, which are helping to effect improvements**

Many of the improvements identified in my report stem from the revised and robust internal governance and performance management frameworks. These have clarified responsibility and increased accountability throughout the organisation.

### **The force should improve the time it takes to answer emergency calls and reduce the number of non-emergency calls that are abandoned**

While the force was quick to identify and respond to this issue, it must do more to make sure that it answers calls from the public promptly. This is particularly important for emergency 999 calls. I note recent improvements. Nonetheless, I will monitor this matter closely.

### **The force needs to improve the accuracy of its crime recording**

The force isn't recording enough crimes when people report [anti-social behaviour](#). Also, it isn't always recording crimes of rape accurately. It needs to improve its crime recording practices and make sure that all reported offences are accurately recorded.

My report now sets out the fuller findings of this inspection. While I congratulate the officers and [staff](#) of Northumbria Police for their efforts in keeping the public safe, I will monitor the force's progress in addressing the areas I have identified where it can improve further.



**Andy Cooke**

HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary

## Reducing crime assessment

We have identified seven themes underpinning a force's ability to reduce crime effectively, which, taken together, allow an assessment of the extent to which the force is doing all it can to reduce crime. This is a narrative assessment, as police-recorded crime figures can be affected by variations and changes in recording policy and practice, making it difficult to make comparisons over time.

Northumbria Police has a strong focus on prevention, early intervention, problem-solving, and diverting people away from involvement in crime. The force works well with other organisations to keep vulnerable people safe from exploitation and to prevent crime.

Other factors contributing to the force's ability to reduce crime are:

- its clear policing priorities, with effective strategic and operational governance and accountability;
- its comprehensive understanding of the nature and scale of vulnerability, enriched by other organisations' data, with a strategic focus on protecting vulnerable people;
- its preventative policing approach, where it intervenes early with young people to give support and divert them away from offending;
- its work with other organisations to reduce neighbourhood crime and anti-social behaviour through prevention and problem-solving, increasing public confidence;
- its highly effective work with communities to understand their issues, which influence local policing priorities; and
- its good quality care to victims of crime, including the completion of victims' needs assessments.

I am pleased that the force is addressing the right areas of policing to reduce crime.

However, the following areas may limit the force's progress:

- Its call handling performance for emergency and non-emergency calls could result in victims choosing to disengage, or not report important information to police that would help in preventing and detecting crime.
- It doesn't always give crime-prevention or scene-preservation advice at the first point of contact.

# Providing a service to the victims of crime

## Victim service assessment

This section describes our assessment of the service victims receive from Northumbria Police, from the point of reporting a crime through to the end result. As part of this assessment, we reviewed:

- 70 case files;
- 20 cautions;
- 20 [community resolutions](#); and
- 20 cases where a suspect was identified but the victim didn't support (or withdrew support for) police action.

While this assessment is ungraded, it influences graded judgments in the other areas we have inspected.

### **The force uses a structured triage approach well, but it needs to improve its identification of repeat victims and its advice to callers**

When a victim contacts the police, it is important that their call is answered quickly and that the right information is recorded accurately on police systems. The caller should be spoken to in a professional manner. The information should be assessed, taking into consideration threat, harm, risk and vulnerability. And the victim should receive appropriate safeguarding advice.

The force needs to improve the time it takes to answer emergency calls. It also needs to reduce the abandonment rate for non-emergency calls. We found that the force usually assesses victims' vulnerability using a structured process. However, it doesn't always give victims advice about crime prevention or preservation of evidence when appropriate. This could lead to the loss of evidence that would support an investigation, or the opportunity to prevent further crimes against the victim.

### **The force doesn't always respond to calls for service in a timely way**

A force should aim to respond to calls for service within its published time frames, on the basis of the prioritisation given to the call. It should change call priority only if the original prioritisation is deemed inappropriate, or if further information suggests a change is needed. The response should take into consideration risk and victim vulnerability, including information obtained after the call.

The force isn't always responding to calls within its published time frames. This is covered in more detail in the section on responding to the public. Sometimes, the



force doesn't update victims about delays and their expectations aren't met. This can cause victims to lose confidence and disengage. When a force fails to attend calls within an appropriate time frame, victims may be put at risk and evidence can potentially be lost.

### **The force's crime recording is of an adequate standard to make sure victims receive an appropriate level of service**

The force's crime recording should be trustworthy. It should be effective at recording reported crime in line with national standards and have effective systems and processes, supported by the necessary leadership and culture.

Northumbria Police needs to improve its crime recording processes to make sure crimes reported to the force are recorded correctly and without delay.

We set out more details about the force's crime recording in the crime data integrity section below.

### **The force allocates crimes to appropriate staff, but it doesn't always tell victims if their crime isn't going to be investigated further**

Police forces should have a policy to make sure crimes are allocated to appropriately trained officers or staff for investigation or, if appropriate, not investigated further. The policy should be applied consistently. The victim of the crime should be kept informed of the allocation and whether the crime is to be further investigated.

The arrangements for allocating recorded crimes for investigation are in accordance with the force policy. And in nearly all cases we reviewed, the force allocated the crime to the most appropriate department for further investigation. However, the force doesn't always tell victims that their crime report won't be investigated further. This information is important so as to give victims an appropriate level of service and so they know what to expect.

### **Most investigations were effective, and victims were given the appropriate level of advice and support for the crime**

Police forces should investigate reported crimes quickly, proportionately and thoroughly. Victims should be kept updated about the investigation and the force should have effective governance arrangements to make sure investigation standards are high.

Usually, the force carries out investigations in a timely manner. In most cases, it completes relevant and proportionate lines of enquiry. It supervises investigations well. It keeps victims updated throughout investigations. Victims are more likely to have confidence in a police investigation when they are regularly updated. A thorough investigation increases the likelihood of perpetrators being identified and a positive end result for the victim. The force doesn't always take victim personal statements. This omission can deprive victims of the opportunity to describe the impact that crime has had on their lives.

According to the [Code of Practice for Victims of Crime](#), forces have to conduct a needs assessment at an early stage. This is to decide whether victims require

additional support. Forces should record the end result of the assessment and the request for additional support. On most occasions, this force completes an assessment and records victims' needs.

### **The force finalises reports of crime appropriately, by considering the type of offence, the victim's wishes and the offender's background**

Forces should make sure they follow national guidance and rules for deciding the outcome of each report of crime. In deciding the outcome, the force should consider the nature of the crime, the offender and the victim. And the force should show the necessary leadership and culture to make sure the use of outcomes is appropriate.

In all the cases we reviewed, the offender met the national criteria for the use of these outcomes. In most cases, the force sought and considered the victim's views. Where a suspect is identified, but the victim doesn't support (or withdraws support for) police action, the force should have an auditable record to confirm the victim's decision so that it can close the investigation. In most cases we reviewed, evidence of the victim's decision was absent. This represents a risk that victims' wishes may not be fully represented and considered before the force finalises the crime.

## **Crime data integrity**

Adequate

Northumbria Police is adequate at recording crime.

## **Areas for improvement**

### **The force needs to improve accuracy when recording crimes of rape and incidents of rape**

The force doesn't always record reported incidents of rape (known as N100s) and crimes of rape accurately. The force had recorded some of the rape crimes that we reviewed as N100s. Some rape crimes and N100s had no record. The force also could have recorded some crimes of rape as N100s. The force should improve its recording practices to make sure that victims of rape receive the appropriate level of service from the police.

### **The force is poor at recording crime when anti-social behaviour is reported**

The force is failing to record enough crimes when victims report anti-social behaviour. Victims of anti-social behaviour are often the subject of abuse and torment for substantial periods of time. In many cases, crime is committed by neighbours. There are consequences for failing to record crimes and provide an effective service to tackle anti-social behaviour. Victims can live in fear in their own homes while being subjected to long-term abuse and torment by people living in the local community.

### **The force should improve the recording of equality data**

The force's data for victims of crime shows that it records age, gender and ethnicity well. The force doesn't record other [protected characteristics](#). It doesn't gather any ethnicity information when it doesn't record a crime, despite this facility being available on its incident system. The force should be collecting this information to understand:

- the extent to which people who have protected characteristics are affected by crime;
- how this differs from those without the protected characteristics; and
- whether these victims need a different response.

### **The force correctly cancels crimes**

Northumbria Police understands well the level of information it needs to cancel a crime. It has effective oversight of the cancellation process. When people report crimes that are subsequently cancelled, the force keeps people informed of the decision. In all of the cases we reviewed, the decision to cancel the crime was correct and the force had informed all victims of the decision. Cancelling crimes helps to make sure crime figures are correct. It also means that forces can manage demand more efficiently.

# Engaging with and treating the public with fairness and respect

Good

Northumbria Police is good at treating people fairly and with respect.

## Innovative practice

### **The force monitors its use of force, and stop and search, well through effective external scrutiny**

The force has effective and independent scrutiny of the use of force, and stop and search, by its officers. The office of the [police and crime commissioner](#) chairs an external scrutiny panel. The panel has a diverse membership who have received training in the relevant legislation. This allows them to critically review officers' application of stop and search, and use of force. In a separate project, young people from a pupil referral unit review and comment on [body-worn video](#) footage of stop and search encounters. An internal governance meeting considers feedback from both scrutiny groups. This allows the force to identify and make changes to officer training or force policy.

## Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to treating people fairly and with respect.

### **The force works well with the communities it serves, and understands and responds to their priorities**

The force's approach to policing is based on a neighbourhood policing model. The force is divided into three geographical areas, covering its northern, central and southern areas. In each of these area commands, local [neighbourhood policing teams](#) have a visible presence in local communities. Neighbourhood support teams give logistical and administrative support. Each area also has a dedicated community engagement team. The force's harm reduction and communities team co-ordinates this local approach.

The force has introduced an online messaging system, Northumbria Connected. Members of the public can sign up to receive information and messages from the force. They can also ask questions and give information or feedback. This structured and co-ordinated approach means that the force has a good understanding of the issues facing local communities.

The force also works with an extensive network of volunteers. This ranges from the mini-police project with young children in primary schools and a vibrant youth cadet force to the special constabulary and police support volunteers.

### **The workforce understands the importance of treating the public with fairness and respect**

Since our last inspection, the force has trained the workforce on [unconscious bias](#). This helps officers and staff to identify stereotypes and cultural influences, so these influences don't affect their behaviour and decisions.

All police officers have received training in stop and search, effective communication, and the use of force. The force reinforces this training through annual officer safety training, where body-worn video footage is used to show the expected standards. Staff must activate body-worn video devices to record stop and search encounters, and when they anticipate confrontation or the use of force.

### **The force monitors the use of force, and [stop and search powers](#), well**

The force has good systems in place to monitor and scrutinise its officers' use of force, and stop and search powers. The force holds meetings every six weeks to review data on both stop and search, and the use of force. Staff from the [professional standards department](#) and officer safety training attend the meeting. Representatives from the area commands also attend. In an innovative move, so does a mental health practitioner. The force values the practitioner's professional insight regarding the potential impact of (and likely response to) confrontation. This internal meeting considers a range of data to identify any potentially disproportionate application of stop and search, or use of force, on people who have protected characteristics. The meeting also reviews body-worn video footage to make sure officers are using these powers appropriately and proportionately.

The force requires supervisors to review stop and search records at the time of submission. This is to make sure they are completed correctly. A central team reviews all stop and search records, to make sure they are based on reasonable grounds. According to its latest dip sample, the force concluded that reasonable grounds were made out in 91 percent of the records it reviewed.

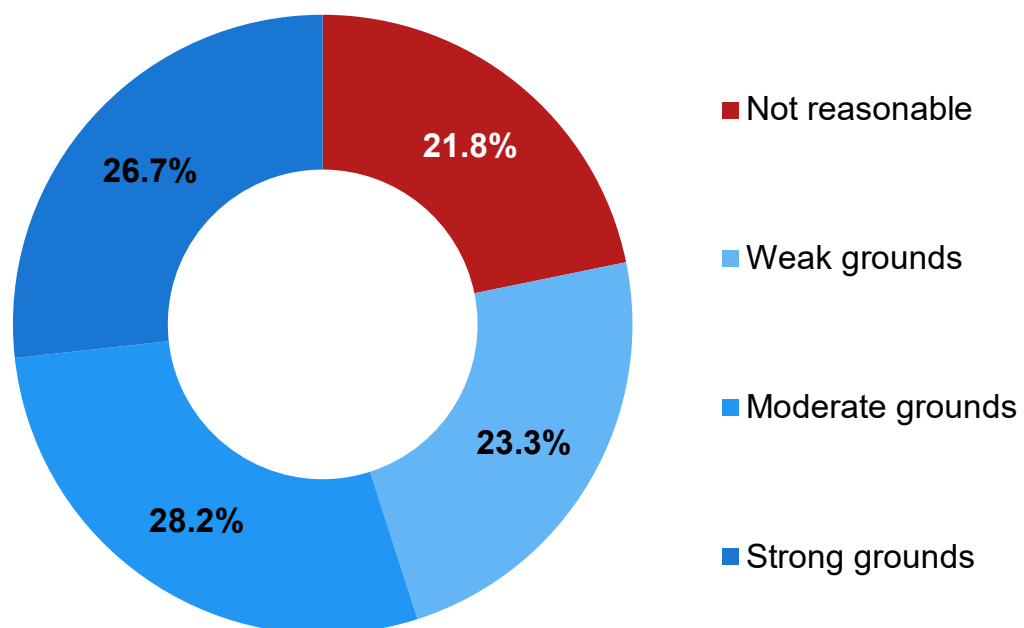
During our inspection, we reviewed a sample of 202 stop and search records from the year to 31 December 2021. On the basis of this sample, we estimate that 78.2 percent (with a confidence interval of +/- 5.6 percent) of all stop and searches by the force during this period had reasonable grounds recorded.

This is broadly unchanged compared with the findings from our review of records in 2019, when we found that an estimated 84.1 percent (with a confidence interval of +/- 4.4 percent) of stop and searches had reasonable grounds recorded. Of the records we reviewed for stop and searches of people from ethnic minority backgrounds, almost all (18 of 19) had reasonable grounds recorded.

As a result of the discrepancy between its findings and our own review, the force has developed an online training package for all frontline officers. It is also giving additional guidance to supervisors on the audit standards.

There is a supervisory review of any use of force where the subject is recorded as being from an ethnic minority background. Supervisors dip-sample all other use of force records.

#### **Reasonableness of grounds for Northumbria Police stop and search cases in 2021**



The above data set shows whether the force can show that its use of stop and search conducted under section 1 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE), and section 23 of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, is fair and effective. Data is from cases reviewed as part of our audit of stop and search records.

# Preventing crime and anti-social behaviour

Good

Northumbria Police is good at prevention and deterrence.

## Innovative practice

### **The force has a comprehensive performance management framework for neighbourhood policing officers**

The force has developed a comprehensive performance management framework. The framework contains individual objectives, targets and measures for each role within the force. For neighbourhood policing staff, the framework is built around the main objectives and the neighbourhood wheel. The framework is designed to manage performance at both the operational and strategic levels.

### **The force works well with other organisations to prevent and deter people from becoming involved in crime**

Northumbria Police works well with other organisations to intervene early, to solve problems and prevent vulnerable people from being drawn into crime. We found some excellent examples of the force's early intervention and prevention strategies being put into practice.

Operation Cloak was introduced in response to concerns about the safety of women and girls. Officers in plain clothes patrol the city centre at night-time with others, including street pastors. They are looking to identify and ensure the safety of those (predominantly young women) who are vulnerable to exploitation or victimisation as a result of being intoxicated. The force has raised awareness among those who work in the night-time economy of the signs to look for. It has also told them how to report to the police.

The You Only Live Once project uses sport as a pathway to divert young people away from involvement in knife crime. It is operated in collaboration with Newcastle United FC and Sunderland AFC community foundations.



## Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to prevention and deterrence.

### **The force effectively prioritises prevention and deterrence activity**

The force's operating model is based on its neighbourhood policing approach. The early intervention and prevention strategies clearly recognise and emphasise the importance of prevention and deterrence. The service's operational plans support the strategies. And there is effective governance in place to effect and monitor action. The force has introduced a comprehensive performance management framework. It includes bespoke objectives and end results for neighbourhood policing teams. At the heart of this framework is the neighbourhood wheel. This is an interactive tool that is accessed on the force's intranet. It sets out the four most important and long-term aims of neighbourhood policing:

- working with communities;
- reducing anti-social behaviour;
- preventing crime; and
- safeguarding vulnerable people.

It then identifies the main tasks that will help to achieve those objectives. The framework operates at two levels: the tactical level covers the operations carried out by frontline staff, while the strategic level covers the management at area command and force level.

### **The force makes good use of problem-solving, and works in partnership to prevent crime, anti-social behaviour and vulnerability**

Since our last PEEL inspection, the force has further integrated the [OSARA](#) (objective, scanning, analysis, response, assessment) model as its standard approach to problem-solving. It gave training to all supervisors, neighbourhood policing team staff and partner organisations that are involved in local community safety partnerships. The adoption and training of a single approach has increased understanding. The force has also introduced a common language and approach throughout the organisation, and with other organisations it works with.

We found good awareness and knowledge of problem-solving techniques and processes. This was particularly the case in the neighbourhood policing teams. The force records problem-solving plans on the intranet, and we saw many good examples of problem-solving projects throughout the force. Local neighbourhood officers work with partner organisations and local communities to tackle nuisance and anti-social behaviour issues. And there are larger problem-solving projects, such as the Southwick Altogether Raising Aspirations (SARA) project in the Southwick area of Sunderland. SARA brings together staff from the police, local authority, social care, and the housing, education and health sectors under one roof, in the heart of the community. The project offers the public a single point of access to advice and services. It has used a clear, hold, build approach to working with local people and involving them in improving the area, tackling crime, and addressing anti-social behaviour and environmental problems. The project will be the subject of formal and



independent evaluation. The reductions in crime and demand on public services have led the force to expand this approach to other areas, for example, the HALO Project in Hetton.

The force identifies those people who place the greatest demand on its service. It uses this information to develop problem-solving plans to address any underlying issues and reduce unnecessary demand. This is exemplified in the force's work with the Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust, in which health professionals work with people who have mental health conditions. This clinical response is tailored to treating the individual. It also reduces their demand on public services.

The force has good governance in place to effect and oversee problem-solving activity. It regularly reviews and assesses problem-solving plans. The harm reduction teams are responsible for co-ordinating activity in their respective areas. Additionally, the force harm reduction and communities team works with local authorities, as well as health and other organisations at the strategic level. This structured and co-ordinated approach has led to improvements in the understanding and application of problem-solving techniques throughout the force. That said, we spoke with several supervisors who felt that officers would often identify a problem in the scanning phase and rush to the response phase, without first analysing the nature and scale of the problem. The force would wish to make sure that staff aren't overlooking the important stages of analysis and assessment.

### **The force understands well the demand facing neighbourhood policing teams, and manages resources in line with that demand**

The force has a good knowledge of the demand facing its neighbourhood policing teams. It supplements police data with information from the six local authorities, and has produced an anti-social behaviour [problem profile](#). It has used this to inform the allocation of staff (and some money), and to identify issues suitable for resolution through problem-solving.

The force co-ordination centre (FCC) manages the deployment of staff throughout the force, in both a reactive and proactive manner. The three area commands hold daily management meetings. These meetings are designed so that local managers understand the demand they face and the staff that are available to meet that demand. These local meetings inform the force's morning pacesetter meeting. Staff from the FCC chair this meeting, which allows the force to respond to changes in anticipated demand (for example, by moving staff from one area to another). The force reviews the effectiveness of the response at an evening pacesetter meeting.

The FCC also co-ordinates planned absences (such as annual leave and training commitments). Any abstraction from neighbourhood policing teams reduces their capacity to make visible patrols and carry out problem-solving activity. The FCC manages and co-ordinates such absences. During a fortnightly planning meeting, the force considers anticipated demand. This includes the need to police events such as protests and football matches. The FCC has an overview of staff availability, and then identifies those officers who need to be temporarily moved from one team or area to police another area. These officers are given two weeks' notice of their move, which gives them time to plan for their absence, while giving managers assurance that they

will have the staff to meet the demand. We found very little evidence of staff being moved outside this policy. Although the force manages abstractions well, we did find that officers who were moved to police another area often kept any work they picked up as a result. We heard of several cases where, as part of their workloads, neighbourhood officers had investigations from incidents they had attended in other areas. The force would be advised to clarify its expectations in this regard.

The force makes good use of a range of volunteers and it values their contribution. A chief superintendent is responsible for co-ordinating the provision of the volunteer strategy and chairs the citizens in policing board. The force also has a volunteer manager and three volunteer co-ordinators. They are aligned to three area commands. The force has more than 350 young children involved in the mini-police project, in 35 primary schools throughout the force. Each of the six local authority areas also has an active cadet force. This is made up of secondary school pupils who receive educational input on policing cultures and staying safe. They also support police colleagues at a range of events, from local community fairs to the Great North Run. The force has a growing network of police support volunteers who give support in relation to rural policing, cybercrime, and neighbourhood and community speed watch programmes. Following the success of the programme in Sunderland, the force is aiming to recruit university student volunteers in Newcastle.

Recently, the special constabulary has seen a decline in numbers. This is a result of the national police uplift programme. As of 31 March 2021, the force had 150 special constables, some of whom have completed joint safety works training with the fire and rescue service. The force is currently recruiting to the special constabulary. It is using its positive action team to target interest among under-represented groups, including women and people from an ethnic minority background.

The force holds an annual citizens in policing awards evening. This event recognises and rewards the service of these volunteers.

# Responding to the public

Requires improvement

Northumbria Police requires improvement at responding to the public.

## Areas for improvement

### **The force should improve the time it takes to answer emergency calls and reduce the number of non-emergency calls that are abandoned**

On 31 May 2022, the Home Office published data on 999 call answering times. This is the time taken for a call to be transferred to a force, and the time taken by that force to answer it. In England and Wales, forces should aim to answer 90 percent of these calls within 10 seconds. Since the Home Office hadn't published this data at the time we made our judgment, we have used data given by forces to assess how quickly they answer 999 calls. In the future, we will use the data that the Home Office supplies.

The force isn't answering 999 emergency calls within the national target times. The force told us that, in the year ending 31 March 2022, it answered 73 percent of 999 calls within 10 seconds.

It also needs to reduce the rate at which [101](#) non-emergency calls are abandoned by the caller before they are answered. The force told us that in the year ending 31 March 2022, 27 percent of 101 calls were abandoned. At the time of our inspection, the force was planning to introduce new software to the call handling system. The software is designed to reduce this rate and improve the customer experience.

### **The force needs to make sure that call takers give appropriate advice on the preservation of evidence and crime prevention**

We found that call handlers weren't always giving victims appropriate crime prevention advice or advice on the preservation of evidence. This could lead to the loss of evidence that would support an investigation, and the opportunity to prevent further crimes against the victim. We are aware that the force intends to give training to all frontline staff, including call handlers, on the preservation of evidence. This will draw on the expertise of the force's forensic services department.

### **The force needs to attend calls for service in line with its published attendance times and make sure that when delays do occur, it fully updates victims**

The force assigns a grade to incidents that need police attendance, according to the level of threat, harm and risk. The most urgent incidents are assigned Grade 1. The target response time for Grade 1 incidents is 15 minutes in urban areas and 20 minutes in rural areas. The force told us that in the year ending 31 March 2022, it attended 81 percent of Grade 1 urban incidents and 62 percent of Grade 1 rural incidents within the stated target. Incidents requiring a priority (but not immediate) response are assigned Grade 2. The target response time for Grade 2 incidents is 60 minutes. The force told us that, in the year ending 31 March 2022, it attended 59 percent of Grade 2 incidents within 60 minutes.

When the response to an incident was delayed, the force didn't always update victims. When a force fails to attend within the expected time, victims may lose confidence and disengage. When a force fails to attend calls in an appropriate time, victims may be put at risk and evidence might be lost.

## **Main findings**

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to how well the force responds to the public.

### **The force identifies and understands risk well**

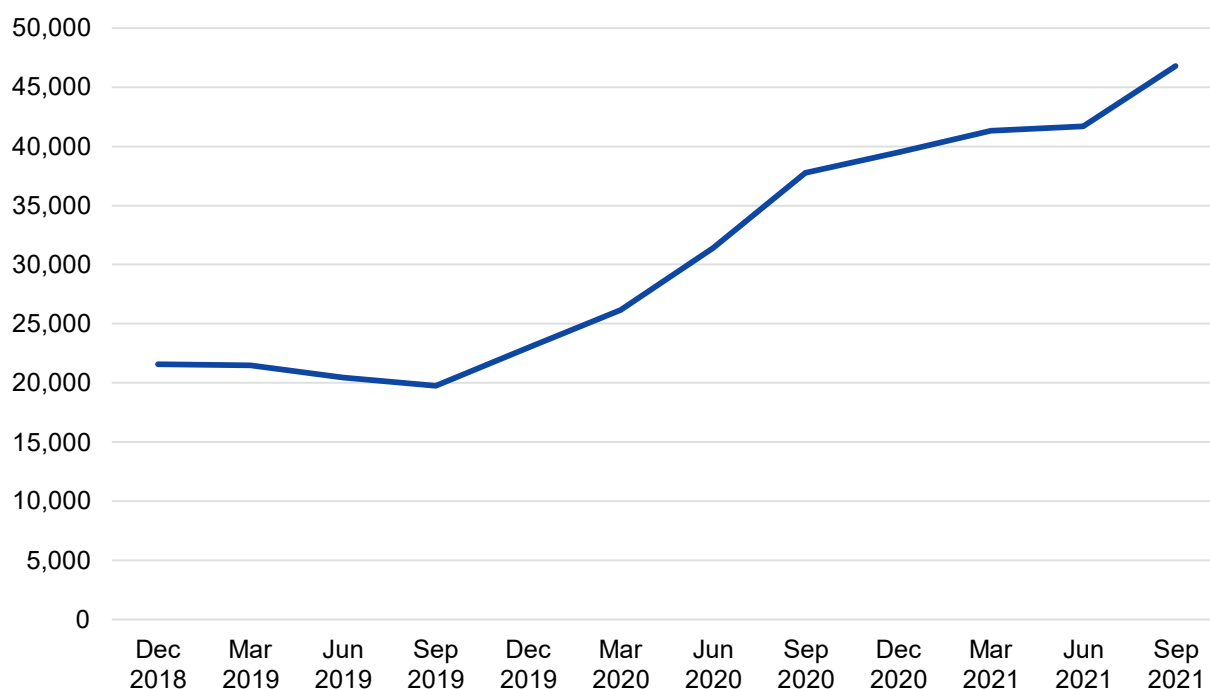
Since our last PEEL inspection, the force has improved the identification of risk when members of the public call it. The force gave training to [control room](#) staff on the application of a structured approach to the identification of threat, harm and risk. Many police forces use this risk assessment model, which is known as [THRIVE](#).

In June 2021, the force introduced new call handling and command and control computer systems in the control room. These new systems replaced the Northumbria Police integrated computer and communications system (NPICCS), which had been in use for more than 35 years. The new system is designed to lead call handlers through the THRIVE process. We found that, in the majority of cases, control room staff were applying the THRIVE model appropriately and consistently.

As part of our victim service assessment, we reviewed 130 calls from the public. We found that call handlers weren't always identifying people who had been in contact with the police before. Repeat victims of crime should be identified so that their additional needs can be properly assessed.

The force has seen a steady increase in the number of incidents flagged for repeat callers since September 2019. This has been particularly acute since the force implemented its new call handling and command and control computer systems in the control room in June 2021. The number of incidents flagged for repeat callers increased from 41,699 in the year ending June 2021 to 46,809 in the year ending September 2021.

### Number of incidents flagged for repeat callers by Northumbria Police from the year ending December 2018 to the year ending September 2021



### Call handlers treat callers politely and with respect

People who call the police, particularly in an emergency, may be under pressure and may not always communicate calmly and rationally. We found that call handlers were invariably polite and professional, and showed empathy in dealing with members of the public.

### The force responds well to incidents involving vulnerable people

The consistent application of THRIVE is enabling the force to identify vulnerable people at the earliest stage. This allows the force to plan an appropriate response. The force has introduced the risk management desk in the control room. Its purpose is to make sure that the risk assessment has been correctly applied and that the incident has been graded correctly. It does research to build as full a picture as possible for the officers attending. It also monitors the time taken to attend incidents that involve vulnerable people. And in appropriate cases, it contacts the caller to offer information or advice, or to gain additional information. We found that the force was generally attending incidents involving vulnerable people within the graded response target times.

Currently, the force is piloting the [domestic abuse](#) specialist support adviser (DASSA) project in its control room. Under the scheme, a team of [independent domestic violence advisers](#) are deployed in the control room to give immediate professional support to victims of domestic violence, and police officers, on appropriate support services and referral pathways.

## **The force has a detailed understanding of the demand in call and incident handling**

As mentioned earlier in this report, the force has introduced new computer systems in the control room. This has led to a significant increase in the availability and quality of data in respect of incoming calls and incidents. In addition to the 999 emergency and 101 non-emergency calls, the force is making it possible for the public to contact it digitally. There is already an online chat facility, which is available between 7.00am and 12.00am daily. The force intends to join the national single online home project as soon as technology allows.

The force quickly identified that replacing NPICCS with the new systems resulted in much increased call handling times. Although staff received training, it took time for them to become familiar with the new systems. This had an immediate and adverse effect on the force's ability to answer 999 calls promptly, and the abandonment rate for 101 calls increased to 41 percent. Although the situation has improved, further work is required.

The force can now identify:

- the telephone numbers that have abandoned 101 calls before being answered;
- those telephone numbers that subsequently did or didn't contact the force; and
- whether the telephone number is already known to it (for example, as a previous victim).

This will allow the force to analyse (and better respond to) repeat and abandoned calls. Meanwhile, the force continues its efforts to meet the demand from 999 and 101 calls. Since autumn 2021, the force has recruited and trained an additional 48 call handlers. Further recruitment is continuing. Force statistics confirm improvements in call handling performance, aligned to each trained cohort that enters the force.

## **The force has responded to the wellbeing needs of control room staff**

The control room can be a stressful and demanding environment to work in. The replacement of NPICCS in the control room involved more than just introducing new software. It meant a change in long-established working practices and procedures. Given the adverse impact on performance, it undoubtedly put more pressure on the workforce.

The control room is well supervised. It is home to the force operations manager (a chief inspector responsible for the command of serious incidents, including firearms incidents). Each team has its own supervision, with six police staff supervisors on duty to manage call handling and deployment staff. The supervisors have a twofold role in ensuring quality of service and monitoring staff wellbeing. In common with other areas of the force, we found that supervisors were attuned to the welfare and wellbeing needs of their staff. Staff recognise and appreciate these efforts. [Trauma risk management](#) is available within the control room to anyone involved in particularly traumatic incidents.

# Investigating crime

Good

Northumbria Police is good at investigating crime.

## Area for improvement

**The force should make sure that, when a victim withdraws their support for a prosecution, it makes an auditable record of the decision**

We found that the force usually conducted investigations to a good standard. However, in cases where the victim doesn't support the prosecution of a suspected offender, the force doesn't always have a record of that decision or the rationale for it. This is particularly important in cases involving domestic violence. In such cases, it is sometimes possible to pursue a prosecution based on evidence in body-worn video footage from officers who attended an incident.

## Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to how well the force investigates crime.

### **The force generally conducts good quality investigations**

As part of our inspection, we reviewed 70 investigation case files. We found that the majority (62 of 70) of these investigations were assessed as being effective. In most (60 of 67) cases where supervisory guidance was necessary, we deemed it to be appropriate and effective. We found investigation plans in most (47 of 51) cases where we would have expected them. Investigations were mainly (62 of 70) conducted in a timely manner.

The force has given training to all frontline staff in how to conduct effective investigations. There is effective governance in place to monitor and assess the quality of investigations being conducted. The assistant chief constable (crime and safeguarding) chairs the investigation and effective justice group. It co-ordinates and monitors the effectiveness and quality of investigations.



There are processes in place to make sure that file quality is consistent. This starts with supervisors reviewing case files on initial submission. Following supervisor approval, the file passes to the file quality assurance team (FQAT). This team reviews most case files before submission to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS). We found examples where there was an over-reliance on the FQAT process. Some supervisors felt that their checks were unnecessary because they thought that the FQAT checks would pick up any failings. The force would wish to assure itself that supervisors are doing what is expected of them.

Most failings in file quality that were found by FQAT relate to either the redaction of personal information or a lack of consistency in the provision of rebuttable presumption material. This follows changes in the Attorney General's guidelines on [disclosure](#). FQAT holds regular drop-in clinics to improve knowledge. These sessions address specific questions from individuals and give general information on how to prepare quality files. The FQAT process has reduced the number of files that the CPS has rejected. However, the force continues to work with the CPS managers to identify a pragmatic and proportionate application of the guidelines. A successful resolution would improve the victim experience by getting cases to court sooner.

### **The force has a good understanding of its crime demand and works hard to staff this appropriately**

The force has a good understanding of the demand it faces from investigations. It also has a detailed understanding of the capability and capacity it currently has. And it knows what it needs to meet that demand. The force is accredited by the [College of Policing](#) to provide detective training. Like other forces, Northumbria doesn't currently have the number of qualified investigators that it needs. As of 31 March 2021, it had filled 80 percent of its 664 PIP2 investigator posts with accredited detectives. In response, there is an established detective resilience action plan, which aims to eliminate this shortfall by November 2022. The force closely monitors progress against the plan every month, and is using a range of ways to close this gap. These include increasing the number of police staff investigators and investigative support officers, and recruiting through a dedicated graduate entry programme for detectives. The force has also been successful in attracting qualified detectives from other forces and law enforcement agencies. The force told us that at the end of April 2022, the shortfall in PIP2 investigators stood at 60 posts, having reduced from 167 on 31 March 2021. The force has training courses scheduled to fill these posts. It remains confident that it will eliminate the shortfall by November.

### **The force normally provides a quality service to victims of crime**

We found that overall compliance with the Code of Practice for Victims was generally good. The force has provided staff training on the code. An important element of the code is the requirement to identify the level of support a person needs through the criminal justice process. This is known as a victim needs assessment. We found that the force had completed assessments in the majority (46 of 52) of cases we reviewed. The investigation and effective justice group monitors compliance with the code. The force told us that its latest data indicated that in 91 percent of cases, it had completed victim needs assessments within 48 hours.



The Northumbria Victim and Witness Service gives support and advice to victims of crime. Until recently, the service was provided through an external contract. According to feedback from victims, the service could be improved. Now the force provides the service itself. It designed the revised service in consultation with victims. The force monitors the satisfaction of victims throughout the criminal justice process. The force told us that according to that monitoring, in the year ending 31 March 2022, 83 percent of victims of volume crime were satisfied with the whole experience. This figure rose to 89 percent for victims of domestic abuse-related crime and 92 percent for victims of rape.

### **Investigations usually lead to appropriate end results for victims**

We found that in most (40 of 49) cases we reviewed where the investigation had been concluded, the end result was appropriate. We analysed a variety of specific end results. We looked at 20 cases where the offender had received a caution. In all 20 cases we found that a caution was appropriate in regard to the offender, and in almost all (19 of 20) cases, appropriate for the offence. We found that the force had recorded well the rationale for the decision to caution.

We reviewed 20 cases where a community resolution was used. Again, in all 20 cases we found that this was appropriate for the offender. We found one community resolution involving domestic abuse. This is in breach of the force policy. However, the force had recorded the rationale for the decision and it was well made out.

[Outcome 16](#) is used in those cases where a suspect has been identified, but the victim doesn't support prosecution. We reviewed 20 cases where outcome 16 had been used. We found that the majority (15 of 20) of these cases were correct. In two cases the suspect was under the age of criminal responsibility. In the remaining three cases there was no record of the victim's decision. Therefore, it wasn't possible to say if the outcome was appropriate.

# Protecting vulnerable people

Good

Northumbria Police is good at protecting vulnerable people.

## Innovative practice

### **The force works well with other organisations to identify and safeguard those who are most vulnerable**

The force has many examples of working in partnership to identify those who may be vulnerable to exploitation or abuse. These include:

- the multi-agency exploitation hub;
- the multi-agency tasking and co-ordination (MATAC) meetings;
- the missing, slavery, exploited, trafficked (MSET) process; and
- the aforementioned DASSA project.

Initially, the force created the exploitation hub as part of Operation Sanctuary (an investigation into the organised sexual abuse of girls and young women). The hub brings together the police and partner organisations from social care, and the health and education sectors. It receives referrals of young people who have been identified as (or who are suspected of) being at risk of serious sexual or criminal exploitation. It also receives referrals regarding those believed to be at risk of [forced marriage](#), honour-based violence and [female genital mutilation](#).

Northumbria Police developed MATAC in response to our report *Everyone's business: Improving the police response to domestic abuse*. MATAC is now established in each of the six local authority areas. Many other police forces have also adopted it. Throughout Northumbria, the police and other organisations hold regular meetings to discuss perpetrators of domestic abuse; they also identify opportunities to work with those people to change their offending behaviour.

The force has developed MSET to identify those predominantly young people who repeatedly go [missing](#), or who are considered to be at risk of sexual or criminal exploitation. Once these people have been identified, the force draws up action plans to respond to incidents, or to work with and support the individual.

## Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to how well the force protects vulnerable people.

### **The force has a good understanding of the nature and scale of vulnerability**

In our last PEEL inspection, we expressed concern at the force's inability to identify and respond to vulnerability. The force has worked hard and has addressed our concerns. The force now has a good understanding of the nature and scale of vulnerability. It has a detailed vulnerability strategy, with supporting implementation plans. These are aligned with the national vulnerability action plan. The strategy also aligns with other force strategies, including those for violence against women and girls, and neighbourhood policing. The force has developed them with the benefit of information from other organisations. This has improved the force's understanding of issues. For example, input from independent domestic violence advisers has given insight into the lived experience of victims.

The force has developed several detailed problem profiles. Force analysts prepare the profiles, which incorporate information from the police and other organisations. They also give a detailed assessment of the nature and scale of vulnerability-related issues. Recent examples include problem profiles for:

- drugs;
- domestic abuse;
- child criminal and [sexual exploitation](#); and
- modern-day slavery and human trafficking.

These profiles have helped the force's understanding of vulnerability, and informed the allocation of staff (and some money) in these areas.

### **The force works well with other organisations to keep vulnerable people safe**

The force works well with a range of other organisations to make sure that vulnerable people are identified and kept safe.

In addition to local arrangements, the force has created a strategic, regional safeguarding partnership. This involves executive leaders from adult and children's social care services in each of the six local authorities, and the clinical commissioning group. This effectively brings together senior leaders from all the public sector agencies with a responsibility for safeguarding. According to the force, it has led to greater consistency and improved standards throughout all of its areas.

The force has a long-standing and effective relationship with the Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust, which specialises in mental health. Together they operate a mental health [street triage](#) service. Every day, between 10.00am and 3.00am, dedicated police officers patrol the force area with mental health nurses. They respond to incidents involving people who are suffering a mental health crisis. This gives an immediate and professional health response, appropriate to individual needs. When nurses aren't being deployed to incidents, they give advice and information to officers dealing with people who have mental

health conditions. As a result of this approach, officers are less likely to resort to arrest or detention under [section 136 of the Mental Health Act 1983](#). The mental health professionals have the experience, knowledge and ability to access better and more suitable end results for vulnerable people.

[Multi-agency safeguarding hubs \(MASHs\)](#) are established in each of the six local authority areas. Police officers and support staff work alongside partners from the local authority, adult and children's social care, and the housing, education and health sectors. There are two MASH managers to improve consistency of approach. They work closely together, each covering three hubs. Police officers must submit concern notices when they come across someone who is at risk or otherwise vulnerable. Similarly, if they attend a domestic incident, they must submit a [domestic abuse, stalking and harassment \(DASH\)](#) form. The police or someone from one of the other agencies sends all DASH forms and child and adult concern notices to the appropriate MASH. Each MASH holds daily triage meetings to review and assess the forms submitted in the previous 24 hours. This ensures that risk and vulnerability have been correctly identified and graded. Once MASH staff have assessed the forms, police officers and/or staff from other agencies allocate them for further action.

We visited MASHs in both the north and south of the force. We confirmed that, despite increases in workload, there were no backlogs in the assessment of concern notices and DASH forms. The force has recognised the increased demand in MASHs and has agreed additional staff. However they aren't yet in post. The force should assure itself that these additional staff are in post as planned. Partner organisations that we spoke to were supportive and positive in terms of the force's commitment to safeguarding vulnerable people.

The MASH is also responsible for co-ordinating and chairing the [multi-agency risk assessment conference \(MARAC\)](#) meetings. These take place throughout the force. MARAC meetings review domestic abuse cases involving the highest risk. The partnership approach makes sure that relevant information is shared to build the most accurate and complete picture. This means that victims can receive the appropriate support and intervention. The MASH also co-ordinates applications submitted under both the domestic violence and child sex offender disclosure schemes ([Clare's Law](#) and [Sarah's Law](#), respectively). This means that applications are considered with access to partner information, rather than being based on police information alone. The MARAC automatically considers all cases referred to it for disclosure under Clare's Law.

Northumbria is one of the areas in the country to receive Home Office innovation fund money to develop a violence reduction unit. The office of the police and crime commissioner created and manages the unit, which is well supported by partners and the force. For example, the force has devised an education programme using virtual reality technology to highlight the dangers of knife crime. The force has taught the programme to secondary school children throughout Northumbria.

# Managing offenders and suspects

Good

Northumbria Police is good at managing offenders and suspects.

## Area for improvement

### **The force should take steps to reduce delays in intelligence development for paedophile online investigation packages**

The paedophile online investigation team (POLIT) receives referrals from the National Crime Agency in relation to the sharing of indecent images of children online. The force told us that at the time of our inspection, there was a backlog of 161 referral packages awaiting [intelligence](#) development. Of these, 150 had no action completed apart from an initial triage against internal force systems. Since our inspection, the force has prepared a detailed action plan to address this issue. However, it is too early to assess the effectiveness of those measures.

## Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to how well the force manages offenders and suspects.

### **The force manages suspects and wanted people well**

The three local area commands hold daily management meetings each morning. During these meetings, they review the previous day's activities and plan for the day ahead. A standard agenda makes sure they consider the main issues. One of these is the management of suspects and wanted offenders. The area commands discuss anyone who is identified as a suspect for an offence and who hasn't been arrested. If it is considered necessary, they allocate a suspect to local neighbourhood policing teams to make enquiries to arrest them. A suspect who is considered a higher risk, or who has proven difficult to arrest, can be escalated to the force's pacesetter meeting. The area commands can then allocate these suspects to force resources (such as firearms officers and roads policing officers) to make arrest enquiries.

The force has improved its management of foreign national offenders. Custody staff are responsible for making sure that any arrested person who is identified as a foreign national undergoes five mandatory checks. These include confirmation of identity,

verification of immigration status and referral to the [ACRO](#) Criminal Records Office. Force monitoring shows that the force is carrying out these checks routinely.

### **The force manages effectively the risk posed by registered sex offenders**

The College of Policing has issued [authorised professional practice \(APP\)](#) in relation to the management of registered sex offenders. The [chief officer](#) team elected to deviate from this by using neighbourhood police officers to manage low-risk and medium-risk registered sex offenders. Initially, the force trained 300 neighbourhood officers. This figure has since increased to more than 600. All were volunteers, and all have completed the accredited training programme. These officers are responsible for completing the initial risk assessment, maintaining the risk management plans and conducting home visits. Neighbourhood officers conduct the majority of visits in uniform. Again, this is a deviation from APP. However, the force believes that it is more appropriate for neighbourhood officers to conduct these visits in uniform, unless there is a reason not to.

As at 31 March 2021 the force was managing 1,774 registered sex offenders. Of these, it assessed 2 as very high-risk and 360 as high-risk. A dedicated team of officers manages them. It is known as the [MOSOVO \(management of sex offenders and violent offenders\)](#) unit. The neighbourhood officers were managing 827 medium-risk and 575 low-risk offenders. A further ten individuals were in the process of being assessed. Regardless of the risk level, we found that the risk assessments were comprehensive and robust.

### **The force responded quickly to initial feedback on the management of registered sex offenders**

At the time of our early inspection work, we found several areas where the force could improve its management of registered sex offenders. We gave feedback to the force, and it responded quickly.

Neighbourhood officers complete risk management plans in respect of the low-risk and medium-risk offenders that they manage. Prior to our feedback, these weren't the subject of supervisory oversight or review. This meant that the force couldn't be satisfied that it fully and properly understood the risk that they posed. The force has now put in place a system where supervisors in the MOSOVO unit dip-sample and quality assure several of these plans. The force may wish to consider extending this process to include all plans, until it is satisfied that they are being completed to a satisfactory standard.

The force recognises the MOSOVO unit as a high-risk role in terms of staff wellbeing. As such, members of the unit receive enhanced wellbeing monitoring and support through the [occupational health unit](#). This enhanced service wasn't previously available to neighbourhood registered sex offender managers. The force has now introduced a system whereby supervisors and individuals can refer themselves for enhanced support if they feel it necessary.

The force has access to a range of technology and software that can be used to support the management of registered sex offenders. The force has two officers trained in the use of a polygraph device. The force uses this on a voluntary basis, to



good effect. We found its use of other technology was less consistent. The force has given further guidance to offender managers on what is available and how it can be used.

We found some confusion over the use of pre-charge [bail](#) when dealing with offenders. Bail, particularly with conditions attached, can be an effective method of safeguarding vulnerable victims. Since our initial feedback to the force, it has developed and implemented the ABC process: targeting domestic abuse and sexual offences, it promotes the use of arrest, bail and charge. Since it introduced the process, the force has reported an increased use of pre-charge bail, with a corresponding reduction in applications for domestic violence prevention orders.

### **The force makes good use of ancillary orders to keep people safe**

We found that the force was making good use of ancillary orders to manage offenders and protect vulnerable people. For example, in the year ending 30 September 2021, the number of sexual harm protection orders granted increased to 194. This is an increase of 28 percent compared to the 152 granted in the previous year. During the same period, the number of orders that were breached reduced by more than two thirds, from 122 to 39. Similarly, over the same period, the number of sexual risk orders increased from 31 to 73. Again, breaches reduced, from 22 to 13. The force has created a working group to promote and monitor the use of ancillary orders and civil powers. The harm reduction and communities team chairs it, and it features representatives from legal services department.

### **The force has an effective approach to integrated offender management**

The force works with the national probation service to produce an [integrated offender management programme](#). There are three cohorts of offenders, one in each area command. A strategic lead in the harm reduction and communities team oversees and co-ordinates the programme. They work closely with the senior probation service manager. Offenders are identified for inclusion on the scheme by use of a scoring system. It considers the recency, frequency and gravity of the offending behaviour, and the number of victims affected by it (the RFGV score). Currently, there are around 250 offenders on the scheme.

The force has adapted its approach to fit the 'fixed, flex, free' model set out in the national offender management strategy. This resulted in 40 additional offenders being selected for their neighbourhood crime offending. Those in the fixed cohort are predominantly involved in serious theft, robbery or burglary. The flex cohort reflects the local priorities, and is made up of drugs and violent crime offenders. The free cohort is selected by reference to their offending behaviour over the past two years.

There is effective, tiered governance of the scheme. This ranges from the daily management meetings at area command level to monthly multi-agency partnership meetings and the strategic governance, which the local criminal justice board gives. Analytical reports are produced every six weeks. They track the effectiveness of the scheme by reference to changes in the offenders' RFGV scores. At the time of our inspection, the force told us that the latest report identified that two thirds of the cohort had lower RFGV scores, indicating that their offending had reduced.

## **The force uses a range of activities to reduce offending behaviour**

In addition to the integrated offender management programme, the force is actively involved in several schemes to address offending behaviour.

The transformational resolutions, education and adult diversion (TREAD) scheme is designed to offer suitable offenders an alternative to prosecution. The force refers those who are arrested for lower-level crimes to the TREAD team. First, the team checks that the victim is agreeable to the matter being resolved without prosecution. If the victim agrees, and the offender is considered suitable, the team offers the offender the opportunity to take a certain pathway. There are seven pathways, each designed to address underlying issues that may be factors in their offending. There are dedicated pathways for women offenders, and for young people aged between 18 and 24. If the offender actively participates, they will then be eligible to receive a caution or community resolution.

A similar scheme (specifically for young people) is called Divert from Charge. Young people who are arrested for relatively minor offences work with the youth justice service and the six local authorities to be considered for [out-of-court disposals](#). They must take part in schemes that are designed to address their offending behaviour.



# Disrupting serious organised crime

We now inspect [serious and organised crime \(SOC\)](#) on a regional basis, rather than inspecting each force individually in this area. This is so we can be more effective and efficient in how we inspect the whole SOC system, as set out in HM Government's SOC strategy.

SOC is tackled by each force working with [regional organised crime units \(ROCUs\)](#). These units lead the regional response to SOC by providing access to specialist resources and assets to disrupt organised crime groups (OCGs) that pose the highest harm.

Through our new inspections we seek to understand how well forces and ROCUs work in partnership. As a result, we now inspect ROCUs and their forces together and report on regional performance. Forces and ROCUs are now graded and reported on in regional SOC reports.

Our SOC inspection of Northumbria Police hasn't yet been completed. We will update our website with our findings (including the force's grade) and a link to the regional report once the inspection is complete.

# Building, supporting and protecting the workforce

Good

Northumbria Police is good at building and developing its workforce.

## Innovative practice

### **The force uses innovative advertising to reach its target recruitment audience**

The force wants to increase the representation of under-represented groups in its workforce. It created a series of adverts for television, specifically aimed at people from ethnic minority backgrounds. It then used a satellite TV company to broadcast these adverts into homes where it knew they would reach the target audience. In a similar way, the force used audio adverts on a music streaming service to target people based on musical genre. The force reports that these were successful in increasing applications by people from a minority ethnic background.

### **The force has developed a comprehensive performance management framework, which is helping to effect improvements**

The force has designed and implemented a detailed and comprehensive performance management framework, which will contribute to effecting sustained improvements. The system is designed around revised role profiles. It identifies the main objectives and steps that need to be taken for each role. It sets out how roles contribute to the achievement of the force's strategic objectives. It operates at two levels: the tactical level covers frontline staff and their immediate line managers, while the strategic level is used for superintendents and equivalent police staff. The framework is populated with relevant quantitative data to inform discussion between individuals and their line manager. Regular [performance and development review](#) discussions focus on achievement against objectives, wellbeing and ethical discussions. The framework is aligned to the existing performance and development review process.

## Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to how well the force builds and develops its workforce.

### **The force promotes an ethical and inclusive culture**

The chief constable has clearly and consistently set out the force's purpose, objective and values. More importantly, we found that the workforce understood them well. This understanding has been helped by the use of a simple and standard approach to communication to the workforce. For example, the force has promoted its six most important and long-term aims by using the mnemonic POLICE – Protect the vulnerable; be an Outstanding organisation; Lead through intelligence; improve Investigation quality; reduce Crime and disorder; and Engage communities.

### **The force understands and responds to the wellbeing needs of the workforce**

The force has a detailed wellbeing strategy, which is supported by a series of action plans. An external supplier is contracted to provide the force's occupational health service. Over the past two years, the force has continued to invest in additional resources (that is, staff and money) in this area. This means that there are no undue delays in accessing treatment services. Between July and September 2021, the average waiting time from referral to appointment was ten days. This had reduced to seven days between January and March 2022. Ninety-seven percent of those referred were seen within the target time of ten days.

The force works with the Police Federation to offer a range of physiotherapy and psychological support services. There is a network of trained trauma risk management practitioners throughout the force. This includes two superintendents who the force trained in collaboration with the superintendent's association. This means that superintendents can receive peer support from someone who fully understands their role.

The force has completed the Blue Light organisational wellbeing assessment. The wellbeing team within the people services department leads on a variety of activities that are designed to improve the wellbeing of individuals. These include a mobile coffee van and organised weeks of activity. We found numerous examples where staff recognised and appreciated the force's efforts. Everyone spoke in positive terms about their line manager being supportive and taking their wellbeing seriously.

During the inspection, we found several examples where managers felt empowered to do something different because it was the right thing to do. For example, one inspector – whose team had had a particularly demanding set of shifts – decided to take his team for a walk on the beach rather than complete formal continuous professional development training. When a response team had dealt with several suicides in a short period, line managers approached the force benevolent fund. It funded a team-building night away for the team. The chief officer team supported both proposals.

## **The force has good relationships with staff associations and support networks**

In addition to working well with the trade union and staff associations, the force has an active network of support groups. These groups cover a range of protected characteristics and themes, including disability, religion, ethnicity and sexuality. We spoke with representatives from these networks. They all commented on the open and approachable nature of the chief constable and the executive team. They are involved in, and consulted on, several projects (for example, the role, reward and pay review). Despite this, there was a shared view that the groups could be of greater benefit to the force if it used them to support and develop other activities (such as its diversity, equality and inclusion strategy). The force would wish to explore this offer further.

## **The force knows its recruitment needs and is making good progress in building its workforce for the future**

The force has a good understanding of its recruitment needs for police officers and staff. Following ten years of cuts during a period of austerity, the force was quick to recruit officers as part of the national police uplift programme. As at 31 December 2021, it had increased its officer headcount by 59 more than its target for Years 1 and 2 of the programme (an increase of 369 officers), 3 months ahead of the end of Year 2. This was intentional and was agreed with the police and crime commissioner, who provided the additional funding through the police precept. The commissioner has given the funding to retain the number of police officers at 60 over establishment for the next two years. The force intends to use this additional capacity to produce and sustain performance improvements. Despite significant recent and continuing recruitment activity, the force remains under its agreed establishment for police staff. This is made harder by the force's challenging plans for growth in a difficult job market.

## **The force is committed to improving diversity, equality and inclusion**

The force has a detailed and comprehensive diversity, equality and inclusion strategy, supported by an action plan. The strategy and plan are aligned to the national strategy, with three themes centred around the workforce, the organisation, and the community and partners. The overall strategy is also supported by its positive action strategy. In order to address some identified misconceptions among staff, the force is currently running an awareness campaign to explain what positive action is (and, more importantly, what it isn't).

The force closely monitors the workforce make-up. It uses a comprehensive data set that includes diversity and protected characteristic information. There are differences throughout the workforce. As at 31 March 2021, women represented 34 percent of police officers and 62 percent of police staff. At the same time, people from ethnic minority backgrounds represented 2.9 percent of police officers and 1.6 percent of police staff. This compares to estimates from the 2011 census that 5.4 percent of the resident population of the force area is from ethnic minority backgrounds. The force's positive action plan has a target to increase representation to 7 percent of the workforce.

## **The force is making good progress with the policing education qualifications framework**

In March 2019, the College of Policing introduced the policing education qualifications framework (PEQF). This is a national programme. It is designed to create a standard approach to, and improve the quality of, police officer training. Northumbria Police was an early adopter of the PEQF. It has recruited alternating cohorts of both the police constable degree apprenticeship (PCDA) and degree-holder entry programmes. It has also recruited additional investigators through a targeted detective degree-holder entry programme.

In September 2019, the Home Office announced the national police uplift programme. The programme aims to recruit an additional 20,000 police officers in England and Wales by 31 March 2023. Following public consultation, the police and crime commissioner increased the local precept. This funded the recruitment of a further 60 officers in addition to the uplift figure. The force decided to recruit these additional officers as quickly as possible. It considered the infrastructure requirements of such a large and sustained recruitment campaign. This led to investment in the force training school estate and people.

As at 31 December 2021, the force had recruited an additional 428 police officers since the uplift programme was announced. Of these, 369 were funded by the national uplift programme. The force recruited the other 59 using the increased precept. This is an overall increase in the number of police officers of 13.7 percent.

New police officers combine academic learning with gaining operational competence as part of a response policing team. This means that student officers are at various levels of capability and aren't always available to perform operational duties. This results in a competency lag, as officers develop the skills and experience needed to become operationally competent. For example, the force told us that, as at 31 March 2022, 43 percent of its frontline officers were student officers and only 50 percent of response officers were trained to drive police vehicles. The force has created professional development units in each of the area commands, to co-ordinate and oversee this learning process. These units make sure the new officers receive the right mix of university education and operational experience.

The national uplift programme has also had an impact on the number of special constables and police community support officers (PCSOs). Many of them were successful in becoming full-time police officers. Despite the challenges of the police uplift programme, the force has managed to increase the number of special constables over the past 12 months. In recruiting special constables and PCSOs, the force has extended the PEQF principles to these roles. Training for new specials and PCSOs is now based on the first year of the PCDA. This means that, in future, if they are successful in joining the regular force, their training will be reduced by a year; they will achieve operational competence earlier. It also means that they are more effective in the current role.

## **The force is developing its workforce to be fit for the future**

The force has a detailed and costed training plan which the people development department draws up annually. It includes the training and development needs identified by area commands and departments. The FCC monitors and co-ordinates production of the plan. It makes sure that officers and staff attend the courses they need (or are assigned) to attend. The force has an established performance and development review process which the people development department monitors. Having identified that its previous talent management scheme wasn't returning the desired results, the force introduced a revised process in January 2022. The four-tier programme is designed to identify up-and-coming talent. However, it is too early to make any assessment of its effectiveness now, and we will watch with interest.

## **Vetting and counter corruption**

We now inspect how forces deal with vetting and counter corruption differently. This is so we can be more effective and efficient in how we inspect this high-risk area of police business.

Corruption in forces is tackled by specialist units, designed to proactively target corruption threats. Police corruption is corrosive and poses a significant risk to public trust and confidence. There is a national expectation of standards and how they should use specialist resources and assets to target and arrest those that pose the highest threat.

Through our new inspections, we seek to understand how well forces apply these standards. As a result, we now inspect forces and report on national risks and performance in this area. We now grade and report on forces' performance separately.

Northumbria Police's vetting and counter corruption inspection hasn't yet been completed. We will update our website with our findings and the separate report once the inspection is complete.

# Strategic planning, organisational management and value for money

## Good

Northumbria Police is good at operating efficiently.

### Innovative practice

#### **The force makes good use of virtual reality technology to educate young people and keep them safe**

The force has created a series of virtual reality computer programs to educate and safeguard members of the community, particularly young people. Programs have been designed on the following themes:

- staying safe in the night-time economy;
- the dangers of child sexual exploitation; and
- coercion and control.

Of note is a program about the dangers of knife crime. Secondary schools have used this widely throughout the force area. Supported by detailed teaching notes, it highlights the risks of carrying knives and the consequences of decisions. The force tests knowledge and awareness before and after these interactive sessions. The results show the value and effectiveness of the sessions. This innovative approach will realise further benefits to the force and partner organisations in the longer term.



## Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to how well the force operates efficiently.

### **The force has an effective strategic planning and performance framework, making sure it tackles what is important locally and nationally**

The force has a robust approach to strategic planning and performance management. The revised planning framework and integration of the [force management statement](#) within its planning cycle has improved the force's understanding of strategies and plans. It also gives the force clarity about how it is performing and whether it is producing what the communities need.

The force supports its governance by a clear investment in senior leaders. The force works with Northumbria University to support superintendents and police staff equivalents by giving them business planning training. There is a clear focus on developing their understanding of outcomes and benefits. This investment is improving governance, responsibility and direction.

The force has made improvements in the presentation of data using Qlik Sense. This is a comprehensive dashboard of data and indicators. It gives the force detailed information supporting improved performance.

### **The force manages current demand well**

The force has an established and rigorous approach to understanding and managing demand. This is supported through the FCC. This approach effectively manages the staff available to meet the current demand. The pacesetter meetings cover immediate response, planned events and abstractions. The force introduced this process during the pandemic and it has become part of its routine. This has been supported by a better understanding of productivity and the value of mapping the benefits.

The force shows an understanding of value for money, and how investment in people can effect wider benefits to understanding process and change. This is becoming accepted throughout the organisation and is reflected in its strong sense of values. There is clear consultation, supported by demand data and good leadership. This means that the force is better informed to respond to changes in demand, and to take appropriate action to manage those changes.



**The force makes the best use of the finance it has available, and its plans are both ambitious and lasting**

The medium-term financial strategy (MTFS) is based on sound assumption and the force operates a tight financial management regime. At the time of our inspection, the MTFS identified a shortfall in funding of £3m in 2023/24 and £6m in 2024/25. The force will need to make further efficiency saving to cover this shortfall. This will present a challenge, given the history of savings that the force has already made. As a contingency, the force has produced a revised MTFS with an assumption that, subject to public consultation, the police and crime commissioner will increase the precept over the next two years. If this is approved, the revised MTFS presents a balanced budget through to 2024/25.

The force shows a rigorous approach to financial management. It is investing in technology and training to improve the service it provides to the public. It is mapping the benefits of change projects to make sure that it uses its finances to best effect in achieving value for money.

**The force actively seeks opportunities to improve services through working with other organisations and makes the most of the benefits of working collaboratively in line with its statutory obligations**

The force currently works with academia and a number of other organisations, and it has a good history of seeking new opportunities for collaboration.

The force has entered into a formal collaboration agreement with Durham Constabulary for its joint forensic and scientific support laboratory facilities. It works with the force's counter terrorism intelligence unit and its response to chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear threats. It also works with the wider police service and other forces in the region.

The force is open to working with other organisations and it has processes in place to evaluate whether its current collaboration activities achieve the results it expects. The force has good oversight processes in place to assess whether any new joint activities are likely to be beneficial. The force is in a strong position to develop this area and is supported by the investment it has made in developing its leaders.

**The force can show it is continuing to achieve efficiency savings and improve productivity**

The force asked consultants to review its information and communications technology (ICT) structure and provision. This led to the introduction of a business architecture approach to ICT. The force has also created a chief information officer role. This gives effective governance over its infrastructure and enabling services. The force is already realising benefits and this is shown in how it is using ICT and data to inform its new operating model.

The investment in ICT and data places the force in a good position to maximise the opportunities that this will bring. It is using technology to improve the service it gives, how it works with people, and in education and safeguarding.

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