

PCC acknowledgement record

Version:

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 2022
Inspectorate	 <p>His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services</p>
Summary of inspection	<p>This is His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary's first annual report to the Secretary of State under section 54(4A) of the Police Act 1996. It contains his assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of police forces in England and Wales, based on the inspections we carried out between 1 December 2021 and 31 March 2023.</p> <p>This report draws on findings from inspections of police forces in England and Wales, to provide an overall view of the state of policing.</p>
Grade	
Recommendations	
Areas for improvement	<p>The police service is a complex system operating within an even more complex criminal justice system (CJS), and there are widespread systemic failings in both. Some of these account for the present state of policing. In broad terms, these are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The police aren't always focusing on the issues that matter most to the public, and charge rates are far too low. • The police and the wider CJS aren't getting the basics right, as shown through the withdrawal from neighbourhood policing. • Some critical elements of the police's leadership and workforce arrangements need substantial reform.

Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner's Response

This is a comprehensive report from His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary which covers a range of issues within and outside of the control of individual Police and Crime Commissioners and Chief Constables.

The report highlights that the service is 'experiencing one their biggest crises in living memory' and that public trust and confidence is at an all time low. Whilst it cannot be denied that cases of appalling behaviour by serving officers have dented public confidence across England & Wales, our most recent local public perception survey over the same period has shown an upturn. 68% of people agree with the statement 'Taking everything into account, I have confidence in Staffordshire Police' compared to 63% in the previous survey. 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.

Public demand for a local and responsive service is a major theme in my Police and Crime Plan. Over the last decade, with shrinking resources, the service has struggled to meet the demands placed on it and statutory partners to protect vulnerable people. Given the complexity and risk involved in many of these cases, there is no doubt that the service has had to prioritise and this has often been at the cost of getting the basics right. Good contact management, a swift and effective response, professional investigation and keeping victims informed and supported are absolutely key to public confidence and police legitimacy.

In Staffordshire, as officer numbers have increased, 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.

Investigation skills in particular have traditionally relied on inexperienced front-line officers dealing with volume crime working alongside, and acquiring knowledge from, more seasoned colleagues and supervisors. The service profile of our local policing teams now means that the force is having to find new ways to develop these skills. Additionally, Staffordshire is facing the same challenge that is being seen throughout the country of maintaining and increasing the number of accredited detectives. I am encouraged that the force is making more arrests and I will continue to hold them to account for ensuring this translates into increased charge rates, file quality and successful prosecutions.

I welcome the recognition of the very significant role of the PCC in the Criminal Justice System, including in ensuring each service plays their part in supporting the delivery of a single CJS. My Police and Crime Plan has as a priority to ensure Staffordshire Police, the Crown Prosecution Service, Courts, the Probation Service and HM Prison Service all work seamlessly so that effective justice is delivered more quickly. I am using my existing powers to convene the relevant bodies to do this but look forward to the proposals set out in the PCC Review Part Two to formalise such arrangements.

I wholeheartedly agree that understanding communities and recognising their different needs is essential to delivering a style of policing that builds relationships, tackles the right problems and increases public confidence. It's therefore important to give people a voice so that they feel they are being heard and are confident to report crime and ASB and provide information that can help to prevent crime. Each of Staffordshire's local policing teams now has its own engagement plan tailored to its areas' needs. I have implemented a new public survey that enables my office and the force to understand the variations in perception of policing and feelings of safety across the county and

respond to them and performance frameworks now enable local commanders to be held to account for public confidence outcomes. I have also overhauled our local approach to tackling ASB, including making it easier to report and to get cases reviewed where people are unsatisfied with the response they've had from the police and other agencies.

I support our Chief Constable's plan to further invest in neighbourhood teams. I recognise the report's observation that neighbourhood officers are all too often deployed to respond to incoming demand, and only by bolstering their numbers will they have the capacity to engage, understand the problems people are experiencing and be proactive in tackling them.

I support the report's observations regarding the over-complexity of Home Office Counting Rules. The resultant processes are highly bureaucratic and resource intensive and I believe there are significant opportunities beyond those already taken to simplify them without detriment to victims.

I have been supportive of the uplift programme's focus on police officer numbers as a means of driving forces to recruit to an agreed level, but I share that concerns set out in the report that this is creating an arbitrary target which limits the flexibility of Chief Constables to optimise the workforce mix in response to new pressures.

I welcome the proposal to formalise the support offered by NPCC and the College of Policing to forces that, like Staffordshire, find themselves in the engage process. The resources and skills they bring to the process has been invaluable in helping the Chief Constable address the causes of concern raised.

Effectively holding the police to account has never been more essential and I agree that there should be a requirement for local policing bodies to provide follow-up comments for inspections where issues have not been sufficiently addressed. However, I do not believe that this requires a legal footing or needs to be particularly burdensome. Progress against such actions are already monitored at regular internal governance meetings, and a reasonable and proportionate level of reporting and updating should be achievable.

I am open to the suggestion that HMICFRS should be able to inspect 'policing services, such as victim and witness services' where commissioned by PCC's. Whilst I understand the ambition to assess services and offer the opportunity to benchmark them against others where they are provided through direct grant, the scope of this ambition needs to be clear. There is a huge variety of services commissioned, often in partnership, to meet local needs. Many of these services support victims and witnesses who are not referred by the police or are focused primarily on prevention and early intervention activity to reduce demand on policing. It is important that the intention does not stray into the 'and crime' aspect of the PCC's role. I welcome scrutiny of such services but it does not necessarily follow that HMICFRS is the most appropriate body to do so.

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?