

PEEL 2025–27

Police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy

An inspection of Northamptonshire Police

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Overall summary

Our judgments

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

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

Following our latest PEEL inspection, I am satisfied with several aspects of the performance of Northamptonshire Police. These include its support for workforce well-being, treatment of the public, preventative activity and [safeguarding of vulnerable children](#) and adults. However, it must solve crime more effectively, respond to incidents more promptly and ensure stronger tactical implementation and leadership accountability.

Since [our last PEEL inspection](#), the force has appointed a new [chief officer](#) team. It is providing visible leadership and shaping a culture that aims to establish accountability across all levels of the organisation. I recognise the challenges and time it will take to progress the changes needed.

One of the most pressing challenges is the force's operating model. We identified that the model at the time of our inspection wasn't using force resources effectively to meet demand.

Although the force has comprehensive strategic governance processes with good levels of data and analytical support, decision-making is delayed. Tactical implementation and performance management are also inconsistent.

The force, like many others, continues to face financial pressures related to funding levels.

The force offers strong support to [personnel](#) who attend traumatic incidents or operate in high-stress environments. The number of personnel leaving the organisation has decreased and the force is improving use of data to understand workforce experience. However, there are emerging risk factors suggesting a decline in overall workforce well-being, which the force needs to address.

The force maintains adequate oversight of [stop and search](#) and use of force, including the use of independent scrutiny to check powers are used lawfully. However, it needs to strengthen tactical governance to support continuous improvement.

[Neighbourhood policing teams](#) are adequately resourced, and the force monitors [abstractions](#) against service level agreements. However, while governance of [antisocial behaviour](#) is developing, the force needs to improve its use of problem-solving plans and antisocial behaviour preventative orders.

The force has significantly improved 999 call handling and [101](#) call abandonment rates. However, it needs to attend incidents more quickly and set clear expectations for response times.

It is a [cause of concern](#) that the force is achieving fewer [positive outcomes](#) for [victims](#) of crime. Overall performance in solving crime hasn't improved since our last inspection. This is particularly apparent in serious offences of rape, robbery and violence with injury. Victims don't consistently receive the statutory level of support, and there isn't enough accountability for investigative quality and outcomes.

I welcome the force's collaboration with partner agencies to protect victims, including initiatives such as Operation Satin, which reduces repeated [missing from home](#) incidents involving young people. However, it must improve how it identifies hidden risks in missing from home and [domestic abuse](#) incidents and accelerate information sharing, including with education partners.

The force understands the threat of fraud but needs to improve how it allocates fraud investigations and trains the workforce.

Custody provision is safe, and [officers](#) and [staff](#) treat detainees with dignity. However, the force must improve the consistency of audits and performance monitoring to provide quality assurance.

I have given Northamptonshire Police specific recommendations that set out the areas it needs to focus on, and we will continue to monitor performance.



Roy Wilsher OBE QFSM
His Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary

Leadership and force management

Requires
improvement

Northamptonshire Police's leadership and force management require improvement.

Areas for improvement

The force needs to speed up implementation of a new operating model to improve how it manages demand

During our inspection, we found demand and capacity weren't balanced across the force, with some operational teams overloaded and others not.

Lack of capacity to meet demand is prevalent in, but not limited to, the force's investigative functions. We found the criminal investigation department and [domestic abuse](#) teams were particularly under-resourced, and having to deal with higher caseloads, including serious and complex crimes. A similar lack of capacity was evident in response teams, resulting in inconsistent incident response times and investigative capability to deal with [volume crime](#). Response teams rely on other force resources, notably [neighbourhood policing teams](#), to manage demand.

In [our last PEEL inspection](#), we found the force had limited understanding of its reliance on overtime to meet demand. In our latest inspection, the force told us it was spending on average £3,600 a day on overtime to cover [personnel](#) shortages and had already paid £1.3 million for the year ending 30 November 2025. However, although the force was aware of this financial data, it wasn't using it to make meaningful strategic and tactical interventions.

The force recognised its operating model at the time of our inspection wasn't meeting demand, resulting in inconsistent levels of service to the public. It understands it needs to address this and has appointed a senior leader and project team to progress the design and implementation of a new model, with a view to implementing changes in 2026.

The force has access to good quality data and analytical support but needs to strengthen its use of this to improve decision-making

In [our last PEEL inspection](#), we identified that the force had invested in IT to provide better access to data. But we found leaders needed to provide more effective governance to maximise the potential for this technology to increase productivity. Based on our latest inspection findings, we have concluded this remains an [area for improvement](#).

In our latest inspection, we found the force's combined digital data and analytical team had become an integral part of force governance. This has led to the continued and effective development of Qlik as an analytical software tool to support an expanding range of operational needs. For example, we observed that Qlik applications had been developed to support the management of investigation workloads, supervisory reviews, [stop and search](#), use of force, protective orders and wanted persons.

Operational leaders are provided with high levels of data and analysis to support governance and operational implementation. An example of this is the development of a plan to help co-ordinate the medium-term implementation of technological improvements in the [control room](#).

However, we found the level of demand for business analytical products exceeded analyst capacity. With more than 300 projects and programmes ongoing, the force needs to make sure there is a clearer prioritisation process that is better aligned to its priorities and performance needs.

We found the force had performance data and analytical insight, but was using it inconsistently to inform decision-making. For example, the force wasn't using data to make effective decisions about resource allocation, differences in workloads or performance outcomes.

Strategic governance arrangements are in place but the force must ensure stronger tactical implementation and leadership accountability

In [our last PEEL inspection report](#), we said the force should make sure it monitored performance effectively at all levels of the organisation. Based on our latest inspection findings, we have concluded this remains an [area for improvement](#).

During our inspection, we observed numerous strategic governance meetings and interviewed leaders at all levels. We frequently found these meetings were used to provide briefings and updates on performance or organisational activity. However, it was noticeable that leaders were rarely held to account for performance concerns.

We also found a lack of tactical governance. Examples of this included some senior leaders not having any structured operational meetings or consistent process to address performance requirements.

During our inspection, we highlighted to the force examples of where there was a disconnect between strategic oversight and tactical implementation. The force has taken some steps to address this issue and recently introduced an [antisocial behaviour](#) board, an investigation standards bronze group and a use of force working group. These processes aren't fully formed, however, and we will continue to monitor the impact they have on improving force performance.

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 using predictive analysis to inform its force management statement but it isn't using this to improve operational planning and resource allocation

The force is using predictive analysis to help plan how it will manage future demand. By assessing past crime levels, call-handling information, population changes and other local factors, it is starting to build models that can predict what future demand might be.

These models should help the force anticipate when incidents are most likely to happen, which areas are at higher risk and how crime levels change at different times of the year. This will support better decisions about where and when to place [officers](#), [staff](#) and other resources.

However, the force needs to do more. At the time of our inspection, the [force management statement](#) focused on the amount of demand the force thinks it can handle. What it didn't do as well as set out clear plans for how the force will adjust resources to meet excessive demand.

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

The force is investing in digital, data and technology solutions as part of its continuous improvement strategy. This includes developing its own software to support problem-solving plans, implementing [rapid video response](#) technology and developing an expanded automated number plate reading infrastructure across the force.

An enterprise architect develops technology plans by assessing current interconnected systems and defining the steps needed to be more efficient. They work with senior leaders and technical teams to make sure the plans align ongoing projects with operational priorities.

The force is working to improve how its data systems communicate with each other and to appropriately decommission legacy IT systems that hold sensitive data.

It makes sure officers have access to mobile technology to access real-time information, complete reports remotely and share updates instantly with the control room. Digital literacy across the force has increased, giving all police officers and staff access to Qlik and other data.

It communicates with the public through online reporting tools as well as getting communities involved and using messaging channels such as Northamptonshire Talking.

It has developed new technologies that offer the potential for improved operational performance. However, we found that, after the initial strategic investment and rollout, progress on integrating some of these projects in day-to-day operational activity has slowed or stalled.

The force needs to focus on continuous improvement from design to full implementation and evaluation.

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

During our inspection, we saw the force aligned its finances to its priorities. It clearly links its budget allocations to strategic objectives and operational needs. It 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. However, it is using an unsustainable amount of overtime to meet demand. It is aware of this but, without changing how it manages demand, it could lose public confidence in its financial leadership and operational effectiveness.

In the year ending 31 March 2025, the force received around £183 million in total funding. In common with other forces in England and Wales, this was a combination of government grants, [precept](#) and other non-government grants. The precept income was £80.4 million. This is equivalent to £98,779 per 1,000 population. This is in the typical range of precept funding received by forces across England and Wales.

The force manages its total reserves of around £21 million carefully and has a clear strategy for them. They are forecast to decrease over the duration of the mid-term financial plan through spending and funding the budgetary gap. This will keep the general reserve at around 2.6 percent (£5.5 million) of the budget requirement and is considered an adequate amount.

Senior leaders are working to build the right culture and leadership capability across the force

The force provides training for supervisors and future leaders through programmes such as volume-crime investigation management, first-line and middle-line leadership courses, and the senior leaders' programme. It is also designing new development pathways for chief inspectors and superintendents. The force's career academy and [positive action](#) initiatives further support progression and inclusion.

Leaders actively monitor standards of professional behaviour. The force completed the [Code of Ethics](#) self-assessment to better understand its culture. The new [chief officer](#) team reinforced these expectations using a variety of communications such as recorded video logs and 'ask the chief' live question-and-answer sessions to promote standards and behaviours. It has also strengthened the [professional standards department](#), improving discipline, vetting and capacity to investigate officers and staff, to maintain public trust.

Senior leaders aren't always visible but when they are, they have a positive impact and are very approachable.

The force has staff associations that communicate directly with the chief officer team. These associations told us that, although some improvements were still needed, communication and openness with chief officers had improved since the new team took over.

Overall, these actions show senior leaders are working towards the right culture and developing capable leadership at all levels.

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

Adequate

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

Area for improvement

The force needs to better understand the well-being challenges that demand and workloads create

There are several interconnecting factors that are increasing the risk to well-being across the force.

Officers and staff we spoke to raised concerns about high workloads and working hours. During our inspection, we carried out a workforce survey open to all officers and staff between 29 September and 24 October 2025. We received 472 responses, which we estimate to be 16.9 percent of the workforce at the time of the survey. In the survey, 67.4 percent of respondents (318 of 472) said the force used overtime to manage workloads when necessary. The force told us it was paying on average £3,600 a day for overtime due to personnel shortages for the year ending 30 November 2025.

The force told us short-term sickness of officers and staff had been increasing since May 2025. It told us that, as at 31 December 2025, the highest recorded reason for these absences at 42.0 percent was mental health difficulties. This lack of available staff and officers was compounded by 324 officers and staff on recuperative leave or restricted duties as at 31 December 2025, as reported by the force.

Our inspection across different policing departments highlighted vacancies and [abstractions](#) from core roles. [Professionalising investigations programme \(PIP\) 2](#) departments, including the criminal investigation department and the [domestic abuse](#) investigation unit, appeared disproportionately affected.

In our workforce survey, we asked officers and staff which statements most reflected their current thoughts about working for the force; 23.9 percent of respondents (98 of 409) said they wanted to leave the force as soon as possible or within the next 12 months.

Leaders need to better understand and address the multiple and interconnected challenges of high workloads, the use of overtime, and sickness and abstraction levels to improve well-being.

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 provides officers and staff with the right training to carry out specialist work

The force provides training for specialist investigative work but it continues to struggle with a detective shortfall.

As at 31 December 2025, the force had 267 full-time equivalent PIP 2 investigators in post compared to 419 who should be in post. This means 63.7 percent of PIP 2 investigator posts were filled. The force is struggling to address the shortfall and, as at 31 December 2025, had only 52 full-time equivalent PIP 2 trainees. It told us a further 49 officers were working towards their PIP 2 accreditation but weren't yet in investigator roles.

The force has an action plan to tackle detective resilience and reports on progress in the force's Project Sherlock governance board. This board provides the senior leadership team with information on detective capability and capacity across the force. It identifies ways to attract and recruit detectives internally and externally. It also provides insight on the retention and well-being of detectives to inform strategic decision-making.

The force uses the Detective Constable Entry Programme to recruit directly from the public, recruiting 19 detectives in September 2025, 15 in September 2024 and 14 in September 2023. It is also carrying out wider initiatives to attract candidates to the detective role, including internal student placements, detective aide programmes and transferees from other police forces. However, it still struggles to close the gap in the numbers of required detectives in role.

The force is working with the [College of Policing](#) to align its neighbourhood policing programme to the college's neighbourhood policing programme. The College of Policing dashboard shows that, as at 17 February 2026, 262 individuals had completed the first part of the programme. The force had 225 neighbourhood officers and police community support officers (PCSOs) eligible and required to complete the training. This suggests all or nearly all [neighbourhood policing teams](#) had completed the first part of the programme, and the training may have been extended to other colleagues. The force also told us that, as at 18 December 2025, around 9 percent of neighbourhood officers and PCSOs had completed the second part of the programme. It has planned further courses to provide this training to all remaining neighbourhood officers and PCSOs.

The force provides effective training for volunteers in specialist roles. During our inspection, we spoke to special constables who said the force provided flexibility to train with officers through the day. It also provided additional evening and weekend training classes if special constables weren't available during normal office hours. They reported being trained in a wide range of skills, including methods of forced entry and emergency response driving. These skills made them feel valued by the force and their colleagues.

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

The force is developing a retention strategy and has created a role of recruitment manager to support this project. The force tracks the number of officers and staff leaving through strategic governance.

In response to the findings of [our last PEEL inspection](#), the force introduced [stay conversations](#) and exit interviews to better understand and address why people left. Our data shows that, since March 2023, there has been a year-on-year reduction in the number of people leaving. However, further evaluation is needed to understand the reasons and the specific impact of such interventions. The force needs to reassure itself that the well-being challenges outlined in this report don't undermine progress made in retaining personnel.

In our inspection, we identified the force had trained 57 facilitators of stay conversations and exit interviews. It advertises this confidential service online through awareness campaigns. Facilitators provide feedback to the HR team. In turn, the team provides feedback to strategic governance boards where retention information is measured and used to make informed decisions.

The force developed a campaign and action plan called 'Is your future with us?' to support recruitment and retention goals. This included a comprehensive officer and staff consultation in June 2024 and the development of several initiatives. These include well-being training for officers, a review of tutoring support for student officers and a mentoring and coaching scheme for officers after their tutoring phase.

In our workforce survey, 45.7 percent of respondents (187 of 409) said they saw their future career in the force beyond the next three years. This was the most common sentiment.

The force recognises the challenges faced by those from [under-represented groups](#). It offers supportive measures through its career academy and other incentives to overcome these issues. Home Office Police Workforce data shows two officers from ethnic minority backgrounds left the force in the year ending 31 March 2025. They made up 2.9 percent of all officer leavers. Across all forces in England and Wales, on average 9.3 percent of officer leavers were from ethnic minority backgrounds.

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 takes positive action to recruit and retain staff and officers who are representative of the community

The force recognises and measures [disproportionality](#) across the force and is taking steps to address it. It has developed a [positive action](#) strategy. Its recruitment web pages share information and videos from the chief constable and testimonies from other officers and staff across the organisation.

The force surveys candidates before they know if they have been successful in the recruitment process, so they can provide feedback anonymously. The surveys have identified that police officer applicants' perceptions of the role were different from how they found the role once their employment had started. The force believed this was a cause of officers leaving. The force also found this difference was magnified when the officers involved had neurodivergent conditions.

As a result, the force now gives applicants clear updates and a detailed job description, so they know what to expect and understand how their personal resilience will be tested. The force told us this had helped reduce the number of people leaving. Specially trained staff provide coaching and mentorship to officers, and the force has established a role of neurodivergence officer to support colleagues.

The positive action team runs community events across the force's area. It provides support such as mock interviews and online masterclasses for potential applicants who declare themselves as female, from an ethnic minority, LGBTQ+, disabled or neurodivergent. In 2025, the force budgeted for and recruited 20 police staff investigators. It told us over 100 potential applicants attended the online session for these roles, leading to a diverse cohort of applicants being successful.

The workforce uses and understands the professional development review process

The force has an annual professional development review (PDR) process for its officers and staff. In the year ending 31 March 2025, 90.0 percent of officers and 91.0 percent of staff had had a PDR. During our inspection, staff and officers reported high levels of compliance with the PDR process through one-to-one meetings with their supervisors.

The force also carries out its own PDR quality assurance [dip sampling](#), identifying learning and recommendations that it tracks through the strategic people and culture board. All PDRs had to have an objective aligned to the force's [control strategy](#).

However, some officers and staff felt PDRs were useful only for people looking for development or promotion. The force should make sure all the workforce values the PDR process, not only those looking for promotion.

Officers and staff feel confident to challenge inappropriate behaviour

The force has invested in its [professional standards department](#), raised awareness of expected behaviours and standards across the force, and tried to increase awareness of the Integrity App confidential reporting system. This shows the strategic investment to improve behaviours and standards across the organisation.

In our workforce survey, 86.2 percent of respondents (407 of 472) agreed their manager nurtured an environment of trust, 88.1 percent (416 of 472) agreed their manager created an inclusive working environment and 90.3 percent (426 of 472) agreed their manager challenged discriminatory behaviour.

Using powers fairly, appropriately and with justification

Good

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

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 understand how to use stop and search powers fairly and appropriately

During our inspection, we reviewed a sample of 68 [stop and search](#) records from 1 September 2024 to 31 August 2025. Based on this sample, we estimate 98.5 percent (+/- 2.4 percentage points) of stop and searches the force carried out during this period had reasonable grounds recorded.

This is a statistically significant improvement compared to the findings from our previous review of records from 1 January to 31 December 2022. In that review, we found 89.1 percent (+/- 4.3 percentage points) of stop and searches had reasonable grounds recorded.

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

The force reviews incidents to make sure officers use stop and search or use of force powers fairly

When an officer submits a stop and search form, supervisors are digitally notified and asked to complete a review. Supervisors review all stop and search forms using a template to ensure consistency. They review the recorded [body-worn video](#) to inform their assessment and feedback to officers. During our audit of stop and search and use of force incidents, we found all 20 records audited had supervisory reviews completed and were of a good standard. On ten occasions, learning had been identified and fed back to the officer.

The force tracks the mandated use of body-worn video. The officers we spoke to told us they understood its use was an effective way to provide evidence for their proportionate and justified use of stop and search tactics.

The force also routinely carries out further qualitative audits. This quality assurance provides it with clear information for the structural equality board, chaired by the assistant chief constable. This helps the force understand how officers are using stop and search fairly. It could improve this qualitative auditing by making sure the results are collated so both good practice and [organisational learning](#) can be highlighted. The force has recently set up a tactical-level working group, which will help to bridge this gap. In addition to [first-line](#) supervisory oversight and the force's qualitative audits of use of force and stop and search, the force supplements this by allocating six random cases a month to sergeants and inspectors to review. The reviews include the body-worn video.

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

The force's strategic governance board for stop and search is the structural equality board. This sets the tone for and improves the force's understanding of [disproportionality](#).

Good quality data on self-defined ethnicity (how individuals define their ethnicity) allows the force to understand the rate at which officers stop and search 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 September 2024 to 31 August 2025. We found self-defined ethnicity information was unknown (not recorded, not stated or refused) for 11 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 officers didn't ask for self-defined ethnicity in 18 of these encounters. Officers should make sure they ask for this data to allow the force to better understand the demographics of people it stops and searches and help identify any disproportionate use of the power.

The force uses stop and search sufficiently

In the year ending 31 March 2025, the force carried out 3,663 stop and searches of people. This equals 4.5 stop and searches per 1,000 population. This is within the typical range for forces in England and Wales.

The number of stop and searches the force carried out decreased by 16.7 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. The force told us this was because of an improved, [intelligence](#)-led focus on the proportionate use of stop and search as a tactic, making its use more targeted.

In the year ending 31 March 2025, the force had an overall [find rate](#) of 32.2 percent from stop and search encounters. This was made up of 26.2 percent [linked finds](#) and 6.0 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.

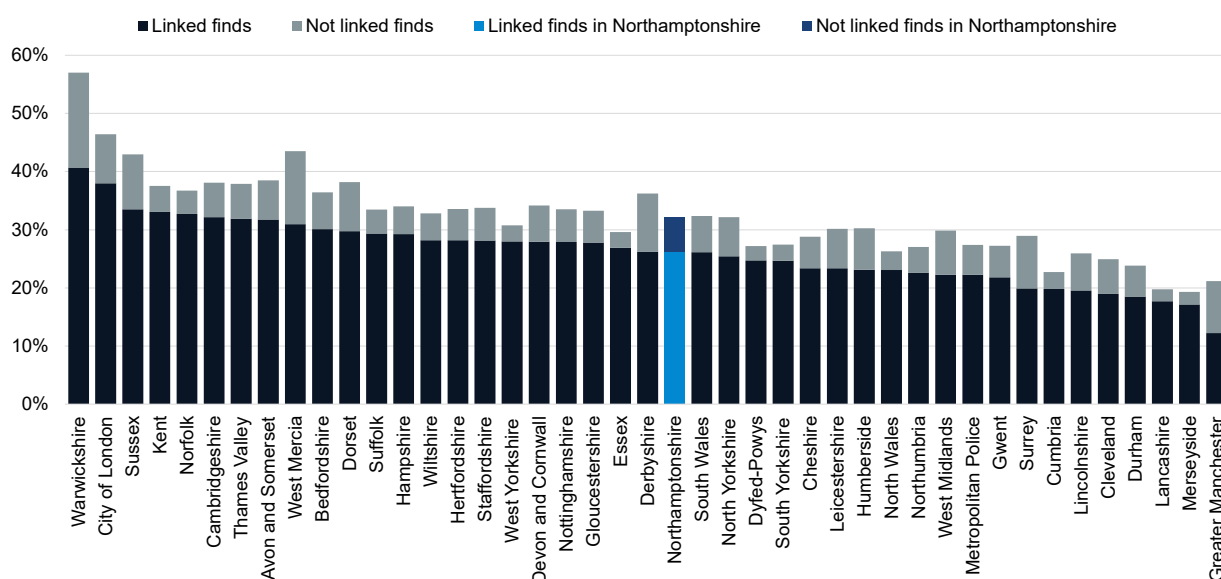
The force's linked find rate of 26.2 percent in the year ending 31 March 2025 was within the typical range for forces in England and Wales, but slightly higher than the 24.8 percent linked find rate recorded in the year ending 31 March 2024. This is further evidence of increasingly targeted use of the tactic.

We examined:

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

The results of this review show the force is using its stop and search powers well.

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 Northamptonshire Police, 26.2 percent of stop and search encounters resulted in a [linked find](#) and 6.0 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 the year ending 31 March 2025, people from a Black ethnic minority background were 3.6 times more likely than White people to be the subject of a stop and search by the force. The England and Wales average is 3.7. In our review of stop and search records of people from an ethnic minority background, we found 18 of 19 had reasonable grounds. The force analyses its disproportionate use of stop and search powers to help it understand why it exists.

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. The England and Wales average is 3.0. The force analyses its disproportionate use of force to help it understand why it exists.

The force is taking action to reduce disproportionality by renaming its strategic governance process as the structural equality board. It told us this change was part of creating a culture that recognises and works to reduce disproportionality.

The force carried out a strategic assessment of disproportionality to inform its decision-making. It provides cultural awareness training to all officers to improve their knowledge of the diverse communities it serves.

The force's public and personal safety training (PPST) has been developed to increase officers' awareness of disproportionality. We saw PPST trainers describe disproportionality and [adultification](#) in the wider context to student officers.

The force has also carried out a three-month detailed qualitative analysis of force used on [children](#) and people from a Black ethnic minority background. Of the 297 cases allocated for review, 279 were reviewed (94 percent). At the time of inspection, it was evaluating the results from these reviews.

The force recognises it still needs to better understand and explain to the community its disproportionate use of force and take action to reduce it.

The force should make sure it appropriately records all use of force incidents

In the year ending 31 March 2025, the force recorded 10,689 use of force incidents. This is a decrease of 8.6 percent compared to the previous year. This decrease is likely due to a combination of under-recording and other factors, such as improved training for officers in more effective [tactical communication](#) skills.

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 Taser. Where more than one officer uses force on an individual, each officer must submit their own use of force report.

To determine if the force was recording use of force appropriately, we reviewed two different measures. We first examined the number of arrests and compared this to the number of recorded use of force reports. We expect the number of use of force reports to be at least as high as the number of arrests. Most arrests involve the use of handcuffs and multiple officers may have used force during the arrest. In the year ending 31 March 2025, the force carried out 9,353 arrests and recorded 10,689 use of force reports.

We then reviewed the overall expected number of use of force records compared to the actual recorded number. The expected number is estimated based on the average number of uses of force associated with each recorded arrest. We estimate that, in the year ending 31 March 2025, the force should have recorded 16,336 use of force incidents. It actually recorded 10,689 incidents. This means it likely under-recorded its use of force by 5,647 incidents. This shows a deterioration in recording use of force compared to the previous year when, based on this estimation, it didn't record 2,554 use of force incidents.

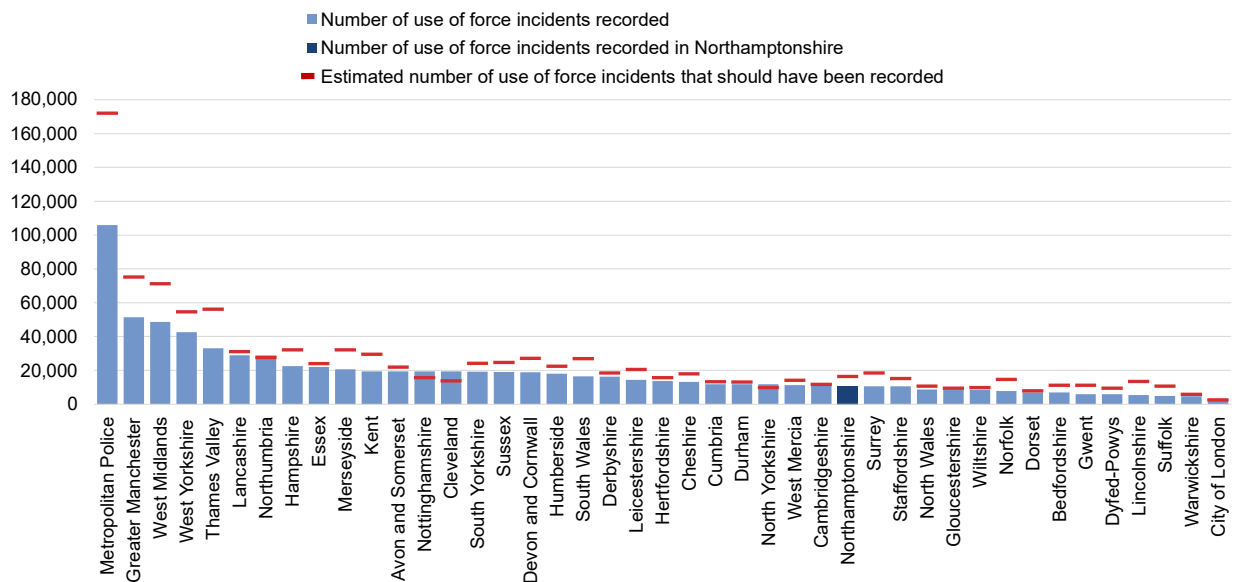
In our audit of body-worn video in 14 cases of stop and search where force was used, use of force forms were submitted in only 10 cases.

The force tracks the number of use of force incidents recorded in its structural equality board. The board noted a decline in recording since March 2024.

The force needs to make sure all officers are accurately recording the use of force with adequate checks in place to help identify missing records.

However, the force has increased scrutiny of use of force incidents and reviews body-worn video. Officers we spoke to told us they expected scrutiny and feedback from a supervisor. These processes support accountability.

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. Northamptonshire Police recorded 10,689 use of force incidents. This was lower than the estimated 16,336 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 should make sure officers consistently complete timely safeguarding referrals

Officers are aware of the [safeguarding](#) practices for children in stop and search and use of force incidents. Safeguarding referrals were completed for each of the five instances in our body-worn video audit where children were searched.

The [multi-agency safeguarding hub](#) reviews each safeguarding referral, or incident that should have a referral attached, the following day. The hub makes sure any incident (including stop and search) that should have a safeguarding referral attached but doesn't is updated within a set time frame.

The force doesn't measure how many of these updated incidents involve stop and search or use of force, or are incidents that include children or disproportionately affected groups. By reviewing and understanding this data, the force could better identify safeguarding gaps, support early intervention, provide multi-agency support and add to organisational learning.

An independent stop and search and use of force scrutiny panel provides external challenge

An external community panel scrutinises officers' use of stop and search and use of force quarterly, including reviewing body-worn video.

The panel has a diverse community membership. Each panel meeting focuses on a specific theme, such as cases where the people stopped and searched were women or children. Twice a year, the panel focuses on stop and search and use of a Taser. Panel members are offered training in stop and search, use of force and Tasers. This gives members insight for them to make informed judgments of how officers performed.

Officers offer tactical insight to the panel before it views body-worn videos from incidents. Using a structured evaluation sheet, the panel scores each incident and provides feedback, which determines the type of learning gathered or action taken afterwards. The force provided examples where this feedback has improved performance, such as the use of gloves by officers or the consistent use of seatbelts when transporting handcuffed detainees in police vehicles.

Stop and search scrutiny has expanded into four [independent advisory groups](#), which review two further incidents of stop and search at each at their two-monthly meetings. Their reviews use the scoring system used in the external community panel, with the scores determining the feedback generated.

Tactical governance for stop and search and use of force is improving

In our inspection, we identified clear strategic governance in the structural equality board. This monitors performance and focuses the organisation on disproportionality in stop and search and use of force.

Despite this, we identified that some wider tactical elements of stop and search and use of force weren't getting structured scrutiny and their performance wasn't being measured. These elements included officers who repeatedly didn't use body-worn video, identifying people who were repeatedly subject to use of force, feedback from complaints and tracking of safeguarding referral submissions, for example.

The force has recognised this and implemented a tactical governance group to support strategic direction provided by the structural equality board. This group is yet to be fully established. We look forward to seeing how it influences tactical performance across the force.

Preventing and deterring crime and antisocial behaviour, and reducing vulnerability

Adequate

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

Area for improvement

The force needs to consistently record and evaluate day-to-day problem-solving and share learning

We identified this [area for improvement](#) in [our last PEEL inspection](#). In our latest inspection, we spoke to neighbourhood [officers](#) and [staff](#), and reviewed a selection of problem-solving plans. While we found some good examples, the recording of problem-solving plans was inconsistent.

The force uses an [objective, scanning, analysis, response and assessment](#) structure for its problem-solving plans, but we found officers and staff weren't clear when to apply it. There was inconsistent evidence of evaluation and learning recorded in problem-solving plans.

The force is investing in its problem-solving provision. It has created problem-solver and problem-solving co-ordinator roles, which are now in place in both its local policing areas. They are intended to produce problem-solving plans, support officers and staff with tactical advice, provide training, share learning and support governance. The force shared with us its comprehensive training plan for 2026 to fully establish these roles and processes.

The force has also developed a digital dashboard to provide a single repository for all problem-solving plans. This dashboard will help make recording and evaluation of problem-solving plans and sharing of learning from them more consistent.

While the force is improving its problem-solving in these ways, at the time of our inspection these improvements weren't fully established. The force needs to make sure its plans and the changes it has made lead to clear improvements in performance.

Innovative practice

The force partners with the office of the police, fire and crime commissioner to support children affected by the imprisonment of a parent, carer or sibling

Northamptonshire's serious violence prevention partnership carried out analysis and identified that [children](#) affected by imprisonment of a parent, carer or sibling are more [vulnerable](#) to a wide range of risks including exploitation and committing crime.

As a result, the force and the office of the [police, fire and crime commissioner](#) developed the Prison Intervention Project. This multi-agency project has three police community support officers from the youth violence intervention unit and two early intervention and [adverse childhood experience](#) officers from the office of the police, fire and crime commissioner. The project team works with a wide range of partner agencies to provide support.

The initiative provides early intervention opportunities for children to discuss their feelings and understand the process of imprisonment. It aims to help them develop coping strategies and break the cycle of potential future offending by the child.

Children are referred through established pathways for triage. Where appropriate, the specially trained officers offer support to families and children for up to 16 weeks.

Interventions are child focused, offering a safe place for them to explore and share their emotions, feelings and uncertainties. Support is tailored to the individual needs of the child and their family.

At the time of our inspection, there had been no formal independent evaluation due to the project's recent implementation. However, the force told us the project had received 22 referrals and had supported 46 children so far. The force records feedback from families, which has been positive. We will continue to monitor this project to understand the outcomes following a more formal evaluation.

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.

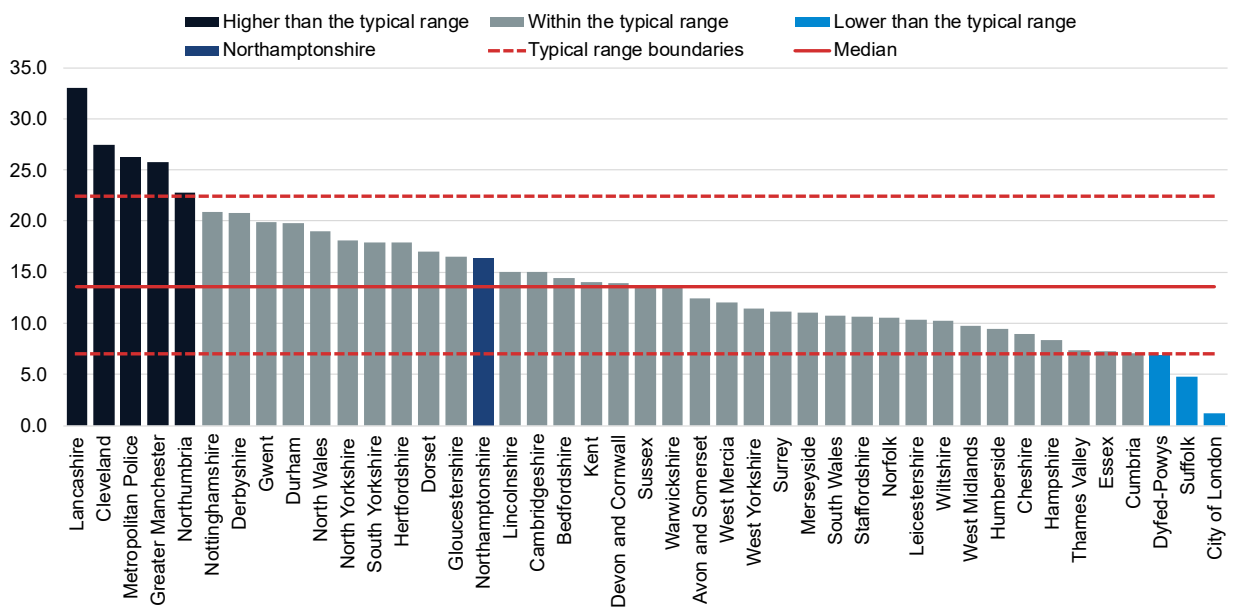
The force is developing its understanding of the causes of antisocial behaviour and vulnerability in its communities

During our inspection, we noted the force’s emerging governance provided a foundation for understanding the causes of antisocial behaviour and the associated vulnerabilities in its communities. However, the force needs to make sure it carries out routine analysis of antisocial behaviour to inform decision-making and ensure greater performance accountability, including at a local policing level.

The force’s antisocial behaviour action plan tracks actions and performance as part of the force’s newly created tactical oversight performance group. This group provides governance across a number of important performance indicators such as demand, antisocial behaviour categories, attendance times, secondary [risk assessments](#) and the use of ancillary orders. However, the group wasn’t fully established at the time of our inspection.

In the year ending 31 March 2025, the force recorded 16.4 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. Northamptonshire Police recorded 16.4 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.](#)

Forces may split antisocial behaviour incidents into three categories for recording purposes. In the year ending 31 March 2025, the force recorded 13,384 antisocial behaviour incidents, of which:

- 24.5 percent were [antisocial behaviour personal](#) incidents – within the typical range for forces in England and Wales;
- 23.1 percent were environmental antisocial behaviour (incidents where individuals or groups impact their wider surroundings) – higher than the typical range; and
- 52.4 percent were nuisance antisocial behaviour (incidents affecting the community rather than an individual [victim](#)) – lower than the typical range.

The force needs to understand the reasons for these differences when compared to other forces.

In our [quality service review](#), we audited 60 antisocial behaviour personal incidents recorded by the force. We considered 41 of these incidents to be correctly recorded as antisocial behaviour personal.

We found the force didn't always record crimes that had occurred when victims reported antisocial behaviour personal. In the antisocial behaviour personal incidents we examined, the force recorded 16 of 22 crimes correctly. Five of the crimes that weren't recorded were [harassment](#) crimes. The force should make sure it records all crimes reported by victims of antisocial behaviour personal.

The force isn't using preventative and protective orders effectively to help it tackle antisocial behaviour

During our inspection, we found [neighbourhood policing teams](#) worked closely with local authority antisocial behaviour officers, housing providers and other partners to address the root causes of antisocial behaviour in their communities. Local authority antisocial behaviour officers are co-located with neighbourhood policing teams in Northampton, Daventry, Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough to support information sharing and partnership working to reduce antisocial behaviour.

However, we found officers weren't using antisocial behaviour legislation effectively to prevent community problems from escalating. In the year ending 30 September 2025, the force issued 76 preventative and protective orders, which equals 0.09 orders per 1,000 population. This is lower than 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 only 12 of these records did the force use or consider antisocial behaviour legislation to help it tackle the root causes of antisocial behaviour.

During our inspection, the officers we spoke to told us they were confident in applying for and using legislation such as [Criminal Behaviour Orders](#) and civil injunctions, particularly in more complex or persistent antisocial behaviour cases. This indicates officers understand antisocial behaviour legislation and the range of powers available to them but aren't maximising their use to effectively tackle the root causes of antisocial behaviour.

Officers also told us the force used an incremental approach to tackling antisocial behaviour, ranging from the use of formal warnings to applications for legal orders and injunctions. We found relevant force governance boards considered the use of antisocial behaviour interventions but weren't using data effectively to generate actions that would lead to performance improvement.

A dedicated antisocial behaviour order team is co-located with neighbourhood policing teams across the force. However, during our inspection we identified there was a lack of effective task assignment and co-ordination of this team and an inconsistent understanding of the role and responsibilities of its specialist officers. The force has recognised this and taken steps to recruit a dedicated supervisor.

The force has fully integrated its initiative to provide early intervention and diversionary opportunities for young people and to prevent further criminality

During our last inspection, we observed the force's community initiative to reduce violence. In our latest inspection, we observed how this had become established as the force's youth violence intervention unit (YVIU).

The YVIU works to divert young people away from the [criminal justice system](#) by reducing serious violence and exploitation where appropriate. Led by a detective inspector, the unit includes two sergeants, eight constables and four youth offending service officers, organised across disruption and monitoring teams.

The unit triages referrals to identify those young people at highest risk. Sergeants risk-assess each case, making early contact and making sure a visit to that young person takes place within 72 hours. Weekly multi-agency triage meetings attended by partner agencies agree the most appropriate support pathways. Young people who meet the YVIU threshold progress to a tailored intervention programme while others are redirected to suitable partner services.

When a young person enters the YVIU programme, officers trained in early intervention and adverse childhood experience implement a structured plan designed to prevent further harm and steer the young person towards [positive outcomes](#).

Interventions may cover knife crime awareness, criminal exploitation, emotional regulation, healthy relationships and the impact of adverse childhood experiences.

The YVIU has a disruption function for young people who repeatedly fail or refuse to co-operate. Officers continue to take a trauma-informed approach and all interventions from this function are tailored to encourage the young person back into involvement.

The force gave us case studies demonstrating success stories. It uses its established partnership analytical function ('the observatory') to analyse data and track young people supported by the unit. This will assess the unit's impact and, in turn, its value for money.

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

Neighbourhood officers are responsible for building relationships with communities, solving problems and working with partner agencies 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 an [abstraction](#).

During our inspection, neighbourhood 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, 23 of 54 respondents involved in neighbourhood policing said they were abstracted from their main neighbourhood policing duties on a monthly or more frequent basis, which is consistent with our findings. This affects their ability to consistently carry out visible patrols in their communities, communicate with local residents and carry out preventative work.

The force has developed an abstraction policy that outlines clear expectations of how much time neighbourhood policing teams should spend in their communities. The force aims for neighbourhood officers to spend 60 percent and police community support officers 65 percent of their time on visible patrols or communicating with their local communities. The force told us that, in the year ending 18 December 2025, it met this target across all neighbourhood policing areas. On average, neighbourhood officers spend 63.4 percent of their time in their communities and police community support officers spend 70.3 percent of their time in their communities.

However, officers told us they weren't consistently reporting when they were abstracted from their main neighbourhood policing duties. This was despite officers agreeing the process to record abstractions was quick and easily accessible. We found the force's strategic neighbourhood policing board closely monitored how often abstractions were happening. But it needs to make sure its officers are recording all their abstractions. This will make sure senior leaders are aware of the impact of abstractions on local communities and officer well-being.

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

In the year ending 31 March 2025, 9.4 percent of the force's officers were in dedicated neighbourhood policing roles. This is within 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 they had enough officers and staff with the right skills and training to work effectively in their communities and with partners to reduce crime and antisocial behaviour.

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 partner agencies, problem-solving and tackling antisocial behaviour. It has a consistent and structured approach to training and developing its neighbourhood policing teams.

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

During our inspection, we found neighbourhood policing teams regularly communicated 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 found neighbourhood policing teams were tailoring their local communications 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. We found evidence there was generally a clear understanding of how to build trust with communities who weren't communicating with their local policing teams.

A prevention, intervention and problem-solving board, chaired by the assistant chief constable, provides strategic governance of community involvement. It has a standing agenda item where it measures involvement with communities, and in particular seldom-heard groups, and holds leaders to account for service provision. The force benchmarks itself against other forces to gain insight and learning.

Responding to the public

Requires
improvement

Northamptonshire Police requires improvement at responding to the public.

Areas for improvement

The force needs to attend calls for service in line with its published attendance times and make sure it updates callers if there are delays

In [our last PEEL inspection](#), we identified that attending calls for service in line with published attendance times and updating the caller if there were delays was an [area for improvement](#). In our latest inspection, this remains the case.

The force has a graded response policy with published targets for attendance times for grade one incidents (the highest priority incidents needing an emergency response). It gave us relevant performance data, which highlighted it wasn't consistently meeting these targets. The targets are 15 minutes for urban areas and 20 minutes for rural areas. In the year ending 31 December 2025, attendance at grade one urban incidents was on target in 49 percent of incidents and attendance at grade one rural incidents was on target in 59 percent of incidents.

In our [quality service review](#), we found that, in 41 of 56 cases, the time to respond to the incident was on target. 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. We found the force had updated [victims](#) of delays and of downgrading of incidents in 15 of 19 cases. We also found an appropriate level of incident supervision in 36 of 44 cases.

While our quality service review findings show improvement compared to the findings in our last inspection, force data outlined above clearly highlights the force is still not meeting its targets for attending grade one incidents.

Despite recent successful piloting, the force hasn't implemented [rapid video response](#) technology or developed emergency video response processes, which can enhance the force's attendance capabilities.

Delayed incident 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 force needs to develop performance management and accountability processes to improve how it deploys resources to incidents

During our inspection, we found evidence of visible leadership and performance management in the [control room](#). Daily management meetings review resourcing, demand and significant incidents. Weekly command, monthly senior leadership and two-monthly people and resourcing meetings provide strategic and operational governance.

We found that the control room provided effective performance management for emergency and non-emergency calls, as well as digital contact from the public. However, we found there was a lack of equivalent performance management and accountability processes to make sure the force was effectively deploying resources to incidents.

We found the force didn't have a service level agreement for incident management, other than for grade one incidents (the highest priority incidents needing an emergency response). The lack of performance focus on the force's response to all incident grades is resulting in it not fully understanding the service it is providing to the public.

We found an 'ask not task' approach to resource deployment, in which the control room asks for resources to volunteer to attend incidents, and a lack of dynamic process for escalating issues. These undermine the force's ability to promptly respond to grade one incidents.

The force needs to set clearer performance expectations for all grades of incident management. These need to make sure greater accountability is placed on leaders who are responsible for making sure resources are efficiently and effectively deployed.

The force needs to improve how it assesses ongoing incident risks and uses problem-solving in unresolved incidents

The force uses a [threat, harm, risk, investigation, vulnerability and engagement \(THRIVE\)](#) risk management model to provide a consistent and structured approach to evaluating emergency and non-emergency calls.

During our inspection, we found the force was also operating a re-THRIVE process, to re-evaluate incidents that remain unresolved after 12 hours and again after 24 hours. The force uses a data analysis application (Qlik) to help identify relevant incidents needing further [risk assessment](#). It has also developed an application called the active incident risk management system (AIRMS) to identify incidents that may need prioritisation based on automated risk scoring.

However, despite this, we found high levels of demand in non-emergency incident queues, which weren't being effectively managed. The force wasn't using problem-solving effectively. There was evidence the force was applying re-THRIVE to these incidents but it was apparent this didn't always help to resolve them. Our [quality service review](#) supported these observations: it found the force carried out an effective re-THRIVE process in only 19 of 31 cases reviewed.

Innovative practice

A 'persistent caller officer' identifies repeat callers and co-ordinates actions to reduce demand

The [control room](#) has a specialist persistent caller [officer](#). The post holder is responsible for identifying repeat callers and co-ordinating associated actions to reduce unnecessary or inappropriate demand.

Repeat callers are highlighted through routine analysis of call demand and information provided by control room [personnel](#). The officer carries out research and works with colleagues and external partners to provide supportive interventions or, where appropriate, incremental steps to address unlawful behaviour towards the caller. This incremental process is summarised as follows:

- initial advisory letter
- community protection warning letter
- community protection notice
- application for [Criminal Behaviour Order](#).

The force is yet to formally evaluate this process. However, it could show it obtained several Criminal Behaviour Orders in 2025 and could show positive examples of where this process had significantly reduced unnecessary demand from persistent callers.

Main findings

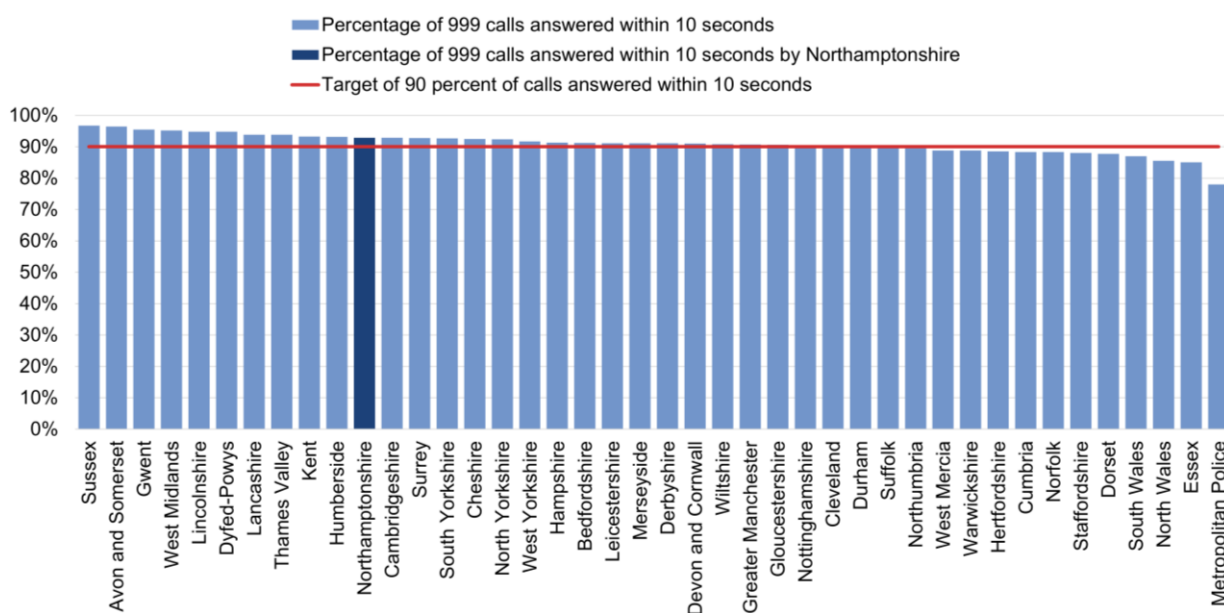
In this section, we set out our main findings that relate to how good the force is at responding to the public.

The force answers emergency calls quickly enough

In the year ending 31 January 2026, the force received 178 emergency 999 calls per 1,000 population. This was within the typical range for forces in England and Wales. For the same period, it answered 92.9 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. By comparison, in our last PEEL inspection report we highlighted that data for the year ending 30 June 2023 showed the force answered 78.5 percent of its 999 calls within 10 seconds. The force has therefore made noticeable and sustained improvements in how quickly it answers emergency calls.

To achieve these performance improvements, the force has invested in an additional 12 call handlers and 4 dispatchers. It has re-organised its control room staffing to increase the number of supervisors from one to two per team, providing greater supervisory support and resilience. It has also trained control room personnel to be competent in all areas. Consequently they can carry out a range of different functions with flexibility to help meet demand.

Figure 4: Percentage of 999 calls that forces in England and Wales answered within 10 seconds in the year ending 31 January 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 31 January 2026. Northamptonshire Police answered 92.9 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. Fifteen 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 206 non-emergency [101](#) calls per 1,000 population. This was within the typical range for forces in England and Wales. The force told us that, in the year ending 31 December 2025, 12.9 percent of calls to its non-emergency 101 facility were abandoned.

Our previous PEEL inspection report highlighted that, in the year ending 31 August 2023, 25.6 percent of calls to the force’s non-emergency 101 facility were abandoned. While there is no formal national standard for how non-emergency performance is measured, the force’s recent performance is demonstrably much improved and now at an acceptable level.

The force is improving its understanding of why callers hang up through performance monitoring and quality assurance processes. It has improved how it manages non-emergency calls by using an effective triage process to prioritise calls, using a callback option, and actively reviewing and following up on abandoned calls.

However, we found wider service provision problems were creating unnecessary demand on the force's call handling service. We observed several examples of members of the public using the 101 service to ask for updates on crime investigations, which they should have received from officers working on the case or the officers' supervisors.

We also observed how the force was increasingly signposting victims to report crimes via its single online hub. While this is a viable option to manage non-emergency demand, we found the force didn't have an audit trail process to mitigate against the risk of crimes not being recorded.

The force doesn't always give necessary safeguarding, crime prevention or evidence preservation advice during initial incident reporting

During our inspection, we found evidence the force trained call handlers to make sure they gave safeguarding, crime prevention and evidence preservation advice to callers. In addition, call handlers used bespoke call scripts to generate specific questions and advice for different incidents. The force also gave callers a link to crime prevention guidance on its website.

In our quality service review, we identified that evidence preservation advice was given in 27 of 31 incidents, crime prevention advice in 32 of 39 incidents and safeguarding advice in 32 of 38 incidents.

The point at which incidents are reported often represents the [golden hour](#) for investigations. Actions taken by call handlers are crucial to evidence preservation and safeguarding of victims. The force needs to make sure these requirements continue to feature in training and internal quality assurance processes.

The force uses triage processes to risk assess and prioritise calls, including appropriate consideration of whether a caller is vulnerable or a repeat victim

In our quality service review, we found call handlers used a structured triage approach to assess risk in 41 of 46 incidents. We also identified that they completed a repeat victim check in 56 of 62 cases and completed a [vulnerable](#) victim check in 57 of 65 cases. We determined that appropriate risk assessment was carried out in 36 of 40 cases and initial prioritisation of calls was appropriate in 70 of 74 cases.

In our workforce survey, 87.5 percent of respondents (116 of 136) said they received the necessary information and [intelligence](#) on risk and vulnerability to be able to provide an appropriate response to the public. However, we also found a sufficient record of vulnerability had been made in only 31 of 40 relevant cases. This is important for minimising the risk of vulnerability being overlooked in the response to incidents.

During our inspection, we found specialist personnel worked in the control room to provide enhanced support and guidance to help progress incidents effectively. These included intelligence development officer cover 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to enable effective research and information gathering for priority incidents. As part of Operation Motto and the Raheem's Law initiative, the force also uses independent [domestic abuse](#) advisors to work alongside its control room personnel during peak demand times, to provide rapid support to risk assessment and safeguarding actions.

In addition, as part of Operation Alloy, the force benefits from having mental health practitioners working alongside the control room personnel. They help gather information and give advice and support to officers dealing with incidents involving people with mental health concerns. This process supports the force's ongoing commitment to 'Right Care Right Person' (making sure people with mental health or social care needs get support from the most appropriate agency, rather than the police).

The control room uses an internal audit process to inform quality assurance, training and continuous improvement requirements

During our inspection, we found evidence the force had a well-established internal audit and quality assurance process for call handling and dispatching.

This process involves supervisors carrying out eight structured incident reviews for their respective teams every month. These reviews are centrally co-ordinated and require supervisors to listen to calls and check incident records. The control room training team collates review findings and uses them to provide quarterly performance reports.

The control room's training development officers also periodically audit three calls per call handler. These audits include two triage calls and one emergency 999 call. The officers consider fundamental requirements, such as whether the event log is an accurate reflection of the call and whether the call has been appropriately risk assessed. They grade audits and give feedback via line managers. Audit results dictate the frequency of further audits for individual call handlers.

A similar approach is taken to assuring the quality of dispatching standards. Beyond initial training reviews, training development officers spend a minimum of four hours observing and reviewing dispatchers' individual performance. Observations include use of mapping, radio communication skills, officer welfare considerations, use of 'task not ask' to dispatch resources and interactions with colleagues. Sergeants are allocated to give observation feedback and graded results dictate the frequency of future audits at 18-month, 12-month or 6-month intervals.

In addition to informing feedback and personal development requirements for personnel, audit and observational findings are used as evidence to recognise good work.

This internal audit and quality assurance process provides important information to help senior managers make informed decisions on training, communication and continuous improvement requirements.

Investigating crime

Inadequate

Northamptonshire Police is inadequate at investigating crime.

Cause of concern

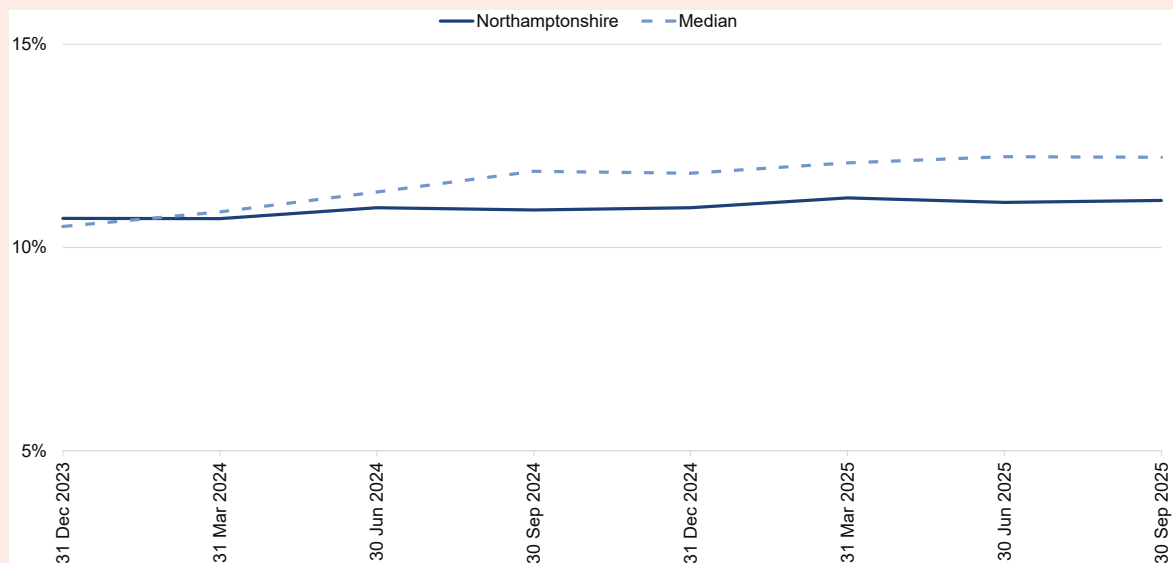
The force isn't always achieving appropriate outcomes for victims of crime

In [our previous PEEL inspection](#), we identified [areas for improvement](#) in how the force allocated investigations to [officers](#) and teams and the force's ability to achieve outcomes for [victims](#) of crime. During our latest inspection, we found these areas for improvement remained.

The force isn't always achieving acceptable outcomes for victims of crime. The number of crimes it solves following investigations is low. It must make sure it always allocates serious crime to suitably trained investigators. It needs to understand crime demand and investigative capacity to produce better outcomes for victims across a range of serious crime types, in particular rape and other serious sexual offences.

In the year ending 30 September 2025, 11.2 percent of all outcomes the force assigned to [victim-based crimes](#) were [positive outcomes](#).

Figure 5: Percentage of positive outcomes that Northamptonshire 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 Northamptonshire 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 11.2 percent of outcomes Northamptonshire Police assigned to [victim-based crimes](#) were positive in the year ending 30 September 2025, compared to the median of 12.2 percent for forces in England and Wales. It also shows that the percentage of positive outcomes Northamptonshire Police assigned has been relatively constant 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 a 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 Northamptonshire Police and all forces in England and Wales assigned to victim-based crimes in the year ending 30 September 2025

Outcome type	Northamptonshire percentage [%]	Median percentage [%] for forces in England and Wales
<u>Unresolved crime outcomes</u> (Outcomes 11–18)	85.8	84.2
<u>Resolved crime outcomes</u> (Outcomes 5, 9, 10, 20–22)	3.1	3.3
<u>Positive crime outcomes</u> (Outcomes 1–4 and 8), of which:	11.2	12.2
1 – Charged or summonsed	8.8	9.0
2 and 3 – <u>Caution</u> : youths and adults	0.8	0.8
4 – Taken into consideration	0.1	0.1
8 – <u>Community resolution</u>	1.4	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 a corporate body. For a detailed description of crime and outcome types please see the [Home Office statistics](#).

In the year ending 30 September 2025, of all crime outcomes the force assigned to robbery crimes, 6.6 percent were positive. This is lower than the typical range for forces in England and Wales, and 1 percent lower when compared to the year ending 30 September 2023.

In the same period, of all crime outcomes the force applied to rape crimes, 5.7 percent were positive. This is also lower than the typical range for forces in England and Wales, and 1.4 percent lower when compared to the year ending 30 September 2023.

In the same period, of all crime outcomes the force applied to violence with injury crimes, 12.8 percent were positive. This is within the typical range for forces in England and Wales. However, it is 3 percent lower when compared to the year ending 31 September 2023, in which 15.8 percent of outcomes for this crime type were positive. Although the positive outcome rate was within the typical range for violence with injury crimes, the charged/summonsed rate was below the typical range and has declined since the year ending 31 March 2025.

While the force has introduced a crime allocation policy, this has resulted in more investigations being allocated to teams that are significantly under-resourced or not appropriately trained.

In our workforce survey, we asked officers and [staff](#) how often they were allocated investigations outside their level of accreditation and training, such as [professionalising investigations programme \(PIP\)](#) 1 investigators being allocated PIP 2 cases. In response, 56.4 percent of respondents (66 of 117) said they were allocated such investigations quarterly or more frequently.

Our inspection of the force's supervision of investigations doesn't indicate a single point of failure. Rather it indicates repeated missed opportunities in a challenging operating environment, which reduces the likelihood of achieving positive outcomes for victims.

Our [quality service review](#) showed:

- an investigation plan was completed in line with [authorised professional practice](#) in 56 of 59 cases (in 49 of these cases, we found evidence the plan was followed and updated);
- investigations were appropriately supervised in 62 of 78 cases;
- all appropriate investigative opportunities were taken throughout the investigation in 66 of 85 cases; and
- overall, the investigation was deemed effective in 61 of 82 cases.

In our workforce survey, we asked investigators how often they received feedback on how to improve their investigations following supervisory reviews. In response, 53.8 percent of respondents (64 of 119) reported receiving feedback quarterly or more frequently. However, 26.9 percent of respondents (32 of 119) stated they had never received feedback on their investigations.

During our inspection, we found the force didn't focus consistently on completing initial supervisory reviews. Furthermore, while it was evident the force monitors the number of 28-day supervisory reviews completed, it doesn't provide consistent quality assurance to make sure these reviews are effective. It has no formal process for auditing and scrutinising investigations by inspectors and chief inspectors, particularly PIP 1 investigations. This is essential to ensuring effective quality assurance and achieving broader investigation improvement.

The force has previously identified the need to introduce a single investigation plan template, which will make sure it identifies and pursues reasonable lines of enquiry more consistently. However, the force is yet to do this.

The force isn't always supporting victims appropriately. Our quality service review showed:

- a victim contract was recorded in 57 of 66 cases and the contract was adhered to in 51 of 57 cases;
- a victim personal statement was considered in 9 of 21 cases;
- the victim was told the investigation outcome in 68 of 74 cases; and
- an auditable record of the victim's views was recorded in 20 of 35 cases.

Recommendations

Within six months, Northamptonshire Police should:

- allocate investigations to teams that have appropriate capability and capacity to manage them effectively;
- focus on tactical governance, investigation standards and outcomes for victims;
- make sure its quality assurance processes provide greater consistency in how investigation plans, supervisory reviews and management oversight are applied; and
- consistently comply with the [Code of Practice for Victims of Crime](#), carrying out quality victim needs assessments, recording victims' views and maintaining effective contact.

Main findings

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

The force's criminal justice unit reviews cases thoroughly before submitting them to the Crown Prosecution Service but could do more to improve initial file quality

The force's criminal justice unit has three levels of quality assurance for criminal case files to pass before they are sent to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) for a charging decision. First, the supervisor of the officer in the case reviews the case file and authorises it to go for criminal justice triage assessment. If the case isn't rejected and returned to the officer for further work, it progresses to an evidential review officer for assessment. If it isn't rejected and returned to the officer in the case with an action plan, it is forwarded to the CPS. The most efficient and effective case files pass through this process without the need to be returned for further work.

The force's governance process identified common themes leading to triage and evidential review officer rejections. The force now has the data to identify where and what development is needed to improve case file submission quality.

Despite the high rate of initial rejections by the criminal justice unit, cases submitted to the CPS achieve a high charge rate. In the year ending 31 December 2024, the charge rate in the force's area was 82.7 percent.

The force has increased its digital forensics capability, but further work is required

The force has a centrally based digital forensic unit that supports the local policing areas and operational departments. During our inspection, officers told us this approach wasn't working well and described lengthy waits for digital evidence from suspects' devices.

Digital forensic leaders recognised demand was exceeding capacity. The unit operates a three-tiered prioritisation system. The first tier is for critical cases where a person is detained for a serious offence and evidence is needed to bring a charge and remand to court. These cases would be completed within a 24-hour window to support that remand application. The second tier is for cases where a detained person has been remanded into prison awaiting trial. These cases are completed within custody time limits identified and agreed with the CPS.

The force stated it was compliant with time limits for these two tiers but there was no demand or performance data to track this compliance.

The third tier is for all other cases where there aren't specific CPS or court time limits. For these cases, the force told us the average turnaround of digital forensic evidence was around 18 to 24 months. The unit prioritises cases in this tier using a continually reviewed risk score. The force told us that in January 2026 there were 490 devices in this tier awaiting examination. This is a reduction on the average level of 560 in 2025.

The force has recognised the risk in this demand queue. It told us it had supported a spending increase in the unit to recruit three more digital data acquisition specialists. This would increase the number from 8 to 11 in January 2026. The force told us that, with this added capacity, it would try to reduce the average time taken for tier three devices to be examined from 18 months to between 3 and 6 months. It didn't provide a timeline for this target. We will review how this increase in staff reduces the time it takes to examine digital devices.

In our quality service review we identified there were no significant delays due to digital forensic submissions or digital examination in 11 of the 12 cases we reviewed.

Where appropriate, the force also examines victims' phones to gather evidence. It told us it aimed to complete this within a 24-hour period. It monitors performance, understands why it may not always meet its target and keeps victims informed.

The governance of bail and the release of suspects under investigation is inconsistent and increases risk to victims

During our inspection, officers showed they understood the importance of using [bail](#) conditions to [safeguard vulnerable people](#) and to manage the risk posed by some suspects.

The force has one bail sergeant in each of its two custody suites. The bail sergeants use a Qlik app to identify people returning to police stations to answer bail on specific agreed dates.

The force has an automated system to send reminders to officers about upcoming bail dates. The system emails officers 14 days before a bail date and then 7 days before the date. If the bail sergeants haven't received an acknowledgement, they escalate the matter to supervisors within the final seven days.

The bail sergeants record this information in a locally held spreadsheet, not a force-wide system. The bail sergeants can't access each other's spreadsheets, so in their absence this oversight is inconsistent. Communication with the officers in the case is recorded on the force's crime management system.

If the officer in the case doesn't attend or arrange for another officer to meet a person returning on bail, the case can lapse from bail to [released under investigation](#). This means any conditions added to the bail agreement would be lost. The bail sergeant will carry out a [risk assessment](#), although they don't have the same detailed insight as the officer in the case to make informed decisions about safeguarding. The bail sergeant then escalates the case to the officer in the case and their supervisors for follow-up action.

The force told us bail sergeants escalated cases to their inspector where officers had allowed bail to lapse into released under investigation three times in a six-month period. This was recorded on the officer's professional development review.

Data the force provided shows that, in the year ending 30 September 2025, pre-charge bail lapsed into released under investigation 1,423 times out of 14,999 arrests, which equates to 94.9 times per 1,000 arrests.

We saw evidence of supervisors who had a clear understanding of the bail cases in the teams they led and were using the Qlik app to make data-informed decisions to manage risk and demand well.

The force must satisfy itself there is a consistent approach to bail governance that safeguards victims.

The force uses ancillary orders effectively to manage high-harm suspects

The force frequently uses [Sexual Risk Orders](#). In these cases, offenders can be suspected of crimes such as possessing [indecent images of children](#). We were shown evidence suspects would initially be released on conditional bail to provide safeguarding measures. During this bail period, the force would ask for a civil order such as a Sexual Risk Order from the courts.

The order places certain restrictions on the individual, providing enhanced safeguarding and management of the individual by a specially trained officer to manage risks.

The force is developing its governance of managing outstanding suspects

During our inspection, we observed the force's wanted persons working group. This group was well attended and supported with relevant performance data. This data included analysis of people listed on the [Police National Computer \(PNC\)](#) as wanted, people circulated locally as wanted for arrest but not listed on the PNC, outstanding court warrants for arrest, people wanted for a breach of bail and people wanted following a forensic identification.

There have been no year-on-year reductions of note for suspects listed as wanted on the PNC. Our data shows on 5 June 2024, the force had 730 suspects listed on the PNC as wanted for more than 6 months. On 30 May 2025, the force had 729, a reduction of 1.

In our data collection, as at 31 May 2025 the force had 945 suspects wanted who weren't listed on the PNC. This is a reduction of 475 from 4 March 2024, when our data shows the force had 1,420 locally wanted suspects who weren't listed on the PNC.

In our quality service review audit of investigations, we found appropriate suspect checks were completed in 53 of 56 cases. We found that when a suspect was identified, they were arrested or interviewed where appropriate in 26 of 43 cases. We also found that an arrest or interview was completed at the earliest opportunity in 22 of 26 cases. In the 17 cases where a suspect was identified but not arrested or interviewed, an appropriate rationale was documented for non-arrest in 12 cases.

In our inspection, we found the force had firmly established approaches to risk level identification for [domestic abuse](#) perpetrators, but the risk level assessment wasn't as firmly established for non-domestic abuse perpetrators.

During our inspection, the wanted persons working group was still developing and had recently come under new leadership. As a result, performance and accountability across different categories of wanted suspects remained inconsistent. Leaders need to assure themselves the risks posed by wanted suspects are properly assessed and understood. They must also make sure there are no unnecessary delays in arresting suspects to help safeguard victims, and that the force takes all opportunities to preserve evidence.

The force is training its supervisors to improve investigation outcomes and the quality of service to victims

In our workforce survey, we asked line managers about the training they received to carry out their duties. Of these, 69.3 percent of respondents (106 of 153) agreed the force gave them the necessary training to carry out line management or supervisory responsibilities. Results showed 48.4 percent of respondents (74 of 153) were participating in Northamptonshire Police or [College of Policing](#) leadership courses, programmes or workshops, or had done so in the previous 2 years.

The force recognised the need to support its leaders and developed a professionalising investigations programme (PIP) 1 supervisor's course to run between November 2025 and March 2026. The force is focusing the course on officers eligible for carrying out the role as a sergeant: from temporary promoted sergeants to those who have been a sergeant for up to five years. The course follows a proven College of Policing course syllabus. It is a five-day course including seven modules:

- the role of an investigation supervisor
- managing investigations
- critical thinking
- outcomes of investigations
- victim and witness management
- suspect management
- custody/bail management.

There are also self-study modules.

The force is investing in this clearer guidance for new sergeants and strengthening the training programmes that support existing [first-line](#) and second-line managers. The force intends this to give everyone in these roles consistent direction and the skills they need to lead effectively.

The force has surveyed attendees to continually improve the training.

The criminal justice team supports officers with file completion and submission

To get the best outcomes for victims, forces train officers and staff to investigate using the PIP process. All officers and staff who investigate [volume crime](#) are trained to level 1. Officers and staff investigating serious and complex crime are expected to be trained to level 2 or should be working towards it.

The force needs to better understand its PIP 1 capacity, capability and performance to produce positive outcomes for victims of volume crime. It also needs to better understand its PIP 2 capacity, capability and performance to produce positive outcomes for victims of serious and complex crime, which can cause high levels of harm to victims.

During our last PEEL inspection, the force told us the criminal justice team supported investigators with 'super Wednesdays'. These were drop-in sessions every Wednesday providing advice and support to PIP 1 response and neighbourhood officers with their ongoing investigations and file preparation. Since then, this has developed into Operation Prudent: a PIP 2 detective sergeant surgery across the force. The detective sergeants who carry out this work are provided with a briefing package and expected to proactively work with PIP 1 colleagues. All detective sergeants take part in this operation in turn. Governance boards track performance indicators such as engagement, action plans and crimes closed. The operation has been included in the College of Policing's practice bank. During our inspection, officers spoke highly of this support.

Safeguarding children and adults at risk of harm

Adequate

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

Areas for improvement

The force needs to effectively record and manage all reports of missing people

The force records initial reports of [missing people](#) on its control system called STORM. It then allocates the missing from home investigation to an [officer](#) and transfers the report to another system called [COMPACT](#).

During our inspection, we found the force didn't always transfer missing person reports to COMPACT, such as when the missing person returned during the initial call or shortly after it. As a result, [safeguarding](#) referrals wouldn't always have been shared with partner agencies even though the missing person may have needed support or could have been exposed to harm. The force can't readily use its STORM data to understand the risks and demand in these situations.

Due to these practices, the force can't see the true scale of missing people or repeated missing person incidents, meaning it may miss opportunities to offer earlier intervention or support to missing people. It needs to address this to protect [vulnerable people](#).

However, we found once the force had recorded the missing person on COMPACT, it gave a structured and proactive response. During the missing person triage process, the force assesses risk and gathers important information.

In our audit of missing person cases, we found the risk grade was appropriate for the information known at the time in 13 of 13 cases. In 10 of 14 cases, officers attended within the required time frame. The force carried out thorough investigations to locate missing people in 11 of 12 cases. In these cases, officers followed the investigation plan, made relevant enquiries and recorded updates on their efforts to locate missing people. In 12 of 15 missing [child](#) cases, social care was notified of the missing child incident. This means some children weren't assessed for the welfare support they may have needed.

The force needs to assure itself missing person investigations are being recorded accurately and consistently on an appropriate system that supports information sharing with partners.

The force needs to promptly share information with schools about pupils living with domestic abuse

The force has a process for updating the local authority with information about schoolchildren who are living with [domestic abuse](#). This is part of [Operation Encompass](#).

Statutory guidance states the force should share this information before the start of the next school day. In exceptional cases, it should do this as soon as possible. The force told us its information sharing was taking up to 72 hours. Its process has inherent delays, which means support provided by schools and other educational provisions to [children](#) will also be delayed.

The force recognises the risks. It is developing a new digital process to reduce the time taken to update schools. However, there is no clear timeline for this.

The force needs to share information with schools efficiently to [safeguard](#) children in line with statutory guidance.

Innovative practice

The police and the office of the police, fire and crime commissioner work together to reduce the risk of harm to young people who repeatedly go missing

[Officers](#) from the force's [missing persons](#) investigation unit and specially trained [staff](#) from the office of the [police, fire and crime commissioner](#) visit young people who have had up to three missing from home incidents. They work together to understand the young person's needs and support them and their parents or carers. They also teach how to recognise risks and use strategies to manage and reduce those risks. This partnership is called Operation Satin.

Operation Satin has had 1,107 young people referred to it between November 2023 and November 2025. Only 14 percent of those young people have gone missing again repeatedly. The force described to us several successful case studies of young people who had been [safeguarded](#).

Operation Satin was recognised at the 2025 National Missing People Conference and is included in the [College of Policing](#)'s practice bank. An independent evaluation of the operation by the University of Liverpool is due for completion in 2026.

The force works with a third party to provide immediate and short-term help to domestic abuse victims fleeing home

The force works in partnership with Amazon, which provides grab bags to [victims](#) of [domestic abuse](#). A grab bag is a prepacked emergency support pack containing essentials such as a new mobile phone, non-perishable snacks, emergency children's items, notebooks, writing materials, a whistle and a torch. The aim is to provide immediate practical assistance to victims who are fleeing what is likely to be a traumatic incident and who haven't had time to gather essentials.

Amazon has given the force a stock of grab bags. The force has created a process to make sure they are considered as an option in appropriate circumstances.

The force told us it had offered grab bags on 26 occasions. In general, feedback from [officers](#) and victims had been positive but a more formal evaluation is yet to be completed.

We are interested to see how this initiative develops and the evaluation of its benefit to victims.

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 crimes committed against vulnerable victims effectively

The force records crimes committed against vulnerable victims. In our [quality service review](#), we examined 50 records involving referrals made to the force about vulnerable adults and child protection cases, 50 incidents involving victims of domestic abuse, 49 reported incidents of rape and 16 decisions to cancel crimes of rape. We found the following:

- Vulnerable adult and child protection cases: 41 crimes should have been recorded and 38 were recorded correctly.
- Domestic abuse incidents: 28 crimes should have been recorded and 24 crimes were recorded correctly.
- Reported incidents of rape: 2 crimes of rape should have been recorded and 2 crimes were recorded correctly.
- Cancelled crimes of rape: 16 of 16 crimes were cancelled correctly.

It is especially important the force accurately records crimes involving vulnerable victims. It is equally important to cancel crimes only when it is certain no crime was committed. Recording and cancelling crimes correctly helps 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

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

We found that, in 52 of 57 cases, safeguarding advice was appropriately given to victims. This means officers are aware of their duty to identify and reduce the risk of harm to vulnerable victims. In ten of ten cases involving children we reviewed, officers recorded the [voice of the child](#) in referrals, making sure the child's experiences and needs were considered in safeguarding decisions.

In 34 of 40 cases where officers had attended incidents, we found they had completed appropriate [risk assessments](#) showing they were aware of the need to look for signs of hidden harm, exploitation or vulnerability.

In our review, we also identified that officers made relevant referrals to specialist partners in 30 of 33 cases, showing an awareness of available support services and the importance of connecting victims with the help they need.

The force has established multi-agency safeguarding partnerships to reduce the risk of harm to vulnerable people, but it needs to share information consistently

Multi-agency working is an important part of the force's safeguarding strategy. During our inspection, we observed strategic and tactical multi-agency boards where partners in probation, social care, education, health and other agencies worked alongside the force. Senior and experienced officers and staff represented the force at these boards.

Established safeguarding partnerships included the Northamptonshire [multi-agency risk assessment conference](#) steering group. During our inspection, we observed this governance board. All agencies were represented with a clear agenda to improve partnership working. The meeting was supported with analytical data that tracked demand. The data showed that, from July to September 2025, cases had increased by 15.3 percent and repeat cases had increased by 7.4 percent compared with the same 3 months in 2024.

However, in our quality service review we found the force referred only one of seven relevant cases to the conference. This means that, in six of seven cases, the force and its partners couldn't create a multi-agency plan to reduce the harm to [high-risk domestic abuse](#) victims or their children and manage the risk from offenders.

We also saw effective partnership working in the force's [multi-agency safeguarding hub \(MASH\)](#), where several agencies are co-located and work together. For example, the force told us the MASH detective inspector met monthly with the Northamptonshire Children's Trust lead to [dip sample](#) ten [public protection notice](#) referrals. This joint quality assurance activity provides shared analysis and helps improve the multi-agency service. We found the MASH processed multi-agency referrals promptly and there were no delays in sharing referrals.

However, again, in our quality service review we found that, in only 13 of 17 relevant cases, the force shared information with the appropriate agencies. The force needs to make sure it shares information consistently and appropriately with partner organisations to protect victims from harm.

Partnership working has been strengthened further since the force appointed a domestic abuse safeguarding manager in February 2025. This role provides an experienced and consistent point of contact for partner agencies. The manager is supported by the force's domestic abuse and safeguarding officers. These officers are specially trained to work with partners to protect victims and support the force's wider safeguarding investigations.

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 12 of 15 cases we reviewed, the force considered preventative orders to reduce the risk of further harm to victims. These included [Domestic Violence Protection Notices](#), [Domestic Violence Protection Orders \(DVPOs\)](#), [Domestic Abuse Protection Orders](#) and [Stalking Protection Orders](#). This shows the force is using all available tools to safeguard victims. Processes for monitoring and enforcing these orders are well established.

Our data shows that, in the three-month period ending 30 September 2025, a force superintendent authorised a Domestic Violence Protection Notice in 5.2 percent of domestic abuse crimes (112 cases). A magistrate's court must then hear any case made within 48 hours to consider granting a DVPO. Seventy-five DVPOs were granted in this way. During the same period, the force took enforcement action to deal with 13 breaches of DVPOs, providing safeguarding to victims.

The force has created a proactive domestic abuse team. Among other duties, the team proactively visits victims of [high-risk domestic abuse](#) at least twice every 28 days to support safeguarding measures and gather evidence of any breaches. Response officers are given dedicated time to carry out similar visits to medium and lower-risk victims. The force tracks compliance with these proactive measures.

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, with timely disclosure to applicants. This empowers individuals to make informed decisions about their relationships and personal safety.

The force has created a team to divert young people from harmful sexual behaviour

The force recognised young people were at risk by either displaying [harmful sexual behaviours](#) or being exposed to them. It told us that, in the year between November 2024 and October 2025, many reported sexual offences involved suspects aged from 10 to 14 years.

The force used research to identify exposure to pornography before the age of 13 or exposure to exploitative or violent pornography between the ages of 13 and 17 may trigger harmful sexual behaviour. The force identified a gap in the provision to refer children for support.

It has recruited and trained a team of early intervention police community support officers. The team offers a trauma-informed adolescence and intervention programme to support referred children. During a 12-week programme, the team focuses on education and challenging inappropriate and unhelpful thinking, with the aim of stopping escalating behaviour. It has supported 21 children and plans to carry out an evaluation when there is a larger data set to analyse.

Managing fraud

Adequate

Northamptonshire Police is adequate at managing fraud.

Areas for improvement

The force needs to implement an effective and achievable fraud policy that supports investigators

In our inspection, we found the force expected fraud investigation to be managed by specialist fraud investigators after an initial 28-day period. However, the force told us [reality testing](#) had shown 40 of the 120 live fraud investigations were being investigated outside specialist departments after 28 days.

Fraud investigations are allocated with limited guidance and no ongoing specialist support. The force doesn't have effective methods to escalate investigations when they go beyond the capability of the investigator.

This means insufficiently trained investigators are leading investigations, and we found investigators didn't feel supported or adequately trained in this area.

The force needs to put adequate training in place for call handling, protecting the public and all levels of fraud investigation

Our inspection showed fraud training wasn't adequate outside specialist fraud investigation departments.

[Reality testing](#) during our inspection showed call handlers' response to fraud calls was inconsistent. In addition, the force has identified gaps in call handlers' knowledge due to staff turnover and the infrequency of fraud training.

In our inspection, we found advice given to the public was based on opinion rather than national guidance. We also found wider work to protect the public from fraud had limited capacity and wasn't targeted.

We also found training for fraud investigators outside specialist fraud investigation departments was ad hoc and the force didn't have a clear understanding of who had received training and if it was up to date.

During interviews and reality testing with frontline investigators, we found they didn't feel adequately trained to investigate fraud or that they had effective support to do so. Our workforce survey supported this finding: 49 of 70 respondents involved in fraud reported they hadn't received fraud training.

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 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, and the force treats fraud as a strategic priority in its [serious and organised crime](#) portfolio. The force has a named fraud lead and has clear governance at both a strategic and an operational level. The serious and organised crime board effectively monitors performance in relation to fraud. However, fraud isn't considered at the force-level performance board.

The force doesn't have enough capacity and capability to manage fraud in its communities and provide support to victims

During our inspection, we found the force didn't have enough capacity or capability to manage fraud. Although it created a dedicated [4P plan](#) for fraud in 2025, it wasn't yet accepted or understood by the workforce. There wasn't an effective triage process and we found fraud investigations were regularly given to non-specialist teams against force policy.

Dedicated fraud investigation teams effectively manage complex cases using the [fraud investigation model](#). Our inspection audit showed the model was used in 15 of the 17 fraud investigations we reviewed. However, we found [officers](#) were often [abstracted](#) from the fraud investigation teams, reducing the effectiveness of the teams.

We found that when the force identified a [vulnerable victim](#), it supported them effectively. It uses partner agencies, such as trading standards and the local authority, appropriately to help victims. It also considers ancillary orders to prevent offenders reoffending.

Despite this, it was apparent that resourcing and training issues were undermining the force's ability to provide a consistent level of service to all victims of fraud.

Providing a safe and lawful custody environment

Adequate

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

Areas for improvement

The force should improve auditing and monitoring of custody performance, including quality assurance of custody records

The oversight, quality assurance and governance of custody performance and risk would benefit from focused improvement. Existing performance data and quality assurance processes had failed to identify the risks we found. At the time of our inspection, the force hadn't carried out any quality assurance of custody records for nine months. During our inspection, we found custody records didn't always reflect some of the good practices we observed, and the quality of recording overall wasn't good enough.

Following feedback, the force has developed an action plan and shown it has started working on some aspects of this plan. We encourage it to continue this work to further address the risks identified.

The force should improve how it assesses, manages and records the risk detainees pose to themselves and others throughout detention and on release

[Custody officers](#) explain [risk assessments](#) to detainees but don't consistently record all relevant, available information. The use of probing questions and the recording of these and the answers detainees give is lacking when the risk assessment is completed at booking-in.

Custody officers don't always review a detainee's risk during the detention period. Nor do they always record a rationale when there is a change (or no change) in observation levels for [children](#) and detainees with mental health risks. We found they didn't consistently carry out level two rousing checks in accordance with the [Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 \(PACE\) code C annex H](#).

Custody officers rely on generic templates without adding relevant information or removing text that doesn't apply to individual detainees. They don't always carry out pre-release risk assessments in enough detail. Some custody records lacked information on the risk the detainee presented and any mitigation that had been applied in custody and on their release.

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 has some effective governance to manage the safety and well-being of detainees

The force has some effective monthly and quarterly performance meetings to make sure its custody services are safe and lawful. It can show it has a structured approach to oversight of its custody service with quantitative and qualitative performance measures in place. However, there is a lack of strategic governance and performance monitoring of [bail](#) and [voluntary attendance](#). While the force monitors staffing levels and their capacity to meet demand, on occasion there aren't enough trained [officers](#) and [staff](#) to provide custody services.

The force understands its responsibilities under the [public sector equality duty](#). It monitors custody data to identify [disproportionality](#). Custody officers and staff told us they had received some training in supporting detainees with mental health difficulties and/or neurodivergent conditions. But they also felt they had other training needs that weren't fully met such as understanding [vulnerability](#) and the needs of women in custody.

The force is open to effective external scrutiny. It could show external bodies regularly visited the custody suites and worked with custody officers and staff. It could show how it documented and responded 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 all custody suites and found one suite wasn't sufficiently clean, but the physical environment provided enough privacy for detainees. There were no [ligature points](#) at one suite, but we found some in toilets at another. This is a result of the design of the toilets. Custody officers and staff carry out daily cell checks as per [authorised professional practice](#) but don't deal with all non-essential 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 visual impairments, and religious materials are available for detainees to practise 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 and female children are allocated a female member of staff to oversee their care. Data that the force provided shows children whose detention is authorised spend longer than adults in police custody. Although the force has introduced a 12-hour PACE clock for children, this wasn't yet firmly established at the time of our inspection.

Decisions to detain children overnight are appropriate and clearly recorded. When children are charged and remanded overnight, they aren't usually moved to local authority accommodation despite custody officers generally requesting suitable [alternative accommodation](#). The force appeared to apply only limited strategic pressure on the local authority in relation to bed provision. It recognises more quality assurance needs to take place to fully understand all aspects of child detention and make improvements where needed.

There are [safeguarding](#) measures in place to protect vulnerable adults and children. Provision of an [appropriate adult](#) for children and vulnerable adults is available but the force should improve its appropriate adult provision for children after 10pm.

Detainees can exercise their legal rights

Custody officers authorise detention appropriately and explain the booking-in process. They are considerate and professional, and consider the needs of detainees, such as those with mental health conditions and other vulnerabilities. They clearly explain rights and entitlements and provide written notices setting these out. All suites have easy-read and Braille versions of these notices. Posters in the booking-in areas display information about rights, including how to make a complaint. For detainees who don't speak English, custody officers provide translated documents and arrange interpreters.

We observed how custody officers made sure vulnerable detainees understood their ongoing right to legal advice. Detainees can speak with their legal representatives in private, either in person or on the phone. If detainees waive their right to legal advice, custody officers explore the reasons why. The force told us it had found male detainees from an ethnic minority background were more likely to waive this right. To address this, it changed the focus of the question asked at booking-in, where detainees were asked to state their preference for the duty solicitor or another firm.

The force generally follows the [PACE Act 1984](#) and its codes of practice when carrying out reviews of detention. The force carries out reviews in the best interests of detainees, and reviewing officers consider the needs of children and vulnerable adults. If reviews are late, they record the reasons why. However, the force should improve the recording of reviews as, in some cases, officers relied on general templates without including all relevant details. This made it difficult to understand decisions related to detainees' individual circumstances and whether detainees had made any comments.

Custody officers don't always inform detainees of reviews carried out while they are asleep. This is contrary to PACE code C and means detainees don't get the chance to hear about the review and make any representations.

In our audit of cases involving detainees with mental health concerns, we found two cases where reviews weren't carried out as required. We pointed this out to the force and it took action to improve this process by communicating requirements to [personnel](#).

Initial training for permanent and temporary custody officers and staff is comprehensive and follows the national courses developed by the [College of Policing](#). 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 has an effective booking-in procedure that identifies and manages risk, but doesn't consistently follow it

During the booking-in procedure, 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. Custody officers regularly revisit the detainee and reassess their risk to make sure all risks are reduced.

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

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

We reviewed 35 custody records involving 58 use of force incidents as well as CCTV footage in 15 cases to make sure that when force is used in custody it is proportionate, necessary and justified. Custody officers showed good leadership and gave clear direction to keep officers and detainees safe. However, records were poor and lacked relevant detail that accurately reflected incidents.

Officers who use force in custody submit individual use of force forms. We asked for use of force forms for the incidents we reviewed and received 75 of the 84 we expected. This was a good rate of return.

The force has processes to scrutinise use of force incidents in custody. An inspector reviews detention logs, use of force forms and, in some cases, CCTV footage. However, this quality assurance hadn't identified all the issues we found during our inspection. This means the force may not always be able to assure itself that when force is used in custody it is necessary, justified and proportionate.

We found 98 percent of custody officers and staff were up to date with their officer safety and first-aid training. Those who weren't had a date booked for their refresher course.

We reviewed 7 cases that involved strip searches authorised under [section 54 of the PACE Act 1984](#) and 20 cases where clothing was removed for safety reasons. Custody officers recorded appropriate grounds for these searches in all but three cases and carried them out well.

However, we identified some gaps in the training for frontline officers on strip searching in custody. For example, frontline officers and supervisors told us they weren't aware of the recent changes to the College of Policing's approved professional practice in relation to clothing exchanges.

There is effective healthcare provision for detainees with sufficient oversight from the force and NHS England

The force and NHS England effectively monitor the contract for all health provision for detainees. Healthcare professionals (HCPs) are available in the custody suite and carry out timely assessments of detainees' healthcare needs. However, weekend staffing cover was more limited.

HCPs treat detainees in an appropriate clinical space that protects their privacy and dignity. They gain appropriate consent from detainees to access medical records and make onward referrals for ongoing support. Detainees have access to appropriate medicines while in custody, including those to manage withdrawal from substances. However, Northamptonshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust had withdrawn patient group directions. These offer a framework that lets some registered HCPs administer specific medicines to particular groups of patients without seeing a prescriber.

Without this framework, HCPs had to contact a doctor to prescribe medicines for detainees. If the doctor was busy this caused delays.

Frontline officers can contact a specialist mental health team for advice before detaining a person under section 136 of the Mental Health Act 1983. This team can also deploy onto the street to support frontline officers. This means some detainees are diverted to hospital rather than custody, which is positive.

The force told us it was sometimes difficult to secure an approved mental health professional to attend custody for detainees who needed an assessment under section 2 of the Mental Health Act 1983. In these situations, the force used powers under section 136 of the Act to transfer detainees to a health-based place of safety. This was to prevent detainees facing long waits in police custody, although there were still delays sometimes due to a lack of capacity at healthcare facilities.

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