



## **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 the respective 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 2: use of an intelligence-led approach, tackling online content and social media, and crime investigations.

### **Published on:**

7 May 2025

### **Publication Types:**

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 2 - His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services](#)

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

2 July 2025

### **Key Findings**

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

On 6 September 2024, the Home Secretary commissioned 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.

On 18 December 2024, HMICFRS published a Tranche 1 report titled: 'An inspection of the police response to the public disorder in July and August 2024: Tranche 1'. It set out the inspectorate's findings about the police service's response to the incidents of disorder at a

force, regional and national level. It dealt with the themes of public order public safety (POPS) capacity and capability, mobilisation and well-being. HMICFRS included recommendations and lessons that the police service needs to learn quickly.

This is the Tranche 2 report. It sets out findings and recommendations about how the police managed intelligence, online content including misinformation and disinformation, and investigations into the disorder.

The police strategic risk assessments (SRAs) at the time of the disorder graded the threat of disorder as “low”. National police intelligence assessments didn’t correctly assess the risk and threat to public safety from a rising tide of disorder. Grading the threat and risk of disorder as “low” was wrong and influenced the timeliness of national mobilisation decisions.

HMICFRS identified that the absence of a police intelligence network to specifically deal with disorder is a problem. Without a cohesive and properly joined-up approach to intelligence on disorder, the police cannot accurately assess the strategic risk of disorder.

There is no clear police strategy or plan to manage intelligence on the risk of widespread disorder. It isn’t clear to the inspectorate which part of the police intelligence network is responsible for managing intelligence about disorder-related risks.

HMICFRS also found that many forces were unclear about the role and responsibilities of National Police Coordination Centre’s (NPoCC) strategic intelligence and briefing (SIB) in a national emergency, such as the widespread disorder in summer 2024. And it is clear that SIB doesn’t have enough capability and capacity to take a more real-time lead role in disorder-related intelligence functions.

The wider police intelligence network is fragmented when it comes to dealing with intelligence on disorder. There are several separate intelligence functions, departments and teams across the police service that deal with aspects of intelligence on disorder. However, each has developed its own processes in response to specific crime types, policing themes or individual priorities. They each apply different priorities and use different terminology to inform risk assessments aligned to their core functions.

The police service needs to have a better intelligence strategy or plan in place. At a time of national emergency, this plan should be clear and obvious to all. Instead, as one senior intelligence officer described; the police service “wrote the manual as it happened”.

HMICFRS commented that intelligence on disorder isn’t a priority for the police service. This was evident in the POPS SRAs in 2023 and 2024 that graded the threat of disorder at a national level as “low”.

The lack of prioritisation and inadequate risk assessment is also clear in Government assessments and commentary in its National Risk Register about “the most serious risks facing the United Kingdom”. HMICFRS are concerned that the National Risk Register 2025 doesn’t adequately reflect the future risk of disorder at the national strategic level.

The police service and government intelligence functions need to revise how they work together on intelligence capacity and capabilities during national emergencies. In this case, the response to widespread disorder.

Since HMICFRS recommendations made in 2011, the police service has made some progress in reviewing its intelligence-led approaches to disorder. For example, it has established NPoCC and SIB. However, the inspectorate found that the police service hadn't fully implemented their recommendations, or those in reports from other agencies. As a result, the police service has missed opportunities to improve its capacity, capability and approach when dealing with intelligence and information on disorder.

The police service needs to properly classify and prioritise intelligence on disorder, and intelligence capacity and capability across the police network need to be better aligned. If this is achieved, the police service should be better prepared for future disorder. It will also be able to properly assess the strategic risk of disorder at national, regional and local levels.

Some people, including politicians, and many media outlets have suggested that the disorder was the result of well-organised and co-ordinated action by extremist groups. Others stated that the disorder was caused by deliberate, targeted disinformation from a variety of sources. However, HMICFRS found that the causal factors were more complex than were initially evident. Some of the main reasons for the widespread disorder were social deprivation, austerity and the economic downturn, political policies and decisions on migration and asylum, and decreasing trust and confidence in policing.

HMICFRS commented on how the police service simply hasn't kept pace with the fast-developing nature of online communications. In general, forces haven't invested enough in resources and technology. This means many forces have limited capability to effectively manage and respond to online content.

The police service hasn't fully responded to recommendations made by HMICFRS in a variety of previous inspection reports and reviews. As a result, at the time of the disorder it hadn't sufficiently developed its capability to effectively respond to online content.

The police service can't fully control or counter the speed and volume of online content, whether the content is legitimate or presents a risk. However, what is clear to the inspectorate, social media commentators, and academic researchers is that the police service must do more to communicate online and fill the information void with the truth. Forces must provide a true narrative online to reach people who may be searching for information. They must be robust in countering online content that contains misinformation or disinformation. The police service must communicate the facts repeatedly, continuously and effectively as circumstances change and develop. If not, others will take over the narrative with overwhelming amounts of online content.

The police service doesn't have a cohesive approach to handling online content in relation to disorder. The NPCC's 2019 'Social Media Project: Target operating model' was only published as guidance. It wasn't implemented by all forces and is already outdated. In the absence of any police power to remove illegal online content at its source, the strength of

the police voice and influence becomes even more important. The police service must not remain silent. It must respond quickly. Some forces showed that this is possible.

The inspectorate commented on how the Online Safety Act 2023 is complex. The provisions and powers within it are only partly in place. The Act is being implemented in three phases. It is expected to be fully in force in 2026. Ofcom is the independent regulator for communications services. It has published a “roadmap” to regulation, setting out its overall approach. The Act requires providers to implement systems and processes to reduce the risk that their services are being used to post illegal content, and to remove such content when they are alerted to it. These new safety duties are now in effect. Since 17 March 2025, Ofcom can enforce them, however the Act doesn’t give Ofcom or the police the power to remove illegal online content. HMICFRS are concerned that in practice the Act may make no significant difference to the police service’s ability to respond to online content connected to rapidly evolving serious disorder.

Some senior police officers HMICFRS spoke with felt that the investigative workload following the disorder wasn’t shared equally. Others felt that national mobilisation mutual aid arrangements to support investigations weren’t clear. The inspectorate found that investigative officers weren’t included in the POPS-related elements of the Strategic Policing Requirement. This means forces aren’t obliged to supply them, even when the national mobilisation plan is activated. Individual chief constables had to decide whether to request or release investigative resources to support other forces. This contributed to serious investigative pressure across some forces during and after the disorder, particularly those that made many arrests.

HMICFRS commented on how the police worked rapidly and effectively to investigate crimes associated with the disorder. They quickly brought many offenders to justice for their crimes. NPCC data shows that police arrested 1,804 people during Operation Navette in response to the disorder. Forces brought 1,071 charges against suspects. Forces told HMICFRS that they received good support from the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and HM Courts & Tribunals Service (HMCTS). During the disorder, some courts sat for longer periods and at weekends.

## **Recommendations**

Three recommendations are made within the report:

### **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 serious 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; and
- 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; and
- 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, should create a plan and begin work to improve how the police service investigates offences associated with large-scale disorder. They should plan to:

- revise the public order public safety Strategic Policing Requirement to include and specify the range of investigative resources that can be deployed when the national mobilisation plan is activated
- make sure that senior investigating officers receive training and guidance to better manage investigations into widespread disorder
- make sure that there is an investigation plan or strategy that can be used by all forces at times of a national police mobilisation to disorder
- make sure that all forces routinely carry out structured debriefs of suspects and offenders, to obtain potential evidence or intelligence about disorder.

### **Areas For Improvement**

There were no areas for improvement.

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

Norfolk Constabulary welcomes the publication of this Tranche 2 report following the rapid review that HMICFRS have undertaken into the police response to the wide-scale public disorder seen in July and August 2024.

We acknowledge the Inspectorate's assessment that the police services must improve in the ways set out in the three recommendations they make in the report, themed around improving how the police service collects, analyses, and communicates intelligence about disorder, improving the understanding and response to the risk associated with online content, and improving how offences associated with large-scale disorder are investigated.

We welcome the emphasis that HMICFRS places on the important role that neighbourhood policing has in building trust and gathering community intelligence. I am committed to further strengthening our local policing model, ensuring that my officers are fully embedded within the communities they serve.

I note the findings and recommendations outlined in this report and recognise the critical importance of learning from these events to strengthen the collective preparedness and response of the Police Service to any future incidents of serious disorder.

The recommendations that have been made require all Chief Constables to work with the National Police Chief's Council, the College of Policing, and the Home Office to deliver the required improvements. Norfolk Constabulary is determined to play its part in delivering these improvements to ensure public confidence, safety, and operational resilience in the face of future challenges.

In conjunction with Suffolk Constabulary, our joint Specialist Operations Command will work with our regional and national partners to consider and implement the report's recommendations.

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

I welcome the Tranche 2 HMICFRS report and note its findings and recommendations.

The report provides useful information and observations regarding the context in which the disorder of 2024, and the police response, took place. As such, the complexities of the context and the gaps in policing response are set out and remedies sought in the recommendations.

While the county of Norfolk was not directly affected by the disorder, the Constabulary was called upon to provide mutual aid through the Strategic Policing Requirement. As such, the recommendations set out by the HMICFRS will have operational implications for the Constabulary.

I look forward to the NPCC and Norfolk Constabulary's consideration and implementation of these recommendations. Given the shared service with Suffolk Constabulary, I will work with my counterpart in Suffolk to periodically review the implementation to ensure that suitable scrutiny and accountability is brought into this area of work as the public would expect.

### **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 OPCON website.