

PEEL 2025–27

Police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy

An inspection of Merseyside Police

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Overall summary

Our judgments

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

Outstanding	Good	Adequate	Requires improvement	Inadequate
Preventing and deterring crime	Leadership and force management	Responding to the public	Investigating crime	
	Developing a diverse and inclusive workforce	Safeguarding children and adults		
	Police powers and public treatment	Managing fraud		
		Providing a safe custody environment		

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.

We also assess the force's performance in a range of other areas, and we report on these separately. We make graded judgments for some of these areas.

PEEL 2025–2027

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.

We have moved to a more [intelligence](#)-led, continual assessment approach, rather than the annual [PEEL inspections](#) we used in previous years. We assess forces against the [characteristics of good](#) performance, set out in the [PEEL assessment framework 2025–2027](#), and we more clearly link our judgments to [causes of concern](#) and [areas for improvement](#).

It isn't possible to make direct comparisons between the grades awarded in this PEEL inspection and those from the previous cycle of PEEL inspections. This is because we have increased our focus on making sure forces are achieving appropriate outcomes for the public. We have also changed the aspects of policing we inspect and added new areas.

Terminology in this report

Our reports contain references to, among other things, 'national' definitions, priorities, policies, systems, responsibilities and processes.

In some instances, 'national' means applying to England or Wales, or England and Wales. In others, it means applying to England, Wales and Scotland, or the whole of the United Kingdom.

About the data

For more information on data and analysis in this report, please [see the 'About the data' section of our website](#).

HM Inspector's summary

I am pleased with the performance of Merseyside Police in keeping people safe, reducing crime and giving [victims](#) an effective service. The force has made improvements in leadership, prevention and safeguarding since our last inspection, and I recognise the workforce's hard work in achieving this. But I have concerns about how the force is investigating crime.

The force has good governance in place. It has clear strategic plans informed by accurate information and broad performance framework. Its funding is within the typical range for forces in England and Wales. The force has a new [chief officer](#) team with a new chief constable and deputy chief constable. At the time of our inspection the force was going through considerable change and introducing a new force operating model.

The workforce feels well supported by immediate supervisors, staff associations and networks. But some investigation teams are facing high workloads, which negatively affect some individuals' well-being. I was disappointed to hear feedback from some trainee investigators that the force didn't always provide effective support throughout their training.

The force has effective oversight of [stop and search](#), including external scrutiny that also examines its use of force. The force is a high user of stop and search and makes proactive use of these powers to address local priorities. There are low levels of [disproportionality](#). But it needs to improve the recorded justification of its use of force.

I was pleased to see that the force has achieved outstanding performance in prevention and deterrence. It has a higher number of neighbourhood officers than the average for forces in England and Wales. This investment in prevention has proved very positive in tackling neighbourhood crime and [antisocial behaviour](#). It has particularly good offers to divert young people away from crime.

The force effectively answers calls from the public and has low abandonment rates. The number of emergency calls is within the typical range for forces in England and Wales. The force consistently assesses the initial risk and vulnerability of callers to decide the appropriate response. Response times to emergency calls are consistently positive. However, responding to non-emergency incidents needs to improve.

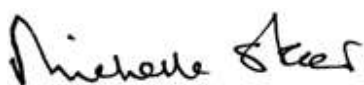
The force needs to make sure that it properly allocates, plans and supervises investigations so that victims get the service they deserve. And the force needs to improve outcomes for victims of crime. This was identified as an [area for improvement](#) at our 2023–25 PEEL inspection. In this inspection we found there has been slight improvement but the area for improvement remains open.

The way the force protects [vulnerable people](#) has improved since our last PEEL inspection. It was pleasing to find that the force has considerably improved its governance and how it manages its [Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme](#). The force has responded positively to our feedback, but it needs to make sure it manages [missing person](#) investigations appropriately.

The force assesses the threat from fraud and understands how this affects its communities. However, it doesn't always identify calls for service appropriately. It manages fraud investigations well and has a good outcome rate for fraud, within the typical range for forces in England and Wales.

There is effective oversight of the force's custody suites, however, the force could improve the communication between [personnel](#) and senior leaders. There are enough [custody officers](#) and staff available. Custody records are detailed and thorough. The force treats detainees with dignity and respect and provides appropriate care. It is open to effective external scrutiny of its custody facilities. I was pleased to see that diverting children and vulnerable adults away from custody was a clear priority.

This report sets out our inspection findings. There are some areas in which Merseyside Police must do better, and we will continue to monitor its progress. But I am optimistic that its new leadership team and operating model, together with its committed officers and staff, will continue to support the improvements needed.



Michelle Skeer OBE QPM

His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary

Leadership and force management

Good

Merseyside Police's leadership and force management are good.

Main findings

In this section, we set out our main findings that relate to how good the force is at leadership and force management.

The force is making significant changes to its operating model and these are supported by robust strategic planning processes

During our inspection, the force was carrying out a major change programme to move its operating model from a functional model with centralised functions to a geographic model. This involved several significant changes to governance, accountability and its operations. Operational changes included moving some less complex investigations to response and neighbourhood [officers](#) to investigate, rather than to dedicated investigative teams.

The force was also revising its operating model during our last inspection. It has continued to provide a good service to the public throughout these periods of change.

The force continues to have strong business planning processes. In our last inspection, we identified [promising practice](#) in how the force tracks the success of its projects. In this inspection we found it continues to do this for force projects and its work with partner organisations.

The force can clearly explain how different functions depend on each other. This helps it understand the wider impact of any changes. It also allows the force to identify hidden demand and reduce the risk of unexpected consequences.

The force monitors the costs, benefits and risks of its work with partners. This helps it make informed decisions about how to provide services effectively.

In our last inspection, we recognised how the force effectively tracks and analyses the benefits of its business cases as an area of promising practice. In this inspection, we found that, despite the significant changes it is undergoing, it has continued this good work. It has also received national recognition from the [College of Policing](#) and the [National Police Chiefs' Council](#) for its work on the Right Care, Right Person programme.

Since our last inspection, the force has adopted a [priority-based budgeting](#) approach. This allows it to use budgeting as a tool to support risk-based decision-making, understand and improve its services, and contribute to making necessary savings.

Before making changes to its operating model, the force chose not to complete another round of priority-based budgeting. However, we found that the force's strong approach to strategic planning provides reassurance. This strength has been evident in this and previous PEEL inspections.

The force has also retained learning from earlier priority-based budgeting work. It continues to use its understanding of costs and outcomes to support decision making.

This approach means the force can use this information as a baseline when planning change. It helps leaders assess the effect of proposed changes and make informed decisions.

The force includes the perspective of the workforce in managing change, but should make sure that its change communication is as effective as possible

The force communicates its strategic priorities and performance objectives to its workforce through a communications strategy and supporting documents.

However, we found that [staff](#) and [officers](#) don't always understand what the organisation is trying to achieve and how performance is measured.

During our inspection, most staff and officers understood the force's new four-pillar approach.

We found that not all officers and staff were clear about how their roles support the force's performance framework or how their daily activities align with force priorities. Some officers and staff were also unclear about how their work contributed to wider organisational goals.

The force is introducing changes at pace, which has created some uncertainty among frontline staff and officers about next steps.

Despite this, most leaders gave a clear and consistent account of expectations. They also explained how the new operating model will work in practice.

During our inspection, we carried out a workforce survey open to all officers and staff between 17 November and 15 December 2025. We received 1,656 responses, which we estimate to be 23.4 percent of the workforce at the time of the survey. Only 55.4 percent (918 of 1,656 respondents) of those surveyed agreed that change is managed well in Merseyside Police. This is despite the force consulting its workforce about the changes and including the results of this consultation in its plans for change and strategic documents.

The force doesn't make full use of opportunities to link roles and activities to its objectives. This limits how clearly staff and officers can see how their work supports organisational priorities.

We found that the force's professional development review process doesn't consistently connect individual performance discussions to force objectives. Line managers don't always draw clear links between personal goals and wider organisational aims.

This means officers and staff may not fully understand how their performance contributes to force priorities. Stronger links in these discussions would help clarify expectations and reinforce how individual roles support the force's objectives.

The force uses data to help it operate efficiently and provide its services to the public

We found that the force uses data to help it provide its services efficiently and effectively. Force meetings we observed included a range of data that supported leaders in managing performance. Force performance packs contained relevant information to help identify opportunities to improve. For example, force performance boards included data to help establish reasons for missed attendance times such as incident locations, day of the week, time of day, incident type, availability of resources and equipment.

The force's Delphi platform makes data accessible to frontline officers and staff through a range of dashboards. We found that officers and staff used these dashboards effectively to identify crime or [antisocial behaviour](#) trends and hotspots and deploy resources effectively. Delphi's search feature allows users to identify relevant information, for example entering the term "sharp" immediately locates records linked to knife-related offences.

The force can also use Delphi to understand officer and staff workloads and better manage their performance and welfare. However, we found that the force made limited use of partnership data. By incorporating a wider range of data from other organisations, the force could gain a more comprehensive understanding of all types of demand it faces. The force should continue to improve the range and types of data it uses to understand performance.

The force can show effective use of demand data to inform workforce planning

We found that the force was effectively using demand data to help allocate resources efficiently and effectively. It combines data insights from incident trends, response times and geographic crime patterns to make sure it deploys officers and staff where they are most needed. This approach helps to align HR data on officer and staff skills with specific operational needs. Whether in neighbourhood policing, investigation or emergency response, it makes sure the right people with the right skills are in the right places.

However, the force could further improve this approach. The systems for finance, duties and HR doesn't provide a singular overview of staff and officers' deployment and availability. We found this could cause issues, with [personnel](#) having to manually input or extract data to understand when and where to deploy officers and staff most effectively.

At the time of our inspection, the force didn't have a strategic workforce plan, although one was in the draft stage. The force mitigated the impact of this through its strategic workforce planning group. This group bring together the information required to effectively plan the deployment of resources such as projections of anticipated promotions, leavers and other workforce moves. We also found that the force was still developing its approach to effective succession planning.

The force is using predictive analysis to inform its force management statement, and it is using this to improve operational planning and resource allocation

During our inspection, we found that the force was using predictive analytics to inform its [force management statement](#). By using historical crime data, call logs, demographic trends and environmental factors, the force is creating predictive models to forecast future demand with greater accuracy. These models identify patterns such as peak times for incidents, high-risk locations and seasonal fluctuations in crime rates. This proactive approach has helped the force to distribute officers, staff and resources more efficiently.

The force uses predictive analytics to highlight emerging crime trends and support its strategic planning. This allows it to develop targeted interventions and community policing initiatives. When integrated with real-time data systems, these insights can also inform the force's dynamic deployment strategies. It can make sure police presence aligns with actual demand.

The force has established a rapid investment panel to manage unexpected rises in demand. This panel considers options when demand increases suddenly. This approach allows the force to act quickly. It reduces the need to rely on slower processes to approve extra resources. As a result, the force can respond more effectively to changing demand. It can make timely decisions about staffing and capability without waiting for formal planning cycles, such as updates to the force management statement.

The force has effective systems to gather intelligence to make sure it can anticipate and respond to current and future demand

During our inspection, we found the force had an effective [intelligence](#) gathering function that makes sure it can assign the appropriate resources. This means that the force can meet its strategic priorities and both current and future demand. The force is using real-time data, predictive analytics and collaborative information-sharing networks. These help it to proactively identify emerging threats, allocate resources efficiently and prioritise operations based on risk and impact. This intelligence-led approach makes sure that the force's decision-making is based on evidence and is responsive. This helps it to anticipate criminal trends and community needs.

We observed the force's daily management meetings and meetings of its tactical tasking and co-ordination group and found that they were supported by high-quality data and analysis. These meetings appropriately identified and directed officers, staff and other resources to address areas of risk.

The force is investing in improving its leaders' skills and abilities

The force provides training and support to all leaders and there are specific training packages for first and second-line leaders. The force extends the same support to officers and staff who have acting or temporary leadership responsibilities.

In our workforce survey, 64.8 percent of respondents (345 of 532) agreed that Merseyside Police gave them the necessary training to carry out line management or supervisory responsibilities. But, during our inspection, officers and staff told us that support through supervision and tutorship wasn't always consistent, particularly in investigative teams. And they told us that the force could do more to make sure officers and staff received supportive tutorship.

One of the pillars of the force's leadership training is behaviours. The force provides additional training about desired behaviours including 'upstander training'. Officers and staff we spoke to during our inspection were positive about the behaviours of their immediate managers and about their senior leaders.

In our workforce survey, 74.1 percent of respondents (1,227 of 1,656) agreed or somewhat agreed that Merseyside Police's senior leaders demonstrate the standards, behaviours and culture expected from the police. And 77.7 percent of respondents (1,287 of 1,656) agreed or somewhat agreed that senior leaders make an effort to improve the standards, behaviours and culture in Merseyside Police.

We also found the force was still to self-assess against the [Code of Ethics](#), having initially delayed this due to the amount of ongoing change. At the time of our inspection, the force had plans to complete this important assessment soon.

The force has digital transformation plans that show how it uses technology to improve operational efficiency

During our inspection, we found that the force's digital transformation plans were centred on using advanced technologies to enhance operational efficiency and service provision. By integrating tools such as artificial intelligence (AI), cloud storage systems, and data analytics, the force is making workflows more efficient, improving decision making and increasing productivity. This will enhance public safety and trust through more transparent and responsive policing.

The force lacks a digital, data and technology strategy, but we found existing governance of digital, data and technology helps achieve force priorities. The force is carrying out many projects, which are clearly prioritised against several relevant metrics and align with the force's strategic objectives.

The use of capital spending on digital, data and technology is also clearly outlined and planned for, helping the force create financial stability. It has a number of successful projects, including the Delphi data platform and its cell allocation management software, which demonstrate the effectiveness of these overall processes.

The force considers the use of AI and automation to increase productivity, such as the use of auto-redaction software (a program that automatically removes personal details from files). The force has plans to increase how it uses automation, including:

- automation within crime recording;
- machine learning to identify further lines of enquiry in investigations; and
- smarter solutions for gathering caller and incident histories in the force [control room](#).

We found that officers and staff could access the information they needed across multiple force systems. But the systems the force uses for resource management, such as those that record and store information on duties and skills, don't automatically share data. While the force was able to mitigate the impact of this through effective workforce planning, this requires manual data management through spreadsheets and extracting from each system individually, which is inefficient.

The force is using its investment in technology to better understand demand and productivity. During our inspection, we saw clear evidence of this. The force uses data to monitor workloads and identify demand. This helps leaders understand pressure points and adjust resources where needed.

The force has also improved how staff and officers work. It has issued laptops and software that support remote working. This allows officers and staff to complete tasks more efficiently and submit information without returning to a station.

Overall, technology is helping the force to work more flexibly and make better use of its resources. For example, in our previous inspection we identified that a lack of investment in vehicle telematics meant that the force was unable to show a detailed understanding of its fleet of vehicles and how it was used. Since then, the force has invested in a fleet management system to monitor its vehicles. This system automatically records mileage and fuel use. It also automates the reporting of when vehicles are due for maintenance to make sure the highest-risk vehicles are at the top of the maintenance schedule. At the time of our inspection, the force planned to introduce an app that officers can use on their handheld devices to record daily vehicle checks so that any vehicle defects are reported immediately.

The force can show how it aligns finances to its priorities and how it decides if its expenditure offers value for money

The force could show its finances and its priorities are aligned. It clearly links its budget allocations to strategic objectives and operational needs. This involves transparent financial planning that shows how it uses resources in critical areas such as investigations, neighbourhood policing, and technological innovation. The force uses regular performance reviews and audits to help assess whether its spending leads to measurable outcomes and makes sure it is using public funds efficiently. The force uses [benchmarking](#), cost-benefit analyses and adopts best practices in procurement and resource management to further support value for money. By maintaining this alignment and accountability, the force can instil public confidence in its financial leadership and operational effectiveness.

In the year ending 31 March 2025, the force received £485,279,945 in total funding. As with other forces in England and Wales, this is a combination of local revenue generated from the [police precept](#), a core grant from central government and other non-government revenue. The precept income to the force that year was £103,292,210. This is equivalent to £70,003 per 1,000 population, which is lower than the typical range forces in England and Wales receive from the precept.

Attracting, developing and retaining the workforce and creating a diverse and inclusive workplace

Good

Merseyside Police is good at attracting, developing and retaining its workforce and creating a diverse and inclusive workplace.

Promising practice

The force has a well-designed apprenticeship offer that supports effective staff retention

A range of apprenticeships are available including for accountancy, business administration, cyber security, contact handling and vehicle maintenance.

The scheme is well established and works effectively. Ofsted has assessed it and rated it as good. The force has also received national recognition. It was named in the Times top 100 apprenticeship employers for 2025.

Many apprentices progress into other roles in the force such as crime scene investigators, witness care officers, [digital forensics](#) technicians, team leaders and [police officers](#).

This approach supports workforce development. It helps the force retain skills and experience within the organisation.

Main findings

In this section, we set out our main findings that relate to how good the force is at attracting, developing and retaining its workforce and creating a diverse and inclusive workplace.

The force strives to recruit the right people to meet the needs of its communities

The force has an outreach team who support a wide range of activities with local communities to help applicants from diverse backgrounds throughout their recruitment journey.

The force holds recruitment events for potential applicants from [under-represented communities](#). One event in November 2025, organised by the inclusion, well-being and engagement team, allowed local communities to see what it is like to work for the force by speaking with current [officers](#) and [staff](#). The force told us that between 400 and 500 people attended.

The force offers flexible working opportunities. This means more officers and staff can apply to work flexible hours and, with the creation of smarter working hubs, work from locations that suit their personal circumstances.

Representatives from the staff associations and networks we spoke to were complimentary about the force recruitment processes and told us they were fair, open and inclusive.

The force promotes diversity, equality and inclusion

The force has arrangements in place to promote diversity, equality and inclusion across the workforce.

All officers and staff are required to complete the 'Our Culture' e-learning course. Following several high-profile cases across policing in England and Wales, the force developed the course with support from its [professional standards department](#). These cases involved inappropriate behaviour by police officers, staff and volunteers, both on and off duty. The force told us that as at 23 February 2026, 89.0 percent of officers and staff had completed the course.

The force has also introduced an internal 'Call it Out' campaign. This sets out how officers and staff should challenge and report behaviour that falls below expected standards. The campaign's message is clear: challenge it, report it, stop it.

The reporting process allows staff and officers to raise concerns anonymously. There is a dedicated page on the force intranet. This includes:

- a link to a confidential reporting system;
- a video from the chief constable setting out the force's position on inappropriate behaviour; and
- links to additional sources of support.

In our workforce survey, 88.8 percent of respondents (1,471 of 1,656) agreed that their manager challenges discriminatory behaviour.

The force has achieved Disability Confident level 2 status. This demonstrates that it has taken steps to support disabled people in the workplace. The force was also a runner-up in the 2025 National Diversity Awards. This was the second consecutive year it had received such recognition.

The force holds a monthly transitioning support meeting to discuss and address issues raised by officers and staff or those supporting colleagues who are undergoing gender transition. There is a meeting tracker in place detailing actions and progress. The force offers tailored support to individuals. It signposts staff and managers to support services when needed. These include student support, staff networks, internal well-being teams and people (HR) partners.

The force has effective staff associations and networks that provide advice, support and guidance.

The force gives officers and staff with the right training to carry out specialist work

The force has a good understanding of its current and future investigative demand. Investigators told us that they felt well trained to carry out their role. As at 31 December 2025, the force had 463 [professionalising investigations programme \(PIP 2\)](#) investigators in post compared to 832 who should be in post. This means 55.6 percent of PIP 2 investigator posts were filled. The force is working to address the shortfall and as at 31 December 2025, there were 273 PIP 2 trainees in place. This position still leaves the force with a shortfall of 96 PIP 2 investigators.

The force has introduced the [College of Policing's neighbourhood policing programme](#). The [College of Policing](#) dashboard shows that as at 17 March 2026, 912 individuals had completed the first part of the programme. The force had 842 neighbourhood officers and police community support officers (PCSOs) eligible and required to complete the training. The force has trained more than the eligible number of officers due to some moving on to other roles and functions, and being replaced by people who required training.

In addition, the force has provided level 3 Skills for Justice neighbourhood policing training to its local policing teams. The force told us that as at 25 February 2026, 350 officers and staff had received the training, with 280 completing the necessary portfolios.

The force provides effective training for its volunteers, including those in specialist roles. All volunteers complete an induction programme. This includes mandatory training, such as ethics and equality. The force uses this training to make sure volunteers understand expected standards and behaviours.

Volunteers told us they feel valued by the force. They were positive about the training they received when they joined and said the force makes them feel included.

The force also recognises the contribution of its volunteers. Each year, it marks National Volunteers Week. During this week, the force holds a valuing volunteers event. [Chief officers](#) support and attend this event.

The force has a clear understanding of the well-being challenges of its workforce

The force has a comprehensive well-being plan, which is clearly aligned with the five main areas of the '[National Police Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2024–2026](#)'. It communicates with its workforce and acts on information and feedback to improve its well-being.

In our workforce survey, 62.4 percent of respondents (1,034 of 1,656) said that the force took their well-being into account when setting their working pattern, and 72.0 percent of respondents (1,192 of 1,656) said that their line manager actively checked that their workload was manageable. However, some officers and staff we spoke to during our inspection raised concerns about large workloads affecting their well-being. The force expects the introduction of its new force operating model to reduce demand placed on investigators.

The force provides neurodiversity training for supervisors and managers. This helps them understand the needs of neurodivergent staff and officers and explains how line managers can provide effective support.

The force has a medical intervention panel. Officers and staff can apply directly to the panel. If accepted, the force funds an assessment by a medical professional. This allows individuals to access support more quickly. In some cases, staff and officers are seen within days rather than weeks. This helps them begin the most appropriate treatment and return to work sooner.

The force listens to feedback from officers and staff. Officers raised concerns about the inferior quality of uniforms. The chief constable responded to these concerns. The force has committed to reviewing uniforms and equipment. Its aim is to make sure that officers and staff have access to good-quality kit.

The force promotes the physical and mental health of all officers and staff

We found that the force takes a positive approach to well-being.

It provides psychological drop-in sessions at police stations across the force area. These sessions are open to all officers and staff. They don't require an appointment. An initial discussion helps assess whether further support is needed.

The force has also created a webpage for family members of officers and staff. This provides links to the employee assistance programme and the National Police Wellbeing Service. It also links to external organisations such as [Police Treatment Centres](#), [Blue Light Services](#) and the [Police Children's Charity](#).

The force offers other well-being support including physiotherapy sessions, stress management courses and healthy lifestyle programmes. And it operates a well-being van at various locations to offer health checks and support.

However, not all officers and staff can access this support easily. Some told us that they were unable to attend events due to shift patterns and event locations. The force should consider how it can improve access for all officers and staff.

The force should improve its oversight and governance of continuing professional development

The force offers [continuing professional development \(CPD\)](#) for officers and staff. However, its oversight and governance of this isn't effective.

We found several CPD programmes that were more than two years old. These programmes had low completion rates. The force hadn't reviewed whether they remained relevant or effective.

Officers and staff told us there are too many e-learning courses. Many questioned the value of this learning method. They said it often replaces face-to-face or practical training.

Staff and officers complete e-learning packages, but in many cases the force doesn't check what they have learned. We found examples of no assessments on packages to confirm knowledge or understanding.

Staff and officers also told us that protected learning time is regularly cancelled when operational demand increases. In our workforce survey only 53.2 percent of respondents (881 of 1,656) agreed that time for training and development is protected and not regularly deprioritised when operational demands increase.

We observed CPD completion rates discussed at some performance meetings. Overall, we found these discussions were brief and lacked clear direction. Senior leaders didn't set clear expectations for completion.

At the time of our inspection, the force had recently introduced a learning and development governance board. This should help improve oversight and accountability. However, it was too early to assess its impact.

The force has processes in place to encourage officers and staff to stay in its workforce

The force checks on the satisfaction of its workforce through surveys and collects workforce data. It uses 'stay' interviews to identify concerns early and discuss how it can encourage people to stay in its workforce. Officers and staff who are thinking of leaving are identified through discussions with line managers during appraisal meetings.

However, the force could improve the options for [personnel](#) to enter this process by creating a way for them to directly raise the issue with independent members of the organisation, such as HR. This would give staff and officers the opportunity to discuss concerns with someone other than their line manager.

The force has an effective and transparent exit interview process, which is independent of the line management chain. This process is voluntary and has low return rates. The force would benefit from understanding why this is.

In our workforce survey, 78.6 percent of respondents (1,114 of 1,418) said that they wanted to stay working for the force for at least the next year.

The force is effectively gathering reasons for people leaving the workforce as part of the [National Police Chiefs' Council](#) national leavers framework, which is designed to improve the data collection on reasons for officers leaving police forces in England and Wales.

The force identifies the challenges raised by those from under-represented groups and offers supportive measures and incentives to overcome them. It uses professional development and action learning sets, which are part of a targeted programme for under-represented workforce groups, to improve retention and support personal development. Candidates receive classroom development training and are allocated mentors with specific experience in their required areas.

Using powers fairly, appropriately and with justification

Good

Merseyside Police is good at using its powers fairly, appropriately and with justification.

Area for improvement

The force needs to consistently record the justification for the use of force

As part of our review of use of force records, we found that [officers](#) didn't consistently record the justification for the use of force.

We found some recording practices weren't justifying why compliant handcuffing was used.

In our [stop and search body-worn video](#) audit, we found that seven of the eight compliant handcuffing cases didn't have clear explanation, apparent grounds or justification to apply handcuffs.

In addition, we also reviewed 20 use of force encounters and found 9 of these records failed to clearly explain the reason force was used or justify the officers' actions.

Supervisors had been unable to complete quality assurance of use of force forms and as such had been unable to identify when recorded justification was insufficient.

This was due to technical issues. However, the force told us it has now rectified the situation and has started training line managers in the quality assurance process and making sure they have access to submitted forms.

The force should make sure that officers record justification for use of force consistently and accurately to provide reassurance that powers are being used appropriately and to improve public confidence.

Main findings

In this section, we set out our main findings that relate to how good the force is at using its powers fairly, appropriately and with justification.

Officers use body-worn video in use of force encounters and stop and search

We found that [officers](#) consistently use [body-worn video](#). The force has a policy that sets out clear guidance for its use at specific incidents including those involving [domestic abuse](#), searches, planned arrests, the use of force and the use of [conducted energy devices](#).

The force monitors the use of body-worn video carefully to make sure officers' interactions with the public are being recorded with transparency and for evidential purposes. It doesn't issue body-worn video to individual officers and [staff](#) but uses it as a shared resource. Officers told us this worked. but could at times mean it was unavailable due to demand or shift changeovers.

The force has effective independent scrutiny of police powers

The force has effective independent processes to review how officers use police powers.

The force uses several independent panels to provide scrutiny and challenge. These panels review the use of stop and search and use of force powers. The main panel operates through the Merseyside [independent advisory group](#).

The panel meets every two months. It reviews stop and search and use of force incidents. This includes reviewing body-worn video footage. Members usually attend meetings in person, but they can also join online if needed.

The panel chair selects cases at random. This prevents the force from choosing which incidents the panel reviews and eliminates potential bias. We observed strong and informed challenge from panel members.

Panel members asked probing questions about the footage they reviewed. They provided clear feedback and identified learning points. The discussion and scrutiny were effective.

The force expects officers to receive feedback after panel reviews. A senior officer attends scrutiny meetings. The force's fairness in policing team and training [personnel](#) also attend. They provide feedback to officers and support panel discussions by explaining relevant laws and training.

The force responds well to the challenge it receives. The fairness in policing team keeps an action tracker. This records panel feedback, actions taken and changes made. The force updates panels on progress at follow-up meetings.

Officers understand how to use stop and search powers fairly and appropriately

During our inspection, we reviewed a sample of 106 stop search records from 1 November 2024 to 31 October 2025. Based on this sample, we estimate that 82.1 percent (+/- 6.1 percentage points) of stop and searches the force carried out during this period had reasonable grounds recorded.

This suggests some deterioration compared to the findings from our previous review of records from 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2022. In that review, we found that 85.1 percent (+/- 4.9 percentage points) of stop and searches had reasonable grounds recorded. However, as the estimated results are based on a review of a sample of records and the ranges of possible true values overlap, we can't be sure that there has been a real change.

The percentage that had reasonable grounds recorded suggests that officers are suitably trained and they use stop and search powers in a fair and appropriate way. Officers told us that they felt confident to use their stop and search powers and had enough training.

Supervisors are required to review a minimum of 20 percent of stop search forms submitted by their team each month. The force has provided a template for them to use to aid consistency of reviews. The fairness in policing team then carries out further [dip sampling](#) and audits of those reviews.

This quality assurance provides the force with clear information to understand how its officers are using stop and search. As part of this review process of stop and search forms, supervisors are required to dip sample the accompanying body-worn video.

The force collects accurate data to allow it to understand how fairly stop and search is being used

Good-quality data on self-defined ethnicity (how individuals define their ethnicity) allows the force to understand the rate at which it uses stop and search on people from ethnic minority backgrounds in the local resident population.

As part of our review of stop and search records, we asked the force to provide 12 months of stop and search data from 1 November 2024 to 31 October 2025. We found that self-defined ethnicity information was unknown (not recorded, not stated or refused) for 3.6 percent of these records. In the year ending 31 March 2025, on average, self-defined ethnicity was unknown for 18 percent of stop and searches that forces in England and Wales recorded.

In our review of 20 stop and search encounters filmed on [body-worn video](#), we found that in 20 of these encounters, officers asked for self-defined ethnicity. When officers ask for this data, the force can more accurately identify any [disproportionate](#) use of the power.

The force uses stop and search effectively to reduce crime

In the year ending 31 March 2025, the force carried out 53,105 stop and searches of people. This equals 36.0 stop and searches per 1,000 population. This is higher than the typical range for forces in England and Wales and shows that Merseyside Police is the highest user of stop and search powers in England and Wales.

The number of stop and searches the force carried out increased by 7.6 percent compared to the year ending 31 March 2024. This isn't in line with the overall picture for forces in England and Wales in which, on average, the number of stop and searches decreased by 1.3 percent.

We found that the force closely monitors its use of stop and search. Officers we spoke to were confident in using it. We saw effective use of stop and search in response to crime in the force's local communities. [Neighbourhood policing teams](#) use it in problem-solving and this indicates that the force supports stop and search as a valued tool to reduce crime.

In the year ending 31 March 2025, the force had an overall [find rate](#) of 19.3 percent from stop and search encounters. This was made up of 17.1 percent [linked finds](#) and 2.2 percent not linked finds.

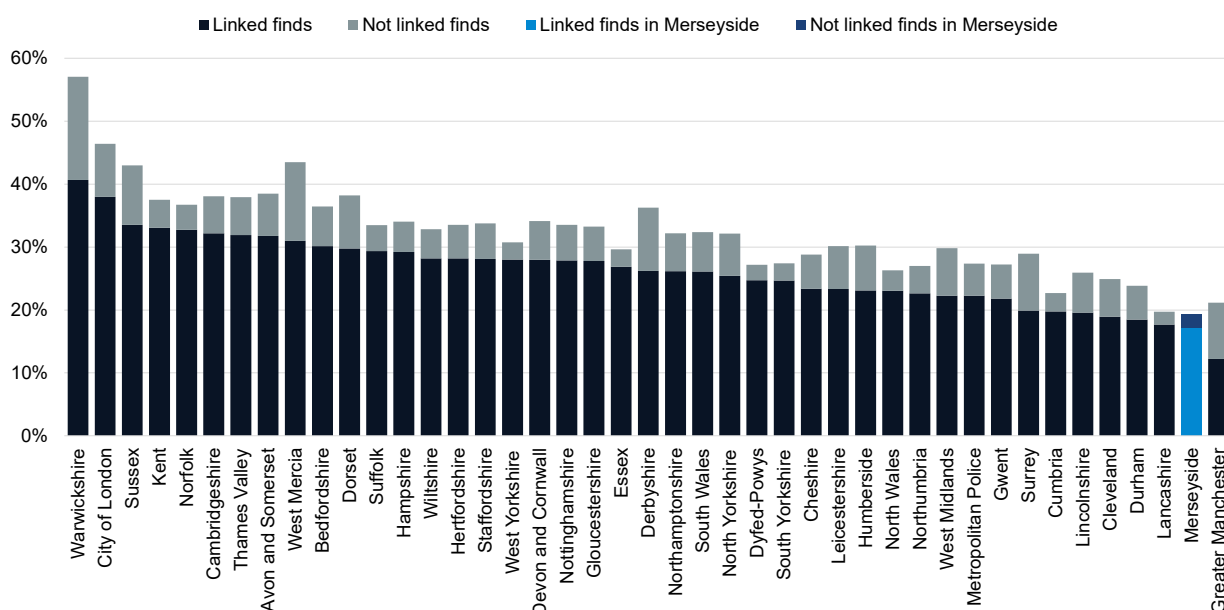
Linked finds are when one or more items, which the officer suspected a person had in their possession, are found and were the reason for the search. Not linked finds are when items are found that a person may have been in unlawful possession of but weren't the reason for the search.

The force's linked find rate was lower than the typical range for forces in England and Wales. The England and Wales average in the year ending 31 March 2025 was 26.2 percent. The linked find rate for the force increased by 1.1 percentage points compared to the year ending 31 March 2024. The force should make sure it understands why its linked find rate is lower than other forces and how it can improve this.

We examined:

- the number of searches the force carried out;
- the number of searches that had reasonable grounds; and
- the percentage of linked finds.

Figure 1: Percentage of stop and search encounters resulting in linked and not linked finds for forces in England and Wales in the year ending 31 March 2025



Source: [Stop and search open data tables](#) from the Home Office

Chart description: A stacked column chart showing the percentage of stop and search encounters where the item found was and wasn't linked to the reason for the search for all forces in England and Wales in the year ending 31 March 2025. In Merseyside Police, 17.1 percent of stop and search encounters resulted in a linked find and 2.2 percent in a not linked find.

[The accessible data table for figure 1 is available on our website.](#)

Note: In the calculation, we have excluded records where it isn't known whether the item found was linked to the reason for the search. We have also excluded records where it isn't known whether the officer found any items. If the percentage of linked or not linked finds isn't included in the chart for some forces, it is because they haven't supplied it.

The force understands how it is using stop and search and use of force powers and is trying to do more to reduce disproportionality

In our review of the force's stop and search records of people from an ethnic minority background, we found that 11 of 14 had reasonable grounds. The force analyses its use of stop and search powers to help it understand any disproportionality.

In the year ending 31 March 2025, people from a Black ethnic minority background were 1.8 times more likely than White people to be the subject of a stop and search by Merseyside Police. In comparison, people from a Black ethnic minority background across England and Wales were 3.7 times more likely than White people to be the subject of a stop and search.

In the year ending 31 March 2025, people from a Black ethnic minority background were 3.1 times more likely than White people to be subject to use of force by Merseyside Police compared to a rate of 3.0 in the rest of England and Wales. This suggests that force is used disproportionately on people from Black ethnic minority backgrounds. The force analyses its use of force to help it understand any disproportionality. This analysis includes location, age, gender and ethnicity, as well times and days of the week, to identify themes and trends.

The force is recording enough use of force incidents

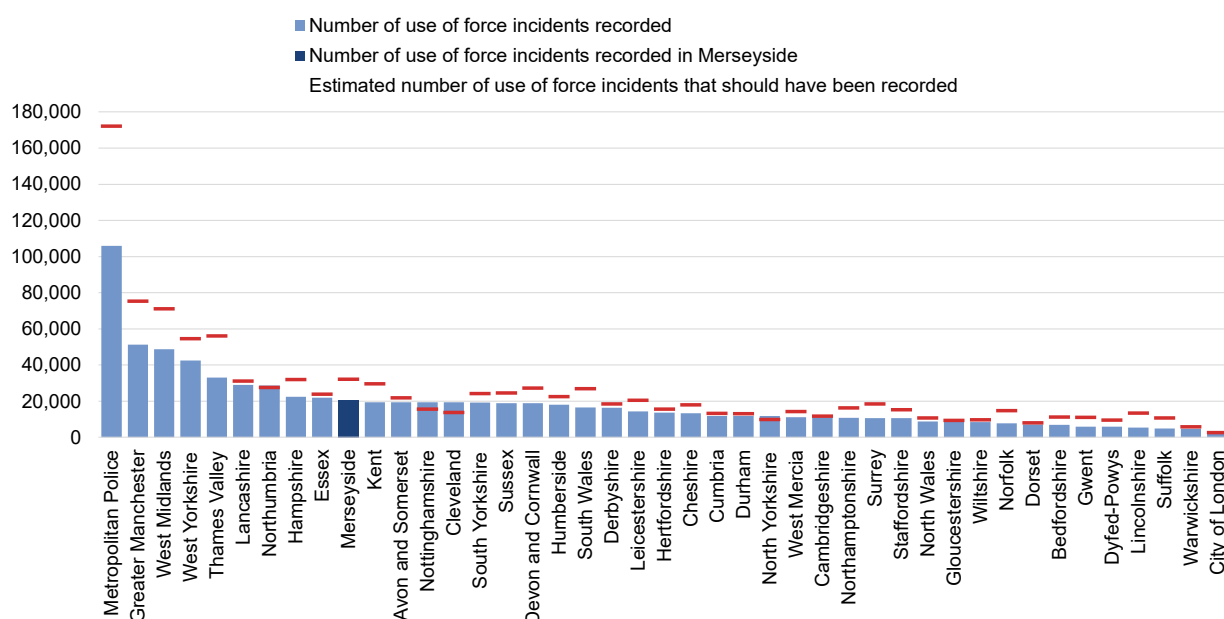
In the year ending 31 March 2025, the force recorded 20,658 use of force incidents. This is an increase of 38.8 percent compared to the previous year. This increase is likely due to improved recording systems and practices.

Officers are expected to record every use of force to make sure it is transparent and accountable. This includes recording low-level use of force such as handcuffing a compliant person and higher levels of force such as the use of a baton or conducted energy device (Taser). Where more than one officer uses force on an individual, each officer must submit their own use of force report.

We expect the number of recorded use of force incidents to be at least as high as the number of arrests the force carried out and it should most likely be proportionately higher – each arrest typically includes at least one count of force being used but many will involve more than one count of force. In the year ending 31 March 2025, the force carried out 21,014 arrests. Based on the number of arrests, we estimate that the force should have recorded 32,090 use of force incidents and, based on that estimate, likely under-recorded 11,432 incidents. This shows an improvement in recording use of force compared to the previous year when, based on the number of arrests, it didn't record 16,605 use of force incidents.

Force data shows that, since 1 September 2025, the submission of use of force records has increased and now exceeds the number of arrests made each month. Officers told us that there is better clarity on when forms are required and this is emphasised in public and personal safety training. The force needs to continue this improvement in recording these incidents.

Figure 2: Number of use of force incidents that forces in England and Wales recorded and the estimated number that should have been recorded in the year ending 31 March 2025



Source: [Police use of force open data tables](#) and [arrests open data tables](#) from the Home Office

Chart description: A combination chart showing the number of use of force incidents that all forces in England and Wales recorded (represented by columns) and the estimated number of use of force incidents that should have been recorded (represented by red target lines) in the year ending 31 March 2025. Merseyside Police recorded 20,658 use of force incidents. This was lower than the estimated 32,090 use of force incidents it should have recorded.

[The accessible data table for figure 2 is available on our website.](#)

Note: To understand how well forces record their use of force, we compare the number of incidents they recorded with the estimated number they should have recorded. To estimate the number of use of force incidents forces should have recorded, we use the number of recorded arrests and the number of recorded use of force incidents linked to an arrest.

The force safeguards children who have been subject to stop and search

The force has developed the [child](#) exploitation risk index (CERI). This tool helps it assess how vulnerable children and young people are to exploitation.

CERI brings together information from several force systems. This includes [missing person](#) reports, social care markers, drug use and records of domestic abuse. The tool produces a risk level for each child based on this information.

Each morning, the force uses CERI to check the details of children who have been subject to stop and search. This helps it identify children who may be at risk. The risk level guides decisions about further action. It helps the force and its partners decide what early help, [safeguarding](#) or other intervention is needed.

Preventing and deterring crime and antisocial behaviour, and reducing vulnerability

Outstanding

Merseyside Police is outstanding at preventing and deterring crime and [antisocial behaviour](#), and reducing [vulnerability](#).

Promising practice

The force works well with partners to divert children away from the criminal justice system

The force works closely with Merseyside [Youth Justice Services](#) and the Violence Reduction Partnership. Together, they have developed the No Comment pathway.

This gives [children](#) an opportunity to avoid court proceedings and receive support at an early stage. It offers an additional route into Merseyside's [out-of-court disposal](#) process. This helps Youth Justice Services work with children sooner.

The pathway increases opportunities to divert children from court or custody. It focuses on groups that are over-represented in the youth justice system, including children from ethnically diverse communities, children in care and those with special educational needs.

The goals of the pathway are clear and well understood. It aims to reduce the number of children entering the youth justice system. It also helps more children access timely and appropriate support. This approach helps address behaviour and reduces the risk of unnecessary criminalisation.

The Violence Reduction Partnership provides regular oversight and reviews performance data. This shows the pathway is working as intended and supports effective diversion from the statutory justice system.

The force works well with partners to support families of children exposed to drug misuse

Neighbourhood policing [officers](#) in St Helens work closely with the young people's drug and alcohol team. Together, they provide early and sustained support to families and carers. This includes regular ketamine support group meetings in St Helens. These are well attended and clearly focused on prevention.

The sessions help [children](#) make safer and better-informed choices. They also give families the confidence to address drug misuse at an early stage. The support offered is wide-ranging and well targeted. It creates open conversations about drugs and alcohol. It also improves understanding of risks and harm.

The sessions help families recognise signs of exploitation. They support effective safety planning tailored to individual children. This proactive and collaborative approach reduces harm. It strengthens family resilience and helps keep children safe.

Main findings

In this section, we set out our main findings that relate to how good the force is at preventing and deterring crime and antisocial behaviour, and reducing vulnerability.

The force has effective governance and oversight for prevention and deterrence

The force has clear governance and oversight arrangements for prevention and deterrence. An assistant chief constable oversees this work.

Neighbourhood policing and prevention are priorities for the force. Leaders understand the value of this work. The force discusses performance at the local policing, criminal justice and prevention meeting. It also reviews performance at monthly local area meetings.

The force is implementing the [Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee](#) (a government initiative to increase the number of neighbourhood [police officers](#) to create a more visible presence in communities). As part of its new operating model, the force plans to increase the number of neighbourhood officers.

The force has effective community safety partnership arrangements across the force area. Partnership meetings are well attended. Partners told us they see these meetings as essential in addressing antisocial behaviour and are very complimentary of the work the force does.

The force holds weekly threat, harm and risk meetings. These meetings include partners such as fire and rescue services, local authorities and substance misuse services. Partners work together to assess issues and agree joint actions.

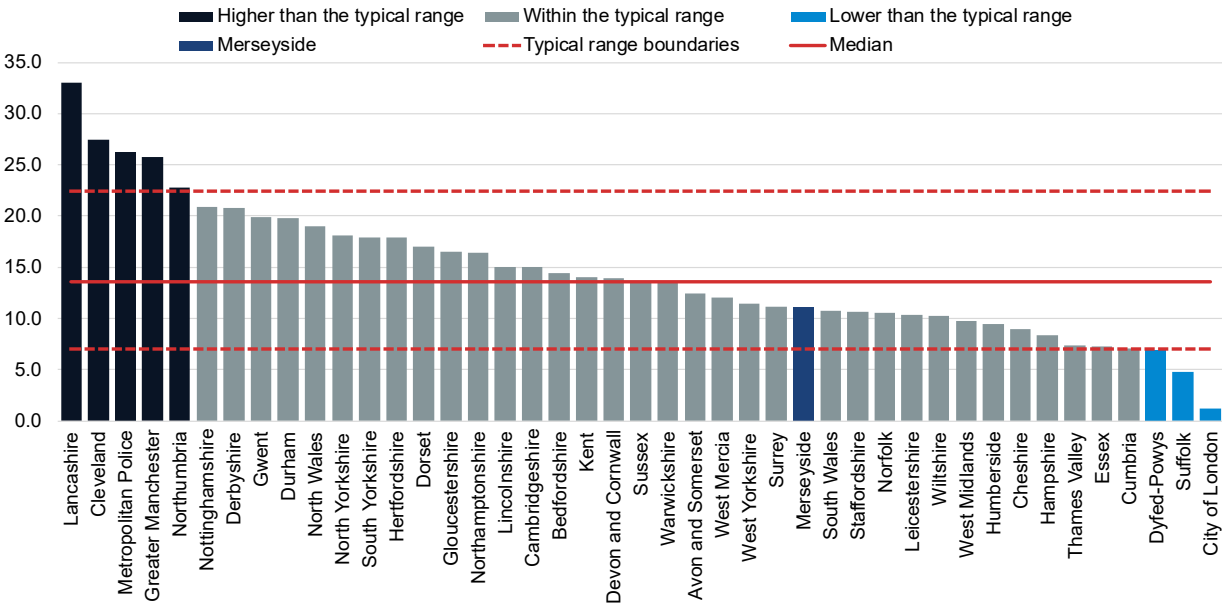
An example of this work is Operation Banger, which the force ran with partners in 2025. This targeted antisocial behaviour and small fires during the Halloween and bonfire period of 30 October to 5 November 2025. The force told us that incidents reduced by 67 percent compared to the same period in 2024. This resulted in 173 fewer deployments for police and fire services.

The force completed a full evaluation of the operation. This showed that work with schools in hotspot areas was an important factor in reducing incidents.

The force understands the causes of antisocial behaviour and vulnerability in its communities

During our inspection, we found the force had a clear understanding of [antisocial behaviour](#) and related vulnerability in its communities. The force has taken steps to understand trends in its antisocial behaviour reporting and the underlying causes. In the year ending 31 March 2025, it recorded 11.1 antisocial behaviour incidents per 1,000 population. This is within the typical range for forces in England and Wales.

Figure 3: Number of antisocial behaviour incidents per 1,000 population that forces in England and Wales recorded in the year ending 31 March 2025



Source: [Police-recorded antisocial behaviour incidents data](#) and [population estimates for England and Wales](#) from the Office for National Statistics

Chart description: Column chart showing the number of antisocial behaviour incidents per 1,000 population that all forces in England and Wales recorded in the year ending 31 March 2025. Merseyside Police recorded 11.1 antisocial behaviour incidents per 1,000 population, which was within the typical range for forces in England and Wales. The typical range, represented by dashed red lines on the chart, is between 7.0 and 22.4 antisocial behaviour incidents per 1,000 population. The median value of 13.6 per 1,000 population is presented as a solid red line.

[The accessible data table for figure 3 is available on our website.](#)

The force understands the reasons for differences between the number of antisocial behaviour incidents per 1,000 population and those recorded in other forces. This will help it further develop strategies to tackle the causes of the antisocial behaviour, allocate resources where they are most needed and keep its communities safe.

However, the force doesn't always record crimes that have occurred when [victims](#) report [antisocial behaviour personal](#). In our [quality service review](#), we found that in the cases we examined, the force had recorded 19 of 25 antisocial behaviour personal crimes correctly. Five of the unrecorded crimes were crimes of [harassment](#). The force needs to make sure it is accurately recording crimes within antisocial behaviour incidents to help it better understand the position.

The force is using preventative and protective orders effectively to help it tackle antisocial behaviour

During our inspection, we found that [neighbourhood policing teams](#) worked closely with local authorities, housing providers and other partners to address the root causes of antisocial behaviour in their communities. We found that officers were using antisocial behaviour legislation effectively to prevent community problems from escalating. In the year ending 30 September 2025, the force issued 344 preventative and protective orders, which equals 0.23 orders per 1,000 population. This is within the typical range for forces in England and Wales.

In our quality service review, we examined 20 antisocial behaviour incidents and any crimes recorded from them. We found that in 14 of 17 appropriate cases, legislation was used where it could help to tackle the underlying causes of antisocial behaviour.

During our inspection, the officers we spoke to told us they were confident in applying for and using tools such as [Criminal Behaviour Orders](#) and civil injunctions, particularly in more complex or persistent antisocial behaviour cases. This indicates that officers understand antisocial behaviour legislation and the range of powers available to them. This could help them to tackle the root causes of antisocial behaviour more effectively.

The force has a positive culture to support problem-solving activity

We found a positive culture for problem-solving in Merseyside Police. The force provides training to neighbourhood policing teams and clear guidance is available from the central problem-oriented policing team to help them in problem-solving. This team consists of tactical advisors who have received extensive training and a member of staff who carries out effective analytical and evaluation work.

We were pleased to see examples of problem-solving from other teams across the force and not just those working in neighbourhood policing. In our workforce survey, 48.9 percent of respondents (809 of 1,656) reported being involved in problem-solving activity. And 60.6 percent of respondents (490 of 809) agreed that senior leaders in Merseyside Police value and promote problem-solving activity.

The force actively works with partners to divert young people away from crime

The force also holds specific events to include and work with young people.

Through 'Rugby Beats Robbery', the force worked with the Sale Sharks Foundation, Birkenhead Park rugby club and Wirral School Games to target at-risk students from [under-represented communities](#). The force told us that since its introduction the programme has worked with more than 1,000 young people and has led to player participation in under 12s increasing by 40 percent. The programme – funded by Project Medusa, Merseyside Police's team dedicated to tackling [county lines](#) and criminal gangs – aims to prevent crime through early intervention.

Merseyside Police's chief constable and the [police and crime commissioner](#) fund the 'She Inspires' programme. This is run in partnership with Liverpool FC, Liverpool FC Foundation and Everton in the Community. 'She Inspires' helps [vulnerable](#) young girls build on their social skills and learn more about the support networks available to them. The programme has supported female year 8 and 9 pupils in secondary schools across Liverpool, providing workshops focused on building self-confidence and teamwork. There are plans to expand the programme into primary schools. The programme won the 2024/25 Sports Initiative of the Year Award at the Manchester & North West England Prestige Awards.

Operation Prospect is an educational programme for secondary school students about confronting the realities of serious violence, organised crime and [child criminal exploitation](#). It is a partnership programme between the force and local education. It teaches young people how to recognise exploitation. The central element of the programme shows how a vulnerable young person is manipulated by an [organised crime group](#), resulting in armed officers "intervening" live in a school hall to arrest a suspect in possession of a firearm. The programme has reached over 16,000 students across 37 secondary schools in Merseyside and, at the time of our inspection, was scheduled to be seen in a further 17 secondary schools in 2026.

The force has invested in the capacity and capability of its neighbourhood policing teams

In the year ending 31 March 2025, 11.4 percent of the force's officers were in dedicated neighbourhood policing roles. This is higher than the typical range for forces in England and Wales.

The force's neighbourhood policing teams have the capacity and capability to provide a regular and visible presence that is accessible to their local communities. During our inspection, we found that neighbourhood policing teams had enough officers and [staff](#) to work effectively in their communities and with partners to reduce crime and antisocial behaviour. This makes sure there is the time available for preventative work and problem-solving activity. And it means that local priorities are met.

The force has invested resources in its neighbourhood policing teams. It has taken steps to improve the capability of its neighbourhood officers and staff through training and development of essential skills and knowledge. This includes building confidence in community liaison, working with partners, problem-solving and tackling antisocial behaviour. It has a consistent and structured approach to training and developing its neighbourhood teams.

The force has effective processes in place to monitor how often its neighbourhood teams are abstracted from their communities

Neighbourhood police officers are responsible for building relationships with communities, solving problems and working with partners to prevent crime and antisocial behaviour. This requires local officers to be visible and have meaningful communication with those communities.

Sometimes neighbourhood officers are diverted away from their usual work to carry out other duties in the force to meet demand. This is referred to as [abstraction](#). If this happens regularly and isn't monitored by the force, it can affect the ability of neighbourhood officers to carry out their main roles in their communities.

During our inspection, some officers told us they were regularly abstracted from their main duties to support other areas of policing, such as response teams or crime investigations. In our workforce survey, 46.9 percent of respondents involved in neighbourhood policing (121 of 258) said that they were abstracted from their main neighbourhood policing duties on a monthly or more frequent basis. Due to the high numbers of neighbourhood policing officers in post, this hasn't affected their ability to carry out visible patrols in their communities, communicate with residents and carry out preventative work.

The force has developed an abstraction policy that outlines clear expectations of how much time neighbourhood teams should spend in their communities. The force aims for officers to spend 90 percent of their time on visible patrols or communicating with their local communities. The force told us that between 1 October 2025 and 28 February 2026, it met this target across all neighbourhood policing areas. On average, teams were spending 94 percent of their time in their communities.

We found that officers were consistently reporting when they were abstracted from their main neighbourhood policing duties. And we found that the force closely monitored how often this was happening through its performance dashboard. This means that senior leaders are always aware of the impact on local communities and officer well-being.

The force communicates well with its diverse communities to better understand their needs and help set its local priorities

During our inspection, we found that neighbourhood policing teams were regularly communicating with local people to understand their concerns and help them feel safe. At the time of our inspection, the force had developed a plan to guide local teams in how to build relationships and set local priorities based on community feedback.

We also found that neighbourhood policing teams had made efforts to reach communities that traditionally have less contact with the police or may have lower levels of trust and confidence. Some teams were also tailoring their communication to include [seldom-heard groups](#), such as newly settled communities. We found examples of two-way communication methods with the public, such as local meetings and digital platforms.

However, communication practices can vary across different areas of the force. In some locations, officers are less confident and not as proactive in contacting diverse communities. In others, there is a clear understanding of how to build trust with communities who aren't communicating with their local policing teams. The force should make sure these practices are consistently applied across the force.

Responding to the public

Adequate

Merseyside Police is adequate at responding to the public.

Areas for improvement

The force should improve its response to priority calls so that victims receive an appropriate service

The force attends emergency calls for service well, however this isn't the case for priority-grade incidents.

The force has a graded response policy with published targets for incident attendance times. In our [quality service review](#), we found that in 41 of the 61 cases we examined, the time to respond to the incident was within the required attendance time. This was regardless of whether the incident was downgraded or not. Sometimes incidents are regraded because of updated information or reassessed risk, which may increase the response time.

Any delayed response can lead to the force missing opportunities to [safeguard victims](#) or collect evidence. The force should have the right levels of oversight in place to improve the way it responds to incidents. It needs to improve the way it prioritises its response to incidents and how quickly it responds.

The chief constable has identified this as a main priority for the force to address and the force has changed its practices. Although the force has reported some improvement, it needs to make sure this is consistent and sustained.

The force should keep the caller informed and regularly review and record risk when there are delays in attending incidents

The force doesn't always inform callers of any delays in attending incidents. In our quality service review, we found that the caller wasn't always updated regarding a downgrade or delay in attendance. The call also wasn't always subject to an effective reassessment of risk. This was also reflected in the calls we observed.

[Control room](#) operatives told us the levels of demand they faced meant they couldn't effectively recontact callers to update them or carry out further and more up-to-date [risk assessments](#) of the incident.

The force should review its processes to make sure levels of new incoming demand don't affect its ability to effectively deal with incidents already reported to the police.

Failing to recontact callers and review risk could result in the force not deploying appropriate [officers](#) and [staff](#) to incidents and may negatively affect public confidence levels.

Main findings

In this section, we set out our main findings that relate to how good the force is at responding to the public.

The force has an effective management structure to understand performance and make sure that the public receives a quality service

We found that the force control room had established and involved leadership. There was clear direction and a strong ambition to continually improve.

Performance is managed through monthly healthy people and healthy organisation meetings. Senior leaders benefit from detailed quality data and analysis covering all aspects of control room performance. This includes resourcing, predicted demand, seasonal considerations and planned events.

This allows the force to make informed decisions about the right numbers of officers and staff that it needs to meet incoming call and digital demand from the public. There is good oversight of daily demand in the control room and managers can flex resources to meet that demand.

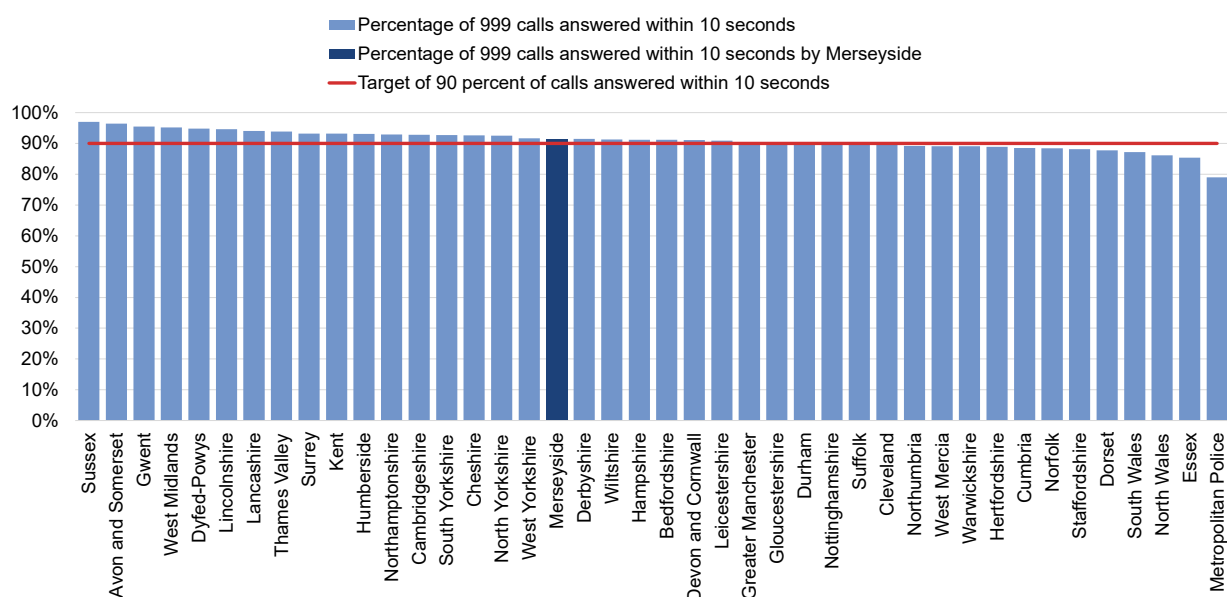
The force has improved how quickly it answers emergency calls

In the year ending 28 February 2026, the force received 179 emergency 999 calls per 1,000 population. This was within the typical range for forces in England and Wales. In the same period, it answered 91.5 percent of the 999 calls it received within 10 seconds. This was higher than the standard expected of forces in England and Wales of answering 90.0 percent of 999 calls within 10 seconds.

The force has improved this since our last inspection, where we found, in the year ending 31 March 2023, it answered 75.4 percent of 999 calls within 10 seconds. At that time, this was an [area for improvement](#) for the force. Given the improved performance level, we have now closed this area for improvement.

This reflects the force's commitment to provide a quality service to the public.

Figure 4: Percentage of 999 calls that forces in England and Wales answered within 10 seconds in the year ending 28 February 2026



Source: 999 call answering times from BT

Chart description: Column chart showing the percentage of 999 calls that all forces in England and Wales answered within 10 seconds in the year ending 28 February 2026. Merseyside Police answered 91.5 percent of the 999 calls it received within 10 seconds. This is above the expected standard of 90 percent for forces in England and Wales, which is marked with a solid red line on the chart. 14 forces were below the expected standard.

[The accessible data table for figure 4 is available on our website.](#)

Note: Call answering time is the time taken for a call to be transferred from BT to a force and then answered by that force.

The force answers non-emergency calls quickly enough

In the year ending 30 September 2025, the force received 140 non-emergency [101](#) calls per 1,000 population. This was lower than the typical range for forces in England and Wales. The force told us that in the 12-month period to 11 March 2026, 9.5 percent of calls to its non-emergency 101 facility were abandoned. While there is no formal national standard for how non-emergency performance is measured, the force's performance is at an acceptable level. The force is working to understand why callers hang up before the incident they are reporting is dealt with.

The force identifies vulnerability at the first point of contact and records a structured triage that determines how it will prioritise the call

Call handlers we spoke to were all trained for their role. All had received training on initial risk assessment processes and guidance documents were readily available. They use markers on the control room system to highlight vulnerable callers. These initial risk assessments then inform the grading of the incidents. We found call handlers were confident in doing this. Supervisors were readily accessible to provide guidance.

In our quality service review we found that in 46 of 47 cases call handlers used a structured triage approach to assess the risk. The triage record was an accurate and meaningful description of the call in 46 out of 46 cases and the initial prioritisation of the call was appropriate in 69 out of 74 cases.

However, we found an inconsistent approach to the identification and recording of repeat callers. Our quality service review found that there was an effective check to identify repeat victims in 51 of 57 cases. The force command and control system allows staff to tick an information box on the incident log to identify the caller is a repeat.

But the staff approach was inconsistent as some would record this issue in the text of the incident log and not in the repeat box. This inconsistency in completing effective checks could result in repeat callers not being appropriately identified.

The force could improve the consistency of advice to callers on safeguarding, evidence preservation and crime prevention

Staff we spoke to understood their role in giving advice to callers and knew how to access this advice on force systems.

But our quality service review indicated that call handlers didn't always give appropriate advice on preservation of evidence, crime prevention or safeguarding. We also found this in the calls we observed. While the force regularly monitors its performance and progress in this area, it needs to make sure it provides a consistent level of service to callers.

Investigating crime

Requires improvement

Merseyside Police requires improvement at investigating crime.

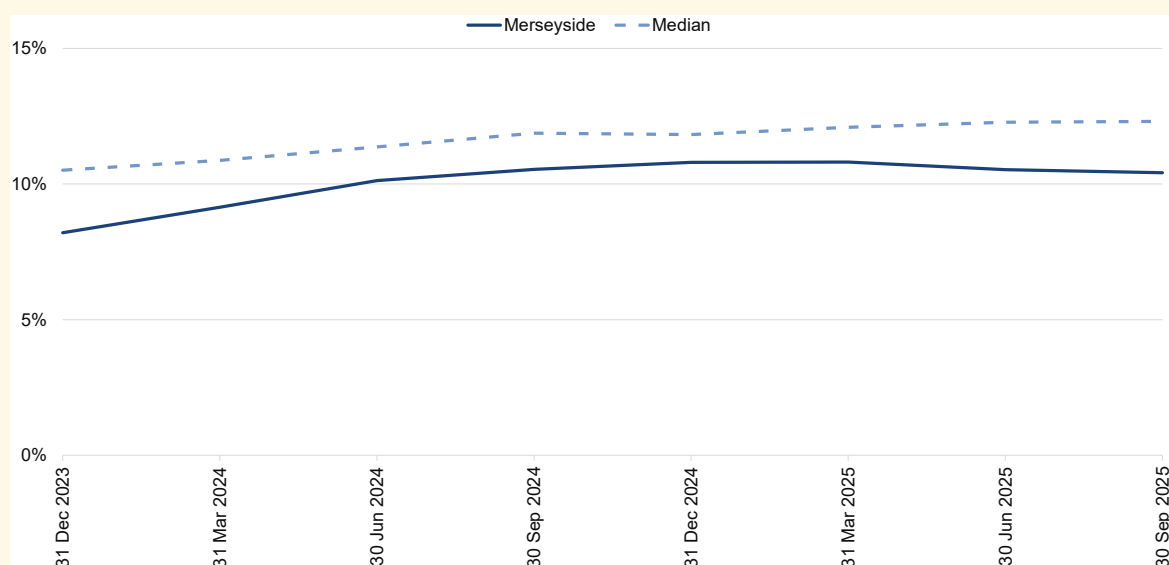
Areas for improvement

The force doesn't consistently achieve appropriate outcomes for victims

In [our 2023 PEEL inspection](#), we highlighted an [area for improvement](#) that the force doesn't consistently achieve appropriate outcomes for [victims](#) of crime.

In this inspection, we found the force isn't always achieving acceptable outcomes for victims of crime. The number of crimes it solves following investigations is low. It needs to understand the issue and work to achieve better outcomes for victims. Therefore, this area for improvement remains open.

Figure 5: Percentage of positive outcomes that Merseyside Police and all forces in England and Wales assigned to victim-based crimes between the year ending 31 December 2023 and the year ending 30 September 2025



Source: [Police recorded crime and outcomes open data tables](#) from the Home Office

Chart description: Line chart showing the percentage of positive outcomes that Merseyside Police assigned and the median for forces in England and Wales for each year from the year ending 31 December 2023 to the year ending 30 September 2025. The chart shows that 10.4 percent of outcomes that Merseyside Police assigned to victim-based crimes were positive in the year ending 30 September 2025, compared to the median of 12.3 percent for forces in England and Wales. It also shows that the percentage of positive outcomes that Merseyside Police assigned has been generally increasing since the year ending 31 December 2023. And the median percentage of positive outcomes for forces in England and Wales has been slowly increasing in the same period.

Note: The percentage of positive outcomes that forces assign is calculated from all outcomes they assign in a given period. Victim-based crimes include all police-recorded crimes where there is a direct victim, such as an individual, an organisation or corporate body. For a detailed description of crime and outcome types, please see the [Home Office statistics](#).

Figure 6: Percentage of unresolved, resolved and positive outcomes that Merseyside Police and all forces in England and Wales assigned to victim-based crimes in the year ending 30 September 2025

Outcome types	Merseyside percentage [%]	Median percentage [%] for forces in England and Wales
Unresolved crime outcomes (Outcomes 11–18)	86.0	84.0
Resolved crime outcomes (Outcomes 5, 9, 10, 20 – 22)	3.6	3.2
Positive crime outcomes (Outcomes 1–4 and 8), of which:	10.4	12.3
1 – Charged/summonsed	9.6	9.1
2 and 3 – Caution – youths and adults	0.3	0.8
4 – Taken into consideration	0.1	0.1
8 – Community resolution	0.5	2.1

Source: [Police recorded crime and outcomes open data tables](#) from the Home Office

Note: The percentage of unresolved, resolved, and positive outcomes that forces assign is calculated from all outcomes they assign in a given period. Victim-based crimes include all police-recorded crimes where there is a direct victim, such as an individual, an organisation or corporate body. For a detailed description of crime and outcome types, please see the [Home Office statistics](#).

In the year ending 30 September 2025, 10.4 percent of all [outcomes](#) that the force assigned to victim-based crimes were positive outcomes. This is an increase from 7.9 percent in the year ending 30 September 2023. The force is within the typical range but is below the median of 12.3 percent.

In the year ending 30 September 2025:

- 30 percent of all outcomes the force assigned to victim-based crimes were [outcome 16](#): evidential difficulties – suspect identified; victim doesn't support further action.
- 8.6 percent of all outcomes the force assigned to victim-based crimes were outcome 14: evidential difficulties – suspect not identified; victim doesn't support further action.

Outcome 16 is a Home Office classification used when a suspect is identified but the victim doesn't support or withdraws support for police action. Outcome 14 is used when a suspect isn't identified and the victim doesn't support or withdraws support for police action.

These are both higher than the typical range compared to other forces in England and Wales. This data suggests that victims are either failing to support or withdrawing their support for the force to investigate some crimes. The force should try to understand why this is happening.

We found that the force didn't routinely audit and scrutinise use of outcome types. This means that leaders can't be confident they understand what determines the use of specific outcomes, whether the outcomes are appropriate and what improvements might be needed to give victims better justice.

The force needs to show a meaningful and sustained improvement in this area.

The force needs to improve the effectiveness of its investigations

During our inspection, we found that crime wasn't always allocated to an investigator promptly. In our review, we found the crime was allocated to an investigator promptly in only 72 of 85 cases. Line managers told us they would sometimes delay allocating crimes to investigators. This was due to the high workloads that investigators were already carrying. Delays in investigations can result in the loss of evidence and lower victim confidence rates.

Supervisors also told us that they weren't able to effectively review investigations within the timescales specified in force policy to provide direction to investigators. Investigators told us that this was because of high workloads and there is a focus on compliance rather than quality. In our [quality service review](#), we found that in only 42 of 64 cases the investigation was appropriately supervised throughout.

The force doesn't take all appropriate investigative opportunities from the onset and throughout the investigation. In our review we found this only happened in 64 of 85 cases.

The combination of delays in allocation, lack of supervisors' reviews and not taking all appropriate investigative opportunities resulted in the investigation being effective in only 57 of 79 cases we reviewed.

The force needs to make sure it consistently carries out high-quality investigations to achieve appropriate outcomes for victims.

The force should make sure it provides support to vulnerable victims

The force doesn't always record the victim's views when administering an outcome. In 16 of the 39 relevant cases we examined as part of our [quality service review](#), we found the force hadn't recorded those views.

In 17 of 54 relevant cases we examined, we also found that the force hadn't recorded victim needs assessments. This means that investigators hadn't assessed whether those victims needed support and, if so, what type of support they needed, and whether they were [vulnerable](#) or intimidated.

Victims being assessed for needs is one of the rights in [the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime \(the Victims' Code\)](#).

[Officers](#) we spoke to were unclear on the requirements of a victim needs assessment and weren't completing these with the victim at the scene. Instead, officers would complete these much later when returning to the police station.

It is essential for the force to comply with the Victims' Code to provide effective support and give victims a high-quality service.

The force needs to improve the support it gives its trainee investigators

As of 30 December 2025, the force had 463 professionalising investigations programme (PIP 2) investigators in post. It should have had 832. As a result, only 56 percent of required PIP 2 posts were filled.

The force was taking steps to address this gap. As of 30 December 2025, it had 273 PIP 2 trainees in place. However, if all these officers qualify, it would still leave the force with a shortfall of 96 officers.

In many teams we visited, the ratio of qualified PIP 2 investigators to trainees was low. This limited the experience and support available to trainees.

Most trainees we spoke to told us they didn't receive enough support. Many carried high workloads and had no dedicated mentor. They relied on the few mentors that were available and line managers who were also under pressure due to their own workloads.

Trainees are required to complete a portfolio of work to achieve the PIP 2 qualification. Investigators said they had limited time to complete their work portfolios within the required timescales. They prioritised victim investigations over their own portfolio development. While this demonstrates commitment, it had a negative effect on the welfare of some trainees.

In our workforce survey, 26.2 percent of respondents (72 of 275) reported they were allocated investigations outside their level of accreditation or training on a quarterly or more frequent basis.

The force didn't have any accredited investigator tutors and relied on mentors instead.

For both the force and its trainee investigators to succeed, the force needs effective tutoring, mentoring and support. It should make sure this is in place at the appropriate stages of investigator training.

Main findings

In this section, we set out our main findings that relate to how good the force is at investigating crime.

The force has governance arrangements for the oversight of investigations

An assistant chief constable oversees crime performance. This [officer](#) chairs a monthly investigations standards board. The board reviews themes in crime investigations. And it considers how investigators can improve their work and make progress.

The force also holds monthly crime scrutiny panels. Senior managers complete monthly investigation audits and present their findings at these panels. The force told us it audits around 85 investigations each month. These audits assess quality, standards and compliance.

The force grades each investigation. Where audits identify inadequate work, managers act. They give feedback to the investigating officer and their supervisor. Managers expect updates on progress at the next crime panel meeting.

Senior leaders have set ambitious standards for investigations. However, the force isn't always meeting these standards.

The force supports victims and keeps them informed about the progress of investigations

The force prioritises the examination of victims' mobile phones when they contain evidence. It aims to examine and return devices within 24 hours.

Officers and supervisors show a strong focus on victim updates. A performance dashboard shows when updates are due. In our quality service review, we found the force had updated victims in line with a victim contract (a commitment to give the victim regular updates on an investigation) in 39 of 40 relevant cases.

Officers usually contact victims by telephone. This allows victims to ask questions. Where appropriate, officers also provide updates by email or text message.

The force takes action to deal with outstanding suspects and wanted people

The force holds effective management information on outstanding and wanted suspects. Managers review this information at daily management meetings; these meetings identify the ten highest-risk individuals to locate. They base decisions on the threat and risk each person poses.

The force also holds a monthly tactical named suspect meeting, which is chaired by the chief superintendent for prevention. Superintendents from each locality and senior investigation managers attend. In this meeting they examine wanted people who aren't deemed to be high risk and makes sure enquiries to trace those individuals are being progressed.

The force needs a better understanding of the demand created by post-charge work

Officers told us they often have large workloads from completed investigations. These cases are closed for investigation but still require work for court. Investigators said they don't believe the force fully understands the pressure this work creates.

Performance data helps managers to closely monitor live and open investigations. However, they don't appear to monitor workloads linked to closed investigations. Investigators told us they can have similar numbers of these cases.

We found the force has motivated and conscientious investigators who want to do an excellent job. However, high levels of demand sometimes prevent investigators from doing their jobs to the best of their ability.

The force needs to better understand this position so it can fully assess the workloads of its investigators.

Safeguarding children and adults at risk of harm

Adequate

Merseyside Police is adequate at [safeguarding children](#) and [adults at risk of harm](#).

Promising practice

The force has developed an app to monitor the suitability of children's care homes

The Children's Care Home Referral app allows [officers](#) and [staff](#) to raise concerns about the suitability of children's care homes.

The app has led to positive [safeguarding](#) outcomes and helped challenge the suitability of some care placements. It is simple, quick to use and is designed to avoid unnecessary bureaucracy.

The concerns submitted through the app are varied. They include care home staff having no paperwork or knowledge of a [child](#), poor building conditions, insecure doors or windows, and concerns about staff behaviour.

The force assesses each concern on its own merits. Actions may include referral to Ofsted, social workers or local authorities.

In some cases, concerns relate to care home staff not understanding their responsibilities. The force addresses this through advice and guidance.

Information from the app helps the force analyse high-demand locations. It also helps identify repeat concerns and emerging patterns linked to specific homes or providers. This helps officers submit referrals without delay to the [missing persons](#) prevention team for action.

The app has helped identify unregistered care homes the force was previously unaware of and has improved [intelligence](#) about providers and staff.

It has also helped identify care home links to criminality.

Areas for improvement

The force should improve how it records crimes committed against vulnerable victims

In our [quality service review](#), we examined 50 incidents involving [vulnerable victims](#) reported to the force by partner agencies. We found that 33 crimes should have been recorded and 23 were recorded correctly.

The force should improve its recording practices to make sure that all crimes involving vulnerable victims are recorded properly.

Recording crimes accurately helps make sure that crimes are fully investigated, offenders are identified and brought to justice, and crime data is complete.

The force should make sure it has an effective response to, and oversight of, missing person reports

The force doesn't always deal with reports of [missing persons](#) effectively.

We found the force didn't always attend missing person incidents within its service level agreement. In 7 of 17 cases we reviewed, [officers](#) didn't attend within the required timescales.

The force didn't always investigate or supervise missing person cases effectively. We found the investigation plan was followed, updated and enquiries made in 12 of 15 cases.

Supervisors didn't always carry out regular reviews. The supervisor completed regular proactive reviews of the investigation in 10 of 14 cases. Some cases had no supervisory oversight at any stage of the investigation.

We found an example of a child graded as medium risk when this should have been high, and investigations weren't progressed overnight for medium and low-risk missing people.

The force didn't make effective use of the Philomena or Herbert protocols in relevant cases and failed to apply them in assessment or response. These protocols allow carers of children at risk (the [Philomena protocol](#)) and people with dementia (the [Herbert protocol](#)) to prepare information to help the police find them. We found the force adopted the Philomena or Herbert protocols in only 2 of 5 relevant cases.

Officers and [staff](#) hadn't completed relevant training packages. We found examples of missing person training packages that had been in existence for more than two years and had extremely low completion rates.

Some staff and officers told us that although they received initial missing person training when they joined the force they hadn't received any additional training. In some cases, this meant officers and staff hadn't had any missing persons training in several years.

Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to how good the force is at safeguarding children and adults at risk of harm.

The force records most crimes committed against victims of domestic abuse, but it doesn't always record rape crimes from reported incidents of rape or cancel rape crimes correctly

The force records most crimes committed against [victims](#) of [domestic abuse](#). In our [quality service review](#), we examined 50 incidents involving victims of domestic abuse, 50 reported incidents of rape and 20 decisions to cancel crimes of rape. We found the following:

- Domestic abuse incidents: 48 crimes should have been recorded, and 45 crimes were recorded correctly.
- Reported rape incidents: 2 crimes should have been recorded, and neither were recorded.
- Cancelled rape crimes: 17 out of 20 crimes were cancelled correctly.

It is especially important that the force accurately records crimes involving victims of domestic abuse and rape. It is equally important to cancel crimes only when it is certain that no crime was committed. Recording and cancelling crimes correctly helps to make sure victims receive the service and support they expect and deserve from the police. If the force doesn't record or cancel crimes correctly, offenders may go on to commit further crimes against their victims or against other vulnerable victims.

The force safeguards children and adults at risk of harm

The force has improved its governance in [safeguarding](#). This has created notable change since our last inspection, including improved systems and processes and a better level of service to communities.

As part of our quality service review, we reviewed 60 cases to determine how well the force safeguards victims.

We found that in 25 of 29 cases, safeguarding advice was appropriately given to victims. This suggests that [officers](#) are aware of their duty to identify and reduce the risk of harm to vulnerable victims. In 18 of 18 cases we reviewed, officers recorded the [voice of the child](#) in referrals, making sure that the child's experiences and needs were considered in safeguarding decisions.

When attending incidents, officers consistently show [professional curiosity](#) and look beyond the obvious to identify signs of hidden harm, exploitation or vulnerability. In 36 of 36 cases we reviewed, officers completed appropriate [risk assessments](#), which shows they had a clear understanding of the risks that victims face. Officers made relevant referrals to specialist partners in 25 of 25 cases, which shows that they were aware of available support services and the importance of connecting victims with the help they need.

However, the force isn't always completing [stalking](#) risk assessments. We found that it didn't complete an appropriate stalking risk assessment in 7 of 10 cases. The force should make sure all victims of stalking are assessed so that appropriate safeguarding can be put in place where necessary.

The force works well with multi-agency partners to safeguard and reduce the risk of harm to vulnerable people

Multi-agency working is an important part of the force's safeguarding strategy. The [multi-agency safeguarding hub](#) includes a range of partners whose work predominately covers children but can also include adults.

In 25 of 25 relevant cases we reviewed, the force shared information with appropriate agencies, which allowed for a co-ordinated response to safeguarding. The force requested a strategy meeting when appropriate in five of six cases. In addition, in 13 of 14 cases the victim was referred to support services, independent domestic violence advisor services or suitable third sector services. The force processes multi-agency referrals promptly, with no backlogs reported.

The force has systems or processes in place for promptly notifying schools of pupils living with domestic abuse ([Operation Encompass](#)). In eight of ten relevant cases we reviewed, officers notified schools about children exposed to domestic abuse, which mean children may have received the required support in school. The notification to the schools was recorded on force systems in seven of eight cases.

Through effective management, the force has improved performance in its multi-agency safeguarding units since our last inspection. And this has created positive change in referral units. There are no backlogs and service levels for victims have improved.

The force uses appropriate measures to safeguard vulnerable people and reduce any risk from offenders

The force uses preventative orders and schemes to manage risk and protect vulnerable people. In seven of eight cases we reviewed, the force considered preventative orders to reduce the risk of further harm to victims. These include [Domestic Violence Protection Notices](#), [Domestic Violence Protection Orders](#) and [Domestic Abuse Protection Orders](#). This shows that the force is using the available tools to safeguard victims.

The force is proactive in the enforcement of these orders. [Neighbourhood policing teams](#) are responsible for this. They attend relevant addresses on a regular basis to make sure the orders are being complied with, speak with people at the address and, if necessary, carry out a physical search.

The force operates disclosure schemes such as the [Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme](#) and the [Child Sex Offender Disclosure Scheme](#) in compliance with national statutory guidance. We found no backlogs in processing applications, with appropriate and timely disclosure to applicants.

The force has achieved a commendable improvement in performance since our 2023 inspection and this is, in the main, due to effective management, supervision and appropriate resourcing of this department. This was an [area for improvement](#) in our last inspection, and we have now closed this.

This improvement empowers individuals to make informed decisions about their relationships and personal safety.

When working with partners, the force considers additional ways to safeguard and protect vulnerable people and challenge offenders

When working with partners, the force considers all appropriate ways to safeguard vulnerable people and challenge offenders. In five of five cases we reviewed, the force referred the case to the [multi-agency risk assessment conference \(MARAC\)](#) and made [multi-agency tasking and co-ordination](#) arrangements. This means that the force and its partners could create a multi-agency plan to reduce the harm to [high-risk domestic abuse](#) victims or their children, and manage the risk from offenders.

However, the force needs to make sure that updates and actions from MARAC meetings are always recorded on police systems. In two of the five cases we reviewed, this didn't happen.

In the year ending 30 September 2025, MARAC meetings in Merseyside discussed 4,827 cases, which is higher than the [SafeLives](#) recommendation of 2,440. This is due to increasing demand levels and police and partner agencies making referrals that didn't meet the MARAC criteria. The MARAC steering group are aware of inappropriate referrals and are making efforts to address this.

Managing fraud

Adequate

Merseyside Police is adequate at managing fraud.

Area for improvement

The force needs to consistently identify fraud-related calls and respond appropriately

Before our inspection, the force had recognised that it didn't always identify fraud-related calls for service correctly. It also didn't always recognise or respond to [vulnerable victims](#) appropriately.

As a result, the force has taken steps to improve its approach. It has introduced a fraud toolkit to help call handlers identify calls for service. Call handlers should either allocate these calls within the force or send them to Action Fraud for investigation. It has also started using Operation Signature to better support vulnerable victims. This is a targeted police initiative focused on protecting vulnerable and elderly members of the community from becoming repeat victims of fraud.

We found that the force has improved how it identifies and supports vulnerable victims of fraud. Staff now understand risk better and take appropriate action.

However, despite the introduction of the fraud toolkit, we found that the force still doesn't routinely identify fraud-related calls for service. This means some incidents aren't handled as they should be. We found incidents that the force hadn't allocated appropriately, for example where the fraud was ongoing or where a local suspect had been identified.

The force should make sure fraud-related calls for service are routinely identified and appropriately dealt with so that victims receive a timely and effective response.

Main findings

In this section, we set out our main findings that relate to how good the force is at managing fraud.

The force has effective accountability for fraud, and it understands and manages the threat of fraud in its communities

During our inspection, we found that the force had assessed the threat from fraud and understood how this affects its communities. This assessment shows the local and national threat picture for fraud. This is supported by a detailed quarterly report on fraud, covering the top threats and some planning to mitigate these. However, the force would benefit from further planning in this area.

The force's fraud policy is clear and consistently gives direction for allocating fraud investigations and [safeguarding victims](#). However, fraud specialists or leaders don't widely access these policies.

The force has a named fraud lead and has clear governance at both a strategic and an operational level.

The force effectively monitors performance in relation to fraud at a force-level performance board.

The force has enough capacity and capability to manage fraud in its communities and provide support to victims

During our inspection, we found that the force had enough capacity and capability to manage fraud. Fraud investigations are correctly triaged and supported by an initial investigation to identify lines of enquiry. There is a dedicated fraud investigation team that effectively manages complex cases using the [fraud investigation model](#). The force has a robust fraud investigation model template that is effectively used at initial supervision, during investigation and at the point of outcome.

For example, during the two years ending 31 March 2025, 13.4 percent of cases sent to the force by the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau (111 of 827) had a judicial outcome, and this value is within the typical range for forces in England and Wales.

Investigators in the fraud investigation team receive training. However, some investigations, such as those into [domestic abuse](#), sit outside this team. These investigators don't receive training, and the fraud investigation model isn't used as effectively. Training is given to [staff](#) in the [control room](#). However, at the time of our inspection, some staff had only just completed this training. Therefore, it was too early to see the results of this.

The force does some work to protect its communities from the risk of fraud, such as with minority groups and local universities. This work isn't always consistent or informed by its understanding of overall fraud threats. At the time of our inspection, the force had recently employed a fraud protect officer to help with this work.

Providing a safe and lawful custody environment

Adequate

Merseyside Police is adequate at providing a safe and lawful custody environment.

Areas for improvement

The force needs to improve its communication practices with staff and officers to make sure custody processes are safe, effective and efficient

Custody [staff](#) and [officers](#) told us that they have limited contact with senior leaders. They said communication isn't effective or consistent. This means that issues aren't always understood or acted on. As a result, some custody services aren't as safe, efficient or effective as they could be.

Staff and officers gave examples of raising concerns or suggesting improvements with senior managers. However, they felt these were often not listened to, addressed or acted on.

We found that the force doesn't always respond promptly to identified risks. For example, staff and officers had raised a health and safety issue about cell doors with senior managers. But this issue remained during our inspection and hadn't been resolved for more than six months.

The force has monthly and quarterly performance meetings. These provide some oversight. However, they don't always offer a clear route for staff and officers to raise concerns or suggestions. Staff and officers have limited opportunities to share issues or track progress.

The force should improve these arrangements. Senior leaders should ask for and, where necessary, act promptly on custody [personnel](#)'s feedback. This will help the force to identify issues earlier and respond more effectively.

The force needs to make sure it provides consistent and effective healthcare for detainees and maintains appropriate oversight

The force has a contract with an external healthcare provider. This is intended to meet detainees' healthcare needs. However, the force doesn't monitor the contract effectively. As a result, it can't be confident that care is consistent across all custody suites.

We found that healthcare staff are available in custody suites. But they don't always assess detainees' healthcare needs promptly. This means that some detainees may not receive timely care.

Healthcare staff use appropriate clinical spaces. However, they don't always protect detainees' privacy and dignity during treatment. This can reduce the quality of care provided.

We did find some areas of effective practice. Staff obtain consent before accessing medical records and making referrals. Detainees can also access appropriate medicines in custody. This includes treatment for substance withdrawal.

However, the force needs to strengthen its oversight and governance to make sure healthcare provision consistently meets expected and required standards.

Main findings

In this section, we set out our main findings that relate to how good the force is at providing a safe and lawful custody environment.

The force effectively resources custody suites and is open to external scrutiny

Ongoing efforts to improve custody services have helped to make sure that there are enough trained officers and staff to provide the services, and the force monitors staffing levels and their capacity to meet demand.

The force is open to effective external scrutiny. It could show that external bodies regularly visit the custody suites and work with [custody officers](#) and staff. The force was able to show how it documents and responds to feedback from external bodies such as the [Independent Custody Visiting Association](#), the [independent advisory group](#) and the scrutiny panel.

The force protects detainees from neglect and harm

We visited the custody suites and found that they were clean and the physical environment provided some privacy for detainees, but this could be improved. There were potential [ligature points](#) in some suites, due to the design of the toilets and poorly fitted cell doors. Custody officers and staff carry out daily cell checks as per [authorised professional practice](#), but don't always deal with repairs quickly. The custody environment is generally safe.

Custody officers and staff treat detainees with dignity and respect and provide appropriate care. Detainees' individual needs are met. For example, there are adaptations for detainees with mobility issues or hearing or sight difficulties, and religious materials are available for detainees to practice their faith. Food to meet most dietary needs is available and the force considers the specific needs of female detainees.

The force only arrests [children](#) as a last resort. Children spend as little time as possible in police custody. Decisions to detain children overnight are appropriate and clearly recorded. Custody officers request suitable [alternative accommodation](#) that the local authority provides. The force and partner agencies provide oversight of children. Female children are allocated a female member of staff to oversee their care.

There are [safeguarding](#) measures in place to protect [vulnerable](#) adults and children. Provision of an [appropriate adult](#) for children can be more difficult than for vulnerable adults and, as a result, children sometimes wait a long time for an appropriate adult to arrive.

Detainees can exercise their legal rights

Custody officers authorise detention appropriately and explain the booking-in process. They build a good rapport with detainees and consider the needs of vulnerable people. They clearly explain rights and entitlements and provide written notices setting these out. All suites have 'easy read' and Braille versions of these notices. For detainees who don't speak English, custody officers provide translated documents and arrange interpreters.

Detainees can speak with their legal representatives in private, either in person or on the phone. We saw that if detainees waived their right to legal advice before they are interviewed, inspectors explored the reasons why.

The force largely complies with the [Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984](#) and its codes of practice when carrying out reviews of detention. Reviewing officers carry out reviews in the best interests of detainees and consider the needs of children and vulnerable adults. They make detailed records of reviews that reflect each detainee's circumstances. If reviews aren't carried out in person, they record the reasons why.

But reviewing officers didn't always contact interpreters by telephone when carrying out reviews of detention for detainees who couldn't speak English. Instead, they asked for detainees to be informed of the outcome of the review when an interpreter was available in the custody suite, and we found records showing that this was happening. This meant that there was a delay in detainees making representations about their continued detention.

Positively, custody officers routinely inform detainees of reviews carried out while they are asleep. However, sometimes these updates were unnecessarily delayed if detainees needed an appropriate adult or an interpreter.

Initial training for permanent and temporary custody officers and staff is comprehensive and follows the national courses that the [College of Policing](#) developed. Custody officers and staff spend time shadowing more experienced colleagues and complete a workplace assessment before carrying out duties on their own. The force provides regular training days each year to all custody officers and staff for their [continuing professional development](#).

The force effectively assesses, manages and regularly reviews risk throughout detention and on release

The force has an effective booking-in procedure that helps custody officers to identify and manage some, but not all, risks. Custody officers clearly explain their [risk assessments](#), but don't always access or consider all relevant information about the detainee. For example, [Police National Database](#) checks aren't always completed when required. Most custody officers put in place appropriate care plans and observation levels to safeguard the detainee. The removal of clothing or other items is based on an individual risk assessment. Not all custody officers regularly revisit the detainee or reassess their risk to make sure all risks are reduced.

The force has an effective handover process for officers and staff where relevant information is shared with healthcare professionals. When a detainee is ready to be released, custody officers don't always carry out a thorough pre-release risk assessment in the presence of the detainee. Custody officers make sure an accurate person escort record is completed for detainees who are transferring to court.

The force should improve how it monitors disproportionality

The force understands its responsibilities under the [public sector equality duty](#). However, it could improve monitoring of custody data to identify [disproportionality](#). Some custody officers and staff told us that they had received training in supporting neurodivergent detainees and those with mental health conditions, but most couldn't recall receiving this training.

Use of force and strip search in custody is lawful, necessary and proportionate and is subject to robust scrutiny

We reviewed 20 custody records involving use of force incidents as well as CCTV footage to make sure that when force is used in custody, it is proportionate, necessary and justified. All records showed relevant detail that accurately reflected incidents. Custody officers showed good leadership and gave clear direction to keep officers and detainees safe.

Officers who use force in custody don't routinely submit individual use of force forms. We asked for use of force forms for the incidents we reviewed and received 75 of the 93 we expected.

The force reviews use of force incidents so it can assure itself that when force is used in custody, it is necessary, justified and proportionate.

We found that 87.5 percent of custody officers and staff were up to date with their officer safety training, however, only 30.8 percent were up to date with first-aid training.

We reviewed 6 cases that involved strip searches authorised under [section 54 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984](#) and 11 cases where clothing was exchanged for safety reasons. The six strip searches were correctly authorised and recorded appropriately. However, we found that 10 out of the 11 clothing exchanges (91 percent) weren't correctly authorised and recorded.

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