

# **State of Policing: The Annual Assessment of Policing in England and Wales 2024–25**

**His Majesty's Chief Inspector of  
Constabulary**

**Presented to Parliament pursuant to section 54(4A) of  
the Police Act 1996**



**His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and  
Fire & Rescue Services**

**State of Policing:  
The Annual Assessment  
of Policing in England and  
Wales 2024–25**

Presented to Parliament pursuant to section 54(4A) of  
the Police Act 1996



© Crown copyright 2025

This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit [nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3](https://nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3)

Where we have identified any third party copyright information, you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

This publication is available at: [gov.uk/official-documents](https://gov.uk/official-documents)

This document is also available from our website at: [hmicfrs.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk](https://hmicfrs.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk)

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at HMICFRS, 8th Floor, 23 Stephenson Street, Birmingham B2 4BH

ISBN 978-1-5286-3849-4 | E02843391 09/25

Printed on paper containing 40% recycled fibre content minimum

Printed in the UK by HH Associates Ltd. on behalf of the Controller of His Majesty's Stationery Office

# Contents

<b>Foreword</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Summary</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1. Making communities safer and building public confidence</b>	<b>19</b>
<hr/>	
The Government's Safer Streets mission recognises the importance of reducing crime and improving access to justice	19
The decline in public confidence in the police may be levelling out	22
Focusing on neighbourhood policing should help forces to be more responsive to community concerns	26
A more effective police approach to tackling antisocial behaviour should help improve public perception of community safety	31
Forces still need to improve how consistently they communicate with their communities	34
Police forces and politicians need to take a measured approach to high-profile incidents	36

## **2. Main inspection activity and findings** **40**

---

Overview of our police efficiency, effectiveness and legitimacy (PEEL) 2023–25 inspections	40
Forces face challenges in how they respond to the public	44
Forces are struggling to improve how well they protect vulnerable people	48
Good leadership and management are vital for forces' efficiency and effectiveness	52
Forces must improve how they investigate crime	55
The police response to the summer 2024 disorder was largely effective	60
Operation Soteria is already making a difference to victims of rape and other serious sexual offences	63
There is some variation in the arrangements for responding to serious and organised crime	68
Child protection is improving	75
Our custody inspections have led to improvements and will now take place more often	76

## **3. The police workforce** **80**

---

High levels of inexperience in the workforce are still a challenge for forces	80
---	----

Police staff are essential to forces' efficiency and effectiveness	84
Officers and staff feel undervalued and experience low morale	88
Well-being support is improving, but provision is inconsistent	90
There are often too few candidates for chief constable positions	93
Vetting and misconduct processes are continuing to improve	96
Dealing effectively with complaints is essential for police legitimacy	99
<b>4. Police reform</b>	<b>101</b>
The case for change	101
There isn't enough central direction and oversight of performance	103
Forces need better co-ordination and collaboration	107
Investment in science and technology is vital	113
Police funding needs fundamental change	116
<b>Annex A: Our reports – 1 April 2024 to 31 July 2025</b>	<b>123</b>
<b>Annex B: About us</b>	<b>135</b>

# Foreword

This is my third report to the Secretary of State, under [section 54\(4\) of the Police Act 1996](#). It contains my independent assessment, as His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary, of the efficiency and effectiveness of policing in England and Wales.

It draws on the evidence we found during our inspections between 1 April 2024 and 31 July 2025. Therefore, this report covers slightly more than a year. This means we include the findings from our completed 2023–25 police efficiency, effectiveness and legitimacy (PEEL) inspections of all 43 police forces in England and Wales. In July 2025, we published the last of our reports from this inspection programme.

The 15 months covered by this report were especially difficult for the police service. On Monday 29 July 2024, three young girls, Bebe King, Elsie Dot Stancombe and Alice Da Silva Aguiar, were murdered in a knife attack in Southport. Following these tragic events, during late July and August 2024, widespread unrest and violent disorder broke out in towns and cities across the UK.



The emergency services, especially the police, were placed under significant pressure. [Officers](#) displayed immense bravery in the face of extreme violence. Many officers sustained injuries, and some were hospitalised. We should be proud of how they kept us safe from those intent on committing unlawful violence and criminal damage. They have my utmost respect and admiration.

Also in 2024, a new Government was elected. Its manifesto included a [Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee](#) as part of the [Safer Streets mission](#).

On 19 November 2024, the Home Secretary set out her plans for major reforms in policing and her intention to increase public trust and confidence in policing. Proposed new structures include a National Centre of Policing, which will improve police procurement and access to technology and equipment, and the Home Office's Police Standards and Performance Improvement Directorate.

The reforms the Home Secretary announced in November 2024 are welcome and required. I have seen how leaders across policing share the ambition for change. Change is needed now for the police service to improve its provision to the public and to deal with the evolving challenges it faces. There is a great deal to do, and the police service will need focus

and commitment. So that the service has the time and opportunity to make the necessary changes, I have chosen not to make any recommendations in my 'State of Policing' report this year.

## **Contributions to my assessment**

When compiling this assessment, I wrote to chief constables, [police and crime commissioners](#) and their equivalents and the wider policing sector. I invited them to give their views on the state of policing in England and Wales. I received a good range of responses. The information in their responses provides strong evidence for my assessment. I am very grateful for their views.

The main evidence for this report comes from our inspections. Between 1 April 2024 and 31 July 2025, we published 121 reports on the police service. Our staff are devoted public servants who work tirelessly and professionally to complete their duties, and I thank them for it.

## **Changes at the inspectorate**

In March 2025, Kathryn Stone OBE was appointed as HM Inspector for police forces and fire and rescue services in the Wales and Western Region. Previously, Kathryn was chair of the bar standards board and a non-executive member of the board of the Crown Prosecution Service. She has also had a long career in public service and advocacy.

It is a pleasure to welcome Kathryn to the team. Her extensive experience will be a valuable asset to the inspectorate.

### **Sir Andy Cooke QPM DL**

His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary

# Summary

## **Police forces and the Government are working hard to rebuild public confidence**

This is my first annual report since the new Government came into power in July 2024. As part of its '[Plan for Change](#)', the Government has established five missions. One of those is the [Safer Streets mission](#), which is an important recognition that reducing crime and improving access to justice are two of the most pressing problems facing society.

Achieving the mission will require a contribution from nearly all government departments and public services. But the police service has the largest role to play. I have been pleased to see chief constables working towards the mission with a collaborative approach and vigour.

In my '[State of Policing](#)' reports for [2022](#) and [2023](#), I raised concerns about a decline in public confidence in the police service. So, I am pleased to see evidence that this decline appears to be levelling out. It is too early to say when, or indeed whether, confidence will start to rise again, but the action forces are taking is promising.

Forces are making concerted efforts to improve public confidence. This year, chief constables and [police and crime commissioners \(PCCs\)](#) have again told me about their efforts to improve how well their forces meet the fundamental and reasonable expectations of the public. Forces are trying to improve how they respond to calls for service, investigate crime, meet the needs of [victims](#) and bring offenders to justice. And they are also continuing their efforts to improve their vetting and counter-corruption arrangements and to prevent and tackle [misconduct](#) in the workforce.

Another important area of focus is neighbourhood policing. [Neighbourhood policing teams](#) are the main links between police forces and the communities they serve. Neighbourhood policing is how the police show they understand and are dealing with the concerns of local people and businesses. It has been pleasing to see that during our police efficiency, effectiveness and legitimacy (PEEL) 2023–25 assessment programme, ‘preventing and deterring crime and [antisocial behaviour](#), and reducing vulnerability’ (which includes neighbourhood policing) has been one of the best performing areas.

There are still elements of neighbourhood policing that need to improve, such as how often [officers](#) are diverted from their neighbourhood duties and how well

forces are tackling antisocial behaviour. Forces also need to improve how consistently they work with their communities, such as their work with external advisory groups.

The Government's [Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee](#) and associated £200 million in additional funding should help forces to further strengthen their approach. But with the continued financial challenges that most forces are facing, many chief constables are concerned this won't be enough.

## **In our inspections we identify where policing is strong and where it must be improved**

Our PEEL inspection programme is the most comprehensive source of information about the performance of police forces in England and Wales. As part of our PEEL 2023–25 inspections, we graded forces across nine areas. We have now [published our inspection reports for all 43 forces in England and Wales](#).

Overall, 68 percent of our 368 graded judgments were 'adequate' or better. This means that forces showed some of the characteristics of good performance, which we have outlined in our '[PEEL assessment framework 2023–2025](#)', in our nine areas of inspection, but that we

also identified areas where they should make improvements. Forces gave us more than 100 examples of [innovative](#) or [promising practice](#), which shows the efforts they are making to improve. We gave 15 outstanding judgments across 10 forces.

Forces are now recording most types of crime more quickly and accurately. They have improved how well they can show that officers and [staff](#) treat the public fairly, appropriately and respectfully. This includes more use of [body-worn video](#) and an improved focus on [safeguarding children](#) and young people when using [stop and search powers](#). We have also seen better internal scrutiny of decision-making to provide assurance that stop and search and use of force is fair and proportionate.

Yet many improvements are needed. Of our graded judgments, 26 percent were 'requires improvement' and 6 percent 'inadequate'. The forces with these grades must do more to provide the quality of policing that the public expect and deserve. We found that many forces were struggling to perform adequately in our question areas on responding to the public, investigating crime and [protecting vulnerable people](#). In part, this is due to the high demands placed on forces that frequently exceed the resources they have available. But we also found that not all police forces were as well led,



efficient, effective and sustainable as they could and should be. While forces have limited resources, we believe many could do better with the resources they have.

The effective investigation of crime is fundamental to the legitimacy of policing and public confidence. It also influences how safe people feel and helps prevent future offending. Due to growing concerns, including a long-term decline in successful prosecutions and [out-of-court disposals](#), we examined this issue in depth. On 27 March 2025, we published our report, '[An inspection into how effectively the police investigate crime](#)'.

During our inspection, we saw numerous promising force initiatives to improve investigations and achieve better outcomes for victims. But we also found many areas of concern. An increase in the volume and complexity of recorded crime and limited resources have led to unacceptably high workloads and lengthy delays. Investigations are often poorly supervised, and cases are sometimes assigned to [personnel](#) who don't have the right skills. Work with victims is often not to the expected standard, and victim needs assessments are often missing from the crime record. To improve, forces must strengthen leadership, supervision and training and make sure



victims receive their rights under the [Code of Practice for Victims of Crime](#).

In 2024, I was commissioned by the Home Secretary to rapidly review the policing response to the summer disorder that followed the murder of three young girls, Bebe King, Elsie Dot Stancombe and Alice Da Silva Aguiar. We have published two reports setting out our findings ([tranche 1](#) and [tranche 2](#)). Overall, police officers across England and Wales showed immense bravery, and the police response to the disorder was largely effective. But we also found that many systems and processes needed to improve.

Many forces were initially unprepared for the scale of the disorder. They struggled to monitor and counter the online misinformation and disinformation that played a major role in fuelling the disorder. We have made several further recommendations to improve how forces manage the threat of and response to any future disorder. Regrettably, our review highlighted that the police service hasn't learned all the lessons it should have from previous incidents of disorder and subsequent reports.

We have also carried out a range of inspections in other areas that are essential to making communities safer. This included an unprecedented programme called [Operation Soteria](#), which was designed to greatly

improve how the police investigate rape and other serious sexual offences. And we have continued our inspection programmes into:

- how well police forces and [regional organised crime units](#) tackle [serious and organised crime](#);
- the child protection work of every police force in England and Wales; and
- police custody (in association with the Care Quality Commission) to assess outcomes for detainees.

We set out the findings from these inspection programmes in more detail in [chapter 2](#).

## **Police forces face significant workforce challenges, and some officers have shown great bravery**

After years of decline during the austerity period of 2010–19, in recent years the size of the police workforce has grown substantially. This growth in numbers should help forces to keep the public safe and bring criminals to justice. But the rapid decline and subsequent rise have led to high levels of inexperience in the workforce.

In the year ending 31 March 2024, 35 percent of officers had fewer than 5 years' policing experience. This lack of experience is a challenge for forces.

New recruits can have less confidence and/or capability, and this brings additional training, supervision and leadership demands. Forces will be managing the impact of this inexperience for several more years.

The focus on increasing the size of the police workforce has been on police officers. While police staff numbers have also increased, chief constables haven't been given the financial freedom to hire the balanced workforce of officers and staff they need. Last year, I recommended that the Government should abolish the officer number target and associated financial constraints to allow forces to recruit more police staff. This recommendation hasn't been implemented.

I understand the political imperative to maintain officer numbers. Visible policing is reassuring for many communities and is often something they support. But achieving and maintaining the right balance of police officers and staff is also essential, especially because the nature of crime and policing is changing. Forces need a wide range of skills, many of which can be provided more effectively or more economically by police staff. For example, forces need [intelligence](#) analysts and IT specialists. The Government should give chief constables more flexibility over their workforce mix.

Each year I am struck by the professionalism, dedication and bravery of the vast majority of the police workforce. They deserve the respect of the public and the support of their force and the Government.

But, for many in the service, morale is too low. One factor that may be contributing to this is the inconsistency in well-being provision between forces. While support is improving, it still varies widely across England and Wales. Forces and the Government must do everything they can to help improve officer and staff morale and consistently support well-being.

Good leadership is critical at all levels of the police service, especially at the level of chief constable, who has overall direction and control of a force. They must be capable of meeting the demands of the job. Unfortunately, we are seeing a trend where there aren't enough applicants for chief constable positions. Often PCCs have still been successful in securing capable and highly qualified candidates. But as a matter of principle, it isn't right that such important and influential senior positions aren't attracting a diverse field of candidates. Police forces, the [College of Policing](#), PCCs and the Government all have an important role to play in addressing this problem.

Many forces, acting on our previous recommendations, have made changes so that those who are unfit to serve in the police are either prevented from joining or removed from the service. Overall, forces are improving in most areas in relation to vetting. For some recommendations, we have found that all or nearly all forces had made good progress. I also welcome the new regulations that the Government has introduced to strengthen vetting and assist in dealing with misconduct. But there are still some aspects of vetting, counter-corruption and misconduct where forces need to do more. Chief constables must maintain momentum in these areas. Our new integrity inspection programme will continue to assess progress.

## **The Government has ambitious police reform objectives**

Police forces have always had to adapt to meet the changing needs of communities. It is no different now. The nature of criminality is changing, technology is rapidly advancing and societal change has altered public expectations of the police. Forces are faced with systemic problems in the police service, wider [criminal justice system](#) and other parts of the public sector as well as with financial constraints. But there are also opportunities for forces to introduce improvements, such as making better use of data and technology.

The Government has recognised that resolving these problems and taking advantage of system-wide opportunities for improvement are essential to achieving the outcomes in the Safer Streets mission. In November 2024, the Home Secretary announced an ambitious programme of police reform and has committed to working collaboratively with the policing sector to develop this.

The existing model of local accountability in policing has brought benefits but has also led to highly variable performance across forces. A lack of clear national direction and fragmented performance frameworks have hindered improvement. The Home Office now plans to take a more active leadership role, including setting national priorities and introducing a new national performance framework. Strengthened powers for HMICFRS and earlier support and intervention from across the policing system will help to address underperformance; this will prompt struggling forces to become more responsive to concerns and more focused on outcomes for the public.



The 43-force structure helps to make sure that police are close to and understand their communities, but it also leads to inefficiencies, duplication and inconsistencies. Previous changes, such as the introduction of the College of Policing and [National Police Chiefs' Council](#), have improved how forces work together. But overall progress has been too slow. The proposed National Centre of Policing could increasingly centralise many support functions that forces rely on, such as IT, to increase consistency between them and potentially lead to efficiency savings. The National Centre of Policing will need strong leadership and to be responsive to local needs. There are some problems it won't solve, such as when chief constables or PCCs need to reach a national agreement. A decision-making process is still needed to bind PCCs, chief constables and other parties to collective decisions that need to be made in the police service's, rather than individual forces', interests.

Modern policing depends on the effective use of data and technology, yet many forces rely on outdated systems and struggle with poor data management. While science and technology have advanced rapidly, police forces haven't kept pace. Limited capital investment has contributed to this gap, and greater government support is needed. Forces must also

embrace innovation to meet future challenges. Emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence and facial recognition, will bring opportunities to operate more efficiently and effectively. Although some forces have introduced impressive innovations, these have often been too slow to spread across the policing system, which has limited their impact.

Police funding has increased, yet many forces remain under strain due to rising demand and a variety of cost pressures. Most forces show good financial management, but all forces still need to do more to understand the demands they face, how to best align their resources and what they can do to improve productivity.

The '[Spending Review 2025](#)' has given a degree of medium-term financial certainty to forces, even if investment isn't as high as many chief constables had hoped. But the way the funding is distributed still needs to change because it is outdated and unfair. And the absence of a capital grant for forces remains a major barrier to making some of the long-term investments that the police need. The Government hasn't yet signalled an intention to address either of these challenges during its police reforms. In such an ambitious programme of reforms, not doing so would be a missed opportunity.



The Government also hasn't yet confirmed that it will allocate additional funding to support police reform. Most reforms, such as the introduction of a National Centre of Policing, will require substantial upfront investment to succeed. They must be sufficiently funded. Change is urgently needed to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of policing. Without enough money, there is a risk that the ambitions of the Government and police service will fall short.

# 1. Making communities safer and building public confidence

## **The Government's Safer Streets mission recognises the importance of reducing crime and improving access to justice**

This is my first annual report since the new government came into power in July 2024. As part of its '[Plan for Change](#)', the Government has established five missions for this Parliament and beyond. One of these is the [Safer Streets mission](#), which aims to reduce serious harm and increase public confidence in the police service and [criminal justice system](#).

The mission is an important recognition that reducing crime and improving access to justice are two of the most pressing problems that society is facing.

The mission also recognises that improvements are required in other areas, many of which we have reported on. These areas include:

- inconsistent responses to domestic violence and abuse;
- not enough [neighbourhood policing](#) resources;

- an unacceptably low proportion of criminal investigations; and
- protracted delays in the criminal justice system, which frequently extend into years.

This list is far from exhaustive.

Achieving all the aims of the mission will require sustained contributions from across most government departments, the criminal justice system and other parts of the public sector, such as health and education. But police forces have the largest contribution to make. Chief constables are operationally independent from the Government and may deploy their resources in ways they consider most appropriate. This has been implicit in the British model of policing by consent for many years and has subsequently been recognised in case law and codified in legislation by [The Policing Protocol Order 2011](#) and [The Policing Protocol Order 2023](#). It stops police forces from becoming an enforcement arm of the Government. But ministers still have an important role in achieving effective and efficient policing.

Greater central direction is needed to overcome some of the limitations in our system of 43 separate police forces. The Home Secretary is ultimately accountable to the electorate for making sure our

communities are kept safe and secure. I therefore welcome her commitment to take a more interventionist approach to policing. Striking the right balance won't always be easy and may sometimes bring tensions. But I am encouraged by the work so far and the Home Secretary's and the Government's collaborative efforts with police forces and the wider policing system. I am also pleased to see that police forces are working hard to address the aims of the mission.

We will play an essential role in supporting the mission and will remain independent and act in the public interest, as we have done for the past 169 years. We will continue to ask the questions the public wish to have answered. And we will always publish our findings without political interference. Our '[Policing inspection programme and framework 2025–29](#)' includes important inspections, such as our ongoing police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy (PEEL) assessments of all forces and [thematic inspections](#) into police leadership, the police response to knife-related crime and the use of emerging science and technology. Our work will help forces to improve in areas covered by the mission. We also have an important advisory role, helping chief constables, [police and crime commissioners \(PCCs\)](#) and the Home Secretary to make communities safer.

# The decline in public confidence in the police may be levelling out

Public approval of the police sits at the heart of the British model of policing by consent. In [my 'State of Policing' reports for 2022](#) and [2023](#), I said that forces needed to do more to increase public trust and confidence in the police. The police have done work to try to improve this. Since then, the decline in public trust and confidence seems to be levelling out. Data from YouGov surveys shows a slight increase between autumn 2023 and autumn 2024 in the percentage of respondents who think the police are doing a good job.

## **Dataset 1: Proportion of adults in Great Britain who think the police are doing a good or bad job, between 6 January 2020 and 30 December 2024**

Over this period, the proportion of people who think the police are doing a good job has declined. Starting at 71 percent in January 2020, the number reached its lowest in April 2023, October 2023 and July 2024, when only 47 percent of people said the police were doing a good job. Since then the proportion has increased slightly, to 53 percent in December 2024.

The proportion of people who think the police are doing a bad job has slowly risen, from 20 percent in January 2020 to 37 percent in December 2024. This number peaked at 45 percent in October 2023.

The proportion of people who say they don't know has stayed relatively consistent, between 7 and 11 percent.

**Source:** [Are the police doing a good job?](#), YouGov

The British public know that forces deal with a wide range of criminal threats and other risks to public safety. This includes tackling threats that may be hidden but are especially important, such as [serious and organised crime](#) and terrorism. It also includes protecting people from harm in situations that don't always involve or result in crimes, such as searching for [missing people](#) or responding to incidents involving people experiencing mental health problems where there is a risk of death or serious injury.

The public largely accept that the police should prioritise according to harm and protect the most [vulnerable](#) in our society, such as by tackling violence against women and girls and reducing knife crime. While taking account of all the demands on the police, the public still expect forces to do certain things well. For three years, I have referred to these as the basics of policing – not because they are easy to

provide but because they are fundamental expectations of the public. These include:

- providing effective neighbourhood policing;
- promptly answering the phone;
- attending incidents within a reasonable time frame;
- investigating crime;
- keeping [victims](#) informed; and
- bringing offenders to justice.

Partly because of the financial challenges they face, forces struggle to always get the basics right. I have sympathy with the difficult decisions that many chief constables are having to make. But with joint effort, there is still more that forces can achieve with the resources at their disposal. Forces recognise this. In our inspections, we found that many forces were working hard to improve public confidence by focusing on how well they provide these basic services.

The way that [officers](#) and [staff](#) behave is as important as how effective forces are at preventing and detecting crime. Reasonable members of the public are far quicker to forgive lapses of competence than lapses in integrity. Forces should continue to focus on improving vetting, standards and culture but also on getting the basics right.



According to the [Ipsos Veracity Index 2024](#), since 2023 there has been a slight increase in the proportion of the public who trust the police to tell the truth, albeit from a regrettably low baseline. This is a positive sign that policing is taking the right actions on police integrity, although there remains much more to do. In January 2025, the [College of Policing](#) published an evidence-based guide, '[Improving public confidence in the police](#)', to help forces in their efforts. All forces should follow its advice.

### **Dataset 2: Proportion of the public who trust the police to tell the truth, between 2008 and 2024**

The proportion of people who trust the police to tell the truth has stayed relatively consistent. Between 2008 and 2024 it went from 65 percent to 62 percent. After a dip in 2009, the proportion steadily increased to a peak of 76 percent in 2018 and 2019. It then declined to 63 percent in 2021 and 2022, and fell to a low of 56 percent in 2023.

The proportion of people who trust the police to tell the truth rose by 6 percentage points between 2023 and 2024 (from 56 to 62 percent). But it is too early to detect a trend towards higher levels of trust.

**Source: Ipsos Veracity Index 2024, Ipsos**

Note: No Ipsos data was collected for 2010 and 2012.



# Focusing on neighbourhood policing should help forces to be more responsive to community concerns

An essential requirement for public confidence in the police is that they are seen to understand and deal with the concerns of local people and businesses.

According to the [Crime Survey for England and Wales \(CSEW\)](#), estimated crime levels have been falling since the mid-1990s, and since 2020 have fallen by 16 percent (excluding fraud and computer misuse).

## **Dataset 3: Annual crime estimates from the Crime Survey for England and Wales, for the years ending 31 December 1981 to 30 September 2024 (number of incidents in thousands)**

Between December 1981 and March 2020, crime estimates excluding fraud and computer misuse nearly halved. Starting at 11,303 in 1981, crime estimates increased, peaking in 1995 at just under 20,000.

After that, there was a steady decline to 5,661 in 2020. After a break because of the COVID-19 pandemic, reporting resumed in September 2023, and crime estimates excluding fraud and computer misuse have continued to fall.

Estimates of crime including fraud and computer misuse began in March 2017 and have slightly declined since then. In September 2024 this figure, 9,490, was nearly double the figure excluding fraud and computer misuse, 4,765.

**Source: Crime in England and Wales: year ending 30 September 2024, Office for National Statistics**

Note: Estimates for the years ending March 2021 and March 2022 aren't available because there was a break in the CSEW due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

But between January 2020 and December 2024, public confidence that the police will deal effectively with crime in their local area reduced by 10 percentage points.

**Dataset 4: Confidence adults have in the police to deal with crime in their local area, between 6 January 2020 and 2 December 2024**

Over this period, the proportion of people who are confident the police can deal with crime has declined. Starting at 51 percent in January 2020, confidence reached its lowest point in October 2022, at 38 percent. It moderately increased to 41 percent by December 2024, but this trend has plateaued.

Over the same period, the number of people who aren't confident that the police can deal with crime has risen. From 40 percent in January 2020, this value peaked at 55 percent in October 2023 and July 2024. In December 2024 it was 50 percent. Although there was a small decline between July 2024 and December 2024, it is too early to interpret this as a trend.

**Source:** [How much confidence Brits have in police to deal with crime](#), YouGov

Unless they report a crime, law-abiding people tend not to have much, if any, interaction with the police. For those who do have contact with the police, it is mostly through neighbourhood policing. If they have a good experience with their local neighbourhood team, their confidence in the police generally is likely to improve.

In my 2022 and 2023 'State of Policing' reports, I said that improving neighbourhood policing was an essential step that forces needed to take to improve public confidence. Forces have listened. In our PEEL 2023–25 assessments, we found 'preventing and deterring crime and [antisocial behaviour](#), and reducing vulnerability' (which includes neighbourhood policing) was one of the best performing areas. For this area, we gave the 43 forces in England and Wales the following grades:

- 2 outstanding;

- 25 good;
- 13 adequate;
- 2 requires improvement; and
- 1 inadequate.

We found that compared with our last round of PEEL inspections, more forces were evaluating their approach to how they work with communities, and the quality of their problem-solving work had improved. But we also found some areas in which many forces still needed to improve. For example, in some forces there isn't enough oversight and understanding of how often officers are diverted from their neighbourhood duties or the reasons for this. And some forces need to improve how they evaluate and share good practice internally and nationally. In our PEEL 2025–27 assessments, we will pay particular attention to the areas we have identified as needing further improvements.

On 9 April 2025, the Prime Minister announced details of the [Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee](#) as part of the Safer Streets mission. It is intended to rebuild community confidence by making neighbourhood police more visible and responsive to the communities they serve. This is a very welcome step.

The Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee promises:

- a neighbourhood policing team that carries out [intelligence](#)-led and visible patrols in every local area;
- a named, contactable officer for every neighbourhood who is responsive to local problems, with residents and businesses able to express their views on police priorities for their area;
- new training and standards of professional excellence for neighbourhood policing to make it a specialist policing capability;
- tougher powers to allow swift enforcement action against persistent antisocial behaviour;
- dedicated lead officers that work with communities to develop local antisocial behaviour action plans; and
- safer town centres as neighbourhood policing teams take strong action on shop theft, street theft and assaults against shop workers.

In 2025–26, there will be £200 million in additional funding for [policing personnel](#), including [officers](#), police community support officers and special constables. But the Government hasn't yet committed to continuing this funding in future years. This additional funding will help forces to make progress towards the

Government's commitment of 13,000 more officers, staff and volunteers in neighbourhood policing roles by 2029. But with the continued financial challenges that most forces are facing, many chief constables believe this funding won't be enough.

## **A more effective police approach to tackling antisocial behaviour should help improve public perception of community safety**

Antisocial behaviour makes people feel unsafe. It damages communities and can destroy victims' lives. In the year ending 31 March 2024, around 1 million antisocial behaviour incidents were reported to the police.

But the police, the public and the media sometimes perceive and refer to antisocial behaviour as low-level crime. This attitude doesn't reflect the significant impact it can have on communities or the trauma that targeted and sustained antisocial behaviour can cause – trauma that has led to some victims taking their own lives.

On 10 October 2024, we published our PEEL spotlight report, '[The policing response to antisocial behaviour](#)'. We said that dealing effectively with antisocial behaviour needn't be complex. In many cases, effective

early intervention can prevent incidents becoming more complex and difficult to resolve.

We found good examples where the police were working hard, using a problem-solving approach to tackle antisocial behaviour and recognising the harm it can cause. This was often being done in partnership with other organisations and charities, which increases the likelihood of action being effective. Many forces understand that antisocial behaviour is a priority for their communities and have allocated trained resources to tackle it. The additional resources committed as part of the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee should help forces to further prioritise tackling antisocial behaviour.

Police visibility alone isn't enough to effectively solve antisocial behaviour problems or prevent crimes. Our PEEL inspections and academic studies have shown that crime prevention and deterrence are improved when officers and staff are deployed well.

Lancashire Constabulary's Operation Centurion provides a good example of how neighbourhood policing should work when tackling antisocial behaviour. [In our 2024 PEEL report on Lancashire Constabulary](#), we highlighted how the constabulary uses Home Office funding to support a partnership approach in hotspot areas to reduce the impact of antisocial behaviour on communities. The operation has become part of



Lancashire Constabulary's core prevention activity. It is now taking a similar approach to crimes such as shoplifting.

Many of our findings weren't as positive. In too many cases, we found forces' commitment to tackling antisocial behaviour was undermined by difficulties in sharing data, which was compounded by external organisations with inadequate IT systems. Forces lacked sufficient analytical expertise to help better understand and deal with IT system and/or data problems.

It is vital that forces understand the complexity and prevalence of antisocial behaviour. Many forces need to improve training, recording methods and how they evaluate their work. They also need to make sure they consistently use the statutory powers available to them to take robust action against the minority of people who often repeatedly cause [harassment](#) and distress. In our 2024 antisocial behaviour spotlight report, we made eight recommendations to promote a better response to victims and address the behaviour of perpetrators.



# **Forces still need to improve how consistently they communicate with their communities**

Effective neighbourhood policing means that communities help forces to set local objectives. Officers who form strong community relationships can identify the issues that are most important to their communities. It is therefore essential that the police communicate effectively with the communities they serve.

This isn't always an easy thing to do. Data from the CSEW shows that the percentage of the public who agreed that the police understood local concerns declined from 70 percent in 2018 to 57 percent in March 2024. When I asked chief constables for their views, they told me that society is less cohesive. It is increasingly politically divided, with some sections that are disengaged from mainstream politics.

Since 1999, and in response to recommendations in the [Stephen Lawrence Inquiry report](#), many police forces in England and Wales have brought people and organisations together to discuss policing-related concerns at a local neighbourhood policing level, for example through community groups. These are often referred to as external advisory groups.

Community groups can help build relationships with local people and give feedback on general feelings in the community. But in our 2024 report '[An inspection into activism and impartiality in policing](#)', we said that forces weren't consistent in their approach and that College of Policing guidance dated 2015 no longer reflected how forces were using these groups. We recommended that the College of Policing should publish new guidance on the role and use of external advisory groups, taking into consideration the results of research it was carrying out and other relevant work. At the time of compiling this year's 'State of Policing' report, the college's work on this was still ongoing.

Forces regularly use social media to communicate with the public. But we found that they sometimes overestimated the effectiveness of these communications. And we also found there was not enough guidance to help officers and staff communicate about contentious issues. Many of the chief constables we interviewed stated that they had started to reduce their use of social media to communicate with the public.

We found good examples of forces working with their communities. For example, in Humberside, each local authority area has its own [independent advisory group](#). There are also some themed groups,

which help Humberside Police to hear from specific communities, such as women and girls affected by violence. Group members share their feedback with the force and scrutinise its services. They also attend live incidents and events. This improves the force's relationships across different communities.

In our PEEL 2025–27 assessments, we will examine how forces' neighbourhood policing teams work with, listen to and respond to all communities to make them feel safe.

## **Police forces and politicians need to take a measured approach to high-profile incidents**

The police deal with millions of incidents each year. In the year ending 31 March 2024, forces in England and Wales recorded more than 14.8 million incidents. The vast majority of incidents don't feature in any television, newspaper or social media commentary. But the tiny majority that do appear in the media can draw a large amount of attention to how the police operate, especially as more footage is being recorded on mobile phones and shared on social media or through the news.

This can lead to some members of the public perceiving (rightly or wrongly) that police forces or individual officers and staff have dealt with a situation incorrectly. At worst, there can be accusations (just or unjust) of the police failing to follow the law, breaching standards of professional behaviour or showing intentional bias. In these circumstances, it is essential that forces communicate effectively with members of the public to maintain their confidence in the police.

The public need to be confident that any potential mistakes or wrongdoing will be investigated appropriately and that any public complaints will be dealt with. But it is also important that police officers and staff, like anyone else, are presumed to be innocent of wrongdoing until proven otherwise.

Video footage on a mobile phone rarely reflects a whole incident. The force or its officers may have been in possession of information that the public wasn't aware of, or other relevant events may have taken place before recording began.

In our 2024 report on activism and impartiality in policing, we said that forces can quickly lose control of the narrative when the media and social media take an interest in an incident. Many officers and staff told us that they were frustrated at how media stories about policing developed, often very quickly, and sometimes

involved political commentary. In one force we inspected, a member of the public had posted mobile phone footage on social media of an incident, together with inaccurate commentary about the actions of the officer. Within 24 hours, 3 million people had viewed the post.

During our inspection, we found that many of those we interviewed felt let down by their force often not responding well enough to the developing narrative when it or its personnel were the subject of critical reporting and social media commentary. This leaves gaps that others fill with speculation, which can have a negative impact on public confidence and officer and staff morale. It isn't easy for the police to quickly respond to all stories in the media and social media. This is especially the case when they may have evidence that could correct reported inaccuracies but can't reveal because it might prejudice ongoing investigations or judicial processes. But forces must do what they can. For example, they might be able to release information or [body-worn video](#) footage or hold non-reportable briefings with the media.

In several high-profile cases, forces have been criticised for failing to release information on the ethnicity, nationality or immigration status of suspects. This has often helped to fuel misinformation or

disinformation on social media. In response to this, on 13 August 2025, the College of Policing and [National Police Chiefs' Council](#) provided new interim guidance to forces. This guidance sets out when forces should confirm the nationality and/or ethnicity of suspects upon charge. It also makes clear that it is the responsibility of the Home Office to decide whether to release information about individuals' immigration status. Clear guidance on sharing this information with the public is welcome. It should help forces to manage any community tensions that arise during criminal investigations.

Politicians should also recognise that what they say about police actions can have long-lasting and far-reaching consequences. In our activism and impartiality report, we gave examples of senior political figures expressing their views on police activity that were based on incomplete information. In one case, this led to undue criticism of an officer who had acted with patience and professionalism, and some people calling for the Metropolitan Police Commissioner to resign. We said that senior politicians should take great care to make sure they are in possession of the full facts before making public statements that can have a detrimental impact on perceptions of police impartiality.



## 2. Main inspection activity and findings

### Overview of our police efficiency, effectiveness and legitimacy (PEEL) 2023–25 inspections

The police efficiency, effectiveness and legitimacy (PEEL) inspection programme is a comprehensive assessment of the efficiency, effectiveness and legitimacy of police forces in England and Wales.

We have completed our 2023–25 PEEL inspections of all 43 forces in England and Wales and have published our findings. We graded forces across nine areas:

1. crime data integrity (not assessed for all forces);
2. police powers and treating the public fairly and respectfully;
3. preventing and deterring crime and [antisocial behaviour](#), and reducing vulnerability;
4. responding to the public;
5. investigating crime;
6. [protecting vulnerable people](#);
7. managing offenders and suspects;



8. building, supporting and protecting the workforce;  
and
9. leadership and force management.

We made 368 graded judgments. We graded 68 percent as ‘adequate’ or better. This means that forces showed some of the characteristics of good performance in most of the nine areas. But we graded 26 percent as ‘requires improvement’ and 6 percent as ‘inadequate’, which shows that forces need to do more to provide the quality of policing that the public expect and deserve.

**Dataset 5: HMICFRS judgment grades assigned to forces across England and Wales for PEEL 2023–25 inspections**

For each area, we grade forces as inadequate, requires improvement, adequate, good, or outstanding. Most areas show a mix of ratings, reflecting varied performance across police forces. Adequate is the most common grade in four out of nine areas.

Preventing and deterring crime is a strong area, with many forces graded good. Public treatment is mostly graded adequate, showing consistent but improvable performance. Investigating crime and protecting vulnerable people often receive requires improvement grades, indicating these areas need more attention.

Crime data integrity has relatively few inadequate grades, suggesting generally reliable data practices.

**Source: HMICFRS**

Our graded judgments for each police force are available in a table on our website, [PEEL assessments 2023–25](#). Changes to our methodology between inspection programmes mean it isn't possible to directly compare the grades we awarded in our 2023–25 inspections with those we awarded in previous years.

In our PEEL inspections, we found that the accuracy of crime recording had continued to increase.

But [domestic abuse](#) crimes have continued to be poorly recorded in most forces, and the recording of [protected characteristics](#) still needs to improve. Our summer [2025 crime data integrity spotlight report](#) examines crime data integrity findings from both our PEEL 2021/22 and PEEL 2023–25 programmes.

Many forces have made progress in treating people fairly, appropriately and respectfully. For example, they

are using [body-worn video](#) more consistently and are better at [safeguarding children](#) and young people when using [stop and search powers](#). We also found better internal scrutiny of decision-making to provide assurance that stop and search or use of force was fair and proportionate.

The additional 20,000 [officer](#) posts funded through the [Police Uplift Programme](#) are beginning to help stabilise [neighbourhood policing](#) resourcing. But too many neighbourhood policing officers are being diverted from their main duties to deal with other areas of demand, without enough oversight or planning. Work with communities, community reassurance and confidence are all negatively affected when neighbourhood officers are diverted and less able to tackle local issues, particularly antisocial behaviour.

Positively, we found improved early sharing of information with children's social care when police received reports of online [indecent images of children](#). But forces need to continue their work on developing an accurate understanding of demand in both [management of sexual offenders and violent offenders](#) and specialist online child sexual offence investigation teams. This will help them make sure they have enough [personnel](#) to effectively manage the risk

that offenders pose. We will be reporting on this in more detail in a future PEEL spotlight report.

We found that the areas in which forces had most difficulties were responding to the public, investigating crime and protecting vulnerable people. Also, not all police forces were as well led, efficient, effective and sustainable as they could be. While forces have limited resources, many forces could have used them more effectively.

## **Forces face challenges in how they respond to the public**

In our PEEL inspections, we found that responding to the public continued to be an area in which many forces performed poorly. This is disappointing, given how important it is to keeping people safe and meeting public expectations. We have reported on this underperformance in our last two rounds of PEEL inspections, but improvements have been slow.

In our PEEL 2023–25 inspections, we gave forces the following grades for responding to the public:

- 3 good;
- 17 adequate;
- 16 requires improvement; and
- 7 inadequate.

We haven't given any force a grade of 'outstanding'. But we found some notable examples of strong performance in this area. For example, Humberside Police and Cumbria Constabulary have shown a clear understanding of demand, effective resource management, robust governance and strong use of data to inform decision-making.

Chief constables are acutely aware of the challenges they face in this area. In 2024, 25 of the 43 forces identified responding to the public as an area of medium or high risk in their [force management statements](#). The high number of requests for service from the public each year is a major contributor to the challenges that forces face.

We found some notable improvements. One of these was the percentage of 999 calls answered in under 10 seconds. Between November 2023 and October 2024, an average of 86 percent of calls were answered within 10 seconds compared with 78 percent in the previous year. Chief constables and [police and crime commissioners](#) told me that an increased focus has significantly contributed to this improvement. Many forces are now closer to consistently achieving the expected standard of 90 percent of 999 calls answered in under 10 seconds.

The police have begun to publish forces' performance in answering [101](#) calls in the same way as for 999 calls. Too often in our inspections we find that this is an area in need of improvement. The time it takes to answer these calls is often too long, especially during periods of peak demand. This leads to a high percentage of calls being abandoned before they are answered.

Abandoned calls can mean that risk in the community isn't being addressed by forces and can damage public confidence in the 101 system. This can also further increase the volume of 999 calls forces receive.

This creates a risk. We look forward to seeing if this public reporting on 101 calls produces similar improvements as it has for 999 calls.

We also found that some forces were using technology to improve how efficiently and effectively they can respond to the public. Dorset Police introduced an enhanced video response following a three-month trial in partnership with Cambridge University. The force uses enhanced video response for [victims](#) of all types of crime. In non-emergency cases, it gives victims the option to speak with police and have the primary investigation take place through a video call. A victim satisfaction survey showed that 89 percent of victims would recommend enhanced video response.



Greater Manchester Police is using process automation to help it manage online reporting and create incident logs. The force evaluated the efficiency of this approach and found it saved 650 hours a month, which is the equivalent of 5 members of [police staff](#) working full-time or £131,000 a year. This means operators now have more time to focus on other important tasks.

Another significant challenge for forces to address is how quickly they attend incidents after a request for service. In our 2023–25 PEEL programme, we found that in 70 percent (2,053 out of 2,926) of the cases we reviewed, police attended within the agreed standard for attendance times. This is similar to our findings in 2021/22 when 71 percent (1,546 out of 2,166) of the cases we reviewed met these times. Of the calls we sampled that required immediate attendance, 16 percent (177 out of 1,077) weren't attended within the force's published attendance time standard.

These audits highlight a persistent gap: while forces often meet standards for answering calls, they often fall short in the response that follows. When forces fail to meet attendance targets, the risk to individuals and communities can increase, particularly in high-risk or vulnerable situations. Delays can also lead to missed opportunities to prevent harm, protect victims or secure



evidence, which can affect the outcome of the incident. Forces should work to address this problem.

## **Forces are struggling to improve how well they protect vulnerable people**

In our PEEL 2023–25 inspection, our grades for protecting vulnerable people have declined for 21 of the 43 forces since PEEL 2021/22. Our inspection methodology means one PEEL inspection programme isn't directly comparable with another. But many of the issues we found were those we had seen before. They have worsened, which has contributed to the decline in grades.

The 2023–25 PEEL programme assessed forces' ability to understand the size and scale of vulnerability in their communities. They need this understanding to provide an effective service. In some forces, we found that their governance of public protection arrangements lacked awareness of the operational challenges that affect their force's service to [vulnerable people](#). This contributed to some forces not effectively managing risk when backlogs in referrals for support occurred and led to delays in vulnerable people being protected from further harm. In contrast, it was pleasing to see good examples of force governance

arrangements to manage police-perpetrated violence and abuse.

The use of protective schemes such as Clare's Law (also known as the [Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme](#)) and [Domestic Violence Protection Orders](#) is a challenge for many forces. Of the 43 forces we inspected, 10 were routinely outside the national statutory [disclosure](#) timescale of 28 days, with backlogs in the process. Again, we found that governance and oversight processes often weren't good enough. The better-performing forces have invested in the right resources and training and have well-established processes. The [National Police Chiefs' Council \(NPCC\)](#) domestic abuse lead has set out national principles to aid forces' oversight of the Clare's Law process.

Obtaining and policing preventative orders is another area where improvements are needed. The [Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022](#) provides for pre-charge [bail](#) to be given for three months before further authorisation for bail extension is required. This is an increase from the previous limit of 28 days, which was in place until an amendment to the [Policing and Crime Act 2017](#) in 2021. This change has resulted in an increase in the use of bail and allowed for more safeguarding protections to be put in place for victims. But it has meant that forces are less incentivised to

apply for preventative orders, such as [Non-molestation Orders](#) and [Stalking Protection Orders](#), which can offer further protection for victims.

In our PEEL 2023–25 inspections, we found that when victim support wasn't in place, some forces weren't applying for civil orders, even in cases where courts were likely to grant them. When they applied for orders and these were granted, forces didn't always enforce them well enough. This could mean that forces don't take action if conditions are breached.

We graded Cheshire Constabulary and Humberside Police as outstanding for their commitment to protecting vulnerable people. They have strong governance and use performance data to inform operational priorities. Cheshire Constabulary stands out for its innovative internal and external media campaigns, which raise awareness about sexual consent and the long-term impact of domestic abuse on children, along with other topics. These campaigns aim to improve how people understand these issues and the force's response to protecting vulnerable people.

Both Cheshire Constabulary and Humberside Police have dedicated teams within their [control rooms](#) that provide immediate post-incident support and safeguarding advice to victims. These teams play a crucial role in making sure victims receive timely and

appropriate assistance. The two forces work effectively with partner agencies, such as children's social care, health, education and domestic abuse services, to reduce risks to vulnerable individuals and families.

We were also pleased to see that some forces were increasing their use of technology to assess risks and share information with partner agencies. Forces' use of technology has shown early signs of efficiency savings, which gives officers and staff more time to spend on other important tasks. Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary is using technology to review police databases to create bespoke information reports for children's services. This is freeing up police staff researchers' time. We have also found other good uses of technology to better protect vulnerable people. For example, Greater Manchester Police is using geofencing technology to notify officers when they are near an address where a Domestic Violence Protection Order is in force.

The new [National Centre for Violence Against Women and Girls and Public Protection](#), based at the [College of Policing](#), shows how seriously the policing system takes these issues. The centre should support greater national consistency in forces' practice and reduce some of the duplication found between previous

national programmes. I welcome its introduction and the government funding to make it possible.

## **Good leadership and management are vital for forces' efficiency and effectiveness**

All police forces should be well led and managed to make sure they are efficient and effective. Forces need to have good strategic planning, governance and performance management arrangements. Leaders need to be visible, set clear expectations, provide support and hold people to account. Forces should make sure they understand the demands they face and have plans to manage them. And they need to provide value for money and show continuous improvement, efficiency savings and increased productivity.

In our PEEL 2023–25 inspections, we found that many forces still had poor governance and performance management. Police forces have access to a large amount of data. Yet we found too many examples where forces didn't use data effectively to understand, scrutinise or challenge poor performance.

Police forces also often fail to use data to identify the underlying causes of poor performance and instead react to the symptoms. This can lead to unsustainable or inefficient practices. For example, forces may

allocate additional resources to an area instead of fixing inefficient processes or improving their use of technology.

We found too many forces where officers and staff didn't know what their force's priorities were and what individual and team contribution they made towards them. Although most forces have increased their efforts to communicate their strategic plans to the workforce, they need to be better at making sure the whole workforce understands them.

Positively, since our last round of PEEL inspections, most forces have established [first-line leadership](#) training programmes. These are helping to make sure that all officers and staff receive better support and management from their immediate supervisors.

Forces must be able to understand and manage the range of demands they face, both visible and hidden. Each force needs to have capacity in the right places so it can respond to calls for service and manage its crime demands effectively. But it also needs to understand the causes for these requirements by analysing high-quality data so that senior leaders can make informed decisions.



We found that too many forces lacked a structured approach to demand management. This leads to them deploying additional resources reactively to meet rising demand instead of addressing the underlying causes. These short-term solutions don't represent the best value for money for the public and may not be financially sustainable.

Where appropriate, forces need to focus on reducing demand through problem-solving approaches. This is especially true for repeat demands. Long-term planning, which allows forces to develop plans based on forecasts of risk and demand, helps to make sure resources are allocated to meet both existing and future needs. We try to encourage forces to take this approach through their force management statements.

Forces must make sure that they use their budgets to improve outcomes for the public. They need to provide value for money. This means creating a culture of continuous improvement, where systems and processes are regularly reviewed and made more efficient.

In some areas, we found obvious gaps in forces' use of technology. Some forces have found that using automated redaction resulted in significant savings in officer time. But some forces haven't yet adopted this technology. Instead, they still require officers and staff



to spend many hours completing tasks manually that technology can achieve in minutes.

Forces should actively search for opportunities to make efficiency savings, such as through better procurement, collaboration with other partners and greater use of technology. In our 2025 joint thematic investigation, '[Joint case building by the police and Crown Prosecution Service](#)', we recommended a review of redaction services to determine which are the most effective.

## **Forces must improve how they investigate crime**

On 27 March 2025, we published our report '[An inspection into how effectively the police investigate crime](#)'. The effective investigation of crime is fundamental to the legitimacy of the police service and to public confidence. It also influences how safe people feel and helps to prevent future offending. Our inspection focused on [volume crime](#).

Volume crime has been falling since the mid-1990s. But there has been a long-term decline in positive crime outcomes, which means that too many criminal investigations aren't leading to justice for victims. Some of the causes for this are beyond the control of the police and are the result of performance issues

in other parts of the [criminal justice system](#), such as the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and the courts. Yet much of this decline may be connected to how effectively the police investigate crime.

Overall, it is clear that chief constables don't have enough resources to investigate all volume crime to the standard that they and the public wish to see. Since 2015, police-recorded crime per 1,000 population has increased by 44 percent even though crime experienced by individuals and households is generally decreasing. An increase in reporting by the public and better recording practices have contributed to this rise. While police officer numbers have increased in since 2019, Home Office data shows that over the past 10 years, the number of crimes recorded per police officer has increased by 32.6 percent. Investigations have also become more complex due to factors such as the growing amount of digital evidence and additional case file requirements for court.

There has also been an increase in the number of investigators who lack experience. This has been caused by a decrease in officers and staff during austerity and then a sudden increase in recruitment as a result of the Police Uplift Programme that began in 2019. Because of this, many uniformed officers and staff lack crime investigation experience. Forces have

also been experiencing high vacancy rates in detective roles. This has further negatively affected forces' ability to investigate crime effectively.

We found that even with these challenges, forces could do more to improve how effectively they investigate crime. During our fieldwork, we saw numerous examples of initiatives that forces had introduced to improve the standard of crime investigations. We included 24 of these initiatives as case studies in our report. But we also found some common weaknesses.

The effective investigation of crime requires all police officers and staff involved to adopt an investigative mindset from the moment the force receives a report of crime. The period immediately following the report of an offence is a time-critical opportunity to take effective early action to secure evidence that would otherwise be lost, damaged, concealed, destroyed or altered. Yet we found that many frontline officers and staff who play a key part in crime investigations lacked an investigative mindset.

We spoke with many officers and staff who worked tirelessly to investigate crime. But too often ineffective force systems and processes for recording, assessing, allocating and investigating crime hampered their efforts. Forces often lacked an in-depth understanding

of their crime-related demand to allow them to accurately plan the resources they needed. In many cases, we found crimes had been allocated to an investigator who didn't have the right level of skill and knowledge. This makes a thorough investigation and a positive outcome for the victim less likely.

Too often, investigators had excessive workloads. This has a negative effect on their well-being and on the quality of the investigation. For example, we sometimes found that investigators didn't follow all reasonable lines of enquiry, which meant they might have missed evidence. Communication with victims can also suffer if investigators are overworked. Victims have a range of rights, which are set out under the [Code of Practice for Victims of Crime](#). Police forces should carry out victim needs assessments to understand how victims need to be supported and whether they are vulnerable. These needs assessments also influence how often the police will contact a victim and the method they use to do so. We often found that needs assessments were missing from the crime record or that they lacked detail.

We found that effective supervision was a key contributory factor to how well officers and staff carry out investigations. But too often we found that supervisors had too many crimes to manage. Many supervisors lacked the training, experience and skills needed to effectively manage officers and staff carrying out investigations. These factors can contribute to investigations not being carried out to the required standard.

These are just a few of the many problems we discussed in our report. We made 11 recommendations for chief constables, the NPCC, the College of Policing and the Home Office.

These recommendations aim to help forces improve the standard of their crime investigations and achieve better outcomes by:

- building a better understanding of their crime-related demand and the resources they need to meet it;
- designing more effective processes for recording, assessing, allocating and investigating crime, putting [victims](#) at the heart of the process;
- providing better training for investigators, their supervisors and any other officers or members of staff who have a role in an investigation; and
- improving the supervision of crime investigations.

# The police response to the summer 2024 disorder was largely effective

In July and August 2024, serious violent disorder broke out across the UK following the tragic murders of three young girls in Southport. The Home Secretary commissioned us to assess and report on the police response and identify lessons for the future. Our first report ([tranche 1](#)) focused on capacity and capability, co-ordination and [mobilisation](#), and well-being.

Our [tranche 2](#) report examined the use of an [intelligence](#)-led approach, tackling online content and social media, and crime investigations.

In our inspection, we found that police officers across England and Wales showed immense bravery.

Many sustained injuries, and some were hospitalised. The professionalism of all officers and staff involved in the response to the disorder deserves credit. So too do those who led and co-ordinated the response.

We concluded that the national mobilisation of [public order public safety \(POPS\)](#) resources, combined with the early identification and prosecution of offenders, was instrumental in ending the disorder and restoring peace to our towns and cities.



But we also found that the police service's systems and processes were outdated and in need of change, which meant that forces were initially unprepared for the scale of the disorder. We found that police intelligence assessments failed to predict the rising threat of disorder, partly because they underestimated the influence of social media and community tensions. Intelligence systems were fragmented, and there was no clear national strategy for managing disorder-related intelligence.

When disorder broke out, it spread quickly across many towns and cities. The volume of online misinformation and disinformation played a major role in fuelling this spread and was overwhelming for many forces. They struggled to counter false narratives quickly. Many lacked the resources to monitor social media effectively. Forces need better arrangements for managing illegal and harmful online content, including a system for real-time content removal.

At first, forces deployed their own officers to deal with the disorder. But it became clear that some forces needed more POPS-trained officers to respond effectively. Many regions decided to implement their regional POPS mobilisation plans. After several days, because of the level, seriousness and escalating nature of the disorder, the NPCC implemented a national plan



called Operation Navette. Some forces still faced problems when they needed to obtain [mutual aid](#), but generally the national mobilisation of POPS resources worked well. I am conscious that hindsight provides an opportunity to view previous events in a different light. But as a result of our inspection, we concluded that this national response should have been instigated earlier.

Despite these challenges, the police response to disorder and subsequent crime investigations were largely effective. By January 2025, the police had made 1,804 arrests and brought charges against 1,071 people. The CPS and courts worked closely with police to bring offenders to justice quickly, which helped deter further disorder. But the burden of investigations fell unevenly on some forces, and there was no national plan for mobilising investigative resources.

Regrettably, our review highlighted that the police service hadn't learned all the lessons it should have from previous incidents of disorder and subsequent reports. We made several further recommendations (in both tranche 1 and tranche 2) to improve threat management and any future response to disorder. These included:

- strengthening how forces collect, analyse and share intelligence relating to public disorder;

- enhancing forces' abilities to monitor and respond to harmful online content; and
- improving the investigation of offences relating to large-scale disorder.

We have also recommended that the national co-ordinating [gold commander](#) should have explicit authority to direct where POPS resources are sent when the national mobilisation plan is activated.

## **Operation Soteria is already making a difference to victims of rape and other serious sexual offences**

Introduced in 2021, [Operation Soteria](#) is an unprecedented programme to transform how police forces across England and Wales and the CPS respond to rape and other serious sexual offences. Soteria has been proven to create effective suspect-focused investigations, in which the police support victims and understand their needs. It also aims to make sure intelligence, analysis and [digital forensics](#) are used effectively to support cases.

All police forces in England and Wales have formally adopted Operation Soteria as a standard through which they investigate reports of rape and other serious sexual offences and provide support to victims.

However, it will take time for Soteria to become established practice. But most forces have already trained large numbers of investigators, specialist staff and first-line responders in the principles of Soteria, which are that investigations should be victim-centred, suspect-focused and context-led.

In May 2023, the then Home Secretary commissioned us to inspect the progress of 19 early adopter forces. The commission required that our inspection should have two phases. The first phase was to map the progress of the first 19 forces to adopt Soteria and to identify its benefits and challenges. The second phase was to examine how cases progressed after suspects had been charged using the Soteria model.

Our first completed inspection intended to make sure learning from the first 19 forces could improve future rollout of Soteria and the National Operating Model. The National Operating Model sets out a foundation for investigative practice and corporate guidance to help forces achieve better outcomes in cases involving rape and other serious sexual offences. We inspected 9 of the 19 forces. On 22 August 2024, we published our report, '[Progress to introduce a national operating model for rape and other serious sexual offences investigations](#)'.

It was, and still is, too early to judge the success of Soteria. But we were encouraged to see that Soteria was already making a difference. We found improvements in how well the police understood and supported victims. Many [independent sexual violence advisers](#) told us that they had noticed a positive cultural change in how police personnel approach victims. New training is helping investigators understand more about rape and other serious sexual offences and how perpetrators can target victims. And other new specialist training, for example in examining digital media, is supporting improvements to investigations. Soteria is also helping the police and CPS to work together better.

Adopting Soteria and the National Operating Model requires major changes. We found areas where forces and the wider criminal justice system needed to improve to bring about the most benefit. For example, we found resource gaps in digital forensics, analysis, victim support and investigation teams. These led to high workloads and delays. In most forces we inspected, about half of rape investigation team members were trainees. Given the overall experience profile of the police workforce, this isn't an easy problem to resolve and will take time.

These resource problems can lead to poor outcomes for victims, despite the introduction of Soteria. In some cases, we found victims were waiting months to receive specialist victim support. In most cases it takes nearly a year before a charging decision is made by the CPS and several years before cases reach trial in the Crown Court. This can lead to victims giving up on the process altogether.

While some of the problems we found related to finite resources, others were due to leadership, management and training issues. For example, we found that most forces could:

- improve training on cases where the victim's disclosure is the only available account but is contested by the accused and there is no (or little) corroborating evidence;
- use existing powers to better effect; or
- better explain to victims the reasons why no further action is being taken.

We also found that forces still had gaps in their data but weren't prioritising the understanding or fixing of these gaps. Forces need to address this. In our 2024 report, we made 14 recommendations to promote improvements.

Even with the challenges that forces face, Soteria remains a major opportunity for making improvements for victims of rape and other serious sexual offences. Its pioneering evidence-based training, rooted in psychology, helps the police to take a victim-centred approach to their investigations. Soteria supports a cultural shift in police attitudes and understanding, which makes it more likely that victims will feel validated and heard. Crucially, police forces must have the right numbers of skilled and trained investigators with manageable workloads before the potential of the Soteria approach can be achieved in other areas of public protection, such as domestic abuse and [modern slavery](#).

We found that the Government, NPCC and College of Policing all strongly supported Soteria. Several members of the police workforce called it “a game changer”. I agree. It is backed by decades of research into policing practice and previous examinations of why victims of rape and other serious sexual offences have been systemically failed by the criminal justice system.

# There is some variation in the arrangements for responding to serious and organised crime

Serious and organised crime (SOC) is a major threat to the safety and security of the UK. It is responsible for danger in our homes and on our streets and for damage to our economy and our communities.

The National Crime Agency leads the national response, supported by nine regional organised crime units (ROCUs) and a separate collaborative arrangement for the London region. Police forces also manage SOC threats locally and work closely with ROCUs to co-ordinate action.

Since 2022, we have inspected 7 regions and the 29 police forces within them. We produced a report for each region and gave a graded judgment to each ROCU and constituent force.

## **ROCUs are doing more to disrupt serious crime than ever before**

Since 2022, we have inspected six of the nine ROCUs and have given the following grades:

- one outstanding;
- two good;



- two adequate; and
- one inadequate.

We haven't given any ROCU a grade of 'requires improvement'.

We found the officers and staff who work within ROCUs were dedicated to tackling SOC. They had an impressive range of skills and capabilities that supported them to do this professionally and successfully.

We found many strengths in how most ROCUs were operating. All the ROCUs we inspected used a strategic assessment process to identify regional SOC threats. They had governance arrangements to manage these threats. But some ROCU governance arrangements were more effective than others. ROCUs operate a [gateway function](#) to manage requests for support. This helps ROCUs to understand the demand placed on them and to formally record decisions on whether the demand is met or not.

We found the following examples of [innovative practice](#) and [promising practice](#):

- The South East ROCU had allocated a dedicated officer to manage serious crime prevention officers and improve the work they carry out.

- The ROCU for the West Midlands had a team dedicated to exploiting intelligence from technical sources.
- The North West ROCU had worked with other agencies to effectively disrupt [county lines](#) by identifying vehicles linked to this type of crime and sharing this information with other forces.
- The North West ROCU had introduced an enhanced process to assess SOC threats in prisons and record disruption activity linked to this threat.

But we also found a high degree of inconsistency between ROCUs and some common weaknesses. For example, we saw inconsistent practice in SOC threat assessments. This means that ROCUs can't measure SOC demand accurately, which limits how well resources are used. We also found that ROCUs weren't always using [SOC local profiles](#) effectively to identify [place-based harm](#) and to promote a multi-agency response.

There are also deeper problems that stop ROCUs being as efficient and effective as possible. Most of the funding for ROCUs comes from police forces in that region, as agreed between local police and crime commissioners and chief constables. They also receive a smaller proportion of their total funding from the Government, which is usually only provided over a

one-year period. This often leads to short-term planning, inefficiencies and difficulties in retaining officers and staff who don't have long-term security in their postings or employment.

The governance and funding model places ROCUs largely under the command of their constituent forces. Because commands are set up separately, they each have their own systems. ROCU personnel have to access multiple information systems and tools to fully analyse intelligence. This creates inefficiencies in bringing this information together and sharing it across the ROCU network. There is also no national framework for SOC performance, which means the forces, ROCUs, the National Crime Agency and other SOC law enforcement agencies can't fully show system-wide performance.

### **Police forces' local response to SOC works best with strategic partnerships**

As at 31 July 2025, we had assessed 33 police forces on tackling SOC and given the following grades:

- four outstanding;
- eight good;
- nine adequate;
- eight requires improvement; and
- four inadequate.

I am pleased to see that Leicestershire Police and Merseyside Police have grades of 'outstanding'. Durham Constabulary and West Yorkshire Police were also graded 'outstanding' in their last PEEL inspection, but haven't yet been reinspected as part of the regional SOC rolling programme. We have also identified 11 examples of innovative or promising practice. Most SOC occurs and is dealt with at a local level by police forces. So, it is disappointing that 12 of the forces we have inspected so far have grades of 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate'. This means their work to keep the public safe isn't as good as it should be.

In the forces that are performing well, we generally found that their senior leaders were prioritising SOC appropriately and putting the right resources in the right place to proactively understand and tackle the threat. We also found that most of these forces had an effective [lead responsible officers \(LROs\)](#) model. LROs are particularly effective when:

- they are supported by strong leadership;
- they have enough training and professional development;
- their role is supported by clear processes to manage the threat; and

- they have good relationships with other specialist SOC professionals, such as SOC co-ordinators and tactical advisers.

There are some common themes in the [areas for improvement](#) we identified in the local response to SOC. LROs are responsible for managing all SOC threats. In forces with strong senior leadership, consistent training and development, well-defined SOC management processes and ancillary support, we usually found that the LROs were performing their role well. But this wasn't always the case. The College of Policing and NPCC are working to increase consistency between forces by developing a professional profile for the LRO role and refreshing material to train and develop LROs.

The [Prevent, Pursue, Protect, Prepare \(4P\) approach](#) was originally developed to tackle terrorism. Forces also use the 4P approach to reduce SOC and its harms. We found that the quality and consistency of 4P plans varied. We have worked with the NPCC SOC portfolio working group to support the design of a national 4P plan template. This is being rolled out and has already been adopted in some forces.

Some forces still don't have strong strategic partnership arrangements. While we have found good examples of local policing and other teams working well with partners, some forces don't have strategic partnership boards to direct and co-ordinate force-level work to tackle SOC. Challenges around partnership and multi-agency working are being addressed in the Government's [Clear, Hold, Build](#) strategy, which is part of the [Safer Streets mission](#). It encourages collaborative working between the police and local authorities, trading standards and community organisation partners. It also provides a framework for the 4P approach.

Our SOC inspections gather evidence on how forces are developing Clear, Hold, Build. We have seen that some forces have made progress in this area. But a small number of forces have either struggled to identify sites to use Clear, Hold, Build or to influence partner agencies to allocate sufficient resources to make it effective.

# Child protection is improving

Protecting children is one of the most important things the police do. We inspect the child protection work of every police force through our national child protection inspections. We also carry out joint inspections, called joint targeted area inspections in England and joint inspections of child protection arrangements in Wales.

Over the past year, we have seen positive progress in this area. In particular, the Metropolitan Police Service has improved how it assesses and investigates the risk to [missing](#) children and crimes involving exploited children, although further improvements are still required. We were also encouraged by Greater Manchester Police's contribution to multi-agency child protection arrangements with its [statutory safeguarding partners](#).

But not all forces are doing as well as they should. We raised concerns about:

- the leadership of child protection in some forces;
- how well forces respond to children who are missing; and
- how well forces investigate incidents involving children, including online [child sexual exploitation](#).



## **Our custody inspections have led to improvements and will now take place more often**

We carry out inspections of police custody jointly with the Care Quality Commission, which inspects health outcomes for detainees. The inspections are part of the UK's commitment to upholding international human rights standards in places of detention, according to the [Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment](#).

Custody inspections make sure that people in police custody are held in a safe environment and are treated fairly and in line with the law. They also focus on how well forces meet the needs of children and vulnerable adults.

The independent '[Evaluation of the HMICFRS joint custody inspection programme](#)', published in 2023, found that the joint inspection programme had led to improvements in how police forces run custody suites, especially when making sure that detainees are treated with dignity and kept safe. The evaluation found that forces often acted on our investigation report recommendations and that our reports provided forces with evidence for improved funding and support for

custody improvements. Nationally, the programme has influenced laws and guidance, especially for children and vulnerable people.

The duration of the programme has allowed joint inspection teams to assess change over time.

For example, in our [2024 inspection of Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary](#), we found that it had made improvements since the last inspection, particularly in the physical condition of custody suites and the overall governance structure.

In general, we found that healthcare provision in custody suites had improved since 2023. This includes forces locating healthcare practitioners in suites on a 24-hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week basis so that they can provide prompt assessment and treatment. They can also support mental health referrals and help detainees with alcohol and drug dependency.

We found improvements in how well forces cared for children and met their needs if they were detained in custody. The number of children held in detention has been falling because frontline officers use other options to divert children from custody. When they are detained, the provision of [appropriate adult](#) support has improved and detention time is kept to a minimum.

Some forces are trialling early reviews with an inspector to speed up investigations involving children with the

aim of making sure child detainees are released within 12 hours.

We also found improvements in how well forces met detainees' needs relating to areas such as disability, gender recognition, neurodiversity and religion.

Safety in cells has also improved, with forces focusing more on health and safety standards in suites, such as reducing risks from any potential [ligature points](#).

But, for many forces, we still have concerns about risk management, particularly the setting of correct observation levels when detainees are under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Also, some forces still aren't robustly monitoring the use of force in custody, for example by reviewing CCTV footage of incidents. Reviews of detention under the [Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984](#) often aren't to the standard we expect.

Custody inspections now form part of our '[PEEL assessment framework for 2025–27](#)' and beyond.

These inspections will take place every four years instead of every six, which will increase the frequency and regularity of oversight. Our inspection methodology for this important area of policing broadly remains the same, but forces will now receive graded judgments. This means that, for the first time, forces will be formally rated on how well they manage custody, which is

similar to how they are graded in other areas under the PEEL framework. Graded judgments will provide clearer benchmarks for performance and help promote improvements across all areas.

During visits to police custody suites, inspectors will examine six key areas, including how forces:

1. protect the safety and well-being of detainees;
2. protect detainees from neglect and harm by recognising and meeting their needs;
3. comply with the [Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 codes of practice](#) and College of Policing [authorised professional practice](#) and make sure detainees can exercise their legal rights;
4. assess, manage and regularly review any risk detainees pose to themselves and/or others throughout detention and on release;
5. make sure that any use of force in custody is lawful, necessary and proportionate and is subject to robust scrutiny; and
6. make sure that detainees have access to a range of appropriately staffed and well-managed healthcare services.

### 3. The police workforce

#### **High levels of inexperience in the workforce are still a challenge for forces**

After years of decline during the austerity period of 2010–19, in recent years forces have increased the size of their workforce. This growth in numbers should help forces to keep the public safe and bring criminals to justice. But the rapid decline and subsequent rise has led to high levels of inexperience in the workforce. This will be a challenge for forces to manage for a few more years.

In the year ending 31 March 2024, 35 percent of [officers](#) had fewer than 5 years' experience. During the years of austerity, between 31 March 2010 and 31 March 2017, the number of officers declined. But between 2019 and 2023, the [Police Uplift Programme](#) created 20,000 new officer posts.

Most chief constables and senior leaders told me about the impact this has had on frontline policing and service provision, particularly in investigations. Many new recruits can lack confidence and/or capability.

This brings additional demands on training, supervision and leadership.

Officers who are in training spend less time on the front line, particularly those in the police constable degree apprenticeship. Also, most practical learning still takes place 'on the job'. New officers take more time to carry out tasks than experienced officers. This limits the amount that forces can achieve with their resources.

All forces need to improve their supervisory capability. Inexperienced leaders are often making decisions without enough firsthand knowledge. It is positive that the [College of Policing](#) is addressing these gaps through its [first-line leadership](#) programme, which is aimed at sergeants and [police staff](#) equivalents. Most forces are providing first-line leadership training.

For example, Cheshire Constabulary has comprehensive training for all levels of leadership. The chief constable leads pledge events for sergeants, inspectors and police staff equivalents. These events set out clear objectives and expectations and promote the constabulary's culture of well-being and inclusion. The constabulary uses performance and talent conversations to get a clear picture of its leaders' capabilities. A talent grid helps it to assess leaders' performance and potential. It has also introduced

effective processes in its student management team to support new recruits and help retain them.

Newer officers are much more likely to leave the police service than their colleagues. One in five new officers leave the service in the first three years. In the year ending 31 March 2010, the overall leaver rate for officers (leavers as a proportion of those in post at the start of the year) was 4.1 percent. In the year ending 31 March 2024, the leaver rate was 6.1 percent compared with 6.6 percent the previous year.

Although it is too early to see this as a trend, this is a positive indicator that the leaver rate may now be starting to decline.

Newer officers leaving the service shouldn't always be seen as a negative. Recruits may start and then realise that being a police officer isn't for them, or forces may consider them unsuitable for the role. But [research by the University of Portsmouth](#) has suggested that cultural factors within police forces, such as a lack of perceived organisational fairness, contribute to them leaving. Forces must continue to do all they can to prevent well-suited individuals from leaving the service.



During our police efficiency, effectiveness and legitimacy (PEEL) 2023–25 inspections, we included a focus on forces' understanding of the challenges that new recruits face. We found that many recruits with limited experience were facing high workloads, often without sufficient support, which was leading to retention and well-being concerns. But we also found some forces were addressing these challenges effectively.

Cheshire Constabulary introduced Operation Support to help officers and staff manage their workloads, especially those who have less experience. It allows officers to have protected time to complete their crime enquiries, and additional supervisors are deployed to support and guide investigations.

Cumbria Constabulary provides a supportive environment that helps new recruits to develop and encourages them to stay. This includes tracking the development and needs of individual student officers using a structured framework. It also has discussions called 'stay conversations' with officers who are thinking of leaving. This is helping to keep retention high. Only 6 of 122 new recruits left in 2023.

The public and forces will feel the impact of an inexperienced workforce for several more years. Forces will need to continue to manage this carefully

and make sure that they are supporting these officers. The renewed focus on recruiting an additional 13,000 officers and staff may make this issue worse in the short term. But increasing the size of the police workforce is undoubtedly a positive thing.

## **Police staff are essential to forces' efficiency and effectiveness**

In my [2023 'State of Policing' report](#), I spoke about the importance of police staff and how the Police Uplift Programme funding arrangements were too restrictive on chief constables. Police staff carry out essential roles; some of these are visible to the public and others aren't. They are all important. I recommended that the Government should abolish the ring-fenced grant associated with maintaining police officer numbers. But this grant is still in place.

I understand the political imperative to maintain officer numbers. Visible policing reassures members of the public and is something that they support. As at 31 March 2025, there were 146,442 full-time equivalent officers in England and Wales. Despite the Police Uplift Programme, this is still fewer officers per head of population than in 2010 due to population growth. In the year ending 31 March 2010, there was 1 police officer per 386 people in England and Wales. But in the year

ending 31 March 2025, there was 1 police officer per 408 people, which means that each officer was serving 5 percent more members of the public.

**Figure 6: Police workforce in England and Wales, by role, between the years ending 31 March 2010 and 31 March 2025**

Since 2019, the number of police officers has steadily increased. The number grew from 123,189 in March 2019 to 147,746 in March 2024. This coincided with the Police Uplift Programme, which ran from September 2019 to March 2023 and successfully recruited 20,000 new officers. Between March 2023 and March 2024 the number of officers remained stable, increasing by only 16.

The number of police staff and designated officers has also grown steadily, from 69,302 in March 2019 to 81,996 in March 2024.

Over the same period, the number of police community support officers steadily declined, from 9,547 in March 2019 to 7,539 in March 2024. The sharpest decline was between March 2022 and March 2023, when the number fell by almost 1,000.

**Source:** Compiled from [Police workforce open data tables](#), Home Office

In their responses to my autumn 2024 questionnaire, chief constables have again told me about the challenges that maintaining officer numbers is creating for them. The nature of crime and policing is changing. Forces need a wide range of specialist skills. For practical and economic reasons, some of these skills are better suited to police staff rather than officers. For example, most forces require more [intelligence](#) analysts and IT specialists. These roles are better suited to police staff.

In addition, financial challenges combined with an inability to reduce officer headcount without losing government grant funding have meant that many forces are putting more officers in back-office roles or are reducing the administrative support available to them. At similar levels of seniority, officers cost a force more than police staff, so this is inefficient. It also reduces the amount of time officers can spend on frontline duties. One chief constable described the impact that ring-fenced funding has had on their workforce. They said that “decisions [are] being made by necessity” due to these constraints and “may not best reflect local need”.

On 31 January 2025, [the Home Secretary announced a £200 million funding increase for forces](#). This is to help forces increase their [neighbourhood policing](#) resources

with an extra 3,000 neighbourhood officers and police community support officers (PCSOs) by March 2026. Although the Government is currently keeping the Police Uplift Programme officer targets in place, it is positive to see that PCSOs have been included in this additional funding. As at 31 March 2025, PCSO numbers were less than half what they were in 2010, declining from 16,918 in March 2010 to 7,315 by March 2025. PCSOs are valuable to forces. They help to gather intelligence, provide a link to communities and act as a visible presence. I welcome this funding for forces and the inclusion of PCSOs.

However, it would be better if forces were allowed to use some of this funding for police staff who can work in neighbourhood policing, such as data analysts who can help to identify crime hotspots. Analysts are an important resource for forces, but there aren't enough of them. The Government should consider changing the rules associated with the funding to allow for this.

Having more police staff may not be the most politically popular approach, but it is nevertheless the right thing to do. It is more challenging for [police and crime commissioners \(PCCs\)](#) and the Home Secretary to hold chief constables to account for performance when they can't maintain a sensible workforce balance between police officers and staff that optimises forces' efficiency.

## Officers and staff feel undervalued and experience low morale

I am concerned about the poor state of morale in police forces. In my 2023 ‘State of Policing’ report, I said that many in the police service don’t feel valued by their force, the Government or the public. Little has changed. In my call for views for this report, over half of respondents chose ‘low morale/well-being within the police force’ as one of the most significant challenges faced by the police service in 2024.

In surveys carried out by the Police Federation and [Police Superintendents’ Association](#), respondents had similar concerns. In the [2024 Police Federation pay and morale survey](#), 88 percent of respondents felt that morale within their force was ‘low’ or ‘very low’, which is a 1 percent increase since the 2023 survey. In response to my call for evidence, the Police Superintendents’ Association said that their 2024 survey responses showed worsening well-being, with more superintendents reporting high levels of stress, anxiety and mental health difficulties. Of superintendents surveyed, 34 percent said their personal motivation was low, 66 percent said morale was low in their force and only 38 percent said they felt valued.



Policing is often described as a job unlike any other. This is for good reason. Police officers and staff regularly face threatening and emotionally demanding situations. They are also required to work long, uncertain hours and have high levels of responsibility. And because they are given extraordinary powers, the level of scrutiny that their decision-making receives is commensurately high. It is therefore exceptionally important that they feel supported and valued for their work. This helps them to face the demands of the job and provide a high-quality service to [victims](#) and the public.

Forces should do everything they can to create the conditions under which morale can improve. Leadership is critical to making sure that the workforce is inspired, motivated and feels a strong personal attachment to their force. Officers and staff should have a clear understanding of their own objectives and those of their force and have agency in how they achieve them. Good work should be praised, and poor work should be learned from without unnecessary blame.

Making improvements in effectiveness and efficiency can also help to improve officer and staff morale. In our inspections, we often find work processes that are poorly designed and unnecessarily bureaucratic. Inadequate IT systems mean that tasks take longer and



create frustration. And we often find changes that haven't been managed well. Policing is hard enough without these challenges.

The Home Office also needs to do all it can to increase the morale of officers and staff. It needs to strike the right balance between providing officers and staff with support to carry out their difficult roles and making sure there is an appropriate degree of accountability for both performance and conduct. I hope to see proposals from the Government about how to restore morale within the police service in the forthcoming police reform white paper.

## **Well-being support is improving, but provision is inconsistent**

Due to the nature of police work and demands of the job, many officers and staff experience high levels of burnout and post-traumatic stress. They also receive injuries from work-related violence that require medical attention. In the year ending 31 March 2024, there were 44,976 offences of assault on police officers recorded in England and Wales. This is an increase of 11.1 percent compared with the previous year. Most police officers and staff remain professional and serve the public well. They need to receive appropriate support for their well-being.

Although all forces provide some well-being provision, some forces provide better and more affordable access to help and support than others. [In our tranche 1 inspection of the police response to the public disorder in summer 2024](#), we found that the programmes and structures that support the well-being of police officers and staff differed across forces in England and Wales. We also found that officers who were given sufficient well-being support recovered more quickly. But officers whose well-being was treated as an afterthought reported feeling let down.

All forces provide an [occupational health service](#). But there is often more demand for support than forces can offer from the budgets they have allocated. This can sometimes lead to unreasonable delays or to adequate support not being provided. Staff associations and charities often step in to help. For example, eligible officers can access one of three specialist treatment centres that offer physical rehabilitation and psychological support. Around 90 percent of the funding for these centres comes from voluntary monthly donations made by police staff, police officers and retired officers.

If insufficient support is provided to officers and staff, it can contribute to long-term sickness absence from the workforce. [Police workforce, England and Wales statistics](#) showed that, as at 31 March 2024, there were 3,055 full-time equivalent police officers on long-term sick leave (sickness absence that has lasted for more than 28 days). This was equivalent to 2.1 percent of police officers in England and Wales and slightly higher than the rate of 1.7 percent in the previous year. There were also 1,574 full-time equivalent police staff on long-term sick leave, equivalent to 1.9 percent of police staff in England and Wales. The proportion of officers on long-term sickness has almost doubled since 2010.

Some of these absences couldn't have been avoided even with better well-being support and effective line management, but many could have been.

Forces should be more consistent in how they prioritise well-being. They should offer the right kind of well-being support to all officers and staff, regardless of their roles. The offer should meet a common minimum standard. To help this, all forces should audit and benchmark themselves against the [National Police Wellbeing Service's 'Blue Light Wellbeing Framework'](#). This will help to reduce the impact of ill-health on the police workforce.

The [Police Covenant](#) was established under the [Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022](#) and was designed to protect the health, safety and well-being of the police workforce in England and Wales. The '[Police Covenant annual report 2023](#)' showed 3 of the 11 original priorities as being completed and progress being made against others. Yet progress against these actions hasn't shown that it is improving the well-being of the police workforce. This work should continue, but there must be a focus on meaningful outcomes. All police officers and staff deserve effective and consistent well-being support so that they can do their jobs well and make sure the public are protected.

## **There are often too few candidates for chief constable positions**

Leadership is critical at all levels of the police service. Leaders set and maintain force values and uphold standards of behaviour. The chief constable is perhaps the most important leadership role in a force. Chief constables act as a single point of success or failure and are responsible for the direction and control of their force. They must be capable of meeting the demands of the job.

However, we are seeing a trend of not enough applicants for chief constable positions. During 2025, the media reported on two examples of this, when Merseyside Police's chief constable vacancy and the Metropolitan Police Service's deputy commissioner vacancy each received only one applicant. In those cases, both candidates were proven leaders.

But as a matter of principle, it isn't right that such important and influential senior positions in policing aren't attracting a wider and diverse range of suitable candidates. On occasions, there have been unsuccessful recruitment campaigns. And sometimes candidates have been appointed who don't necessarily have the breadth of leadership experience necessary for such a demanding role.

Several factors contribute to this situation. The turnover of chief constables has been higher than usual, mainly due to the number reaching retirement age and deciding to leave. [National Police Chiefs' Council](#) data identified that between April 2020 and November 2023, three quarters of chief constables and half of deputy chief constables concluded their service. This has led to a high number of recruitment campaigns. Fewer individuals at the ranks below chief constable now have the necessary leadership experience.

The role also has problems related to attractiveness. This applies to all [chief officer](#) positions, but the problems appear to be most acute for the role of chief constable. The role carries a high public profile and involves a lot of risk and scrutiny. In recent years, more chief constables have found themselves being investigated for conduct or complaint matters because of their actions. In some forces, the relationship between a previous chief constable and the PCC has been strained. There can also be a perception that the existing deputy chief constable will get the chief constable role. All these factors and many others can inhibit people's willingness to apply.

Police forces and the College of Policing must do all they can to make sure that talented individuals are being developed in readiness for the role of chief constable. PCCs must carry out recruitment campaigns in the most open manner possible. And the Government, along with PCCs, should make sure that the role remains sufficiently attractive. During 2025/26, we will carry out a [thematic inspection](#) into police leadership that will include a focus on the role of the chief constable. It will allow us to further explore this issue and make recommendations for improvement.



## Vetting and misconduct processes are continuing to improve

It should never be police officers or staff who are the source of harm to the public. Most police officers are dedicated to public service and never breach the standards of professional behaviour. But criminal acts and [misconduct](#) by some police officers and staff have severely damaged trust in the police. The murder of Sarah Everard by a serving police officer is the most heinous example. But it has sadly not been an isolated cause for public concern.

In our 2022 report '[An inspection of vetting, misconduct, and misogyny in the police service](#)', we found it was too easy for the wrong people to join and stay in the police. We made 43 recommendations to promote improvements. Since then, the police and successive governments have recognised this as an area of concern. Many forces, acting on our recommendations, have made changes so that those who are unfit to serve are either prevented from joining or removed from the police service. There has also been a concerted effort to improve the culture in forces.

We have continued to monitor the progress that forces have made against each of our recommendations. For some recommendations, we found that all or nearly



all forces had made good progress. For example, most forces:

- have introduced a risk matrix to assess and manage sexual-related corruption intelligence;
- have put in place processes to monitor IT systems, including work-issued mobile devices; and
- are correctly categorising corruption intelligence.

Overall, forces are making progress in most areas.

But more needs to be done in areas such as:

- decision-making and quality assurance processes when an applicant is refused vetting clearance or is granted clearance after consideration of [adverse information](#) found during vetting; and
- counter-corruption units establishing working relationships with organisations that support [vulnerable people](#).

Forces' efforts to tackle wrongdoing may have the effect of increasing public concern in the short term. In the year ending 31 March 2024, 1,312 officers were referred to formal misconduct proceedings in England and Wales, and misconduct or [gross misconduct](#) was proven against 1,104 of them (84.1 percent). The public nature of police gross misconduct proceedings and the media coverage that many of these receive may cause the public to further question whether police officers can

be trusted to behave appropriately. But the public should be reassured that action is being taken against these individuals. While media coverage of these cases can be unsettling, it shows how forces are acting to remove those people who are unfit to serve.

During 2024 and 2025, the Government introduced a range of new regulations on police vetting and misconduct to help forces in their efforts. On 7 May 2024, the [Police \(Conduct\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2024](#) came into effect. Chief constables or a suitable deputy can now chair misconduct proceedings instead of an independent legally qualified chair. This was something chief constables called for and something I supported.

The [College of Policing's vetting authorised professional practice](#) continues to provide updated guidance, which should further improve the police vetting system. And on 14 May 2025, the [Police \(Vetting\) Regulations 2025](#) came into effect.

Police forces are now able to dismiss those who fail to meet the required standard of vetting. If officers can't be trusted to hold vetting clearance, they shouldn't be allowed to serve the public.

Since the consequences of officers failing their vetting may now include dismissal, it is important that any

decisions are made appropriately and that due process for appeals is followed carefully.

## **Dealing effectively with complaints is essential for police legitimacy**

In autumn 2023, after we inspected 34 forces and published our reports, we paused our rolling inspection programme on assessing forces' vetting arrangements and how they identify and tackle corruption.

This allowed us to develop our new integrity inspection programme, which includes an assessment of forces' vetting, professional standards and counter-corruption arrangements.

[Professional standards departments](#), working alongside leaders at all levels, play an important role in promoting high standards of behaviour in the workforce. They are also responsible for identifying, handling and investigating conduct and complaint matters.

A police complaint is a member of the public's expression of dissatisfaction about the service they have received from a police force. Complaints cover a wide range of issues. The [Independent Office for Police Conduct \(IOPC\)](#) is the statutory body for overseeing the police complaints system in England and Wales. Since 2020, PCCs' offices, depending on their operating model, have also been responsible for

complaint handling and have a statutory responsibility for oversight alongside the IOPC. But most complaints are handled by the relevant police force through their professional standards department.

It is essential to police legitimacy that these complaint processes work effectively. The public must be confident that police officers and police forces will act appropriately but also that there is recourse and accountability if they don't. According to the IOPC's [‘Police complaints statistics for England and Wales report – 2023/24’](#), in the year ending 31 March 2024, police forces and local policing bodies logged 85,458 public complaints. This is an increase of 5 percent from the previous year.

However, the public don't have high confidence in the police complaints system. [IOPC data](#) shows that public confidence in the police to deal fairly with complaints made against them has increased slightly, from 32 percent in 2023 to 36 percent in 2024.

This progress is encouraging and indicates that the public believe forces are taking more positive action on complaints. But the level of confidence is still far too low.

We will continue our focus on vetting, professional standards and counter-corruption to promote improvements.

## 4. Police reform

### The case for change

Police forces have always had to evolve to meet the changing needs of their communities. The police service has adapted to new criminal threats, technological advancements and shifting public expectations. But progress has never been linear. Today, the pace of change in society is exceeding the policing system's capability to respond effectively.

Communities face changing threats that range from an increase in complex forms of violence, abuse and exploitation to a rise in cybercrime and fraud.

Technological advancements have changed the nature of some types of crime and the investigation of crime. Many crimes are being committed online or involve electronic devices. Traditional forms of crime, such as burglary, have been falling for decades. But the public have an increased expectation that the police will deal with crimes that have historically been vastly under-reported, such as [domestic abuse](#) and other types of violence or abuse mainly committed against women and girls. These challenges are compounded by financial constraints, the inadequacy of the broader

[criminal justice system](#) and the pressures on other essential public services such as health and social care.

There is much that individual police forces can and must do to improve their efficiency and effectiveness, such as addressing the findings from our police efficiency, effectiveness and legitimacy (PEEL) inspections. But there are many systemic problems that hinder their ability to meet existing demands. There are also opportunities that could be better capitalised on, such as new developments in science and technology. The Government recognises that resolving these problems and taking advantage of system-wide opportunities for improvement are essential to achieving the outcomes in the [Safer Streets mission](#). In November 2024, [the Home Secretary announced an ambitious programme of police reform](#) and is working collaboratively with the policing sector to develop it. This chapter explores the systemic challenges facing the police service and how the proposed reforms could help to resolve them.



## There isn't enough central direction and oversight of performance

There are 43 separate territorial police forces in England and Wales, each led by a chief constable or commissioner who has direction and control over the force. Since 2012, chief constables have been held to account by locally elected [police and crime commissioners \(PCCs\)](#) or their mayoral equivalent. PCCs also set the local police and crime plan, which chief constables must have regard to, and the force budget.

When PCCs were introduced, the Home Office began to take a more devolved approach to policing and reduced the level of central oversight and accountability. The aim was to enhance local accountability and improve work with communities.

This localised approach to policing has brought certain benefits. For example, PCCs have taken a leadership role in work with local criminal justice partners to improve the local system. But in our inspections, we have also repeatedly found unnecessary variation between forces' efficiency, effectiveness and legitimacy. This is perhaps most obvious in the widely differing grades we gave forces across all areas of policing in our 2023–25 PEEL inspections. In [our 2023 spotlight](#)



[report on police performance](#), we commented that forces were failing to properly understand and manage their own performance. This was, at least in part, because of the many performance frameworks from varying sources and a lack of clear direction on the most important issues to tackle. There has been some progress since, but there remains much more to do.

It is often said that the first duty of the Government is to keep the nation safe and secure. In England and Wales, that responsibility falls to the Home Secretary, who is accountable to Parliament. The Home Secretary plays a critical constitutional role in setting the direction of policing, and the office holder has significant powers to influence change. These include issuing the [Strategic Policing Requirement](#), making government policy, allocating central government funding to PCCs and a range of reserved powers. There is clearly a need to strike a balance between local and national priorities and performance management.

In 2019, the Home Office, recognising the important role it has in the policing system, established the [National Policing Board](#) to set the long-term strategic direction and improve the consistency of approach to common policing challenges across the 43 police forces. The Home Secretary has said she will take this much further, and the Home Office will now start to take

a more active leadership role in the policing system. This is something I support. Chief constables will always be faced with conflicting priorities. But if the Home Secretary sets a clear national strategic direction for policing, this will benefit forces, PCCs, the Home Office and, most importantly, the public.

Forces have limited resources. Chief constables must have a clear understanding of where national and local politicians, who hold them to account, expect them to focus their resources and what outcomes they expect to see. This will help to make sure that policing is responsive and democratically accountable. But chief constables may not always agree with the priorities that have been set. Although they will have regard to the priorities, they may ultimately choose to focus their resources on other matters if they have sufficiently good reasons.

Once the Home Secretary has set the national strategic direction of policing, it is reasonable for her to know how forces are performing. The Home Secretary has said that the Home Office will collaborate with forces to develop a new police performance framework. This will be used to make sure policing standards are upheld across the country. It will use a new database of high-quality force-level data to track performance in areas that the Home Secretary has judged to

be priorities. Introducing this performance framework will complete one of the national recommendations we made in our 2023 spotlight report, 'Police performance: Getting a grip'.

As the independent inspectorate, we will have an important role in supporting the Home Office as it takes this more active role in monitoring police force performance. Data may indicate that a force isn't performing well in a particular area. But it will be our inspections' qualitative assessments, which are based on our expertise and contextual understanding, that will identify what problems exist and their underlying causes. There are also important areas where data won't be available or won't reflect the nuance and complexity of policing. Maintaining an appropriate degree of qualitative information in the assessment process will help to reduce the risk of measures creating unreasonable incentives and unintended consequences.

If we or the Home Office have concerns about a force's performance, there must be a system to make sure concerns are fairly considered and any necessary action is taken to address them. As part of its manifesto, the Government pledged to give us more powers to intervene in failing forces. I am working with officials as they continue to develop these proposals.

Our monitoring process is a supportive one, and that will remain. But it can be strengthened further. I want to minimise the likelihood of forces entering enhanced monitoring and to focus more on resolving problems early, before they become serious. In exceptional circumstances, where there are serious or critical shortcomings, forces should be required to resolve concerns in a timely manner. Monitoring must be primarily concerned with improvement, be proportionate to risk and focus on outcomes for [victims](#) and the public.

## **Forces need better co-ordination and collaboration**

The 43-force structure traces its origins back to the 1960s. Crime, public expectations and common understandings of how to run public services efficiently and effectively were very different. This structure still retains many advantages, and these shouldn't be forgotten.

Many types of crime increasingly cross police force boundaries or occur online. But most of the work of a police force is still concerned with its local communities. The structure of the 43 forces and their accountability arrangements make sure that sufficient attention is given to communities' needs and concerns. It means

most decisions are made close to the people they affect. The operational independence of chief constables also supports the British model of policing by consent, which means that policing is appropriately detached from politics.

But the structure also comes with many disadvantages. In many respects, it is no longer fit for purpose. There is insufficient co-ordination and collaboration between forces on how they prevent and detect crime and disorder or how to best achieve value for money. Forces often do things separately and differently from one another, some seemingly for no other reason than a focus on their own interests. Too many services are duplicated 43 times, leading to inconsistency, waste and missed opportunities for economies of scale. There are too few examples of successful collaborations between forces. At a national level, some essential capabilities are provided through fragile arrangements that rely on good relationships and goodwill between influential leaders.

Since 2009, there have been several significant changes to the police service. These include the founding of the [College of Policing](#) and [National Police Chiefs' Council \(NPCC\)](#). [Regional organised crime units](#) have been established across England and Wales. And [BlueLight Commercial](#) and the [Police Digital](#)

[Service](#) have been set up to encourage collaboration in procurement and IT.

These changes have had many positive effects, including on co-ordination and collaboration between forces. The College of Policing has produced [authorised professional practice](#) and other material that has helped to improve consistency of leadership and policing practice across England and Wales. The NPCC, which acts as a collective decision-making body for the chief constables of the 43 forces and some other law enforcement bodies, has helped forces to take a much more unified approach in many areas, such as the response to public disorder.

Yet these changes still haven't resulted in the radical modernisation that the police service needs. We frequently find forces with unjustifiable differences in policy or practice or developing their own solutions for problems when tried and tested methods already exist. Even where there are arrangements in place to work together, they don't always operate seamlessly. In our inspection of the police response to public disorder in summer 2024 ([tranche 1](#) and [tranche 2](#)), we found that there was insufficient central co-ordination of the deployment of [officers](#).



The NPCC is often too slow to make decisions due to the need to reach consensus among chief constables. Many chief constables expressed frustrations about this in their response to my call for evidence. Where a majority agreement exists, there is no means of binding the decision on other chief constables who don't agree. This can have the effect of preventing national agreements. For example, in our 2023 spotlight report on police performance, we recommended that the NPCC should agree a national standard for attendance times to incidents. Two years later, and despite its importance, it still hasn't completed this recommendation.

Operational independence for chief constables is important because it means local context is adequately considered. There can be vast differences in the demands placed on forces around England and Wales. As a result, forces sometimes need different things. But this mustn't be used as a cover for allowing inefficiency or ineffectiveness. There are some things that all forces do or need where it makes sense to take a collective approach.

One way to reduce these problems would be to reduce the number of police forces. This was done before in England and Wales, many decades ago. It was done more recently in Scotland when, in 2013, the eight



regional police forces were merged into one.

This approach has certainly led to successes, including a claimed £200 million in annual savings. But it has also had its challenges, such as difficulties in integrating IT systems. Merging forces could be a viable option for the future of policing in England and Wales. It would require significant political will and upfront financial investment.

An alternative approach is to make sure that policing functions or necessary back-office support are provided regionally or nationally where there is clear evidence that it would be more efficient or effective to do so.

Rather than a wholesale structural reform, the Government has proposed a new National Centre of Policing. Work is still in progress to determine the exact scope and scale it will have. But it is expected in its first phase to include responsibility for back-office arrangements, such as procurement, and essential support services, such as forensics, aviation and IT. The aim is to create a more integrated, consistent and efficient support environment that allows forces to focus more of their efforts on operational policing. This is a pragmatic decision. If the centre's roles, responsibilities and powers are developed with sufficient care, it could transform policing in England and Wales.

If implemented well, it could mean better value for money, improved service quality, increased standardisation and better use of technology and data. But it is worth noting that the approach isn't without risks. A centralised service mustn't become detached or unresponsive to local needs. Also, central isn't always better; many national technology programmes have been overdue and over budget. A service or capability shouldn't be moved to the National Centre of Policing unless there is a clear case that carrying it out centrally would be better or cheaper.

The structural step of creating this new organisation will be only one of many determinants of its success. Exceptionally strong leadership, good governance and a collaborative culture will be essential. The centre will have to balance treating forces as unique and as valued customers of the services it provides with the need to make decisions that aren't universally popular. Where the National Centre of Policing provides a product or service on behalf of the whole police service, chief constables and PCCs should be able to influence it or have some form of redress if they don't receive what they need.

Establishing the National Centre of Policing won't entirely replace the need for chief constables to make decisions together. A way for them to make consensus

decisions that bind all chief constables should be pursued separately; it is firmly in the public interest. I look forward to seeing more details about the Government's proposals in the forthcoming police reform white paper.

## **Investment in science and technology is vital**

Modern policing depends on the ability to collect, analyse and act on vast amounts of information. Forces need this to effectively manage the risks facing communities and to deploy their resources efficiently and effectively. Yet outdated technology is holding back many police forces. In our inspections, we frequently find that local and national IT systems are hindering police performance.

Science and technology have increasingly advanced over the last few decades. To a large degree, policing hasn't kept up with these advances. Most of the spending on police technology is used to maintain old systems. These are often expensive and rely heavily on adding information manually. They contribute to poor data management and don't allow effective information-sharing within or between forces.

The limited capital investment in policing over several years has been a large contributory factor in this lack of progress. Police forces must embrace innovation to meet the policing challenges of the future. They must make sure they are operating productively and are equipped to tackle criminals. The Government should provide separate capital funding to support this.

In some areas, policing has made impressive innovations, which I have also discussed in [chapter 2](#). Lancashire Constabulary has improved its productivity and efficiency. It uses robotic process automation to complete some repetitive administration tasks very effectively, such as transferring data between computer systems. The force estimated that this automation was the equivalent of 329 people working full-time and has saved £8.9 million in [staff](#) salaries. But successful examples such as this are too rare. The fragmented 43-force approach means innovations are rarely scaled quickly across England and Wales.

There needs to be enough funding and freedom for forces to test new technologies and when proven to be successful, for them to be rapidly scaled nationally. I am pleased to see that the NPCC and [Association of Police and Crime Commissioners](#) recognise in the '[National Policing Digital Strategy 2025–2030](#)' that “digital capabilities should be built once and well on behalf of

all forces wherever possible”. I am hopeful that the proposed National Centre of Policing will play a large role in making that strategy a reality.

There will be some big opportunities in the coming years as digital advances continue, especially in automation and artificial intelligence. These will come with ethical complexities, but careful governance will help to protect privacy and avoid bias. An example is facial recognition technology, which is already available in policing through the [Police National Database](#) and other systems. This technology could be used much more and can be extremely effective at identifying or locating suspects of crime. It also seems to have the broad support of the public, provided there are appropriate privacy safeguards in place.

There will be many challenges for the police service to contend with as it tries to improve its use of science and technology. Most forces need to improve how they collect and manage data. Existing officers and staff will need new skills. More specialist digital, data and analytics professionals need to be recruited. And forces will need to work more effectively with private-sector businesses. In addition, cybersecurity threats against forces need to be managed, and these shouldn't be underestimated. These challenges are far from exhaustive. In our '[Policing inspection programme and](#)

[framework 2025–29](#)’, we have included [thematic inspections](#) to examine how new or emerging science and technologies are being used to deal with crime, data and analytics and cybersecurity. These inspections should help identify areas where forces can make improvements.

## **Police funding needs fundamental change**

For the financial year ending 31 March 2025, the policing system received approximately £17.6 billion in funding. Of this funding, 70 percent came from central government grants, and the rest was raised locally through council tax precepts. This represents a major public investment. Government grants alone are expected to account for around 1 percent of total government spending in all areas. The public deserves to know whether this money is being used efficiently.

In our inspections, we found that most forces managed their budgets responsibly. Financial planning is generally sound, and budgets are aligned with priorities and based on realistic assumptions. Where savings are needed, forces are increasingly using structured approaches that prioritise public safety and risk. Most forces also maintain sensible reserves to manage uncertainty or to fund future activities.



But despite good financial management, many forces remain under strain. While funding is now substantially higher in real terms than it was in 2017/18, as at 31 March 2024, the size of the full-time equivalent workforce was still 3 percent lower than in March 2010. This is due to lower numbers of police staff and police community support officers. During this time, demand has changed substantially. Forces now spend more time on complex and resource-intensive issues, such as online exploitation and violence against women and girls. They also spend a large proportion of their time responding to non-crime-related matters, such as mental health crises and [missing people](#). Meanwhile, the population of England and Wales has grown by five million since 2010, with uneven impacts across force areas.

This mismatch between demand and resources is leading to unmet community needs. Some forces are reducing this gap by improving efficiency, as explained in [chapter 2](#). We also found that many forces were making better use of [force management statements](#) to align resources with demand and manage the risks associated with unmet demand. But more progress is needed. We often found that forces lacked a sophisticated understanding of the demands they expect to face, which means that some operate with too



much of a short-term focus. A deeper understanding of demand is essential to inform strategy, planning and future funding bids.

In my [2023 'State of Policing' report](#), I said that, for several years, forces haven't always had the medium-term financial certainty that they need. This complicates planning and negatively affects efficiency and effectiveness. The amount of government funding for policing is set at spending reviews, where the Government decides how it will fund public services over several years. I have urged the Government to provide forces with medium-term financial certainty at the next spending review by including a multi-year funding settlement that sets out how much forces can expect to receive.

On 11 June 2025, the Chancellor reported the outcome of the [2025 spending review](#) to Parliament. This included police spending for the next three financial years up to 2028/29. This is positive and should give chief constables more confidence about the money that will be available to them over the coming years. This will help them to plan. But it is worth noting that in making these calculations, the Government has assumed that PCCs will raise the local council tax precept by the maximum amount each year. However, some PCCs have chosen to raise this by less

than the maximum, and they may do this again in coming years. This would mean that some forces receive less than they expect.

The spending review includes an increase of £2.1 billion in funding for the policing system between 2025/26 and 2028/29. After accounting for inflation, the Government estimates that this will result in a real-term annual spending growth of 1.7 percent. A real-term increase should be seen as positive. Given the UK's challenging fiscal situation and numerous competing priorities across the public sector, the outcome for the police service could have been much worse. But the NPCC and chief constables have said that forces' costs, including pay for officers and staff, will likely grow more quickly than this. This may mean that they need to make savings and reduce service levels despite the real-term increase.

The national reforms that the Home Secretary announced in November 2024 should help to alleviate the medium-term financial strain on forces if they are implemented well and in a timely manner. Clearer national priorities will help chief constables to make better-informed trade-offs about how they use their resources. Increased co-ordination and collaboration between forces could lead to considerable efficiency savings in areas such as procurement.

And better use of science and technology has the potential to free up large amounts of officer and staff time.

But most reforms will require substantial upfront investment. Given the challenging spending review, it isn't yet clear how the Government and police service will sufficiently fund the changes they intend to make. Although an investment of £200 million has been allocated to the [Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee](#), no additional funding has yet been allocated for transformation and change. Without enough money, there is a risk that the much-needed reforms to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of policing either won't happen or won't succeed. Forces are struggling both to address the wide-ranging threats to public safety and to meet basic public expectations. These reforms are urgently needed. They must be sufficiently funded.

The Government also hasn't yet signalled that it will include any wider reforms to police funding in the white paper. In such a comprehensive and ambitious programme of reform, not reforming police funding would be a missed opportunity. There are three main problems that still need to be addressed:

1. The police allocation formula is no longer fit for purpose.

2. Police forces are becoming more reliant on raising money through the council tax precept, which disadvantages some forces.
3. There is a lack of funding for long-life assets to help forces make long-term investments.

The way funding is raised and distributed needs to change because it is outdated and unfair. The police allocation formula, which is used to distribute central government grants, has remained unchanged since 2013. Forces have recognised this for many years and the Home Office is aware of the concerns, yet there still aren't any proposals to revise it.

At the same time, a growing share of force funding is being raised through the local council tax precept, which varies greatly between areas. Some forces can raise much more money than others by increasing the precept. This means the shift towards the council tax precept, especially in the absence of amending the police allocation formula, risks undermining consistency and fairness in police funding.

Finally, capital investment remains a major challenge. All organisations need to invest in long-life assets that help them to carry out their work, such as buildings, equipment and technology. These investments, called capital spending, typically incur large but

infrequent costs. To help public services fund these investments, the Government often provides them with financial support, known as capital funding. But police forces haven't received any direct capital funding from the Home Office since 2022/23. And for several years before that, the amount provided was only a small proportion of what forces needed. Some forces are nonetheless investing or have no option but to invest as systems become obsolete, sometimes having to borrow money to do so. The overall result of this is an outdated police estate, not enough police vehicles and outdated technology. The Government should substantially increase the amount of capital funding that it provides to forces.

# Annex A: Our reports – 1 April 2024 to 31 July 2025

## PEEL inspections

- [An inspection of the West Midlands regional response to serious and organised crime](#)
- [Wiltshire Police: PEEL causes of concern revisit letter](#)
- [Staffordshire Police: PEEL causes of concern revisit letter](#)
- [PEEL 2023–2025: An inspection of Derbyshire Constabulary](#)
- [PEEL 2023–2025: An inspection of South Wales Police](#)
- [PEEL 2023–2025: An inspection of Devon and Cornwall Police](#)
- [PEEL 2023–2025: An inspection of Nottinghamshire Police](#)
- [PEEL 2023–2025: An inspection of Cumbria Constabulary](#)
- [PEEL 2023–2025: An inspection of West Yorkshire Police](#)

- [West Midlands Police: PEEL causes of concern revisit letter](#)
- [PEEL 2023–2025: An inspection of Metropolitan Police](#)
- [PEEL 2023–2025: An inspection of Wiltshire Police](#)
- [An inspection of the south-east regional response to serious and organised crime](#)
- [West Midlands Police: return to default phase of monitoring](#)
- [PEEL 2023–2025: An inspection of Norfolk Constabulary](#)
- [PEEL 2023–2025: An inspection of Staffordshire Police](#)
- [Devon and Cornwall Police: closure of cause of concern letter](#)
- [The policing response to antisocial behaviour: PEEL spotlight report](#)
- [PEEL 2023–2025: An inspection of Humberside Police](#)
- [PEEL 2023–2025: An inspection of Hertfordshire Constabulary](#)
- [Metropolitan Police Service: closure of cause of concern](#)



- [PEEL 2023–2025: An inspection of Leicestershire Police](#)
- [PEEL 2023–2025: An inspection of Lancashire Constabulary](#)
- [PEEL 2023–2025: An inspection of North Wales Police](#)
- [Lincolnshire Police: move to enhanced phase of monitoring](#)
- [Gloucestershire Constabulary: closure of cause of concern](#)
- [Cambridgeshire Constabulary: closure of cause of concern](#)
- [Metropolitan Police Service: return to default phase of monitoring](#)
- [PEEL 2023–2025: An inspection of Bedfordshire Police](#)
- [PEEL 2023–2025: An inspection of Cheshire Constabulary](#)
- [PEEL 2023–2025: An inspection of Avon and Somerset Constabulary](#)
- [The Police Service of Northern Ireland: An inspection of police effectiveness and efficiency](#)
- [Nottinghamshire Police: PEEL causes of concern revisit letter](#)

- [PEEL 2023–2025: An inspection of Cleveland Police](#)
- [PEEL 2023–2025: An inspection of Dorset Police](#)
- [PEEL 2023–2025: An inspection of Lincolnshire Police](#)
- [PEEL 2023–2025: An inspection of Essex Police](#)
- [PEEL 2023–2025: An inspection of Northumbria Police](#)
- [PEEL 2023–2025: An inspection of West Mercia Police](#)
- [Nottinghamshire Police: return to default phase of monitoring](#)
- [PEEL 2023–2025: An inspection of Warwickshire Police](#)
- [An inspection of the south-west regional response to serious and organised crime](#)
- [PEEL 2023–2025: An inspection of Gwent Police](#)
- [Hertfordshire Constabulary: closure of cause of concern](#)
- [PEEL 2023–2025: An inspection of South Yorkshire Police](#)
- [PEEL 2023–2025: An inspection of Sussex Police](#)
- [PEEL 2023–2025: An inspection of the City of London Police](#)

- PEEL 2023–2025: An inspection of Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary
- Devon and Cornwall Police: return to default phase of monitoring

## **Child protection inspections**

- Joint inspection of the multi-agency response to abuse and neglect of children in Cardiff
- Joint targeted area inspection of the multi-agency response to serious youth violence in Lancashire
- Joint targeted area inspection of the multi-agency response to serious youth violence in Leeds
- Joint targeted area inspection of the multi-agency response to serious youth violence in Coventry
- Joint targeted area inspection of the multi-agency response to identification of initial need and risk in Rochdale
- Joint targeted area inspection of the multi-agency response to serious youth violence in Somerset
- Joint targeted area inspection of the multi-agency response to identification of initial need and risk in Richmond upon Thames
- Joint inspection of child protection arrangements: Overview report 2019–2024

- Multi-agency responses to serious youth violence: working together to support and protect children
- Joint targeted area inspection of the multi-agency response to children who are victims of domestic abuse in Hertfordshire
- Greater Manchester – National child protection inspection
- Update on our inspection of Greater Manchester Police and its safeguarding partners' approach to child criminal and sexual exploitation
- Cleveland Police: National child protection inspection
- Joint targeted area inspection of the multi-agency response to identification of initial need and risk in Blackpool
- The Metropolitan Police Service's handling of the sexual and criminal exploitation of children: Causes of concern – revisit
- Joint targeted area inspection of the multi-agency response to children who are victims of domestic abuse in Norfolk
- Joint targeted area inspection of the multi-agency response to identification of initial need and risk in Bromley

- Joint child protection inspection of victims of domestic abuse in North Yorkshire
- Joint child protection inspection of victims of domestic abuse in Reading
- Gloucestershire Constabulary: National child protection inspection
- Joint child protection inspection of victims of domestic abuse in Redcar and Cleveland
- Joint child protection inspection of abuse and neglect in Pembrokeshire
- Inspection of Greater Manchester Police and its safeguarding partners' approach to investigating allegations of child criminal and sexual exploitation
- Joint child protection inspection of identification of initial need and risk in Southampton

## **Specialist inspections**

- Vetting and anti-corruption part 2: How effective is the National Crime Agency at dealing with corruption?
- The Police Service of Northern Ireland: An inspection of crime data integrity
- Report on an inspection visit to police custody suites in Avon and Somerset

- Police and crime commissioner-commissioned inspection into Norfolk Constabulary
- The British Virgin Islands: volume one – A review of law enforcement and criminal justice bodies in the British Virgin Islands
- Report on an inspection visit to police custody suites in Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary
- Report on an inspection visit to police custody suites in Cambridgeshire Constabulary
- Progress to introduce a national operating model for rape and other serious sexual offences investigations
- An inspection into activism and impartiality in policing
- Report on an inspection visit to police custody suites in Essex Police
- Report on an inspection visit to police custody suites in Thames Valley Police
- An inspection of the police response to the public disorder in July and August 2024: Tranche 1
- Report on an inspection visit to police custody suites in Gwent Police
- A report into the effectiveness of integrity arrangements in Derbyshire Constabulary

- A report into the effectiveness of integrity arrangements in North Yorkshire Police
- A report into the effectiveness of integrity arrangements in Lincolnshire Police
- An inspection into how effectively the police investigate crime
- A review of law enforcement and criminal justice bodies in the British Virgin Islands: Volume 2 – a road map for 2025 to 2035
- An inspection of the police response to the public disorder in July and August 2024: Tranche 2
- Improving the response to organised immigration crime
- A report into the effectiveness of integrity arrangements in Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary
- A report into the effectiveness of integrity arrangements in Surrey Police
- A report into the effectiveness of integrity arrangements in Sussex Police
- Joint case building by the police and Crown Prosecution Service: final report



# Non-inspection publications

- [Police integrity inspection programme – methodology](#)
- [National child protection inspection programme – framework](#)
- [Updated response from the National Police Chiefs' Council to the recommendations from the Tees Valley Inclusion Project super-complaint report](#)
- [Responses to the super-complaint from the Criminal Justice Alliance about police use of stop and search](#)
- [State of Policing: The Annual Assessment of Policing in England and Wales 2023](#)
- [Annual review of the 2022–25 policing inspection programme and framework – 2024](#)
- [Report on the Suzy Lamplugh Trust's super-complaint: The police response to stalking](#)
- [Proposed policing inspection programme and framework 2025–29: For consultation](#)
- [Letter from HM Chief Inspector to Humberside Police and Crime Commissioner](#)
- [Terms of reference: Inspection of Greater Manchester Police and its safeguarding partners' approach to child criminal and sexual exploitation](#)

- Consultation on proposed Criminal Justice Joint Inspection programme for 2025–27
- Terms of reference for a rapid review of the policing of public disorder – Tranche 1
- Responses to the super-complaint report on the police response to stalking
- Terms of reference for a rapid review of the policing of public disorder – Tranche 2
- Value for money profiles 2024
- Policing inspection programme and framework 2025–29
- CJJI response to the Victim's Commissioner recommendations
- Terms of reference: Report on the progress made against recommendations in our 2023 inspection of the police response to child sexual exploitation in England and Wales
- Police integrity inspection programme methodology – 2025 onwards
- PEEL assessment framework (PAF) 2025–2027
- Criminal Justice Joint Inspection business plan 2025–27
- Observations, learning and good practice from 2024 force management statements

- Memorandum of understanding: HMICFRS and the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners
- Memorandum of understanding: HMICFRS, the College of Policing and the Independent Office for Police Conduct

# Annex B: About us

[Biographies for each of the Inspectors](#) and [information about who we inspect](#) are available on our website.

## His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary

**Sir Andy Cooke QPM DL**

In April 2022, Andy Cooke was appointed HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary and HM Chief Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services.

## His Majesty's Inspectors of Constabulary

**Lee Freeman KPM**

In August 2023, Lee Freeman was appointed HM Inspector of Constabulary and HM Inspector of Fire & Rescue.

**Michelle Skeer OBE QPM**

In August 2023, Michelle Skeer was appointed HM Inspector of Constabulary and HM Inspector of Fire & Rescue.

## **Kathryn Stone OBE**

In June 2025, Kathryn Stone was appointed HM Inspector of Constabulary and HM Inspector of Fire & Rescue.

## **Roy Wilsher OBE QFSM**

In October 2021, Roy Wilsher was appointed HM Inspector of Constabulary and HM Inspector of Fire & Rescue.

## **Assistant His Majesty's Inspector**

### **Nicola Faulconbridge**

In October 2023, Nicola Faulconbridge joined HMICFRS as Assistant HMI.

# Finances and workforce

## Our finances

We are funded mainly by the Home Office. We also receive funding for inspections commissioned by others (such as the National Crime Agency). We spent 84 percent of our funding on our workforce, with the rest spent on IT, surveys and other expenses.

### **Expenditure breakdown 2023/24**

We spent:

- £23.5 million (83.6% of our funding) on staffing costs including associates;
- £2.2 million (7.7%) on travel and subsistence;
- £1 million (3.6%) on IT;
- £0.9 million (3%) on accommodation;
- £0.5 million (1.7%) on office expenses and other costs; and
- £0.1 million (0.3%) on surveys and inspection services.

**Note: numbers may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.**

## Our workforce

Our workforce comprises the inspectors of constabulary and fire and rescue services, civil servants, seconded police officers and staff, and secondees from fire and rescue services. We also have a register of associates who provide specialist resource and skills.

### Staffing breakdown 2023/24

Our total workforce is 274 staff. This consists of:

- 198 permanent staff (72% of our workforce);
- 30 police secondees (11%);
- 22 fixed-term appointments (8%);
- 15 fire and rescue secondees (5%);
- 3 sandwich students (1%);
- 2 police staff (1%);
- 2 staff from other Government departments (1%);
- 1 fire staff (1%); and
- 1 apprentice (1%).

**Note: numbers may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.**



ISBN 978-1-5286-3849-4 | E02843391

© HMICFRS 2025

[hmicfrs.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk](https://hmicfrs.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk)