



## **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:**

State of Policing – The Annual Assessment of Policing in England and Wales 2023

### **Published on:**

19 July 2024

### **Publication Types:**

Annual reports

### **Police Forces:**

All local forces in England and Wales

### **Link to Report:**

[State of Policing: The Annual Assessment of Policing in England and Wales 2023 - His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services \(justiceinspectrates.gov.uk\)](https://justiceinspectrates.gov.uk)

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

13 September 2024

### **Key Findings**

The 'State of Policing Annual Assessment of Policing in England and Wales 2023' is HM Chief Inspector Andy Cooke's second report to the Secretary of State, under section 54(4A) of the Police Act 1996. The report contains his independent assessment, as His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary, of the efficiency and effectiveness of policing in England and Wales. It is based on the inspections HMICFRS carried out between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024.

The police are trying to rebuild public trust and confidence by ensuring only the right people can join the police and stay in the police. They have been doing this by improving vetting, rooting out corruption and tackling misconduct. However, there is still much that needs to improve, and the service must continue to focus on this area. The evidence is clear

that neighbourhood policing is the most effective way to build community confidence. Effective neighbourhood policing is vital for preventing crime and disorder. Investigating and detecting crime will always be essential, both as a deterrent and to bring justice for victims. The specific activities that have been shown to have a causal effect on public confidence when implemented in combination are:

- Engaging with communities to identify crime and disorder problems that matter to the public, and prioritising those that matter most.
- Problem-solving to tackle the underlying causes of crime and disorder that matter most to the public.
- Patrolling in certain areas to reassure and engage with the public and reduce crime.

The number of neighbourhood police officers is increasing. Between 31 October 2019 and 31 March 2023, police officer numbers increased by almost 21,000 nationally as a result of the Police Uplift Programme. For neighbourhood policing officers and staff to be fully effective, they need to be properly trained, led and managed. Unfortunately, on too many occasions, neighbourhood policing officers and staff are the first to be diverted away from their normal roles to respond to periods of peak demand in other aspects of policing. This negatively affects their ability to perform the core functions of neighbourhood policing, such as community engagement and problem-solving.

The level of crime in England and Wales continues on a long-term downward trajectory. It should always be recognised that the test of police efficiency is the absence of crime and disorder, and not the visible evidence of police action in dealing with it. However, some crime types, such as violence against women and girls, are still highly prevalent in society. Police forces are increasingly trying to prioritise tackling violence against women and girls. Some serious crimes, such as homicide, have reduced. The homicide rate gradually increased from the mid-1970's to a peak in the early 2000's. Over the past two decades, the risk of being a victim of homicide has substantially reduced. Police recorded crime figures showed an increase of 32% in shoplifting offences between 30 September 2022 and 30 September 2023. A survey of British Retail Consortium members in 2023 found that levels of shoplifting in ten major cities had risen by an average of 27%. In some forces there is a lack of performance management and insufficient oversight and scrutiny of Public Protection Units. In part, this is due to some forces not having effective governance arrangements in place.

Another theme identified is that senior leaders don't always understand enough about the safeguarding activities they oversee. This leads to forces not performing as well as they could, or decisions being made with the intention of managing demand rather than aiming to make the public safer. Some forces need to improve their governance structures and the training and development opportunities they provide to senior officers.

Too many victims of crime are still being let down by the police and the wider criminal justice system. Victims want to receive a responsive, thorough and caring service from the police and criminal justice system. Unfortunately, too often, they are left disappointed by the response they receive. The main reasons victims are dissatisfied are clear:

- The police still aren't getting the basics right.
- Outcomes of police investigations don't always meet victims' expectations.
- Too often, the criminal justice system isn't providing access to justice.

Given the high demands the police face it isn't always easy to provide these services, however too often some forces aren't doing as good a job as they should be. There were often unacceptable delays in the phone being answered, particularly for non-emergency 101 calls. In too many cases, forces didn't identify vulnerability and repeat victims. There were too many investigations with inadequate supervisory oversight, and forces were closing investigations where there were still reasonable lines of enquiry that should have been pursued. Despite the increasing focus of Chief Constables on responding to the public and investigations, it isn't yet translating into better performance. One of the consequences of poor performance is that too few criminal investigations are leading to an offender being charged or receiving an out-of-court disposal.

Crime has always evolved with opportunity. Given the increasing extent that the public use technology and spend their lives online, the rise in fraud and cybercrime isn't a surprise. Taken together, fraud and cybercrime now make up nearly 50% of all crime. Fraud is now the crime type with the highest level of victimisation. According to the Crime Survey for England and Wales, in the year ending 30 September 2023, 1 in 17 adults were a victim of fraud. There were 3.2 million fraud offences, constituting 38% of all crime. Given the volume and nature of fraud, it will always be difficult for the police to provide an adequate investigation for those crimes, which means the focus must be on prevention. Fraud isn't a problem the police service can solve alone; the Government, wider public sector, businesses and the public all have a role to play in effective prevention.

Access to justice is the hallmark of a civilised society, but the criminal justice system isn't working properly. Too often, justice is difficult to access. Although the number of prosecutions has been declining for many years, there are longer court backlogs and prisons that are fuller than ever. HMICFRS suggest that the Government should consider setting up a Royal Commission on criminal justice as fundamental reform is long overdue.

There are more police officers than ever. As of 31 March 2023, the number of full-time equivalent police officers in England and Wales reached an all-time high of 147,430 officers. By 30 September 2023, the figure dropped slightly to 147,098. Many of these officers are still inexperienced and the full benefit of them joining the service is yet to be felt by forces and communities. In the year ending 31 March 2023, inexperience reached a peak, with 36% of officers having fewer than five years of service. The inexperience of these officers, combined with the resources that are required to train and supervise them, is one of the greatest challenges forces continue to face. Chief Constables need to hire the number of police officers and staff that they require for their local area. But the Government's police officer target is stopping them from doing this and is leading to forces having fewer staff than they need. At the time of the report, too many police officers and staff do not feel valued by the public, the Government, or their force. Some have unacceptably high workloads and others aren't getting the support they need to develop and reach their full potential.

The way that the police are funded is an area of increasing concern. The Police Allocation Formula (the 'funding formula') is outdated and unfair. Funding should be distributed so that it goes to where it is needed most, however this currently isn't the case. Most of the funding for the police comes from two main areas: a central government grant and Council Tax bills. The police force areas that need the funding most can struggle to raise money through increasing Council Tax, which increases inequality between forces. The Government should fix the funding formula at the earliest opportunity.

In addition to receiving a fair share of the total funding, forces need to have a reasonable degree of certainty about how much money they will receive over a multi-year period that covers at least three financial years. This allows them to plan their spending and the services they will provide to meet community needs.

For many years, the police haven't received enough funding to help them make large capital investments, such as purchasing or renovating buildings and buying ICT equipment or vehicles. In response, police forces aren't investing in all the assets they need to be efficient and effective. The police estate is ageing, and its ICT systems are often inadequate.

## **Recommendations**

Four recommendations are made within the report, none of which are directed at Chief Constables. All four were directed at the Government and Home Secretary:

### **Recommendation 1**

By 1 April 2025, the Government should abolish the fixed police officer numbers target in favour of a more balanced performance framework.

### **Recommendation 2**

By 1 April 2026, as part of the next spending review, the Government should provide police forces with a multi-year funding settlement that covers at least three financial years. As part of this, the Government should:

- conclude its review of the police allocation formula and make changes to ensure that funding is distributed according to the needs of communities; and
- substantially increase the amount of capital funding that it provides to forces.

### **Recommendation 3**

By 1 April 2025, the Home Secretary should develop legislative proposals to grant additional powers to the inspectors of constabulary. And they should write to HM Chief Inspector to explain these plans.

### **Recommendation 4**

By 1 December 2025, as part of the next spending review, the Government should increase the funding allocated to the inspectorate to adequately reflect the scope and scale of the work of the inspectorate.

## **Areas For Improvement**

There are no areas for improvement made.

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

I welcome the latest State of Policing Report and agree with many of the observations and recommendations contained within the report. The Constabulary particularly recognises the need to improve our service levels for 101 calls and to enhance our service for victims of fraud. We note the observations relating to violence against women and girls and again share the ambition to improve services in these areas. However, these areas along with many of the other recommendations in the report, require substantial investment for the required improvements to be made.

Whilst the Constabulary agrees with the recommendations relating to the need to revise the funding formula, that will simply lead to an alternative means of cutting a cake which is too small for policing to meet the expectations that the public and the Constabulary desire policing to meet. Providing police forces with full financial flexibility through the removal of ring-fenced grants would be the single biggest lever which could be pulled to allow the issues set out in this report to be addressed.

I share the concerns set out in the report regarding the state of the wider Criminal Justice System. Victims and witnesses are waiting too long for court cases and justice is being delayed. For the Constabulary, this results in higher demand as the offending behaviour of suspects is not being addressed, and it creates a greater work volume for investigators as contact with victims needs to be maintained over longer periods. However, locally we continue to deliver strong results including:

- An 11.6% reduction in crime (ONS July data release).
- Consistently in the top three of forces for solving all crime types.
- The highest solve rate for shoplifting in the Country.
- An average time to answer 999 calls of 6 seconds.

We remain determined to continue to deliver these results in the months ahead.

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

As a new Police and Crime Commissioner, I find the State of Policing Report 2023 interesting for many reasons: some operational, some strategic, and some political. Making clear his frustrations with the previous Government's slowness to respond to his previous recommendations, HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary's observations paint a picture of a police service which is largely doing its best to serve the public despite the previous Government's interventions.

As a Norfolk resident and the county's PCC, I am pleased that Norfolk Constabulary has a strong record in many of the areas in which the State of Policing Report notes shortfalls nationally, such as shoplifting and crime detection. However, as the report makes plain, the criminal justice system in the round has been failing for years. As the most visible and obvious link in the criminal justice chain for most people, the police are being let down by the weaknesses elsewhere in the system, as are victims of crime. These compounded failures have led to a downward spiral of trust and confidence in policing in the wider public. That the report recognises this situation, and also recognises that the police need to do more but cannot do so in isolation, is welcome.

I broadly welcome Recommendation 1, that by 1 April 2025, the Government should abolish the fixed police officer numbers target in favour of a more balanced performance framework. Similarly, Recommendation 2 is broadly accepted although I note some striking omissions. In calling for the Government to provide police forces with a multi-year funding settlement by 1 April 2026 that covers at least three financial years, the report recommends that the Government should:

- conclude its review of the police allocation formula and make changes to ensure that funding is distributed according to the needs of communities; and
- substantially increase the amount of capital funding that it provides to forces.

The report makes helpful observations on the imbalance between Home Office funding and Council Tax precept revenues, and the drawbacks of an over-reliance on Council Tax precept to deliver local policing. I am, however, disappointed by the lack of recognition of the need for flexibility in funding settlements to forces so that specific needs can be addressed locally. Further, there is no acknowledgement of the effect of, or need for a route to address in that funding settlement, the uncosted recommendations that HMICFRS makes with respect to improvements that they recommend to individual forces. Experience tells me that Norfolk Constabulary want to improve the service they provide to the public and there is a recognition of the power of the HMICFRS recommendations to help them do so. However, the lack of costings leads to a furtherance of the mismatch between, on the one hand the legitimately raised public and Government expectations of the police and, on the other hand, the police's practical ability to deliver on those expectations.

I would therefore observe that if Recommendations 3 and 4, which relate to HM Inspectorate, are delivered then there should be a consequent improvement in the quality of recommendations to individual forces. This change should recognise the cost implications of those recommendations and provide an appropriate and strengthened

feedback loop to the Home Office to advocate for the practical and financial implications of those recommendations' implementation.

**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.