

Commissioner's response to Staffordshire Police Public Performance Report (incorporating Specified Information Order Statement on National Crime and Policing Measures)

Staffordshire Commissioner for Police, Fire & Rescue and Crime Ben Adams held his first police Public Performance Meeting since his re-election earlier this year on October 7 2024. The Commissioner remains keen that the key measures, revisited each meeting, will demonstrate the progress being made against delivering the service-level ambitions in his Police & Crime Plan, the Staffordshire Policing Plan, and the National Crime & Policing Measures (NCPM) in the government's Beating Crime Plan. Where appropriate, these are highlighted as local priorities or those that form the national Digital Crime Performance Pack (DCPP). This formal response to the performance report is designed to satisfy the statutory requirement to comment on Staffordshire's contribution to the national measures. The Commissioner is satisfied that, where appropriate, Staffordshire Police have used local data to demonstrate their current position and we await guidance on the new government's intentions regarding the existing NCPM measures.

The Commissioner welcomed his new Deputy Commissioner David Evans and Chief Constable Chris Noble, Chief Superintendent Paul Talbot, Head of Force Contact, and Chief Superintendent Emily Clarke, Head of County Command.

1. Emerging Challenges

The Commissioner shared the renewed focus of his new Police & Crime Plan, currently under consultation, which prioritises public confidence, prompt contact and impactful partnerships to tackle particular offence types, business crime, rural crime and roads policing. The Commissioner was keen to reflect on progress since the last meeting including the outcome of the latest published HM Inspectorate of Constabulary inspection report.

The Chief introduced the performance report and noted that, following the uncomfortable period of Engage, he was pleased that HMICFRS are satisfied with the improvements the force has made in efficiency and effectiveness and legitimacy arrangements demonstrating at least one grade improvement in each headline area. Staffordshire Police are one of the most improved forces over the last 12 months and this is still improving. The Commissioner is comfortable that HMICFRS have given this feedback and that the force can continue moving towards returning to an outstanding police force.

2. Key Headlines

Police recorded crime is down 6% and criminal justice outcomes are up 1.7%, with public confidence beginning to improve. The Commissioner has seen more communication directly to the public through the Local Policing Teams (LPTs) and PCSOs working with communities, which he hopes will positively impact root causes of anxiety. The Commissioner noted that during a recent commissioning exercise, there has been an increase in the force offering restorative justice mechanisms to aid victims in their recovery. In addition, the Commissioner is keen to understand what the force is learning from complaints and, as this will be an agenda item for the Police Fire & Crime Panel in January 2025, there will be an opportunity to bring more detail back to the next Public Performance Meeting.

3. Public Confidence & Victim Surveys

3.1. Public Perception Surveys

Headline figures show Staffordshire in a comparable light compared with most similar forces and there is even more detail at LPT level now. The force is keen to reduce variation across LPTs and the detail shown here is used as part of individual team performance management to encourage communication and sharing what works to improve public confidence.

3.2. Improve Satisfaction among Victims.

Satisfaction with investigations continues to improve, alongside satisfaction before and after police contact, but there could be improvement in keeping victims informed about the progress of an investigation.

3.3. Local Complaints, Reviews & IOPC Bulletin

The Commissioner is keen to share with the public at future meetings the force's organisational learning processes and what learning has been identified through the complaints process. For conduct matters in the last 12 months, there have been 45 lessons learnt, 17 learning by reflection, 27 reflective practice review processes and one professional discussion. The Chief was keen to demonstrate that not every complaint needs to be dealt with in a punitive manner, and will start with honest conversations with the complainant and staff member, although there have been more formal outcomes and eventual dismissals where appropriate. Feedback from the IOPC regarding how the force conducts itself is broadly positive when compared against peers and against the force's own standards. The Chief and Commissioner would encourage people to submit complaints to enable continuous improvement.

4. A Local & Responsive Service

4.1. Emergency and Non-Emergency Calls

The Commissioner reassured the meeting that keeping people informed and improving how they are dealt with at the first point of contact via 101 remains a priority. Triage continues to assist in managing 101 demand, and 999 performance has remained stable in the last 3 months. Volumes of 999 calls are reducing slightly, at 4% lower than the previous year.

The total average time to answer 101 calls, including pre-triage and post-triage waits, is currently at 11.5 minutes, although the force acknowledges there are longer outliers. The triage approach to calls for service operates from 8am-10pm, seven days a week, and supports the force to identify and prioritise vulnerability quickly, ensuring immediate support when appropriate. Triage resolves two-thirds of these calls at the first point of contact and there are options for a queue-buster call-back service. However, even with this in place, slide 17 shows the decrease in post-triage calls and the increase in median wait times since January 2024.

In the same period, there was an increase of 47% for Single Online Home contacts, which impacted on capacity within the Contact Centre. Call handlers answer 1-2 calls per hour, compared with 5-6 in similar forces, simply due to the internal processes that are required to be carried out before completing a call. Lateral checks demand and other processes have been changed to other units so that the call handlers can be released sooner to answer new calls. This is already showing benefits in September.

4.2. Response: Grade 1 and Grade 2

The local policing model, moving from 3 response hubs to 10 hubs, has seen LPTs aligned with PCSOs, Specials and detectives (CID). The force is not yet meeting the response targets it sets itself, with less than 50% of Grade 1 incidents attended within 15 minutes. National targets are likely to be 15 minutes

for urban areas and 20 minutes for rural areas, but the Chief is keen to keep the 15-minute target for both and continue to improve the speed of response and service to victims. Slide 18 shows a reduction in incidents across all LPTs, but there are differing demands across Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire, allowing LPT Commanders to analyse data and predict resource needs and activity required locally.

In July 2024, 40.6% of Grade 1 incidents were attended within 15 minutes of the call being opened, with a median attendance time of 17.1 minutes. In July 2024, 34.2% of Grade 2 incidents were attended within 2 hours of the call being received, with an average attendance time of 2 hours 9 minutes. It has only been possible to measure this since the new graded response policy was implemented on 4 August 2023, as prior to this Grade 2 incidents included scheduled appointments which impacted on the data.

High Risk Domestic Abuse (DA) is categorised as a Grade 2, which requires an attendance within 2 hours. However, the sensitivity around DA means that this response may not be the best service to support the victim. A grade 3 safer or convenient appointment could be more appropriate. The force is investing in a technological capability to support face-to-face intervention for DA offences, Enhanced Video Response (EVR), which will allow safe, fast capture of evidence without having to wait for appointments and provide early signposting for victims from DA-trained specialists. The Commissioner requested an update on the progress of this new technology at the next Public Performance Meeting.

4.3. Reducing Neighbourhood Crime

Neighbourhood crime includes burglary residential, personal robbery, theft from and of vehicles, vehicle interference and theft from a person. It remains the key metrics set out in the previous government's Beating Crime Plan and until told otherwise, we will continue to check progress against this.

Neighbourhood Crime is now stable and even reducing in some areas, with the exception of Burglary which is disproportionately affected by crime recording changes in this category, which now include unconnected outbuildings, sheds and garages. Chief Supt Emily Clarke shared the current proactive policing plan process for tackling neighbourhood crime and mentioned that video doorbells and CCTV cameras are more widespread now, capturing attempted burglaries which are also included in this category. To dispel myths, the Chief reiterated that police will attend burglaries and shoplifting offences in Staffordshire following a conversation with victims, unless there is a very clear reason not to as informed by the victim.

4.4. Tackle Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

The Commissioner noted the reported 13% decrease in ASB. All types of ASB have decreased, however the majority of the decrease is in the personal nuisance category -45% (-3,869), due to better identification and classification of behavioural crimes such as harassment. The Commissioner was keen to identify what his office can do to support partners to keep driving ASB down. The Chief is keen to support a structured problem-solving approach. Interventions are being put in place in hot spots and hot dots with the visibility of Safer Streets community wardens, with consistency across Community Safety Partnerships in conjunction with community groups. The Commissioner is hopeful that the new neighbourhood policing commitment from government should be similar, but flexibility is needed to reflect the mix of each force. A two-way relationship is important and the Commissioner asked the Chief to ensure the conversation about impactful partnerships is discussed at future meetings.

4.5. Outcomes

Staffordshire now ranks 12th nationally with positive criminal justice outcomes. The Chief attributes this to a more robust and proactive process with additional officers in force with new skills, and the formation of proactive specialist teams with effective investigation and supervision skills. The balance is



giving the victim a sense of justice, and preventing offending using restorative justice and rehabilitative opportunities, whilst robustly holding the worst offenders to account for the worst offences.

There has been an overall arrest volume increase of 15.6%. Children account for 5.3% of detainees in the last 12 months, and child arrest volume has increased by 17.4%.

The Chief discussed the protests Staffordshire experienced in August and how the Criminal Justice System came together to work in a different way to reach speedier justice. There ought to be some thought around how to make this business as usual to support victims. The Commissioner intends to use Ministry of Justice channels to raise the profile of issues around the court process. Some progress has been made in reducing the time taken to investigate crime but, with limited authority to convene the LCJB, there must be some national intervention to progress tackling court backlogs.

5. Rural Crime

Conversations about rural crime repeatedly arose during election campaigning specifically, with 70% of Staffordshire rural. Rural crime is any crime committed in a rural location where the victim is specifically targeted because of their connection to or involvement in the rural community, economy or area, including wildlife and heritage crime. There has been an 8.9% increase in rural acquisitive crime since 2022 to the value of £1.8m in the last 12 months, with additional heritage and wildlife crimes. Adopting a specific definition has enabled work to begin on developing a performance product on PowerBI.

The team will support LPTs with their identified risks and assist with the implementation of problem-solving interventions, safeguarding tactics, intelligence development and assessing vulnerability across the county command. Engagement has been key to gaining support from partners and some really positive conversations are being held.

6. Retail Crime

In the last 12 months the force has recorded a 21% increase in shoplifting crimes. This is a key focus for all LPTs and daily tasking, follow-up visits and preventative visits are carried out. For shoplifting, Staffordshire is first among most similar forces and 7th nationally (5.259 per 1,000 population).

7. Vehicle Crime

Overall there has been a 10% reduction in vehicle crime in the last 12 months.

8. Roads Policing – KSI

The Deputy Commissioner asked what changes have been implemented recently in roads policing in the county and what the public will see. The local uplift on police officer numbers had already allowed the development of the dedicated roads policing team into a 24/7 service. Staffordshire had a collaboration with regional forces covering the motorway network, and made the decision to bring the motorway team in-house and focus on safer roads and denying criminals use of arterial roads. This change, which went live a few days ago, has uplifted numbers in the roads policing team providing new opportunities for a proactive focus on criminality using the roads. The resource can be accessed by all Staffordshire proactive teams and enables a much more joined-up and immediate approach to specific operations. The road network is a community and Staffordshire can now focus on providing a neighbourhood and partnership approach to roads policing.

Killed and serious injury road traffic collisions have increased by 37% (96) compared to the previous year, which is an increase of 52% (122) in the last 12 months compared to the 2019/2020 baseline.

Roads Policing – Motoring Offences

Slide 32 shows the variety of motoring offences prosecuted within the force area. There has been a 10% increase in speed camera offences in the last 12 months. This is related to a month of focused activity in April 2024 around the 'Fatal 4' factors (speeding, use of mobile phones, not wearing seatbelts and driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs), and also upgrading two old camera vans with new vans and equipment. The significant increase of mobile phone offences in April 24 was due to focused activity and recent replacement of camera technology.

Roads Policing: Community Speed Watch (CSW)

Speeding, mobile phones use and seatbelt offences are still a concern for local people and the impact of volunteer CSW teams cannot be underestimated. Roads policing is community policing, as much about education as enforcement. The Commissioner will be writing a letter asking specific schools to engage with road safety education as part of the Safer Roads Partnership.

9. Support Victims and Witnesses

78.4% of victim details are sent to the Victim Gateway within 48 hours so they can receive timely support and advice to aid their recovery. 91% of victims have a victim contract added to their investigation on the police IT system, NICHE, further demonstrating compliance with the Victims Codes of Practice.

10. National Crime Performance Measures

10.1. Reduce Murder and other Homicide (NPCM)

Alcohol, drug misuse and mental health are common factors in murder investigations. Many of these murders are the result of broader social issues and require a long-term holistic approach to breaking the generational cycle of violence.

Staffordshire is not an outlier in national Homicide data from the national Digital Crime and Performance Pack, sitting 6th out of 8 most similar forces and 26th out of 42 forces for rate of homicides in two years per million. The Chief noted there was no increase in particular (+1) and the force will continue to focus on tackling domestic abuse, intervening early with a Violence Against Women & Girls approach focused on offenders and acceptable behaviour.

10.2. Reduce Serious Violence (NPCM): inc Domestic Abuse & Violence against Women & Girls

Serious violence* includes Knife and Gun Crime, Personal and Business Robbery, Violence with Injury

Nationally this is measured through hospital admissions of under-25s for assault with a sharp object, and police-recorded information of offences involving discharge of a firearm. A local measure for knife crime and gun crime is used at the Public Performance Meeting to show Staffordshire's position and this is used as a benchmark for future progress. Knife crime is stable (+1) in the last 12 months compared to the previous 12 months, but has increased by 34% (155) compared to the national Beating Crime Plan baseline 2019. Compared to our most similar forces (MSF), Staffordshire had 0.77 knife crimes per 1,000 population in the 12 months to March 2023, and was 6th (of 8) compared to MSP. This is comparable to the most similar force average. Regionally, Staffordshire was 3rd of 4 forces for the volumes of knife crimes per 1,000 population.

Serious violence decreased by 11% (1,403) in the last 12 months compared to the previous 12 months, and has seen a 20.9% (1,931) increase compared to the national Beating Crime Plan baseline 2019.

Domestic Abuse has decreased by 18% compared to the previous year, linked to changes to the principle crime recording for harassment and stalking offences since June 2023. Violence against women and girls has seen a 11.7% (2,478) decrease compared to the previous 12 months, and a 55.9% (6,674) increase compared to the national Beating Crime Plan baseline. Recent increases (compared to the previous year) can be seen in non-domestic crimes. The data shows a big drop in malicious communications, however some of these incidents are now recorded as stalking and harassment as the focus is on recording the principle or core higher category crime.

10.3. Disrupt Drugs Supply and County Lines (NPCM)

Staffordshire is not a national outlier for recorded drugs crime within the drugs section (per 100,000 population) of the Home Office DCP, compared to the national baseline 2018/19. Staffordshire had a 4.4% increase in the last 12 months compared to the 2018/19 baseline.

10.4. Tackle Cyber Crime (NCPM)

Staffordshire uses a local proxy measure to measure cybercrime, incorporating cyber-dependent crimes which are managed nationally by the City of London Police. The National Fraud Intelligence Bureau reviews and disseminates investigations to local forces which were recorded by Action Fraud. Cyber-enabled crimes are those owned by Staffordshire Police which have a cyber/online element to them. Action Fraud cases are reported to National Action Fraud and some cases are forwarded to Staffordshire Police to investigate. There has been an increase of 23.3% in Action Fraud cases reported by Staffordshire residents compared to the national baseline in 2019. There has been a 38% decrease in those referred back to Staffordshire to conduct local investigations against the same baseline. Criminal justice positive outcomes are down. The criminal justice outcomes rate for Action Fraud investigations is 6.9% in the last 12 months to July 2024, and has decreased by 0.2% compared to the previous year. The vast majority (58%) result in a disposal of 'unable to progress the investigation'.

The Commissioner was keen to spend more time on the national policing metrics at the next meeting and will consider bringing them further up the agenda.

11. Enabling Services: HR & Finance Update

11.1. Workforce update, Officer Recruitment & Diversity

The Commissioner discussed officer numbers, which dipped below 2,000, however due to recent intake officer numbers are now above the 2,000 mark but this is not the same for other forces. The Chief discussed how these new recruits are faring in their fledgling careers, touching on the fact that while retention is good, the workload can be heavy going. The force is taking steps to ensure the professional development and welfare of officers and ensure they have the time, space and support they need to do their job effectively. The Commissioner noted the information on staff diversity across the force, and the slide demonstrating Staffordshire is one of the most cost-effective police forces in the country.

11.2. Efficiency & 11.3 Value for money.

Finance, efficiency and saving plans will be discussed in more detail at the next meeting supporting future budget decisions.

The Commissioner noted that the continuation of improvements and achievements in key areas of concern is very positive and urged the force to keep up progress on building an outstanding police service. The Commissioner thanked the Chief Officer team for a useful meeting and asked the Chief to pass on his thanks to all officers and staff in Staffordshire.