



THE POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER OF STAFFORDSHIRE AND THE CHIEF CONSTABLE OF STAFFORDSHIRE
Public Protection Unit (PPU) Investment Benefit Realisation

FINAL Internal Audit Report 8.25/26

18 June 2026

This report is solely for the use of the persons to whom it is addressed.

To the fullest extent permitted by law, RSM UK Risk Assurance Services LLP will accept no responsibility or liability in respect of this report to any other party.

OUTCOME OVERVIEW

Background:

We conducted an advisory review of the Public Protection Unit (PPU) Investment Benefit Realisation Programme, which commenced in 2022. The objective was to assess how the programme was managed, including how benefits were identified, tracked, and monitored to support completion and transparency.

A decision paper was presented to the Executive Management Board (EMB) in February 2023. This outlined the need to meet resource levels set out in the PwC Final Report, manage existing demand, and develop new capability in child exploitation and intelligence development. The EMB commissioned further design work. This focused on Child Exploitation and Intelligence Development, alongside Harm Reduction Hub (HRH) growth to manage demand absorbed from the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

Several external reviews highlighted related issues. These included findings from a HMICFRS re inspection, a peer review assessing the force response to the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) national vulnerability action plan, and the Force Management Statement (FMS). The FMS identified that PPU Command had the highest current demand to asset score and the highest future service delivery risk score.

At the time the programme commenced, there was no formal project management framework in place. A framework has since been introduced. At the point of this review, the PPU programme had progressed to post implementation and benefits realisation stage.

This review was undertaken as an advisory review and therefore has not resulted in a formal opinion.

Conclusion

We found that, at the outset, there was a clear understanding of the issues and the high level project objective. We also observed that the project was well documented. This included defined responsibilities, established timelines, and task allocation across each workstream. Regular progress reporting and stakeholder communication were also in place.

However, there was limited clarity on the expected benefits, which were not clearly defined at the start. While some benefits were captured during delivery, these were not aligned to the subsequent Post Implementation Report (PIR). The Force need to learn the lessons identified from this review and ensure that future projects and programmes have clearly defined benefits, that are regularly tracked, monitored and reported.

We agreed one high priority and three medium priority actions with management.

Headline findings:

Our review identified the following issue resulting in one high and three medium priority management action:

Business cases

We reviewed the business cases to identify the expected benefits of the programme and each workstream. No benefits were set out in the draft outline business cases for Intelligence Development or the HRH Uplift. The Child Exploitation draft outline business case included several stated benefits. The PPU Programme Detailed Design: Enabling Services draft outline business case referred to benefits, although these were not clearly defined.

Management advised that no further versions were produced and that these documents represented the final position. Where business cases do not clearly define objectives and expected benefits, the programme lacks direction and there is no clear basis to assess success or failure. **(Medium)**

Benefits Tracking

We reviewed the benefits register provided, which had a last review date of 3 February 2025. Each benefit included a reference number, assigned owner, description, and expected outcome. However, for most benefits, there was no clear explanation of how performance would be measured. We also noted that the progress tracking section was largely incomplete, with many entries not updated and no benefits recorded as achieved.

Our review of the draft outline business cases identified that only the Child Exploitation business case set out expected benefits. However, these were not aligned with those later recorded in the benefits register or reflected in the Post Implementation Report (PIR).

Within the Child Exploitation business case, it was noted that Process Evolution joined the PPU programme in August 2023. One of its deliverables was to establish measurable baselines and targets for the stated benefits by early autumn. We did not receive evidence to demonstrate that this had been completed.

Where benefits are not actively monitored throughout the project lifecycle, there is a risk that corrective action is not taken when required. **(High)**

Project Closure

We reviewed the closure and handover reports for each workstream and team and noted the following:

- The PPU Programme Handover presentation, dated November 2024, included recommendations for outstanding activity with assigned owners, details of continuing projects and their business leads, and defined responsibility for monitoring benefits. It also set out areas for continued improvement and a schedule for completing Post Implementation Reviews. We observed that handover presentations were also produced for individual workstreams using a consistent format, although these provided only limited detail on the transfer of responsibilities and outstanding activity.
- A PPU Programme closure report was produced in December 2024. This outlined achievements with reference to PwC recommendations and the handover, where remaining actions had been assigned. It also covered benefits and objectives, with ownership allocated to any outstanding tasks. Closure reports were produced for individual workstreams; however, these were not consistently completed or dated. **(Medium)**

Programme Boards

We received minutes for both the Programme Board and the PPU Priority Project Board. However, no terms of reference were provided. As a result, we were unable to assess whether the activities of these groups aligned with their intended roles and responsibilities, or how they operated within the wider governance structure. This includes a lack of clarity on how the roles and remit of the two groups were distinguished. **(Medium)**

We found the following control areas to be adequately designed and operating effectively:

Design Options

We confirmed that in autumn 2022, the force commissioned PwC to work with a small project team to review the PPU and develop high level design options. The outputs from this review, along with the proposed investment in a programme team, were presented to the EMB in February 2023. This was followed by a detailed design phase during spring and summer 2023.

The report outlined the key issues and challenges associated with the existing PPU model, and set out options, next steps, objectives, and a high level Target Operating Model.

We also noted that PwC recommendations were progressed through the detailed design phase and were referenced within the outline business cases submitted to the EMB for approval in September 2023.

Communications

We noted from our review of the business cases that three referenced stakeholder engagement. However, these did not specify who the stakeholders were or the methods of communication.

We reviewed presentation materials used for programme 'kick off' meetings across Child Exploitation, MASH, HRH, and Child Protection teams. While formats varied, these generally set out the programme background, roles and responsibilities, activity levels and demand, project design, stakeholders, key milestones, and areas for discussion.

We also confirmed that a communications plan was in place, dated October 2022. This identified the relevant teams and set out how communications would support the programme aims, expected outcomes, and key messages. The plan considered both internal and external stakeholders and outlined communication methods and timelines for the initial phase of the programme.

Project Plan and Timelines

We confirmed that as part of the reporting to the EMB in February 2023 a high level milestones plan was included covering the period April 2022 to December 2024 for the following:

- Work Package Activity.
- Detailed Design (internal/external).
- Business Case - EMB Approval.
- Implementation & Delivery.
- Phased Recruitment - Intakes, Trf, Police Now etc.
- Phased Fleet Delivery.
- Estates, Interim moves.

We confirmed that work breakdown spreadsheets were in place for each project team, covering individual workstreams. These set out tasks, assigned owners, and current status. Dates were recorded based on reporting to the PPU Programme Board, and each document identified the relevant Business Lead and Project Manager.

We also confirmed that highlight reports were presented to the Programme Board. These provided updates against timelines, reported changes in risk profile, and included RAG ratings to indicate progress.

Project Teams

We confirmed that the PPU Programme Lead was identified within the business cases. This individual also chaired both the PPU Programme Board and the PPU Priority Project Board.

From our review of the work breakdown spreadsheets presented to the PPU Programme Board, we confirmed that these recorded the Business Owner and Project Manager for each project team across the relevant business units, along with those responsible for individual tasks.

For the project teams, we obtained terms of reference for the Child Protection Team and the Child Exploitation Team as examples. These documents identified the Chair and members by role title and set out the purpose of the group along with standard agenda items for meetings.

Executive Management Board (EMB) and Change Portfolio Board (CPB)

We received summary meeting notes for the CPB for December 2023 and July and November 2024. These confirmed that the Board received regular updates on projects across the change portfolio, including the PPU.

We also confirmed, from papers issued to the EMB, that the PwC report was reviewed, the programme was approved in February 2023, and business cases were approved in September 2023. In addition, our review of PPU Programme Board papers confirmed that progress and key issues were escalated to the EMB.

Post Implementation Review

We confirmed that a PIR was in progress at the time of this audit.

The report looked back at the project from the internal concerns in 2022 of spiralling demand, inconsistent safeguarding, and workforce resilience challenges and the high level design review by PwC. The report included:

- Measurable improvements.
- Benefits delivered.
- Risks.
- Lessons learnt.
- Recommendations and next steps.
- Achievement against objectives.
- A review of benefits and outcomes.
- A review of costs.

The main post implementation report was accompanied by an appendix which gave a review for each business area. This provided a review of what was delivered against what was proposed, what went well and issues, lessons learnt and next steps, alongside benefits and outcomes.

New Change Management Framework

We reviewed the Change Framework presentation. The stated purpose of the strategy was to enable and deliver sustainable change that strengthens the force, enhances public trust, and supports its people, through well governed and evidence based approaches aligned to strategic priorities.

The presentation set out a structured process, covering stages from initial concept and case for change through to benefits realisation. This included identification of benefits and risks, development of project plans, milestones, communication, ownership, benefits tracking, and post implementation review.

A suite of template documents was referenced, alongside defined team roles and responsibilities. It also included a framework for assessing and monitoring benefits from project initiation through to implementation. In addition, a governance chart outlined responsibilities across the force structure for oversight and approval.

From our review of the Integrated Benefits document, we noted that it provided guidance on recording benefits from the planning stage through to benefits realisation review, including measurement approaches and ownership.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS FOR MANAGEMENT

The action priorities are defined as:

High

Immediate management attention is necessary.

Medium

Timely management attention is necessary.

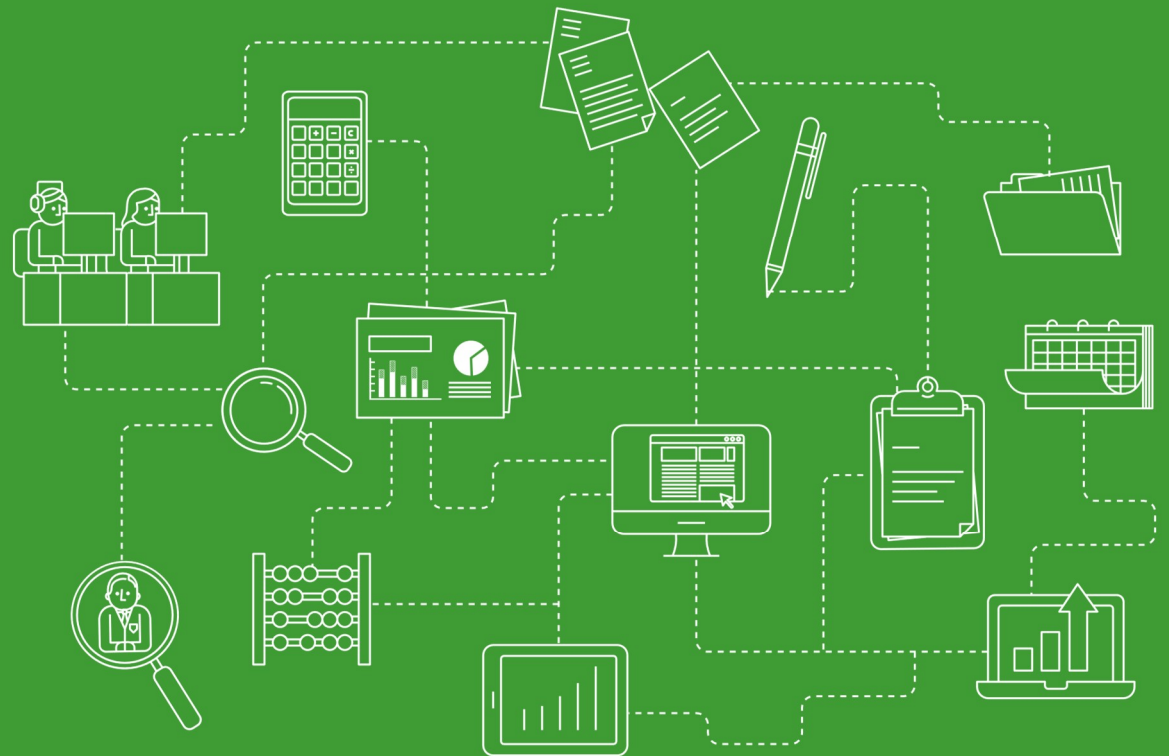
Low

There is scope for enhancing control or improving efficiency.

Ref	Action for management	Priority	Responsible Owner	Date
1	The Force will ensure that business cases clearly outline the objectives and expected benefits of any future projects.	Medium	Head of Strategic Change	Completed Post Audit
2	The Force will ensure for future projects, once planned benefits have been identified these are tracked throughout the life of the project and to the Post Implementation Review.	High	Head of Strategic Change	Completed Post Audit
3	The Force will ensure that where there are multiple workstreams within a project the objective and benefits for each are regularly reviewed and reported to the appropriate Project Board or Governance forum.	Medium	Head of Strategic Change	Completed Post Audit
4	The Force will ensure groups and boards have a defined purpose and that roles and responsibilities are documented within a terms of reference.	Medium	Head of Strategic Change	Completed Post Audit

Detailed Findings and Actions

02



DETAILED FINDINGS AND ACTIONS

The results of our testing are set out below.

Business Case				
Control	<p>Three business cases were developed and approved by the Executive Management Board (EMB) these covered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Exploitation. • Intel Development. • Harm Reduction Hubs. <p>These set out the costs, benefits objectives and risks with each of the proposals. The EMB also received a summary presentation of proposed new model for PPU and the decisions required.</p>			
Findings summary	<p>We reviewed the Programme Detailed Design Summary covering</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Exploitation. • Intel Development. • Harm Reduction Hubs. • Detailed Design. • Work Force Plan. <p>This was a presentation to the EMB referring to the decisions already made and progress on the design stage of the programme. The paper explained what further decisions were required and options available.</p> <p>We also received four outline business cases and cover papers for the EMB. The cover papers explained the previous decisions by the EMB further design work completed with the teams in each business area, and what further decisions were required of EMB. We noted that these were each in a standard format, one covered enabling areas and three covering business units. They all stated the name of the Senior Officer, discussed the background to the project, reasons and issues. We confirmed that while the PPU programme was active, there was also review of enabling functions including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Estates. • Fleet. • L&OD. • IT & Equipment. • Finance. • HR. <p>We reviewed the business cases for a record of the benefits expected from the project and each of these workstreams. For the Intelligence Development Draft outline business case none were listed. There were also none for the Harm Reduction Hubs Uplift draft outline business case. Several were listed for the Child Exploitation draft outline business case. For the PPU Programme Detailed Design: Enabling Services draft outline business case there were references to benefits but were not clearly stated.</p> <p>We were informed that there were no other versions of the business cases stating that they were final. Where a business case does not clearly state the objectives and benefits the project has no direction and no measure of success or failure.</p>			
Management Action 1	The Force will ensure that business cases clearly outline the objectives and expected benefits of the project	Responsible Owner:	Date:	Priority:
		Head of Strategic Change	Completed Post Audit	Medium

Benefits Tracker

Control	A benefits tracker was put in place and was updated at regular intervals during the life of the project and through to the post implementation review.			
Findings summary	We noted that PwC did not identify explicit benefits during the high-level design phase. We received a copy of the benefits register with a last review date of 3rd February 2025 and noted that each benefit had a reference number and owner, a description and expected outcome. However we found that for the majority there was no explanation of how they would be measured. We also noted that the section of the register for recording progress for many had no up date and none of the benefits had been recorded as achieved. We noted that the register recorded 39 benefits that were being tracked across workstreams. We reviewed these against those in the post implementation review and noted those listed as at programme level and those recorded at business unit level did not align with any of those in the register. From a review of the draft outline business cases we noted that only the one covering child exploitation described expected benefits, however these did not align with those later recorded in the register no the post implementation review. From the child exploitation business case, we noted in respect of project benefits it states that Process Evolution joined the PPU programme in August 2023, with one of their deliverables being to provide measurable baselines and targets around the above benefits by early Autumn, however we received no evidence of this, although noted that there was a presentation dated November 2024 on the use of a benefits map If benefits are not monitored through the life of the project there is a risk that corrective action will not take place when required.			
Management action 2	The Force will ensure for future projects, once planned benefits have been identified these are tracked throughout the life of the project and to the Post Implementation Review.	Responsible Owner: Head of Strategic Change	Date: Completed Post Audit	Priority: High

Project closure and handover

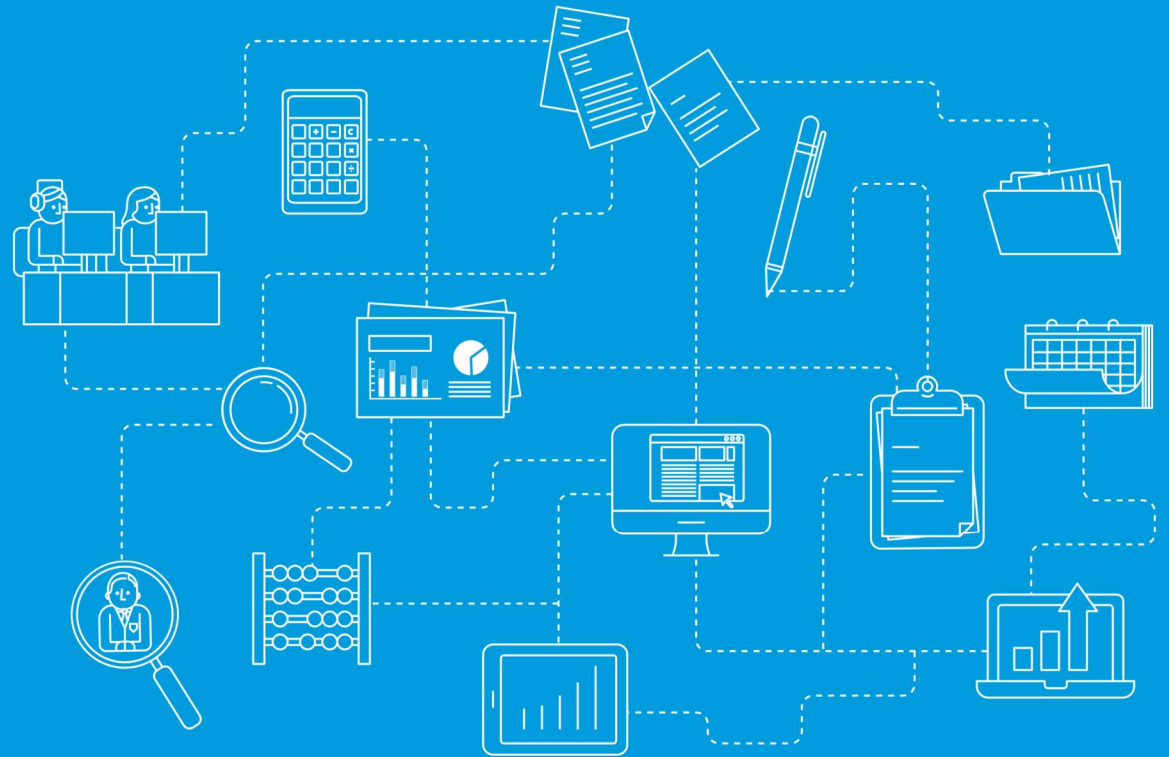
Control	There was a formal stage of closure and handover by each workstream, this included handing over assessments of objectives, risks and benefits and lessons learnt.			
Findings summary	We reviewed the closure and handover reports which covered each of the workstreams and teams and noted: - The PPU Programme Handover presentation was dated November 2024, it included a set of recommendations of outstanding activity and their owners, continuing projects and their business leads, responsibility for monitoring benefits, areas of continuing improvement and a schedule for the completion of post implementation reviews. We also noted that there were handover presentations for the individual workstreams following this same format, but this gave just basic information on the transfer and outstanding activities. - A PPU Programme closure report was produced in December 2024. This outlined the achievements with reference back to PwC recommendations and to the handover where remaining activity had been assigned. It also covered benefits and objectives with any outstanding tasks given an owner. There were also reports for the individual workstreams however these were not fully completed or dated.			
Management action 3	The Force will ensure that where there are multiple workstreams within a project the objective and benefits for each are reviewed.	Responsible Owner: Head of Strategic Change	Date: Completed Post Audit	Priority: Medium

Programme Boards

Control	<p>The PPU Programme Board has the responsibility for oversight of the PPU programme and receive reports from each of the workstreams on progress against milestones, agreeing and monitoring actions to ensure projects remain on course.</p> <p>The PPU Priority Project Board has operational responsibility to ensure tasks are completed and each workstream remains on course towards completion with objectives being achieved.</p>			
Findings summary	<p>We received minutes, agendas and papers of meetings for the Programme Board for October 2022, May, June and November 2023, October and November 2024. We confirmed that at meetings they were receiving and reviewing the Programme Highlight report, updates from individual project teams and from enabling functions.</p> <p>We also confirmed that the agreement of actions and the follow up of actions were included within the minutes, we also noted that there was an action log based on a sample dated September 2023.</p> <p>We received the minutes of the PPU Priority Project Board for September and November 2023 and June and September 2024 and noted at each meeting they received and reviewed the Programme Highlight Report. Meetings also received updates from individual project teams and supporting functions such as Human Resources, Estates and Finance.</p> <p>However we did not receive a terms of reference, so we are unable to give assurance that the activities of these groups were consistent with their roles and responsibilities, or over its relationships within the governance structure, particularly how it is distinguished the roles between these two groups</p>			
Management action ref 4	<p>The Force will ensure groups and boards have a defined purpose, roles and responsibilities documented within a terms of reference</p>	Responsible Owner: Head of Strategic Change	Date: Completed Post Audit	Priority: Medium

Appendices

03



APPENDIX A: SCOPE

The scope below is a copy of the original document issued.

Scope of the review

The scope was planned to provide advisory report on the controls and mitigations in place relating to the objective.

Objective of the risk under review

An audit to understand how this project has been managed including potential benefits are tracked and monitored to ensure completion and transparency.

When planning the audit, the following were agreed:

Areas for consideration:

- Processes for the initial identification of potential benefits, including both financial and qualitative benefits, together with the clarity and robustness of the metrics used to measure them. This will include an evaluation of whether each benefit was clearly articulated, aligned to overall objectives, and whether responsibility for benefit tracking was defined and communicated from the outset.
- Allocation of responsibility for benefit tracking and post project reporting, including whether this remains with the project team or is formally handed over following completion of the project.
- Processes for monitoring progress towards benefit realisation, including the regularity and quality of reporting to appropriate forums for challenge and scrutiny. This will cover how benefits have been measured, the extent to which desired outcomes have been achieved, and the evidence supporting this. Consideration will also be given to the monetisation of benefits and, where benefits are not monetised, the methods used to measure and report savings or qualitative improvements.
- The completeness and accuracy of benefits registers, and how realised benefits compare to those planned and documented in initial business cases.
- Governance arrangements including the identification of any gaps, weaknesses, or areas where oversight and control could be strengthened.
- As part of this we will also consider the impact of changes made as part of the appointment of the Head of Change.

Limitations to the scope of the audit assignment:

- Our review will only consider those areas identified above
- We will not provide assurance that all benefits will be realised and that the strategy is effective.
- Testing will be undertaken on a sample basis only
- We will not provide assurance over the accuracy of all data used
- The results of our work are reliant on the quality and completeness of the information provided to us.
- Our work will not provide an absolute assurance that material errors, loss or fraud do not exist.

Debrief held	8 May 2026
Draft report issued	29 May 2026
Responses received	18 June 2026

Final report issued	18 June 2026
----------------------------	--------------

Internal audit Contacts	Daniel.Harris@rsmuk.com / Dan Harris, Partner and Head of Internal Audit Louise.Davies@rsmuk.com / Louise Davies, Internal Audit Manager
--------------------------------	---

Client sponsor	Sally Blaiklock / ACC
Distribution	Sally Blaiklock / ACC Jane Gould / Project Lead John Bloomer/Chief Finance Officer

We are committed to delivering an excellent client experience every time we work with you. If you have any comments or suggestions on the quality of our service and would be happy to complete a short feedback questionnaire, please contact your RSM client manager or email admin.south.rm@rsmuk.com.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT



Dan Harris, Head of Internal Audit

Email: Daniel.Harris@rsmuk.com

Telephone: **+44 190 868 7915**



Louise Davies, Managing Consultant

Email: Louise.Davies@rsmuk.com

Telephone: **+44 190 868 7894**

rsmuk.com

The matters raised in this report are only those which came to our attention during the course of our review and are not necessarily a comprehensive statement of all the weaknesses that exist or all improvements that might be made. Actions for improvements should be assessed by you for their full impact. This report, or our work, should not be taken as a substitute for management's responsibilities for the application of sound commercial practices. We emphasise that the responsibility for a sound system of internal controls rests with management and our work should not be relied upon to identify all strengths and weaknesses that may exist. Neither should our work be relied upon to identify all circumstances of fraud and irregularity should there be any.

Our report is prepared solely for the confidential use of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner of Staffordshire and the Chief Constable of Staffordshire, and solely for the purposes set out herein. This report should not therefore be regarded as suitable to be used or relied on by any other party wishing to acquire any rights from RSM UK Risk Assurance Services LLP for any purpose or in any context. Any third party which obtains access to this report or a copy and chooses to rely on it (or any part of it) will do so at its own risk. To the fullest extent permitted by law, RSM UK Risk Assurance Services LLP will accept no responsibility or liability in respect of this report to any other party and shall not be liable for any loss, damage or expense of whatsoever nature which is caused by any person's reliance on representations in this report.

This report is released to you on the basis that it shall not be copied, referred to or disclosed, in whole or in part (save as otherwise permitted by agreed written terms), without our prior written consent.

We have no responsibility to update this report for events and circumstances occurring after the date of this report.

RSM UK Risk Assurance Services LLP is a limited liability partnership registered in England and Wales no. OC389499 at 6th floor, 25 Farringdon Street, London EC4A 4AB.