

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

To be read in conjunction with the accompanying January Public Performance Report

Staffordshire Commissioner for Police, Fire & Rescue and Crime Ben Adams held his latest Police Public Performance Meeting on January 21 2025. The Commissioner remains keen that the key measures, revisited each meeting, 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). Where appropriate, these are highlighted in the accompanying performance report as local priorities or those that form the national Digital Crime Performance Pack (DCPP). This formal response is designed to satisfy the statutory requirement to comment on Staffordshire's contribution to national measures. The Commissioner is satisfied that, where appropriate, Staffordshire Police use 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 Deputy Commissioner David Evans and Chief Constable Chris Noble, Deputy Chief Constable Jon Roy and Chief Superintendent Victoria Lee, Head of Public Protection.

1. Emerging Challenges

The Chief introduced the performance report and shared that crime continues to fall with noticeable decreases in stalking and harassment, violence with injury and vehicle offences. Arrests are up 13% and CJ outcomes are increasing. The vast majority of 999 calls are answered within 10 seconds and there are continued improvements in the time taken to answer 101 calls alongside the changes in the force contact centre.

Furthermore, the force's investigation into the violent disorder which blighted Stoke-on-Trent and Tamworth in summer 2024 continues with the latest 200th arrest. A dedicated investigation team will continue to work tirelessly to review all the footage to bring those responsible to justice. The Commissioner asked whether there were any further concerns. National reflections and Staffordshire's input into the recent Home Office Select Committee reflect the importance of proportionality and community cohesion approaches such as in Tamworth and Stoke-on-Trent. Other local protests since then have not reached the disorder levels seen last year.

Public protection capability has improved with the Police uplift campaign and Staffordshire is investing in technology for the future to maintain a robust sustainable service. Police funding settlement matters for the impact it has on victims and communities and we find ourselves in a challenging environment. The force not only needs to maintain the ground made but not slip back once funding issues start to bite. The force is ready to face the savings challenge and has made £15million in savings already.

The Commissioner agreed that policing is in a challenging place but so is the whole country. The current settlement is not covering cost increases, therefore there are real-term reductions. HMICFRS can see the potential of Staffordshire Police's journey to be an outstanding service and it would be a real shame for resources to impact on this journey.

Looking ahead to 2025, the force is committed to implementing the government's Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee to ensure local communities have a more visible and responsive service as part of a continuing commitment to delivering an outstanding local Police service. The Chief Constable is happy for the government to set expectations which match the public's needs, but emphasised the importance of operational independence.

Attendance for Grade 2 incidents within two hours has improved following analysis of Grade 2 Domestic Abuse (DA) incidents, which had been previously rescheduled for appointments within 24 hours rather than as a two-hour attendance. Where it is safe to do so, and to make victim-led decisions, such incidents are regraded and THRIVED as a grade 3 with an appointment time. This has also been impacted by the introduction of a pilot Enhanced Video Response (EVR) for DA with specially trained staff ready to take witness statements and risk assess and provide support. 97.5% victims preferred the video response option instead of a Police car outside their home. Children in DA settings and the voice of the child is heard, with changes in DA legislation making children victims in their own right. A 30% increase in crime recording among child victims is recognised and welcomed. It is a whole family approach and provides support interventions to break the cycle of abuse and learnt behaviour.

The Commissioner was pleased to hear the update on EVR and would appreciate an update at the next Public Performance Meeting to review how the service has bedded in.

2. Key Headlines

The accompanying report is available on website, and the Commissioner thanked for team pulling it together. He was pleased to see that the volume of emergency and non-emergency calls is reducing. Anti-social behaviour (ASB) is down, all crime is down and the CJ outcome rate is up.

Recorded sexual offences show an increase of 11%, partly due to the introduction of new offences. The Deputy Commissioner asked the force how assured they were that local communities are willing to come forward and report any potential crimes. The Head of Public Protection reported that the force is making services more accessible and suitable for all individuals, via a portal, video response services and with partners. Partnership arrangements are strong, reflective and committed to joint working.

The Commissioner noted that knife crime shows an increase of 4% and the meeting acknowledged that DA was contributing to this.

The Commissioner and his Deputy have been attending local public meetings and found enthusiasm about public engagement and the force's recent changes in contact methods using the customer portal, queue-buster triage and Single Online Home.

3. An outstanding local Police Service: Enabling Services

3.1. Workforce Update: Officer Recruitment & Diversity

The Chief Constable noted that Staffordshire Police has always been under-funded but Operation Uplift has allowed them to build skills and specific expertise in public protection, and a fair settlement is vital to ensure the force has sufficient funds to continue recruitment and keep communities safe. The force has more student officers than anywhere else in the country and workload is high. The Chief Constable acknowledged that additional resources may be required to support particular hotspots and this could be a topic for further discussion at the next Public Performance Meeting. PCSOs and wardens all have a role to play in community safety and the Commissioner will support them in the best way for the public of Staffordshire.

3.2. Efficiency

In most of the benchmarking metrics, Staffordshire is on the right side for efficiency and value for money, but this is in the context of having to find savings over the next few years. The Chief Constable acknowledged that Staffordshire is in a very good position to be disciplined around finance and

performance, corporate change, improvement, transformation and efficiency, and that the answer is not in cutting critical front-line services and technology budgets.

3.3. Value for Money

The budget gap is likely to be over £20m over the next 4 years and it is unlikely that funding centrally is going to improve. The graph on page 8 shows how the force is funded – the funding formula does not work particularly well for Staffordshire and the force doesn't qualify for additional funding around VRA and other interventions that could go into high-crime, typically metropolitan areas. The force must be ever-more diligent and it is what the public expect: real value for money.

The Deputy Chief Constable discussed the protection of service delivery and officer headcount remaining priorities, along with protecting jobs as far as possible. The force has a long list of options which will be worked through in consultation with the workforce.

4. Public Confidence & Victim Surveys

4.1. Public Perception Surveys

Alongside the refreshed Police & Crime Plan, public concerns remain highest around communication, and engagement and reassurance.

Headline figures show Staffordshire in a comparable light compared with most similar forces and the force is now working on recording more detail at Local Policing Team (LPT) level. 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.

4.2. Improve Satisfaction among Victims.

Satisfaction with investigations continues to improve, alongside satisfaction before and after Police contact with an 11% increase, and there could be improvement in keeping victims informed about the progress of an investigation. The Deputy Commissioner commented that another challenge is around engaging with communities who do not have contact with the Police and ensuring awareness of local Police activity in keeping neighbourhoods safe.

4.3. Local Complaints, Reviews & IOPC Bulletin

The Commissioner continues to be comfortable with the process of escalation inside and outside schedule 3 complaints and understanding the type of issues raised. He has a particular role in hearing appeals, considering the outcome of complaints and engaging with the Independent Office for Police Complaints. The Commissioner is keen to share with the public at future meetings the force's organisational learning processes and be transparent about what themes have been identified and the learning that has identified through the complaints process.

5. Supporting Victims

5.1. Victim's Code of Practice Compliance

77.1% of victim details are sent to the Victim Gateway within 48 hours so they can receive timely support and advice to aid their recovery. 89.7% of victims have a victim contract added to their investigation on the Police IT system, NICHE, further demonstrating compliance with the Victim's Codes of Practice.

5.2. Criminal Justice – Timeliness

As chair of the Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB), the Commissioner reviews the quality of Staffordshire cases put to CPS. The timeliness to Police-recorded decisions improved on the previous 12 months, but backlogs in the court system means the force and partners are having to keep more victims and witnesses engaged than ever before. The Commissioner vowed to keep positive pressure in this space. In addition, LCJB has noted increases in both Out-of-Court Disposals and restorative justice activity, which is the right thing to do.

6. An outstanding local Police Service: Contact and Local Policing:

6.1. 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, at 11% lower than the previous year.

The total average time to answer 101 calls, including pre-triage and post-triage waits, is improving and is currently at 8.4 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 50% of these calls at the first point of contact and there are options for a queue-buster call-back service.

For some crime types, callers will now receive text messages and automated updates and the take-up of this media engagement and awareness technology has been particularly high. In comparison with other forces using this, Staffordshire is at more than double take-up figures. A full review is being undertaken and will be ready to share at next Public Performance Meeting. This will be continually reviewed and adapted using local feedback. In addition, the use of the Police portal may already be having an impact by removing demand from telephone contact centre operators.

6.2. Response: Grade 1 and Grade 2 including Enhanced Video Response

Generally, across the board incidents are showing a reduction and the detailed information for LPTs is very welcome. The Chief Constable is hopeful that the Right Care, Right Person policy is also having a longer-term impact on reductions where the force is identifying the correct agency to support incident response. Grade 1 response times show a continued reduction and Grade 2 response is improving alongside the use of DA EVR which has already been discussed in section 1.

6.3. Reduce Neighbourhood Crime (NCPM)

Whilst LPTs have been boosted with officer numbers, there has been additional support provided allowing LPTs to effectively utilise central teams such as armed response and the road crime team to tighten the grip around offenders.

A current initiative across rural and city areas with local authorities and other partners is Operation Yammer which is focused on individuals targeting vehicles and domestic properties. Sadly, there is significant representation of young people and children in this crime type, so safeguarding and rehabilitation responsibilities are always considered but on occasion enforcement is appropriate. This has resulted in 137 impending prosecutions and 46 charges, and support from the central teams has been integral to LPT success.

The Deputy Commissioner asked about the additional impact of the new local road crime team compared to the old CMPG model in denying criminals the use of Staffordshire's roads. Operation Limit over the festive period targeted drink driving resulting in 154 arrests of which 87% were male, there were 53 positive drugs wipes and 78 positive breath tests. The team allows a much more proactive targeted local approach but maintains the collaborative work with Cheshire, West Mercia and West Midlands Police of the old CMPG. Significant reductions in road fatalities have been tracked this year. The tasking of central teams and Operation Yammer are all examples of how the force is contributing to partnership initiatives such as Making Great Places in collaboration with councils and the Commissioner.

6.4. Tackle Anti-Social Behaviour

An almost 7% reduction was seen across all LPTs with the impact of hotspot Safer Streets activity and neighbourhood policing. The Chief Constable commented that where ASB is carried out by children and young people, the force remains cognisant of individual context and circumstances while ensuring that such behaviour has consequences. In collaboration with youth offending teams, Community Safety Partnerships and local authorities will need to take ownership in order to intervene and divert behaviour. In the current landscape, with less money than in previous years and the destabilised environment due to devolution prospects, there remains opportunities for impactful partnerships and shared endeavours allowing districts to put forward bids for specific prevention and intervention activity to impact community priorities.

6.5. Outcomes

Arrest rates have increased and there has been an associated substantial step-up in CJ outcome rates, with Staffordshire now in the top half of forces nationally (18th out of 42 forces) and third out of the eight most similar forces. The Deputy Chief Constable commented that this is intrinsically linked to improvements in the quality of investigations and the subsequent increases in victim satisfaction and compliance with the Victim's Code of Practice. Staffordshire has a high proportion of student officers so there has been investment in training, master classes, supervisor support and the crime bureau and improvements in performance and governance structures.

7. An outstanding local Police Service: Local Crime Priorities

7.1. Rural Crime

Rural Crime is covered in earlier discussion in section 1.

7.2. Retail Crime

In the last 12 months, the force has recorded a 26% increase in shoplifting crimes but is not seeing the same increases as other areas in OCG shoplifting. This is a key focus for all LPTs and daily tasking, with follow-up visits and preventative visits carried out. For shoplifting, Staffordshire is second among most similar forces and 9th nationally (5.259 per 1,000 population). Target hardening, CCTV and security and working in collaboration with businesses is key. Engagement with local Chambers of Commerce and businesses has seen more offenders brought to justice and limits the increases seen elsewhere in the country.

7.3. Vehicle Crime

Overall there has been a 5% reduction in vehicle crime in the last 12 months. This is covered in the earlier discussion in section 1.

7.4. Roads Policing

This is discussed in section 6.3.

Killed and serious injury (KSI) road traffic collisions have decreased by 13% (minus five) compared to the previous year.

Roads Policing – Motoring Offences

There has been a 16% increase in speed camera offences and significant increases in tickets issued relating to driving documents, mobile phone use and seatbelt offences in the last 12 months.

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, and is as much about education as enforcement.

8. Preventing and protecting: National Crime Performance Measures

8.1. 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 & Performance Pack, sitting 7th out of 8 most similar forces and 24th out of 42 forces for rate of homicides per million. The Chief Constable noted there was no particular increase (-1) and the force will continue to focus on tackling DA, intervening early with a Violence Against Women & Girls (VAWG) approach focused on offenders and acceptable behaviour.

8.2. Reduce Serious Violence (NPCM): inc DA and VAWG

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 has increased (+73) in the last 12 months compared to the previous 12 months, and has increased by 41% (187) compared to the national Beating Crime Plan baseline 2019. Compared to our most similar forces (MSF), Staffordshire is 4th (of 8) and 21st out of 42 in national comparison.

Serious violence has decreased by 7% (923) in the last 12 months compared to the previous 12 months, and has seen a 20% (1,898) increase compared to the national Beating Crime Plan baseline 2019-2020.

DA has decreased by 11% compared to the previous year, linked to changes to the principle crime recording for harassment and stalking offences since June 2023. VAWG has seen a 7% (2,478) decrease compared to the previous 12 months, and a 55% (568) increase compared to the national Beating Crime Plan baseline 2019-2020.

8.3. 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 2019. Staffordshire had a 17% increase in the last 12 months compared to the baseline.

8.4. 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 was an increase of 21% in Action Fraud cases reported by Staffordshire residents compared to the national baseline in 2019. There was a 39% decrease in those referred back to Staffordshire to conduct local investigations against the same baseline. CJ positive outcomes are down – the CJ outcomes rate for Action Fraud investigations is 6.9% in the last 12 months to December 2024, a decrease of 0.2% compared to the previous year. The vast majority (59%) result in a disposal of 'unable to progress the investigation'.

The Commissioner thanked everyone involved with the hotspot ASB warden pilots that have been implemented over the last 2 years. In conjunction with neighbourhood policing, the initiative has been very positive and impacted on numbers, visibility and reassurance in local communities. The Commissioner is confident the results of these pilots have partly informed the government's commitments around the Neighbourhood Guarantee.

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 Constable to pass on his thanks to all officers and staff in Staffordshire.