



## **Norfolk's Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) response to inspections published by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS)**

Section 55 of the Police Act 1996 (as amended by section 37 of the Policing and Crime Act 2017) requires local policing bodies to respond and publish comments on all inspection reports pertaining to your force within 56 days of report publication.

### **Inspection Title:**

An inspection of the police response to the public disorder in July and August 2024 – Tranche 1: capacity and capability, co-ordination and mobilisation and well-being

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Disorder and Thematic Inspection

### **Police Forces:**

All local forces in England and Wales

### **Link to Report:**

[An inspection of the police response to the public disorder in July and August 2024: Tranche 1 - His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services](#)

### **Section 55 Response Deadline:**

12 February 2025

### **Key Findings**

On Monday 29 July 2024, three young girls, Bebe King, Elsie Dot Stancombe and Alice Da Silva Aguiar, were killed in a knife attack in Southport. Following these tragic events, widespread unrest and violent disorder broke out in many towns and cities across the UK.

On 6 September 2024, the Home Secretary commissioned His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) to carry out a rapid review into the policing response to the disorder, to identify lessons for the future. The commission divided the work into two tranches (parts). The terms of reference for Tranche 1 required HMICFRS to examine:

- the police service's public order public safety (POPS) capacity and capabilities

- the police service's ability to mobilise officers across police force areas to respond to the disorder
- how the well-being and resilience of officers might be affected by repeated exposure to incidents of disorder.

In July and August 2024, many of the people who took to the UK's streets participated in unlawful and serious violence and disorder, not peaceful protests. They put communities in fear by damaging property, targeting religious buildings and attacking people's homes. The violent disorder spread quickly across many towns and cities. This put the emergency services under significant pressure, including the police who offenders targeted deliberately.

At first, forces deployed their own officers to deal with the disorder. But it became clear that some forces needed more POPS trained police officers to respond effectively, so many regions decided to implement their regional POPS mobilisation plans. After several days, because of the level, seriousness and escalating nature of the disorder, the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) implemented a national plan, called Operation Navette. Each police region mobilised officers in support. Operation Navette was the largest mobilisation of POPS officers since the violent disorder of 2011.

HMICFRS reviewed eight police forces (Norfolk was not included) in areas where violent disorder had taken place. The inspectorate spoke with officers at all levels, many of whom had been present at these incidents. HMICFRS reviewed the activities of a range of national and regional bodies with relevant responsibilities. The inspectorate also examined reports and documents to gain further insight into the police service's response, planning and decision-making.

HMICFRS concluded that the national mobilisation of POPS resources, combined with the quick identification and prosecution of offenders, was instrumental in ending the disorder and restoring peace to our towns and cities. Once the police service mobilised resources, it did this well, however the systems and processes they work under need to change and the NPCC should have activated its national mobilisation plan on Friday 2 August 2024. When it activated this plan, deploying officers in greater numbers deterred those planning to take part in violent disorder and helped police commanders to deal with the disorder more effectively.

The police service's deployment decisions need to be based on better intelligence. On Thursday 1 August 2024, after two days of violence across England and three days after the tragedy that triggered it, the Prime Minister chaired a discussion about the disorder with senior police and other public service leaders. HMICFRS found that the police service was preparing to mobilise its resources nationally, but it didn't do so on Friday 2 August 2024 or over the following weekend as the intelligence picture and Strategic Risk Assessments (SRAs) didn't promote fully informed national decision-making. However, during the interim, widespread disorder took place across many towns and cities. It meant forces responded on a local or regional basis, in accordance with their plans.

Mobilising national police resources helped to end the violent disorder. On Wednesday 7 August 2024, the NPCC decided to mobilise a significant number of POPS officers to respond to the disorder across the UK. This helped to bring the disorder to an end. During Operation Navette, the police deployed 1,622 Police Support Units (PSUs) in total, amounting to about 40,000 police officer days worked. It was the first time the police service activated its mobilisation plan to create a national strategic reserve of POPS officers.

HMICFRS found that the police kept the public safe and communities supported them. Many members of the public were openly appreciative of the police. HMICFRS heard of several instances where they offered help and support to the police at scenes of disorder. During and after the widespread disorder, communities came together and took to the streets to show their public support for the police. They included many people from ethnic minority communities and faith groups.

The inspectorate found that elements of the Strategic Policing Requirement (SPR) related to public order public safety need to be reviewed. The SPR states that Chief Constables should make sure they have a range of specific POPS capabilities, as a force or across a region, to meet local requirements and their agreed contribution to regional and national requirements.

The number of officers in public order public safety roles has declined, but the reasons for this are not clear. Some forces told HMICFRS that they struggle to recruit enough volunteers for POPS roles. They are considering options to increase the number of POPS officers, including mandatory training or bonus payment incentives.

National training standards and command structures are well established. All the forces reviewed had established appropriate and effective command structures for dealing with disorder. The strategies and tactical plans examined described clear aims and objectives.

HMICFRS identified opportunities to improve public order public safety officer training. The inspectorate concluded that POPS officer training should be improved, this should include:

- preparing officers to deal with violent disorder as well as peaceful protest
- physical fitness requirements
- building officers' confidence in carrying out the role
- familiarity with a wider range of tactics
- the suitability of training facilities.

HMICFRS found that forces were unprepared for the scale of the disorder. The College of Policing publishes authorised professional practice on intelligence management and information management, and forces should adopt this guidance when managing POPS events and incidents. Commanders should also follow authorised professional practice on the national decision model when planning POPS operations. Forces base their policing plans and assigning of resources on SRAs. POPS SRAs should include local, regional and national information and intelligence that may indicate the actual or potential threat of disorder.

Specialist resources played an important role in restoring order and bringing offenders to justice. Police use of dogs and horses helped to restore order, but they weren't available to all forces. Aircraft and drones helped the police gather evidence and make decisions.

The police didn't use more dynamic crowd dispersal options. Attenuating energy projectiles (AEPs), commonly known as baton rounds, are a tactical option for the police. The SPR states that each police region should have the ability to deploy two full AEP teams, providing a total of 18 AEP teams if required. As far as HMICFRS could establish, the police have never fired AEP during disorder in Great Britain. During Operation Navette, it wasn't readily available to some commanders.

Some decisions on uniform and equipment exposed officers to greater risks. The College of Policing's authorised professional practice guidance on POPS sets out what uniform and equipment officers should wear for POPS incidents. This is known as a POPS dress code. The inspectorate is concerned that the initial dress code set by some commanders could have left officers vulnerable to injury. Most personal protective equipment worked well, but there may be better options and some equipment broke after taking repeated hits, including protective shields and helmets. Communication equipment didn't always work effectively and some officers experienced problems with earpieces not working or not being compatible with their NATO helmets. This reduced their ability to communicate.

The College of Policing's authorised professional practice on mobilisation gives guidance on the structures, roles and responsibilities for local, regional and national mobilisation. The NPCCs 'Mobilisation Operational Guidance' specifies the numbers and types of POPS resources that should be available to deploy. The capacity and contribution of each force and region varies. In 2012, Chief Constables in England and Wales agreed the National Policing Requirement, a plan to allow the police service to meet the current SPR. The plan states that the police service needs 297 police support units (PSUs) to be available to meet the SPR. This was based on the police service having to respond to three simultaneous seats of significant disorder over a seven-day period. There are nine police regions in England and Wales. Each region contributes resources to the mobilisation plan, based on a calculation that takes into account the size of each force.

In April 2013, the NPCC created a facility called the National Police Coordination Centre (NPoCC). It supports forces across the United Kingdom, Crown Dependencies and British Overseas Territories. It is comprised of a small number of officers and staff from police forces across the UK. An Assistant Chief Constable, known as the national mobilisation co-ordinator (NMC), leads NPoCC. Regional information and co-ordination centres (RICCs) operate in each region and support NPoCC in handling requests for mutual aid from forces. In April 2020, NPoCC introduced an intelligence gathering and sharing function called strategic intelligence and briefing (SIB). SIB circulates daily and weekly intelligence reports to forces and the Government about major events and incidents. SIB's responsibilities include collating and circulating intelligence about aggravated activists and protests that have the potential to cause disorder or significant disruption on a regional or national scale. But SIB doesn't have its own intelligence gathering or development capabilities, so its effectiveness depends on the quality of intelligence it receives from forces.

National mobilisation of POPS resources worked well. Although simultaneous disorder took place in more than three places, enough officers were mobilised to respond to it, however officers sent on mutual aid often arrived later than would ideally have been the case.

The NPCC is responsible and accountable for acting when national mobilisation is required, however neither the NPCC nor NPoCC has the authority to require forces to supply resources through mutual aid. The Chief Constable of each force area is operationally independent and has full control over their resources. A Chief Constable acts as the NPCCs lead for POPS policing. This officer can activate the national mobilisation plan when they consider it necessary to mobilise large numbers of resources. They act as the national co-ordinating gold commander. Activating the plan helps the police service to co-ordinate its response. When this happens, forces should adopt common priorities and strategic aims and they should move resources to where they are most needed.

Regional information and co-ordination centres (RICCs) gave support, but some could operate more effectively. Neighbouring forces deployed trained officers to the seats of disorder quickly. This allowed the police to increase and rotate their resources and it supported the use of more dynamic tactics to disperse crowds.

HMICFRS received mixed responses about the effectiveness of some RICCs during the first week of the disorder, particularly outside office hours and at weekends. And the methods forces used to request support from their RICCs were inconsistent. Some commanders and force incident managers didn't know about their region's mobilisation processes. Because RICC support wasn't always available, some gold commanders resorted to liaising directly with one another to obtain more resources. This resulted in an unclear picture of deployments, making national co-ordination more difficult. Many of the force incident managers interviewed confirmed they had no or extremely limited access to their force's duties management systems or databases to help them understand the resources that were available.

The police service needs to be able to track POPS resources accurately. NPoCC uses a system called Mercury to hold information about the skills and capabilities of POPS officers. The police service introduced it in preparation for the 2012 Olympic Games, but NPoCC and forces can't track the resources they deploy during incidents effectively. Some forces can track the location of vehicles using the Airwave radio system, but this data isn't available to NPoCC.

During the initial stages of the disorder, SIB handled requests for data and information from police forces and officials from the Home Office and other government departments. Each needed information to help them understand the developing situation. This diverted SIB staff from their core intelligence function. At times during Operation Navette, SIB produced intelligence assessments and briefings every two hours. This placed SIB staff under immense pressure.

Many POPS commanders HMICFRS spoke with felt that the police service should increase mobilisation testing. They felt testing should be more rigorous. Some said that

exercises or mobilisation testing should involve live scenarios and should take place outside normal office hours.

A variety of programmes and structures support the well-being of police officers and staff throughout England and Wales. Most forces offer these services as part of their occupational health provision. This isn't always sufficient to meet demand. Forces operate differently, which means access to support services can vary. Eligible officers can access one of three specialist treatment centres. These offer physical recuperation and psychological support, largely through self-funded schemes.

The inspectorate found that the psychological and physical rehabilitation support forces gave to officers during and after the disorder was inconsistent. Officers responded positively when forces provided systematic and well-planned wellbeing support.

Because of the arduous nature of policing scenes of violence and disorder, officers need easy access to drinking water. This is particularly the case during prolonged deployments. Some forces made sure officers remained hydrated. In other cases, water supplies were too far away, or forces simply ran out of supplies altogether. The supply of food and nutrition is equally important. Some forces were better than others at making sure officers were fed, however some officers needed to source food themselves.

Some commanders told HMICFRS that offenders targeted officers disproportionately. This included supervisory officers (identifiable by insignia on their uniforms), female officers and those who could be identified as from ethnic minority backgrounds. Commanders were particularly concerned about deploying officers from ethnic minority backgrounds because of the level of animosity directed towards them.

Forces use different methods to collect information about injuries to officers. This means that national data on officers' injuries may be unreliable. This is especially the case in respect of psychological injuries, which are often not immediately recognisable.

The National Police Wellbeing Service introduced Operation Hampshire to help the police service respond more effectively to assaults on officers. Forces can use an app to report details of assaults and injuries, including psychological injuries. The app has been recommended by the College of Policing. Some forces appear reluctant to use the Operation Hampshire app and guidance. Their reluctance seems to be based on the additional administrative requirements involved. The NPWS also offers training in trauma support through the emergency services trauma intervention programme. This programme aims to reflect best practice in early trauma interventions. Most forces have some form of post-trauma support that officers and staff affected by an incident can access, however forces don't always follow the best practice approaches of the programme.

## **Recommendations**

Three recommendations are made within the report, all three of which are directed at Chief Constables:

### **Recommendation 1**

With immediate effect, the National Police Chiefs' Council and Chief Constables, working with the College of Policing and the Home Office, should create a plan and begin work to improve the police service's capacity and capability to respond to widespread violent disorder. They should plan to:

- in consultation with the Home Office, review the public order public safety (POPS)-related elements of the Strategic Policing Requirement and add relevant specialist capabilities, beginning with investigators and intelligence resources
- complete a full assessment of the suitability and availability of personal protective equipment for all POPS trained officers, including mounted branches and dog units
- make sure that every police force or region can rapidly deploy drones during POPS incidents
- develop and provide guidance on the use of drones within the College of Policing's POPS authorised professional practice
- review the range of available tactical options, equipment and technology to make sure officers can quickly and safely disperse people who take part in disorder
- review POPS training at all levels, including an assessment of the adequacy of the current fitness test for level 2 officers.

### **Recommendation 2**

With immediate effect, the National Police Chiefs' Council and Chief Constables, working with the College of Policing, should create a plan and begin work to improve how the police service mobilises public order public safety (POPS) resources. They should plan to:

- give the National Police Chiefs' Council POPS lead (national co-ordinating gold commander) explicit authority to set the national strategy for POPS mobilisation, and full command and control of the deployment of tier 3 resources
- improve the capacity and capability of all regional information and co-ordination centres, including providing better guidance and a common operating framework
- improve the technology available to the National Police Coordination Centre, so that it can deploy and manage mutual aid more effectively and efficiently – the police service should be able to access information on the identity, number, location and nature of resources; skills available; length of deployments; and operational status of vehicles
- prioritise a national structured debriefing process about the police response to disorder that supports rapid learning and improvement
- increase the police service's POPS mobilisation testing regime and take decisive action on its results.

### **Recommendation 3**

With immediate effect, the National Police Chiefs' Council and Chief Constables, working with the College of Policing and the Home Office should create a plan and begin work to improve the wellbeing support the police service gives to its officers and staff. They should plan to:

- create formal protocols with ambulance services and hospital trusts for the treatment of police officers who are injured on duty
- assess how public order public safety planning and mobilisation, at force, regional and national levels, considers and prioritises the well-being of officers and staff, such as making sure they have access to food and drink, rest and rotation, personal protective equipment and toilet facilities
- consider whether public order public safety roles should be defined as 'high risk', particularly in police forces that face frequent, extensive and severe disorder
- review whether officers deployed in hostile incidents need additional support on a case-by-case basis
- examine the level of contribution that each police force, and the Home Office, makes to police treatment and wellbeing centres, so that all officers and staff who need treatment can access it.

### **Areas For Improvement**

No areas for improvement were made within the report.



## Chief Constable response to report and any Recommendations/Areas For Improvement

This report entitled "An inspection of the police response to the public disorder in July and August 2024 - Tranche 1," examined how the police service responded to the major disorder that occurred following the tragic events in Southport on 29 July 2024 when three young girls were killed in a knife attack.

HMICFRS undertook a rapid review which was divided into two tranches, with Tranche 1 focusing on public order public safety (POPS) capacity and capability, co-ordination and mobilisation of resources, and well-being provision for officers who responded.

Widespread unrest and violent disorder broke out in many towns and cities across the UK. Norfolk and Suffolk Constabularies responded collaboratively and in partnership with our other regional forces to support the national mobilisation of Public Order Level 2 trained officers under Operation Navette. We were jointly asked to mobilise our Strategic Policing reserve of Police Support Units (PSU), a group of officers who are trained in enhanced public order tactics who deploy in specialist police carrier vans. Mutual aid provision under Operation Navette was stood-up on Thursday 1 August. Both Constabularies provided PSUs daily, until 18 August as part of the national mobilisation programme.

Following their Tranche 1 rapid review, HMICFRS have made three recommendations. These recommendations require all police forces across England and Wales to work in collaboration with the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC), the College of Policing, and the Home Office to take them forward.

After the publication of the report in December 2024, and in advance of receiving national direction and guidance, we have already begun to consider and act in response to some of the rapid review findings.

In conjunction with Suffolk Constabulary, we are reviewing the number of officers we train to PSU Level 2 to ensure that we will continue to have sufficient capability to support the Strategic Policing Requirement related to public disorder. We are also considering how public order public safety planning and mobilisation at a force level prioritises the wellbeing of officers and staff, such as making sure they have access to food and drink, adequate personal protective equipment, and toilet facilities.

The Constabulary's Drone Development Team are working with the NPCC to develop digital intelligence within drone technology, which could include facial recognition and number plate recognition. The Constabulary already routinely deploys drones to disorder incidents in the county which can provide live video feed to PSU Commanders on the ground.

All activity relating to Operational Support and in particular Public Order and Public Safety is overseen by the Joint Operations Assistant Chief Constable at the Operational Support Governance Board. The themes from this report, including those relating to training, logistics, and wellbeing will be picked up in that forum.

In conjunction with Suffolk Constabulary, our joint Protective Services Command will work with the National Police Chiefs' Council, the College of Policing, and the Home Office to consider, and where appropriate implement the report's recommendations on a local or regional basis. We await further national direction on this matter.

## **PCC response to report and any Recommendations/Areas For Improvement**

This report "An inspection of the police response to the public disorder in July and August 2024 - Tranche 1," examined how the police service responded to the major disorder that occurred following the tragic events in Southport on 29 July 2024 when three young girls were killed in a knife attack. Here in Norfolk, our residents were not subjected to the same violent disorder that was experienced elsewhere in the country. However, that does not mean that our police service was similarly unaffected.

The obligations established via mutual aid provisions enabled the violent disorder to be brought under control. Norfolk police officers played a part in this through availability, and more widely, the Constabulary was stood up to respond in the way that the public expects.

I welcome this HMICFRS report and the recommendations within it. It is critical that when disturbing events such as this take place, our police service is ready to respond and that it can do so effectively and with due regard to officer welfare and wellbeing.

People living in Norfolk can be reassured by the immediacy and proactive nature of Norfolk Constabulary's response to this report, to ensure that lessons learned can be incorporated into existing operations. As national guidance emerges, and additional requirements are defined, I will continue to discuss all the operational needs established within the Strategic Policing Requirement with the Chief Constable and the Assistant Chief Constable, to ensure that Norfolk Constabulary is well-prepared should there be a future need to address this type of violent disorder.

### **For Office Use Only:**

- Response forwarded to the Chief Constable.
- Response forwarded to the Norfolk Police and Crime Panel.
- Response submitted to the HMICFRS monitoring portal.
- Response published on the OPCCN website.