

PFCC Report Acknowledgement record

Version:

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| Force | Staffordshire |
| Police and Crime Commissioner | Ben Adams |
| Chief Constable | Chris Noble |
| Title of inspection | State of Policing: The Annual Assessment of Policing in England and Wales 2023 |
| Inspectorate |  <p>HMICFRS Making communities safer</p> |
| Summary of inspection | <p>This report is based on the inspections we carried out between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024. The Police service in England and Wales has faced many recent challenges, but there remains much for it to be proud of. The model of British policing remains fundamentally sound. The power of the Police isn't based on inducing fear, but on securing public co-operation and support. And the vast majority of Police officers, staff, special constables and volunteers are wholeheartedly dedicated to serving the public and to doing the right thing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Police are trying to rebuild public trust and confidence • Too many victims of crime are still being let down by the Police and wider criminal justice system • The Police workforce must be set up to succeed • Police finances are an area of increasing concern • The inspectorate helps to make communities safer, but we need the right powers and sufficient funding |
| Grade | |
| Recommendations | <p>Recommendation 1 By 1 April 2025, the Government should abolish the fixed Police officer numbers target in favour of a more balanced performance framework.</p> <p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.

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| Areas for improvement | |
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Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner’s acknowledgement

This comprehensive report from His Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Constabulary covers a range of issues within and outside of the control of individual Police and Crime Commissioners and Chief Constables. I welcome the acknowledgement of the substantial improvements carried out here in Staffordshire resulting in a move back to routine monitoring.

Restoring public trust and confidence

The report rightly revisits the theme of public trust and confidence. Here in Staffordshire, our most recent local public perception survey over the same period has shown 65% of people agree with the statement ‘Taking everything into account, I have confidence in Staffordshire Police’ compared to 63% in June 2022. This may be an indication that local efforts to engage better with communities, improve basic services and increase visibility in neighbourhoods may outweigh the negative reactions to the misconduct of a small number of officers, often in other parts of the country.

I recognise that there is still much to do, and I agree with the four broad areas the report identifies as factors in improving confidence. This will be a key part of my Police & Crime Plan.

Being transparent with the public is vital and I have established independent scrutiny panels to examine important aspects of Police and public interaction such as stop and search and the use of force. The force also needs to do more to publicise the great work they do.

Focus on improving vetting, rooting out corruption and challenging misconduct features throughout our scrutiny and governance arrangements and remains a priority for me in Staffordshire. The national historic data wash of PND records in 2023 was an important step forward but more needs to be done to increase transparency on vetting decisions and publicising the outcome of misconduct processes.

Investment in neighbourhood policing remains a priority for me, and I am pleased that the report recognises that the need to service response demand and the relative inexperience of neighbourhood

officers are a factor in its current effectiveness. As this experience develops following an unprecedented level of growth over the past few years, I expect the capacity and capability of neighbourhood officers to increase.

With the Chief Constable, I am looking at ways in which the force can improve the way it engages with communities and interacts with people. Importantly, this drive for quality needs to happen throughout the service, not just at first contact and in neighbourhood policing.

As identified in the report, getting the basics right is a fundamental part of this. Whilst the response to 999 calls in Staffordshire is good, I recognise public concerns that requests for service through 101 need to be handled more quickly. Quality of investigation is improving in Staffordshire, having been a previous HMICFRS cause of concern. Both aspects remain a priority for me and the public of Staffordshire and will remain a standing agenda item at my regular public performance meetings with the Chief Constable.

Providing a service to victims and the most vulnerable

From my experience, all organisations in the criminal justice system recognise the importance of supporting victims and are committed to improving the service they provide. Here in Staffordshire, we agree that a combination of competing demands, high workloads, poor communication and lack of experience were the main factors contributing to victims not always receiving the best service.

Victims' Code Compliance is a high priority and I have been vocal about the importance of the quality of these interactions with victims and proof of this quality interaction. Training and supervision within the current 'quality of investigation' workstream has been integral in putting the victim first and the Right Care Right Person policy and partnership approaches being embedded will allow the force to focus on Police matters.

I concur with the finding that "Despite a decreasing number of prosecutions, our prisons are fuller than ever. The courts and legal systems are in disarray, with unacceptable court backlogs, overly bureaucratic processes and a legal aid system that is no longer fit for purpose. This all has a considerable adverse impact on achieving justice for victims of crime and those awaiting trial." National intervention is now required to address the backlogs in the court process which places Staffordshire as the most affected location for court capacity.

Setting up the workforce for success

As the report states, "The greatest asset of the Police service is its workforce. Forces rely on Police officers, staff and volunteers turning up at work and giving their best efforts to provide a high-quality service to communities."

In Staffordshire, as officer numbers have increased through the Uplift programme and local funding, we have reinvested in local policing teams and contact management and have started to see improvements in most areas; however the limited experience of many of our frontline officers means that this is not something that can be improved overnight – it requires training and development, effective leadership, performance management and accountability.

Along with many forces, Staffordshire Police are struggling to fill some lower-graded Police staff roles in an increasingly competitive market. Lengthy vetting processes are a factor in this and I am working with the force to see how this can be improved without compromising standards, to avoid people pursuing other opportunities whilst waiting for clearance.

I welcome the report's recognition that Chief Constables must have flexibility in balancing the workforce mix to avoid sub-optimal deployment decisions that are neither effective or efficient. Rigidly applying targets for officer numbers has been important in delivering the Uplift programme but are restrictive at times of financial constraint.

Although in Staffordshire we are not seeing the high levels of attrition reported by some forces, I remain concerned at the impact high workloads can have on officer and staff wellbeing. Overtime working and cancellation of rest days for major events are a factor in this and I appreciate the focus the force has on listening to workforce concerns, not taking difficult resourcing decisions lightly and providing quality wellbeing support.

Funding the Police

The report states: "We found that too many forces were failing to properly understand and manage their own performance. Two of the biggest reasons for this were that forces weren't using data properly to inform their decision-making and they didn't have effective governance processes in place. This prevented many forces from being as efficient, effective and legitimate as they could have been."

Staffordshire Police have made significant advances in their approach to data management and performance products and this is clearly now driving operational decision-making and accountability for performance. They are now extending this to incorporating partner data, to improve their approach to managing vulnerability, for example.

I support the comment in the report that the funding formula for policing needs to be revised and that efforts to do so have not progressed. I also agree that returning to a multi-year funding settlement would greatly assist medium-term financial planning and therefore enable us to be clearer with our communities on our plans and ambitions to improve services. As the report states, capital funding is a major part of this; the level of investment required for large estates and IT projects requires significant levels of borrowing, creating further pressure on revenue budgets.

The Inspectorate

Staffordshire Police have benefitted from improved collaborative working between the APCC, the NPCC and the College of Policing without additional legislation, and I remain committed to responding to inspection reports within 56 days using the new monitoring portal.

With regard to selecting and supporting the right leaders, I see HMICFRS' direct involvement in the selection process for chief officers as a potential conflict of interest. Whilst I would be open to early conversations with regard to the personal style, strengths, knowledge and experience of candidates and their 'fit' with the force, I see the responsibility for the selection process remaining with the PCC. It would be dangerous to blur this responsibility or allow direct influence. Ultimately the primary role of HMICFRS is to inspect the force and potentially highlight shortcomings; should it bear a shared responsibility for the choice of chief officer and the outcomes of that choice with the elected Commissioner?