

Norfolk Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) response to inspections of Norfolk Constabulary 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 to recommendations in inspectors reports within 56 days.

Inspection Title:	HMICFRS – An inspection of how well the police tackle serious youth violence
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Police Forces:	All local forces in England and Wales
Link to Report:	https://www.justiceinspectrates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/publications/inspection-of-how-well-the-police-tackle-serious-youth-violence/

KEY FINDINGS:

This thematic inspection conducted by His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS), at the request of the Home Office, examined how well the police tackle serious youth violence. Within the report HMICFRS cover the following subjects:

- How the police work with Violence Reduction Units (VRUs) and partner organisations to reduce serious youth violence
- How well the police use their powers to reduce serious youth violence, and whether they understand racial disproportionality
- How well the police work with partner organisations and take a public health approach to serious youth violence.

HMICFRS secured support from His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Probation and Ofsted. They inspected twelve police force areas (Norfolk Constabulary was not one of them), ten with a Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) and, for contrast, two without.

The Inspectorate reviewed more than 300 documents provided by forces, VRUs and Community Safety Partnerships. Fieldwork for this inspection took place in January and February 2022, while pandemic-related guidance to restrict contact in the workplace was in place. The Inspectorate held remote video interviews and focus groups with relevant officers and staff including:

- Chief officers responsible for tackling serious youth violence
- Heads of VRUs

- Senior responsible officers appointed by Police and Crime Commissioners to oversee VRUs
- Senior managers in some partner organisations

Furthermore, HMICFRS also spoke to members of Independent Advisory Groups (IAG) that work with Police Forces. In addition to this, the Inspectorate reviewed a sample of monitoring data submitted to the Home Office from the ten Police Force areas with VRUs that were inspected.

HMICFRS also commissioned 'User Voice' to interview some young people who had been both perpetrators and targets of serious youth violence. The charity conducted face-to-face interviews with 13 young people aged between 18 and 24 years old, all of whom were in prison, young offender institutions or under probation supervision.

HMICFRS found that some forces were using intelligence to support their approach to serious youth violence, but more work is needed, particularly in the way police understand their responsibility to use diversion instead of prosecution to conclude certain investigations. Police in many forces still weren't recording ethnicity data well enough, which was preventing them from understanding the full extent of racial disproportionality in serious youth violence.

In addition to this, HMICFRS suggested that in order to reduce serious youth violence, police need strong partnerships with organisations involved in education, health, social services, housing, probation, youth offending services and victim services.

Recommendations:

There were four recommendations made by HMICFRS in their report; two of these were directed to forces and Chief Constables across England and Wales, and these are detailed below using the same numbering contained within the report itself:

Recommendation 3

By 31 March 2024, Chief Constables should make sure their officers are trained in the use of Home Office crime outcome 22.

Recommendation 4

By 31 March 2024, Chief Constables should make sure their forces, through data collection and analysis, understand the levels of racial disproportionality in serious youth violence in their force areas.

CHIEF CONSTABLE RESPONSE TO REPORT AND ANY RECOMMENDATIONS:

This report entitled “An inspection of how well the police tackle serious youth violence” was a thematic inspection conducted by His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) at the request of the Home Office. In this inspection, HMICFRS examined how well the police address serious youth violence to reduce violent crime involving young people, particularly young people between the ages of 14 to 24 years.

Twelve force areas were inspected. Ten of these areas had a Violence Reduction Unit (VRU), which were introduced with government funding in 2019 in 18 parts of the country that had high instances of violent crime. They were intended to bring together police, local government, health, community leader and other organisations to address violent crime by understanding its causes and responding in a co-ordinated way. The number of VRUs was increased to 20 in 2022, and they are funded until March 2025. Two forces that don’t have a VRU were also inspected for contrast.

Whilst Norfolk Constabulary was not one of the twelve forces inspected, the report provides four recommendations. The first two recommendations relate to VRUs and are for the Home Office to progress. The other two recommendations were relevant to all police forces in England and Wales.

Norfolk Constabulary accepts both recommendations and will continue to make progress in these areas to deliver the standards outlined. The Constabulary’s Community Safety Department has reviewed the forces current position against each recommendation and has developed a clear plan to achieve them both by 31 March 2024.

Recommendation 3

By 31 March 2024, Chief Constables should make sure their officers are trained in the use of Home Office crime outcome 22.

All recorded crimes will be assigned a Home Office outcome code when the investigation has been concluded. Outcome 22 is a code that police forces can use as an alternative to prosecution in appropriate cases. It is aimed at preventing reoffending and changing behaviour by addressing the root causes of the offending. It allows the accused the opportunity to engage with diversionary, educational or intervention activity, keeping them out of the criminal justice system. HMICFRS found that some officers had a flawed understanding of outcome 22, which undermined its use in those forces.

Norfolk Constabulary will continue to work with local criminal justice partners, including the Norfolk Youth Justice Service, to ensure that outcome 22 is being used as an out of court disposal option in appropriate cases. We will ensure that this approach is supported by refreshed training material and training opportunities for our officers.

Recommendation 4

By 31 March 2024, Chief Constables should make sure their forces, through data collection and analysis, understand the levels of racial disproportionality in serious youth violence in their force areas.

HMICFRS found that the forces they inspected weren't recording protected characteristics of victims well enough, and as a result they weren't able to adequately assess and address any racial disproportionality in serious youth violence, or other areas of crime, in their communities.

The National Police Chiefs Council is developing a set of Operational Recording Standards and guidance for the consistent and accurate recording of data about protected characteristics, including ethnicity data, across policing systems. We are supporting this national workstream alongside other police forces who use the Athena database as their crime recording system, to ensure that we can implement the new Operational Recording Standards when they are published. This will provide us with a more robust and accurate data set to analyse the extent of racial disproportionality in serious youth violence, and other crime types, in Norfolk.

At a local level, we have developed a data dashboard which provides person-focused information about victims, suspects, and offenders who are under the age of 18. The dashboard provides evergreen content and the opportunity for real time data interrogation by date range, demographics, geographics, crime type and outcomes (including outcome 22). This dashboard provides an early indication of potential over-representation and disparity. As the dashboard is further developed, data slicers will be added which will identify risk markers such as knife crime, Child Criminal Exploitation, Child Sexual Exploitation, County Lines and gangs. The intention is for the police data to be overlaid with information held by other partners, and for the data to be used by the police and partners to identify opportunities for prevention activity and earlier interventions, with the aim of reducing youth offending and re-offending.

PCC RESPONSE TO REPORT AND ANY RECOMMENDATIONS:

As PCC Norfolk, I regard HMICFRS reports as valuable guidance to assist in targeting my scrutiny of the policing service provided by Norfolk Constabulary to the public of Norfolk.

I welcome my Chief Constable's positive response in which he embraces both recommendations applicable to policing.

My office already has a role in supporting the Constabulary by commissioning diversion schemes in support of Outcome 22, but I will review our direct contribution and also the additional contribution we might be able to make by convening partnerships. Norfolk is fortunate to have a single Community Safety Partnership, with its staff embedded in my office, spanning the County Council and all seven district councils, which greatly facilitates coordination of partnership work across the public, private and charity sectors within the county.

I support the Chief Constable's intent to implement the NPCC's Operational Recording Standards and the local development of a data dashboard in order to monitor racial proportionality.

For Office Use Only:

- ✓ Response forwarded to HMICFRS Section 55 Responses
- ✓ Response forwarded to Chief Constable
- ✓ Response forwarded to Police and Crime Panel
- ✓ Response published on the OPCCN website