Police Remuneration
Review Body

Police Remuneration Review Body

Twelfth Report on England and Wales 2026

Chair: Zoë Billingham CBE

CP 1629

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Twelfth Report on England and Wales 2026

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by the Secretary of State for the Home Department
by Command of His Majesty

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Police Remuneration Review Body

Terms of Reference[1]

The Police Remuneration Review Body[2] (PRRB) provides independent recommendations to the Home Secretary and to the Northern Ireland Minister of Justice on the hours of duty, leave, pay, allowances and the issue, use and return of police clothing, personal equipment and accoutrements for police officers of or below the rank of chief superintendent and police cadets in England and Wales, and Northern Ireland respectively.

In reaching its recommendations the Review Body must have regard to the following considerations:

- the particular frontline role and nature of the office of constable in British policing;
- the prohibition on police officers being members of a trade union or withdrawing their labour;
- the need to recruit, retain and motivate suitably able and qualified officers;
- the funds available to the Home Office, as set out in the Government's departmental expenditure limits, and the representations of police and crime commissioners and the Northern Ireland Policing Board in respect of local funding issues;
- the Government's wider public sector pay policy;
- the Government's policies for improving public services;
- the work of the College of Policing;
- the work of police and crime commissioners;
- relevant legal obligations on the police service in England and Wales and Northern Ireland, including anti-discrimination legislation regarding age, gender, race, sexual orientation, religion and belief, and disability;
- the operating environments of different forces, including consideration of the specific challenges of policing in rural or large metropolitan areas and in Northern Ireland, as well as any specific national roles which forces may have;
- any relevant legislative changes to employment law which do not automatically apply to police officers;
- that the remuneration of the remit group relates coherently to that of chief officer ranks.

The Review Body should also be required to consider other specific issues as directed by the Home Secretary and/or the Northern Ireland Minister of Justice, and should be required to take account of the economic and other evidence submitted by the Government, professional representatives and others.

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[1] The terms of reference were set by the Home Office following a public consultation – Implementing a Police Pay Review Body – The Government's Response, April 2013.
[2] The Police Remuneration Review Body was established by the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, and became operational in September 2014.

It is also important for the Review Body to be mindful of developments in police officer pensions to ensure that there is a consistent, strategic and holistic approach to police pay and conditions.

Reports and recommendations of the Review Body should be submitted to the Home Secretary, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Justice (Northern Ireland), and they should be published.

Members[3] of the Review Body

Zoë Billingham CBE (Chair)
Andrew Bliss QPM
Dr Rebecca Driver
Frances Hill
Pamela Kelly QPM
Jacqui Siggers
Stephen White

The secretariat is provided by the Office for the Pay Review Bodies.

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[3] Members of the Review Body are appointed through an open competition adhering to the Governance Code on Public Appointments. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/governance-code-for-public-appointments/governance-code-on-public-appointments-html [Accessed on 22 May 2026]

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List of Abbreviations

AI	Artificial Intelligence
APCC	Association of Police and Crime Commissioners
ASHE	Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings
AWE	Average Weekly Earnings
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CPI	Consumer Prices Index
CPIH	Consumer Prices Index including owner occupiers' housing costs
CPOSA	Chief Police Officers' Staff Association
CRTP	Competence Related Thresholds Payments
EIA	Equality Impact Assessment
FTE	Full-time Equivalent
FYE	Financial Year Ending
GCSE	General Certificates of Secondary Education
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HMICFRS	His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services
IDR	Incomes Data Research
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LRD	Labour Research Department
MPS	Metropolitan Police Service
NCA	National Crime Agency
NHS	National Health Service
NPCC	National Police Chiefs' Council
NPS	National Police Service
OBR	Office for Budget Responsibility
ONS	Office for National Statistics
OPRB	Office for the Pay Review Bodies
PAYE	Pay As You Earn
PCC	Police and Crime Commissioner
PCF	Police Consultative Forum
PCSO	Police Community Support Officer
PFEW	Police Federation of England and Wales
PPS	Pay Progression Standard
PRRB	Police Remuneration Review Body
PSA	Police Superintendents' Association
RDIL	Rest Day in Lieu
ROCU	Regional Organised Crime Unit
RTI	Real Time Information
SSRB	Senior Salaries Review Body
TVP	Targeted Variable Pay
UK	United Kingdom

Foreword

This is our 12th Report to the Home Secretary. The Policing and Crime Minister's remit letter of 19 February 2026 asked us to make a formal recommendation on the police officer pay award for 2026/27 for all ranks up to and including chief superintendent. We are grateful to all parties who took part in the review process. We were pleased to receive insightful and informative material from the Police Federation of England and Wales, and we hope it will formally rejoin the pay review process next year.

Policing continues to operate in a demanding and fast-changing operational environment. Forces are responding to increasingly complex crime and heightened public expectations. The police service is facing a period of sustained and, in some respects, exceptional policing demand further intensified by the conflict in the Middle East. The terrorism threat level has been increased to 'SEVERE', and some police forces are facing prolonged periods of high-intensity public order and protest policing. We observe that this is likely to intensify, particularly in the forthcoming busy summer months. This is against a backdrop of the Government's ambitious targets to halve knife crime and violence against women and girls in a decade alongside the delivery of the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee.

Since our last report, the Government has published its White Paper on Police Reform, which sets out an ambitious programme aimed at modernising law enforcement in England and Wales, improving outcomes for the public and rebuilding public confidence in the police. In our view, it will be people, and not structures, that will be critical to the delivery of the outcomes the White Paper seeks to achieve. Over the last four years we have emphasised the importance of developing a workforce strategy for the police service. The commitment in the Police Reform White Paper to develop a national workforce strategy provides a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reshape how policing recruits, trains, structures and develops its workforce, including rank structures, progression pathways and entry routes, and to make progress on ethnic diversity. There is scope to explore the benefits of consistent competency-based recruitment and progression. The demography of the police workforce has changed significantly, but pay structures, incentives and allowances have not kept pace. This must be addressed. This work will also have wider implications for the National Crime Agency and the Police Service of Northern Ireland.

The police service needs officers and leaders who can deliver the vision set out in the Police Reform White Paper over the long term. Recruitment and retention must be about more than officer numbers. There needs to be a competitive remuneration package that supports the wellbeing of officers, to enable the police service to recruit and retain high-calibre officers with the attitudes, integrity and skills to deal with evolving social norms and the ever-increasing complexity of demand driven by technology. These officers must also reflect the communities they serve if they are to continue the process of rebuilding trust in the police. We highlight our concern that progress on ethnic diversity, particularly at senior ranks, has been slow or reversed despite the Police Uplift Programme and is misaligned with the importance of representation for trust, legitimacy and public confidence.

We judge that the implicit psychological contract between society and policing is under strain, affecting motivation and morale. Public perceptions of policing and social attitudes and behaviours are changing and have made the environment in which police officers are operating more challenging. In our view, that has increased the risks to the personal safety and wellbeing of officers and, as a result, policing risks becoming a less attractive profession unless there is a competitive package that supports officers and their families.

We also point out that turnover figures alone do not provide assurance of long-term workforce sustainability, particularly during a period of major reform and organisational uncertainty. In that context, we highlight the risks of 'flight' and 'blight' which may result from the lack of clarity regarding the implementation of some of the structural reforms in the White Paper.

Since parties submitted their written evidence, there have again been a number of largely unexpected geopolitical events, which have led to a new period of heightened economic uncertainty. As we complete our 2026 Report, the most recent outturns for inflation in April showed the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) rate of inflation at 2.8% and CPIH (including owner occupiers' housing costs) at 3.0%. In its most recent Monetary Policy Report, published in April 2026, the Bank of England assessed the likely inflation risks from recent events and considered three potential scenarios, which showed that inflation was expected to range between 3.6% and 6.0% in the fourth quarter of 2026, depending on the length of the current crisis and the extent to which energy price rises fed through to other prices, such as in retail and hospitality, and to pay bargaining. This contrasts with the expectation in the Bank's February 2026 Monetary Policy Report, which forecast that inflation in the fourth quarter of 2026 would be 2.0%, as well as evidence submitted by HM Treasury to the Pay Review Bodies in December 2025, which set out the Office for Budget Responsibility's forecast for inflation of 2.2% in the financial year ending 2027. Police officers also continue to experience the cumulative effects on their living costs of the period of high inflation over the last five years. We remain mindful of the continued heightened uncertainty in the economic outlook and note the likely impact on inflation of the planned increase to the energy price cap in July. We note that, as we submit our report in late May, the conflict in the Middle East continues and that even if a ceasefire were to be agreed there is likely to be a continued inflationary effect on the economy. We observe that, in its evidence, HM Treasury advised us to take full account of the latest data and forecasts.

We also considered developments in pay across the UK economy. Latest median pay settlements, which HM Treasury described as the most comparable data with Pay Review Body decisions, ranged between 3.0% and 3.8% as we finalised our recommendations. We are aware of the pay awards announced by the Government over the last few months for other parts of the public sector. These included: 3.3% for NHS Agenda for Change staff; 3.5% for prison officers and doctors; and 3.75% for dentists in primary care. We observe that when some of the other Pay Review Bodies were submitting their recommendations to Government for these pay awards for April 2026, CPI inflation had been projected to fall back close to the 2.0% target by the third quarter of 2026. The expectations for inflation in September 2026, when the police pay award is due to take effect, are now higher due to the Middle East conflict. In reaching a pay recommendation for 2026/27, we are aware not only of the strategic and operational challenges facing policing and its need to attract recruits able to develop, with training, the relational skills required to manage complexity, respond to vulnerability and de-escalate social tension, but also of the very real pressures on serving officers. A pay award that is judged unfair by officers in this uncertain economic climate, particularly in comparison with other parts of the public sector, will not assist with the retention of the high-calibre, experienced officers on which the service relies. We have seen evidence this year of the negative impact of policing on the wellbeing of officers and their families.

The picture is not uniform. However, overall, we judge that there is a persistent reliance on goodwill, flexibility and personal sacrifice by officers. We also note our concern that, in some cases, particularly in relation to rest days, regulations are not being adhered to. This is increasingly unsustainable, with serious implications for morale and motivation. Short-notice rostering, cancelled rest days and disrupted leave are routinely treated as normal rather than exceptional, with significant impact on officers' personal lives and families. This exploitation of officers is out of step with a modern, sustainable workforce model and undermines morale, wellbeing and retention. In this context, we highlight our concerns that around 15% of officers are long-term absent or not fully deployable, and that the sergeant and inspector ranks have seen a growth in resignations over the last few years. We are also mindful that the transition to new governance and organisational models has the potential to create uncertainty for officers and staff, particularly in the absence of early clarity on workforce implications.

We again give weight to the requirement in our terms of reference to consider the fact that police officers are prohibited from taking industrial action and that, again this year, policing parties, both the employer representatives and the staff associations, have emphasised the heightened duty this places on government to ensure fair, competitive and sustainable pay and conditions. We observe that at least one public sector group, for which the Government has announced a pay award of 3.5%, is already taking industrial action partly in response to that award. We also observe that where officers are expected to forgo industrial rights, regulations and entitlements must be honoured consistently and fairly. As we have observed, that is currently not always the case. We therefore judge this year that it is vital that officers receive a pay award that is likely to be above the CPI rate of inflation when the award takes effect.

Given these factors, and considering all our terms of reference, we conclude that an annual pay uplift of 3.9% for all officers up to and including the rank of chief superintendent is the most suitable approach this year. In addition, we are recommending that London Weighting be uplifted in line with the pay award.

In making our recommendations, affordability remains a central consideration. The existing policing funding model is under severe strain. It is due to be reformed as part of the White Paper proposals, but nine forces are receiving exceptional financial assistance, with the number likely to increase next year. Action cannot be delayed much longer. Decisions on police pay cannot be divorced from the sustainability of force finances. With regard to this year's award, we observe that in recent months the UK Government has announced 2026/27 pay awards for other parts of the public sector which were significantly above the 2.5% affordability limit set by many departments. This demonstrates, as we have said in previous reports, that affordability is ultimately a matter of choice. While such decisions may be difficult, there are always options for reprioritising spending, both within and between departments.

In considering the outcome of, and making recommendations regarding, the second year of the National Police Chiefs’ Council's review of allowances, we have again given weight to the wellbeing of officers. We reiterate that ensuring officers are fairly compensated and promoting officer wellbeing and work-life balance should drive the review of allowances. We make recommendations in relation to London Allowance, South East Allowance, Acting Up Allowance, and Protection Allowance. We also make recommendations for further work in a number of areas including to address ongoing concerns around the operation of on-call duties, on additional hours worked and on acting up arrangements, with the intention of making substantive recommendations on some of these issues next year.

We address the persistent delays in implementing agreed changes to employment law through police regulations, which continue to create inconsistency and undermine confidence in the system. We recommend that all outstanding agreed changes be implemented by the end of 2026 and that, as a minimum, future statutory employment law changes should be applied automatically where they exceed existing police provisions. We also recommend that, in the interests of both officer wellbeing and operational effectiveness, statutory minima should not be treated as the default position for policing. We also support targeted improvements now to officer wellbeing, including the introduction of two weeks’ maternity support leave on full pay.

Looking ahead, we advise that a wider review of remuneration, including allowances, will be necessary to reflect the changes arising from the Police Reform White Paper. This review will need to consider allowances in the round, alongside the overall structure of police remuneration. Rather than reviewing each individual allowance, the review needs to consider what the allowances are attempting to achieve and the best approach to delivering those outcomes. Any resulting proposals should be brought forward in due course, following proper consideration through the Police Consultative Forum.

Zoë Billingham (Chair)
Andrew Bliss
Rebecca Driver
Frances Hill
Pamela Kelly
Jacqui Siggers
Stephen White

29 May 2026

POLICE REMUNERATION REVIEW BODY

England and Wales 12th Report 2026

Executive Summary

Our headline 2026/27 pay recommendation is a consolidated increase of 3.9% to all police officer pay points for all ranks up to and including chief superintendent from 1 September 2026.

Our full set of 2026/27 recommendations is as follows:

1. **The national workforce strategy for England and Wales be shared with the PRRB by December 2026.**
2. **All outstanding agreed changes to police regulations and determinations be implemented by the end of 2026.**
3. **Statutory employment changes:**

   3a. Statutory employment changes which exceed any provision already in police regulations be applied automatically and concurrently to police officers when they are enacted by Parliament. Where the existing position in police regulations exceeds the new statutory provision in employment law, the existing police regulations should take precedence.

   3b. In the interests of both officer wellbeing and operational effectiveness, statutory minima should not be treated as the default position for policing. In developing provision for police officers, due weight should be given to these two factors, alongside the levels of provision available elsewhere in the public sector. Any enhanced provisions should be negotiated through the Police Consultative Forum (PCF) in advance of the statutory changes taking effect.
4. **Police officers' maternity support entitlement be increased to two weeks on full pay from 1 September 2026.**
5. **A consolidated increase of 3.9% to all police officer pay points for all ranks up to and including chief superintendent from 1 September 2026.**
6. **The National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) develops and agrees the framework for the inspecting and superintending ranks that allows time off in lieu for hours worked while on call at plain time, within defined parameters as quickly as possible, for implementation at the latest by April 2027 as planned.**

7. **The NPCC finalises its national on-call guidance and submits it to the PCF for discussion as quickly as possible, for implementation at the latest by the end of 2026 as planned.**
8. **The 10-day qualifying period for the Acting Up Allowance be abolished from 1 September 2026.**
9. **An increase of £8 to all Protection Allowance rates and that Protection Allowance rate 3 be applied for each day an officer is deployed to a qualifying country from 1 September 2026.**
10. **Further work be undertaken, led by the NPCC, to develop a more robust, deliverable and more fully supported set of proposals on additional hours worked (rest days in lieu, reinstated rest days, retention on duty for less than four hours on rest days and public or bank holidays). This should include clearer evidence of the likely impacts on officers' wellbeing, the capacity and incentives on forces to implement the proposals, and equality outcomes. The work should be progressed in the context of wider police reform and refined through the PCF. We expect these proposals to be submitted to us in the next pay round for our consideration and decision.**
11. **London Weighting be uprated by 3.9% in line with the pay award from 1 September 2026.**
12. **The maxima of the London Allowance and South East Allowance be uprated by 3.9% in line with the pay award from 1 September 2026.**

1. In addition to our formal recommendations, there are various other areas where we advise that further work should be undertaken and on which we seek an update in future pay rounds. We highlight these issues in bold throughout the report and bring them together in Chapter 5, which sets out our Forward Look.

2. We received the Policing and Crime Minister's remit letter on 19 February 2026, asking us to make a formal recommendation on the police officer pay award for 2026/27 for all ranks up to and including chief superintendent. The letter also asked us to consider proposals resulting from year two of the National Police Chiefs' Council's (NPCC's) review of allowances, taking into account the views of policing stakeholders.

3. Since our last report, the Government has published its White Paper on Police Reform. We are therefore writing this year's report against the backdrop of what the Government has described as the largest reforms to policing for two centuries. We welcome the White Paper. In our view, delivery of the White Paper reforms is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reshape how policing recruits, trains, structures and develops its workforce, including rank structures, progression pathways and entry routes, and to make progress on diversity and inclusion. Work needs to be

taken forward at pace, with a clear destination vision that is shared by officers and staff.

4. The White Paper set out three key challenges that need to be addressed: falling public confidence, declining and inconsistent performance, and radically changing crime. In our previous reports, we highlighted our concerns about the implications of declining public trust and confidence in the police. We observe that there is evidence that the implicit psychological contract between society and policing is under strain, which risks affecting motivation and morale. The White Paper explained that policing was not currently set up to succeed and described the barriers it needed to overcome. In particular, it explained that the police service does not have the capabilities it needs to deal effectively with modern threats.

5. In our previous reports, we have highlighted the need for a competitive remuneration package that attracts and retains high-calibre recruits who are able to develop, with training, the relational skills required to manage the complexity of modern policing. We return to these issues in this year's report, and we emphasise the need for the police service's 'offer' to promote the wellbeing of its officers and an appropriate work-life balance. We also highlight our concern that progress on ethnic diversity, particularly at senior ranks, has been slow or reversed despite the Police Uplift Programme and is misaligned with the importance of representation for trust, legitimacy and public confidence.

6. The police service is facing increased demand and complexity across almost all functions. Alongside this, forces are working to meet the Government's ambitious targets to strengthen neighbourhood policing and halve knife crime and violence against women and girls over the next decade. Geopolitical events, such as the conflict in the Middle East, contribute to changes in demand, particularly in London, as policing has to deal with increased security threats and numbers of protests. The terrorism threat level has also increased to 'SEVERE'. We point out that, alongside this, the police service must also commit itself to delivering the major reforms to policing set out in the White Paper, and it needs the capacity and capabilities to deliver these changes.

7. In Chapter 2, we comment on various aspects of pay and workforce modernisation. We set out the wider strategic context in which we are writing our report this year by outlining some of the key proposals in the Police Reform White Paper and our comments on the evidence we have received on the White Paper's proposals and their implications for pay and reform. We note that thinking in many of these areas is still at an early stage. We advise that urgent action is needed on the employment and workforce implications of these changes to ensure that there is early clarity on the impact of these proposals on pay structures and terms and conditions. We note that there are likely to be significant costs associated with the proposals in the White Paper and, given the financial pressures already being experienced by forces, we highlight our concern about the medium- to long-term impact of the changes on the

financial position of the police service and individual forces. We also welcome the commitment in the White Paper to review the police funding formula. We set out our view that the position is deteriorating and is no longer fit for purpose. We emphasise that urgent action on the funding formula is required.

8. The development of a workforce strategy for the police service is at the heart of the White Paper reforms. In Chapter 2, we note that in our last four reports we have emphasised the importance of developing a long-term workforce strategy. We welcome the commitment in the Police Reform White Paper to develop a national workforce strategy, which we have consistently argued is critical to pay and workforce reform. We argue that this is a unique opportunity to set a clear, long-term direction for how the police service recruits, develops, deploys and retains the skills it needs, particularly in light of significant demographic change and the declining proportion of experienced officers. We emphasise that the strategy must be ambitious, forward looking and properly resourced, and informed by wider labour market developments, including changing expectations around careers, flexibility, wellbeing and lifelong learning. While recognising the distinctive legal and operational features of policing, we urge the service to ensure that its people practices keep pace with modern workforce management. We advise that the development of the workforce strategy should be informed by the lessons learned from the Police Uplift Programme, and the risks of prioritising volume and speed of recruitment over quality, training and skills. This includes the long-term consequences of relaxing vetting and entry standards, some of which may be felt for decades. We highlight the importance of maintaining appropriate entry standards, accelerating progress on diversity, addressing cultural and leadership capability, and considering the role of pensions and career pathways in shaping workforce behaviour. We set out our concerns that progress on the strategy has been slower than expected. We urge the Home Office and the NPCC to press ahead with the next phase of work as quickly as possible. We observe that further delays may lead to action being postponed on a range of issues, including pay and allowances. This risks adding to uncertainty for forces and officers during the reform period. We therefore recommend that a draft workforce strategy be made available to us no later than December 2026.

9. In Chapter 3, we consider Government pay policy and the performance of the wider economy and labour market. The chapter describes the economic climate at the time we submit our report in May 2026, including that the CPI rate of inflation was 2.8% in the year to April 2026 and the CPIH rate was 3.0% but inflation was expected to increase during the year, in contrast to previous expectations of falls in the rate. We highlight the continued uncertainty in the economic outlook, particularly given the impact of geopolitical developments, including the risk that the expected increase in inflation later this year may be significant according to one of three scenarios set out in the most recent Bank of England forecast. We point out that inflation under all these scenarios is expected to be much higher than was the case

immediately before the conflict. On affordability, we point to the differing financial positions of forces and the difficulties of us taking these into account in recommending a pay award. We set out the information we received from the NPCC that forces had built 3% into budgets for a pay award for 2026/27 but that 2.5% represented the limit of affordability beyond which critical service cuts would be required, even where forces have planned for a higher pay award. We also set out the evidence we received from the Government that a pay award above 2.5% would require difficult reprioritisation decisions for the Government and policing. In that context, we highlight the fact that the UK Government recently announced 2026/27 pay rises for other parts of the public sector which were significantly above levels within its affordability evidence of around 2.5%.

10. We consider the policing workforce and environment. We also note the continuing growth in demand, both in volume and complexity, including safeguarding, online crime and public order, and the increasing levels of risk, accountability and scrutiny faced by officers. We set out long-term changes to police earnings and the workforce, and the likely recruitment and retention challenges the service will face over the next few years. We highlight significant structural challenges arising from the legacy of low recruitment during the early 2010s, followed by rapid recruitment under the Uplift Programme, which has resulted in a workforce with a high proportion of officers with relatively short service and a reduced cohort of mid-career officers. We set out our concerns regarding the rise in voluntary resignation rates among sergeants and inspecting ranks and the increases in both long-term sickness absence and the proportion of officers on adjusted and restricted duties, and the impact this has on deployable capability. We welcome the removal of direct links between funding and officer numbers, which should give forces greater flexibility to adopt more sustainable workforce models.

11. However, we point out that recruitment is about more than numbers and that pay and reward need to be sufficiently competitive, and facilitate a reasonable work-life balance, to enable the police service to attract and retain high-calibre recruits with the right attitudes, aptitudes, resilience, motivations and maturity to respond to vulnerability, de-escalate social tension and manage complexity. We also set out our concerns that forces may be basing decisions on which entry routes they offer on affordability and abstraction levels, rather than on what might be appropriate to bring in the skills and talents their workforce requires.

12. Chapter 3 also sets out results from staff surveys showing low levels of morale, alongside growing evidence of workload pressure, stress and declining wellbeing. We also highlight the information we have received suggesting that forces are not monitoring the working hours of their workforces as required by regulations relating to the Working Time Directive. While these issues have not yet translated into acute recruitment or retention problems, we consider that they pose a clear medium-term risk if left unaddressed. We note that morale and wellbeing are influenced by a

complex mix of factors, including workload, leadership, organisational culture, public scrutiny and reward. We are particularly concerned by evidence of long working hours, cancelled rest days and difficulties in taking annual leave, and stress the importance of sustainable workforce management and effective wellbeing support. We also point out that officer wellbeing is another significant driver of motivation and morale, and is key to retention.

13. The chapter also presents the information we have received on diversity. We note continued improvements in the overall representation of female and ethnic minority officers, particularly at entry level, but observe that progress remains slow and that representation at senior ranks continues to lag behind the communities served. We highlight our concerns about the evidence of higher resignation rates among women and ethnic minority officers, and disparities in progression outcomes. We conclude that stronger and more urgent action will be required if policing is to build a workforce that is representative, inclusive and trusted, especially in the context of the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee.

14. Although pensions remain outside our direct remit, we emphasise in Chapter 3 that they form an important part of the overall reward package, and we point out that they can influence behaviour relating to retention, motivation and workforce flexibility. We highlight our concerns about the increasing opt-out rates, particularly among officers early in service and those from ethnic minority backgrounds, and we welcome steps to improve understanding of pension benefits while seeking further evidence on the drivers of these trends.

15. At the end of Chapter 3, we reiterate our longstanding concerns about the delay in translating agreed changes in employment law into police regulations and determinations and we recommend that all outstanding agreed changes be implemented by the end of 2026. In light of these delays, we recommend that statutory employment changes which exceed any provision already in police regulations be applied automatically and concurrently to police officers when they are enacted by Parliament. We acknowledge some concerns raised by the staff associations about this approach. We therefore also recommend that, in the interests of both officer wellbeing and operational effectiveness, statutory minima should not be treated as the default position for policing. We explain that in developing provision for police officers, due weight should be given to wellbeing and operational effectiveness, alongside the levels of provision available elsewhere in the public sector. We welcome the agreement of proposals relating to Neonatal Care Leave and Pay and Paternity (Bereavement) Leave, and encourage the Home Office to take these forward without delay. We also note the Police Federation of England and Wales's Charter for Change, which has the potential to improve officer wellbeing, and ask that this be considered through the PCF with clear priorities identified and supported by full analysis of costs, benefits and risks.

16. Finally, we highlight the importance of maternity support leave and recommend that police officers' maternity support entitlement be increased to two weeks on full pay. We explain that this will support officer wellbeing, family life and operational effectiveness, and would address current inconsistencies across forces.

17. In Chapter 4 we summarise the issues we took into account in making our recommendation for a basic pay award for police officers in 2026/27 and for changes to police allowances. We focus first on the performance of the economy. We note that inflation is expected to rise during the year and that police officers continue to experience the cumulative effects on their living costs of the period of high inflation over the last five years. We also point out that there continues to be heightened uncertainty about the economic climate, particularly given the recent geopolitical events. We also note trends in median pay settlements, the latest of which ranged from 3.0% to 3.8% as we finalised our recommendations.

18. We note that, with the exception of the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), the police service appears to be managing to recruit at the volume it requires and that attrition rates compare favourably with those of other organisations. However, we emphasise that recruitment is not solely a question of numbers. The police service must attract and retain officers with the skills, judgement and attitudes required to respond to increasingly complex demand, evolving social norms and technological change, and to rebuild trust and confidence in communities. We also recognise that recruitment conditions vary significantly across local labour markets and highlight the particular challenges facing the MPS, whose scale and operational pressures mean that recruitment shortfalls in London carry risks for policing nationally. While we welcome falling resignation rates and declining attrition, we stress that headline recruitment and turnover figures alone do not provide assurance of long-term workforce sustainability, particularly during a period of major reform and organisational uncertainty. In that context, we highlight the risks of 'flight' and 'blight' which may result from the lack of clarity regarding the implementation of some of the structural reforms in the White Paper. We set out our concerns that voluntary resignations remain concentrated among officers with relatively short service and note the changing expectations of a younger workforce, including greater emphasis on flexibility and work-life balance. We note that this creates risks for the longer term, especially given changes to both public perceptions of the police and the increasingly challenging operating environment. We point out that police remuneration must continue to recognise the inherent constraints and pressures of policing, while supporting the service to modernise its workforce and retain the officers it needs for the future.

19. We give weight to the fact that police officers, unlike the vast majority of employees in the private and public sectors, are prohibited from taking industrial action. We highlight the information we have again received from policing parties this year regarding the importance they attach to the impact of this issue. We also observe

that, where officers are expected to forgo industrial rights, regulations and entitlements must be honoured consistently and fairly. As we observe in other parts of this report, that is currently not always the case. We were also conscious, in setting a pay award, of the pressures and practicalities of policing on officers' personal lives and wellbeing. We note that some of these are referred to in police regulations as the 'exigencies of duty' and are compensated for through the allowance system, but others are not. We also highlight what appears, from information we received during our visits programme, to be an almost constant breach of regulation in some areas, particularly in relation to rest days, and point out that this will affect officers' perceptions of how valued they are by the police service, with implications for morale and retention.

20. After taking the above factors into account and balancing against affordability, we conclude that a pay uplift of 3.9% across all ranks up to and including chief superintendent is the most suitable approach. We also recommend that London Weighting be uprated by 3.9%.

21. We then set out our views on the second year of the NPCC's review of police allowances. In considering these allowances, we again observe that, in addition to ensuring officers are fairly compensated, the promotion of officer wellbeing, welfare and work-life balance, and the impact on their families, should be driving the review of allowances. We acknowledge the unpredictable nature of policing and the unavoidable impact of unexpected events. We remain concerned that, in some cases, allowances may be providing compensation to officers for poor management practices, possibly the result of resourcing pressures, that are impacting on wellbeing and work-life balance.

22. We outline our thinking behind our decision to increase the maximum limits for the London Allowance and South East Allowance in line with the pay award from 1 September 2026. We also call for further work on these allowances to build on the analysis already undertaken. We also recommend increasing all Protection Allowance rates by £8, and that Protection Allowance rate 3 should be applied for each day an officer is deployed in a country deemed to be subject to a higher level of risk.

23. We highlight that we are minded to recommend the abolition of the Acting Up Allowance in the next pay round and we ask for some additional information from parties. In advance of that, we recommend the immediate abolition of the 10-day qualifying period for the allowance from 1 September 2026.

24. We conclude that, while there is a clear and urgent need to reduce the level of rest days owed to officers and to address the underlying causes of their accumulation, the proposals put to us regarding additional hours worked are premature. We recommend that further work be undertaken, led by the NPCC, to develop a more robust, deliverable and more fully supported set of proposals on additional hours

worked (rest days in lieu, reinstated rest days, retention on duty for less than four hours on a rest day or bank/public holiday). We ask that this includes clearer evidence of the likely impacts on officers' wellbeing, force behaviour, and equality outcomes. We also emphasise that this work should be progressed in the context of wider police reform and refined through the PCF. As part of our recommendation, we ask these proposals be submitted to us in the next pay round for our consideration and decision.

25. Given ongoing concerns expressed by the staff associations, we welcome work by the NPCC on guidance around on-call, but wish to see its delivery expedited. We recommend that the NPCC bring forward its planned framework for inspecting and superintending ranks that allows time off in lieu for hours worked while on call at plain time, within defined parameters, by April 2027, and that the NPCC brings draft national on-call guidance to the PCF for discussion and agreement by the end of 2026.

26. We also draw attention to a number of innovative and thoughtful proposals that have come to us from the staff associations. We observe that it is not possible for us to reach a proper view on these because they have not been properly considered through the PCF, and the necessary work has not been done on costing the proposals and assessing the risks and benefits. We observe that our consideration of these proposals is further complicated by the fact that not all parties are currently formally engaged with the PRRB process. We propose that there should be substantive discussion at the PCF based around the outcomes that parties are looking to achieve in the short term to deal with, for instance, urgent matters relating to officer wellbeing or immediate recruitment and retention pressures. We suggest that the best way to achieve that should be a list of agreed priorities for us to consider in the next pay round.

27. Looking to the future, we propose that a wider review of allowances will be necessary that takes into account the changes which will result from the implementation of the reforms in the White Paper. We observe that the review will need to consider allowances in the context of changes to police remuneration as a whole. We explain that, rather than reviewing each individual allowance, the review needs to consider what the allowances are attempting to achieve and the best approach to delivering those outcomes. We note that any proposed changes from that exercise should be brought to us in due course once they have been properly considered through the PCF. We observe that there will need to be a clear articulation of the strategic issue they are seeking to address and how that fits with police reform, improving outcomes for the public and wider changes in remuneration. We note that the proposals will need to be fully costed, and an Equality Impact Assessment and risk assessment will need to be completed.

28. At the end of Chapter 4, we again welcome the NPCC's intention to carry out a further review of annual leave policy in two years' time. We note the further evidence

we have received regarding officers' ability to use their new annual leave entitlement. However, we note the continuing concerns set out by the staff associations regarding officers' ability to take annual leave, and we ask for a rank-by-rank assessment in the next pay round.

29. In Chapter 5, our Forward Look, we note that thinking on a number of the reforms set out in the White Paper remains at an early stage and is likely to create uncertainty for officers, with implications for recruitment and retention. We stress the need for urgent clarity on the workforce impacts, particularly in relation to pay structures and terms and conditions, and we seek a detailed update in the next pay round. We also seek a view from parties on how we will be engaged in emerging work on the workforce strategy and Licence to Practise. We reiterate the importance we attach to the swift development of a workforce strategy as part of the police reform agenda, and the role it will play in future considerations of pay and pay reform. We also ask the parties to provide evidence in the next pay round setting out how the workforce strategy and leadership reforms will improve diversity outcomes, and how pay, progression and specialist pathways will support the recruitment and retention of a diverse workforce. We also reiterate the importance of officer wellbeing and seek an update in the next pay round on amending police regulations to reflect a range of family-friendly measures.

30. We highlight that the reform programme places strong emphasis on the use of data, technology and artificial intelligence to improve productivity, support decision-making and reduce administrative burdens on officers. We ask for an update in the next pay round on whether these initiatives are delivering measurable benefits. We point out that we anticipate examining the implications of greater reliance on digital systems and technology-enabled working for skills requirements, training, career pathways and the overall policing employment offer.

31. We reiterate our longstanding concerns about the fragmented and complex architecture for decisions on police pay, conditions and workforce reform. We continue to consider that greater clarity and simplification would help support a more coherent and strategic approach and enable proposals to be more fully developed and tested before reaching us for determination.

32. We again seek an assessment of the impact on recruitment in the MPS and the City of London Police of the changes to starting pay and the London Allowance implemented in April 2025. We also set out the additional work we are expecting to see on police allowances, as described in Chapter 4.

33. Finally, we invite parties to provide evidence in the next pay round on the reasons why officers opt out of the police pension scheme, particularly given our concerns that opt-out rates are highest among both early-career officers and ethnic minority officers.

Chapter 1 – Introduction

Introduction

1.1 This is our 12th Report to the Home Secretary following our establishment in 2014, and in it we make observations and recommendations on the matters referred to us by the Home Office in our remit letter.

Our 2025 Police Remuneration Review Body Report

1.2 Our 11th Report was submitted to the Home Secretary on 5 June 2025 containing our recommendations on police officer pay and allowances (Appendix A). The recommendations set out in our report were:

1. A consolidated increase of 4.2% to all police officer pay points for all ranks up to and including chief superintendent.
2. On-call Allowance to be increased from £25 to £35.
3. The current three bands for the Motor Vehicle Allowance essential users' lump sum, linked to engine size of the vehicle, to be replaced with a single allowance of £1,239 irrespective of the engine size.
4. The Away from Home Overnight Allowance to be increased by £10 from £50 to £60.
5. The Hardship Allowance to be increased by £10 from £30 to £40.
6. London Weighting to be uprated by 4.2%.

1.3 The Home Secretary responded on 1 August 2025 by accepting our recommendations in full.

The 2026/27 remit

1.4 The Policing and Crime Minister's remit letter of 19 February 2026 (Appendix B) set the context for our 2026/27 review. It asked us to make recommendations on how to apply the pay award for all police officers in ranks up to and including chief superintendent. The Policing and Crime Minister separately remitted consideration of pay for chief police officers to the Senior Salaries Review Body (SSRB).

1.5 The letter also asked us to consider proposals resulting from year two of the National Police Chiefs' Council review of allowances, taking into account the views of policing stakeholders.

1.6 The Policing and Crime Minister's remit letter provides a primary focus for the Review Body. However, it is open to us to consider any issues that fall within the broad scope of our formal terms of reference.

Approach to the 2026/27 pay round

1.7 We have reached recommendations and made observations this year following our close examination of evidence from a range of sources. These include not only written and oral evidence submissions from the parties and the Policing and Crime Minister’s remit letter, but also our analyses of police workforce and pay statistics, the economic and labour market context and external independent reports.

Visits

1.8 We conducted visits to the following police forces in the autumn of 2025: Cheshire; Dorset; Humberside; the Metropolitan Police Service; and West Midlands. We also visited the Eastern Region Special Operations Unit. We were able to meet many police officers from a wide range of roles and hear their perspectives on pay and allowances and other matters, such as the challenges they faced. We are grateful to all those who took part in our visits and look forward to visiting other forces in the coming year.

1.9 Our visits supplement the formal evidence that we receive and are a vital part of our consideration and decision-making process. We have set out some of the more detailed messages arising from the visits in the relevant sections of our report.

1.10 A number of major issues arose on our visits. These included:

- The 4.2% pay award was generally welcomed but the cost of living had also increased. There was regret that the pay award had not overcome longstanding real-terms pay decline.
- The Metropolitan Police Service was undertaking a major restructure because of its affordability position. It was also placing 700 officers from inspector to chief superintendent rank in a development centre and had started a police officer voluntary exit programme. All the changes were impacting on morale.
- The differential impact of the funding formula had led to major reductions in police community support officer (PCSO) numbers in Cheshire, and police staff and PCSO numbers in Dorset.
- The police funding formula was under extreme pressure.
- Mixed views were expressed about the quality and commitment of new recruits.
- Many new recruits had taken a pay cut to join and starting pay was often seen as a barrier.
- A police force might offer different entry routes but the same level of starting pay, regardless of qualifications. There was also inconsistency between forces in the entry routes offered, which reflected the absence of a general strategy and widespread variability in the recruitment standards applied.

- There were many reports of officer mental health problems and high stress levels and evidence of inconsistent welfare provision – in some cases it was good but in others it was limited.
- A constantly arising theme was short-notice rostering, cancelled rest days and disrupted leave, with a significant impact on officers' personal lives and families. In some cases, particularly in relation to rest days, we learned that regulations were not being adhered to.
- Strong concerns were again expressed about working hours and workload in the inspecting ranks.
- The On-call Allowance was frequently described as too low.

Parties giving evidence

1.11 In February and March 2026, we received written evidence from the parties listed below. We have summarised the key points from each party's evidence in Appendix C, and have provided links to the submitted evidence in Appendix D:

- the Home Office;
- HM Treasury;
- the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC);
- the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC);
- the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS); and
- the Police Superintendents' Association (PSA).

1.12 We held a series of oral evidence sessions with the parties in March and April 2026. These were attended by the Minister for Policing and Crime; Home Office officials; representatives from the NPCC, APCC, MPS and PSA; and the Chief Executive Officer of the College of Policing. We are also grateful to a number of other organisations and individuals who provided background briefings which provided important contextual information for our work.

The Police Federation of England and Wales

1.13 The Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW) withdrew from the Review Body process in 2021 and confirmed that it was not formally participating in the 2026 pay round. However, the PFEW sent us a report for our consideration in February 2026 and later briefed us on this report.

Environment for our considerations

1.14 Both the 2025 National Security Strategy and the 2026 Police Reform White Paper have significant implications for the future of policing across the UK, as does the current global context of major geopolitical uncertainties.

1.15 We were disappointed to experience a delay in receipt of both our remit letter and the Government written evidence this year. We hope this does not set a precedent for future pay rounds as it causes difficulties for other parties as well as for PRRB itself.

1.16 Chapter 2 contains our observations and commentary on modernising the police workforce and police pay and considers aspects of the Police Reform White Paper.

1.17 In Chapter 3, we consider the implications of the broader policing environment, Government pay policy, and the performance of the wider economy and labour market. We also examine indicators on changes in the policing workforce and police recruitment, retention, motivation, morale and wellbeing.

1.18 We set out our pay recommendations in Chapter 4, and in Chapter 5 we look ahead to the possible context for the next pay round and highlight issues that are likely to be of interest to us in future.

1.19 The work of police officers is important, difficult, complex and often dangerous. We would again like to acknowledge our remit group for their contribution and thank all the parties for engaging with us this year.

Chapter 2 – Police Workforce and Pay Modernisation

Introduction

2.1 In this chapter, we comment on the evidence we have received on the modernisation of the police workforce and pay. We begin by setting out the wider strategic context in which we are writing our report this year. The publication of the Police Reform White Paper, 'From Local to national: a new model for policing 2026', sets out the Government's plans for the biggest modernisation of policing, its workforce and law enforcement since the 1960s. We then set out our comments on the evidence we have received on the White Paper's proposals and their implications for pay and reform, focusing in particular on plans to develop a workforce strategy for the police service.

2.2 These developments provide the strategic context for our commentary on the evidence we have received from parties on proposals for more immediate changes to aspects of base pay, the Pay Progression Standard (PPS) and Targeted Variable Pay (TVP), in advance of the implementation of the reforms set out in the White Paper.

Our previous commentary on the Police Reform White Paper and workforce and pay reform

2.3 In our 2025 Report we welcomed the Home Secretary's announcement of an ambitious programme of reform to policing, and the forthcoming Police Reform White Paper which we understood would set out how the challenges that policing faced would be addressed and develop a system that was modern and fit for the future. We recognised that funding for some key aspects of this work was being sought by the Home Office through the Comprehensive Spending Review which reported in June 2025.

2.4 We emphasised that we were particularly pleased to learn that the White Paper would consider a national police workforce strategy. We advised that the work to develop the strategy should consider some fundamental questions regarding the capabilities and skills the police service required to deliver the Police Vision for 2030 and beyond and the outcome of work on the Police Reform White Paper, and how to attract and retain those skills. We also observed that the police service would wish to future-proof its strategy by considering some of the developments (demographics, technological advancements and shifting societal values) which were driving the profound transformation occurring in the modern workplace. We pointed out that the management of future workforces would need to be more flexible and innovative and that this needed to be reflected in the police service's structure and culture.

2.5 We emphasised that it was important that the work proceeded at pace. We noted that the workforce strategy was vital to delivering the best outcomes to the public and that it was a crucial step in pay and workforce modernisation. We therefore explained that we were not going to comment on the detail of the NPCC's proposals for the reform of base pay until we could consider them in the context of the workforce strategy. We noted that this strategy would provide important context for our future considerations of pay and pay reform. We therefore emphasised that it was vital that the workforce strategy, or at least a draft, be made available to us early in 2026 in good time to inform the next pay round.

2.6 We also urged the NPCC to seize the opportunity presented by the wider police reform agenda and the plans for a workforce strategy to review the link between progression and performance. We encouraged it to develop the PPS into a meaningful competency related tool which was clearly linked to continuous professional development (CPD) and strengthened the professionalisation of the police service. We also proposed that TVP be extended for a further three years rather than being made permanent so that the future of TVP could be considered in the light of the outcome of the wider police reform programme, the workforce strategy and possible changes to the structure of base pay.

The Police Reform White Paper – setting the strategic context for our considerations

From local to national: a new model for policing[4]

2.7 The White Paper set out three key problems: falling public confidence; declining and inconsistent performance; and radically changing crime. The White Paper explained that policing was not currently set up to succeed because it was disconnected from local communities as a result of neighbourhood policing visibly diminishing. It argued that excessive bureaucracy and outdated laws were pulling officers away from frontline priorities and an outdated, fragmented structure with 43 forces was inefficient and incoherent. It reported that smaller forces lacked specialist capability and resilience and that there was poor interoperability between information technology systems that limited data-sharing and national coordination. It noted that the Home Office had previously stepped back from performance oversight which had contributed to weak national standards and inconsistent data. It said that the police service did not have the capabilities it needed to deal effectively with modern threats.

2.8 To address these issues, the White Paper outlined plans to re-energise neighbourhood policing and tackle a number of issues that were hindering effective policing, including reducing bureaucracy and the distractions from non-core policing tasks. The White Paper set out the Government's plans for structural reform. In addition to plans for a new system of local police governance by Mayors and

[4] Home Office (January 2026), *From local to national: a new model for policing*. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/from-local-to-national-a-new-model-for-policing [Accessed on 22 May 2026]

Policing and Crime Boards following the abolition of Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs), it articulated the case for reducing the number of forces. The White Paper announced an independent review to design the optimal structure, considering regional boundaries, mayoral areas, and implementation options. It stated that pathfinder mergers of forces may begin this Parliament, with full delivery expected by the end of the next Parliament. A new National Police Service (NPS) would be established which would be responsible for: strategic leadership, standard setting, enabling and support functions, and providing a national operational response. The White Paper explained that once the NPS was mature, which was likely to be early in the next Parliament, it would incorporate counter-terrorism policing, the National Crime Agency (NCA) and Regional Organised Crime Units (ROCUs).

2.9 The White Paper also committed to the development of a new funding formula for the police once structural reforms were underway. In the meantime, the White Paper proposed that the Government would work in partnership with policing to explore the structure and scope of the police settlement and to consider what steps could be taken in the short term to better align funding allocations with the Government's policing priorities.

2.10 It set out plans to improve standards and the culture of the police service and define priorities and responsibilities. It also outlined proposals to strengthen the powers of His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) and those of the Home Secretary to intervene where serious performance or safety risks arose.

2.11 The White Paper made a commitment to develop a new national workforce strategy. It explained that the aims of the strategy were to:

- get the right balance of generalist and specialist police officers and other police professionals, including across priority areas such as violence against women and girls;
- build a clearer picture of future demands and how to ensure police training and skills met those demands;
- build an understanding of the resource and skills pipeline and its financial impact, ensuring delivery of the correct shape and size of the workforce;
- enable improved productivity by looking at how reductions could be made in the numbers on restricted duties, sick leave or suspension;
- build stronger career pathways in policing, including examining the pathways in and out of policing and across law enforcement;
- explore how to use volunteers and special constables better;
- enable the police service to take a more flexible approach to the overall workforce; and

- consider how to make the pay structure for policing more effective, including how policing opportunities compete with the wider employment market.

2.12 It also announced that there would be a shift away from a focus on police officer numbers and that chief officers would be given the flexibility to build a workforce that met the needs of their communities. The White Paper also committed to “explore the option of renewing the Direct Entry Inspector programme, linked to a fast-track route to superintendent”. It said that the Government would work with the sector to develop that model into the first multi-route specialised pathway that supported entry into policing at different ranks to deliver leaders with specialist skills in areas of need.

2.13 The White Paper described the Government’s plans to strengthen leadership, performance management and development. A new Police Leadership Commission would advise on further reforms later in 2026. It said that a new mandatory performance management framework would be established and a Licence to Practise would be phased in.

2.14 The White Paper also acknowledged that wellbeing provision was inconsistent. It promised that steps would be taken to strengthen the Police Covenant. It also committed to: setting national mandatory standards in policing wellbeing provision, including an enhanced trauma support package and occupational health.

2.15 The White Paper committed to “unleashing the power of our people through data and technology” via a £115 million investment to deliver responsible artificial intelligence (AI) adoption and the creation of a new National Centre for AI in Policing.

2.16 Other measures included the expansion of the use of facial recognition technology and the simplification of the governance of data and clearer accountability. The White Paper reported that other technology was expected to reduce administrative workloads.

View from parties on the implications of the Police Reform White Paper

2.17 The Home Office set out the key proposals in the Police Reform White Paper, including the structural reforms to improve inefficiencies, strengthen national capabilities and support local delivery. The Home Office said that this included the creation of a new national police force, the National Police Service, that would set stronger national standards and ensure a more consistent service was received by the public, regardless of where they lived. It explained that the reforms proposed in the White Paper would remove the barriers that prevented the police from focusing on what mattered and set up the policing system to succeed in the long term by addressing systemic issues so that policing could better deliver for the public.

2.18 In oral evidence, the Home Office said that the blueprint for policing as articulated in the White Paper was to protect and enhance local policing and priorities and dedicated neighbourhood forces at local level. It said that this was why the Government had campaigned for 13,000 extra neighbourhood policing individuals to build back support. It informed us that the planned new regional structure for policing would be confirmed by the Home Secretary after Lord Hogan-Howe's Independent Review of Police Force Structures had reported. It said that there would be different boundaries for different types of work and their functions determined in relation to the new NPS. It confirmed that counter-terrorism work and the NCA would be incorporated into the NPS.

2.19 The Home Office said that standards, training and workforce planning and all things the service needed would be considered. It said that this work all amounted to a policing efficiency drive as it would produce 'baked-in' efficiencies. It reported that there would be a major investment in AI for policing. It said that some of that work was already underway: at a cost of £115 million, the National AI centre for Policing would launch in June 2026. It was expected to automate 6 million hours of work annually, equivalent to freeing up 3,000 officers for the frontline.

2.20 The Home Office explained that greater technological integration would support policing and investment in technology and would make police officer jobs more efficient. It observed that police officer pay would also be very important. It said that how officers were looked after and retained to do their jobs would be reviewed. It also told us that a tranche of work in the policing review would focus on officer wellbeing. It said that the Policing Covenant would be strengthened to ensure police officers received support when they needed it in what was a very pressured job. It said that the priorities for improving workforce planning were to get officers what they needed when they needed and to avoid the vast swings in workforce numbers of the past – the big reductions and large recruitment drives.

2.21 In oral evidence, the Home Office also told us that policing needed a new funding formula. The current one was out of date and would need to be updated alongside police restructuring. It told us that there would be a lot of work involved in the transition from current police funding arrangements to the new governance system without PCCs, and there was uncertainty on the future arrangements. The Home Office was working with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on the new local government and policing boundaries.

2.22 The joint statement from the NPCC, Chief Police Officers' Staff Association (CPOSA) and PSA stated that the White Paper showed that the Government was embarking on significant police reform and structural change by setting out proposals for a new national policing body, refocusing on local policing, and enhancing leadership and standards, including the development of a Licence to Practise. It observed that all of these would impact the police service's future workforce requirements. The statement emphasised that these ambitions would only be realised if pay, conditions, and workforce policy supported the people who would need to deliver that reform. It said that the success of future policing models would depend on securing and retaining the right skills, strengthening leadership, and ensuring capacity was sustainable. It told us that effective pay and conditions were a foundation for reform, productivity, and long-term public confidence.

2.23 The NPCC told us that the Police Reform White Paper set out proposals for new national structures, leadership, performance and standards, including the introduction of a Licence to Practise. It observed that all of these would shape future workforce requirements. It explained that in response, the service was strengthening its understanding of current and future workforce needs through an enhanced Strategic Workforce Assessment and partnership with Skills for Justice to develop exemplar forces and a national workforce planning template that better integrated workforce and financial planning.

2.24 The NPCC said that the White Paper provided a clear direction for the future of policing. It explained that the removal of officer maintenance targets also enabled longer-term workforce planning and a more deliberate approach to the future shape of the service, including how policing attracted and retained the skills it needed. It told us that pay and the broader remuneration package would remain a key part of that offer as policing moved towards a more blended workforce. The NPCC said that these reforms would take time to implement and that the service must continue to make proportionate changes within the existing reward framework, balancing future reform with fairness for officers under existing terms and conditions.

2.25 In oral evidence, the NPCC described the different stages to the establishment of the NPS. It observed that its establishment was a fundamental opportunity to reform the police workforce, drawing on the lessons the NCA had learnt regarding the integration of non-powered and warranted officers. It noted that the size of the NPS was unclear and that some chiefs favoured a relatively slimline NPS. In practice, the design of the NPS would be partly dependent on the outcome of the Independent Review of Police Force Structures.

2.26 In oral evidence, the APCC reported that two or three models were being developed to replace PCCs. In Kent, for example, a Police and Crime Board would be established which would bear some resemblance to the former police authorities. The body would set the budget, raise the precept, and scrutinise the chief constable – holding them to account for recruitment, retention and workforce issues. In many other parts of the country, the mayoral model would replace PCCs.

2.27 The MPS highlighted two key changes in the White Paper: the new workforce strategy and the proposed Licence to Practise. It observed that there was very little detail on the latter. It said that the transfer of the NCA into the NPS, and the need to reconcile terms and conditions, was a major issue. It observed that the Licence to Practise could have significant implications for pay in the longer term.

2.28 The PSA told us that it looked forward to being consulted and working on the delivery of the White Paper proposals. In oral evidence, it told us that it had not been engaged on the implications for the workforce regarding the major changes proposed in the White Paper including the proposed merger of forces. It would welcome both further engagement and more information.

Information from the PFEW on the Police Reform White Paper

2.29 The PFEW observed that the Police Reform White Paper had the ambition to set the police up to succeed, but action was needed to deal with the realities being faced by officers now, such as workload and financial pressures. On the latter, it highlighted evidence of officers missing meals and the fact that the salary of officers in London was consumed by expenditure on essentials. It drew our attention to survey results showing that 23% of officers wanted to leave policing and 57% had said they were more likely to leave after publication of the White Paper, (compared with just 4% who said they were less likely to leave following its publication).

Our comment on the Police Reform White Paper

2.30 We welcome the White Paper on Police Reform. We note the Government's view that these will be the largest reforms to policing for two centuries. In our view, delivery of the White Paper reforms is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reshape how policing recruits, trains, structures and develops its workforce, including rank structures, progression pathways and entry routes. Work needs to be taken forward at pace, with a clear destination vision that is shared by officers and staff.

2.31 We note the underlying challenges that the White Paper is seeking to address. In our previous reports, we highlighted our concerns about the implications of declining public trust and confidence in the police. We observe that there is evidence that the implicit psychological contract between society and policing is under strain, which risks affecting motivation and morale.

2.32 We recognise that the White Paper's proposals will have important implications for pay and reward, including through: the development of a workforce strategy; the introduction of a Licence to Practise; direct entry and new specialised pathways into policing; and measures relating to leadership. We also welcome the White Paper's focus on wellbeing, which we highlighted as a key issue in our 2025 Report.

2.33 We note that thinking in many of these areas is still at an early stage. We also note that some of these reforms, in particular the establishment of the NPS (which will involve the merger of a number of entities) and other structural changes following the Independent Review of Police Forces Structures, have the potential to create significant uncertainty among police officers. We observe that these changes will have implications for recruitment and retention and will influence officers' thinking about their career paths. We advise that urgent action is needed on the employment and workforce implications of these changes to ensure that there is early clarity on the impact of these proposals on pay structures and terms and conditions. We are concerned that thinking about, for instance, a new workforce model for the NPS has not yet begun in earnest.

2.34 We observe that affordability is a key issue in making our recommendations each year. We note that there are likely to be significant costs associated with the proposals in the White Paper and, given the financial pressures already being experienced by forces which we describe later in the report, we are concerned about the medium- to long-term impact on the financial position of the police service and individual forces.

2.35 In our previous reports, we have highlighted our concerns about the operation of the police funding formula in relation to the resourcing of pay awards. In our last report, we observed that the funding formula had been in place for many years and had not been adapted to take account of changes in population or the nature of crime. We are conscious, from the information we have received during our visits programme and the evidence from parties, that affordability is affecting local decisions on pay and allowances and on which entry routes to use. For instance, forces have told us that one reason they are not using the additional flexibility to start new entrants on pay point 2 is the additional costs this would incur. As we highlight later in the report, we are also aware that some forces have reduced the size of the location allowances they are paying to officers as a result of affordability concerns. While we recognise the benefits of local discretion, affordability pressures are already contributing to significant variation between forces in relation to the application of the regulations, use of entry routes, decisions on TVP and approaches to overtime. This has implications for both fairness and the delivery of the White Paper reforms.

2.36 We therefore welcome the commitment in the White Paper to review the police funding formula. We said in our last report that, in our view, the position was becoming increasingly acute. However, we consider that the position is deteriorating and the formula is no longer fit for purpose. We are seeing strong evidence that the current funding arrangements are increasingly misaligned with demand and are creating mounting affordability pressures across forces. As we highlight later in the report, nine forces this year have received additional funding either via the precept or special grants. This reinforces our view that urgent action on the funding formula is required.

2.37 In addition, we observe that the move to new and potentially differing local governance models following the abolition of PCCs is increasing the uncertainty around the arrangements for decision making on police funding at the local level across England and Wales. We also observe that the absence of Strategic Authority Mayors in Wales raises questions about where the functions currently exercised by PCCs in Wales will sit. As of May 2026, no formal decision has been announced on Wales-specific replacement arrangements for PCCs, and discussions between the UK and Welsh Governments are ongoing. We note that the Welsh Government has stated that any approach should build on what currently works well and strengthen the devolution settlement. In our view, early clarity on future governance arrangements, including in Wales, will be important to support consistent and accountable decision-making on funding and to reduce uncertainty for forces and officers. We also point out that there will need to be prompt clarification on the future operation of the police precept, given the decision to abolish PCCs.

2.38 Finally, we note that these proposals, including the development of a workforce strategy which we consider in detail below, will take time to put in place. We observe that interim measures may be needed to begin to address the challenges facing the police service, and that remuneration may have a part to play.

Modernising police workforce and pay: workforce strategy

2.39 The Home Office set out its commitment to a workforce strategy for the police service. It emphasised that the Government was clear that an effective, well-supported, and modern police workforce was fundamental to delivering safer communities and reducing crime. It said that it was therefore developing a new national police workforce strategy which would underpin wider police reform, bringing forward practical proposals on leadership standards, wellbeing, recruitment, retention, and workforce data – ensuring every force had the tools to deliver an effective, modern service.

2.40 It reported that it was focussed on ensuring policing had the right people, with the right skills, in the right places, to deliver a more efficient modern service that was properly aligned to current and future demand so that policing could provide a more effective service to the public. It said that the police workforce strategy would support forces to improve workforce planning and demand modelling, underpinned by stronger, standardised workforce data. It observed that this would enable policing to assess both current capability and future need.

2.41 It said that the Government would also develop a Licence to Practise model. It explained that this was a long-term ambition that would ensure officers were supported in their careers, and reflected the professionalism and standards the public rightly expected of policing today.

2.42 It told us that there would be greater flexibility around entry and exit for the workforce, including a specialist direct entry pathway into policing to ensure that policing could continue to access the skills it needed.

2.43 In oral evidence, the Home Office explained that the next steps were for the police workforce plan to be developed over a six- to twelve-month period, in conjunction with policing. It said that it would be owned by the NPS, with input from the Home Office, and developed as quickly as possible. It observed that this presented a number of challenges and, ideally, would be an iterative process. The Home Office highlighted some of the consequences of the absence of a strategy to date, including a 50% decrease in PCSOs. It said that the aim was to produce the most robust and effective workforce plan that could be mustered jointly with policing, based on the best available evidence. The Home Office reported that the groundwork had been done on police reform, including sprint work with the NPCC. It said that it had been very helpful to bring in external industry expertise, for example from those involved in NHS workforce planning. The Home Office had looked at other sectors too, and expected to do more such research as its workforce plan developed. Project leaders were starting to provide structure and sequencing around what the workforce strategy process might look like. The Home Office highlighted some of the key issues being considered, including what a core workforce strategy might look like; the implications for pay and reward; workforce welfare; and the administrative and human resource functions in the context of national structural police reform. It said that it did not expect to achieve the best police workforce strategy overnight, but was conscious of the need to be ambitious and to put in the work to achieve the right product. This would require a development process that worked for the police service, while remaining mindful of the need to take time and build it gradually in collaboration with policing.

2.44 The NPCC informed us that police stakeholders were in agreement on the need for a long-term workforce strategy but that investment was needed. It set out the engagement it had undertaken across the service and explained that the consultation had shown that there was strong consensus in several key areas that would be used to shape future pay policies:

- the need to retain both officers in the first five years' of service, through competitive pay and progression structures, and late career experience;
- the importance of progression reflecting competence;
- the requirement for pay structures to better address officers no longer able to perform the full role;
- the need for a compelling employment offer particularly around wider benefits, flexibility and support; and
- the importance of the reward model, considering both officers and staff, as the police service moved to a more blended workforce.

2.45 However, the NPCC told us that there was concern about how the police service set a framework where skills or roles were differentially rewarded, balancing national consistency and local flexibility. It set out for us a number of strategic workforce challenges that the police service needed to address in any pay strategy. These included: the growing demand for digital and specialist skills; the need to evolve from general to specialist career pathways; the importance of ensuring professional standards and behaviours were reinforced structurally through reward mechanisms; and the need to strengthen leadership capability, enabling forces to move on individuals whose performance or conduct did not meet expectations. The NPCC said an incremental approach to change had been agreed and the main steps were around improvements to performance management, increasing flexibility at local level and developing nationally defined specialist career and skills pathways.

2.46 In oral evidence, the NPCC stated that the police service was now making far more effective use of workforce data and insight developed through the Uplift Programme, providing a stronger understanding of police workforce composition than ever before. It described this and the commitment to produce a workforce strategy as a significant opportunity to professionalise policing for the long term. It told us that police reform could not happen without workforce reform. It noted that there was a danger of an over-focus on reform of structures rather than reform of workforce. It reported that the service was ready to move at pace on the workforce strategy but was waiting for Home Office support and endorsement.

2.47 The NPCC explained that early sprint work had been undertaken in February and March, as referenced in the White Paper, and that, with consultancy support, a timeline had been developed to deliver a comprehensive workforce strategy alongside broader people strategy principles. It indicated that delivery of work on shared services would take around twelve months and that the NPCC had an outline resourcing and cost plan already in place.

2.48 The NPCC confirmed that Home Office officials had been involved in the early sprint work and that advice on resource implications had been, or was about to be, submitted to ministers. However, it reported that while funding was referenced in the White Paper, it had not yet been released. Notwithstanding this, the NPCC emphasised that good progress had already been made, with improved workforce segmentation and data quality, and with key elements such as talent initiatives and a review of leadership already underway, which would inform the development of a reward strategy. It considered that, subject to resourcing, the overarching workforce strategy and underpinning principles could be delivered within six to nine months. The NPCC further explained that this work was closely linked to wider reform, with the Basic Command Unit envisaged as the core building block of policing, irrespective of the number of forces, and with an emphasis on designing the most efficient operational model, standardising the use of police staff and addressing significant disparities between forces.

2.49 The NPCC highlighted early modelling work and consideration of issues such as the optimum workforce balance between police and staff, as well as the shifting of roles, and the scale of changes required around different policing functions. Finally, the NPCC argued that this work represented good value for money and suggested that framing the requirement in people terms would be helpful, estimating that delivery would require between 15 and 20 staff.

2.50 In oral evidence, the NPCC set out its view of how the police workforce was likely to develop over the next three to four years. It envisaged a workforce with a much broader mix of skills, better aligned to an increasingly complex and changing threat picture, and characterised by a greater prevalence of multidisciplinary teams. It explained that this would involve both officers and staff retraining and acquiring new skills, with a significantly closer integration of officers and police staff working together. The NPCC also pointed to a more porous organisational model enabling the increased movement of individuals across law enforcement. This would reduce friction across the system, enabling easier movement between national, regional and local roles, as well as into and out of partner organisations, and back again, supporting portfolio careers and increasing workforce flexibility. The NPCC additionally observed that a number of generic tasks currently undertaken by officers and staff were increasingly likely to be automated or supported by technology. In this context, it highlighted multi-million pound investment to encourage the use of AI across policing, which was expected to go live shortly. The NPCC described this as a key component of police reform, supporting the standardisation and automation of bureaucratic processes.

2.51 The MPS told us that longer-term pay reform was essential. It welcomed the Police Reform White Paper and the design of a national workforce strategy which would look to make the pay structure for policing more effective, including how policing opportunities competed with the wider employment market. Nonetheless, the MPS said it remained frustrated by the pace of pay reform which it saw as a critical enabler to achieving its own cultural reform ambition.

2.52 During our visits programme, a number of officers noted that some roles required specialist qualifications but this was not reflected in extra pay. Some officers suggested that there might be a case for making some specialist roles, especially in investigations, more attractive through a pay incentive.

Our comment and recommendation on the future direction of modernising police workforce and pay

2.53 Over the last four years, we have emphasised that the development of a workforce strategy for the police service would be a vital step in pay and workforce modernisation. The commitment in the Police Reform White Paper to develop a national workforce strategy provides a unique opportunity to shape the way policing recruits, equips, structures, deploys and develops its workforce.

2.54 The key focus of that work should be on how the police service recruits and retains the skills it most needs, including taking account of the significant demographic changes in the police workforce in recent years and the decline in the proportion of experienced, mid-career officers. We also observe that the service currently faces challenges in relation to its leadership pipeline and that a more consistent and managed approach to recruiting and developing individuals on the basis of competency will be required to address this. We note that the workforce strategy is vital to improving outcomes for the public and, for that reason, it is important that it proceeds at pace. We observe that, given the importance of this work, it is our strong view that it must be properly resourced. We also note the NPCC's commitment in its evidence to incremental change. We point out that this must be informed by a clear direction of travel to a defined destination.

2.55 We note the White Paper's description of the issues that will be covered by the workforce strategy. We urge the police service, in developing the strategy, to be ambitious and to think strategically about developments in the wider labour market, including new ways of working, in order to future-proof the strategy and ensure that it is sustainable. As we noted in our last report, the management of future workforces will need to be more flexible and innovative, and this needs to be reflected in the police service's structure and culture.

2.56 In our last report, we highlighted work by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, which outlined the profound transformation occurring in the modern workplace, driven by changing demographics, technological advancements and shifting societal values. We set out a number of implications for the police service, including the continuing decline in the working-age population. We noted that people will work for longer and that employers will need to support this through more innovative career opportunities, promotion, and continuous learning and development. We also pointed out that the police service will need to attract, and then retain, a more diverse group of recruits from a shrinking pool of potential employees. In response, the police service will need to consider the breadth and scope of roles within the service, as well as its approaches to promotion, careers and the organisation of work within policing. The service will need to provide clearer and more credible career pathways, ensuring that opportunities for progression are transparent and based on assessed capability and competency, rather than primarily on tenure.

2.57 We observe that the expectations of the next generation of workers are changing. Flexible and hybrid working arrangements are now widely established, underpinned by recent legislative reforms that entitle employees – including those seeking portfolio rather than traditional careers – to request flexible working from the outset of employment. We note that there is also an expanded framework of statutory leave and employment protections, reflecting greater recognition of caring responsibilities and the need to support labour market participation across different life stages. Employers also face heightened expectations to address wellbeing, mental health and workforce sustainability, alongside challenges associated with workload pressures and retention.

2.58 We recognise, of course, the unique nature of policing, both legally and in terms of the operational demands facing the police service. The legal position of officers as public office holders, rather than employees, means that their terms and conditions are governed by statute and regulations rather than contract, and that they are excluded from core employment law protections. In addition, police officers are unable to take industrial action. We consider this to be a fundamental feature of the policing ‘offer’ and one which heightens the importance of ensuring that pay, conditions and workforce policies are fair, credible and well understood and that regulations are fairly and consistently applied. Historically, policing has been characterised by single-route entry, linear progression within rank structures, and relatively limited lateral entry, reflecting the need for common training, shared professional identity and consistent operational standards.

2.59 At the same time, we observe that some of the operational features often cited as ‘exceptional’ in policing are now widely experienced across the labour market. Many public services and other organisations operate on a 24/7 basis, face unpredictable demand, and increasingly rely on digital systems and online service delivery. We therefore encourage the police service, in developing the workforce strategy, to ensure that its people practices keep pace with wider developments in how workforces are managed, supported and developed, including through more flexible and innovative approaches where these are feasible. Nonetheless, we recognise that policing continues to face certain structural and operational constraints which do not apply to most employers, including the need to provide an immediate emergency response capability, court-driven timetables, and public order responsibilities. These factors create clear limits on the extent to which orthodox models of flexibility can be adopted, particularly for frontline roles.

2.60 We note that the White Paper includes a commitment for the workforce strategy to examine pathways into and out of policing and across law enforcement. We recognise the importance of this in securing, developing and retaining the technical and specialist skills the police service requires. The police service will need to consider carefully the best levers it has available for fostering skill acquisition especially in relation to technical roles. We observe that the wider benefits of a more porous organisational model include supporting capability, strengthening culture, and enhancing the service’s ability to respond to increasingly complex demands where this can be achieved alongside the maintenance of core policing standards. We hope that this work will also consider whether existing entry routes are delivering the skills policing needs. We are concerned that entry standards are being diluted. We note that the PFEW drew attention to a survey of its members in which more than 80% of respondents believed Maths and English GCSEs were needed for police officers. While we accept that not all officers may hold, or aspire to acquire, a degree, we judge that certain basic qualifications (or equivalent attainment) should be required, given the complexity and moral judgement required of officers, and the need for them to provide written accounts of incidents and compile case files. We assume that the workforce strategy will be informed by the lessons learned from the Police Uplift Programme, and the risks of prioritising volume and speed of recruitment over quality, training and skills. This includes the long-term consequences of relaxing vetting and entry standards, some of which may be felt for decades.

2.61 We assume that work on the strategy will also consider what can be done to increase the pace of progress on diversity in the police service. We are very concerned that progress on ethnic diversity, particularly at senior ranks, has been slow or has reversed, despite the Police Uplift Programme, and is misaligned with the importance of representation for trust, legitimacy and public confidence. We note that attrition rates among ethnic minority officers remain higher, with implications for inclusion, progression and wellbeing. We observe that ensuring that progression is linked to capabilities and competency is likely to be a key factor in addressing this issue.

2.62 We are also concerned about the recent issues raised by the Independent Scrutiny and Oversight Board[5] regarding progress on the Race Action Plan. In developing the strategy, we consider that attention should be given to the leadership skills and cultural change that will be needed to ensure the police service has the capabilities required to deliver the transformation.

2.63 We also advise that the implications of the police pension scheme for a long-term workforce strategy should be considered. We point out that pension arrangements play a significant role in shaping career decisions, retention behaviour and overall workforce structure, and can either support or hinder longer-term strategic objectives. We observe that pension incentives may influence how long officers remain in service, with some remaining primarily to secure pension entitlement, which can have implications for motivation and engagement. We also note that officers have told us that reforms to pensions may have reduced the attractiveness of policing as a career, relative to past expectations. In addition, we highlight that pension arrangements may affect workforce flexibility, including the ease of transfers into and out of policing, or across roles within a more multidisciplinary workforce.

2.64 We note that one element of the police reform programme that the strategy will need to consider is the creation of the NPS through the merger of a number of entities, including the NCA. We observe that this will not be straightforward and will need to take into account a number of complex issues. **We urge the police service to work with the NCA and other partners, as appropriate, to undertake a job evaluation exercise to facilitate the merger and convergence process.**

2.65 We also consider that the development of the workforce strategy will require meaningful engagement with officers and with their staff associations, reflecting the important role these bodies play in representing those who will be expected to deliver reform. In our view, early and sustained engagement will help to strengthen the legitimacy and practicality of proposals, identify implementation risks, and

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[5] The Independent Scrutiny and Oversight Board is an independent body established to provide external scrutiny, challenge and oversight of the Police Race Action Plan. It monitors progress against commitments, assesses delivery and impact, and holds policing leaders to account for addressing racial disproportionality and improving outcomes for Black communities.

support workforce confidence during a period of significant change. We note that the Police Consultative Forum (PCF) provides a mechanism for dialogue on pay, conditions and related workforce matters. We also note, however, that later in this report we set out concerns about the operation of the PCF. In that context, we consider it particularly important that the Home Office and NPCC ensure that engagement arrangements for the workforce strategy are effective, transparent and capable of supporting genuine consultation.

2.66 We note that the development of a workforce strategy is a very significant piece of work. However, as we have previously explained, this strategy will provide important context for our future considerations of pay and pay reform. It is therefore vital that work on the workforce strategy proceeds at pace. We note that we have called for a national workforce strategy for a number of years, and that in our last report we asked that the strategy, or at least a draft, be made available to us early in 2026. That expectation has not been met. We were concerned to learn, from oral evidence, that after the initial scoping exercise, work on the strategy appears to have stalled, although we recognise that since then progress has been made on the resourcing of the work. The scale and pace of reform set out in the White Paper make it more important that a clear, properly resourced workforce strategy is developed and published without further delay. We urge the Home Office and NPCC to press ahead with the next phase of work as quickly as possible. We observe that further delays risk postponing action on a range of issues, including pay and allowances, and also risk adding to uncertainty for forces and officers during the reform period. We therefore ask that the strategy, or at least a draft, is made available to us as soon as possible and no later than the end of 2026, in good time to inform the next pay round.

Recommendation 1. We recommend that the national workforce strategy for England and Wales be shared with the PRRB by December 2026.

Proposals for pay related reforms to take effect in 2026/27

2.67 The Police Reform White Paper and plans to develop a workforce strategy provide the strategic context for our consideration of proposals for the 2026/27 pay year. Below, we set out our commentary on the evidence we have received from parties on proposals for more immediate changes to aspects of base pay, the PPS and TVP, in advance of the implementation of the reforms set out in the White Paper.

Review of base pay

2.68 The NPCC told us that the pay structure remained outdated and that it was overly complex and misaligned. It set out its preferred long-term framework, built around three pay points per rank to mark clear stages of competence; purposeful increments linked to retention, skills or experience; and pay bands that reflected training and experience levels, with clearer differentials between ranks to recognise increasing responsibility.

2.69 It said that because of financial constraints, only incremental changes were feasible in the short term. It explained that as a result it was putting forward proposals for changes to the inspecting ranks which aimed to improve the differentials between ranks now without prejudicing broader longer-term reform.

2.70 The NPCC outlined its benchmarking approach and its assessment of each rank from constable to chief superintendent. It reported that average earnings had declined over time for ranks up to the inspecting ranks, and that market comparisons showed, accounting for the P-factor, pay was generally competitive only when officers reached the top of their pay scale.

2.71 The NPCC explained its decision to not put forward proposals at this stage to address pay issues of constables and sergeants and set out the case for reforming the pay of inspectors and chief inspectors.

2.72 The NPCC proposed the removal of pay point 0 from the inspector pay scale so that inspectors would progress through a three-point structure rather than the current four. The NPCC explained that concerns had been raised both by us and by the staff associations about the current positioning of inspectors within the pay ladder, with evidence that pay stagnated for the first two years in rank and that some sergeants could earn more than newly promoted inspectors due to the consolidation of allowances on promotion. The NPCC reported that the existing four-point structure did not provide a clear or competitive progression pathway, and that the limited pay differential with sergeants weakened incentives to progress and undermined the leadership pipeline.

2.73 The NPCC also highlighted external market comparisons for inspector pay. These showed that it was comparable against the median for public and not-for-profit organisations, in terms of both base pay and total cash, for all pay points apart from pay point 0. Pay point 0 was comparable for total cash, but not for base pay when the P-factor was accounted for. The data also indicated that inspector pay did not reach comparable levels against the median for all-organisations at any pay point in terms of either base pay or total cash. The NPCC considered that removing pay point 0 would strengthen pay alignment, re-establish a meaningful differential with sergeants, and respond directly to the concerns we have previously raised. It estimated that implementation costs would be £2.8 million per year based on the number of officers on pay point 0 as of March 2025, with full transition to the new structure by April 2027.

2.74 The NPCC proposed a proportionate uplift to all three chief inspector pay points in order to improve competitiveness and create clearer differentials with both inspectors and superintendents. It explained that the chief inspector rank was currently undervalued, with a narrow pay band that did not reflect the leadership responsibilities carried by officers who frequently led units. The NPCC noted that we had also highlighted this issue, and had raised concerns about the rank's relative positioning within the wider structure. It told us that these changes would not be applied to the MPS which had its own pay scale for inspectors.

2.75 The NPCC reported that chief inspector pay was competitive with not-for-profit organisations on base pay at the top of the scale, but it did not achieve comparable levels against all organisations on either base pay or total cash. It was also not comparable with upper-quartile benchmarks when the P-factor was taken into account. The NPCC assessed that a targeted uplift to each of the three pay points – raising pay point 1 to £71,000, pay point 2 to £73,000 and pay point 3 to £75,000 – would improve competitiveness and provide more appropriate differentiation from adjacent ranks. The NPCC estimated that the full-year cost of these changes would be £4.2 million, with implementation scheduled for April 2027.

2.76 In oral evidence, the NPCC emphasised that it was important to ensure that the inspector and chief inspector ranks were rewarded properly because these were the generation of officers that would guide the service through police reform. It was therefore important to make progression as attractive as possible for officers recruited during the Uplift Programme who were now starting to think about promotion to sergeant and inspector, particularly as the NPCC was increasingly concerned about mid-service attrition.

2.77 Following its oral evidence, session the NPCC provided further evidence in support of its proposals to pay and conditions for inspectors and chief inspectors. The NPCC highlighted that inspecting ranks occupied a structurally vulnerable position within policing, carrying significant operational, supervisory and organisational responsibilities, while reporting the lowest levels of morale, pay satisfaction, organisational confidence and psychological safety among leadership tiers.

2.78 The NPCC argued that the current pay and conditions for inspectors and chief inspectors risked undermining morale, wellbeing and the attractiveness of progression, and that targeted consideration of the inspecting ranks was necessary to maintain effective and resilient leadership pipelines.

2.79 The MPS said that it supported the NPCC's proposals for changes to the pay of inspectors and chief inspectors in principle. However, it explained that the MPS, which had a different pay scale, had not experienced recruitment or retention challenges at this rank. It said this meant that the NPCC's proposals for changes to the pay of inspectors and chief inspectors were not a priority for the MPS. It explained that other issues, such as the London Allowance and starting pay, were more important. The MPS emphasised that the proposals for changes to the inspecting ranks were not affordable without additional funding.

2.80 In oral evidence, the MPS said it was not concerned about the proposal to introduce changes nationally, as London pay scales for inspectors and chief inspectors would remain above national scales even after the reforms were implemented. It said that it might wish to revisit its position, if the changes affected its ability to recruit or retain inspectors in due course. However, at present it did not judge that there was a need to change the pay scales for its own inspectors or chief inspectors.

2.81 The MPS said it was proposing a reprofiling of the constable pay scale to make starting salaries more attractive and in doing so, reduce the time taken to get to the top of the pay scale. It explained that a reprofiling of the constable pay scale would allow MPS to start new officers on pay point 3 and that removing pay point 4 would accelerate progression through the pay scale to mitigate the rising attrition trend among officers with five to nine years' service. The MPS judged that its recruitment and retention would benefit from both reprofiling the constable pay scale and raising London Allowance. However, it told us that it would prioritise higher starting pay if associated funding was provided.

2.82 In oral evidence the MPS set out its case for reform to the constable pay scale. It said that shortening the scale would help officers manage the financial pressures they faced, including debt and housing costs. It argued that the shape of the constable pay scale – and the fact that it was back-loaded, with significant pay increases later – was contributing to attrition in the early years, particularly given the risks involved in policing.

2.83 The MPS told us that it did not accept that shortening the constable pay scale would have significant implications for the career constable. It said that finding ways to reward career constables was part of broader pay reform. The MPS had done a lot of thinking about this, including how it could use the performance development review process to reward experienced officers. It suggested that one option was to encourage and reward lateral progression and the development of specialist career pathways, potentially supported by a bonus system.

Information from the PFEW on the review of base pay

2.84 The PFEW set out its concerns regarding the NPCC's approach to benchmarking police officer pay and the way it used the P-factor. It described the outcome of research it had commissioned on the use of the P-factor and concluded that "if benchmarking is to have any validity, it needs to make comparisons with P-factor sitting separate".

2.85 The PFEW again proposed that the constable pay scale should be shortened so officers reached the higher pay points faster, reflecting the work undertaken and exposure to danger from the beginning of their police service. The PFEW referred us back to the analysis it had commissioned to review constable base pay, the results of which it had set out in its 2025 pay positioning paper.

2.86 The PFEW also set out its concerns regarding the base pay of, and the differentials between, the ranks of inspector and chief inspector. It drew our attention to the results of its Inspecting Ranks Survey and highlighted concerns regarding the excessive hours worked by both inspectors and chief inspectors. It also highlighted an increase in voluntary resignations among inspectors. The PFEW again suggested the existing Recognition of Workload Payments – currently available only to superintending ranks – should be extended to the inspecting ranks. It explained that, under the current arrangements, these provided payments of up to £5,000 where the role of an officer in the superintending ranks met criteria such as unusually frequent antisocial hours, high operational demand of continuing intensity, extensive travel demands, or managing major organisational change. The PFEW said that, if extended, such payments would be more likely to be paid to chief inspectors than inspectors. In addition, to address the excessive working hours of officers in the inspecting ranks more directly, the PFEW proposed a separate payment for any week in which an inspector or chief inspector worked more than 48 hours. The PFEW noted that the NPCC's proposals had asked for a small increase to chief inspector pay but this was not adequate. It said that the NPCC had ignored PFEW's call for a full review of the 1994 agreement because it would be complex and expensive. The PFEW said that the agreement was 32 years old and had not been reviewed which it did not consider to be acceptable as policing had changed.

Our comment on the review of base pay

2.87 In our last report, we noted the work underway by the NPCC to consider the options for the future reform of base pay. We also noted the helpful analysis undertaken by the PFEW. However, we agreed with the Home Office that the development of the workforce strategy should be the foundation on which subsequent reforms are built. On that basis therefore, we reiterate that we are not going to comment on proposals for the reform of base pay until we can consider them in the context of the workforce strategy. We also note that, in oral evidence, the Home Office said that greater clarity was needed on the costs and benefits of the NPCC's proposed changes to inspectors' and chief inspectors' pay scales. It also said that further information was needed on the outcomes those changes were expected to deliver. We agree any future proposals need to set out the intended impact on the effectiveness, retention and development of the inspecting ranks and how they fit with the police service's plans for leadership development.

2.88 We advise that any review of base pay and the inspecting ranks should carefully consider the evidence supporting the continued use of separate London pay scales for inspectors and chief inspectors. These scales have been in place for many years. We understand that, historically, they reflected evidence at the time that the responsibilities of inspectors and chief inspectors in the MPS were greater than those carried by equivalent ranks elsewhere. We judge that the time has come for this assumption to be tested.

2.89 However, as we said in our last report we are concerned that progress on restructuring and rebalancing of the pay and workload of the inspecting ranks is some distance away. We reiterate that it is essential that this is expedited, once a workforce strategy is in place. **In our last report, we invited the NPCC to work with the PFEW and other representative groups to explore the introduction of temporary, time-limited payments for the inspecting ranks to compensate for high workload where this is unavoidable. We again encourage parties to examine this option, possibly by extending the temporary Recognition of Workload Payments to the inspecting ranks, in advance of a more fundamental reform following the completion of the workforce strategy.**

2.90 We also note the MPS' desire for reforms of the constable pay scale to deal with some of the immediate challenges it faces. However, we observe that, when it submitted its proposals in written evidence, the MPS had planned to stabilise its workforce numbers in the financial year ending (FYE) 2027. In oral evidence it said it now planned to shrink in the next financial year as a result of budgetary constraints. We also observe that the MPS proposals would not address its concerns about attrition at the five- to ten-year mark.

Pay Progression Standard

2.91 The NPCC described the background to the PPS, its purpose and use, and the challenges the police service currently faced in using the PPS. The NPCC said it recognised the link between the PPS and wider police reform but it explained that it was looking at measures to increase the effectiveness of the PPS in the short term. It said that it was seeking a view on these proposals from us. The NPCC proposed:

- An extension of the PPS to probationers. The NPCC said it would like to apply the PPS to officers subject to an extension of their probationary period due to performance matters, with exemptions available where appropriate. It explained that at the moment if an officer's probation was extended for performance reasons, they could still move up the pay scale without meeting PPS standards. The NPCC considered this to be unfair.
- A reduction in the notice period for any changes to the local training requirement of the PPS from twelve months to three months. It explained that currently forces rarely used the local training requirement because the existing rules required twelve months' notice. The NPCC said that the twelve-month notice period was deterring forces from responding quickly to emerging priorities.

2.92 In oral evidence, the NPCC explained that the PPS would eventually link to the proposed Licence to Practise. It reported that thinking on this was at an early stage and linked to what happened in the nursing profession. The NPCC explained that it was awaiting for agreement from the Home Office to progress the work.

2.93 The MPS strongly supported the NPCC's ambition to strengthen the PPS and link pay progression to performance and training. It endorsed reducing the training notice period from twelve months to three months to improve agility. The MPS also supported extending the PPS to officers whose probation was extended.

2.94 In response to our comments on the PPS in our 2025 Report, regarding the development of the PPS into a meaningful competency related tool, the PSA said that it looked forward to being consulted and included in discussions about how this would work and be developed.

Information from the PFEW on the Pay Progression Standard

2.95 The PFEW reported that the NPCC had not undertaken significant work on the PPS this year and that only limited amendments were expected – namely, extending the PPS to officers with prolonged probation, reducing notification periods for training requirements, and reviewing exemptions within NPCC guidance. It noted that any wider review of the PPS remained paused pending broader pay reform. The PFEW reiterated its long-standing position that automatic pay progression had not existed in police officer pay for nearly 30 years, and emphasised its support for CPD-focused approaches, provided they did not introduce the possibility of movement down the pay scale or link the PPS to misconduct. It expressed concern that the NPCC's proposals lacked detail and that feedback provided by the PFEW did not appear to have been reflected in subsequent NPCC papers. The PFEW recommended that any review of the PPS must be undertaken alongside a wider review of pay scales.

Our comment on the Pay Progression Standard

2.96 In our last report, we urged the NPCC to seize the opportunity presented by the wider police reform agenda and the plans for a workforce strategy to review the link between progression and performance. We encouraged it to develop the PPS into a meaningful, competency-related tool, clearly linked to CPD, which strengthened the professionalisation of the police service.

2.97 We observe that, looking ahead, the relationship between the PPS and the proposed Licence to Practise announced in the Police Reform White Paper will need to be defined. However, there is currently insufficient detail available on how the Licence to Practise will operate, or how it may ultimately interact with pay progression, for us to comment on its likely relationship to the PPS at this stage.

2.98 Against this background, we have considered the NPCC's proposed short-term measures to strengthen the operation of the PPS. We recognise the NPCC's intention to address operational and administrative issues arising from the current arrangements.

2.99 In relation to training, while we recognise the NPCC's view that the current twelve-month notice period limits the practical use of local training requirements, we are cautious about the extent to which a shorter notice period alone would address the underlying challenges. We judge that the ability of forces to release officers to complete mandatory or required training can be constrained by operational demand and capacity pressures, regardless of the formal notice period.

2.100 We are clear that officers should not be penalised, through impacts on pay progression, where they have not been given a reasonable opportunity to complete required training. Any use of local training requirements within the PPS must therefore be applied in a way that is fair, transparent and supportive of individual officers, and should be underpinned by appropriate local engagement with staff associations.

2.101 We therefore consider that these issues should be considered by the PCF. We will wish to return to the strategic issue of the relationship between the PPS and the future Licence to Practise once plans for the latter have been developed.

<u>Targeted Variable Pay</u>

2.102 The NPCC sought our support for its request that TVP became permanent in legislation before 30 June 2026. The NPCC described forces' use of and expenditure on TVP. It told us that equality analysis indicated that TVP did not present direct discrimination risks. The NPCC, while acknowledging that TVP was only one part of a wider toolkit, told us that TVP was essential for: sustaining specialist capability; supporting workforce planning; and helping manage retention as forces dealt with an inexperienced workforce following the Uplift Programme. It stated that the staff associations, although supportive of TVP being made permanent, sought a more consistent approach for the use, akin to a skills-based payment. The NPCC explained that it did not support this approach. It stated that a skills-based approach to remuneration was linked to wider reform. However, it told us that, in its view, a pay incentivisation mechanism linked to attraction and retention would be a necessary tool regardless of any future operating model. The NPCC told us that permanency would give forces stability and allow consistent forward planning, especially in roles requiring lengthy training, high accreditation cost and CPD. The NPCC informed us that its national guidance provided consistency while preserving local flexibility. It said monitoring would further strengthen the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA), with data collection improvements to support fair, proportionate use of TVP.

2.103 The MPS stated that TVP was a valuable mechanism in the reward framework and that it supported the NPCC's recommendation that TVP be made a permanent provision from July 2026. In oral evidence, the MPS said that, given the challenges it faced, it wanted every possible lever at its disposal to maximise flexibility around pay.

2.104 The PSA told us that its experience of the use and application of TVP was that there was inconsistency across forces nationwide and it was often not applied or used because police budgets were not sufficient to fund it.

2.105 In oral evidence the Home Office said it was minded to retain TVP, but in the long term wanted to replace it with coherent and sustainable pay arrangements. It noted concerns about equality and consistency, but set out the challenges associated with some of the possible levers for improving consistency in the short term.

Information from the PFEW on Targeted Variable Pay

2.106 As already detailed above, the PFEW proposed the extension of Recognition of Workload Payments to inspectors and chief inspectors. However, it set out its concerns about the disproportionate impact of TVP on officers with protected characteristics. It also expressed disquiet about the lack of quality data to enable evidence-based decision making with regards to the future of the scheme. The PFEW said that its position remained that, without suitable evidence that the TVP scheme was effective and consistent, it should not be made permanent.

2.107 The PFEW also said the lack of quality data meant there was no evidence on the effectiveness of TVP. It argued that the discretionary nature of TVP had led to inconsistency across forces and across roles within forces, and explained that some forces were already reducing or discontinuing the payments due to financial pressures. The PFEW suggested that greater emphasis should instead be placed on group-based recognition or on more systematic application of the P-factor to reward frontline risk and responsibility.

Our comment on Targeted Variable Pay

2.108 We note the information provided by the NPCC and others on the use of TVP. We also note that overall service spending on TVP fell from £12.0 million in FYE 2024 to £8.1 million in FYE 2025. We understand from the NPCC that this was largely due to financial constraints and that it reflects local decision-making rather than declining usefulness.

2.109 In our previous reports, we raised concerns about the consistency of the application of TVP. We note the NPCC’s view that its guidance has strengthened consistency, decision-making transparency and value for money across forces without compromising necessary flexibility. However, while we acknowledge these assurances, evidence from staff associations and our own past consideration suggests that TVP continues to be applied inconsistently across forces particularly where local financial pressures constrain its use.

2.110 We welcome the ongoing monitoring of TVP. We note the PFEW’s continuing concerns about diversity, and the NPCC’s equality analysis, which indicates that TVP does not present direct discrimination risks. We reiterate that it is important that the police service can demonstrate that chief officers are completing their own EIAs. We also consider it important that there is clearer assurance on how such monitoring operates in practice, including how concerns about inappropriate or inconsistent use are identified and addressed.

2.111 We reiterate that TVP has an important part to play in the police service's current reward and remuneration framework. However, we remain strongly of the view that decisions about the longer-term future of TVP should be taken in the context of the wider police reform programme, the development of the workforce strategy, and any future changes to the structure of base pay or specialist remuneration. We plan to return to this issue once a clearer future model for police pay and workforce reform has been articulated.

2.112 **It therefore remains our view that TVP should continue on an interim basis for a further fixed period. During this period, we expect the NPCC and forces to demonstrate clearer evidence of improved consistency, stronger monitoring arrangements and the appropriate use of TVP in line with its original purpose, and to set out how they identify and address concerns about inappropriate or inconsistent use.**

Chapter 3 – Analysis of the 2026/27 Evidence

Introduction

3.1 In this chapter, we analyse the key points from the evidence as they relate to our standing terms of reference and matters referred to us by the Policing and Crime Minister. More detailed summaries of each party's evidence are in Appendix C. Our conclusions from the evidence and analysis in this chapter are carried forward to our consideration of pay proposals in Chapter 4 and our Forward Look in Chapter 5.

Police environment

3.2 The Home Office said that the Government valued the vital contribution of police officers across the country. It told us that the Government's White Paper had set out a comprehensive package of reforms to policing that aimed to create a police service that was more rooted in local communities and focused on their needs. It considered that the reforms proposed in the White Paper would remove the barriers that prevented the police from focusing on what mattered and set up the policing system to succeed in the long term by addressing systemic issues so that policing could better deliver for the public.

3.3 The Home Office explained that the Government's Safer Streets Mission was taking a whole-system approach to reduce serious harm and restore public confidence in policing and the criminal justice system. The Home Office informed us its ambitious programme of reform included:

- The Police Reform White Paper, published on 26 January, to tackle structural inefficiencies and ensure national policing supported local neighbourhood policing.
- The Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee to ensure there were named, contactable officers for every community, guaranteed patrols at peak times, and 13,000 extra neighbourhood officers.
- Safer town centres where neighbourhood policing teams would crack down on crime.

3.4 The joint statement from the NPCC, CPOSA and PSA said that demand on the police service continued to rise in volume and complexity, particularly in high-harm areas such as safeguarding, online crime, and mental health. These parties considered that such demands required experienced, skilled officers, staff and leaders who felt valued and supported. They also highlighted that unlike most other public services, police officers were required to move towards danger, not away from it.

3.5 The joint statement also reflected that the Government was embarking on significant police reform and structural change, having set out proposals for a new national policing body, a refocus on local policing and enhanced leadership and standards, including the development of Licence to Practise.

3.6 The NPCC reported that overall crime against individuals and households had declined over the past decade, but that sexual assault offences were an exception. However, it explained that the experimental Crime Severity Score developed by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) had generally risen over the same period, reflecting an increasing share of more serious and complex crimes recorded by the police. The NPCC also said policing faced increasing complexity across all functions, driven by technology, societal changes, and workforce challenges.

3.7 The MPS said that population growth, a rapidly changing crime landscape, and intensifying public expectations continued to drive sustained increases in demand. It explained that crime was becoming more complex and more expensive to investigate, public protection demand had grown by over 8% this year, online harm continued to rise, and serious and organised crime posed increasing risk. The MPS also highlighted that London had faced unprecedented public order pressures driven by global tensions, with sustained demonstrations requiring large-scale deployments and exposing officers to heightened physical and psychological risk.

Information from the PFEW on the police environment

3.8 The PFEW said that policing in England and Wales was operating under sustained operational demand and increasing complexity. It added that officers in the federated ranks were managing higher investigative burden, greater safeguarding responsibilities, expanding digital crime and continued public order requirements.

3.9 The PFEW highlighted that recent legislation and policy direction demonstrated that the police role had expanded well beyond traditional crime response to encompass digital investigation, safeguarding, public protection, and mental health crisis intervention – functions historically associated with other public services. The PFEW also observed that the expanded scope and complexity of policing over time had increased the cognitive, technical and emotional demands placed on officers.

3.10 The PFEW reported that officers were enduring a much harsher lens of scrutiny than previously. The PFEW explained that lengthy and intrusive investigations could affect officers’ right to privacy. It told us that there had been a marked increase in complaints and misconduct proceedings, which demonstrated that officers were always under the spotlight from the public and internally. However, the PFEW argued that available evidence did not suggest that this heightened scrutiny was driven by a rise in serious or substantiated wrongdoing by officers.

HMICFRS State of Policing Report 2024–25[6]

3.11 The annual report on the State of Policing in 2024–25 by HMICFRS noted that the Home Office planned to take a more active leadership role in policing, including setting national priorities and introducing a new national performance framework and that it had committed to working collaboratively with the policing sector on this. The report stressed that the police service had not kept pace with advances in science and technology even though modern policing depended on the effective use of such developments, such as AI and facial recognition.

Our comment on the police environment

3.12 As discussed in the previous chapter, the Government's Police Reform White Paper has set out a comprehensive package of reforms to policing that will fundamentally change the police environment. However, it will take some time for these reforms to take effect, and longer to determine whether they contribute to an improvement in public trust and confidence in the police. In the meantime, it could lead to increased uncertainty for officers which may have negative impacts on their motivation and morale.

3.13 Demand on the police continues to evolve, and policing needs to be able to react to that changing demand. We note that geopolitical events, such as the conflict in the Middle East, contribute to changes in demand, particularly in London, as the police service has to deal with increased security threats and numbers of protests. During our visits programme this year we also heard from officers about the level of risk and accountability that they carried, and the perception of this seemed to be increasing.

Government pay policy and affordability

3.14 HM Treasury said that the 2025 Spending Review had set departmental budgets up to FYE 2029, but that the Government had since announced in the 2025 Budget that it would seek to make further savings and efficiencies of £2.8 billion in FYE 2029, rising to £4.9 billion in FYE 2031. These additional savings and efficiencies were equivalent to 0.5% of Resource Departmental Expenditure Limit budgets.

3.15 HM Treasury highlighted that if recommended pay awards exceeded what departments could afford there would be no additional funding, including from the Reserve or by switching funding from capital budgets into resource budgets. It explained that if Pay Review Bodies recommended awards above the levels budgeted for, then departments would have to consider whether further efficiencies or cuts were possible, and recommendations would have to be rejected if they proved unaffordable.

[6] HMICFRS (September 2025), *State of Policing: The Annual Assessment of Policing in England and Wales 2024–25*. Available at: https://hmicfrs.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/publications/state-of-policing-the-annual-assessment-of-policing-in-england-and-wales-2024-25/ [Accessed on 22 May 2026]

3.16 The Home Office reported that total funding for territorial police forces and counter-terrorism policing would be up to £19.6 billion in FYE 2027. It said that this was £848 million higher than in FYE 2026 and represented an increase of 4.5% in cash terms and 2.2% in real terms. The Home Office advised that within this settlement, the total funding to the territorial forces would be up to £18.4 billion, an increase of £796 million (4.5% in cash terms and 2.3% in real terms) from FYE 2026. The Home Office explained that these figures assumed that PCCs made full use of the flexibility for English forces to increase the council tax precept by £15 for a Band D property.

3.17 The Home Office assessed that a pay award of up to 2.5% was affordable for 2026/27 for most police forces. However, it warned that affordability was not uniform and some forces were likely to face pressures from a 2.5% award as there were some forces already facing difficult choices to balance their budgets in FYE 2027 and in the medium term. The Home Office explained that any award above 2.5% would likely require difficult choices and financial reprioritisation to be made by policing.

3.18 The Home Office explained that difficult decisions had needed to be taken and savings found from its budgets to provide additional funding for recent pay awards that had been above affordability levels. It stated that it was not sustainable for the Home Office or policing to repeatedly reprioritise budgets and make savings to fund pay awards, as this came at the expense of other investment. In oral evidence, the Minister for Policing and Crime told us that extra funding from the Home Office would require trade-offs with other Home Office priorities (such as the programmes to reduce knife crime and violence against women and girls or the funding to address illegal migration and reduce the asylum backlog), while financial reprioritisation within policing could have an impact on service delivery.

3.19 The Home Office reported that the Government was taking steps to improve police productivity and efficiency to ease financial pressures, but that it would take time for these benefits to be fully realised. In oral evidence, the Minister for Policing and Crime explained that the National AI Centre for Policing was due to launch in June 2026, and was expected to automate 6 million hours of work annually, equivalent to freeing up 3,000 officers for the frontline. The Minister also told us that the Home Office was targeting £350 million of savings in policing during this Parliament, and that while police reform would require investment, it had the potential to realise efficiencies in the long term.

3.20 The joint statement by the NPCC, CPOSA and PSA said that structural deficits, rising inflation, and limited room for investment were common across forces. It highlighted that reserves were low, borrowing was often at prudent limits, and essential modernisation, particularly in digital infrastructure, was being delayed.

3.21 The NPCC explained that forces were at different points in terms of their relative funding, debt and reserves, as influenced by decisions taken locally. However, the general trend and future planning indicated an increase in long-term borrowing and reserves being maintained at a minimum for financial prudence. The NPCC also informed us that nine forces were in receipt of emergency funding, and it considered that this underlined how challenging police finances were.

3.22 The NPCC reported that total police funding for FYE 2026 had been £17.5 billion, and that an additional £0.9 billion would be available to forces in FYE 2027 assuming every force took the full precept flexibility that had been made available. The NPCC said that the latest finance survey across the service had indicated an unfunded shortfall of around £0.4 billion in FYE 2027 and that this would rise to £0.6 billion in future years. It explained that this fell differently across forces and was made up of unfunded inflation, rising debt repayments and interest charges, employers' National Insurance shortfall, increased national information and communications technology systems, new legislation and major enquiries.

3.23 The NPCC informed us that around 58% of force budgets were accounted for by police officer pay, with police staff pay accounting for a further 25%. It advised that it would take time for forces to workforce plan to their required levels and mix following the removal of requirements to maintain officer numbers from April 2026.

3.24 The NPCC highlighted that forces had been advised to build in pay assumptions over the Comprehensive Spending Review period of 3% in FYE 2027, and 2.5% in FYEs 2028 and 2029. However, it emphasised that these assumptions were not assessments of affordability but rather reflections of the requirement for forces to make realistic assumptions. It explained that in some forces no pay increase could be achieved without requiring efficiency savings, but its overall assessment was that 2.5% was the absolute limit of affordability beyond which critical service cuts would be required.

3.25 Following oral evidence, the NPCC provided information on three broad events that had occurred subsequently and were likely to affect force finances in FYE 2027 and beyond. It said that the level of impact and ability to manage the effect would vary by force, but that collectively across the service they would place further strain on finances. The events were:

- The conflict in the Middle East – the NPCC highlighted that this had led to higher oil prices and consequently increasing inflation across the whole economy. This would lead to increased costs for forces. The NPCC estimated that the increase in cost pressure from a 1% increase in inflation compared with budget was the equivalent of a 0.2% pay award increase in a full-year.
- Increased service demands – the NPCC reported on initiatives that had not been met with any additional resources, and political expectations to respond to certain types of demand. It said that, coupled with the need to increase

Neighbourhood Police teams, these would result in further rigidities in force budgets which would make affordability a more finely balanced issue.

- The removal of ROCU grants from grant allocations to forces in FYE 2027 and beyond – the NPCC explained that this had been replaced by a one-off grant in FYE 2027 but it was assumed that PCCs and forces would need to use existing precept and grant to fund ROCUs in future years. The NPCC estimated that the value of the grant was the equivalent of a 0.15% pay award increase in a full-year.

3.26 The APCC said that policing in England and Wales continued to operate in a challenging financial context, and that each of the 43 forces was in a different financial position. It explained that around 83% of force budgets was spent on the workforce, and that this left little scope to make savings from non-staff budgets, where pay costs were higher than expected. The APCC agreed with the NPCC's assessment that 2.5% represented the level of true affordability for the 2026/27 police officer pay award, and stated that any unfunded award above that level would carry severe operational implications.

3.27 The MPS told us that its draft budget for FYE 2027 assumed a pay award of 3%. However, it said that the funding settlement had been lower than the assumptions at the time of the Spending Review, and so there was a gap of around £30 million against its November draft budget after stretching efficiencies. It explained that its medium-term financial plan gap grew to around £125 million in FYE 2028, which would require a workforce reduction of 1,000 full-time equivalents (FTE). The MPS concluded that the impact of other pay proposals meant that it agreed with the NPCC's national assessment that 2.5% was the limit of affordability. Following oral evidence, the MPS informed us that every additional 0.5% added to the pay award would increase the unfunded pressure by the equivalent of 127 FTE.

3.28 The PSA considered that the understanding of productivity and impact on policing had proven to be complex and often misunderstood. It cited a National Audit Office report that had said:

- pressures facing policing were growing and current approaches to managing these pressures risked damaging the services that police forces provide;
- improving the productivity of the police service was crucial to helping it manage financial pressures while supporting its ability to respond to changing demands;
- the Home Office's previous attempts to improve efficiency and productivity had not led to sustainable long-term change across the 43 police forces; and
- structural changes may take time, but there were steps the Home Office could take to lead the policing system to address the barriers to productivity and support better value for money from police funding.

Information from the PFEW on Government pay policy and affordability

3.29 The PFEW suggested that a multi-year pay award would give forces the opportunity to plan their budgets more confidently. It considered that this would be useful in times of reform and change.

HMICFRS State of Policing Report 2024–25

3.30 The HMICFRS report said that the 2025 Spending Review had given a degree of medium-term financial certainty to forces, even if the amount was not as high as had been hoped. However, HMICFRS reported that the way police funding was raised and distributed needed to change because it was outdated and unfair. It set out three main problems that needed to be addressed:

- The police allocation formula had been unchanged since 2013 and was no longer fit for purpose.
- Police forces were becoming more reliant on raising money through the council tax precept, which disadvantaged some forces, particularly in the absence of an amended police allocation formula – this risked undermining consistency and fairness in police funding.
- There was a lack of funding for long-life assets to help forces make long-term investments (with no direct capital funding since FYE 2023). HMICFRS said that the Government should substantially increase the amount of capital funding that it provided to forces (e.g. in buildings, equipment and technology), as the police estate, technology and vehicles were generally outdated, so forcing some forces into borrowing more.

Our comment on Government pay policy and affordability

3.31 There appears to be consistency between parties this year that 2.5% represents the limit of affordability beyond which critical service cuts would be required, even where forces have planned for higher.

3.32 In previous years, extra funding has been provided by the Home Office when our recommendations have exceeded affordability. We have heard the evidence of challenging budgetary restraints faced by the Home Office and across Government more widely that mean extra funding may not be forthcoming this year.

3.33 We note that forces are hampered in their ability to drive efficiency savings or make productivity gains by the proportion of their budgets that is spent on workforce, and by targets on officer numbers. Furthermore, the measurement of productivity in policing is complex and there is no agreed method for doing so. We note that the measures outlined in the Police Reform White Paper may lead to streamlined costs, but these will not be realised for some time. We ask that parties provide evidence on work to drive efficiency savings and improve productivity in future submissions.

3.34 As in previous years, we highlight that affordability assessments stem from choices and prioritisation made at multiple levels, from central government down to individual forces. We have also pointed out in the past that the effect of any pay award will be different for each force depending on their financial circumstances. We are particularly mindful that nine forces are currently in receipt of emergency funding and we are conscious that a pay award above budgeted levels for these and many other forces may have potentially serious consequences for them and the outcomes delivered to the public. However, we reiterate again this year that we do not make overall recommendations based upon separate assessments of affordability in each of the 43 forces. We have concluded in previous years, and the same applies this year, that it is neither feasible nor realistic for us to take account of the possible range of priorities and flexibilities which each force will assign to police pay, nor to take account of the potential trade-offs that might exist between pay and other possible expenditure.

3.35 We observe that affordability is about choice. In that context, we highlight the fact that the public sector pay rises announced by the Government for 2026/27 so far (3.3% for NHS Agenda for Change staff, 3.5% for prison officers and doctors, and 3.75% for dentists in primary care) have been above levels previously articulated within its affordability evidence for these groups. In practice, there are degrees of flexibility at each of these levels in how budgets can be constructed or how money is spent. We would not properly discharge our remit if we were to base our recommendations on pre-determined budgetary considerations alone. We also have to consider the needs of the police service and its ability to deliver the best outcomes in terms of public safety, alongside the other, sometimes competing, factors set out in our terms of reference.

3.36 In previous years we have expressed our concerns about the outdatedness of the police funding formula and the inequity it causes, which also adds to our challenge when considering the affordability of pay awards. These concerns remain and have been amplified this year by evidence that nine forces have required emergency funding. We welcome, therefore, the announcement in the Police Reform White Paper to review the formula following the implementation of reforms, and for the Government to work in partnership with policing in the meantime to consider short-term steps to better align funding allocations with policing priorities.

The economy and labour market

3.37 HM Treasury highlighted that inflation had come down from the peak seen in 2022. It explained that the Government was targeting inflation at its source, and that the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) expected the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) measure of inflation to have peaked at 3.9% in the third quarter of 2025 and had forecast that it would fall to 2.2% in FYE 2027.

3.38 HM Treasury said that demand for labour had softened, reflected in falling vacancies and a slowing in private sector pay growth. It pointed out that wage growth was expected to continue to decline over the next year – the OBR was forecasting average weekly earnings growth of 3.2% and hourly earnings growth of 2.6% in FYE 2027.

3.39 The NPCC told us that there was an assumption that the economy would remain under pressure, with only moderate growth projected, and that borrowing costs, cautious consumer confidence, fiscal constraints and debt servicing were all expected to affect the level of public sector investment.

3.40 The NPCC noted that workers and specifically homeowners remained under financial pressure as a result of inflation. It added that persistent inflation was giving rise to 'secondary round effect' inflation with elevated wage growth above inflationary levels, which could also affect the level of pay settlements in 2026.

3.41 The NPCC highlighted that, at the time it produced its evidence, nominal pay settlements suggested for 2026 were between 3% and 4%, with early indications suggesting a median pay award of between 3.1% and 3.5%.

3.42 The MPS considered that the UK economy remained in a challenging position. It highlighted that growth was lower than a year earlier, inflation had remained elevated over 2025, and unemployment had risen. It also highlighted that there was a general downward trend from the previous year in pay settlements across most sectors.

Information from the PFEW on the economy and labour market

3.43 The PFEW reported that, at the time it provided its information, the most recent CPI including owner occupiers' housing costs (CPIH) inflation figure was 3.6% for December 2025. However, it highlighted that inflation would fluctuate throughout the year and that there was significant global uncertainty.

Our comment on the economy and labour market

3.44 As with many of our recent reports, this report has been produced in a period of heightened economic uncertainty. This year, the conflict in the Middle East has changed the economic outlook since the parties submitted evidence and the latest OBR forecasts were made.

3.45 We set out below the latest economic and labour market indicators (summarised in Table 3.1) as at 20 May 2026, available to us when finalising our recommendations.

- *Inflation*. Inflation was rising as we wrote our last report and continued to do so until September 2025, before starting to fall. The CPI increased by 3.8% in the year to September 2025 (when the 2025/26 police pay award took effect), and the CPIH increased by 4.1% over the same period. In the year to April 2026, the CPI increased by 2.8% and the CPIH increased by 3.0%.

- Core CPI inflation (which excludes the effects of price changes in energy, food and alcohol) was slightly lower at 2.5% in the year to April 2026, while core CPIH inflation was 2.8%.
- The Bank of England base interest rate decreased from 4.25% in May 2025 to 3.75% from January 2026 as inflationary pressures were easing. However, it will take time for the full effect of falling interest rates to affect mortgage payments due to the high proportion of fixed-rate mortgages.
- In its March Economic and Fiscal Outlook[7], the OBR expected CPI inflation to average 2.3% in 2026, falling from 3.1% in the first quarter, to 2.1% in the second and third quarters, and 1.9% in the fourth quarter of the year.
- In its April 2026 Monetary Policy Report[8], the Bank of England reported that the conflict in the Middle East had led to a sharp rise in oil and gas prices, reflecting disruption to current and expected future energy supply. It presented three scenarios to illustrate a range of possible outcomes for the UK economy. These scenarios differed in their assumptions about the paths of global energy prices and the extent of any second-round effects on domestic price and wage-setting. Across all three scenarios, CPI inflation was projected to be significantly higher in the near term than in the Bank's February forecasts, driven by the direct and indirect effects of higher energy prices. Under two of these scenarios, the Bank expected inflation to peak at 3.6% to 3.7% in the fourth quarter of 2026, while under the third scenario it would peak at 6.2% in the first quarter of 2027. This contrasted with the Bank's expectation in February that inflation would be 2% in the fourth quarter of 2026.
- *Economic growth*. UK real gross domestic product (GDP) figures showed that the UK economy grew by 1.4% over 2025 as a whole, but growth was weak over the second half of the year. The first estimate of GDP for the first quarter of 2026 showed growth of 0.6% on the previous quarter and 1.1% on a year earlier. Real GDP per head of population grew by 1.1% over 2025 as a whole, and the first estimate for the first quarter of 2026 showed increases of 0.6% on the previous quarter and 0.9% on a year earlier.
- In March 2026, the OBR estimated that annual real GDP growth would be 1.1% in 2026 and 1.6% in 2027. It estimated that real GDP per head would increase by 0.8% in 2026 and 1.3% in 2027.

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[7] OBR (March 2026), *Economic and Fiscal Outlook*. Available at: https://obr.uk/efo/economic-and-fiscal-outlook-march-2026/ [Accessed on 22 May 2026]
[8] Bank of England (April 2026), *Monetary Policy Report*. Available at: https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy-report/2026/april-2026 [Accessed on 22 May 2026]

- In April 2026, the Bank of England expected real GDP growth to slow to between 0.7% and 0.8% in 2026 but to then increase to between 0.8% and 1.0% in 2027.
- *Labour market*. Pay As You Earn (PAYE) Real Time Information (RTI) indicated that the number of employees on payrolls in April 2026 was 30.2 million, 0.7% lower than a year earlier. Estimates from the Labour Force Survey[9] (LFS) put total employment at 34.4 million in the three months to March 2026, 1.2% higher than a year earlier, with annual increases in both the number of employees (up 0.8%) and self-employment (up 3.9%). The LFS unemployment rate (for those aged 16 and over) was 5.0% in the three months to March 2026, 0.5 percentage points higher than a year earlier. The Claimant Count rate in April 2026 was 4.4%, the same as a year earlier. The ONS recorded 705,000 job vacancies in the three months to April 2026, 7.1% lower than a year earlier.
- *Average earnings*. In the three months to March 2026, Average Weekly Earnings (AWE) annual growth for the whole economy was 4.1% for total pay (including bonuses) and 3.4% for regular pay (excluding bonuses).
- Including bonuses, AWE annual growth in the three months to March 2026 was 4.9% in the public sector and 3.9% in the private sector. Excluding bonuses, the figures were 4.8% in the public sector and 3.0% in the private sector.
- In March 2026, the OBR estimated that average earnings growth would fall from 5.3% in 2025 to 3.4% in 2026 and 2.4% in 2027.
- In April 2026, the Bank of England expected growth in private sector AWE excluding bonuses of 3.2% to 3.5% in 2026.
- *Pay settlements*. The latest estimates for median pay settlements in the three months to April 2026 ranged from 3.0% to 3.3%, while the latest Labour Research Department (LRD) median pay settlements were at 3.8% in the three months to March. Our analysis of Brightmine data indicated that just over one-quarter (28%) of the pay awards recorded so far in 2026 were worth 4% or more. The National Living Wage increased by 4.1% from 1 April 2026.
- In March 2026, the Government announced 2026/27 pay awards for some parts of the public sector. These included: 3.3% for NHS Agenda for Change staff; 3.5% for prison officers and doctors; and 3.75% for dentists in primary care.

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[9] The ONS advises that increased volatility of LFS estimates, resulting from smaller achieved sample sizes, means they should be treated with additional caution, and it recommends using them as part of a suite of labour market indicators.

Table 3.1: Latest economic and labour market indicators, as at 20 May 2026

	Figure
Inflation indicators	
Annual CPI inflation	2.8%
Annual CPIH inflation	3.0%
Pay settlement indicators	
Brightmine median pay settlement	3.0%
Incomes Data Research (IDR) median pay settlement	3.3%
LRD median pay settlement	3.8%
LRD lowest basic rates median pay settlement	3.8%
Average earnings indicators	
Annual growth in AWE – private sector excluding bonuses	3.0%
Annual growth in AWE – whole economy excluding bonuses	3.4%
Annual growth in AWE – private sector	3.9%
PAYE median annual change in pay	3.9%
Annual growth in AWE – whole economy	4.1%
Annual growth in AWE – public sector excluding bonuses	4.8%
Annual growth in AWE – public sector	4.9%
PAYE annual change in median pay	4.9%
Labour market indicators	
PAYE employees on payroll annual growth	−0.7%
LFS annual employment growth	1.2%
Claimant Count rate	4.4%
LFS unemployment rate (aged 16 and over)	5.0%
LFS employment rate (aged 16 to 64)	75.0%

Source: ONS – Labour Market Overview[10], Consumer Price Inflation[11], Claimant Count[12], and Earnings and Employment from PAYE RTI[13]; Brightmine[14]; IDR[15]; and LRD[16].

Notes: The employment rate measures the proportion of the population (aged 16 to 64) in employment; the unemployment rate gives the number of unemployed people as a proportion of the total number of people (aged 16 and over) either in work or unemployed; and the Claimant Count rate is the number of people claiming unemployment benefits as a proportion of the total number of workforce jobs and claimants of unemployment benefits.

3.46 We note that inflation fell between September 2025 and February 2026, but it has started increasing as a result of rising fuel prices. However, we continue to emphasise that falling inflation only represents a slowing in the rate of overall price increases and not a fall in prices, and that officers continue to experience the effect of past high inflation in their cost of living. We observe that transport price inflation figures are higher than the overall rate.

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[10] https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/uklabourmarket/may2026 [Accessed on 22 May 2026]

[11] https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/bulletins/consumerpriceinflation/april2026 [Accessed on 22 May 2026]

[12] https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peoplenotinwork/outofworkbenefits/datasets/claimantcountcla01/current [Accessed on 22 May 2026]

[13] https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/datasets/realtimeinformationstatisticsreferencetableseasonallyadjusted/current [Accessed on 22 May 2026]

[14] https://www.brightmine.com/uk/products/hr-compliance-centre/ [Accessed on 22 May 2026]

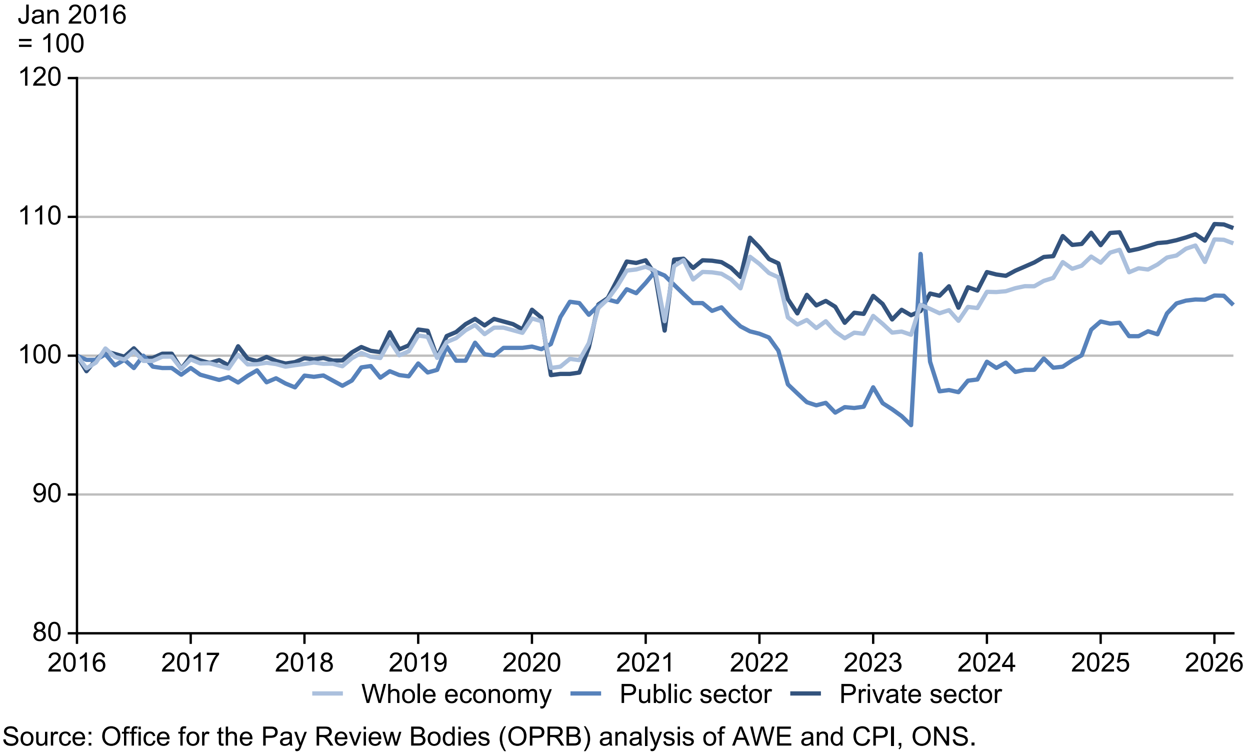
[15] https://www.incomesdataresearch.co.uk [Accessed on 22 May 2026]

[16] http://www.lrd.org.uk/index.php?pagid=29 [Accessed on 22 May 2026]

3.47 We are conscious that HM Treasury's evidence placed more emphasis on the use of forecast data this year. However, we observe that the conflict in the Middle East has changed the economic outlook since the latest OBR forecasts in March, and increased the uncertainty around other forecasts. The Bank of England's latest Monetary Policy Report presented three potential scenarios, all of which pointed to higher inflation than had previously been expected. We have focussed on the general trend of these forecasts rather than any specific values.

3.48 We also observe that measures of average earnings growth and median pay settlements have been more stable than inflation. Furthermore, there has been a significant increase in the gap between private and public sector pay over the last decade, with Average Weekly Earnings in the private sector having grown by 9.2% in real terms since 2016, compared with an increase of 3.7% in the public sector (Chart 3.1). We note that these comparisons can be sensitive to starting year, and that over the last three years real AWE have generally been growing slightly faster in the public sector than the private sector.

Chart 3.1: Real Average Weekly Earnings (January 2016 = 100), by sector, 2016–2026



Source: Office for the Pay Review Bodies (OPRB) analysis of AWE and CPI, ONS.

3.49 Developments in private sector pay continue to play a role in our considerations. However, AWE figures are only a part of these developments and we are mindful that pay settlements are more akin to the pay award recommendations we make each year, as pay settlements look at recent pay awards whereas average earnings figures reflect historic pay growth. Furthermore, average earnings figures are affected by structural changes in the workforce and hours worked in addition to changes in underlying rates of pay. The latest median settlements available to us as we finalised our recommendations ranged from 3.0% to 3.8%.

Police earnings

Our analysis of police earnings

3.50 We have set out our full analysis of police earnings data in Appendix E. We highlight some of the key points below.

3.51 The distribution of officers on the pay scales highlights that only the superintending ranks to had fewer than half of officers at the pay scale maxima in March 2025 (Table 3.2). Overall, nearly 80,000 officers (around 55%) in the federated and superintending ranks were at the top of their pay scale in March 2025, of which over 57,000 were constables.

Table 3.2: Distribution of officers on pay scales, England and Wales, March 2025

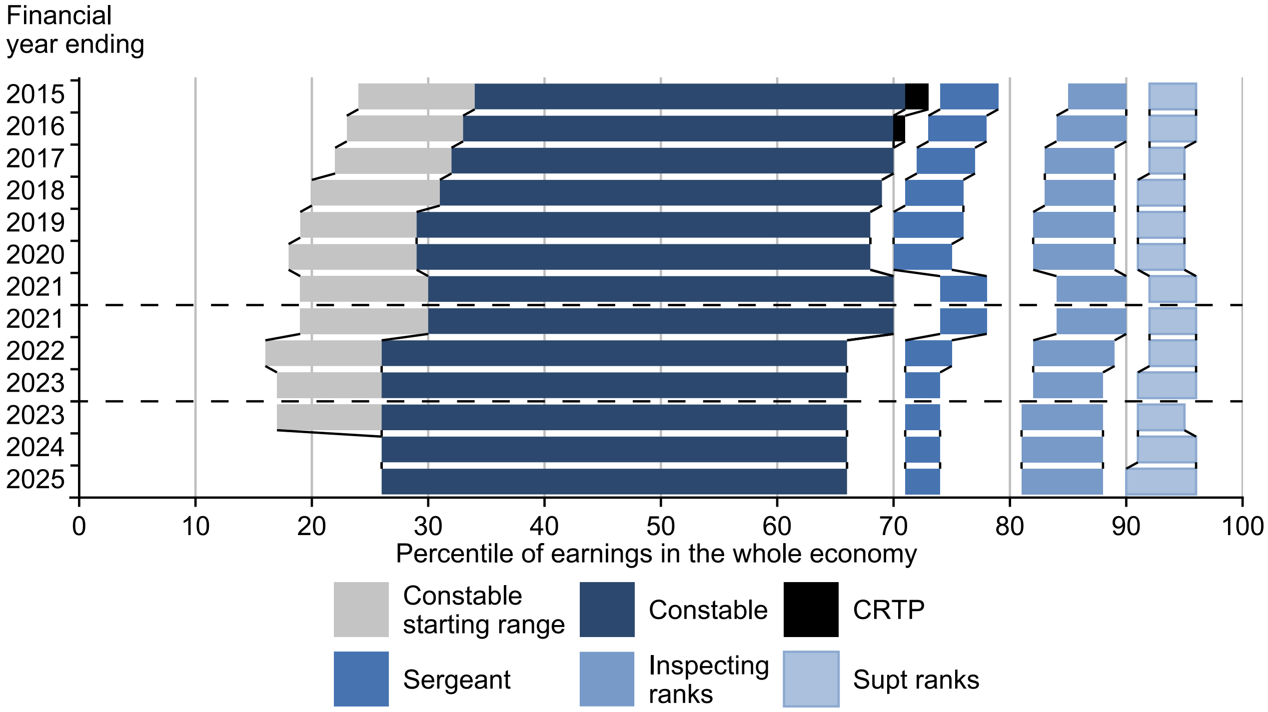
	Constable	Sergeant	Inspector	Chief Inspector	Supt.	Chief Supt.
0	..	–	13%	–	–	–
1	6%	–	17%	18%	17%	29%
2	10%	12%	16%	24%	22%	23%
3	11%	13%	53%	57%	21%	48%
4	8%	75%	–	–	40%	–
5	7%	–	–	–	–	–
6	7%	–	–	–	–	–
7	51%	–	–	–	–	–
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: OPRB analysis of Police Earnings Census data, Home Office.
Notes:
– Percentages represent proportions of all officers in each rank.
– '..' represents a non-zero percentage less than 0.5%.
– '–' represents non-applicable pay points.
– Pay point 0 of the constable scale was removed on 1 September 2023. Pay points 0 and 1 were removed from the sergeant pay scale on 1 April 2014 and 1 September 2020 respectively.

3.52 Our analysis of how the police officer pay scales compare with the distribution of earnings in the whole economy (Chart 3.2) has shown there was a gradual decline between FYEs 2015 and 2022 for the ranks of constable and sergeant, but that they have been relatively stable since FYE 2022.

3.53 These comparisons have been based on using pay scales for police officers, but earnings for the whole economy. In practice, many individual officers will be positioned higher up the earnings distribution than this analysis suggests, as a result of additional earnings from overtime and allowances. Therefore, this chart is more helpful in considering changes over time as opposed to the absolute position of officers in the earnings distribution compared with other employees.

Chart 3.2: Police pay scales position in the percentile distribution of earnings in the whole economy, England and Wales, FYE 2015–2025



Source: OPRB analysis of police pay scales and Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings data, ONS.

Notes:

– Pay scales are as from 1 September in each financial year.

– Competence Related Threshold Payments (CRTP) [17] have been included in the scales for constables, sergeants and the inspecting ranks for FYEs 2015 and 2016.

– The ranges shown for the inspecting ranks cover both the national and London pay scales.

– There are discontinuities in the series due to changes to the Standard Occupational Classification in FYE 2021, and methodological changes in FYE 2023.

– Data for the latest year are provisional.

Evidence from the parties on police earnings

3.54 The joint statement by the NPCC, CPOSA and PSA said that officers continued to report financial pressure and reduced disposable income despite recent pay awards.

3.55 The NPCC provided the results of benchmarking it had commissioned from Korn Ferry; this had compared base pay, total cash and total remuneration for each pay point at each rank with the median of the comparator groups. The NPCC reported that comparative data across all organisations and within the public and not-for-profit sectors showed a year-on-year improvement in how police ranks were positioned against market benchmarks.

[17] CRTP acted, in effect, as an additional point on the pay scales for the federated ranks before being removed in April 2016.

3.56 The MPS said the median salary for full-time workers was £39,039 across the UK and £49,692 in London. It highlighted that constables would need around five years' service to reach the London average.

3.57 The PSA cited AWE growth of 4.7% as published by the ONS in December 2025. It said that this showed the average uplift in pay for 2025 was higher than the 2025/26 pay award of 4.2% received by police officers.

Information from the PFEW on police earnings

3.58 The PFEW highlighted that police pay had not kept pace with inflation since 2010, which had led to a sustained reduction in real earnings. It calculated that the federated ranks were 21.7% worse off compared with 2010 overall, and that pay for constables was 23.5% lower in real terms than in 2010.

3.59 The PFEW reported that public sector pay had not kept pace with private sector earnings in general, and that police officers had fared worse than their public sector colleagues as a result of not having the ability to strike. It said that sectors that attracted the skills of police officers in the private sector had seen significant pay increases since 2010, and that headline private-sector industry pay had increased by 67% in real terms.

Our comment on police earnings

3.60 The evidence we have received on police earnings this year has been focussed more on comparisons with other sectors and less on historic comparisons with inflation than in previous years. We welcome this shift as we set out our view on historic comparisons with inflation last year.

3.61 As we said last year, in making our pay recommendation each year we consider what the appropriate annual award should be, based on the factors in our terms of reference, as informed by the evidence provided to us and our own analysis. Our recommendations are driven by this evidence at the point of our consideration, rather than designed to meet any particular position relative to changes over time against inflation or comparator organisations, or to set a long-term pay strategy. However, we observe that long-term decreases in real terms, or in comparison with other sectors, have potentially negative implications for the morale and motivation of officers and for recruitment and retention, especially given the prohibition on officers withdrawing their labour. This has been highlighted to us by the results of staff association surveys.

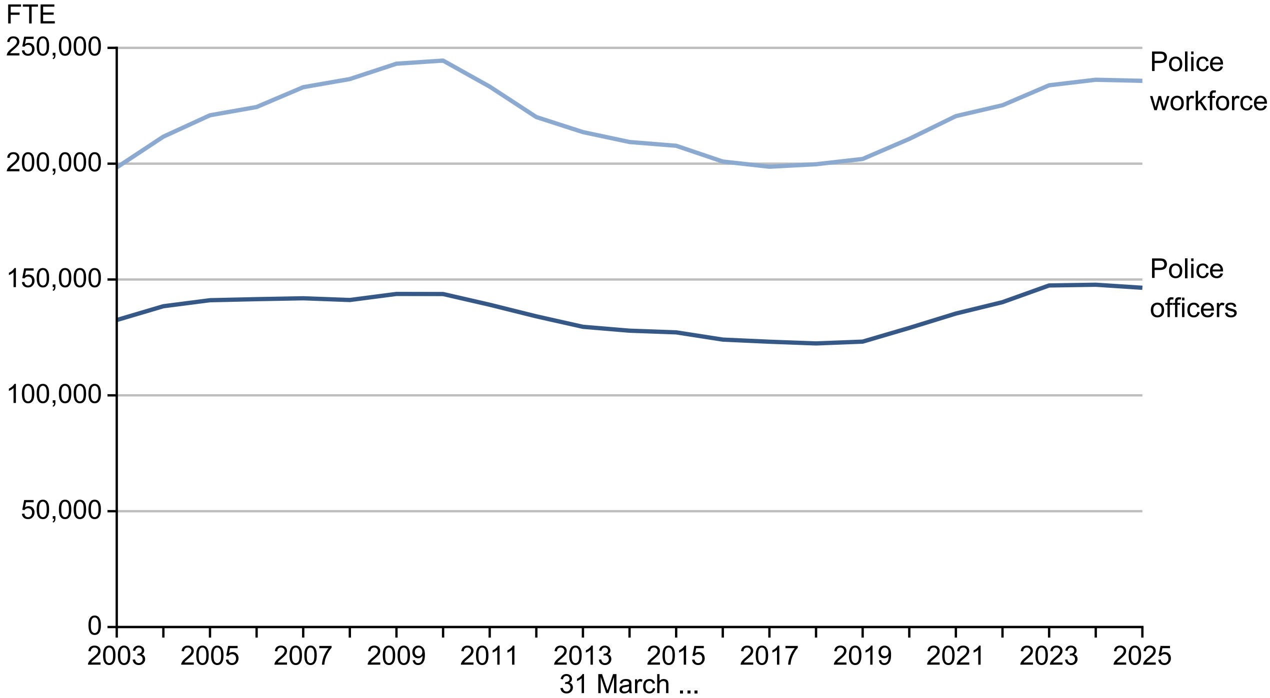
Police workforce, recruitment and retention

Our analysis of the police workforce, recruitment and retention

3.62 We have set out our full analysis of police workforce data in Appendix E. We highlight some of the key points below.

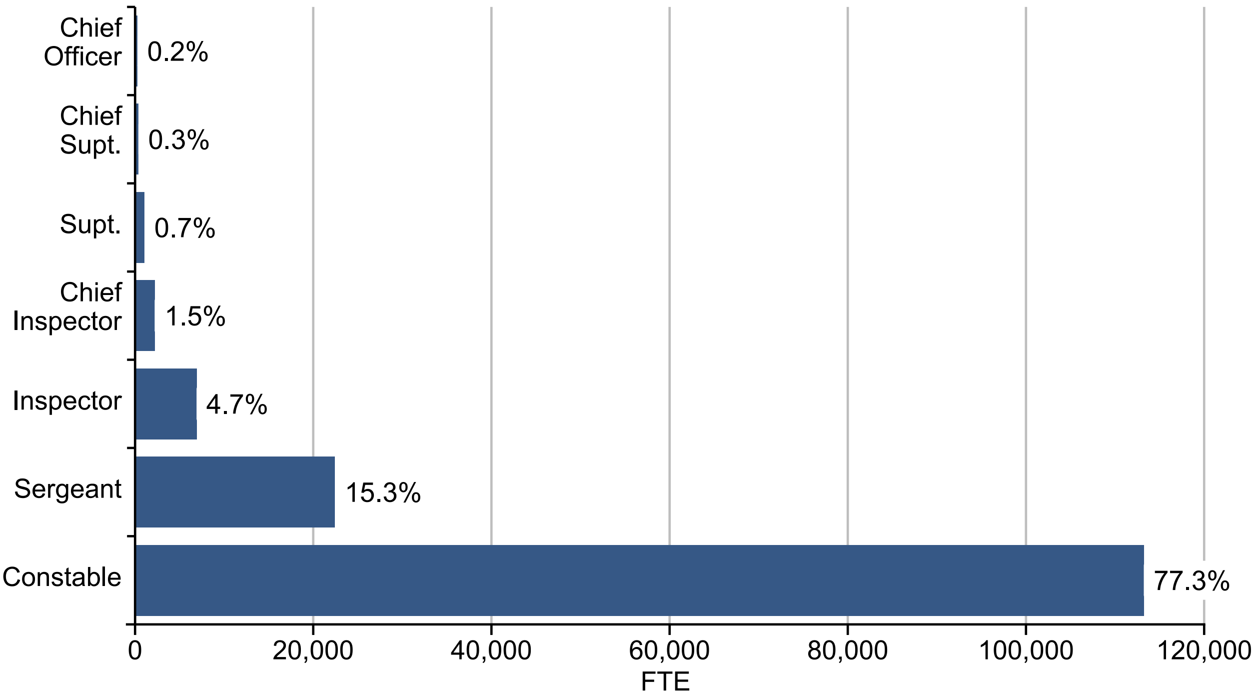
3.63 In March 2025, police officers accounted for just over three-fifths of the police workforce. Between March 2018 and March 2024, FTE officer numbers increased by 25,300 or 21% (Chart 3.3). There were 146,400 FTE police officers at the end of March 2025, slightly lower than a year earlier. The overall police workforce also decreased slightly in the latest year.

Chart 3.3: FTE strength of police workforce and number of police officers, England and Wales, March 2003 – March 2025



Source: Police Workforce Statistics, Home Office.

Chart 3.4: FTE number of police officers by rank, England and Wales, March 2025

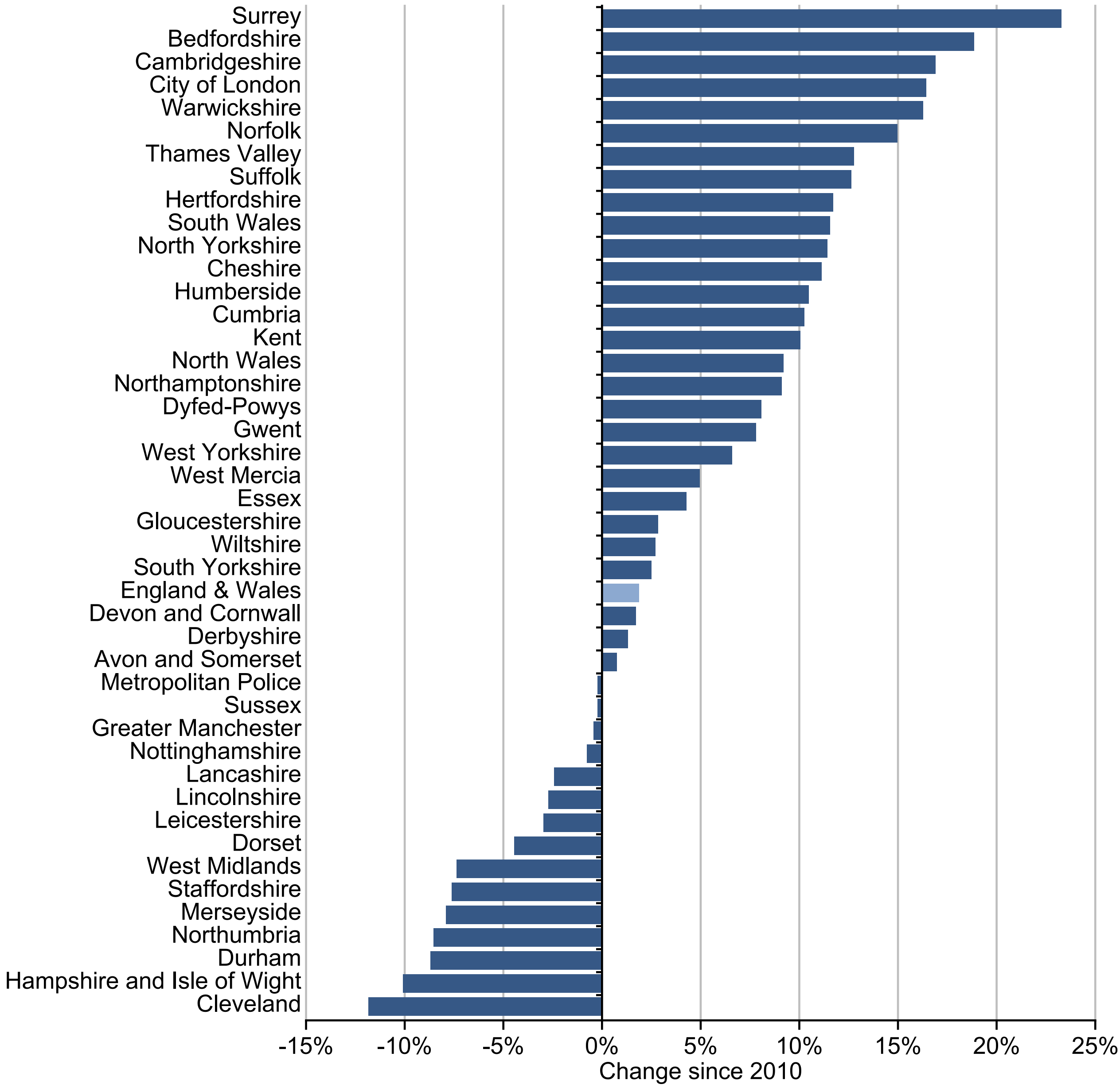


Source: Police Workforce Statistics, Home Office.

3.64 In March 2025, nearly four-fifths (77%) of police officers were constables (Chart 3.4), and just 7% of officers were in the ranks above sergeant. The proportions in each rank have been relatively stable since comparable data started in 2003.

3.65 While overall police officer numbers were higher in March 2025 than March 2010, this was not the case in all forces (Chart 3.5). Officer numbers remained below 2010 levels in 15 forces, despite all forces except the MPS meeting their recruitment targets under the Uplift Programme.

Chart 3.5: Percentage change in FTE police officer numbers between March 2010 and March 2025, by force, England and Wales

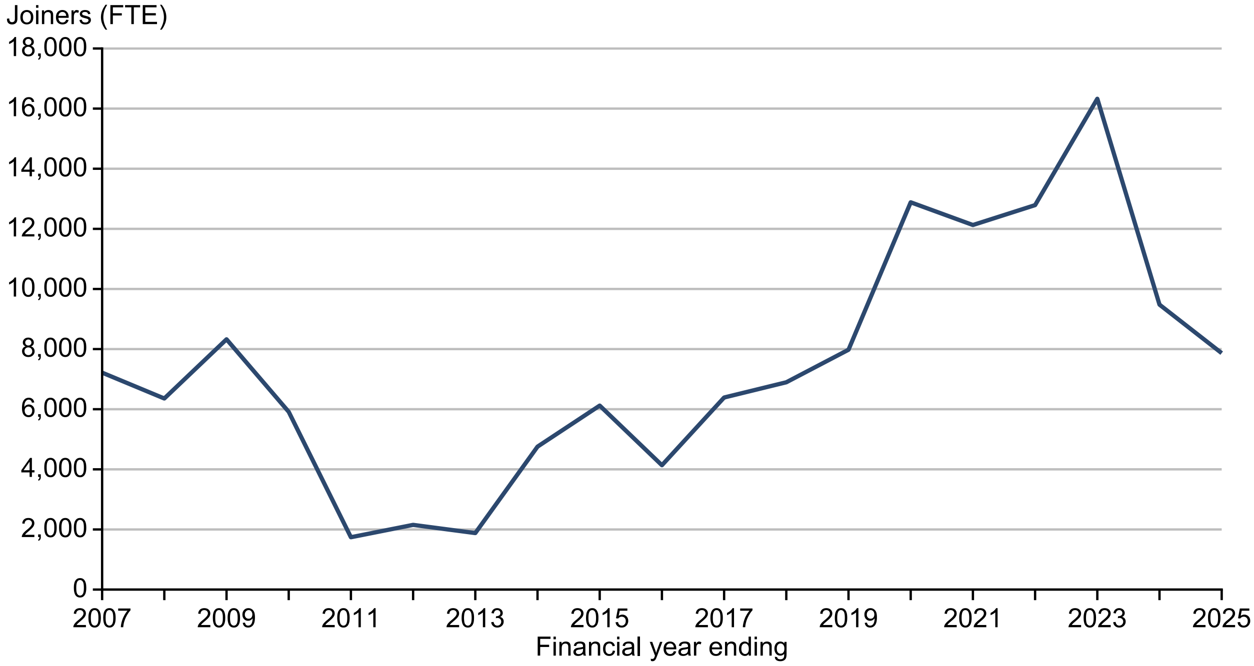


Source: OPRB analysis of Police Workforce Statistics, Home Office.

3.66 The announcement of the Uplift Programme in 2019 led to a sharp increase in the number of police officer joiners (Chart 3.6). The numbers of joiners (excluding officers transferring between forces) have fallen since the conclusion of the Uplift

Programme and there were 7,900 joiners in FYE 2025, 17% (1,600 FTE) lower than the previous year. The number of joiners during FYE 2025 represented 5% of the total number of FTE police officers in March 2025.

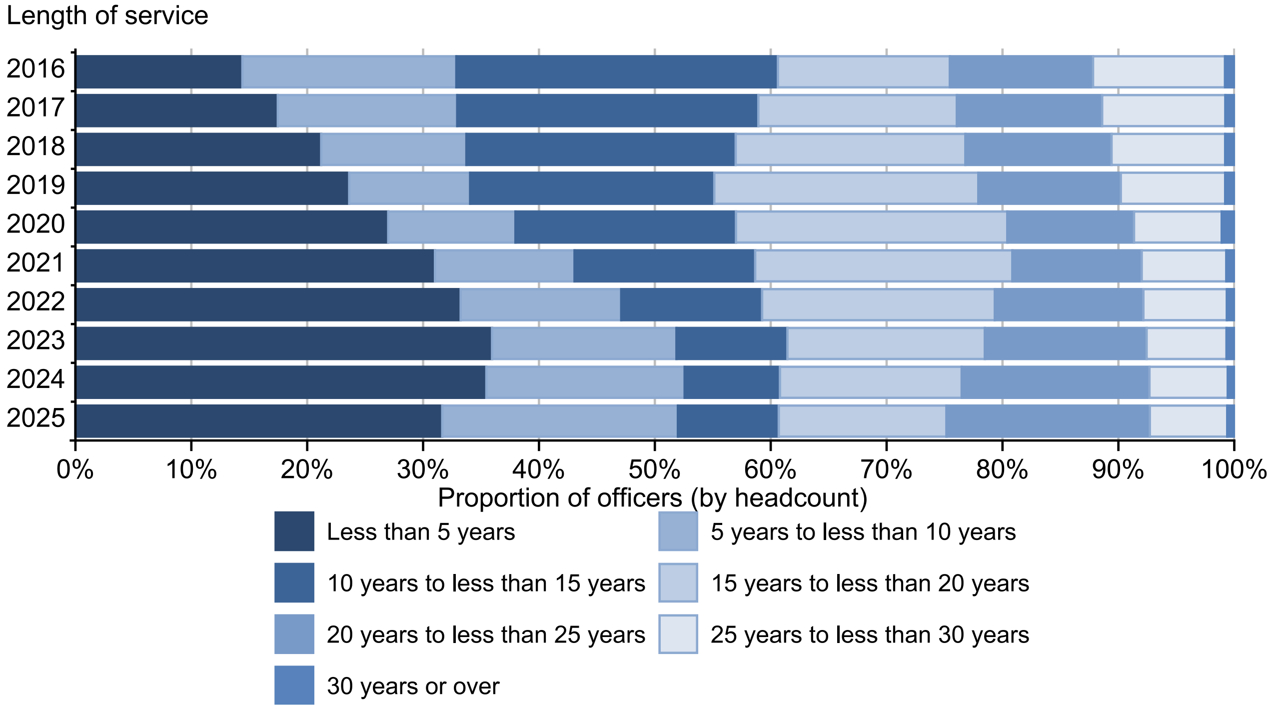
Chart 3.6: FTE police officer joiners excluding transfers, England and Wales, FYE 2007–2025



Source: Police Workforce Statistics, Home Office.

3.67 Historic recruitment trends tend to get reflected in the distribution of officers' length of service. Officers with less than five years' service accounted for 32% of all police officers in March 2025 (Chart 3.7) as a result of the scale of recruitment during the Uplift Programme, while low recruitment in the early 2010s has led to a relatively small cohort of officers with more than 10 but less than 15 years' service.

Chart 3.7: Length of service of police officers (headcount basis), England and Wales, March 2016 – March 2025

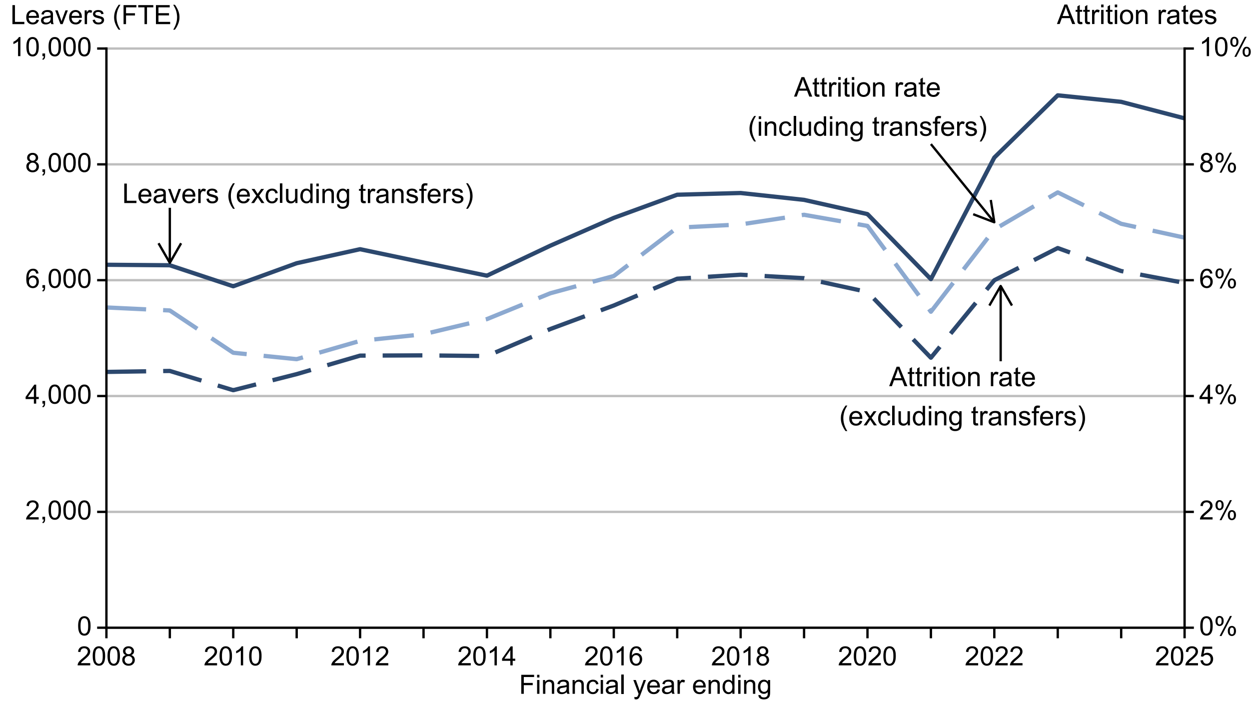


Source: OPRB analysis of Police Workforce Statistics, Home Office.

3.68 Excluding transfers between forces, the number of officers leaving the police service in FYE 2025 was 8,800 FTE (Chart 3.8). This represented a fall of 3% (300 FTE officers) compared with the previous year. The overall attrition rate[18] fell to 6.0% in FYE 2025. Including officers who transferred to other forces rather than leaving the service altogether, the attrition rate was 6.7% in FYE 2025, also a drop on the previous year. The voluntary resignation rate[19] dropped to 3.2% in FYE 2025 while the normal retirement rate[20] remained at 2.2% (Chart 3.9).

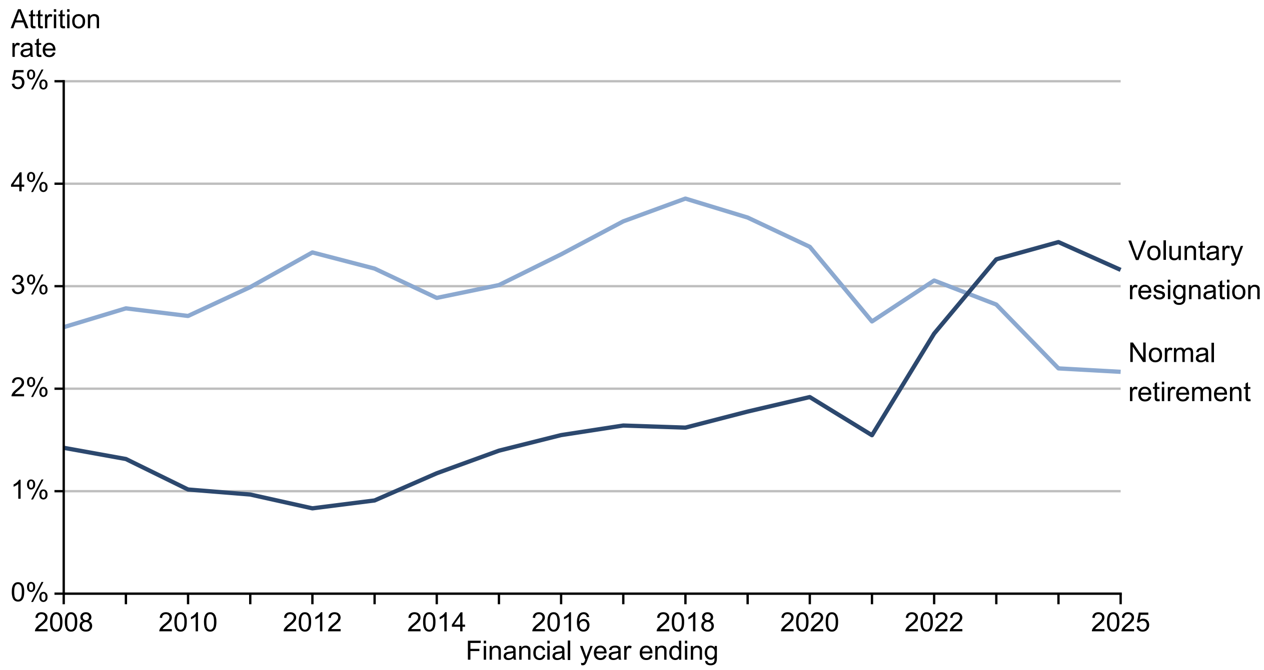
[18] The total number of police officers leaving the service in the financial year as a proportion of the total officers in post in the March just before the financial year began.
[19] The number of officers who voluntarily resigned as a proportion of the total officers in post in the March just before the financial year began.
[20] The number of officers who have retired, not on ill-health grounds, as a proportion of the total officers in post in the March just before the financial year began.

Chart 3.8: FTE police officer leavers and attrition rates, England and Wales, FYE 2008–2025



Source: OPRB analysis of Police Workforce Statistics, Home Office.

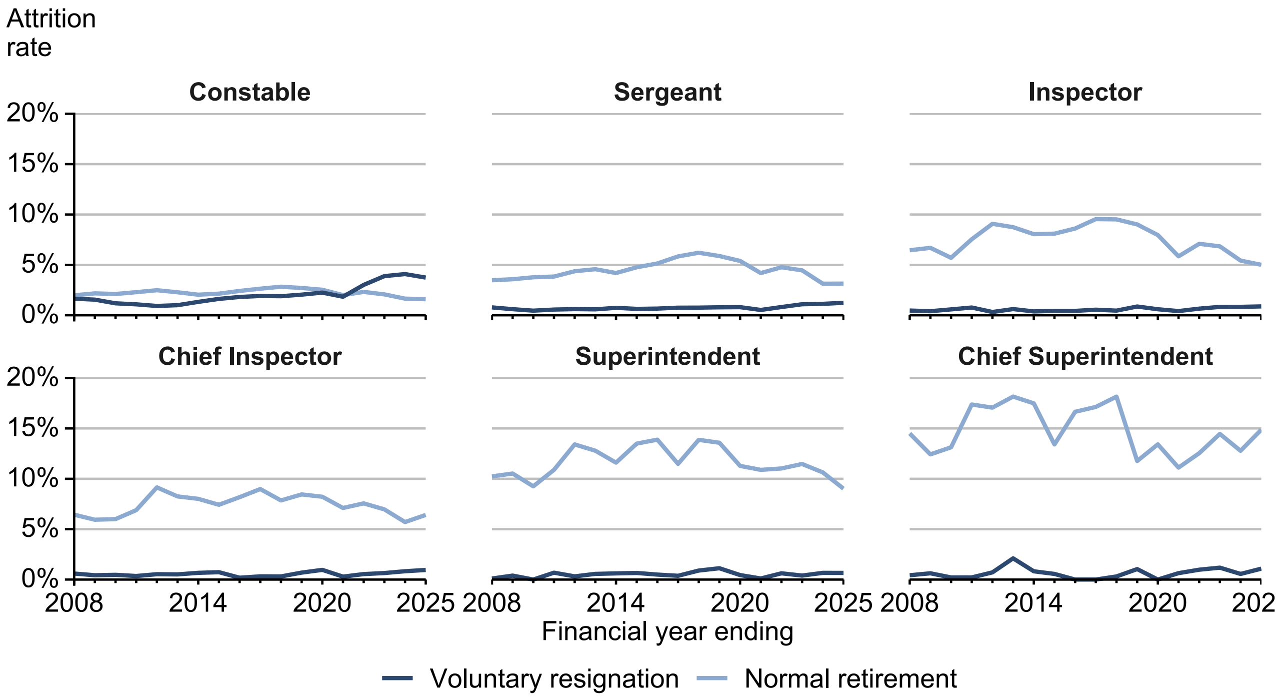
Chart 3.9: FTE police officer attrition rate, by selected leaver type, England and Wales, FYE 2008–2025



Source: Police Workforce Statistics, Home Office.

3.69 The voluntary resignation rate was highest for constables in FYE 2025 (Chart 3.10). For all other ranks, normal retirement was the predominant reason for leaving. However, the voluntary resignation rates have been increasing gradually for the sergeant and inspecting ranks in recent years.

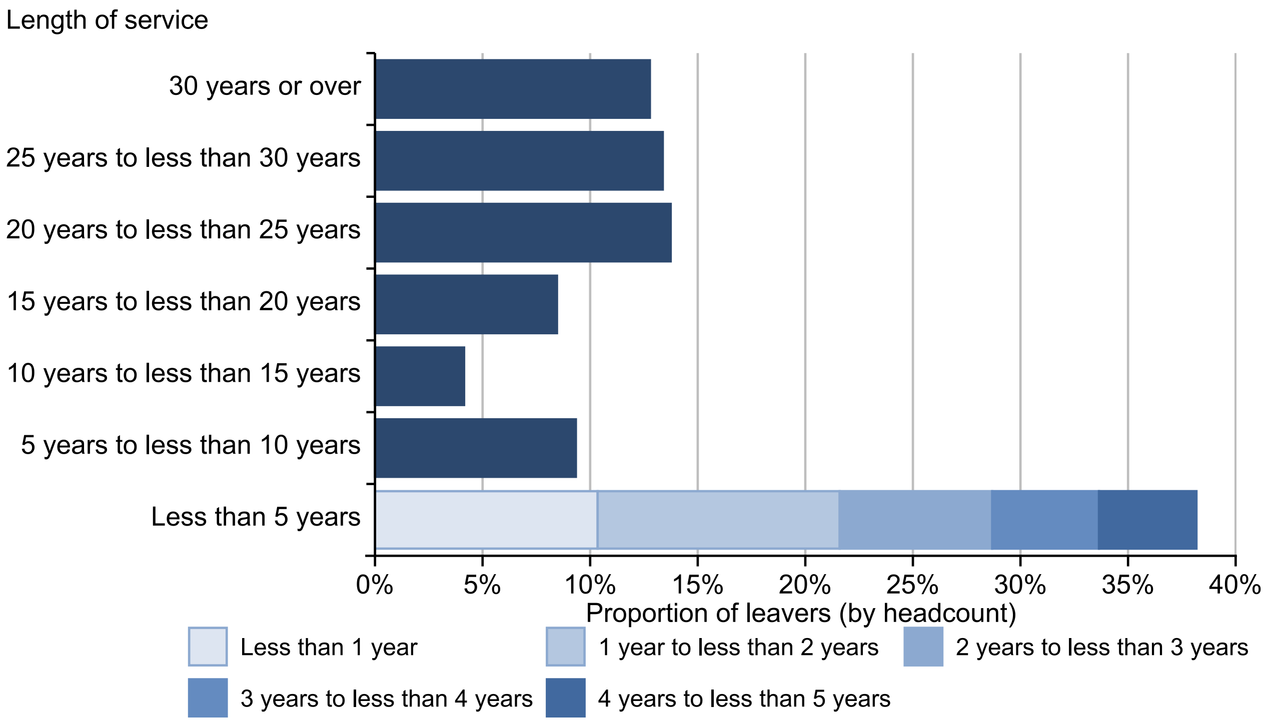
Chart 3.10: FTE police officer attrition rate, by rank and selected leaver type, England and Wales, FYE 2008–2025



Source: Police Workforce Statistics, Home Office.

3.70 Data on the length of service of leavers show that 10% of all leavers in FYE 2025 (on a headcount basis and excluding transfers between forces) had less than one year's service, and 38% had less than five years' service (Chart 3.11).

Chart 3.11: Police officer leavers (headcount basis), by length of service, England and Wales, FYE 2025



Source: Police Workforce Statistics, Home Office.

Evidence from the parties on the police workforce, recruitment and retention

3.71 The Home Office said that it was important that each police force had an effective workforce plan in place to meet current and future needs. It told us it was working closely with policing partners to develop sustainable, long-term workforce plans. The Home Office highlighted that voluntary resignation rates for police officers remained low compared with other sectors. However, it stressed that the importance of retaining valuable experience meant forces should be using effective strategies to manage the retention and progression of existing officers. In oral evidence, the Minister for Policing and Crime added that it was important to find out what factors would encourage officers to remain in policing.

3.72 The Home Office reported that the College of Policing, along with the NPCC and wider sector, was in the final year of the Police Constable Entry Route Optimisation Programme. This sought to improve the quality and consistency of the constable entry routes, including supporting forces to design and deliver inclusive routes.

3.73 The Home Office highlighted the importance of strong leadership at all ranks in order to drive cultural change and raise standards. It said it was working with the College of Policing to develop plans for implementing and improving the training and professional development offer for officers. It was also looking to mandate leadership standards by setting out national leadership development programmes, and would explore a more flexible employment model that could attract a range of people, skills and experience from other sectors and specialisms. It told us that it would learn from previous models to open up direct entry into policing.

3.74 The Home Office said that forces needed to have the right mix of officers, staff, and specialist skills in place to respond to today’s challenges and anticipate those of the future, and it was developing a new national police workforce strategy, to build and support a modern, capable, and sustainable police workforce. It advised us that the police workforce strategy would support forces to improve workforce planning and demand modelling, enabling policing to assess both current capability and future need.

3.75 The joint statement by the NPCC, CPOSA and PSA highlighted reduced experience levels in the workforce and continuing challenges to recruit and retain people in key roles.

3.76 The NPCC observed that workforce reporting emphasised officer numbers rather than deployable capability. It explained that the proportion of the workforce that was deployable was critical to understanding capacity and workforce demand, and reported that: long-term absence had increased from 3.9% in March 2020 to 4.4% in March 2025; those on adjusted or management restricted duties had risen from 3.9% to 6.7%; and those on recuperative duties had been relatively unchanged (3.7% in March 2020 and 3.6% in March 2025).

3.77 The NPCC said that the police officer-to-staff ratio had remained constant over the last decade, but that this may change with the lifting of officer maintenance targets going forward. It also observed that growth in officer numbers had not kept pace with population growth since 2010.

3.78 The NPCC reported that all forces apart from the MPS had achieved or exceeded their maintenance targets, and the MPS had met its planned recruitment levels. It estimated that around 8,000 officers would be recruited in FYE 2026. The NPCC also highlighted that assessment centre success rates were stable, which it concluded showed no evidence of a fall in candidate quality.

3.79 The NPCC informed us that two-thirds of joiners now entered through either the Police Constable Entry Programme or the Detective Constable Entry Programme and around a quarter of recruits were Police Constable Degree Apprentices. In oral evidence the NPCC explained that the choice of entry routes offered in some forces was influenced by costs and workforce availability. It highlighted that the Police and Detective Entry Programmes were cheaper, quicker and required 13 weeks' less trainee abstraction time compared with the Police Constable Degree Apprentice scheme.

3.80 The NPCC explained that attrition through voluntary resignation had been driven largely by rapid recruitment, and was now slowing. It highlighted that overall voluntary resignation rates in policing compared well against public and private sector comparators.

3.81 The NPCC reported the Leavers Framework showed that the main reasons recorded for officers leaving over the last twelve months had been personal reasons and professional development, and that fewer than 1% had cited pay and remuneration as the reason for leaving.

3.82 The MPS said that its number of officers had shrunk over the last two years as a result of budgetary constraints, but that recruitment activities were expected to increase in FYE 2027. The MPS recognised that the reduction in its workforce strength had contributed to limited opportunities for progression over the last two years, but that promotion opportunities would improve in FYE 2027 due to a planned increase in attrition at senior levels.

3.83 However, in oral evidence the MPS informed us that, as a result of changes to its financial position since submission of its written evidence, it was now planning to reduce MPS numbers by a further 1,100 in FYE 2027 (including 700 officers) instead of looking to stabilise workforce numbers.

3.84 The MPS told us that there had been a small increase in attrition rates over the past year, but that this was mostly as a result of the officers leaving due to the end of the Enhanced Returners Scheme. The MPS highlighted its attrition rate was below the national average and in line with workforce planning assumptions. The MPS reported that the majority of its attrition was due to retirements, resignations and transfers, but that resignations and transfers were increasing as a proportion of leavers. In oral evidence, the MPS noted that attrition in early years was higher for the direct entry detective routes.

3.85 The MPS reported that exit survey data showed career fit was a main driver of early years attrition, while the reasons for more experienced officers leaving reflected labour market dynamics.

3.86 The MPS informed us that its recruitment pipeline was increasingly concentrated at the youngest end of the labour market, with almost seven in ten new police constables aged 18 to 25 and nearly nine in ten new detective constables aged 20 to 29.

3.87 The PSA reported that most respondents to its 2025 Pay and Wellbeing Survey[21] intended to stay in policing until they had 30 years' continuous service but planned to leave at the earliest point at which they could collect their pension. Respondents that indicated they would be inclined to leave before being able to claim their pension cited the impact that their work had on their family, personal life, and the ways in which their job negatively affected their health and wellbeing.

3.88 The PSA presented further results from its 2025 Pay and Wellbeing Survey that showed 46% of respondents did not intend to apply for further promotion. The most common reason for this was that respondents believed that promotion would have a negative effect on their work-life balance.

Information from the PFEW on the police workforce, recruitment and retention

3.89 The PFEW informed us that detective and specialist roles remained difficult to recruit and retain in a number of forces. It explained that these roles required accredited skills, sustained caseload management and exposure to complex and traumatic investigations. The PFEW pointed out that these skills were transferable and competitive within the wider labour market, and advised that retention in these areas was directly linked to investigative performance, court timeliness and public confidence.

3.90 The PFEW expressed concern that lowering standards for recruits was ill-thought through and would bring problems in the future. It explained that police constables carried significant legal, ethical and emotional responsibility from an early stage in service, and that new recruits needed to have the skills to deal with the 'deep end' once they were placed there.

3.91 The PFEW highlighted that 67% of police officer voluntary resignations had less than five years' service. It considered this early attrition to be a waste of investment.

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[21] Which received around 600 responses.

The PFEW linked high levels of attrition in early years to: new officers being exposed to the frontline immediately; the harsh reality of frontline working with the public; the level of assaults on officers; and waning support for officers. The PFEW explained that traditionally, new officers had a support network of experienced constable colleagues and sergeants that could support their development, but that had changed and that 42% of respondents to its December 2025 Pulse Survey[22] had said it was common practice in their force for probationary constables to be tutored by other officers still in their probationary period.

3.92 The PFEW did not consider that attrition rates in policing should be compared with public or private sector organisations, particularly at the rank of constable. It explained that the loss of experience through attrition increased the workloads of officers. It also highlighted that losing talented and capable officers at the rank of constable would mean losing great potential for senior ranks in policing in the future as future leaders would start out as constables.

3.93 The PFEW emphasised that the sergeant rank was critical to policing. It explained that more officers reported to a sergeant than any other rank and so their leadership impact was felt by more individual officers. The PFEW was concerned at the rise in voluntary resignations among sergeants since FYE 2021, and a decrease in the length of service profiles of sergeants, which it said indicated that sergeants were generally younger in service and less experienced than previously.

HMICFRS State of Policing Report 2024–25

3.94 HMICFRS noted that the rapid decline and subsequent rise in officer numbers between 2010 and 2023 led to high levels of inexperience in the workforce. The report said this lack of experience was a challenge for forces, not least as new recruits tended to have less confidence and/or capability, which brought additional training, supervision and leadership demands. The report added that forces would need to manage the impact of this inexperience for several more years.

Our comment on the police workforce, recruitment and retention

3.95 We have highlighted concerns in recent years over how the focus on officer numbers, combined with budgetary pressures, has been leading to reverse civilianisation in some cases whereby police officers are being put into roles that would be better suited for police staff. This year we have heard that some forces have been placed in a position of needing to carry significant numbers of vacancies in order to manage financial pressures. We welcome, therefore, the removal of links between funding and officer numbers, which will give forces more flexibility to determine the appropriate mix of officers and staff in their workforces.

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[22] Which received around 5,700 responses.

3.96 While the workforce data do not appear to show any immediate recruitment problems, we continue to highlight that recruitment is about more than numbers and that pay and reward need to be sufficiently competitive to enable the police service to attract and retain high-calibre recruits with the right attitudes and maturity to respond to vulnerability, de-escalate social tension and manage complexity. In our view this is critical to the delivery of the wider police reform agenda and especially the strengthening of neighbourhood policing. We are concerned by the evidence we have heard this year over how forces are basing decisions on which entry routes they offer on affordability and abstraction levels rather than which routes might be appropriate to bring in the skills and talents their workforce requires. In our view, entry requirements should be a factor in determining starting pay, and the differing entry requirements between entry routes and forces will need to be monitored for any implications for starting pay. We consider that the link between starting pay, entry routes and the new career pathways that are due to be developed will need to be considered as part of the police reform programme. We also highlight the importance of setting and maintaining high standards of recruitment eligibility criteria, in terms of both qualifications and vetting.

3.97 We are struck by how low recruitment levels in the early 2010s, due to austerity measures, followed by rapid recruitment under the Uplift Programme has affected the length of service profile of the police officer workforce. Around one-third of officers had less than five years' service in March 2025, but less than 10% had 10 to 15 years' service. We recognise that high levels of inexperience in the workforce increase the pressure on front-line leaders, particularly those in the sergeant and inspecting ranks.

3.98 We note the reduction in the voluntary resignation rate in the latest data, possibly linked to a slightly lower proportion of officers with less than five years' service. We highlight the importance of retaining officers in order to provide experience, as the rigid constable starting salary arrangements and current inability to directly recruit to higher ranks provide barriers to bringing in officers with experience in other sectors. We continue, therefore, to be concerned that voluntary resignation rates for sergeants and the inspecting ranks have been rising.

3.99 We understand that workforce reductions in the MPS over recent years have been primarily driven by financial constraints rather than problems with recruitment and retention. Although the MPS is not the only force to have seen falling officer numbers, it was also the only one not to hit its recruitment target in the Uplift Programme, and accounts for around a quarter of officer strength in England and Wales. The reduction in MPS strength is particularly concerning given increasing demand in London. We will continue to monitor the recruitment and retention situation in the MPS. We expressed our concern about the police funding formula earlier in our report, and the MPS workforce reductions add to concerns about the sustainability of funding arrangements.

3.100 We are grateful for the provision of data from the National Leavers' Framework on reasons for officers leaving, and note that pay does not appear to be a direct factor in this. However, we recognise that the survey only captures the main reason for an officer leaving and that pay may be a secondary factor in some cases. We ask for continued data provision on this, and for any insight that can be provided on differences by ranks and what officers intend to do after they resign. This will help us to assess the role that pay and reward play in retention, and to understand the drivers behind emerging trends.

3.101 We are concerned by the evidence this year of increasing proportions of officers on both long-term sick leave and adjusted or management restricted duties. As the NPCC flagged, this reduces deployable capability which, in turn, affects the workload and pressure on other officers, and potentially the efficiency of delivery for the public. We ask parties to provide more information next year on the drivers behind these increases and any work being done to mitigate or reverse the trends.

Police officer diversity

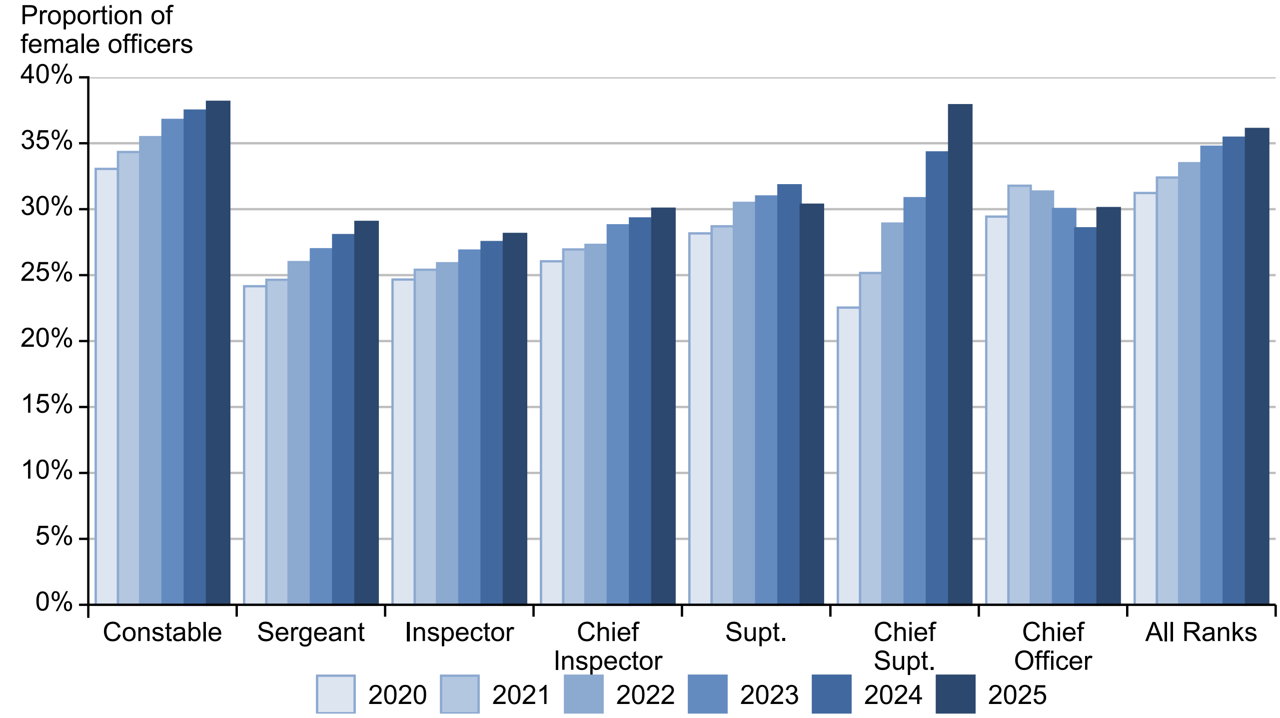
Our analysis of police officer diversity

3.102 We have set out our full analysis of police workforce diversity in Appendix E. We highlight some of the key points below.

3.103 The overall proportion of officers who were female[23] (Chart 3.12) increased from 31% to 36% between 2020 and 2025, but the proportion of female officers for most ranks above constable was lower than the overall proportion. The overall proportion of ethnic minority[24] officers (Chart 3.13) increased from 7.3% to 8.5% between 2020 and 2025, continuing a steadily upward path over the past decade, but again the proportion of ethnic minority officers for ranks above constable was lower than the overall proportion. These indicators show improvement in diversity across the overall officer workforce in recent years, but remain below levels representative of the communities served by the police.

[23] Proportions of female officers exclude officers who did not state their sex from the denominator.
[24] Proportions of ethnic minority officers exclude officers who did not state their ethnicity from the denominator.

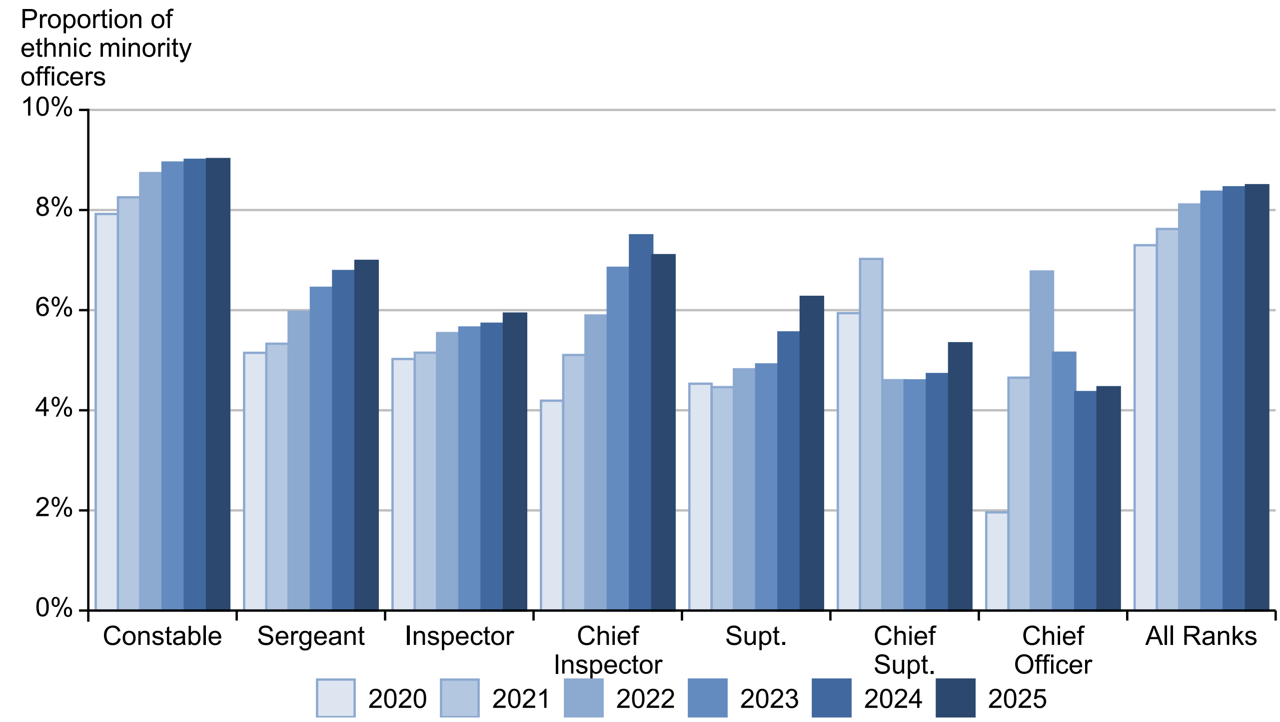
Chart 3.12: Percentage of female officers (FTE), by rank, England and Wales, March 2020 – March 2025



Source: OPRB analysis of Police Workforce Statistics, Home Office.

Note: Officers who did not state their sex are excluded from calculations.

Chart 3.13: Percentage of ethnic minority officers (FTE), by rank, England and Wales, March 2020 – March 2025



Source: OPRB analysis of Police Workforce Statistics, Home Office.

Note: Officers who did not state their ethnicity are excluded from calculations.

Evidence from the parties on police officer diversity

3.104 In oral evidence, the Minister for Policing and Crime stressed the importance of race action plans in policing and that crucial oversight of these was being rolled out from the centre to every force. The Minister also told us that direct entry would bring a more diverse workforce, with a range of routes designed to attract people from varied backgrounds.

3.105 The NPCC said that progress was being made at entry level towards a more representative workforce, with increased recruitment rates for female and ethnic minority officers and progression to higher ranks. However, the NPCC highlighted that the overall figures masked significant variation between forces and the slow progress in increasing representation of the Black ethnic group.

3.106 The NPCC reported that pay gaps for under-represented groups remained. It stated that these were driven by service progression and more part-time officers, but were also affected by allowances and other payments linked to roles with under representation of certain groups. The NPCC explained that the national pay structures for officers sought to minimise the gaps, and that the gender pay gap (GPG) had been declining slowly over time as representation, retention and progression had improved. The NPCC presented data for 41 forces which showed that the GPGs based on median hourly earnings ranged from 6.6% to 27.0% for the 2024/25 reporting year, and that 30 of those forces had seen a decrease in the GPG over the previous two reporting years.

3.107 The NPCC reported that the retention gaps between female and ethnic minority officers and their white, male colleagues were narrowing. However, it informed us staff surveys showed underlying cultural issues that affected ethnic minority retention.

3.108 The NPCC said that the rate of application for national exams for promotion to sergeant and inspector had been historically lower for female officers, but that pass rates were higher. For ethnic minority officers, application rates had been higher but success rates had been lower.

3.109 In oral evidence, the MPS recognised the importance of its workforce reflecting the communities it served. It told us that it had achieved some success in improving the diversity of its recruits since 2020, and had been particularly successful in doing so via the detective pathway.

3.110 The PSA said that it encouraged police forces to adopt more agile working practices, for example allowing more remote working, making non-operational roles a more practical option for those with caring responsibilities. It highlighted that its Pay and Wellbeing Survey findings suggested that female officers in particular had competing demands and stresses with work life and home life. The PSA reported that a respondent to its survey had commented that the Executive Leadership

Programme was supposed to be more family friendly, but this was not the case given the amount of time candidates were expected to be away from home.

Information from the PFEW on police officer diversity

3.111 The PFEW highlighted that the Policing Vision set out an aim for policing to have a representative workforce in all ranks by 2030. The PFEW expressed concern that voluntary resignation rates were highest among women and ethnic minority officers.

Independent Scrutiny and Oversight Board Final Report[25]

3.112 The final report by the Independent Scrutiny and Oversight Board found that progress against the Police Race Action Plan had been uneven and fragile, and was too dependent on individual goodwill rather than structural accountability. It observed that the voluntary nature of the Police Race Action Plan had enabled a degree of honest self-reflection that a compliance-driven approach might not produce, but that it had also allowed forces to disengage without consequence, meaning progress could be undone by changes in leadership or a shift in organisational priorities.

Our comment on police officer diversity

3.113 We note again this year that overall indicators of diversity have shown improvement, but that numbers of female and ethnic minority officers remain below levels representative of the communities they serve, particularly in the ranks above constable. Last year we flagged that policing had missed an opportunity to make more progress in closing the diversity gap during the Uplift Programme, and this is highlighted by the expectation of slower improvements in diversity as a result of lower recruitment. We also consider that progress in addressing diversity gaps is likely to have been hindered by the police service's slowness to modernise by introducing family-friendly terms and conditions. We return to this later in the report.

3.114 We continue to be particularly alarmed by the evidence of higher resignation rates among women and ethnic minorities, and lower promotion pass rates for ethnic minorities, and note the challenges this poses for further increasing the diversity of the workforce. We are also concerned by the higher pension opt-out rates for ethnic minority officers, which we cover later in this chapter. Much more rigorous steps need to be taken to ensure a better diversity balance through recruitment, retention and promotion. We consider that this will be critical to the success of the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee, as the new officers recruited will need to represent the communities they serve if they are to restore trust in the police.

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[25] Independent Scrutiny & Oversight Board (March 2026), *Five Years of Independent Scrutiny of The Police Race Action Plan: Independent Scrutiny & Oversight Board Final Report*. Available at: https://www.policeisob.co.uk/_files/ugd/9e3577_3ecb165ff42c458cac59268ce9f9c2b7.pdf [Accessed on 22 May 2026]

3.115 We note that figures from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings published by the ONS show that the GPG for median hourly earnings of full-time workers in the UK was 6.9% in April 2025. For police officers these GPGs were 1.5% for police constables and sergeants, and 8.4% for officers in the inspecting ranks and above, reflecting the higher proportion of male officers in the higher ranks. We caution that these GPG figures are derived on a different basis to those that employers are required to report publicly, so are not entirely consistent, and that the GPG figures presented by the NPCC in evidence covered both police officers and police staff.

3.116 We continue to encourage the Home Office and police forces to work to improve the completeness of data on disability, sexual orientation and other protected characteristics not yet published, so that we can use them in future.

Police motivation and morale

3.117 The NPCC stated that the social contract between employers and employees was shifting, driven by an aging workforce, shorter career spans, rapidly evolving skills, and changing expectations since the pandemic. It said that employees now placed higher value on organisational culture, wellbeing, work-life balance, and flexible working, which was challenging for a 24/7 operational service. The NPCC advised that evidence showed morale was heavily influenced by how valued officers felt amid rising demand and limited capacity.

3.118 The NPCC presented results from the 2025 Workforce Wellbeing Survey[26]. These showed that:

- only 1 in 10 constables considered the remuneration fair and only a quarter of inspecting ranks;
- officers, especially in ranks up to chief inspector, were not likely to recommend their force as a place to work;
- around half of officers intended to stay in policing for at least the next three years, but more than one-quarter were actively looking at other jobs or intended to leave in the next twelve months; and
- work-life balance (17%) and pay and benefits (15%) made up one-third of the top reasons for wanting to leave.

3.119 Results from the 2025 PSA Pay and Wellbeing Survey showed that similar proportions of respondents reported low personal morale compared with the previous year, but that half of respondents reported lower morale than twelve months previously. The top reported factors negatively affecting morale were: how the police were treated by the Government; uncertainty regarding their pension; and taxation policies.

[26] Which received nearly 21,900 responses from officers.

Information from the PFEW on police motivation and morale

3.120 The PFEW told us that 57% of respondents to its 2024 Pay and Morale Survey[27] reported low personal morale and 88% rated overall force morale as low. This was similar to the level in 2023 (58%). Last year the PFEW observed that the top reported factors negatively affecting morale were: how the police were treated by the Government; how the police were treated by the public; and pay and benefits. This year it added that working conditions were also a major driver of low officer morale, affecting two-thirds of respondents.

3.121 The PFEW provided results from its December 2025 Pulse Survey showing that 23% of respondents intended to leave policing within the next two years, and that this increased to 25% for constables. It explained that the main reasons officers gave for wanting to leave were: high workload and pressure in the job; lack of support or poor leadership; and pay.

HMICFRS State of Policing Report 2024–25

3.122 HMICFRS expressed concern about poor morale in police forces and said forces should do everything they could to create the conditions under which morale could improve. It added that the Home Office needed to do all it could to increase morale and strike the right balance between support and accountability for both performance and conduct. HMICFRS said it was exceptionally important that police officers felt supported and valued for their work. It highlighted that the police regularly faced threatening and emotionally demanding situations, were required to work long, uncertain hours, had high levels of responsibility and experienced a higher level of scrutiny because of their extraordinary powers.

Our comment on police motivation and morale

3.123 We highlight earlier in our report changes to both public perceptions of the police and the increasingly challenging operating environment in terms of greater scrutiny and some loss of public trust and confidence. While this has implications for recruitment, it also risks, in our view, diminishing the intrinsic rewards of policing, including the sense of public service, professional judgement, and purpose that derive from protecting communities and making a tangible difference to people's lives. We observe that such rewards are important to sustaining morale and are likely to be a key factor in retention. In their absence, and in advance of the delivery of possible benefits in terms of better training, leadership and other opportunities through police reform, more visible rewards in the form of better pay are likely to be necessary.

3.124 We remain concerned by low levels of morale shown in staff association surveys. We welcome the provision of results from the National Workforce Wellbeing Survey

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[27] Which received around 35,000 responses.

and hope that future results will help to provide a more rounded assessment of trends in morale and motivation.

3.125 We also flag that it is difficult to draw comparisons between the morale and motivation of police officers and other areas of the public sector due to inconsistent surveys of each workforce. We continue to encourage the Government to introduce a survey of all public sector workers that will enable such comparisons to be made.

3.126 We consider that drivers of morale and motivation go much wider than reward, and note that staff association surveys appear to be showing pay is declining as a driver of low morale and intention to leave. A significant driver of motivation and morale is officer wellbeing. We have received an increasing amount of evidence on wellbeing in recent years and consider this separately in the next section.

Police officer wellbeing

3.127 The Home Office explained that since the introduction of the Police Covenant in 2022, it and its partners in policing had made strides to address disadvantages relating to the health and wellbeing experienced by the police workforce, their families and those who had left policing. It told us that:

- a clear set of guidelines for chief officers had been published that made it clear what they must deliver and what their workforces could expect;
- a national mental health helpline had been established, providing officers and staff with support when they needed it the most; and
- the Government's Police Reform White Paper contained clear commitments to provide support to the police workforce, past and present, and their families.

3.128 The NPCC cited results from the 2025 Workforce Wellbeing Survey that showed:

- time and workload pressures were reported as high across all ranks;
- half the workforce disagreed that their force was committed to a work-life balance;
- nearly half of constables did not know how to access health and wellbeing services; and
- almost half of constables reported having been assaulted in the last twelve months.

3.129 The NPCC reported that the National Police Wellbeing Service was now well established and had programmes, tools and interventions in place to support forces. It said that the Health and Wellbeing Board was driving through a police health and wellbeing strategy and prioritisation plan, and that a mental health crisis line and national suicide prevention action plan had been launched to address real issues that were being seen in policing.

3.130 The APCC said that there was no doubt that the role of a police officer was demanding and could involve long working hours and short-notice demands on officers that affected personal and family lives. It considered that it was important that the systems and processes around short-notice demands on officers' time worked as effectively as possible and that officers' time away from work was only disrupted when it was absolutely necessary.

3.131 The MPS said that improving the health and wellbeing of its people sat at the heart of phase 2 of its A New Met for London plan, and it had committed to: adopting a holistic approach to promoting and maintaining wellbeing, developing a new occupational health service to drive workforce health, resilience and retention; normalising mental health care and catching problems before they escalated; and ensuring its trauma support was best in class. The MPS also supported the NPCC's strategic position on wellbeing. The NPCC wanted the police service to move away from an activity-driven culture that endorsed extra hours worked towards a model of prioritising planned rest, resilience and sustainable working management, in line with Working Time Regulations.

3.132 The PSA reported that its Pay and Wellbeing Survey, and those of other organisations, had shown repeatedly that the wellbeing and morale of police officers were low and decreasing, and that the work they were delivering had an increasingly negative effect on their mental health and family lives. Key points that the PSA highlighted from its 2025 survey included:

- almost 70% of the sample reported experiencing feelings of stress, low mood, anxiety, or other difficulties with their mental health and wellbeing in the last twelve months, and 94% of this group confirmed that these feelings were caused, or made worse, by work;
- 80% considered that their workload is too high, with 70% reporting an increase in their workload in the last twelve months; and
- over half of respondents had not taken all their annual leave, for almost 60% this was due to work related reasons.

Information from the PFEW on police officer wellbeing

3.133 The PFEW advised that the inspecting ranks carried increasing operational responsibility and accountability and many officers in these ranks routinely worked in excess of 48 hours per week. It argued that current arrangements did not sufficiently recognise excessive supervisory workload or prolonged working hours.

3.134 The PFEW said that frequent rest day cancellations and late roster alterations disrupted family life and reduced predictability. It also considered that sustainable policing required that excessive working patterns were addressed through fair and transparent mechanisms.

3.135 The PFEW highlighted that officers were seeing an increase of exposure to harm through physical injury and trauma, which it linked to growing trends in violence and unrest in society and the amount of work given to policing from other sectors. It cited Home Office data showing there were 47,482 assaults on police officers in FYE 2025, a 2.8% increase from the previous year. The PFEW also provided results from its December 2025 Pulse Survey, in which:

- 60% of respondents felt that recent changes in society had affected their physical and mental health;
- 34% of respondents said that being threatened with physical assault was a weekly occurrence; and
- 11% of officers reported regularly experiencing physical altercations (struggling to get free, wrestling, kicking, hitting) on a weekly basis.

3.136 The PFEW reflected that society had spoken openly and with more confidence about the impacts of mental health and trauma over recent years. It highlighted that exposure to trauma was frequent in policing, and the impacts were harsh. The PFEW identified an increasing trend of officers taking their own lives, and noted that there was an irrefutable link between trauma, mental health deterioration and suicide.

3.137 The PFEW reported that it had sent Freedom of Information requests to all forces asking about working hours of police officers, but had only received data from four forces. Many forces had been unable to provide basic working-time data because no force-wide information was held. The PFEW considered that the lack of basic information on the working time of officers indicated that the fatigue and welfare of officers were not considered.

HMICFRS State of Policing Report 2024–25

3.138 HMICFRS stated that forces should be more consistent in how they prioritised well-being, provide well-being support to at least a common minimum standard and offer the right kind of help. It said that some forces provided better, more timely and more affordable access to such services than others and that officers given sufficient well-being support after the public disorder in the summer of 2024 recovered more quickly than those whose well-being was not prioritised.

3.139 The report said that the nature of police work and the demands of the job meant that many officers and staff experienced high levels of burnout and post-traumatic stress. In addition, in FYE 2024, there had been 44,976 assaults on officers, an increase of 11.1% on the previous year. HMICFRS explained that there was often more demand for occupational health services than forces could afford, leading to unreasonable delays and inadequate support.

3.140 HMICFRS observed that insufficient support could contribute to long-term sickness absence in the workforce and that the proportion of officers on long-term sickness absence had almost doubled since 2010. It asserted that some absences could not have been avoided (even with better well-being support and effective line management) but that many could have been.

3.141 HMICFRS reported that only 3 of the 11 original priorities in the Police Covenant established under the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 had been completed. It added that improvements in police workforce wellbeing had not been achieved but said that this work should continue, with a focus on meaningful outcomes.

Our comment on police officer wellbeing

3.142 We continue to be concerned by evidence of decreasing wellbeing and seemingly increasing working hours and instances of cancelled rest days and altered shifts. These have significant impacts not only on officers but also on their partners and families.

3.143 As we said last year, we recognise that the nature of policing means there will always be occasions when unexpected incidents require forces to cancel rest days and alter shifts. However, we remain concerned that in many instances officers are having their rest days cancelled and shifts altered as a result of poor workforce planning and poor workload management. We are particularly concerned by the information from the PFEW suggesting that many forces are not monitoring the working hours of their workforces, as required by regulations relating to the Working Time Directive.

3.144 We return to workforce management in Chapter 4 as part of our observations on police officer allowances.

3.145 We remain concerned at the evidence suggesting officers have difficulty taking their leave entitlements and rest days and stress the importance of being able to do so for officer wellbeing. We strongly urge forces to create the environment in which officers are able to take their full annual leave allocation.

3.146 We continue to be particularly concerned about the workload of officers in the inspecting ranks, and the effect this has on their wellbeing. The PFEW survey of the inspecting ranks highlighted the number of additional hours that these officers work, and we note that this may be one of the factors behind the increasing levels of voluntary resignations in the inspecting ranks. We also observe that some inspectors are likely to earn less than sergeants who work similar hours, since sergeants are entitled to overtime and inspectors are not. We considered this issue in Chapter 2 where we looked at proposed changes to pay for the inspecting ranks.

Pensions

3.147 The Home Office considered access to appropriate pension schemes to be a key benefit of working in the public sector. It highlighted that the police pension scheme was a defined benefit scheme with employer contribution rates of 35.3%, whereas most private sector employees received defined contribution pensions with significantly lower employer contributions.

3.148 The Home Office outlined the revisions being made to the member contribution structure of the police pension following consultation, namely:

- retaining the tiered structure;
- increasing tier thresholds in line with pay increases since 2015;
- basing contribution tiers on actual pensionable pay rather than FTE salary; and
- reviewing contribution thresholds as part of the regular scheme valuation cycle rather than uplifting them automatically by a fixed index.

3.149 The NPCC said that the police pension scheme continued to represent a significant and valuable element of the overall police reward package, but that awareness and understanding of its benefits were limited, compounded by the impact of the McCloud/Sargeant age discrimination remedy.

3.150 The NPCC presented figures showing that the number of officers opting out of the pension (excluding officers in the MPS) had increased in 2025 but remained comparable with other sectors. The figures showed that opt-out rates were highest for officers with less than five years' service, and that ethnic minority officers had higher opt-out rates than white officers. The NPCC informed us that a new national opt-out template had been issued to help understand the behaviours driving trends in pension opt outs. This form would need to be signed by officers choosing to opt out and would record the reason for doing so, it would also highlight the key benefits of the pension scheme and total reward package.

3.151 The NPCC also set out details of further work that was being done to increase knowledge of the value of the pension scheme. These included pension podcasts, development of the police pension scheme website, and pension dashboards.

3.152 The PSA linked increasing pension opt-out rates to falling real-terms pay for police officers. It highlighted that the NPCC's Strategic Assessment of the Workforce for 2025/26 suggested that pay was the main determining factor for opt outs.

Information from the PFEW on pensions

3.153 The PFEW expressed concern at the pension opt-out rates, particularly for officers who were early in service and ethnic minority officers. It called for more to be done to understand why pension opt-out rates were higher for ethnic minority officers. The PFEW also provided data from its December 2025 Pulse Survey which showed that

5% of officers had already opted out from the pension and 11% indicated that they were considering doing so. The results also showed that cost was the main driver behind officers either opting out or considering opting out.

3.154 The PFEW reported that its December 2025 Pulse Survey indicated a need for better information and education on the benefits of the pension scheme, as 29% of respondents who were considering opting out indicated their main driver would be concern that the pension was not good value.

3.155 The PFEW said that it had received reports from some of its branches that their forces were reluctant to more actively encourage enrolment to those that have opted out, as it was a cost saving to forces at a time when police budgets were under strain. However, the PFEW was also aware of some forces taking a more proactive approach with officers that had decided to opt-out by providing more information to encourage their participation in the scheme. The PFEW considered that this inconsistency in approach required a more structured expectation of forces and scheme administrators.

3.156 Following concerns we raised last year about death-in-service and medical retirement benefits available to officers who opt out of the pension scheme, the PFEW informed us that these were provided by the Police Injury Benefit Regulations (2006). The PFEW said it would support the full application of these regulations to assist officers who had opted out of the pension scheme.

Our comment on pensions

3.157 While pensions are not directly in our remit, our terms of reference state that it is important for us to be mindful of developments in police officer pensions to ensure there is a consistent, strategic and holistic approach to police pay and conditions. We are conscious that pensions form an important part of the overall remuneration package, and that changes to police pensions can affect morale, motivation and retention.

3.158 We continue to be concerned about the overall proportion of officers opting out of the police pension scheme. We continue to recognise that the main reason for this is likely to be affordability concerns. We are also particularly concerned about the evidence presented this year showing that opt-out rates for ethnic minority officers are markedly higher than for white officers. We welcome the introduction of the new national opt-out template to highlight the benefits officers are forfeiting by opting out of the pension scheme and to gain further insight into the behaviours driving trends in pension opt outs. We ask for updates in future years on the insights gained from this template and any effect it has had on behaviours. We would particularly welcome further information on the drivers of the higher opt-out rates for ethnic minority officers and any work being done to encourage increased pension participation by these officers.

3.159 We are grateful to the PFEW for drawing our attention to the Police Injury Benefit Regulations (2006), which make provision outside of the pension scheme for officers who are injured or die in service.

3.160 Last year we urged the Government to work with parties to consider the scope for making substantial changes to the pension scheme to make it more affordable and appealing to young-in-service officers and those considering shorter-term policing careers. We consider that pension reform will also be important to enable a workforce strategy that allows officers to join the service at different levels and career stages, and to encourage experienced leaders to stay in the service.

Legal obligations on the police service in England and Wales and relevant changes to employment law

3.161 The Home Office reported that the Employment Rights Act 2025 received Royal Assent on 18 December 2025, and that the Government was committed to reviewing how the additions and amendments to existing employment legislation should be applied to police officers. In oral evidence, the Minister for Policing and Crime reported that family-friendly leave provisions for policing were better than those provided for in statute. The Minister considered that, as a baseline, such provisions for policing should equal those of other public sector professions, particularly those in the emergency services.

3.162 The NPCC proposed that statutory employment changes, once enacted by Parliament following full Government due diligence, should be applied automatically and concurrently to police officers through police regulations. The NPCC stated that the current approach, where police officers experience delayed implementation compared with police staff and the wider workforce, created inequity and placed officers at a disadvantage. It argued that there was no compelling justification for deferring the application to officers where the legislative intent was clear and changes were statutory.

3.163 The NPCC set out areas where employers and staff associations had reached consensus on changes to the regulations, but where implementation was still awaiting action by the Home Office. Many of these were measures reflecting changes to wider employment law and related to family and special leave and pay. The NPCC also described in detail two recent proposals for change. It reported that in 2025, it had agreed a revised position on Neonatal Care Leave and Pay, and it was therefore proposing above-statutory entitlement for police officers: a day-one right to neonatal leave and full pay for up to 12 weeks for both parents. It explained that this position had been formally agreed with staff associations through the PCF, reflecting a shared commitment to better support families whose babies required neonatal care shortly after birth. It said that the proposal was now awaiting a decision from the Home Office on whether to proceed to formal consultation.

3.164 In addition, it was proposing to extend the eligibility for Paternity (Bereavement) Leave, to include nominated carers. This was an above statutory provision. It explained that this would align bereavement leave eligibility with the broader definition of parental responsibility already applied to Maternity and Adoption Support Leave (formerly Paternity Leave), ensuring consistent and equitable treatment across family-related policies. It reported that the proposal was formally agreed with staff associations through the PCF, demonstrating collective support across the service. It said that a decision was now awaited from the Home Office on whether to proceed to formal consultation on the proposed amendment to police regulations.

3.165 The NPCC told us it had considered the case for extending paid paternity leave for police officers, which had been supported by staff associations. It explained that there was no dedicated national data on paternity leave uptake as workforce data combined maternity and paternity leave. However, it said that unpublished NPCC data from 2025 indicated that, of 37 forces responding (including major metropolitan forces), nine currently offered enhancements above the statutory entitlement, while 28 applied the statutory provision. It said that a small number were considering extension, though without defined timescales. It said that any change to entitlement needed to be considered alongside provisions for police staff and in the context of the cumulative financial and operational impact of multiple leave related policy changes currently being implemented or proposed. It pointed out that policing already had a suite of statutory and non-statutory special leave arrangements designed to support wellbeing, work-life balance and workforce retention, with further changes in development subject to Home Office governance. It explained that while it recognised the strength of the case for extending paternity leave, it was mindful that statutory paternity leave was currently under Government review, with findings expected in January 2027. It therefore recommended that consideration of revised paternity leave entitlements be aligned with the outcome of the Government review, and that formal assessment of the proposal be scheduled within the 2027/28 NPCC workplan.

3.166 In oral evidence the NPCC told us that family leave provisions were in the hands of Home Office legal processes. It explained its approach was to consider adopting those already in law and in statute wherever possible from day one but the process took time. It pointed out that maternity pay provision in the police service already exceeded statutory levels and that paternity leave provision was slightly above statutory levels. It said that a tranche of familial leave provisions contained in legislation but not police regulations was with the Home Office. It said that in relation to the proposal for a two-week period for paternity leave on full pay, different forces had different approaches to wellbeing. It reported that it had discussed affordability of this proposal with the PFEW. It said it would think further about familial leave, particularly about any quick wins at a time of significant change. The NPCC also said that it would accelerate its review process in 2026.

3.167 We received some additional information from the NPCC following its oral evidence session including about the introduction of above-statutory entitlements, as set out in the PFEW's Charter for Change. It said that rather than prescribing an expanding suite of new paid or unpaid leave entitlements, the NPCC's emerging view was that a principles-based framework for special leave might offer a more effective and sustainable approach. It said that such an approach would focus on welfare, fairness and operational resilience, enabling forces to apply discretion and flexibility in response to individual circumstances, while promoting greater consistency of policy intent and application across England and Wales. It explained that this would help avoid unintended financial and operational consequences associated with creating multiple new entitlements outside statutory frameworks, while preserving appropriate local decision-making. The NPCC said that it would encourage the PFEW to bring forward a number of its proposals to the PCF during 2026 including those relating to paid leave to attend antenatal appointments with a pregnant woman; paid leave to attend pre-adoption appointments; and bereavement leave.

3.168 In oral evidence, the APCC recalled that, in the last pay round, it had raised the proposal that all officers should be entitled to two weeks' paid paternity leave. It said it had been pleased that we had supported its position in our 2025 Report. However, it was disappointed that the Government had not taken any further action. It did not consider that giving all officers two weeks' paid paternity leave would have significant financial costs. It noted that nine forces had already decided to give officers two weeks' paid paternity leave, and that a few were even offering three weeks. It said that, despite this, the NPCC had suggested that no further action should be taken until the Government review of paternity leave was complete. However, the APCC said that this delay had implications for individual officers. It said that under the current arrangements, some officers were either taking only one week's paternity leave or taking the second week as annual leave. The APCC noted the potential risks, both to officers and operationally, of officers returning after only a short period of paternity leave. The APCC also told us that it would support wider family leave changes, including the current proposal on neonatal leave.

Information from the PFEW

3.169 The PFEW did not support the NPCC proposal to automatically apply statutory employment changes to police officers. It expressed concern that this proposal would implement a legal minimum without any opportunity for discussion, and would make it easier for the NPCC to change officers' terms and conditions without the need to seek agreement with the staff associations or to refer the matter to the PCF or PRRB.

3.170 The PFEW highlighted that officers did not have employment contracts and were excluded from many areas of employment law, and argued that it would not be appropriate or helpful to mirror statutory entitlements of employees. It also noted that many employees were afforded a higher level of entitlements than the legal minimum, and the legal minimum was often aimed at preventing poor practice. The PFEW warned that the legal minimum was not, therefore, an ideal to aim for.

3.171 The PFEW also observed that most, if not all, changes to statutory employee entitlements were known about well in advance, due to the course of legislation through Parliament, and there was almost always a significant notice period before provisions came into effect. It considered that there was, therefore, ample opportunity for matters to be discussed at PCF and, where necessary, to be put to the PRRB before an entitlement came into effect. The PFEW was not convinced that the proposal would lead to police officers benefitting from entitlements any sooner than was currently the case because changes to police regulations and determinations needed to be made by the Home Office.

3.172 The PFEW reported that significant delays at the Home Office were the only reason for any lag in implementing changes to employment law for police officers. It urged the Home Office to take swift action to translate all outstanding agreements into police regulations and determinations as a matter of urgency.

3.173 In addition, the PFEW told us that it was calling for a Charter for Change that would provide a blueprint for a modern, compassionate police service. It said that all officers should be entitled to family-related leave from day one. It pointed out that given the nature of police work, it was in the interests of both officers and the wider public that officers were not rushed to return to work before they were ready. The PFEW said it was bringing forward proposals in a number of areas: carer’s leave and pay, neonatal care leave and pay, maternity support and adoption support leave and pay including in relation to bereavement, shared parental leave and pay, safe leave (up to two weeks’ paid leave for officers experiencing domestic abuse), grandparents’ leave and bereavement leave (both in relation to the death of a child and a spouse). The PFEW said that in addition, before officers were deployed back to the front line following a period of family leave, there should be a proper risk assessment to determine how best to reintroduce them to operational duty.

Our comment and recommendations on legal obligations on the police service in England and Wales and relevant changes to employment law

3.174 We have previously raised concerns over the length of time it takes for changes to employment law to be reflected in police regulations, and the inconsistency in practice between forces during this time. We urged the parties to work to implement necessary legislative changes in a much timelier manner. We have heard again this year about the delays caused by the Home Office in making agreed changes to regulations and determinations after all parties have reached consensus, some of which date back to 2014. We note that in some cases Home Office circulars will have been issued to provide forces with authority to implement agreements ahead of changes to regulations and determinations, although the PFEW informed us this approach was no longer used. We consider the delays in amending regulations and determinations to be unacceptable and support the PFEW's call for these to be dealt with as a matter of urgency. Therefore, we recommend that all such outstanding agreements should be implemented in regulations and determinations by the end of 2026.

Recommendation 2. We recommend that all outstanding agreed changes to police regulations and determinations be implemented by the end of 2026.

3.175 We recognise some of the PFEW's concerns over the NPCC's proposal to apply statutory employment changes automatically and concurrently when they are enacted by Parliament. However, given the delays we have just commented on, we support the implementation of this proposal, as a minimum, where the statutory employment changes exceed any provision already in police regulations. Where the existing position in police regulations is better than the new statutory provision in employment law, the existing police regulations should take precedence.

Recommendation 3a. We recommend that statutory employment changes which exceed any provision already in police regulations be applied automatically and concurrently to police officers when they are enacted by Parliament. Where the existing position in police regulations exceeds the new statutory provision in employment law, the existing police regulations should take precedence.

3.176 We highlight that this recommendation should be the minimum position. We consider that in many such cases policing should be looking to make provisions that go beyond the statutory minimum. In considering a forthcoming statutory provision, steps should be taken to determine whether the statutory minimum is appropriate in light of the particular demands of the role of police officers. This would signal clearer recognition of the special pressures on police officers and the importance of them being fully fit for duty when they return to the frontline after major life events. Any proposals for above statutory measures should take account of provision made by other public sector employers and be informed by the police service's broader workforce and wellbeing priorities, and should reflect a clear ambition to support officer wellbeing and workforce sustainability.

3.177 We observe that for efficiency and clarity, where possible these enhanced provisions should be enacted at the same time as the statutory changes are enacted in the wider economy. Therefore, we encourage parties to negotiate and work together in the PCF to agree enhanced provisions ahead of statutory changes. We also ask for prompt work by the Home Office to make the resulting changes to regulations and determinations so that they take effect concurrently with the law changes.

<u>Recommendation 3b.</u> We recommend that, in the interests of both officer wellbeing and operational effectiveness, statutory minima should not be treated as the default position for policing. In developing provision for police officers, due weight should be given to these two factors, alongside the levels of provision available elsewhere in the public sector. Any enhanced provisions should be negotiated through the Police Consultative Forum in advance of the statutory changes taking effect.

3.178 In the context of making provisions that go beyond statutory provision, we support the proposals relating to Neonatal Care Leave and Pay and Paternity (Bereavement) Leave that have been agreed through the PCF**. In line with Recommendation 2 above, we expect the necessary changes to regulations to be taken forward by the end of 2026.**

3.179 We welcome the PFEW's Charter for Change. Our initial view is that these proposals have the potential to improve the wellbeing of officers and their families. **We ask that these measures be considered in the PCF and the immediate priorities identified. The benefits, costs and risks of any proposals brought to us will need to be fully articulated. We would also expect to see an EIA. We ask for an update in the next pay round.**

3.180 In addition, we recommend that immediate action be taken on one proposal which we judge is important to officer wellbeing and public safety. Like the APCC we were disappointed that its proposal for two weeks maternity support leave on full pay was not taken forward in 2025. We judge that this would benefit officers, their families and the public, would be relatively low cost, and is already being used in some forces. We further judge that this measure would place officers in a better position to return to frontline policing duties, which can often be high-pressure. We observe that there is currently inconsistency in provision across forces. We therefore recommend that this policy should be introduced from 1 September 2026 and the Home Office should update police regulations as quickly as possible.

<u>Recommendation 4.</u> We recommend that police officers' maternity support entitlement be increased to two weeks on full pay from 1 September 2026.

Chapter 4 – Pay Proposals and Recommendations for 2026/27

Introduction

4.1 In this chapter we make recommendations on police officer pay and allowances for the 2026/27 pay year.

4.2 In our remit letter, the Minister for Policing and Crime asked us for a recommendation on how to apply the police officer pay award for 2026/27 for all ranks up to and including chief superintendent.

Basic pay award

4.3 The Home Office said that a pay award of up to 2.5% was affordable for most forces in 2026/27 though affordability pressures varied significantly between forces and some would face challenges even at this level of pay award. It said that any pay award above 2.5% would likely require difficult choices and financial reprioritisation to be made by policing. In its evidence, the Home Office set out its thinking on the pay award in the context of the overall remuneration for police officers including pensions. It asked that, in making recommendations on the remuneration for officers in the federated and superintending ranks, we "had regard to the views of the SSRB in respect of chief officers".

4.4 The joint statement by the NPCC, CPOSA and PSA said that pay was a factor affecting motivation, retention, and the attractiveness of policing as a career. It said that officers continued to report financial pressure and reduced disposable income despite recent awards. It observed that without a fair and competitive framework, policing could not retain experience or attract the skills required for modern public protection. The NPCC, CPOSA and PSA went on to say that they recognised the macro-economic and affordability constraints facing the Government. However, the statement pointed out that pay decisions had to balance these with the need to maintain a resilient, motivated workforce capable of delivering public safety.

4.5 The NPCC sought an annual pay uplift of 3.5% for the federated and superintending ranks from September 2026 with funding provided centrally over 2.5%. The NPCC stated that forces, in preparing their budgets, had been asked to assume 3% for a pay award in 2026/27, and 2.5% in both 2027/28 and 2028/29. The NPCC set its proposal in the context of the forecast for a fall in CPI by the end of 2026, loosening labour market conditions, expected pay settlements in the wider economy of between 3.1% and 3.5%, and issues with the competitiveness of police pay. The NPCC highlighted falling average earnings over time across the federated and superintending ranks. It also drew attention to market comparison information, which it said showed that for most ranks pay was only competitive when officers reached the top of their pay scale when including the P-factor. It said that these two factors had led it to conclude that officers deserved an above inflation award.

4.6 In oral evidence, the NPCC reiterated that while police officers deserved a competitive pay award, the service faced a difficult trade-off between pay and workforce capacity. It stated that 2.5% represented its assessment of ‘true affordability’ in 2026/27 in the absence of additional central funding, and that each additional 1% of pay uplift not centrally funded would cost policing around £156 million. The NPCC cautioned that exceeding affordability limits without full funding would lead to reductions in workforce capacity, and have consequences for overall services to the community.

4.7 The NPCC told us that its proposed pay figure of 3.5% was intended to reflect wider economic forecasts at the time its evidence was prepared. However, it stressed that this figure pre-dated renewed global instability and potential inflationary pressures. It noted that while pay at the top of police pay scales compared more favourably with other sectors, there were clear pinch points, particularly in the inspecting ranks.

4.8 The NPCC also emphasised that the funding position for the 2025/26 pay award continued to affect force budgets in 2026/27. It noted that the 2025/26 award had not been fully funded, with the shortfall effectively baked into future financial plans. It therefore urged us to make clear that any pay award above 2.5% would need to be fully funded centrally to avoid critical service impacts.

4.9 The MPS endorsed the proposal for a 3.5% pay rise in 2026/27. It highlighted London data which showed the particular challenges it faced in terms of salaries. The MPS stated that its budget assumed a 3% pay award for 2026/27, but that there was currently a £30 million gap in the draft budget. The MPS judged that any award above 3% was unaffordable without full additional funding. It explained that any settlement above that risked forcing further workforce reductions, undermining operational capacity, resilience and the progress achieved under phase 2 of its A New Met for London plan. The MPS also told us that the cumulative effect of the proposals being put forward meant that it agreed with the NPCC assessment that, nationally, 2.5% was the limit of affordability.

4.10 In oral evidence, the MPS confirmed that it was seeking a 3.5% uplift to pay in 2026/27 but that the assumption in its budget was a 3% pay award. Despite its financial pressures, it said it was taking a pragmatic approach to pay, given the need to recruit officers. It judged that a 3.5% uplift was the minimum necessary to recruit and retain officers, but emphasised that the award would need to be fully funded above 3%. It noted that a balance needed to be struck between the uplift that officers deserved and what was financially affordable. The MPS said that it recognised that recent geopolitical instability – particularly the current troubles in the Middle East – could increase financial pressures on officers. In that event, it said that a 3.5% pay award might not be sufficient. It added that, based on its current assessment, a 3.5% uplift was at the margins of what would provide officers with an appropriate pay increase. After its oral evidence session, the MPS told us that every 0.5% uplift above 3% was the equivalent of 127 FTE.

4.11 The APCC proposed a 2.5% pay award for 2026/27. It said that it agreed with the NPCC that 2.5% represented the true level of affordability for forces without additional funding being made available. However, it said that it would support the NPCC's proposal for a 3.5% uplift to police pay in 2026/27 provided that this was fully funded centrally. It said that it agreed that officers deserved a higher uplift should such funding be made available.

4.12 In oral evidence the APCC set out the dilemma it had faced in reaching a recommendation on a pay award for police officers in 2026/27. It said that, in normal circumstances, police officers deserved a pay award of at least 3.5%. However, it could only support a pay award at that level if it was fully funded, which would require additional funding from the Home Office. Assuming that no additional funding would be forthcoming, it endorsed a 2.5% pay award, which it said was at the limit of many forces' affordability.

4.13 The APCC said that a pay award of 3.5% or higher would increase the savings forces would need to make to fund the award, if no additional funding was available from the Home Office. In recent years, forces had primarily funded pay awards by reducing police staff numbers. However, the decision as part of police reform to remove police officer maintenance targets meant that some forces might instead seek to release resources by reducing police officer numbers.

4.14 The APCC recognised the risks of greater volatility in CPI, and of significant rises in the cost of living given recent global instability. It noted that council tax costs were increasing, as were mortgage rates. Recent financial instability had led banks to withdraw cheaper mortgage rates. The APCC also recognised that setting a pay award in this economic climate would be very challenging. Given the position at the time when the NPCC had submitted its evidence a 3.5% uplift might have made sense and delivered an above-inflation pay award. However, given recent developments, a pay award of around 3% – which was the assumption in forces' medium-term financial plans – might prove to be below inflation. The APCC said that there should be an onus on the Home Office and HM Treasury to recognise that the situation had changed significantly since the Comprehensive Spending Review, and that different choices might need to be made.

4.15 The PSA sought a fully funded, above-inflation pay award of at least CPI plus 1%, that was applied equally across all ranks, together with a recommendation for a longer-term strategy linked to a future multi-year deal. In oral evidence it observed that global events meant that oil and food prices were rising which were likely to affect CPI and have implications for the pay award which officers would receive in September 2026. The PSA explained that it was seeking a three-year agreement with some protections. It felt that such an agreement based on a CPI plus 1% arrangement would provide stability for both police officers and the police service.

4.16 We also received a range of views on our visits programme this year regarding the pay award for 2026/27. Officers wanted a fair pay award, with inflation generally being used as the measure of fairness. A number of officers again mentioned the need to catch up on years of real-terms pay degradation.

Information from the PFEW on the basic pay award

4.17 The PFEW said a minimum 7% annual pay award for the next three years was needed to halt a downward spiral in retention, morale and operational capability. It explained that this was required to address the real-terms erosion in pay since 2010 (21.7% for the federated ranks overall and 23.5% for constables) and to provide real improvements in take-home pay. It argued that such a multi-year settlement would improve retention, reduce attrition, support workforce planning, and signal long-term commitment to policing as a profession.

4.18 In support of its proposal, the PFEW highlighted that police officers worked longer and far less predictable hours than nearly all comparator professions. It pointed out that small pay rises failed to improve take-home pay. The PFEW set out the results of its December 2025 Pulse Survey that showed that 23% of respondents, and 25% in the rank of constable, intended to leave policing within two years. The PFEW argued that private sector earnings had risen by an average of 67% since 2010 in real terms. It pointed out that policing skills were valuable to prospective employers and that private sector employers could show more flexibility with remuneration when attracting talent from policing. It argued that a multi-year pay settlement would allow policing parties to focus on designing a pay structure and reward system as part of wider police reform and would provide security and assurances of progress while reform was taking place.

4.19 The PFEW expressed its view that a pay award of between 2.5% and 3.5% would represent a further real-terms reduction in police officer pay and would be inconsistent with the ambitions set out in the Police Reform White Paper. It highlighted survey results where 57% of respondents had said that they were more likely to consider leaving policing following publication of the White Paper. The PFEW contended that even a 3.5% award would leave many officers financially worse off once the rising cost of living and fiscal drag were taken into account, and that its proposal for a multi-year settlement of 7% per annum over three years was intended to restore pay closer to 2010 levels and provide workforce stability during the period of reform.

4.20 The PFEW placed particular emphasis on the P-factor. Drawing on analysis it had commissioned from Professor Turnbull, it suggested that police pay should be around 13% higher than comparable roles to remain competitive. The PFEW urged us to give more explicit consideration to the P-factor in framing our recommendations, warning that continued erosion of parity purchasing power risked further damaging morale and retention.

Our comment and recommendation on the basic pay award

4.21 In making our pay award recommendations we considered a number of factors which we discuss below.

Economic factors

4.22 The wider economy including the increased cost of living and the level of pay settlements are factors in our deliberations. Since parties submitted their written evidence, there have again been a number of largely unexpected geopolitical events, which have led to a new period of heightened economic uncertainty. The most recent outturns for inflation in April showed the CPI rate of inflation at 2.8% and CPIH rate at 3.0%. In its most recent Monetary Policy Report, published in April 2026, the Bank of England assessed the likely inflation risks from recent events and considered three potential scenarios, which showed that inflation was expected to range between 3.6% and 6.0% in the fourth quarter of 2026, depending on the length of the current crisis and the extent to which energy price rises fed through to other prices, such as in retail and hospitality, and to pay bargaining. This contrasts with the expectation in the Bank's February 2026 Monetary Policy Report that inflation in the fourth quarter of 2026 would be 2.0%, as well as evidence submitted by HM Treasury to the Pay Review Bodies in December 2025, which set out the OBR's forecast for inflation of 2.2% in FYE 2027. Police officers also continue to experience the cumulative effects on their living costs of the period of high inflation over the last five years. We remain mindful of the continued heightened uncertainty in the economic outlook and note the likely impact on inflation of the planned increase to the energy price cap in July. We note that, as we submit our report in late May, the conflict in the Middle East continues, and that even if a ceasefire were to be agreed there is likely to be a continued inflationary effect on the economy. We observe that, in its evidence, HM Treasury advised us to take full account of the latest data and forecasts.

The labour market

4.23 Recent data suggest that the labour market has continued to weaken, with vacancies falling, unemployment rising and the number of PAYE jobs falling. At the same time, earnings growth has been falling although it remains above inflation: annual growth in Average Weekly Earnings excluding bonuses was 3.4% for the whole economy in the three months to March 2026. We note that the latest estimates for median pay settlements ranged between 3.0% and 3.8% as we finalised our recommendations, and that these settlements remain the most relevant comparators for the annual pay awards we consider. We also note that as the vast majority of pay settlements happen in January to April, expected increases in inflation are unlikely to be reflected in pay settlement data until next year. As in previous years, we take account of these labour market developments as part of the wider context for our recommendations, alongside the specific recruitment, retention and workforce challenges facing the police service.

Policing environment

4.24 We note the evidence we have received that forces are experiencing significantly increased demand and complexity across almost all functions. While recorded crime is falling in some areas, such as homicide and firearms incidents, the crime severity score continues to rise, largely driven by an increase in fraud. We note that the joint statement submitted to us by the NPCC, CPOSA and PSA highlighted that demand is rising in both volume and complexity, especially in high-harm areas such as safeguarding, online crime and mental health. The joint statement emphasised that skilled and experienced officers are required to tackle these challenges. We are aware that the role of the modern constable has changed significantly in recent years. We observe that the new workforce strategy promised in the White Paper will provide an opportunity to develop specialist career pathways to help the police service respond effectively.

4.25 Alongside this, forces are working to meet the Government's ambitious targets to strengthen neighbourhood policing and halve knife crime and violence against women and girls over the next decade. We also note that geopolitical events, such as the conflict in the Middle East, contribute to changes in demand. We judge the police service is facing a period of sustained and, in some respects, exceptional demand particularly, but not exclusively, in London. We point out that the terrorism threat level has been increased to 'SEVERE' and some police forces are facing prolonged periods of high intensity public order and protest policing. We observe that this is likely to intensify if there is a period of significant economic instability, particularly in the busy summer months. During our visits programme this year we heard from officers about the level of risk and accountability that they carried, and the perception of this seemed to be increasing. The police service also needs the capacity and capabilities to deliver the changes set out in the Police Reform White Paper, which the Home Secretary described as a new model for policing. The service will need high-calibre officers with the right skills to meet these challenges effectively, and police remuneration needs to reflect that.

Recruitment and retention

4.26 We observe that we have seen little evidence to suggest that the police service as a whole is developing a problem in recruiting the volume of officers needed to maintain current police officer levels. We note that, nationally, the police service has been able over the last year to meet its officer maintenance targets. However, we recognise that forces need to recruit new officers to meet the commitments in the Government's Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee. However, recruitment is about more than officer numbers. The service needs to ensure that the officers it is recruiting and retaining are those with the attitudes and skills to deal with evolving social norms and the ever-increasing complexity of demand driven by technology, and to continue the process of rebuilding trust in their communities and deliver the police reform programme. We also observe that, as we said elsewhere in this report, the police need to reflect the communities which they serve. This means that diversity needs to improve. We are conscious that there may be a resistance among some high-calibre candidates from all communities to joining the police service, especially given changes to both public perceptions of the police and the increasingly challenging operating environment. While we accept that pay and reward are not the only factors that are required to attract suitable candidates, we judge that it is vital that the remuneration package is attractive and competitive. The police service also needs officers and leaders who can deliver the vision set out in the Police Reform White Paper over the long term.

4.27 We are aware that different police forces face different labour markets. However, we note that forces have been able to start new recruits on either pay point 1 or pay point 2 since April 2025. We acknowledge the ongoing challenges facing the MPS in relation to recruitment and recognise the wider risks to other forces if the MPS is unable to meet the operational demand it faces. County lines crime (the practice of establishing criminal routes, notably associated with drugs and modern-day slavery, from major cities into other areas) remains a significant challenge for the MPS, with around one-third of this type of crime linked to London and exported to other police force areas. We are therefore mindful of the need to avoid crime ‘radiating out’ from the capital as a result of recruitment challenges in the MPS, a force which accounts for around one-quarter of police officers in England and Wales. While we note that financial pressures mean the MPS plans to shrink in FYE 2027, we observe that pay needs to be set at a level that still enables it to meet its reduced recruitment targets and manage attrition, given the cost of living in London.

4.28 We note that, nationally, resignation rates are falling and attrition is declining. We observe that the overall attrition rate of 6% in the police service compares well with other organisations. However, we point out that any turnover represents a substantial cost to the police service, and that minimising attrition enables resources to be used as effectively as possible. We also observe that headline recruitment and attrition figures do not, on their own, provide assurance about workforce sustainability during a period of significant organisational uncertainty, as will occur during the implementation of the police reform programme. This risk is heightened by the current absence of opportunities for mid-career entry at more senior ranks and a workforce that is, on average, less experienced. This increases the importance of retaining existing officers to ensure future capability at supervisory and leadership levels. In addition, we observe that the voluntary resignation rates have been increasing gradually for the sergeant and inspecting ranks in recent years. This is a cause for concern, given these are the officers on which the service will rely to deliver the frontline changes envisaged by the police reform programme.

4.29 In addition, we point out that the reforms themselves, including potential structural changes to force configurations, may give rise to a period of heightened uncertainty within the workforce. For instance, these changes are likely to affect the geographical areas in which officers could be deployed and their commuting arrangements. In the absence of sufficient clarity and timely implementation, this creates a risk of both ‘flight’, as experienced officers choose to leave the service, and ‘blight’, as potential recruits are deterred from joining, with implications for future capability and leadership capacity. In this context we highlight the point made by the Home Office in oral evidence that it was vital to ensure stability in policing during the reform process. It told us that the service had lost many officers during austerity and then had made rapid gains during the Uplift Programme. It underlined that this had led to a number of challenges for the service, including around experience levels.

4.30 We note that around two-thirds of current voluntary resignations continue to come from officers with less than five years’ service. We note that the pressures created by prolonged periods of high-intensity public order policing are most likely to fall on this group of young frontline officers. In our last report, we noted the changing nature of the workforce and the attractiveness of portfolio and varied careers to a new generation of young, mobile workers. Workers increasingly place a premium on flexible working that supports wellbeing and an appropriate work-life balance. We set out our concerns below on the current impact of policing on officer wellbeing, and we observe that this may pose a risk to retention in due course. The police reform programme and the new workforce strategy provide an opportunity to modernise the police workforce. However, policing by its nature will inevitably limit the degree of flexibility it can offer officers. Police remuneration needs to recognise those limitations.

Impact of policing on officers’ personal lives

4.31 We remain concerned about the impact of the practicalities and pressures of policing on officers’ personal lives. In our last report, we acknowledged that policing is a profession in which officers must be available to respond to unforeseen events, including being redeployed at short notice, sometimes to assist a different force.

4.32 We also recognise that resourcing pressures within forces present challenges and can lead to last-minute changes. However, there remains a persistent reliance on goodwill, flexibility and personal sacrifice by officers that is increasingly unsustainable, with serious implications for morale and motivation, and a need to review wider terms and conditions. Short-notice rostering, cancelled rest days and disrupted leave are routinely treated as normal rather than exceptional, with a significant impact on officers’ personal lives and families. This is out of step with a modern, sustainable workforce model and undermines morale, wellbeing and retention. We also note our concern that in some cases, particularly in relation to rest days, regulations are not always being adhered to.

4.33 Some of the pressures described in policing regulations as the ‘exigencies of duty’ are compensated for through the allowance system. However, there are also wider, repeated disruptions that affect officers and their families. These include regular abstractions from neighbourhood teams and redeployment to new posts, sometimes in different geographical locations (for example, the new rotation system introduced by the MPS). Officers are increasingly required to move rapidly from routine duties to situations of serious personal risk, often with limited notice and under significant public and political scrutiny. This also includes assaults on officers and exposure to traumatic incidents, which can undermine wellbeing. Sustained exposure to violence, trauma and critical incidents can lead to deteriorating mental health, which in turn affects home life, relationships and caring responsibilities. Officers are also regularly filmed by members of the public while on duty, with footage shared online. The loss of privacy can have significant impacts that extend beyond the individual officer to their friends and family.

4.34 The police service rightly expects its officers to be resilient and adaptable. However, these pressures, when combined with the exigencies of duty, can significantly disrupt the personal lives of officers and their families. This, in turn, has consequences for officer wellbeing. We have taken this into account in making our recommendation for a pay award for 2026/27.

Morale and motivation

4.35 We note that staff association surveys continue to show low levels of morale. Although the PSA survey showed some improvement in personal morale, a higher proportion of respondents reported low morale in their department, force, and the police service as a whole. We are also conscious that the surveys show the drivers of low morale and the intention to leave are complex and include pay alongside other factors, such as the way the police are treated by the public and the government. We also highlight earlier in our report changes to both public perceptions of the police and the increasingly challenging operating environment in terms of greater scrutiny and some loss of public trust and confidence. While this has implications for recruitment, it also risks, in our view, diminishing the intrinsic rewards of policing, including the sense of public service, professional judgement, and purpose that derive from protecting communities and making a tangible difference to people’s lives. We observe that such rewards are important to sustaining morale and are likely to be a key factor in retention. In their absence, and in advance of the delivery of possible benefits in terms of better training, leadership, and other opportunities through police reform, more visible rewards in the form of better pay are likely to be necessary.

4.36 We agree with the NPCC that workers are placing increasing value on organisational culture, wellbeing, work-life balance and flexible working. We note the NPCC’s conclusion, drawn in part from its 2025 Workforce Wellbeing Survey, that morale is heavily influenced by how valued officers feel amid rising demand and limited capacity. It told us that pay interacted closely with workload and wellbeing pressures, meaning that improving morale required acknowledging that remuneration conveyed organisational value and fairness, not just financial reward.

4.37 We judge that morale is closely linked to perceptions of value, particularly where officers face constraints that do not apply to other workers, including limited flexibility, unpredictable duties, and an inability to withdraw labour. We also observe that morale is affected by personal wellbeing, and we have set out our concerns about this in paragraphs 4.31 to 4.34. In that context, based on conversations that we have had with police officers as part of our visits programme, we note that what appears to be an almost constant breach of regulations in some areas – particularly in relation to rest days – will affect officers' perceptions of how valued they are by the police service.

4.38 We judge that a key test of how fairly officers are treated and the extent to which they feel valued will be how the pay award compares with that received by other parts of the public sector. We note that, in the most recent PFEW Pay and Morale Survey, 70% of officers felt they were paid unfairly compared with other key workers. We note that a pay award which is seen to lag materially behind comparable settlements risks reinforcing feelings of undervaluation and could have a disproportionate negative effect on morale, even where recruitment and headline retention indicators remain relatively stable.

4.39 In this context, we are aware of the 2026/27 pay awards recently announced by the Government over the last few months for other parts of the public sector. These included: 3.3% for NHS Agenda for Change staff; 3.5% for prison officers and doctors; and 3.75% for dentists in primary care. We note that the Pay Review Body reports on which these were based were submitted to Government either shortly before or shortly after the current conflict in the Middle East began, and well before the Bank of England's latest Monetary Policy Report, issued in late April, outlining three possible scenarios for the future path of inflation this year.

The absence of the right to industrial action and fairness

4.40 We are conscious of the prohibition on police officers taking industrial action, in contrast to the vast majority of employees across the public and private sectors. Parties highlighted this issue in their evidence to us this year. The NPCC emphasised that officers have no recourse to industrial action and rely on our recommendations. The joint statement from the NPCC, CPOSA and PSA pointed out that "police officers are required to move towards danger, not away from it. This unique obligation, combined with restrictions on industrial action, places a heightened duty on government to ensure fair, competitive and sustainable pay and conditions".

4.41 The PFEW argued that policing, and in particular constable pay, had not kept pace with other public sector comparators and that this was a consequence of other professions having the right to strike and having used that right in recent years. We agree with both the staff associations and the employer representatives that, in the interests of fairness, this restriction must be recognised in setting a pay award for police officers.

4.42 We highlighted above that a key test of how fairly officers are treated and the extent to which they feel valued will be how the pay award compares with that received by other parts of the public sector. We also drew attention to the 2026/27 pay awards recently announced by the Government for other parts of the public sector. We observe that at least one of those groups is already taking industrial action, partly as a response to their pay award of 3.5%.

4.43 We also observe that where officers are expected to forgo industrial rights, regulations and entitlements must be honoured consistently and fairly. As we observe in other parts of this report, that is currently not always the case. Combined with this, we are also conscious that changes in both public perception of policing and public and social attitudes and behaviours have made the environment in which police officers are operating, especially those on response teams, more challenging. In our view, that has increased the risks to the personal safety and wellbeing of officers. We have therefore given weight to the inability of police officers to take industrial action in formulating our recommendation for a pay award for 2026/27.

Police reform including convergence

4.44 We note that some of the reforms in the Police Reform White Paper, in particular the establishment of the NPS and other structural changes following the independent review of forces, have the potential to create significant uncertainty among police officers. We observe that these changes will have implications for recruitment and retention and will influence officers' thinking about their career paths. As we noted earlier in this report, we are concerned that thinking about, for instance, the development of a new workforce model for the NPS has not yet really begun.

4.45 In oral evidence, the Home Office emphasised that it was vital to keep stability in policing during the reform process. It observed that the service had lost many officers during austerity and then had made rapid gains during the Uplift Programme. This had led to a number of challenges for the service, including around experience levels.

Affordability

4.46 We balanced all these factors with affordability. We note the evidence from the NPCC that forces have been asked to assume a 3% pay award in 2026/27. However, the NPCC also told us that this was not an affordability assessment. It explained that 2.5% represented its assessment of true affordability and emphasised that it would require central funding above 2.5%. The NPCC also emphasised that its assessment reflected a difficult trade-off between pay and workforce capacity and that, in the absence of additional central funding, any award above 2.5% would have direct consequences for officer and staff numbers.

4.47 We are conscious that the Home Office, APCC and MPS have very similar concerns. The Home Office highlighted that a pay award of up to 2.5% was affordable for most forces in 2026/27, though affordability pressures varied significantly and some forces faced challenges even at this level. It emphasised that anything above this would be likely to require difficult choices and financial reprioritisation by policing. We note that the Home Office drew attention to the pressures that four consecutive years of above-affordability pay awards had placed on police budgets, particularly as officer numbers had increased and new recruits had progressed through the pay scales. The APCC told us that it was recommending an award of 2.5% because, although officers deserved 3.5%, a 2.5% uplift was the limit of what was affordable without additional funding. We observe that these views were consistent with the NPCC's oral evidence on the cumulative and compounding impact of above-affordability awards on future budgets. We note that after oral evidence, the MPS told us that every 0.5% above a 3% uplift to pay would equate to the loss of 127 FTE.

4.48 The evidence we received from HM Treasury emphasised its new approach to the use of reserves and the limits on their use. We note that HM Treasury said that if awards were recommended above the level that departments had made provision for within their budgets, the departments in question would need to consider carefully whether the additional costs could be offset through savings. It also warned that departments would need to consider the impact of any award on their budgets beyond 2026/27. We are aware that the Home Office echoed this in its evidence and emphasised that pay awards must be funded from within Spending Review 2025 departmental budgets, with no access to reserves, and that awards above budgeted levels would require offsetting savings or productivity gains. We understand that difficult decisions and trade-offs were required within the Home Office to reprioritise budgets to release £120 million to support forces with the additional costs associated with the 4.2% award in 2025/26. We are also aware that the Home Office drew attention to the additional funding it had allocated to the police service since 2022 to support above-affordability pay awards. We note the Home Office's position that this approach is not sustainable.

4.49 However, we observe that reaching a view on affordability is complex. We point out that HM Treasury and the Home Office have described similar concerns in recent years but additional resources have always been provided by the Home Office to help meet the cost of the pay award. We note that the NPCC cautioned in oral evidence that this historical pattern should not be assumed to continue, particularly given the revised approach to reserves and the constraints of current Spending Review settlements.

4.50 We are aware of the financial pressures facing the police service. The NPCC has told us that the latest financial survey of forces indicated a £0.4 billion shortfall in 2026/27, rising to £0.6 billion in subsequent years. In oral evidence, the NPCC further told us that each additional 1% pay uplift not funded centrally would cost the service around £156 million. We are conscious that the financial position of forces varies, as does their ability to fund a pay award for 2026/27. The proportion of funding coming from the council tax precept varies significantly between forces and, in our last report, we expressed concern about the operation of the funding formula and its implications for some forces.

4.51 We note that special permission has been granted for six forces to receive extraordinary precept increases and that three other forces have received exceptional grant funding. We also note the National Audit Office's report published in November 2025, which stated that "the pressures facing policing are growing and current approaches to managing these pressures risk damaging services that police forces provide". The NPCC told us that exceeding affordability limits without full central funding would lead to reductions in officer and staff numbers, increased vacancies, and deteriorating service delivery, at a time when demand and public expectations continued to rise. We also note the NPCC's evidence that in some forces no pay increase could be afforded without efficiency savings. As in previous years, we have received no detailed evidence on the trade-offs forces face in setting their budgets for FYE 2027, or the likely impact of those trade-offs on the public. The NPCC's view was that, beyond a pay award of 2.5%, critical service cuts would be required.

4.52 We are conscious that around 83% of force budgets are accounted for by the pay of police officers and staff. We observe that, until now, the need for forces to maintain officer numbers has constrained their ability to manage budgets flexibly. This has meant that some forces that needed to reduce costs have only been able to do so by reducing police staff numbers. We have expressed concern in our previous reports about the risks that this has created of reverse civilianisation. We welcome the decision in the Police Reform White Paper to remove the obligation on forces to meet police officer maintenance targets.

4.53 We welcome the efficiencies and productivity gains which the Home Office considers will result from both the current efficiency programme and the proposals in the Police Reform White Paper. We note that the Home Office has told us that the Government's ambition is to deliver £350 million in police service efficiency savings by 2029. We also observe that plans to restructure and reduce the number of forces, plus programmes to invest in technology and AI, should free up some capacity. The national AI centre for policing, due to launch in June 2026, is expected to automate 6 million hours of work annually, equivalent to freeing up 3,000 officers for the frontline. We note the Home Office's position that these changes will require upfront investment and not deliver immediate cashable savings; however, we judge that, over the next few years, they will create additional flexibility.

4.54 We also observe that in recent months the UK Government has announced 2026/27 pay awards for other parts of the public sector, which were significantly above the

2.5% affordability limit set by many departments. This demonstrates, as we have said in previous reports, that affordability is ultimately a matter of choice. While such decisions may be difficult, there are always options for reprioritising spending, both within and between departments.

Pay recommendation

4.55 Since our remit letter was issued and our policing parties submitted their written evidence the geopolitical situation and the inflation outlook have significantly changed, and continue to do so. In its evidence to us this year, HM Treasury placed more emphasis on the use of forecast data this year. When we received our remit letter in February 2026 and some other Pay Review Bodies were submitting their recommendations to Government for pay awards for other parts of the public sector from April 2026, CPI inflation had been projected to fall back close to the 2.0% target by the third quarter of 2026. The current conflict in the Middle East began on 28 February. That conflict has changed the economic outlook since the latest OBR forecasts in March, and increased the uncertainty around other forecasts. The Bank of England's latest Monetary Policy Report presented three potential scenarios which were released in late April, all pointing to higher inflation than had previously been expected. We observe that the Bank's scenarios were affected by assumptions on the length of the current crisis and the extent to which energy price rises fed through to other prices, such as in retail and hospitality, and to pay bargaining. We note that, as we submit our report in late May, the conflict in the Middle East continues, and that even if a ceasefire were to be agreed there is likely to be a continued inflationary effect on the economy. We also observe that transport inflation is higher than the overall rate, fuel prices remain volatile and the energy price cap is due to increase in July, in advance of when the police pay award will take effect in September 2026.

4.56 To this rapidly changing environment we have added consideration of the factors that we set out in paragraphs 4.22 to 4.54 above, including pay trends in the public and private sectors, the impact of policing on officers' personal lives, the prohibition on industrial action, and the need to recruit and retain high-calibre officers (particularly given the increasingly attractive flexible working opportunities offered by other employers) during a period of potential uncertainty as a result of police reforms. The conflict in the Middle East has intensified demands on the police in certain areas. Policing is, for that and other reasons, facing a period of sustained and, in some respects, exceptional demand. The terrorism threat level has been increased to 'SEVERE', and some police forces are facing prolonged periods of high-intensity public order and protest policing. We observe that these pressures may be compounded during the forthcoming busy summer months, when factors such as major events, seasonal demand and workforce availability are likely to place additional demands on policing. In our view, this, combined with changes to both public perceptions of the police and the increasingly challenging risks faced by officers, diminishes the intrinsic rewards of policing. These rewards are important to morale and motivation but in their absence, and in advance of the delivery of possible benefits in terms of better training, leadership, and other opportunities through police reform, more visible rewards in the form of pay are necessary. For these reasons, we judge that this year it is vital that police officers receive a pay award that is likely to be above the CPI rate of inflation when the award takes effect. Therefore, balancing these factors against affordability, we conclude that an annual pay award in 2026/27 of 3.9% across all ranks up to and including chief superintendent is the most suitable approach.

Recommendation 5. We recommend a consolidated increase of 3.9% to all police officer pay points for all ranks up to and including chief superintendent from 1 September 2026.

4.57 The 2023 NPCC review of the Dog Handlers' Allowance for England and Wales recommended that the allowance should increase automatically in line with annual pay awards. The new rate, in line with our pay recommendation, is contained in Appendix F.

Review of allowances

4.58 Our remit letter asked that we consider proposals resulting from year two of the NPCC's review of allowances, taking into account the views of policing stakeholders. The Home Office said that any increases to allowances must be funded from within existing budget allocations. It requested that we have regard to the views of the SSRB when considering allowances that also applied to chief officers.

4.59 The NPCC said that any policy changes to allowances and other cash payments should be considered on a case-by-case basis. It pointed out that certain allowances, such as the Protection and On-call Allowances, were fixed-value compensation payments, and not time-based or inflation-sensitive. It said that automatically uprating all allowances would be inappropriate and would not consider wider market comparators to ensure value for the public purse.

4.60 It explained that all allowances and other cash payments were now subject to a three-year review cycle, unless evidence necessitated an earlier review date. It said that the reviews considered the policy conditions (e.g. rationale) and value.

4.61 The NPCC set out the results from year two of its three-year review of allowances. It also told us that following an employment tribunal, it was proposing an amendment to Regulation 34 to restrict the payment of allowances to officers entitled to payments in accordance with Regulation 24.

4.62 In oral evidence, the Home Office said that the review of allowances had been a relatively piecemeal process. The Home Office envisaged a more coherent and consistent approach, particularly once the workforce strategy was in place.

4.63 The APCC said that it welcomed the approach of reviewing allowances from the perspective of officer wellbeing, where applicable. It observed that the role of a police officer was demanding and could involve long working hours and short-notice demands that impacted on personal and family life. It said that it was important that the framework of allowances and conditions that supported this way of working fairly compensated officers for the calls on their time. However, it said the framework should also allow and encourage them to take time off that had been accrued to allow them to rest and recuperate from a busy, demanding working life.

4.64 The PSA again proposed that the On-call Allowance, which had been reviewed by the NPCC in 2024, be increased to £60 for each 24-hour period for the superintending ranks (which after income tax at the higher rate of 40% would amount to £36 net). In addition, the PSA called for the allowance to become reckonable for pension purposes. The PSA highlighted data from its 2025 Pay and Wellbeing Survey which showed that more than 95% of respondents performed on-call duties (typically 1 to 14 days per month) alongside their normal roles. It said that around 91% of respondents believed the current allowance was inadequate given the risks and demands involved, and the same proportion considered superintending ranks' on-call responsibilities to be greater than those of federated ranks.

4.65 In oral evidence the PSA observed that when the On-call Allowance had originally been put in place it had been designed to deal with relatively unusual circumstances. The PSA observed that at that time, chief officers had often dealt with on-call duties. The PSA explained that on call was now an important function of the job for superintendents. The PSA described some of the duties that its officers needed to cover while being on call including matters such as Domestic Violence Prevention Orders, responsibilities under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, and custody issues.

Information from the PFEW on the review of allowances

4.66 The PFEW stated that allowances must track inflation, otherwise they would fall in real terms every year. The PFEW said it judged that the PCF had been used as a forum for NPCC to report back rather than being a mechanism for genuine engagement on allowances. It reiterated this point during its discussion with us and highlighted the importance of a constructive dialogue.

4.67 The PFEW rejected the NPCC's proposed amendment to regulations so that allowances would only be paid where an officer was entitled to base pay. The PFEW argued that the existing provisions governing the payment of allowances during reduced or nil pay should remain in place. It said that there should not be an automatic trigger to withdraw payment when an officer was on unpaid leave, other than for those allowances paid to meet an expense which then ceased. The PFEW told us that it had not been consulted about the proposed change.

4.68 The PFEW also reiterated its proposals for the Away from Home Allowance and the Hardship Allowance. These allowances had been reviewed as part of the first year of the NPCC's review of allowances. The PFEW welcomed our 2025 recommendation to raise the On-call Allowance to £35. However, the PFEW asked that we make a clear recommendation in 2026 that the NPCC bring forward draft guidance to forces on the management and use of on call to the PCF for discussion and agreement with the staff associations and the APCC.

Our comment and recommendations on the NPCC's review allowances

4.69 We welcome the second year of the NPCC's review of police allowances. As we set out in our report last year, we again emphasise that allowances should properly reflect disruption, risk and welfare impacts, rather than normalising excessive or poorly planned demands on officers. We are concerned that allowances and rest-day arrangements no longer operate as intended. We note that short-notice rostering, cancelled rest days and disrupted leave are increasingly treated as routine rather than exceptional, with a significant impact on officers' personal lives and families. This exploitation of officers is out of step with a modern, sustainable workforce model and undermines morale, wellbeing and retention. It remains our strong view that allowances should act as a financial disincentive, encouraging forces to manage workloads and workforce planning effectively and to avoid making excessive demands on officers.

4.70 We welcome the NPCC's recognition that "Historically, pay and reward structures have incentivised activity, such as overtime, rather than prioritising rest and recovery, contributing to a culture of long hours". We strongly agree that "there needs to be a shift which values planned rest and encourages proactive workforce management".

4.71 In our last report, we noted that in some cases allowances may be compensating officers for poor management practices, possibly arising from resourcing pressures, that are undermining wellbeing and work-life balance. We said that these underlying problems should be addressed. We therefore welcome the NPCC's acknowledgement "that good workforce management and resource planning does mitigate disruption", and its decision to support forces by commissioning Skills for Justice to develop a national approach to workforce planning.

4.72 While welcoming our recommendation to increase the On-call Allowance to £35 in 2025, following the first year of the NPCC's review of allowances, we note the staff associations' continuing concerns about this allowance. We reiterate our view that we accept the findings of the NPCC's review of On-call Allowance that the allowance is a compensatory payment as opposed to a payment for work undertaken. However, we recognise the pressures that on-call duties place particularly on senior officers and consider this a priority for forces in improving workforce management.

4.73 Since our last report, the NPCC has reviewed the compensation arrangements for the inspecting and superintending ranks when on call becomes duty time. We strongly welcome the NPCC's decision, following that review, to endorse the development of a framework that allows time off in lieu for hours worked while on call at plain time, within defined parameters. This proposal could address concerns expressed around the lack of appropriate recompense for the frequency, demands and personal impact of being on call for those ranks, while remaining consistent with the principle that the On-call Allowance itself is not intended as payment for work undertaken. In our view, the NPCC should accelerate the development of this framework as a matter of urgency given ongoing concerns around the level of pressure that on-call duties place on senior officers.

Recommendation 6. We recommend that the NPCC develops and agrees the framework for the inspecting and superintending ranks that allows time off in lieu for hours worked while on call at plain time, within defined parameters as quickly as possible for implementation at the latest by April 2027 as planned.

4.74 We also observe that the NPCC said last year that it would shortly issue national guidance on the use of the On-call Allowance to reconfirm the regulations. This has not yet happened. We note that the NPCC told us in its evidence this year that it was progressing the development of national on-call guidance to provide greater clarity on typical on-call roles, frequency, when on call becomes duty time, and monitoring and review arrangements. The PFEW has requested we recommend that the NPCC brings forward its draft guidance to forces on the management and use of on-call arrangements. In our view this work also needs to be completed as a matter of urgency.

4.75 We therefore recommend that the NPCC brings forward its draft national on-call guidance to the PCF for discussion and agreement with the staff associations and the APCC, and then issues the agreed guidance to forces, without delay. We observe that it is vital that the PCF provides a forum for genuine and constructive engagement between parties on this and many other issues we set out in the report.

Recommendation 7. We recommend that the NPCC finalises its national on-call guidance and submits it to the PCF for discussion as quickly as possible, for implementation at the latest by the end of 2026 as planned.

Our comment on the future review of allowances

4.76 We acknowledge the work that has been done to review allowances in recent years in a more systematic way on a three-year cycle. We recognise that this has allowed allowances that have not been considered for a number of years to be reviewed and updated. We judge that this has benefited both the police service and individual officers. However, as we highlighted in our last report, the wider police reform programme and the new workforce strategy are likely to have long-term implications for allowances, which should, in due course, inform the future development of the framework for police allowances.

4.77 We therefore consider that a wider review will be necessary that takes into account the changes that will result from the implementation of the reforms in the White Paper. That review needs to consider allowances in the context of changes to police remuneration as a whole. Rather than reviewing each individual allowance, the review needs to consider what the allowances are attempting to achieve and the best approach to delivering those outcomes. Any proposed changes from that exercise should be brought to us in due course once they have been properly considered through the PCF, and there is a clear articulation of the strategic issue they are seeking to address and how that fits with police reform, improving outcomes for the public; and wider changes on remuneration. They also need to be fully costed and an EIA and risk assessment have been completed. Given its planned transfer to the NPS, the NCA should be fully involved in such a review. In addition, as part of the process, policing parties in England and Wales should also liaise with partners in Northern Ireland. Policing is, of course, a devolved matter in Northern Ireland; nevertheless, policing parties in Northern Ireland strongly support the principle of parity with England and Wales with regard to pay and allowances. We recognise that this review should follow on from the development of the police workforce strategy. We note that once that strategy is in place we are minded to put forward a formal recommendation for a wider fundamental review of remuneration that will enable allowances to be considered in the round.

4.78 In the sections below, we comment on a number of individual allowances, and we suggest that some of these allowances should be reconsidered as part of that wider work, taking into account our observations. In some cases, we are proposing more immediate changes to an allowance if we consider the circumstances to warrant action.

Unsocial Hours Allowance

4.79 The NPCC set out the outcome of its review of the Unsocial Hours Allowance. It explained that the allowance, which applied to all federated ranks, was paid at 10% of the basic hourly pay and covered work undertaken between 20:00 and 06:00. The NPCC reported that other parts of the public sector generally paid a higher unsocial hours premium. It set out a number of examples from other parts of the public sector. However, it told us that some schemes applied to narrower hours, whereas policing's 10% covered a wide 10-hour window. The NPCC pointed out that policing also offered other forms of compensation (such as overtime and rest day working payments). The NPCC explained that the review concluded that the Unsocial Hours Allowance should remain unchanged and non-pensionable. It explained that unsocial hours were an inherent feature of policing and that the Unsocial Hours Allowance was intended as recognition, not full compensation. The NPCC argued that the current rate of 10% remained proportionate. It also told us that making the Unsocial Hours Allowance pensionable would create a significant long-term cost for forces disproportionate to the intended purpose of the allowance, which was to recognise variable hours worked rather than form part of core salary. The MPS told us it agreed with the NPCC's approach on the Unsocial Hours Allowance.

Information from the PFEW on the Unsocial Hours Allowance

4.80 The PFEW explained that the Unsocial Hours Allowance lagged behind those paid across the private and public sectors, especially when compared with those offered in other emergency and healthcare occupations. It proposed that the rate on Friday, Saturday and Sunday should be increased to 20% and that the allowance should be made pensionable. The PFEW argued that the current 10% rate did not reflect demand or market comparators especially at the weekend. It also highlighted other roles that received a rate of between 20% and 33% of basic pay and cited even higher rates at the weekend particularly for NHS workers. It pointed out that police staff received higher premia for weekend or night working.

4.81 The PFEW explained that working nights and weekends had well-documented health, safety and wellbeing impacts, affecting officers' physical and mental health, family life and finances. It pointed out that childcare or dependent care at night and weekends was rare and expensive. It added that this burden of working unsocial hours fell hardest on the lowest paid officers. It argued that increasing the weekend rate would ensure officers were properly compensated, promote fairness, support wellbeing, and act as an incentive for forces to improve workforce planning so only necessary staff were rostered. The PFEW said that raising the Unsocial Hours Allowance at the weekends would also help attract experienced officers into public-facing roles.

4.82 The PFEW highlighted that the NPCC had not engaged with its proposals to enhance the allowance or make it pensionable, despite evidence that police officers were outliers when compared with other public-sector workforces.

Our comment on the Unsocial Hours Allowance

4.83 We note the conclusions of the NPCC's review of the Unsocial Hours Allowance. We observe that, of the allowances reviewed so far, this is received by the largest proportion of officers: we estimate that around 90% of constables and 85% of sergeants receive the allowance. We also observe that the median value of payments to both constables and sergeants is just under £600 per year. We judge that the Unsocial Hours Allowance currently accounts for around 1% of the pay bill.

4.84 We have considered carefully the arguments presented by both the NPCC and the PFEW. We note the NPCC's evidence that, while its market comparisons indicate that the unsocial hours element for police officers is set at a lower percentage than in other public sector workforces, direct comparisons are difficult because base pay and wider terms and conditions vary.

4.85 We accept that, unlike in some other parts of the public sector, unsocial hours are an inherent and expected feature of policing. However, we observe that the same is true of the ambulance service, parts of the NHS and the prison service, although we recognise that their terms and conditions differ significantly from those of the police service, making direct comparisons challenging.

4.86 In our previous reports, and in Chapter 3 of this report, we have set out our concerns about the workload and the structure of base pay for inspectors and chief inspectors. We note that, although the inspecting ranks are not eligible for overtime, they are eligible for the Unsocial Hours Allowance. However, the median value of these payments is much lower than for constables and sergeants.

4.87 On balance, we accept the NPCC's conclusion that Unsocial Hours Allowance should remain at 10% and should remain non-pensionable at this time. However, we recognise the arguments for a higher rate, particularly for weekend working, and the evidence on the impacts of unsocial hours on wellbeing and family life. **In our view, that allowance should be reconsidered as part of the wider review we proposed at paragraph 4.77.**

Acting Up Allowance

4.88 The NPCC described the purpose of the Acting Up Allowance and the current problems with the allowance. The NPCC told us that its review identified a growing reliance on acting-up arrangements, often for extended periods. It added that forces reported favouring acting up due to the flexibility it offered in comparison with the use of temporary promotion.

4.89 The NPCC recognised the merits of removing the Acting Up Allowance in favour of paying temporary salary from day one and simplifying the framework. The NPCC reported that the modelling it had undertaken suggested its removal would cost around £9.2 million per year which was not feasible in the current financial climate. It told us that it proposed to issue guidance to forces to clarify the correct use of acting up and temporary promotion under existing regulations. It explained that at the same time it intended to improve the central collection of data on the Acting Up Allowance. It said that it intended to conduct a further review of the allowance in two years' time which would consider its simplification and potential removal at a lower cost to the service. The MPS told us it agreed with the NPCC's approach on the Acting Up Allowance.

4.90 After oral evidence, the NPCC provided further information on the Acting Up Allowance. It explained that the Memorandum of Understanding on the allowance, last updated in 2019, stated that where it was anticipated at the outset – and confirmed in writing by the force in advance – that time spent in the higher rank would exceed 56 days, the officer should be temporarily promoted at that point. It explained that, for those officers, the 10-day qualifying period set out in Police Regulation 34, Annex UU, would not apply. The NPCC also committed to a formal review of the Memorandum of Understanding in 2026/27, including explicit consideration of whether the 10-day qualifying period remained appropriate or should be removed altogether. It said that any agreed changes would be progressed through the PCF and reported back to us.

Information from the PFEW on the Acting Up Allowance

4.91 The PFEW explained that the Acting Up Allowance compensated officers who temporarily performed the duties of a higher rank. It said that officers must complete a 10-day qualifying period each year before receiving the allowance, and that the payment was capped at 46 days before officers switched to a temporary salary equivalent to what they would be paid on promotion. The PFEW proposed that the Acting Up Allowance should be abolished. It said that officers who were required to perform the duties normally performed by a member of a higher rank should be paid a temporary salary from the first day of any period of acting up.

4.92 The PFEW explained that the move to a career-average pension scheme in 2015 meant that paying pension on higher pay was now beneficial, even for short periods, which had not previously been the case. It observed that officers could not currently pay pension contributions on acting-up pay during the first 56 days, meaning they lost out financially. The PFEW also reported that since the introduction of the National Police Promotion Framework in 2015, it appeared that acting up was being used more frequently and for longer periods than was envisaged when the current compensation arrangements for periods of acting up and temporary promotion were introduced in 2008.

Our comment and recommendation on the Acting Up Allowance

4.93 We note that the Acting Up Allowance applies to all ranks up to and including the superintending ranks, which provide vital operational oversight for forces. We are concerned that the NPCC review has identified a growing reliance on acting-up arrangements and temporary salary – often for extended periods – resulting in officers performing the duties of a higher rank without the formal safeguards of qualification or assessment, creating organisational and operational risk. In our view any changes to acting-up arrangements should aim both to discourage prolonged informal acting-up practices and to ensure that officers are adequately compensated. We note the PFEW's views, including that the 10-day qualifying period resets annually and the pension benefits that would arise from paying officers the relevant temporary salary from day one when acting up. We also note the decision of the NPCC to review the Memorandum of Understanding and as part of that to include explicit consideration of whether the 10-day qualifying period remained appropriate or should be removed altogether.

4.94 We observe that the NPCC recognises the advantages of replacing the Acting Up Allowance with temporary salary from day one, which would simplify the framework. However, we understand that the NPCC is reluctant to make this change because its modelling suggests it would cost around £9.2 million each year. We question whether these assumptions are correct, given that if an officer is acting up in a higher post, a force would need to pay the postholder in any event unless a new position has been created. However, we note that this represents a very small proportion of the overall police pay bill, particularly given the potential organisational and operational risks involved.

4.95 We are concerned about current practices in relation to acting up arrangements. We judge that this is another instance of regulations being in place but not being followed consistently in all forces. We also observe that the current procedures, including the 10-day qualifying period which resets each year, appear out of step with modern organisations. We are concerned about the potential organisational and operational risks involved in officers acting up for long periods of time. It is our strong view that arrangements need to be fair to the individual officers. Thought also needs to be given to how acting-up arrangements and temporary promotions fit with the police service's wider ambitions to better develop frontline leadership and the senior leaders of tomorrow as well as supporting the leadership journey of individual officers.

4.96 We are therefore proposing to make a recommendation in 2027 that the Acting Up Allowance should be abolished and that officers should receive temporary salary from day one of acting up. **We therefore ask parties to provide in their evidence to us next year: any additional information around the unintended consequences of abolishing the Acting Up Allowance; how the development of acting-up arrangements fit with the police service's plans for leadership development and the outcome of the leadership review; and an EIA.**

4.97 However, as an immediate measure, we consider that the current 10-day qualifying period for the Acting Up Allowance should be removed. This means that in future officers will receive the allowance from the first day they assume the new responsibility. In our view, this will ensure forces provide proper reward for increased responsibility and accountability, and prevent any potential misuse of the system and officers' goodwill. It will also signal to officers the importance that the police service attaches to acting up arrangements, and the associated operational risks. It will also underline the importance of leadership and development.

<u>Recommendation 8.</u> We recommend that the 10-day qualifying period for the Acting Up Allowance be abolished from 1 September 2026.

Protection Allowance

4.98 The NPCC explained that the Protection Allowance was a specialist payment for Protection Officers who in their role might be required to travel nationally or internationally, remain away from home for extended periods, carry firearms while off duty, and operate in high-risk or low-infrastructure environments. It said that the allowance was primarily used within the MPS's Royalty and Specialist Protection Command, though officers from other forces deployed to London for major events or core protection duties were also eligible. It explained that the allowance currently had three rates: £40, £90 and £125 for constables and sergeants; and £40, £125 and £160 for inspectors and chief inspectors.

4.99 The NPCC proposed to increase all the Protection Allowance rates by £8, and that rate 3 of the Protection Allowance should be applied for each day that an officer is deployed in a country deemed to be subject to more risk. The NPCC told us that the allowance formed part of a broader remuneration package available to Protection Officers when travelling with a principal, which may include unsocial hours payments, On-call Allowance (where applicable), overtime and rest-day compensation, accommodation and meal provisions, Motor Vehicle Allowances, and discretionary bonus or Targeted Variable Payments. It said that guidance would be developed to support the proposed change to rate 3 eligibility.

4.100 In oral evidence the Home Office said that the Protection Allowance had not been increased for a long time. The MPS told us that it supported the NPCC's proposals to raise rates by £8. It also explained that it was seeking additional flexibility for officers deployed to high-risk, low-infrastructure operations who received rate 3 of the Protection Allowance for deployments. It explained that under the current regulations, the officer was only able to claim the allowance when their principal was in the country. However, it informed us that due to advance planning requirements, officers were often placed into high-risk, low-infrastructure situations for additional days without any additional compensation. The MPS said it was seeking approval to extend this arrangement to any deployment to a high-risk, low-infrastructure environment.

Information from the PFEW on the Protection Allowance

4.101 The PFEW told us that rates 2 and 3 of the Protection Allowance should be uprated in line with the pay award and this should be backdated to 1 September 2021. The PFEW proposed that rate 1 should be equivalent to the Away from Home Overnight Allowance. In addition, it called for all officers receiving rate 1 to be entitled to the Hardship Allowance if they were not provided with proper accommodation.

Our comment and recommendation on Protection Allowance

4.102 We note that Protection Officers are only based in the MPS. However, officers from other forces who are deployed to London in support of large events, and who perform core protection duties (as defined in the determination), are eligible to claim the Protection Allowance. We also note that the Protection Allowance has not been reviewed since it was established in 2020. We understand that an officer is not entitled to claim the Away from Home Overnight Allowance or the Hardship Allowance in addition to, or as an alternative to, the Protection Allowance; nor may an officer claim the On-call Allowance when eligible for rates 2 or 3 of the Protection Allowance.

4.103 We recognise the vital role played by Protection Officers and that they may be required to travel nationally or internationally, remain away from home for extended periods, carry firearms while off duty, and operate in high-risk or low-infrastructure environments. We understand that the cost of uprating the allowance, as proposed by the NPCC, would be approximately £315,000, depending on deployment volumes. We also understand that these additional costs would be unfunded and would need to be absorbed within force allocations.

4.104 We note the PFEW's concerns that some officers on Protection Allowance rate 1 may be compensated less than other officers who are required to stay away from home – for example, when deployed on the same mutual aid commitment and staying in the same accommodation as officers who receive the Away from Home Overnight Allowance (£60) and, where appropriate, the Hardship Allowance (£40).

4.105 However, we note the methodology used in the review and agree with the NPCC's view that any increase to Protection Allowance should not exceed last year's £10 increase to the Away from Home Overnight and On-call Allowances. On that basis we recommend that all rates of the Protection Allowance be increased by £8, and that rate 3 of the Protection Allowance should be applied for each day that an officer is deployed to a qualifying country.

4.106 We also recognise that the role may be less attractive to officers with significant caring responsibilities. However, we observe that there is scope to increase the diversity of officers involved in protection.

Recommendation 9. We recommend, from 1 September 2026, an increase of £8 to all Protection Allowance rates and that Protection Allowance rate 3 be applied for each day an officer is deployed to a qualifying country.

Bonus payments

4.107 The NPCC explained that bonus payments were discretionary awards made under Regulation 34 (Annex U) for officers who had carried out work of an "outstandingly demanding, unpleasant or important nature". The NPCC told us that these payments ranged from £50 to £2,000. The NPCC informed us that its review had revealed that usage across forces varied widely and that data were limited because forces often merged bonus payments with TVP in their reporting. The NPCC explained that market practice did not highlight many examples of directly comparable bonus payments, but those that were in place tended to have a lower upper limit. The NPCC proposed retaining the current regulation and the £2,000 upper limit. The NPCC said that it planned to collect more detailed usage and value data and develop national guidance on when and how bonuses should be used. It also told us that it would complete an EIA and it would use this evidence to inform future recommendations to us.

Information from the PFEW on bonus payments

4.108 The PFEW explained that in addition to bonus payments there was also the facility for chief officers to make team recognition awards of £50 to £100 to all members of a team (both officers and staff). The PFEW raised strong concerns about the lack of reliable data, inconsistent application across forces, and the absence of a dedicated budget for bonus payments. It said that because bonus payments could not be distinguished in the Home Office Workforce Census, it was unclear who received the payments, for what types of work, and whether they were distributed fairly. The PFEW told us that it wanted the Home Office and NPCC to take steps to urgently collect accurate data on the use of bonus payments and team recognition awards. In tandem, the PFEW asked for proposed NPCC guidance to forces to be shared with the PCF so that the PCF could assess whether the guidance would address the issues highlighted by the NPCC. It said that data should then continue to be collected and reviewed by the PCF, so the PCF was in a position to assess whether any guidance issued had addressed concerns about consistency or any issues highlighted in the EIA. In addition, the PFEW proposed that a set amount of force budgets should be ring fenced for bonus payments.

Our comment on bonus payments

4.109 We note the review's findings that market practice provides few directly comparable examples of bonus payments and, where such arrangements do exist, they tend to have a lower upper limit. We therefore accept the proposal to retain the current regulation and the £2,000 upper limit for payments.

4.110 We share the NPCC's and the PFEW's concerns about the poor quality of data available on the use of bonus payments. We welcome the NPCC's plans to collect more detailed data on usage and value, and to develop national guidance on when and how bonus payments should be used. We agree that once data has been collected an EIA should be produced and any issues with the current system should be addressed.

Additional hours worked

4.111 The NPCC said that long-standing pay and reward structures had incentivised activity rather than rest, contributing to a long-hours culture. It noted that some roles would continue to require work beyond core hours, but argued for a shift toward valuing planned rest and improved workforce management to meet Working Time Regulations. It reported that it was commissioning national workforce planning guidance but said a strengthened regulatory framework was also needed.

4.112 The NPCC explained that its review focused on additional hours worked when on call, and hours worked on non-standard duty days. It noted that overtime and public holiday arrangements were out of scope for review and that these would be reviewed in 2026.

4.113 It summarised the existing compensation provisions for constables and sergeants and confirmed that officers in the inspecting and superintending ranks receive no additional pay because extra hours are consolidated into salary. The NPCC told us that timeframes for taking any rest days in lieu (RDILs) varied:

- For constables and sergeants who received less than 15 days' notice of a cancelled rest day, the RDIL is paid or must be taken as time off in lieu within three months.
- Where 15 days or more notice is given, the RDIL should be re-rostered and taken, and no payment is made. Regulations do not make the period explicit in which any re-rostering should take place.
- For inspecting ranks and above, regulations stipulate that the RDIL must be scheduled and taken within twelve months, extending this to 24 months under exceptional circumstances.

4.114 The NPCC set out the key findings from its review. It said that regulations were complex and inconsistently interpreted. It reported that the accumulation of RDILs was widespread with over 700,000 RDILs, as of 31 March 2025, recorded nationally although the review showed that the situation across forces varied. It said that many RDILs were never taken within the specified time period and these were not protected by regulation. It observed that this created wellbeing risks and potential financial liabilities for forces. The NPCC warned that some officers worked beyond the 48-hour limit but, this applied to a relatively low proportion of officers. It said that there were some outliers, but no force reported above 10%. Therefore, it judged that that this only affected a minority of officers at the rank of constable. In relation to the inspecting and superintending ranks there was limited evidence of officers exceeding 48 hours, but again there were some outliers. However, it noted that inspectors and above were less likely to be recording their working hours. The NPCC concluded that across all ranks, officers were not taking their designated rest periods.

4.115 The NPCC put forward a series of proposals to support changes that it said would prioritise the wellbeing of officers, and drive the fairness and consistency of practice across the service. It said these proposals would be supported by a review of local workforce plans and rostering arrangements, and the proposals were intended to act as an additional lever to encourage effective resource management practices in forces. It proposed that as of 31 March 2027, all RDILs would be ringfenced to be taken by 31 March 2030. It said that the approach would be set locally, supported by national principles, and would vary, depending on each force's RDIL volumes, capacity, and operational demand.

4.116 The NPCC proposed that going forward, to encourage rest days owed to be taken within the regulatory timeframe, a cap would be introduced on the number of rest days in lieu that officers could carry over from one year to the next. The intention was to have a cap of 5 days with 10 days allowed under exceptional circumstances. However, the NPCC explained that forces would transition to these new arrangements over a three-year period. It said that from April 2027, an initial cap of 10 RDILs would be set, reducing to 8 in the following year and then ultimately 5 in FYE 2030.

4.117 The NPCC proposed that to incentivise forces to prioritise ensuring officers take their rest days, a payment would be introduced for RDILs above the cap and accrued from April 2027. It explained that from April 2027, if rest days were not re-rostered within the allowable timeframe, forces would have to pay officers for the excess RDILs. It said that for constables and sergeants, it was proposed that the current provision for short notice cancellation (less than 15 days' notice) remained as it was (time and a half in time off or pay). However, the NPCC explained that in addition it proposed to amend regulations so that:

- For constables and sergeants, where a rest day is cancelled with 15 days' notice or more, it would have to be re-rostered and taken within three months.
- For constables and sergeants, where a rest day is cancelled with 15 days' notice or more and it is not re-rostered and taken within the three months, a payment at plain time would be introduced if the rest day was above the set cap for RDILs.
- For inspecting and superintending ranks, a cancelled rest day would, as now, need to be reschedule within 12 months but the determination that currently enables the 12 months to be extended to 24 months under exceptional circumstances would be removed.
- For inspecting and superintending ranks, where a rest day is cancelled and it is not re-rostered and taken within the twelve months, a payment at plain time would be introduced if the rest day was above the set cap for RDILs.

4.118 The NPCC added that, in line with its policy to prioritise rest and recovery, it was proposing to remove the regulation that enabled constables and sergeants to work a reinstated rest day when given less than seven days' notice. The NPCC also planned to deal with the current differential approach in regulations regarding how officers were compensated when retained on duty during the first four hours of a public or bank holiday rather than a rest day. It said that in future, if an officer was on duty for less than four hours on a rest day or public holiday, the officer would be paid in 15-minute increments at time and a third.

4.119 The NPCC told us that national guidance would accompany the implementation of these proposals. It said that the absence of data made it difficult to complete an EIA, but that this would be considered in the development of national guidance. It informed us that during the transition period, the cap would be reviewed annually based on operational impact.

4.120 The NPCC informed us that it had based the estimated financial impact of the proposals on the assumption of eight RDILs per officer at each rank. It reported that no costs were expected in the first two years. By FYE 2030 the costs for constables and sergeants would be around £27 million and around £3 million for the inspecting and superintending ranks. The NPCC said that from FYE 2030 onwards it estimated that there would be an annual cost of £30 million. It pointed out that these costs were expected to be offset by reduced sick leave and a reduction in other unquantified pressures.

4.121 In oral evidence, the NPCC told us that its proposals on RDILs were intended to address longstanding inconsistencies and poor management of rest days across forces. It said that allowing officers in some forces to accrue large numbers of RDILs until retirement was costly, and that introducing caps and financial payments were designed to incentivise forces to prioritise officers being able to use their rest days. The NPCC acknowledged that some forces, particularly the MPS, had reservations about the proposals due to the scale of existing RDIL backlogs. The NPCC said it would provide clarity to forces on how to observe the regulations.

4.122 Following oral evidence, the NPCC provided some supplementary information on RDILs. In that material, it told us that the PFEW said that there was agreement on the principle that there should be a payment for RDILs not taken within three months for constables and twelve months for inspectors and chief inspectors.

4.123 In oral evidence, the Home Office said that forces needed to be better at managing officers' rest days, workforce planning, and deciding what activities would be happening, and why. It observed that this was particularly challenging in organisations such as the MPS, where it was stated that greater flexible working was not possible because of the public protests it needed to manage. However, it said that pay was not a proxy for wellbeing, and that it was highly undesirable for officers to be rewarded financially but not take their rest days. The Home Office also expressed concern about the absence of an EIA for the NPCC's proposals.

4.124 The APCC expressed concern about the NPCC's proposals to change the arrangements for RDILs, including limiting the number of rest days that officers could carry forward. It felt that the proposed changes sent the wrong message to officers, particularly as in some areas the level of compensation would be reduced. For instance, it highlighted the proposal that, where officers were required on duty for less than four hours on a rest day or a public or bank holiday, they would in future claim time worked in 15-minute increments rather than automatically receiving four hours, regardless of the hours worked.

4.125 The APCC recognised that there were some issues around RDILs, but felt that these were primarily leadership and management issues. It said that chief officers and supervisors should check in with officers, to ensure that rest days were being taken, and to make sure that overtime was not being overused.

4.126 The MPS acknowledged that the NPCC aimed to improve wellbeing by reducing cancelled and outstanding RDILs. It told us that while it was broadly in agreement with the intention behind the proposals it could not support their introduction in the MPS because of the level of unprecedented operational demand on the force. It reported that in total there were 300,000 rest days outstanding in the MPS and it could not reduce all these by the 31 March 2030. The MPS said that the proposals were unaffordable and presented significant operational risks to the MPS. It said they appeared unrealistic for the MPS due to its size and the continued demand placed on its officers. It said that the development of new resource management systems in the MPS, which were due to go live in November 2027, presented the MPS with an opportunity to improve how it managed RDILs and deployments in the future. The MPS said it would therefore welcome further consultation and dialogue to work through the options that had been put forward before it could commit to the intended approach. The MPS reiterated its concerns in oral evidence.

4.127 The PSA highlighted that its members who were impacted by greater demands of being on call and responsible for Force Coordination and Command roles often built up RDILs. It also said that 73% of respondents to its 2025 Pay and Wellbeing Survey had not taken all the rest days that they were entitled to, with many having four or more days due. The PSA said that rest days were either difficult to schedule due to workloads or they were interrupted by work-related tasks.

4.128 In oral evidence, the PSA confirmed that it supported the NPCC's proposals to tidy up the regulations around RDILs. It noted that there was a variety of approaches across forces. It supported the NPCC's proposal of a flat rate payment to officers who accumulated RDILs. It pointed out that the primary purpose of that payment would be to incentivise forces to better manage the process to ensure that officers could actually take their rest days by limiting the number that could be carried over each year and imposing a financial payment for those that exceeded that limit. It was hoped that the new approach would discourage forces from allowing officers to build up large amounts of RDILs.

Information from the PFEW on additional hours worked

4.129 The PFEW highlighted its strong opposition to the NPCC's proposed changes to the compensation framework for RDILs. It described practices in some forces where officers' rest days were cancelled at short notice or subject to blanket cancellation during periods of high demand, which it characterised as an abuse of existing provisions. The PFEW was particularly concerned about proposals to remove the minimum four-hour payment for working on a rest day or public holiday and replace it with payment at time and a third in 15-minute increments. It argued that this would materially weaken protections for officers, normalise rest-day working, and fail to recognise the disruption caused when officers had already arranged family or caring commitments. The PFEW observed that the NPCC had asserted that concern for officer welfare was driving its proposals for change. However, the PFEW argued that the NPCC would comply with the law if they were genuinely concerned about officer morale and welfare. It pointed out that forces were struggling to comply with existing regulations but the NPCC was proposing a more complex system.

4.130 The PFEW told us that rest days were essential to provide rest and recuperation from the strenuous demands of working as a police officer. However, it reported that these days were regularly cancelled and officers were required to work, often for long hours at short notice, depriving them of a much-needed break. The PFEW said that many officers found themselves with large numbers of rest days owed to them. It proposed that constables and sergeants who had RDILs that remained outstanding after three months should have the option of converting them into pay. It said that inspectors and chief inspectors who had RDILs that remained outstanding after twelve-months should have the option of converting them into pay.

4.131 It explained that it could not support the NPCC's proposed package for RDILs because it removed officer choice, reduced entitlements, and rewarded poor force management. The PFEW said it wanted officers to be able to choose either the rest day or a payment. The PFEW also explained that the current provisions that enabled an officer to choose to work a day that had been cancelled (and then reinstated at short notice) and the minimum four hours payment (when less than four hours were worked on a rest day or public holiday) were significant protections for officers against the short-notice changes to working patterns.

4.132 The PFEW said that officers who had been notified of a requirement to work on a rest day or public holiday would, in all likelihood, have rearranged plans or made alternative arrangements for dependents for that day. It might not be possible to change those again at short notice, so the officer should be able to choose whether to continue to work on that day or not. The PFEW observed that the NPCC's proposal would do nothing to prevent, and in all likelihood would increase, abuse by forces of the provisions governing the cancellation of rest days. It said that the NPCC's proposal to remove the minimum four-hour payment and change the rate to time and a third would mean that there was no distinction between working additional hours on a duty day and a non-duty day.

4.133 The PFEW reported that its December 2025 Pulse Survey found that:

- 78% of respondents opposed the NPCC's proposed change to the provisions covering the reinstatement of rest days at short notice; and
- 85% of respondents opposed the NPCC's proposal to change the provisions governing compensation for working into a rest day or a public holiday.

Our comment and recommendation on additional hours worked

4.134 We agree with the parties that unexpected events will inevitably lead to disruption to rest days, leave and shifts. However, we observe that the accrual of large volumes of rest days or leave – often taken at the end of service – is neither healthy nor sustainable, and points to the need for more effective workforce planning and greater predictability to support wellbeing. We were very concerned by the PFEW's description of what it considers to be the abuse of officers, including forces issuing blanket cancellations of rest days and then reinstating them. It also highlighted the banking of a large numbers of days in some areas. We were particularly concerned about the position in the MPS. We also note that this issue has implications for forces' compliance with the Working Time Directive. We strongly endorse the NPCC's renewed commitment to monitoring and managing this issue.

4.135 We note that all parties are in favour of urgently addressing the number of rest days owed to officers. We note the pressures and impact on officers of their inability to take rest days as described by the PSA. We agree with the PFEW that rest days are essential to providing rest and recuperation from the strenuous demands of working as a police officer. We note the NPCC's assertion that the collective delivery of the proposals it has put forward "are intended to support changes to long standing, embedded behaviours, prioritising the wellbeing of officers, and driving fairness and consistency of practice across the service".

4.136 We observe that many of the regulations are already in place to support the effective management of RDILs. The issue is ensuring that forces adhere to them. We therefore agree with all parties that strengthening how forces manage their resources must form part of the solution. As we said in our last report, we were concerned that, in some cases, allowances might be compensating officers for poor management practices; if so, those underlying problems should be addressed. We note the PFEW's view that poor workforce planning and rostering are responsible for the cancellation of rest days. We welcome the NPCC's proposal that any package of measures should be supported by a review of local workforce plans and rostering arrangements.

4.137 We note that certain elements of the NPCC and PFEW proposals to tackle this issue are similar, but the PFEW wants officers to have greater choice in how it is addressed. We note the PSA's strong support for the NPCC's proposals. However, we also note the PFEW's concerns, and those of the APCC, that some changes proposed by the NPCC – particularly to arrangements for payments on bank holidays – will reduce officers' entitlements. We have also reflected carefully on the PFEW's concerns that removing the minimum four-hour payments on bank holidays and rest days could lead to a worsening of forces' management practices. The PFEW explained that the minimum payment currently acts as a deterrent.

4.138 In our last report, we said that in addition to ensuring officers are fairly compensated, promoting officer wellbeing, welfare and work-life balance and discouraging poor planning by forces should be driving the review of allowances. We also said that allowances of this type should be set at a level that deters such practices and encourages effective management of police resources. Therefore, in considering the proposals put forward to us on additional hours worked and RDILs, we have been guided by how far they support officers' wellbeing and encourage the better management of resources.

4.139 We are not convinced that the current proposals do enough to support officer wellbeing. For instance, we observe that some measures, such as the removal of the regulation that enables constables and sergeants to work a reinstated rest day when given less than seven days' notice, will have implications for officers with caring responsibilities.

4.140 We also judge that the impact of some of these proposals on management behaviour is unclear. We recognise that the proposal to change how officers are compensated when retained on duty during the first four hours of a public or bank holiday, rather than a rest day, is designed to address an inconsistency in the regulations. However, we agree with the PFEW that this change risks reducing the incentive for forces to avoid last-minute changes on public and bank holidays.

4.141 We therefore conclude that, while there is a clear and urgent need to reduce the level of rest days owed to officers and to address the underlying causes of their accumulation, the proposals put to us at this stage are premature. We are not minded to support the package as currently presented by the NPCC, given concerns about its readiness and the adequacy of the supporting evidence. In particular, we note the Home Office's concern about the absence of an EIA and the mixed reception of the proposals among stakeholders. We also recognise that the MPS judges that it would be unable to meet the requirements set out in the proposals, at least in the short term, which would create an inconsistency of approach across the police service. Given the MPS's concerns, we are also not convinced that other forces will be able to implement these proposals effectively, leading to further inconsistencies.

4.142 We remain clear that reducing the backlog of RDILs, improving workforce planning, and supporting officers' wellbeing are critical and must remain shared priorities. We recognise the importance of action to address this issue and we are disappointed not to be able to recommend changes in this report for September 2026. **We strongly encourage all parties to work together constructively to bring forward revised proposals to us for consideration and decision in the next pay round that are supported by appropriate analysis, have the confidence of stakeholders, and are capable of consistent and fair implementation across the service.**

Recommendation 10. We recommend that further work be undertaken, led by the NPCC, to develop a more robust, deliverable and more fully supported set of proposals on additional hours worked (rest days in lieu, reinstated rest days, retention on duty for less than four hours on rest days and public or bank holidays). This should include clearer evidence of the likely impacts on officers' wellbeing, the capacity and incentives on forces to implement the proposals, and equality outcomes. The work should be progressed in the context of wider police reform and refined through the PCF. We expect these proposals to be submitted to us in the next pay round for our consideration and decision.

4.143 In taking this forward, the NPCC, forces and stakeholders should address the concerns raised by staff associations, undertake a careful assessment of potential risks – including unintended consequences for carers and those with protected characteristics – and set out clear, practical implementation plans across all forces, including those facing particular operational or financial constraints.

Regional allowances

4.144 The Home Office told us that London Weighting had historically increased in line with annual pay increases. It asked us to consider the evidence put forward by policing partners on whether there was a case for increasing it in 2026/27. It emphasised that any increases to the allowance had to be funded from within existing allocations. It also asked that we have regard to the views of the SSRB when considering London Weighting for officers in the federated and superintending ranks.

4.145 The NPCC again set out the conclusions of its 2024 review of the London Allowance and South East Allowance. The NPCC proposed in its evidence this year that the maximum limits for the London Allowance and South East Allowance should be uplifted in line with the annual pay award from September 2026.

4.146 In oral evidence it said that geographical allowances were really part of standard pay for those officers in receipt and needed to be maintained with the increase in the pay award or some other mechanism to ensure that they did not stagnate in cash terms. It reported that Essex and Kent were no longer applying the full South

East Allowance. The NPCC told us that it was looking at alternatives, such as applying allowances just to specific areas within a force rather than as a blanket allowance across the whole force.

4.147 The MPS supported the conclusions of the NPCC review and the proposal to uplift the London Weighting and the maximum limit of the London Allowance in line with pay. It also suggested that uplifting the London Allowance by a higher percentage than the pay award should be considered if its proposals to raise starting pay and reprofile constable pay were not endorsed. In oral evidence the MPS said that, given the cost-of-living pressures faced by officers in London, it was vital that the London Allowance and London Weighting were increased each year in line with the pay award.

4.148 The APCC said it understood the rationale for the NPCC's proposal to uprate the South East Allowance in line with the annual pay award. However, it noted that doing so would create additional costs and that no central funding would be provided to forces to cover increases in location allowances. As a result, forces would need to fund any increase through savings elsewhere. The APCC also emphasised that applying the allowance (and the level of any increase) would remain a matter for chief officer discretion: a chief constable could choose not to increase the location allowance up to the maximum level. It said that uprating the allowance in line with the pay award would nevertheless give chief officers greater flexibility to respond to local recruitment and retention pressures. However, the APCC recognised that this could have implications for forces if some used that flexibility and neighbouring ones did not.

4.149 The PSA said that it fully supported a review of the ongoing cost of living for officers living in the South East, but that this needed looking at across England and Wales and specifically where the cost of living was higher than average. The PSA observed that if overall pay was better, then this would not be necessary.

Information from the PFEW on regional allowances

4.150 The PFEW said that given the competitive labour market and the cost of living in London and the South East, the value of the allowances needed to be set and maintained at a level that helped attract, recruit and retain sufficient, capable and motivated officers to help meet operational demand. The PFEW proposed that there should be a fundamental review to assess the standard of living of officers in London and the South East compared with the rest of England and Wales. The PFEW set out evidence on the cost of living in London and the South East and its report included a research paper on London and South East payments. The research report reviewed evidence on whether London Weighting, London Allowance, and South East Allowance remained fit for purpose given housing, commuting, and childcare costs.

4.151 Pending its proposed review, the PFEW called for the removal of the existing chief officer discretion to vary the amount of London and South East Allowances payable and that the allowances should be paid at their maximum level. The PFEW raised concerns about recent reductions in the level of the South East Allowance in some forces. It argued that while individual reductions were small, their cumulative impact, alongside below-inflation pay awards, further eroded officers' living standards.

Our comment and recommendations on regional allowances

4.152 In our last report, we considered the outcome of the NPCC's 2024 review of the London Allowance and South East Allowance. That review set out the history, purpose and current operation of these allowances, highlighted issues of discretion and variation in application across forces, and made recommendations to uplift maximum rates in line with the annual pay award. In considering the NPCC's recommendations last year, we were concerned that the MPS had not had sufficient time to evaluate the impact on recruitment of the measures implemented in April 2025 to increase starting salaries and to increase the London Allowance by £1,250. We therefore said that we would consider the NPCC's proposals to uplift the London Allowance and the South East Allowance in line with the pay award in 2026.

4.153 In its written evidence to us this year, the MPS set out the challenges it expects to face in FYE 2027 as it seeks to stabilise its workforce. The MPS was the only force that experienced significant difficulty recruiting sufficient officers to meet both its uplift target and its subsequent officer maintenance targets. We recognise the operational risks associated with any failure to maintain the workforce at the level the force considers necessary to meet demand. As we said in our previous report, the MPS accounts for around one-sixth of total recorded crime in England and Wales and employs around one-quarter of police officers. However, due to budget constraints, the MPS is now looking to reduce officer numbers by 1,100 FTE. We also observe that the MPS is not yet able to fully assess the impact of the April 2025 measures on recruitment and retention.

4.154 At present, the MPS is the lead force for countering certain national strategic threats, including terrorism. However, it expects to face significant change in due course, given plans to transfer counter-terrorism capabilities to the new NPS during the next Parliament. We observe that uncertainty about the implications of this change may itself affect recruitment and retention. We also note the MPS's request that we consider increasing the London Allowance by a percentage higher than the pay award should the constable pay scale not be reprofiled. In oral evidence, the MPS told us that, despite plans to reduce its workforce in FYE 2027, increases to London Weighting and the London Allowance were vital to maintaining workforce stability. In that context, we also highlight the risks posed to recruitment in London by the new period of heightened economic uncertainty.

4.155 Having considered this evidence, and the NPCC's review, we are minded to agree that the London Allowance should be uplifted in September 2026. However, we do not consider it appropriate to create an automatic or enduring link between the London Allowance and the annual pay award.

4.156 We note that the NPCC review has already examined the origins and intended purpose of London Weighting and the London Allowance, the interaction between them, and the increasing tension between flat-rate geographical allowances and more targeted recruitment and retention tools. Nevertheless, we have concerns that the distinction between London Weighting and the London Allowance is not well understood, that the allowances operate as flat-rate payments across pay bands, and that there remains a lack of clarity in practice about whether these payments are intended principally to address cost-of-living pressures, travel costs, or broader recruitment and retention challenges. In our view, form should follow function: the purpose of any allowance should be clearly defined, and only then should consideration be given to the appropriate mechanism for uprating it – whether by reference to pay awards, inflation, or other measures. In future before any further uplifts to the maximum limit of the London Allowance we will also be looking for a more rigorous analysis of how it is supporting recruitment and retention.

4.157 We remain mindful that the purpose of the South East Allowance is to mitigate the impact of London-related labour market pressures on neighbouring forces. The London Allowance increased in April 2025 without a corresponding increase to the South East Allowance. We also note evidence, reflected in the NPCC review and in evidence from the APCC, that some forces – potentially in response to financial pressures – have reduced the level of the South East Allowance paid to officers. Increasing the maximum value of the allowance does not oblige chief officers to use this flexibility unless it is judged necessary for recruitment and retention purposes. We also ask that thought be given to renaming the South East Allowance to better reflect its role in addressing recruitment and retention challenges.

4.158 We therefore propose that the maximum rates of the South East Allowance should be uplifted in September 2026. In agreeing this change, we place particular weight on the discretion available to forces in this area, which the NPCC review demonstrated was already a defining feature of the South East Allowance: uprating the ceiling enables forces to respond to local recruitment and retention challenges without imposing unavoidable additional costs where pressures do not exist.

4.159 However, we observe that, over the medium term, proposals in the Police Reform White Paper for force mergers, alongside wider reforms including the creation of the NPS, are likely to have significant implications for the future role, structure and consistency of regional allowances. In this context we also note the PFEW and PSA proposals for a wider geographical review.

4.160 For these reasons, while we support uplifts to the London Allowance and South East Allowance in 2026, we do not support an automatic annual linkage to the pay award. **While the NPCC has already undertaken a substantive review of these allowances, we consider that further work will be required, particularly in the context of police reform, to resolve outstanding issues around purpose, design, uprating mechanisms and equalities impacts. We advise the NPCC to work closely with the NCA which also has its own geographical allowances. We expect the NPCC to build on the analysis already completed, including consideration of alternative approaches to uprating, such as CPI, and clearer articulation of the function of each allowance, and to bring any revised proposals back to us, supported by clear analysis, for consideration in due course.**

Recommendation 11. We recommend that London Weighting be uprated by 3.9% in line with the pay award from 1 September 2026.

Recommendation 12. We recommend that the maxima of the London Allowance and South East Allowance be uprated by 3.9% in line with the pay award from 1 September 2026.

Additional allowances and measures supporting wellbeing

Information from the PFEW on additional allowances and measures to support wellbeing

4.161 The PFEW again set out the case for some additional allowances:

- A shift disturbance allowance: it reported that short-notice changes to shifts were widespread and were often the result of poor workforce management which could be avoided with better planning. It explained that officers were entitled to know their rosters 90 days in advance. The PFEW called for a £30 payment to be made to officers when shifts were changed within the 90-day window. It highlighted that shift changes had potential financial implications for the officers concerned, particularly those with caring responsibilities, and had a disruptive effect on officers and their families. It said that it had raised this issue in 2025 and it was disappointed that the NPCC had decided not to look at its proposal.
- A detective allowance: the PFEW proposed an allowance of around £1,250 which should be uprated annually with the pay award. It said that it was extremely disappointed that the NPCC had not explored the options for strengthening the financial package for detectives after it raised this last year and had instead focused on TVP which was used inconsistently by forces. The PFEW's position was that progress on a new allowance should not be delayed

for the White Paper. It said that the situation needed urgent remedy. It pointed out that if the position changed once reform had been implemented, then the position could be reconsidered at that stage, with the ability to then evaluate the impact of an allowance as part of any future considerations.

- Long-service leave and recuperative leave: the PFEW again pressed for the introduction of a form of long-service leave and also recuperative leave. It highlighted the supportive comments we had made in our 2025 Report regarding these but noted that the NPCC had not explored these areas over the past year with the PFEW. It considered that these measures could improve retention and wellbeing among experienced officers and complement reforms to pay progression and allowances.

Evidence from other policing parties on additional allowances and measures to support wellbeing

4.162 The NPCC set out its views on the scope for two new allowances that the PRRB had asked it to work with parties to consider in 2025: the shift alteration allowance and a detective allowance. The NPCC told us that it did not support creating a new allowance for shift changes. It considered that existing arrangements were proportionate. It said that introducing a financial penalty for changing shifts would reduce operational flexibility and could create perverse incentives, such as keeping officers on duty longer to avoid triggering compensation. The NPCC informed us that further guidance would be issued in 2026 reiterating existing rules to resolve any local issues.

4.163 The NPCC also pointed out that police regulations did not currently support skills-based allowances. It said that a detective allowance would be a piecemeal change and should be considered as part of wider reform nationally and linked to defined professional career pathways, CPD requirements and consistent national role profiles. It pointed out that forces could already use TVP to support attraction and retention in detective roles.

4.164 The NPCC also set out its view on the scope for recuperative leave and long-service leave, giving its rationale for not pursuing these options. The NPCC said, in the context of the support already available to officers, the case for a separate recuperative leave entitlement had not been made. However, the NPCC said that it would welcome further evidence from the PFEW demonstrating a specific operational, wellbeing, or retention benefit that existing provisions did not already address.

4.165 The NPCC told us that introducing long-service leave would affect a large proportion of the workforce. It said that any change would need to be considered alongside the cumulative financial and operational impact of other policy changes currently underway or proposed. The NPCC considered these reforms to be of higher priority, both in terms of workforce impact and the ability to deliver. However, it said that the proposal for long-service leave maybe revisited in a future review cycle, once current reforms had been implemented and evaluated. It also said that further evidence would need to be provided on affordability, operational impact and added value beyond existing entitlements.

4.166 In oral evidence, the PSA agreed that introducing a period of long-service leave could be one way of improving the wellbeing of its members. It said that in some other countries officers received a period of long-service leave after being in the police service for around seven years. This could help to reduce burnout by giving officers a break.

Our comment on proposals for additional allowances and measures to support wellbeing

4.167 A number of innovative and thoughtful proposals have come to us from the staff associations but it is difficult for us to consider such proposals effectively without further assessment. There are a considerable number of these, including the four set out in the paragraphs above. However, it is not possible for us to reach a proper view on these because they have not been fully considered through the PCF, and the necessary work has not been done on costing the proposals and assessing the risks and benefits. For instance, as we pointed out in our report last year in relation to a shift disturbance allowance, while we understand the regulatory framework underpinning the proposal, the need for a modern workforce to be agile may mean that it is appropriate for the trigger for payment of the allowance to be set at less than 90 days. We observe that our consideration of these proposals is further complicated by the fact that not all parties are currently formally engaged with the PRRB process.

4.168 In paragraph 4.77 above, we have set out our view on the need for a review that looks at remuneration and allowances in the round, in the light of police reform. However, we recognise that, in some cases, action is warranted in advance of that work. **It would be helpful to us if there could be a substantive discussion at the PCF on the outcomes that parties are looking to achieve in the short term to deal with, for instance, urgent matters concerning officer wellbeing or immediate recruitment and retention pressures, and the best way to achieve that. These are issues which need to be tackled in advance of the wider review we outline above. It could consider how far proposals from all parties might help deliver those outcomes. In our view, the output of that process should be a list of agreed priorities for us to consider in the next pay round in advance of the wider work set out at paragraph 4.77 above.**

4.169 More widely, we observe that, given the prohibition on police officers taking industrial action, it is vital that there is a mechanism for all parties to feel that their proposals are being properly heard and considered. We note that this is particularly important where there is evidence that regulations are not being strictly adhered to and also during a period of transformative change. We return to this issue in the Forward Look.

Annual leave

4.170 The Home Office confirmed the implementation of our recommendations on annual leave, reducing time to full entitlement phased in from April 2025 and increasing starting leave for new entrants.

4.171 The NPCC reported that its unpublished data indicated that officers were largely taking their full annual leave entitlement and bank holidays within the allocated period. The NPCC also told us that it had reviewed the leave entitlement for the superintending ranks, but that it was not proposing to make any changes. It informed us that a full review of senior officer leave would take place in 2027/28, alongside the next review for the federated ranks, to ensure a consistent, whole workforce approach.

4.172 In contrast, the PSA told us that its 2025 Pay and Wellbeing Survey indicated that over half of respondents had not taken all their annual leave. For almost 60% this was due to work-related reasons. The PSA also included comments from survey respondents which stated that workload pressures were so high that taking annual leave often created more stress than relief.

4.173 In oral evidence, the PSA observed that the number of officers in the superintending ranks was inevitably limited and it was more difficult for them to take leave while ensuring that the force had adequate capacity to function. It observed that the police service culture meant officers tended to step up and prioritise operational requirements above their own annual leave. The PSA pointed out that officers in the superintending ranks could only carry over five days annual leave each year and that any additional days were lost to officers without cost to the police service. In its view this did not incentivise forces to encourage officers to take their annual leave entitlement.

Information from the PFEW on annual leave

4.174 The PFEW proposed that the time it took officers to reach the maximum annual leave entitlement should be reduced to five years. It argued that policing was an exhausting occupation and that new officers required earlier access to full leave entitlements to prevent burnout. The PFEW also said this would address equality issues, help improve diversity, enhance the total reward package, and put the police scheme in line with other public sector organisations.

4.175 The PFEW also highlighted the importance of officers being able to take their annual leave entitlement. Its 2024 Pay and Morale Survey had shown that one-third of respondents had not been able to take all their leave and two-thirds reported having at least one leave requests refused in the previous twelve months. The PFEW also called for officers to be able to buy or sell up to five days' annual leave (in excess of the working time minimum of 28 days) at the start of each annual leave year, as was quite common in the NHS and other organisations.

Our comment on annual leave

4.176 We note that the NPCC's assessment that officers are largely taking their annual leave within the allocated time period. However, we are conscious of the continuing concerns set out by the staff associations regarding the ability of officers to take annual leave and we ask for a rank-by-rank assessment in the next pay round.

4.177 We also highlight that, in our 2024 Report, we recommended reducing the time it takes officers to reach their full annual leave entitlement from 20 years to 10 years. However, as we heard from the evidence presented to us in 2024, even 10 years to reach full entitlement is out of step with market practice. We note that the NPCC plans a further review of annual leave in 2027/28, which we assume will include consideration of a further reduction in the time taken to reach full entitlement.

Chapter 5 – Forward Look

Introduction

5.1 It will be for Government to set the remit for the next pay round. However, the core of the report will be driven by our standing terms of reference. In this chapter we aim to give the parties who provide evidence, and the remit group more generally, some indication of areas which are likely to be of continuing interest to us in future pay rounds.

The police reform agenda

5.2 Since our last report, the Government has published its White Paper on Police Reform, setting out the most significant overhaul of policing and law enforcement since the 1960s. In Chapter 2, we highlighted the Government's proposals for new national structures, leadership, performance and standards, and a stronger emphasis on productivity and technology. We noted that these proposals would have important implications for pay and reward, including the development of a workforce strategy, the introduction of a Licence to Practise, reforms to leadership, and direct entry through new specialised pathways into policing. We also welcomed the White Paper's focus on wellbeing, which we highlighted as a key issue in our 2025 Report.

5.3 We note that thinking in many of these areas is still at an early stage. We also note that some of these reforms – particularly the establishment of the National Police Service, which will involve the merger of a number of entities, and other structural changes following the Independent Review of Police Forces Structures – have the potential to create significant uncertainty among police officers. These changes will also have implications for recruitment and retention. We advised that urgent action is needed on the workforce implications of these changes to ensure that there is early clarity on the impact of these proposals on pay structures and terms and conditions**. We look forward to receiving a detailed update from the parties in the next pay round. In advance of that, we ask the parties to reflect on how best to involve us in emerging thinking around the key aspects that will have important implications for pay and reward, such as the workforce strategy and the Licence to Practise.**

Pay and workforce modernisation

Delivering the reform programme through a national workforce strategy

5.4 In our recent reports, we have emphasised the importance of a long-term workforce strategy as the essential foundation for sustainable reform, including pay reform. In Chapter 2, we again highlighted its central role in the wider reform programme and in shaping future reward arrangements. We note the breadth of issues the workforce strategy is expected to cover, including future demand and skills requirements;

specialist and technical pathways; career pathways in and out of policing and across law enforcement; the balance of officer and staff roles in a more blended workforce; productivity and deployability; recruitment and retention; and the extent to which the pay structure is competitive in the wider labour market. We expect future evidence to show how these strands are being integrated into a coherent workforce plan, and how that plan will be resourced, governed and delivered.

5.5 We also expressed concerns that, while policing continues to draw comparisons with other parts of the public sector, there is now significant evidence that the service is moving away from being a consistently degree-level entry (or equivalent) profession. We are also concerned about a potential lack of consistency in entry-level qualifications. If that trajectory continues, the basis for those comparisons will become increasingly difficult to sustain. These issues need to be explored as part of the development of a workforce strategy.

5.6 The development of a workforce strategy for the police service is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reshape how policing recruits, organises and develops its workforce, including through a thorough review of rank structures and the role of direct entry. In our view, this work needs to progress at pace, guided by a clear vision of the destination that leaders, officers and staff can understand and support. At present, however, there is little sense of such clarity or momentum.

5.7 In Chapter 2, we highlighted our concern that, following initial scoping, progress on the development of a national police workforce strategy has been slower than expected. We note that our previous expectation that the strategy, or at least a draft, would be available to us early in 2026 has not been met, and that this has limited the extent to which it can inform our current considerations. While we recognise that steps have since been taken to strengthen resourcing for the work, we stress that the scale and pace of reform envisaged in the White Paper make it essential that a clear and properly resourced workforce strategy is developed and published without further delay. We therefore recommend that the Home Office and NPCC move swiftly into the next phase of work in order to ensure that the strategy, or at least a draft, is made available no later than December 2026, in good time to inform the next pay round. We note that further slippage risks delaying progress on pay and allowances reform and adding to uncertainty for forces and officers during a period of significant change.

5.8 We note that one element of the police reform programme that the workforce strategy will need to consider is the creation of the NPS through the merger of a number of entities, including the NCA. We observe that this will not be straightforward and will need to take into account a number of complex issues. **We urge the police service to work with the NCA and other partners, as appropriate, to undertake a job evaluation exercise to facilitate the merger and convergence process. We look forward to receiving an update on this in future pay rounds.**

5.9 We also welcomed the commitment in the White Paper to review the police funding formula. However, we consider that the position is deteriorating and is no longer fit for purpose. We are seeing strong evidence that the current funding arrangements are increasingly misaligned with demand and are creating mounting affordability pressures across forces. **In addition, we highlight the move to new and potentially differing local governance models following the abolition of PCCs. This has implications for funding decisions at local level. In our view, early clarity on all these issues is required and we ask for an update from the Home Office in the next pay round.**

Diversity, culture and legitimacy

5.10 We continue to regard diversity and inclusion as critical to police legitimacy and public confidence. In Chapter 3, we expressed concern about the levels of ethnic minority representation by rank, and noted that at some senior levels it has declined in recent years. We had hoped that the Police Uplift Programme would deliver greater progress on diversity at constable rank; however, there has been relatively little change in the last four years. We are also concerned about higher levels of attrition among officers from ethnic minority backgrounds. Taken together, this does not reflect the pace of change we would expect, particularly given the importance of trust and confidence in policing.

5.11 In Chapter 2, we underlined our concerns about the pace of change and the need for workforce reform to support a more inclusive and sustainable workforce**. We ask the parties to provide evidence in the next pay round setting out how the workforce strategy and leadership reforms are improving diversity outcomes, and how pay, progression and specialist pathways will support the recruitment and retention of a diverse workforce.**

Resourcing pay and workforce modernisation

5.12 The Government's Police Reform White Paper set out an ambitious and wide-ranging programme of reform for the police service, including further workforce, pay and reward modernisation. Delivering this programme will require sustained capacity, specialist capability and effective programme management across the police service and within the Home Office. We remain concerned about whether sufficient resource is in place to support delivery at pace and alongside core operational demands. In our 2025 Report, we noted steps taken to strengthen resourcing within the NPCC. However, the scale, complexity and interdependency of the reforms now proposed appear likely to place additional pressure on already stretched central and force level functions. **We would therefore like evidence in the next pay round on how the reforms will be resourced, governed and sequenced, and on the extent to which the police service and the Home Office have the capacity to deliver them effectively,**

Wellbeing and impact on officers' personal lives and those of their families

5.13 Officer wellbeing must remain central to the police service's workforce reform agenda, both to safeguard the welfare of serving officers and to support policing as an attractive and sustainable career choice. Throughout this report, we have highlighted continuing concerns about the cumulative impact of policing pressures on officers' personal and family lives. In Chapter 3, we set out evidence on the operational realities of policing, including last minute redeployments, resourcing driven abstractions, geographical moves, and exposure to violence, trauma and public scrutiny, all of which can significantly affect wellbeing. In particular, in Chapter 3 we highlighted the findings of the HMICFRS report that stated that in FYE 2024, there had been 44,976 assaults on officers, an increase of 11.1% on the previous year. Elsewhere in this chapter, we return to specific issues relating to allowances and leave arrangements. In our view the former can play an important role in disincentivising poor workforce management and in encouraging better planning.

5.14 More broadly, we remain concerned about the pace at which changes in wider employment law affecting wellbeing are translated into police regulations and embedded consistently across forces. In Chapter 3, we set out our view that delays in translating changes in wider employment law into police regulations remain unacceptable, with some agreed reforms still outstanding after many years. We have recommended that all such changes be implemented without further delay and, at the latest, by the end of 2026. We recommend a more systematic approach whereby statutory employment law changes are applied automatically and concurrently to police officers where they exceed existing regulatory provisions, while preserving more favourable terms where these already exist. We also recommend that in the interests of both officer wellbeing and operational effectiveness statutory minima should not be treated as the default position for policing. In developing provision for police officers, due weight should be given to both factors, alongside the levels of provision available elsewhere in the public sector.

5.15 We also welcome the PFEW's Charter for Change, which has the potential to improve officer wellbeing and support for families. **We have asked that these measures be considered in the PCF and the immediate priorities identified. The benefits, costs and risks of any proposals brought to us will need to be fully articulated. We would also expect to see an EIA. We ask for an update in the next pay round.** We have also made a recommendation that maternity support leave be increased to two weeks on full pay from 1 September 2026 as a measure that benefits officers, their families and the public and improves consistency of provision across the police service.

5.16 **We ask the parties to provide a comprehensive update in the next pay round on progress in implementing and taking forward all of these measures,**

including outstanding regulatory changes, the application of statutory employment provisions, and the development of enhanced wellbeing and family support policies.

5.17 These issues underline the importance of ensuring that officer wellbeing is not treated as a peripheral matter but is embedded in the design and delivery of current workforce and pay reforms. **We therefore expect future evidence to demonstrate how wellbeing considerations are being integrated into reform programmes and translated into practical improvements for officers**.

Architecture for decisions on police workforce and pay reform

5.18 In some of our earlier reports, we commented on the complicated and fragmented decision-making infrastructure involving both statutory and non-statutory bodies that deal with police pay and conditions. We have previously suggested that this architecture should be clarified and simplified to ensure a coherent approach. We also consider that thought should be given to ensuring that the machinery is able to establish as much common ground as possible on proposals before they reach us. All parties should feel that there is scope for their proposals to be properly explored.

Recruitment and retention in the MPS

5.19 In our previous reports, we have set out in detail our concerns about the ability of the MPS to recruit sufficient officers. The MPS has consistently been the only police force that failed to substantively meet police uplift targets and subsequently police officer number maintenance targets. The revised arrangements for starting salaries and the London Allowance, agreed following our 2024 Report to support recruitment and retention, came into effect in April 2025. In its evidence to us this year, the MPS was able to provide only very high-level assessments of these changes. At the time of submitting this report, these measures have now been in place for a full year. **We ask for more substantive evidence in the forthcoming pay round on their impact on recruitment in the MPS. We would also welcome analysis of how frequently forces, in general, have exercised the flexibility to appoint new officers at pay point 2 rather than pay point 1.**

The future of work, technology and productivity

5.20 In our previous work, we have drawn attention to the profound transformation occurring in the modern workplace and its implications for recruitment, retention and organisational design. The reform programme described in Chapter 2 places strong emphasis on the use of data, technology and AI to improve productivity and reduce administrative burdens. **In the next pay round, we would like to receive early evidence on whether these initiatives are delivering measurable benefits in officer time, capability and effectiveness, and on any associated implications for skills requirements and the wider employment offer.**

Allowances

5.21 We have commented on the proposals from the second year of the NPCC's three-year review of allowances. We note an apparent ongoing mismatch between leadership expectations and officers' experiences in relation to allowances. We have emphasised that allowances should both compensate officers and act as a disincentive to disruption, particularly where there are impacts on welfare and wellbeing. We also note that the longstanding expectation that officers can be rostered at very short notice, with rest days and leave routinely cancelled, seems increasingly out of step with a modern, sustainable workforce model. We again underline that, alongside fair compensation, promoting officer wellbeing, welfare and work-life balance should be central to the review of allowances.

5.22 Therefore, while we have proposed changes to the Protection Allowance, we have asked for further work to be undertaken in some areas. We concluded that, while there is a clear and urgent need to reduce the level of rest days owed to officers and to address the underlying causes of their accumulation, the proposals put to us at this stage are premature. We have recommended that further work be undertaken, led by the NPCC, to develop a more robust, deliverable and more fully supported set of proposals on additional hours worked. This should include clearer evidence of the likely impacts on officers' wellbeing, force behaviour, and equality outcomes. We have said that this work should be progressed in the context of wider police reform and refined through the PCF. As part of our recommendation, we have asked that these proposals be submitted to us in the next pay round for our consideration and decision.

5.23 We have also recommended that the NPCC brings forward its planned framework for inspecting and superintending ranks that allows time off in lieu for hours worked while on call at plain time, within defined parameters as a matter of urgency, and that the NPCC brings draft national on-call guidance to the PCF for discussion, agreement and implementation as quickly as possible. **We would like an update on these measures next year**.

5.24 We also highlight that we are minded to recommend the abolition of the Acting Up Allowance in the next pay round. **We therefore ask parties to provide in their evidence to us next year: any additional information around the unintended consequences of abolishing the Acting Up Allowance; how the development of acting-up arrangements fit with the police service's plans for leadership development and the outcome of the leadership review; and an EIA.**

5.25 We have recommended that the maximum limits for the London Allowance and South East Allowance are uplifted in September 2026. **However, we have asked for further work from the NPCC to build on the analysis already undertaken. We consider that further work will be required, particularly in the context of police reform, to resolve outstanding issues around purpose, design, uprating**

mechanisms and equalities impacts. We advise the NPCC to work closely with the NCA which also has its own geographical allowances. We expect the NPCC to build on the analysis already completed, including consideration of alternative approaches to uprating, such as CPI, and clearer articulation of the function of each allowance, and to bring any revised proposals back to us, supported by clear analysis, for consideration in due course.

5.26 At the end of Chapter 4, we also noted that a number of innovative and thoughtful proposals have come to us from the staff associations. We observe that it is not possible for us to reach a proper view on this because they have not been properly considered through the PCF, and the necessary work has not been done on costing the proposals and assessing the risks and benefits. We observe that our consideration of these proposals is further complicated by the fact that not all parties are currently formally engaged with the PRRB process. **We propose that there should be a substantive discussion at the PCF on the outcomes that parties are looking to achieve in the short term to deal with, for instance, officer wellbeing or immediate recruitment and retention pressures, and the best way to achieve that. In our view, the output of that process should be a list of agreed priorities for us to consider in the next pay round.**

5.27 Looking to the future, we also propose **that a wider review of allowances will be necessary that takes into account the changes which will result from the implementation of the reforms in the White Paper.** We observe that the review will need to consider allowances in the context of changes to police remuneration as a whole. We explain that, rather than reviewing each individual allowance, the review needs to consider what the allowances are attempting to achieve and the best approach to delivering those outcomes. **We note that any proposed changes from that exercise should be brought to us in due course once they have been properly considered through the PCF. We observe that there will need to be a clear articulation of the strategic issue they are seeking to address and how that fits with police reform, improving outcomes for the public, and wider changes in remuneration. We note that the proposals will need to be fully costed, and an EIA and risk assessment will need to be completed.**

Annual leave

5.28 We note that, following our 2024 recommendation to accelerate progression to full annual leave entitlement, officers now reach their maximum entitlement after ten years' service. As we observed in Chapter 4, this remains longer than is typical across the wider labour market. We therefore await the further review of annual leave arrangements that the NPCC has indicated will take place in 2027/28. We expect that review to consider whether there is further scope to shorten the progression period. In the nearer term, while the NPCC has advised that officers are generally able to take their annual leave within the required timeframes, staff associations have raised concerns. **We will therefore look for more detailed**

evidence in the next pay round, including rank-by-rank information, to assess how effectively annual leave entitlements are being realised in practice.

Pensions

5.29 We recognise that developments in police pension arrangements have a material influence on officer confidence, engagement and long-term workforce stability. Our remit requires us to consider pension matters where they are relevant to achieving a coherent and joined-up approach to police remuneration and conditions of service. We therefore continue to monitor pension-related issues closely as part of our broader consideration of pay, retention and workforce sustainability.

5.30 In that context, we remain concerned by the evidence that significant numbers of officers are choosing not to participate in the police pension scheme. We consider this an important indicator of wider confidence in the overall reward package, and we will continue to expect evidence on opt-out behaviour and its underlying drivers in future pay rounds.

5.31 In Chapter 3, we expressed particular concern about pension opt-out rates. We also noted evidence that opt-out rates are highest among early career officers and higher for ethnic minority officers. **We have therefore asked for more detailed evidence in the next pay round on the drivers of opt-out behaviour, how this interacts with retention and morale, and what mitigations are being put in place.**

Engagement with parties

5.32 We were again pleased to have received some material from the PFEW this year. This was very informative and illuminating. However, the PFEW has not yet chosen to formally return to the pay review process. We hope it will do so in the next pay round. We are pleased that the PSA continued to be part of the pay review process in 2026.

Evidence gaps and data limitations

5.33 We appreciate the parties' continuing efforts to improve the evidence base, and the additional information that has been provided to us for this pay round in response to the requests in our last report. We have commented in this report on the following specific issues:

- evidence on work to drive efficiency savings and improve productivity; (Paragraph 3.33)
- continued data provision on reasons for officers leaving, and any insight that can be provided on differences by ranks and what officers intend to do after they resign; (Paragraph 3.100)

- information on the drivers behind increasing proportions of officers on long-term sick leave and adjusted or management restricted duties and any work being done to mitigate or reverse the trends; (Paragraph 3.101)
- more complete data on the protected characteristics of officers; (Paragraph 3.116)
- updates on the insights gained from the pension opt-out template and any effect it has had on behaviours; (Paragraph 3.158) and
- further information on the drivers of the higher opt-out rates for ethnic minority officers and any work being done to encourage increased pension participation by these officers. (Paragraph 3.158)

5.34 We encourage those responsible for gathering data to consider what improvements can be made to facilitate the provision of data in these and other areas.

Proposals for further work

5.35 In addition to our formal recommendations and requests for data, we have identified a number of areas for further work elsewhere in this report. In addition to those set out earlier in bold type in this Forward Look, these include:

- **We invite the NPCC to work with the PFEW and other representative groups to explore the introduction of temporary, time-limited payments for the inspecting ranks to compensate for high workload where this is unavoidable. We encourage parties to examine this option, possibly by extending the temporary Recognition of Workload Payments to the inspecting ranks, in advance of a more fundamental reform following the completion of the workforce strategy. (Paragraph 2.89)**
- **It remains our view that TVP should continue on an interim basis for a further fixed period. During this period, we expect the NPCC and forces to demonstrate clearer evidence of improved consistency, stronger monitoring arrangements and the appropriate use of TVP in line with its original purpose, and to set out how they identify and address concerns about inappropriate or inconsistent use. (Paragraph 2.112)**
- **In the context of making provisions that go beyond statutory provision, we support the proposals relating to Neonatal Care Leave and Pay and Paternity (Bereavement) Leave that have been agreed through the PCF. In line with Recommendation 2, we expect the necessary changes to regulations to be taken forward by the end of 2026. (Paragraph 3.178)**

Appendix A – Our Previous Reports

2025 Report

We submitted our 2025 Report on 5 June 2025 and the Government responded on 1 August 2025[28]. The recommendations were as follows:

Our 2025/26 recommendations (from 1 September 2025)

1. **A consolidated increase of 4.2% to all police officer pay points for all ranks up to and including chief superintendent.**
2. **On-call Allowance to be increased from £25 to £35.**
3. **The current three bands for the Motor Vehicle Allowance essential users' lump sum, linked to engine size of the vehicle, to be replaced with a single allowance of £1,239 irrespective of the engine size.**
4. **The Away from Home Overnight Allowance to be increased by £10 from £50 to £60.**
5. **The Hardship Allowance to be increased by £10 from £30 to £40.**
6. **London Weighting to be uprated by 4.2%.**

Previous recommendations

All our previous recommendations, along with the Government responses, are set out below.

Report	Recommendation	Government response
1st (2015)	A consolidated increase of 1% to all pay points for federated and superintending ranks from 1 September 2015.	Accepted
	A 1% increase to London Weighting (from 1 July 2015) and Dog Handlers' Allowance (from 1 September 2015).	Accepted
	The London inspecting lead retained for now.	Accepted
2nd (2016)	A consolidated increase of 1% to all pay points for federated and superintending ranks from 1 September 2016.	Accepted
	A 1% increase to London Weighting and Dog Handlers' Allowance from 1 September 2016.	Accepted
	The maxima for South East Allowances to be increased to £2,000 and £3,000 respectively from 1 September 2016.	Accepted

[28] Letter from Home Secretary to Chair, Home Affairs Select Committee (1 August 2025). Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/688cca95a34b939141463e67/HS_to_HASC_Chair_-_Police_Pay_Award_2526.pdf [Accessed on 22 May 2026]

Report	Recommendation	Government response
	Motor Vehicle Allowances mileage rates for federated and superintending ranks should be the prevailing HM Revenue & Customs rates for essential and casual users from 1 September 2016. The current structure and values for the essential users' lump sums should remain.	Accepted
3rd (2017)	A consolidated increase of 2% to all pay points for federated and superintending ranks from 1 September 2017.	Increased consolidated pay by 1% and, for 2017/18 only, provided a 1% non-consolidated pay award
	London Weighting and Dog Handlers' Allowance to be uprated by 2% from 1 September 2017.	Increased London Weighting and Dog Handlers' Allowance by 1%
	The introduction of appropriate, targeted arrangements in 2017/18 to allow local flexibility for chief officers to make additional payments to police officers in hard-to-fill roles and in superintending ranks. This interim measure should have a time limit through to September 2020.	The Home Secretary welcomed this recommendation
	In order to support our consideration of pay and reward, the Home Office, NPCC and CoP should publish an integrated police workforce and pay reform plan through to 2020 which specifies the strands of reform, their purpose, lead responsibilities and the implementation strategy.	The Home Secretary looked to the CoP and the NPCC to take forward this work
4th (2018)	The time-limited 1% non-consolidated pay award received by the federated and superintending ranks in 2017/18 to be consolidated onto all pay points for officers at these ranks with effect from 1 September 2018.	Rejected
	In addition to and following the first recommendation, a consolidated increase of 2% to all police officer pay points at all ranks from 1 September 2018.	Increased pay by 2%
	London Weighting and Dog Handlers' Allowance to be uprated by 2% from 1 September 2018.	Accepted
	Police forces to appoint apprentice constables on a starting salary of between £18,000 and pay point 1.	Accepted
	Following twelve months, and subject to satisfactory completion of Year 1 of their apprenticeship, apprentice constables to move to the next pay point on the existing police constable pay scale.	Accepted
5th (2019)	A one-year pay award for all police officers in 2019/20.	Accepted
	A consolidated increase of 2.5% to all police officer pay points for all ranks from 1 September 2019.	Accepted
	Subject to further review in the next pay round, no change to the current arrangements for apprentice progression, namely that following twelve months, and subject to satisfactory completion of Year 1 of their apprenticeship, apprentice constables should move to the next pay point on the existing police constable pay scale.	Accepted
	Dog Handlers' Allowance should be uprated by 2.5% from 1 September 2019.	Accepted

Report	Recommendation	Government response
	London Weighting should be uprated by 2.5% from 1 September 2019.	Accepted
	An increase in the On-call Allowance from £15 to £20 from 1 September 2019.	Accepted
6th (2020)	A consolidated increase of 2.5% to all police officer pay points at all ranks from 1 September 2020.	Accepted
	The removal of the lowest point of the sergeants' pay scale from 1 September 2020.	Accepted
	Dog Handlers' Allowance should increase by 2.5% from 1 September 2020.	Accepted
	London Weighting should increase by 2.5% from 1 September 2020.	Accepted
	The maximum rate of London Allowance should increase by £1,000 to £5,338 a year for officers appointed on or after 1 September 1994 and not receiving Replacement Allowance.	Accepted
7th (2021)	The minimum rates for Police Constable Degree Apprentice starting pay and pay point 0 of the constable scale are uplifted by £250, and that all officers with a basic salary above these minima but below £24,000 (on a full-time equivalent basis) should receive a consolidated pay award of £250.	Accepted
8th (2022)	A one-year award for police officers in 2022/23.	Accepted
	A consolidated increase of £1,900 to all police officer pay points for all ranks from 1 September 2022.	Accepted
	The Police Constable Degree Apprentice (PCDA) minimum should be raised to pay point 0 (£23,556 from 1 September 2022).	Accepted
	London Weighting and the Dog Handlers' Allowance should be uplifted by 5% from 1 September 2022.	Accepted
	Parties should review the requirement and appropriate level for the Dog Handlers' Allowance.	Accepted
9th (2023)	A consolidated increase of 7% to all police officer pay points for all ranks up to and including assistant chief constable and commander from 1 September 2023.	Accepted
	The removal of pay point 0 of the constable pay scale from 1 September 2023.	Accepted
	Point 3 of the chief superintendent pay scale to be uplifted by £2,838 from 1 September 2023 and £2,837 from 1 September 2024. These uplifts are to be made before the application of the respective pay awards for these years.	Accepted
	London Weighting to be uprated by 7% from 1 September 2023.	Accepted
	Dog Handlers' Allowance to be uprated by 7% from 1 September 2023.	Accepted

Report	Recommendation	Government response
	The introduction of a new pay structure for those appointed as a chief constable or deputy chief constable from 1 September 2023 comprising three pay points for chief constables, and with deputy chief constable pay set at 82.5% of equivalent chief constable pay. Any chief constable or deputy chief constable who resigns or retires from the police service, and is subsequently reappointed to the same post within the same force, is to be reappointed on no more than their previous salary.	Accepted in principle subject to the development of a full and coherent implementation plan
	A consolidated increase of 5% to all existing chief constable and deputy chief constable pay points from 1 September 2023. To start the transition between the existing and new structures, where an existing pay point remains below the pay for the same post in the new pay structure, that pay point is to receive an additional consolidated award of up to 2%, such that the overall uplift does not exceed 7%.	A consolidated uplift of 7% for all chief officers
	Policing parties to bring forward proposals to improve the independence, transparency and consistency of determining and reporting on chief officer pay and allowances. We expect this to include proposals on how to place, in the public domain on an annual basis, a consistent set of data on the total pay and allowances received by each chief officer in each force.	Accepted
	A consolidated increase of 5% to the pay points of all chief officers in the Metropolitan Police Service and the City of London Police above the rank of commander from 1 September 2023.	A consolidated uplift of 7% for all chief officers in London
	A consolidated increase of an additional 2% to the Metropolitan Police Service deputy assistant commissioner pay point in order to retain the link with deputy chief constable pay from 1 September 2023.	Effectively accepted by the award of a 7% uplift to all chief officers in London
	The Relocation Allowance for chief officers to be amended as proposed by the chief officer remuneration review. The impact of the scheme to be reviewed within three years of implementation.	Accepted in principle subject to the development of more detailed proposals
	Policing parties to bring forward next year additional proposals for a review of the existing power of Police and Crime Commissioners to increase and decrease base pay of chief constables by plus or minus 10% on appointment. As an interim measure, the Home Office to issue guidance to Police and Crime Commissioners advising them against exercising their power to vary starting salaries on appointment until the review is concluded.	The Home Secretary said they were content to receive proposals on this but rejected the recommendation that the Home Office should issue guidance to PCCs advising them against exercising their power to vary starting salaries on appointment until the review is concluded
	The National Police Chiefs' Council to provide an interim report by 30 November 2023 on its progress to develop a long-term pay and reward strategy. This should include an update on the work on constable base pay and the back-to-first-principles review of the P-factor.	Accepted

Report	Recommendation	Government response
10th (2024)	The Home Office, National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) and Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) to work together as a matter of urgency to undertake a Comprehensive Review of police remuneration focused on examining pay and the mechanics of the coherence of pay scales, allowances, rewarding performance and the mechanism for progression, in order to produce a costed plan in preparation for the next Comprehensive Spending Review. As part of the review, the police service should ask itself some fundamental questions regarding the skills and capabilities it requires to deliver the best outcomes for the public, and how it can attract and retain those skills. We invite the Home Office, NPCC and APCC to provide a plan we can consider by January 2025.	Recommendation welcomed and would be subject to further discussions but must be aligned to a police workforce strategy.
	A consolidated increase of 4.75% to all police officer pay points for all ranks up to and including chief superintendent from 1 September 2024.	Accepted
	The chief officer of police in each force be given the discretion to set the starting salary for new constables at either pay point 1 or pay point 2 on the constable pay scale from 1 September 2024.	Accepted, but implementation subject to detailed proposals from the NPCC and APCC on the circumstances in which this discretion can be used.
	The Commissioners of the Metropolitan Police Service and City of London Police be given further discretion to set the starting salaries of new constables at pay point 3 on the constable pay scale. This additional flexibility should be limited to a period of two years, and be reviewed after one year.	Rejected, but London Allowance for officers appointed on or after 1 September 1994 increased by £1,250 with the implementation of this increase being synchronised alongside the wider changes to constable starting salaries.
	The allowances set out in the NPCC's schedule for the review of police allowances be reviewed in their entirety in 2024/25 as part of the Comprehensive Review of police remuneration. A coherent and equitable package of proposals for changes to those allowances should be presented to us in the next pay round for implementation in 2025/26.	Recommendation welcomed and would be subject to further discussions but must be aligned to a police workforce strategy.
	On-call Allowance be increased from £20 to £25 from 1 September 2024 as an interim measure pending the outcome of the NPCC's review of allowances in 2024/25.	Accepted
	London Weighting be uprated by 4.75% from 1 September 2024.	Accepted
	Dog Handlers' Allowance be uprated by 4.75% and the additional rate for officers with more than one dog be raised from 25% to 50% of the rate for the first dog from 1 September 2024.	Accepted

Report	Recommendation	Government response
	The time it takes the federated ranks to reach the maximum annual leave entitlement of 30 days be reduced from 20 to 10 years. Implementation of this change to be in line with the proposals put forward by the NPCC. In advance of that, from 1 September 2024 the annual leave for new entrants also be increased from 22 to 25 days.	Reducing the time taken to reach maximum annual leave entitlement accepted subject to the submission of a satisfactory Equality Impact Assessment by the NPCC to the Home Office. Increasing annual leave for new entrants accepted with implementation taking effect from 1 April 2025.
11th (2025)	A consolidated increase of 4.2% to all police officer pay points for all ranks up to and including chief superintendent.	Accepted
	On-call Allowance to be increased from £25 to £35.	Accepted
	The current three bands for the Motor Vehicle Allowance essential users' lump sum, linked to engine size of the vehicle, to be replaced with a single allowance of £1,239 irrespective of the engine size.	Accepted
	The Away from Home Overnight Allowance to be increased by £10 from £50 to £60.	Accepted
	The Hardship Allowance to be increased by £10 from £30 to £40.	Accepted
	London Weighting to be uprated by 4.2%.	Accepted

Appendix B – Policing and Crime Minister's Remit Letter

Home Office

Sarah Jones MP
Minister of State for Policing and Crime

2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF
www.gov.uk/home-office

Zoë Billingham
Chair, Police Remuneration Review Body
1st Floor, Caxton House
Tothill Street
London
SW1H 9NA

19 February 2026

Dear Zoë

Police Remuneration Review Body Remit 2026/27

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you and the members of the Police Remuneration Review Body (PRRB) for your 2025 report. The Government appreciates the independent, expert advice and valuable contribution that the PRRB makes.

I write to you now to formally commence the 2026/27 pay round and ask for the PRRB to make recommendations on how to apply the pay award for all police officers in ranks up to and including chief superintendent, in England and Wales.

I also ask that you consider proposals resulting from year two of the National Police Chiefs' Council's review of allowances, taking into account the views of policing stakeholders.

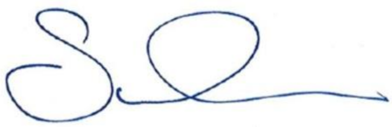
We accepted your recommendation for the 2025/26 pay award. However, since it came in well above the figures we set out as affordable within our evidence, we again had to take difficult decisions and make savings elsewhere in the Home Office's budgets to provide additional funding to forces to help with the increased costs. We undertook a rigorous in-year savings exercise and put in place enhanced spending controls, finding efficiencies across various programmes and reducing discretionary spend. As the Spending Review confirmed, all pay must be funded from Departmental budgets and there will be no additional funding available for pay settlements.

During this pay round, you will receive evidence from my department, HM Treasury and key stakeholders. My department's evidence will set out the funds available to policing for 2026/27, following the Spending Review in June, as well as the recruitment and retention context alongside pay and earnings data, and will provide an update on our Police Reform White Paper.

The police pay year begins on 1 September and we are committed to announcing pay awards as close to this date as possible. To support this, I would be grateful if you could submit your report at the earliest point that allows you to give due consideration to the relevant evidence. To support with this, the Government will provide its written evidence as soon as possible after the police funding settlement is published, as this will inform the affordability position.

I look forward to receiving your report in due course.

Very best wishes,



Sarah Jones MP
Minister of State for Policing and Crime

Appendix C – Summaries of Parties' Written Evidence

C.1 We have set out below our summaries of the written evidence provided to us this year.

Home Office

C.2 The Home Office set its evidence in the context of the Government's Safer Streets Mission and the police reform programme set out in the White Paper 'From local to national: a new model for policing', published in January 2026. It described a comprehensive programme of reform intended to strengthen neighbourhood policing, improve efficiency, and ensure policing was better equipped to meet both current and future threats. Key measures included the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee (the commitment to deliver 13,000 additional neighbourhood policing personnel by the end of the Parliament), proposals to create a new National Police Service to provide stronger national capabilities and the reduction of duplication by moving to fewer forces.

C.3 The Home Office reported that the Crime Survey for England and Wales indicated that there were 9.3 million incidents in the year ending September 2025, which did not represent a statistically significant change from the previous twelve months. Police recorded crime figures for the same time period showed reductions in homicides, knife crime and firearms offences, but a similar number of robbery offences and a 5% increase in shoplifting offences compared with the previous twelve months. The Home Office emphasised the importance of neighbourhood policing in tackling local issues in town centres and hotspots

C.4 The Home Office highlighted total funding for territorial police forces and counter-terrorism policing of up to £19.6 billion in FYE 2027, representing an increase of £848 million compared with the FYE 2026 funding settlement. It explained that total funding for territorial police forces would be up to £18.4 billion in FYE 2027, a £796 million increase on FYE 2026, including £432 million additional government grant and up to £364 million from council tax precept, assuming PCCs used their maximum precept flexibility. Despite this increase, the Home Office stressed that financial pressures remained significant for many forces following several consecutive years of above-affordability pay awards, compounded by rising workforce costs as new recruits progressed through pay scales. It pointed to analysis from the National Audit Office indicating growing pressures on police finances and the risk of service impacts if these were not managed carefully.

C.5 In relation to pay, the Home Office said that its current assessment was that a pay award of up to 2.5% was affordable for most forces in 2026/27, although affordability varied and some forces would face pressures even at this level. It emphasised that any award above this would likely require difficult reprioritisation decisions and further efficiency savings, with no additional funding available from HM Treasury beyond departmental budgets. The Home Office noted that pay awards in each of the previous four years had exceeded affordability. It reported that the pay award for 2025/26 had required significant additional in-year savings and reprioritisation within the Home Office. It did not consider that the available evidence demonstrated widespread recruitment or retention problems that would justify targeted pay interventions, observing that voluntary resignation rates and the overall leaver rate remained low compared with other sectors. The Home Office confirmed that the officer maintenance grant had been removed in the police funding settlement for FYE 2027, giving forces the flexibility to better shape their workforce.

C.6 The Home Office reported that police officer numbers remained high, with more than 145,000 full time equivalent officers in England and Wales as at 30 September 2025. It highlighted the importance of workforce planning, retention of experience and development of leadership capability. It set out its ambition for a national workforce strategy and it described the purpose of the Leadership Commission and the College of Police's National Talent Development Strategy. It noted continued progress on workforce diversity, with the proportion of officers from ethnic minority backgrounds increasing to 8.5% in March 2025. However, representation of ethnic minority officers (excluding white minorities) was lower among senior ranks (chief inspector or above) compared with the ranks of constable to inspector. The Home Office also highlighted ongoing work to improve officer wellbeing, including strengthened Police Covenant commitments, new national wellbeing guidelines and expanded mental health support.

C.7 The Home Office drew our attention to the matters set out in the remit letter for the 2026/27 round. These included the application of the pay award for federated and superintending ranks and consideration of proposals arising from year two of the NPCC's allowances review. It asked that we have regard to the views of the SSRB in respect of chief officers where relevant. It emphasised that any increases to allowances, including London Weighting, would need to be funded from within existing resources. The Home Office also provided updates on the implementation of our recommendations on annual leave, and on pensions, including planned changes to member contribution structures following consultation, and progress in implementing the McCloud/Sargeant age discrimination remedy.

C.8 The Home Office described the overall remuneration package for officers including basic pay, allowances, pensions and annual leave. The Home Office set out median basic pay and median total earnings for each rank over the last five years.

C.9 The Home Office highlighted the Employment Rights Act 2025 and the Government's commitment to reviewing how the additions and amendments to existing employment legislation should be applied to police officers. It said it would welcome our views on this. It also welcomed the NPCC's work to review current paternity leave entitlements (referred to as maternity support leave in the Police Regulations 2003) for officers.

HM Treasury

C.10 HM Treasury's evidence set out the economic, labour market and fiscal context within which it asked the Pay Review Bodies to consider their recommendations for 2026/27 pay awards.

C.11 HM Treasury said that the 2025 Spending Review had set departmental budgets up to FYE 2029, but that the Government had since announced in the 2025 Budget that it would seek to make further savings and efficiencies of £2.8 billion in FYE 2029, rising to £4.9 billion in FYE 2031. These additional savings and efficiencies were equivalent to 0.5% of Resource Departmental Expenditure Limit budgets.

C.12 HM Treasury highlighted that there would be no additional funding for pay if recommended awards exceeded what departments could afford, including from the Reserve or by switching funding from capital budgets into resource budgets. It explained that if Pay Review Bodies recommended awards above the level departments had budgeted for, then departments would have to consider whether further efficiencies or cuts were possible, and recommendations would have to be rejected if they proved unaffordable.

C.13 HM Treasury asked the Pay Review Bodies to take full account of the latest data and forecasts for wage growth across the wider economy, which was expected to decline further in FYE 2027 due to loosening in the wider labour market. It cited the OBR forecasts showing average weekly earnings growth of 3.2% and hourly earnings growth of 2.6% in FYE 2027. HM Treasury highlighted that inflation was also expected to fall – to 2.2% in FYE 2027 according to the OBR's forecast.

NPCC

C.14 The NPCC highlighted the decline in crime against individuals and households in the last decade. It explained that despite reductions in overall volume, crime had become more complex and harmful with the crime severity score rising over the past decade. The NPCC reported that charge/summons rates had improved to 6.3%, reversing a long-term decline.

C.15 The joint statement by the NPCC, CPOSA and PSA, which sat alongside the NPCC's evidence, noted that demand on the police service continued to rise in volume and complexity, particularly in high-harm areas such as safeguarding, online crime, and mental health. It pointed out that these demands required experienced, skilled officers, staff and leaders who felt valued and supported. At the same time, the workforce was under intense strain, with evidence of burnout, reduced experience levels, and a continuing challenge to recruit and retain people in key roles, which affected the services that could be delivered. The statement noted that there was a need for clarity going forward from Government on the role and breadth of the policing mission in a system-wide approach to reducing crime and increasing public safety, to support workforce morale and wellbeing.

C.16 The NPCC reported that the total police workforce stood at 235,753 FTE in March 2025, slightly down from the previous year, but that officer maintenance targets were met nationally. It said that the workforce was still 3.4% below its 2010 peak, and growth had not matched population increases. It told us that 14.7% of officers were not fully deployable due to long-term sickness, adjusted duties or recuperative duties. It explained that the workforce mix had remained stable, though it pointed out that the removal of the officer maintenance requirement might change this position.

C.17 Its evidence suggested that recruitment levels had stabilised and assessment centre pass rates remained stable. The NPCC said this suggested no fall in quality. It explained that now recruitment was slowing, the service was seeing falling resignation rates and rising retention. It reported that attrition was declining, with overall leavers at 6.0%, down from the previous year. It said that employee retention could be measured through the stability rate, a metric indicating the proportion of employees who remain over a given period. The NPCC told us that the stability rate for officers had increased from 82.4% to 89.6% between 2023 and 2025. It told us that equivalent rates over a similar period were: 78% to 85% for the NHS; 92% to 96% for fire and rescue; 75% to 85% for education; and 85% to 92% for the civil service.

C.18 The NPCC reported that the Leavers Framework and 2025 Workforce Survey provided some insight into the reasons for leaving or intending to leave. It noted that over the last twelve months less than 1% of officers who gave a reason stated ‘pay and remuneration’ as their reason for resigning. The NPCC informed us that the main reasons given for leaving the service were ‘personal reasons’ and ‘professional development’. More than a quarter of respondents to the Workforce Survey stated they were actively looking at other jobs or intended to leave in the next twelve months. The NPCC reported that the top reasons for this included: work-life balance, pay and benefits, poor leadership, an unmanageable workload and low public confidence in policing. It told us that above the rank of constable, the main reason for leaving was retirement.

C.19 The NPCC highlighted the acceleration in workforce representation as a result of the Uplift Programme but told us that this was likely to slow as recruitment slowed. However, it reported that ethnic minority officers resigned at greater rates than white officers. It said that this was in part due to their service profiles, with fewer ethnic minority officers in the retirement cohorts, but that staff surveys showed underlying cultural issues that affected retention of ethnic minority officers. The NPCC also reported that the overall attrition rate of female officers was higher than for males – female officers were more likely to stay in the first few years of service but more likely to resign mid service compared with male officers. It said that staff dismissals formed a small percentage of overall staff attrition, and that medical (ill-health) retirement remained small in scale and had increased only modestly over time.

C.20 The NPCC set out the findings from the 2025 Workforce Wellbeing Survey. It highlighted that pay interacted closely with workload and wellbeing pressures, meaning improving morale required acknowledging that remuneration conveyed organisational value and fairness, not just financial reward. The survey results showed organisational strengths such as strong team cohesion and purpose, trust, collaboration and pride but also key challenges. These included: burnout, trauma exposure, and physical risk; poor information technology; perceived discrimination and low organisational justice; significant disconnect between frontline and management perceptions; low confidence in leadership; and concerns about fairness in promotion and conduct processes.

C.21 The NPCC reported that the additional £2 billion (11.2%) funding set out in the 2025 Comprehensive Spending Review was not sufficient to cover: pay growth, inflation and debt servicing. It explained that the 4.2% award for officers and staff in 2025/26 was only partially funded, £120 million had been provided for the period to March 2026 but no ongoing funding was provided, and this had created a new ongoing annual pressure of around £0.2 billion. For planning purposes, forces had been asked to assume: 3.0% pay award in 2026/27, 2.5% in 2027/28, and 2.5% in 2028/29. However, the NPCC emphasised that these were not affordability assessments. It told us that every 0.1% on the pay bill equated to £11 million, equivalent to 150 officers (excluding the implications for the police staff pay award).

C.22 The NPCC concluded that 2.5% was the maximum affordable pay award. Anything above that would require critical service cuts. Nine forces had already required either extraordinary precept increases (six forces), or exceptional grant funding (three forces). It noted that in its evidence HM Treasury had pointed out that any above budget pay awards had to be met through efficiencies.

C.23 The NPCC set out its concerns regarding the pay of inspectors and chief inspectors. It proposed that Pay Point 0 on the inspectors pay scale should be removed. In addition, it also proposed that the three pay points in the chief inspectors pay scale should be uplifted to increase the differentials, for example, pay point 1 to £71,000, pay point 2 to £73,000 and pay point 3 to £75,000 (based on September 2025 base pay rates) with effect from April 2027. The NPCC explained that its proposals were underpinned by work it had taken to benchmark the police pay and it set out the implications of that review for each rank up to and including chief superintendent.

C.24 The NPCC highlighted external market comparisons for inspector pay. These showed that it was comparable against the median for public and not-for-profit organisations, in terms of both base pay and total cash, for all pay points apart from pay point 0. Pay point 0 was comparable for total cash, but not for base pay when the P-factor was accounted for. The data also indicated that inspector pay did not reach comparable levels against the median for all organisations at any pay point in terms of either base pay or total cash.

C.25 The NPCC reported that market comparisons for chief inspector pay showed it was competitive with not-for-profit organisations on base pay at the top of the scale, but it did not achieve comparable levels against all organisations on either base pay or total cash. It was also not comparable with upper-quartile benchmarks when the P-factor was taken into account.

C.26 The NPCC sought an annual pay uplift of 3.5% for the federated and superintending ranks from September 2026. The NPCC set its proposal in the context of the forecast for a fall in CPI by the end of 2026, loosening labour market conditions, expected pay settlements in the wider economy of between 3.1% and 3.5%, and issues with the competitiveness of police pay. The NPCC highlighted falling average earnings over time across the federated and superintending ranks. It also drew attention to market comparison information, which it said showed that pay for most ranks (accounting for the P-factor) was only competitive when officers reached the top of their pay scale. It said that these two factors had led it to conclude that officers deserved an above inflation award.

C.27 The NPCC set out the results from the second year of its three-year review of allowances. It proposed:

- that all Protection Allowance rates be increased by £8, and that Protection Allowance rate 3 be applied for each day an officer was deployed in a country deemed to be subject to more risk;
- the maximum limit for both the London Allowance and South East Allowance be uplifted in line with the annual pay award.

C.28 The NPCC also set out the work it had done on additional hours worked and its proposals for changes to rest days in lieu.

C.29 The NPCC also explained its rationale for not proposing changes to the other allowances that had been reviewed. These included Unsocial Hours Allowance and Acting Up Allowance and bonus payments.

C.30 The NPCC told us that police stakeholders were in agreement on the need for a long-term workforce strategy but that investment was needed. It set out the engagement it had undertaken across the service and highlighted areas where agreement was yet to be reached.

C.31 The NPCC provided an update on the challenges encountered during the implementation of the pension remedy. It also described the current position regarding pension opt outs in the police service. It observed that levels of pension opt in were comparable with other sectors. It reported that officers with less than five years' service had the highest opt-out rate. The NPCC told us that a new national opt-out template had been issued to forces to help understand the behaviour driving opt-out trends.

C.32 The NPCC told us that it was looking at measures to increase the effectiveness of the Pay Progression Standard (PPS) in the short term, while recognising the link to wider police reform. It proposed:

- An extension of the PPS to Probationers – the NPCC wanted to apply PPS to officers who were subject to an extension of their probationary period due to performance matters, with exemptions available where appropriate.
- A reduction of the requirement to give notice to officers of any changes to local training requirements in the PPS from twelve months to three months.

C.33 The NPCC explained the purpose of, and the background to, the X-factor in police regulations and set out the drawbacks. It concluded that it was no longer fit for purpose. It told us that it intended to review the X-factor in the course of 2026

C.34 The NPCC sought our support for Targeted Variable Pay (TVP) being made permanent in legislation before 30 June 2026. The NPCC described the background to TVP and its use. The NPCC argued that TVP had proved to be an essential, flexible and proportionate tool that enabled forces to sustain critical operational capabilities during a period of unprecedented workforce change and demand. It told us that the targeted use allowed forces to maintain capacity while longer-term workforce and pay reforms progressed under the developing police reform programme. The NPCC said that the tool helped avoid workforce churn, supported retention of experienced specialists, and reduced the costs of frequent re-training in highly technical areas such as firearms, investigation and public protection.

APCC

C.35 The APCC described the role of PCCs and their contribution to policing and public accountability. It highlighted the continuing financial pressures facing forces and the limited flexibility available within police budgets, noting that around 83% of expenditure is on the workforce.

C.36 The APCC told us that PCCs faced a tension between wanting to recognise officers' service through a fair pay award and ensuring that forces could maintain the levels of service that communities deserved and expected. It agreed with the NPCC that 2.5% represented the level of true affordability for 2026/27 and warned that any unfunded award above this level would carry severe operational implications. It said that, where pay costs were higher than expectations, forces generally had to reduce police staff numbers or rely on vacancy management, both of which were inefficient.

C.37 The APCC noted that the NPCC had proposed a 3.5% award, which took into account anticipated trends in inflation, pay settlements and average earnings growth, conditional on additional funding for any uplift above 2.5%. It drew attention to the Minister for Policing and Crime's reiteration of the Spending Review position that all pay needed to be funded from departmental budgets and there would be no additional funding available for pay settlements. In this context, the APCC considered it unlikely that further funds would be provided to support the NPCC proposal. It therefore proposed a 2.5% award for 2026/27, while agreeing that officers deserved a 3.5% award should additional funding be made available.

C.38 The APCC welcomed the NPCC review of allowances, particularly its focus on officer wellbeing. It said that the role of a police officer was demanding and could involve long working hours and short-notice demands that impacted on personal and family life. The APCC emphasised the importance of an allowance framework and conditions that fairly compensated officers for calls on their time while allowing and encouraging time off for rest and recuperation. It stressed that processes governing short-notice demands should minimise unnecessary disruption to officers' time away from work.

MPS

C.39 The MPS described the increasingly complex policing demands in London. It highlighted significant population growth, diversity, and rising high-harm, digitally enabled crime alongside sustained public order pressures at a scale not seen for decades. It told us that investigations were becoming more challenging and costly, with criminal justice backlogs and partner agency capacity constraints adding to operational demand. The MPS outlined progress under its A New Met for London plan, including the stabilisation delivered in phase 1 and its shift to phase 2 focused on improving performance, culture, leadership and wellbeing.

C.40 The MPS emphasised the challenging economic and financial context. It told us that its budget for FYE 2027 assumed a 3% pay award, but it was currently carrying a £30 million gap and expected its medium-term financial plan gap to grow to around £125 million by FYE 2028. The MPS stated that any uplift above 3% would be unaffordable without full additional funding, and that non-workforce savings, efficiency and income had been fully exhausted. The MPS explained that its medium-term financial plan currently assumed a 3% uplift which left it needing to reduce by 1000 FTE by FYE 2028. It told us that a pay award of 3.5% combined with pay point 2 reform, would increase the unfunded pressure by around 300 FTE, and any higher settlement risked forcing further workforce reductions, undermining operational capacity, resilience and the progress achieved under phase 2 of its A New Met for London plan.

C.41 The MPS aimed to stabilise workforce strength at around 31,258 FTE by the end of FYE 2027, subject to funding. After two years of workforce contraction (a fall from 33,972 FTE in April 2024), the MPS stressed that meeting even a stabilised workforce target would require a significant increase in recruitment volumes in a highly competitive London labour market. It explained that current application volumes were below levels required to meet anticipated recruitment needs for FYE 2027. It reported that it was too early to evaluate fully the impact of recent changes to starting pay and London Allowance.

C.42 The MPS informed us that attrition had increased from 6.5% to 7.3% in the last year. It explained that if officers leaving under the Enhanced Returners Scheme were excluded, attrition was around 6.7%. It confirmed that the MPS remained a net loser on transfer with a net reduction of 173 FTE between April and December 2025, following losses in the previous year. The MPS continued to lose experienced and specialist officers, including higher rates among detectives (8.6%). This created capability gaps and affected the ability to build a sustainable talent pipeline for specialist commands which were reliant on officers with significant prior service. These included counter terrorism, firearms, public order, and murder investigation teams. The MPS set out its continuing concerns about attrition among officers in the early years of service.

C.43 The MPS highlighted the acute financial pressures officers faced in London. Housing, rental and childcare costs continued to far exceed national averages. The Police Friendly Index 2026 showed that MPS officers had higher levels of financial concerns and debt compared to the UK police average, and a growing number were considering opting out of pensions. The MPS argued that the unique intensity, complexity and risk of policing in the capital required a pay award that supported the recruitment and retention of capable officers.

C.44 The MPS endorsed the NPCC recommendation for a 3.5% national pay award but said more needed to be done to recognise the challenges facing officers living and working in London. It supported the NPCC proposals to uplift London Weighting and London Allowance in line with the pay award each year from 2026. It also suggested that a higher than award uplift in London Allowance might be necessary if its proposal to reprofile the constable pay was not progressed.

C.45 The MPS fully supported most of the NPCC proposals on allowances, including Protection Allowance increases. The MPS explained that while it was broadly in agreement with the NPCC intentions to address issues with rest days in lieu, it was not able to support the proposals that had been put forward. It argued that the caps, repayment requirements and deadlines were unaffordable and operationally unrealistic given the scale of the outstanding rest days in the MPS (around 300,000).

C.46 The MPS said proposals to reform the pay of inspectors and chief inspectors were not a priority for the MPS given the absence of recruitment or retention challenges at that rank, and that the proposals were unaffordable without additional funding. It highlighted that its priorities remained starting pay and the time it took constables to reach the top of the pay scale. It reiterated its support for reprofiling the constable pay scale – raising starting pay (to pay point 3) and removing pay point 4 to accelerate progression – to mitigate its rising five to nine-year attrition trend.

C.47 The MPS strongly supported the NPCC's ambition to strengthen the PPS, including reducing the training notice period, and extending PPS to probationers with extended probation. It also supported making TVP a permanent feature of the reward system.

C.48 The MPS proposed acting as a pathfinder force to accelerate pay reform. It outlined a two-year pilot aimed at: strengthening the link between pay, performance and competence; modernising PPS; introducing performance linked bonus payments under Regulation 34; and reforming X-factor to better reflect deployability, including withholding X-factor for officers on Adjusted Duties subject to lawful safeguards. The MPS explained that it would need up to £51 million of initial investment over two years (including up to £30.6 million in the first year) to test the changes.

PSA

C.49 The PSA said it looked forward to being consulted on the development of the Police Reform White Paper proposals, including work on pay and workforce modernisation. It told us it supported a complete overhaul of the police funding formula as it supported a fully funded service.

C.50 In line with the pressures facing the police service set out in a joint statement it had produced with the NPCC and CPOSA, the PSA sought a fully funded pay award that was at least 1% above the rate of CPI, applied equally across all ranks, together with a longer-term strategy linked to a multi-year settlement and alignment with other public sector pay discussions. It highlighted the challenges facing the police service in terms of improving productivity. The PSA pointed to continuing financial pressures on officers and told us that, according to ONS figures, average UK pay growth in 2025 (4.7%) exceeded the 4.2% award given to officers.

C.51 The Association also set out concerns relating to allowances, particularly in regions such as the South East where costs of living remained higher. The PSA fully supported a review of the ongoing cost of living for officers living in the South East, but advised that the issue needed looking at across England and Wales and specifically where the cost of living was higher than average. It told us that its 2025 Pay and Wellbeing Survey indicated significant levels of dissatisfaction with the South East Allowance.

C.52 The PSA again proposed that the On-call Allowance be increased to £60 per 24-hour period for the superintending ranks (which after income tax at the higher rate of 40% would amount to £36 net). It also sought for the allowance to become reckonable for pensionable purposes. The PSA reported that 91% of respondents to its 2025 Pay and Wellbeing Survey did not feel the current level adequately rewarded the on-call duties that they were expected to perform, and that most respondents considered the risk and demand of on-call responsibilities for the superintending ranks to be greater than those for officers in the federated ranks. The PSA explained that its most recent survey recorded mixed responses for how demanding the on-call function could be, but that over half of respondents reported that they felt that it could be the same or more than that of a normal working day.

C.53 The PSA highlighted a group of its members who were impacted by greater demands of being on call and responsible for Force Coordination and Command roles. It explained that these officers often built up rest days in lieu. The PSA proposed that those officers who covered the most demand should be allowed to convert rest days in lieu into payment at the end of each year. It told us that it supported the NPCC proposals to address the issue.

C.54 The PSA also referenced its 2025 Pay and Wellbeing Survey to identify low and declining morale, with officers reporting that work was increasingly affecting mental health and family life. On wellbeing more broadly, the PSA survey showed that: many officers were often working in 'crisis mode', rushing to complete work and having to work reactively rather than proactively; long hours were seen as entrenched in the policing culture, with many officers regularly exceeding 48 hours a week; and nearly 70% or respondents reported feelings of stress, low mood, anxiety, or other difficulties with their mental health and wellbeing in the last twelve months, with 94% of these saying work caused or exacerbated these conditions, and most attributed this to the workload being too high and causing a poor work-life balance.

C.55 The PSA drew attention to annual leave issues, noting that over half of respondents to its 2025 Pay and Wellbeing Survey had not taken all their leave entitlement. Almost 60% of these respondents had cited work pressures as the reason.

C.56 On workforce and retention, the PSA supported wider and more consistent use of exit interviews and encouraged more agile working options, including greater use of remote working. It emphasised that flexibility was particularly important for officers with caring responsibilities and highlighted survey comments showing that female officers often faced significant pressures balancing work and home life.

C.57 The PSA highlighted that uncertainty regarding pensions was the third highest factor having a negative effect on the morale of respondents to its 2025 Pay and Wellbeing Survey. The PSA considered that there needed to be recognition, support and assistance for those impacted by the pension remedy through no fault of their own. It pointed out that policing was impacted more than other public sector members due to there being different rates of contributions for each pension scheme. Furthermore, each force administered its pension scheme separately which meant there were varying levels of support and assistance available.

Appendix D – The Parties' Website Addresses

The parties' written evidence should be available through these websites.

Home Office	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/home-office-evidence-to-the-police-remuneration-review-body-2026-to-2027
HM Treasury	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/economic-evidence-to-the-pay-review-bodies-2026-27-pay-round
National Police Chiefs' Council	https://news.npcc.police.uk/releases/police-leaders-call-for-investment-in-officer-pay
Metropolitan Police Service	https://www.met.police.uk/
Association of Police and Crime Commissioners	https://www.apccs.police.uk/our-work/workforce/
Joint submission from the Police Superintendents' Association and the Superintendents' Association of Northern Ireland	https://www.policesupers.com/rails/active_storage/blobs/eyJfcmFpbHMiOnsibWVzc2FnZSI6IkJBaHBBbVlDIiwiZXhwIjpudWxsLCJwdXIiOiJibG9iX2lkIn19--66e27b8e6f728e716586df6a2c503c91093e6e64/PRRB%20Submission%202026.pdf

Appendix E – Our Analysis of Police Earnings and Workforce Data

Police earnings

Sources

E.1 We have examined the annual earnings of police officers using results from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) run by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), and the Police Earnings Census run by the Home Office.

E.2 The ASHE is a sample survey of employers covering 1% of employees on Pay As You Earn tax schemes. The results provide earnings estimates by a number of breakdowns, including sex, occupation, industry and region.

E.3 Our analysis of ASHE is used to look at the earnings of police officers and how they compare with other occupations across the economy. Our analyses focus on the occupational group covering constables and sergeants, as there is more uncertainty around the earnings estimates for the group covering the inspecting, superintending and chief officer ranks due to smaller sample sizes.

E.4 ASHE estimates are affected by the composition of the employee workforce, which can vary year on year. Differences in levels and growth rates in ASHE estimates reflect both changes in earnings and changes in the composition of the workforce. The ONS advises focusing on long-term trends rather than year-on-year changes.

E.5 Following methodological changes (to address concerns over coverage of high earners in recent years), ONS cautions against comparing data from 2023 onwards with earlier years. Our analyses have shown both the provisional 2023 data (unaffected by the changes) and the revised 2023 data to give an indication of the effect of these changes.

E.6 The Police Earnings Census, conducted in its present form since FYE 2011, covers all police officers and permits detailed analysis of their earnings. The data provide a useful insight into the range of earnings received within and across ranks, and the take-up and value of individual pay components.

E.7 In our analyses of both these sources we focus on median[29] full-time[30] gross[31] annual earnings.

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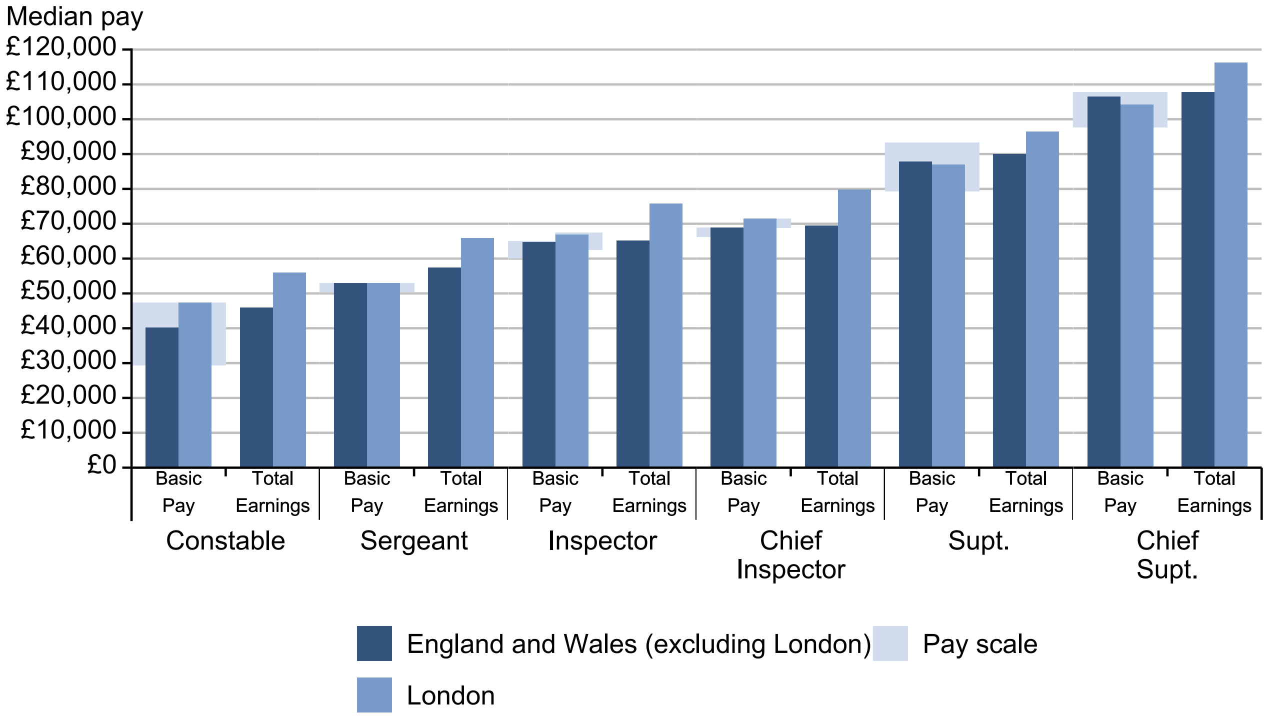
[29] The median is the value below which 50% of workers fall. It gives a better indication of typical pay than the mean as it is less affected by a relatively small number of very high earners and the skewed distribution of earnings.
[30] We focus on full-time earnings to control for any differences caused by different mixes of full- and part-time workers over time and between occupations.
[31] That is before deductions for tax, National Insurance, pension contributions and any other deductions imposed by the employer.

Police earnings in FYE 2025

E.8 We used the latest available Police Earnings Census data for a detailed analysis of police earnings in FYE 2025. Median basic pay for full-time federated and superintending officers ranged from £40,200 for constables to £106,500 for chief superintendents (Chart E.1). Inspectors and chief inspectors are the only ranks to have different basic pay scales in London from elsewhere in England and Wales, resulting in higher median basic pay for those ranks in London. For other ranks, differences in median basic pay between London and the rest of England and Wales are likely to be caused by variations in the distribution of officers on the pay scales.

E.9 Median total earnings for full-time federated and superintending officers ranged from £46,000 for constables to £107,800 for chief superintendents outside London and from £56,000 to £116,200 in London (Chart E.1). Median total earnings are higher in London than the rest of England and Wales for all federated and superintending ranks, due to London-based officers receiving London Weighting and higher rates of Location and Replacement Allowances.

Chart E.1: Median basic pay and total earnings, by rank, full-time officers, England and Wales, FYE 2025



Source: OPRB analysis of Police Earnings Census data, Home Office.
Note: Pay scales are averaged over the financial year to be consistent with earnings data.

E.10 Median basic pay in FYE 2025 was close to the pay scale maxima for all ranks except constables outside London and the superintending ranks. This is as a result of around half or more of officers being at the top of their respective pay scales (Table E.1). The superintending ranks were the only ones to have fewer than half of officers at the pay scale maximum.

Table E.1: Distribution of officers on pay scales, England and Wales, March 2025

	Constable	Sergeant	Inspector	Chief Inspector	Supt.	Chief Supt.
0	..	–	13%	–	–	–
1	6%	–	17%	18%	17%	29%
2	10%	12%	16%	24%	22%	23%
3	11%	13%	53%	57%	21%	48%
4	8%	75%	–	–	40%	–
5	7%	–	–	–	–	–
6	7%	–	–	–	–	–
7	51%	–	–	–	–	–
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: OPRB analysis of Police Earnings Census data, Home Office.

Notes:

– Percentages represent proportions of all officers in each rank.

– '..' represents a non-zero percentage less than 0.5%.

– '–' represents non-applicable pay points.

– Pay point 0 of the constable scale was removed on 1 September 2023. Pay points 0 and 1 were removed from the sergeant pay scale on 1 April 2014 and 1 September 2020 respectively.

E.11 Our assessment of police earnings included the proportion of full-time officers in receipt of specific allowances and overtime (Table E.2) and the median annual values of those payments for officers in receipt of the particular payments (Table E.3). Key observations include:

- The majority of eligible officers received Unsocial Hours Allowance (89% at the constable rank, although the proportions decreased as rank increased) and overtime payments (93% of constables and 92% of sergeants).
- The proportion of officers receiving overtime was similar to the previous year. The median amount of overtime was around £220 (10%) higher than in FYE 2024 for constables, and around £160 (4%) lower for sergeants.
- The percentages of officers receiving Location Allowances and London Weighting reflected the proportions of officers working in London and the South East (excluding those receiving Replacement Allowance in South East forces).
- The proportion of officers receiving On-call Allowance generally rose as rank increased. However, among the superintending ranks it was paid to a slightly lower proportion of chief superintendents than superintendents.
- Fewer than 30 chief superintendents (less than 12%) received Recognition of Workload Payments (intended to be paid when the demands placed on the officer exceed those usually placed on other officers of the same rank) down from 28% in FYE 2024. This is likely to be linked to the change to the top of the pay scale for these officers.
- Very few officers received Away from Home Overnight and Hardship Allowances, or Service Critical Skills Payments.

- As might be expected with a legacy payment, the proportion of officers who received Replacement Allowance (available to officers who joined the police before September 1994) was lower than the previous year. It is now received by very few officers as most who qualify for it will be eligible for retirement.

Table E.2: Percentage of full-time officers in receipt of additional pay components, by rank, England and Wales, FYE 2025

	Constable	Sergeant	Inspector	Chief Inspector	Supt.	Chief Supt.
Location Allowance	43%	44%	42%	42%	46%	41%
London Weighting	26%	28%	26%	22%	28%	18%
Replacement Allowance	0.1%	0.3%	1%	–	–	–
Unsocial Hours Allowance	89%	86%	79%	71%	–	–
Away from Home Overnight Allowance	6%	5%	3%	–	–	–
Hardship Allowance	1%	1%	–	–	–	–
On-call Allowance	7%	16%	39%	67%	84%	82%
Service Critical Skills Payment	9%	8%	3%	5%	–	–
Recognition of Workload Payment	–	–	–	–	13%	–
Overtime	93%	92%	–	–	–	–
Other payments (e.g. Dog Handlers', secondment allowances)	28%	28%	26%	30%	38%	50%

Source: OPRB analysis of Police Earnings Census data, Home Office.

Note: Percentages relating to fewer than 30 officers are suppressed.

Table E.3: Median value of additional pay components, full-time officers in receipt of relevant payments, by rank, England and Wales, FYE 2025

	Constable	Sergeant	Inspector	Chief Inspector	Supt.	Chief Supt.
Location Allowance	£5,338	£5,338	£5,338	£5,338	£5,338	£3,000
London Weighting	£2,966	£2,966	£2,966	£2,966	£2,966	£2,966
Replacement Allowance	£2,951	£2,951	£2,951	–	–	–
Unsocial Hours Allowance	£591	£599	£257	£95	£37	–
Away from Home Overnight Allowance	£150	£150	£150	–	–	–
Hardship Allowance	£60	£60	–	–	–	–
On-call Allowance	£700	£775	£695	£720	£925	£780
Service Critical Skills Payment	£875	£750	£850	£850	–	–
Recognition of Workload Payment	–	–	–	–	£2,000	–
Overtime	£2,401	£3,777	–	–	–	–
Other payments (e.g. Dog Handlers', secondment allowances)	£223	£350	£91	£345	£1,239	£1,253

Source: OPRB analysis of Police Earnings Census data, Home Office.

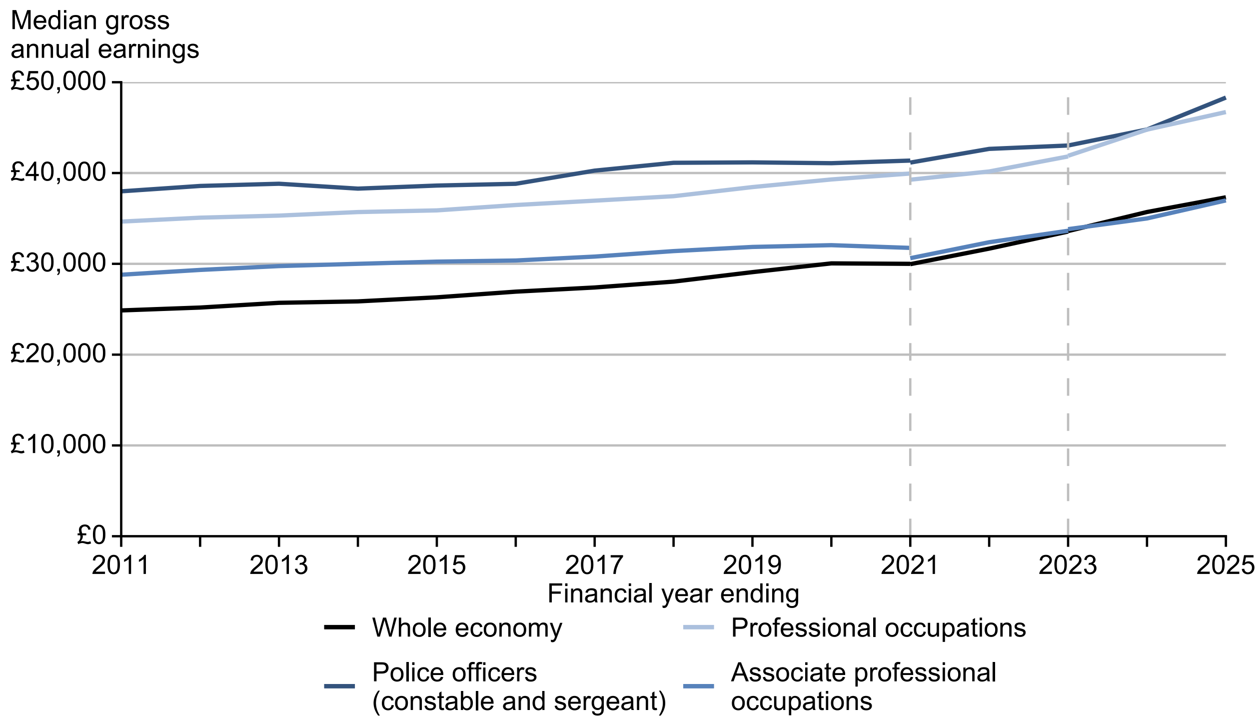
Note: Estimates relating to fewer than 30 officers are suppressed. Zero allowances are ignored in calculation of the medians.

Median earnings relative to other areas of the economy

E.12 We used ASHE data to compare the earnings of constables and sergeants with: the whole economy; the associate professional occupations group (which includes constables and sergeants); and professional occupations (which tend to be graduate professions). For all these groups we have looked at England and Wales excluding London as ASHE annual earnings for police officers in London (and, therefore, England and Wales as a whole) are not available for FYE 2025.

E.13 Our analysis showed that in FYE 2025 the median full-time earnings of constables and sergeants outside London increased by 7.8% (£3,500, Chart E.2). In FYE 2025, median full-time earnings outside London rose for all three comparison groups (by 5.7% for associate professional occupations, 4.5% for the whole economy and 4.3% for professional occupations).

Chart E.2: Median full-time gross annual earnings, England and Wales excluding London, FYE 2011–2025



Source: OPRB analysis of ASHE data, ONS.

Notes:

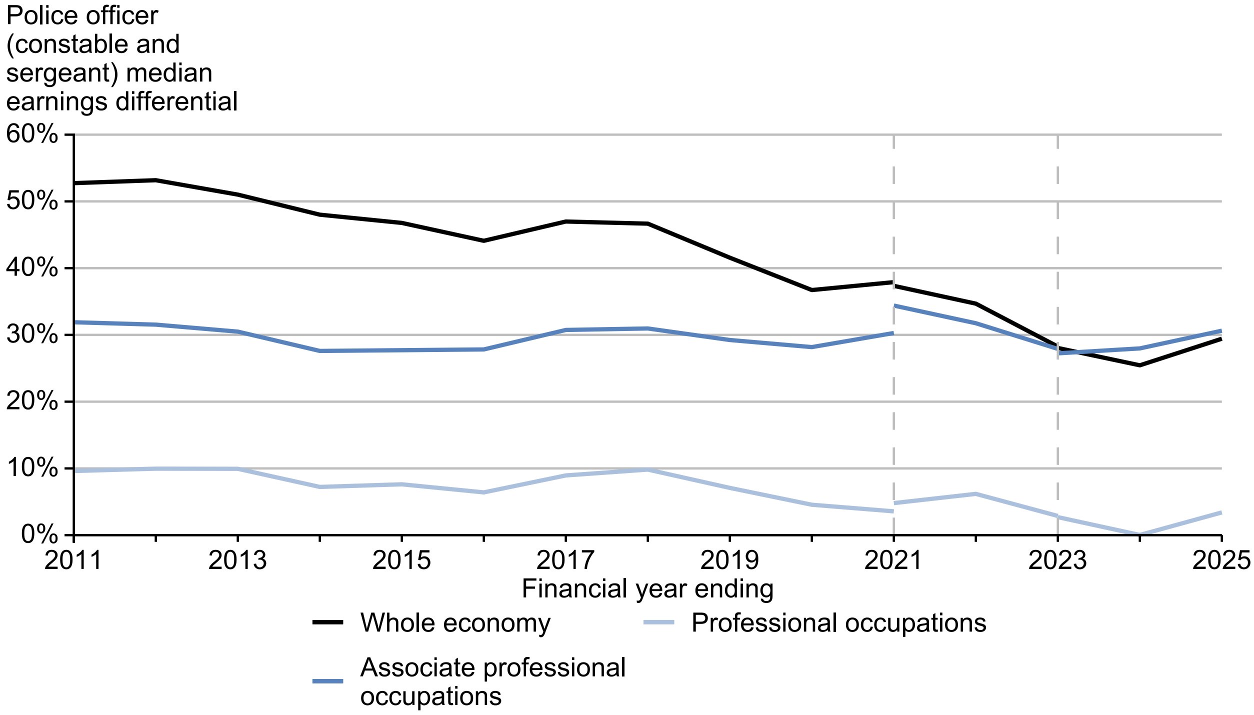
– There are discontinuities in the series due to changes to the Standard Occupational Classification in FYE 2021 and methodological changes in FYE 2023.

– Data for the latest year are provisional.

– The ‘associate professional occupations’ line represents ‘associate professional and technical occupations’ prior to the 2021 Standard Occupational Classification changes.

E.14 Median full-time gross annual earnings outside London for constables and sergeants in FYE 2025 were 29% higher than in the whole economy (Chart E.3), 4 percentage points more than in FYE 2024. In FYE 2025, median full-time gross annual earnings outside London for police officers were 31% higher than associate professional occupations (up from 28% in FYE 2024), and 3% higher than professional occupations (up from being roughly equal in FYE 2024).

Chart E.3: Differentials between police officer full-time median gross annual earnings and those of other groups, England and Wales excluding London, FYE 2011–2025



Source: OPRB analysis of ASHE data, ONS.

Notes:

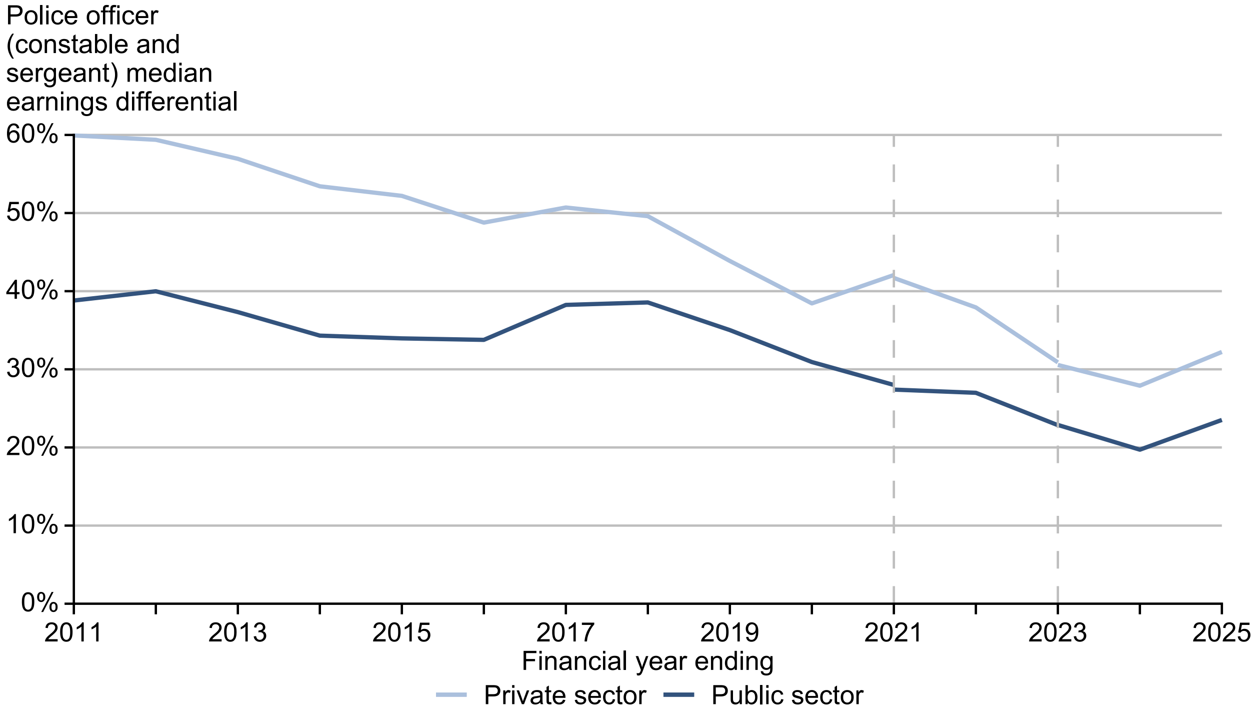
– There are discontinuities in the series due to changes to the Standard Occupational Classification in FYE 2021 and methodological changes in FYE 2023.

– Data for the latest year are provisional.

– The 'associate professional occupations' line represents 'associate professional and technical occupations' prior to the 2021 Standard Occupational Classification changes.

E.15 We can also use the ASHE data to look at the differentials with the overall public and private sectors (Chart E.4). In FYE 2025, median earnings outside London for constables and sergeants were 24% (£9,200) higher than median earnings in the public sector and 32% (£11,800) higher than median earnings in the private sector. Over time, the differentials with both sectors have been falling, but the differential with the private sector has fallen further than that with the public sector.

Chart E.4: Differentials between police officer full-time median gross annual earnings and those of the public and private sectors, England and Wales excluding London, FYE 2011–2025



Source: OPRB analysis of ASHE, ONS.

Notes:

– There are discontinuities in the series due to changes to the Standard Occupational Classification in FYE 2021 and methodological changes in FYE 2023.

– Data for the latest year are provisional.

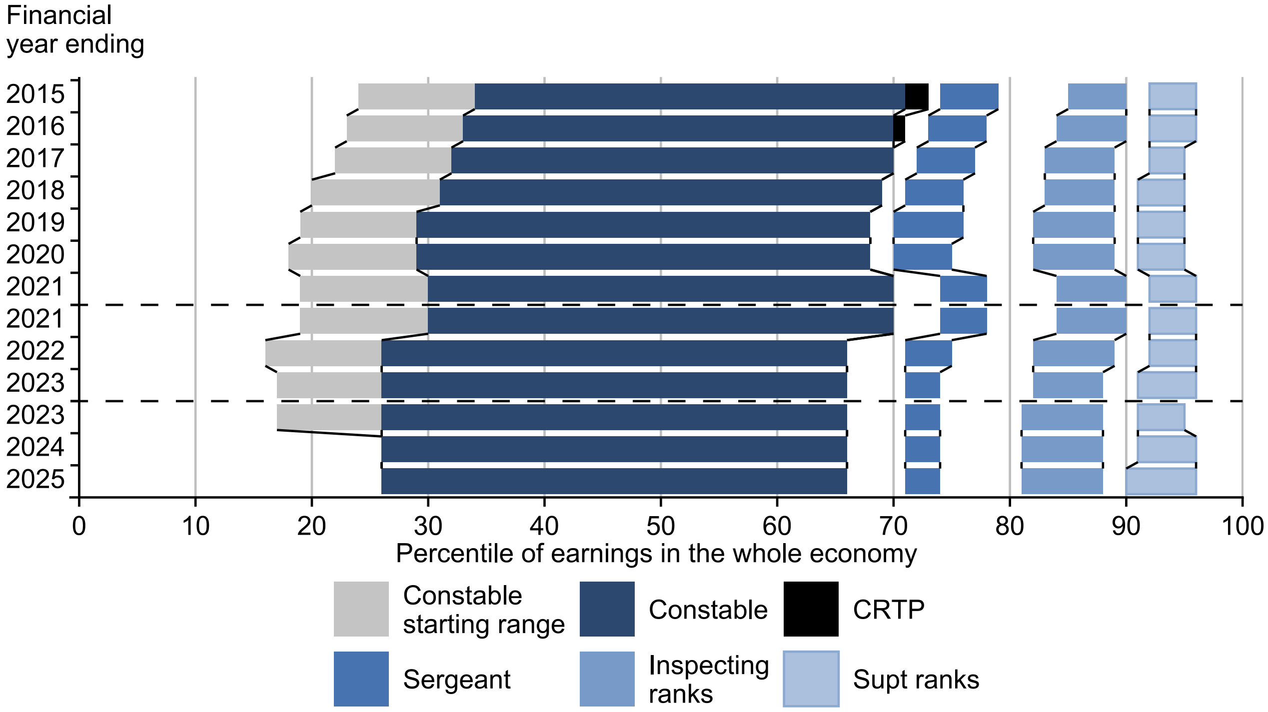
Police pay scales relative to the distribution of earnings the wider economy

E.16 The previous analysis focused on the median earnings of police officers. However, changes in the median can reflect changes to workforce composition as well as changes to actual earnings. Another way to compare police pay with the wider economy is to look at changes in the pay scales relative to the earnings distribution in the wider economy (Chart E.5).

E.17 Between FYE 2015 and 2023, pay point 0 of the constable pay scale dropped from the 24th percentile of whole economy earnings to the 17th percentile, but the removal of this pay point in September 2023 meant that the lowest pay point for constables increased to the 26th percentile in FYEs 2024 and 2025. That is to say that a new constable starting on the lowest pay point in FYE 2015 had a starting salary that was higher than the earnings of 24% of employees in the whole economy, and in FYE 2023 the starting pay of an equivalent new starter was higher than the earnings of 17% of employees, but then the increased starting salary from September 2023 meant that the salary of a new starter in FYE 2025 would be more than the earnings of 26% of employees in the wider economy.

E.18 Pay point 1 of the constable pay scale dropped from the 34th percentile in FYE 2015 to the 26th percentile from FYE 2022 onwards. Forces have had discretion to start new constables on pay point 2 of the constable scale since April 2025, in FYE 2025 this sat at the 30th percentile. The top of the constable pay scale was equivalent to the 71st percentile in FYE 2015, or the 73rd percentile when including Competence Related Thresholds Payments (CRTP)[32], but had dropped to the 66th percentile from FYE 2022 onwards.

Chart E.5: Police pay scales position in the percentile distribution of earnings in the whole economy, England and Wales, FYE 2015–2025



Source: OPRB analysis of police pay scales and ASHE data, ONS.

Notes:

– Pay scales are as from 1 September in each financial year.

– CRTP has been shown for constables, sergeants and the inspecting ranks for FYEs 2015 and 2016 as this was effectively an extra pay point on the scales.

– The ranges shown for the inspecting ranks cover both the national and London pay scales.

– There are discontinuities in the series due to changes to the Standard Occupational Classification in FYE 2021, and methodological changes in FYE 2023.

– Data for the latest year are provisional.

E.19 The bottom of the sergeant pay scale has been less affected, owing to the removal of the lowest pay point in 2020. However, the top of the scale has reduced from the 79th percentile (with and without CRTP) in FYE 2015 to the 74th percentile since FYE 2023. The inspecting ranks have seen the minimum fall from the 85th percentile to the 81st, but the maximum has been relatively stable. The superintending ranks have been broadly unchanged over time relative to whole economy earnings.

E.20 These comparisons have been based on using pay scales for police officers but earnings for the whole economy. In practice many individual officers will be

[32] CRTP acted, in effect, as an additional point on the pay scales for the federated ranks before being removed in April 2016.

positioned higher up the earnings distribution than this analysis suggests, as a result of additional earnings from overtime and allowances. Therefore, this analysis is more helpful in considering changes over time as opposed to the absolute position of officers in the earnings distribution compared with other employees.

Workforce, diversity, recruitment and retention

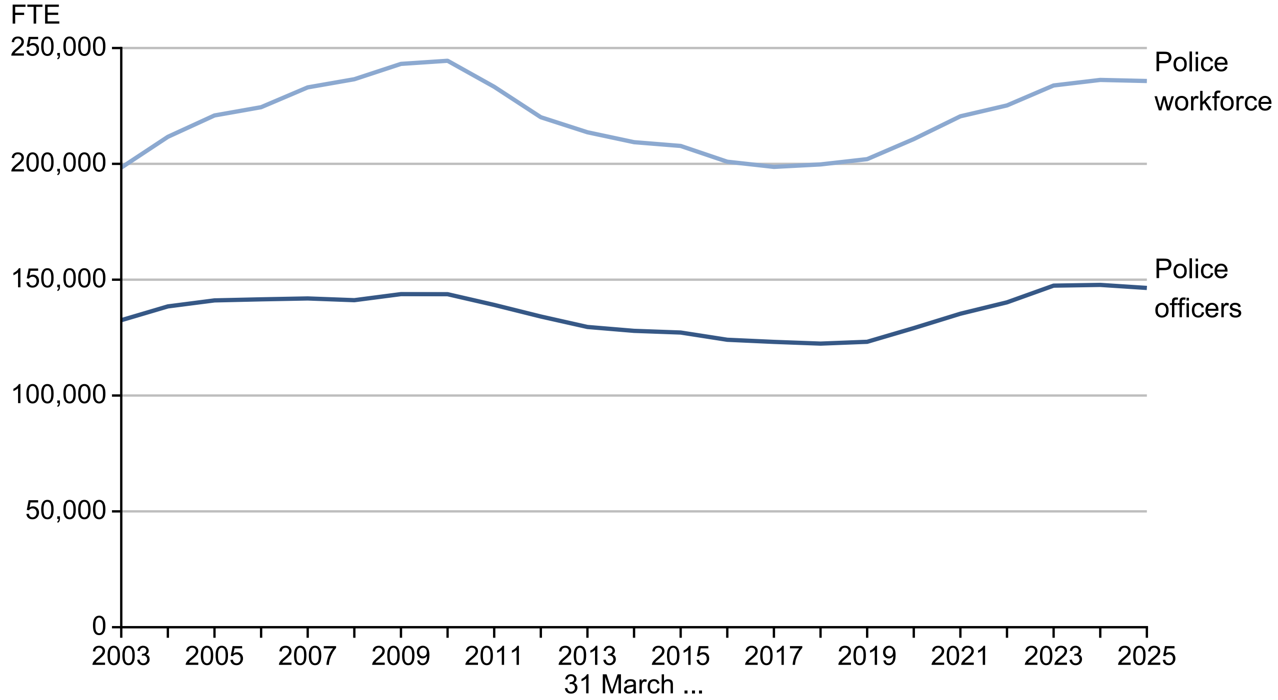
E.21 We have examined the police workforce, diversity, recruitment and retention using the Police Workforce Statistics published by the Home Office.

Overall workforce

E.22 The overall police workforce (as at 31 March each year, Chart E.6) peaked in 2010 at 244,500 full-time equivalents (FTE) before falling by 19% (45,800 FTE) to 198,700 FTE in 2017, a similar level to that seen in 2003. Between 2017 and 2024, workforce strength increased by 19% (37,500 FTE) to 236,200 FTE. However, in the latest year it has fallen by 0.2% (500 FTE) to 235,800 FTE.

E.23 Police officers account for just over three-fifths of the police workforce. The number of officers fell every year from a peak at 143,800 FTE in 2009 to 122,400 FTE in 2018, a 15% drop. Between 2018 and 2024, officer numbers increased by 25,300 FTE (21%). At the end of March 2025 there were 146,400 police officers, slightly lower (0.9%) than a year earlier, but 2% higher than in 2009, and 19% higher than in 2019.

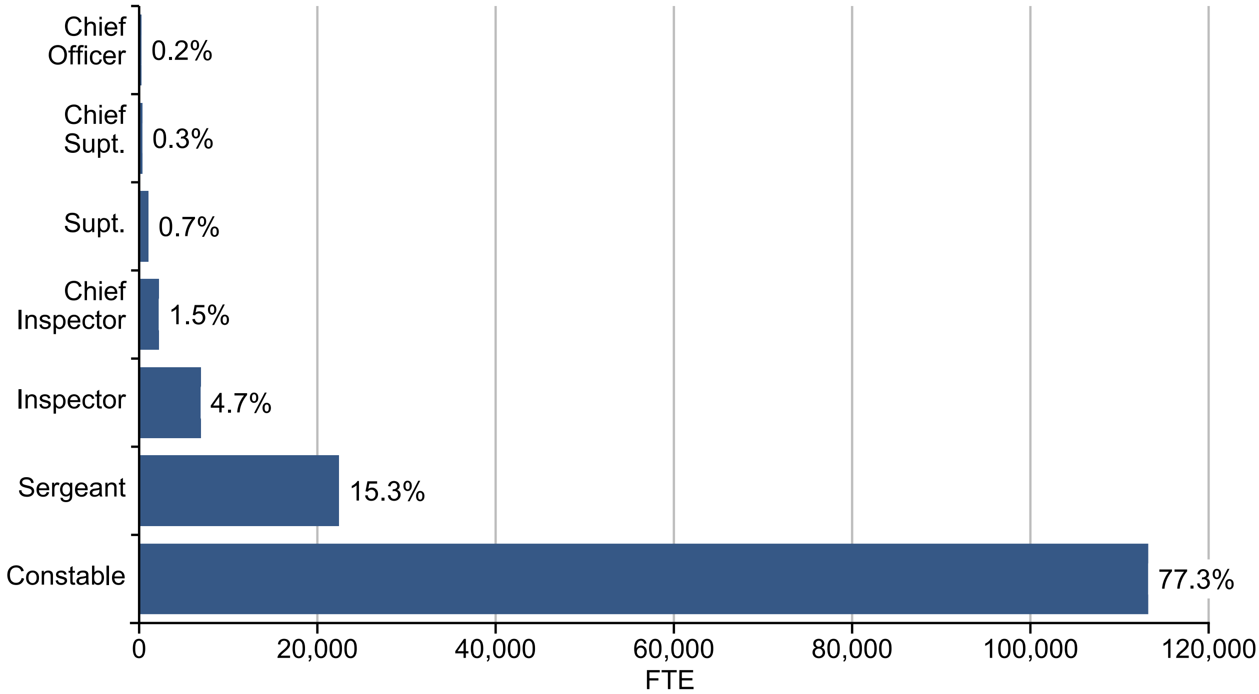
Chart E.6: FTE strength of police workforce and number of police officers, England and Wales, March 2003 – March 2025



Source: Police Workforce Statistics, Home Office.

E.24 In March 2025, nearly four-fifths (77%) of police officers were constables (Chart E.7), and just 7% of officers were in the ranks above sergeant. The proportions in each rank have been relatively stable since 2003 (when comparable data start).

Chart E.7: FTE number of police officers by rank, England and Wales, March 2025

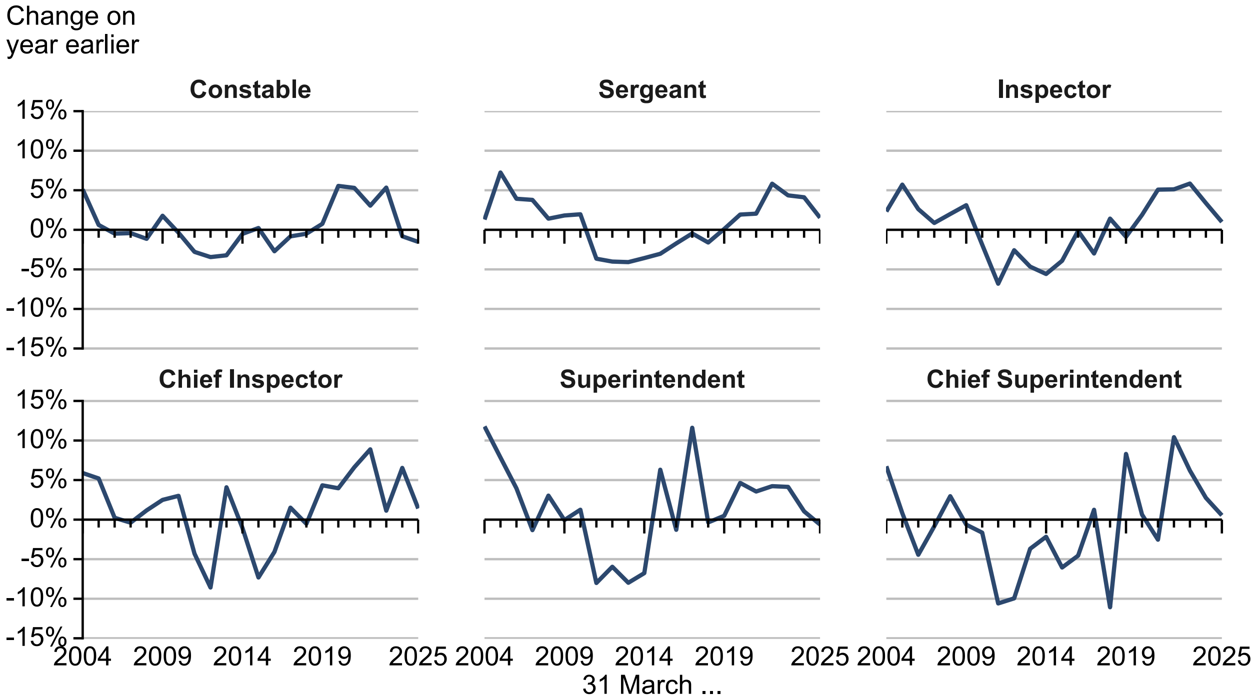


Source: OPRB analysis of Police Workforce Statistics, Home Office.

E.25 Most ranks have seen numbers increasing since 2019 (Chart E.8), and in the latest year there were increases in the number of officers in all ranks except constables and superintendents which were down 1,800 FTE (1.5%) and 10 FTE (0.6%) respectively. In absolute terms, the largest increase during the latest year was in the number of sergeants (up 300 FTE) while in percentage terms chief officers saw the largest uplift (7%).

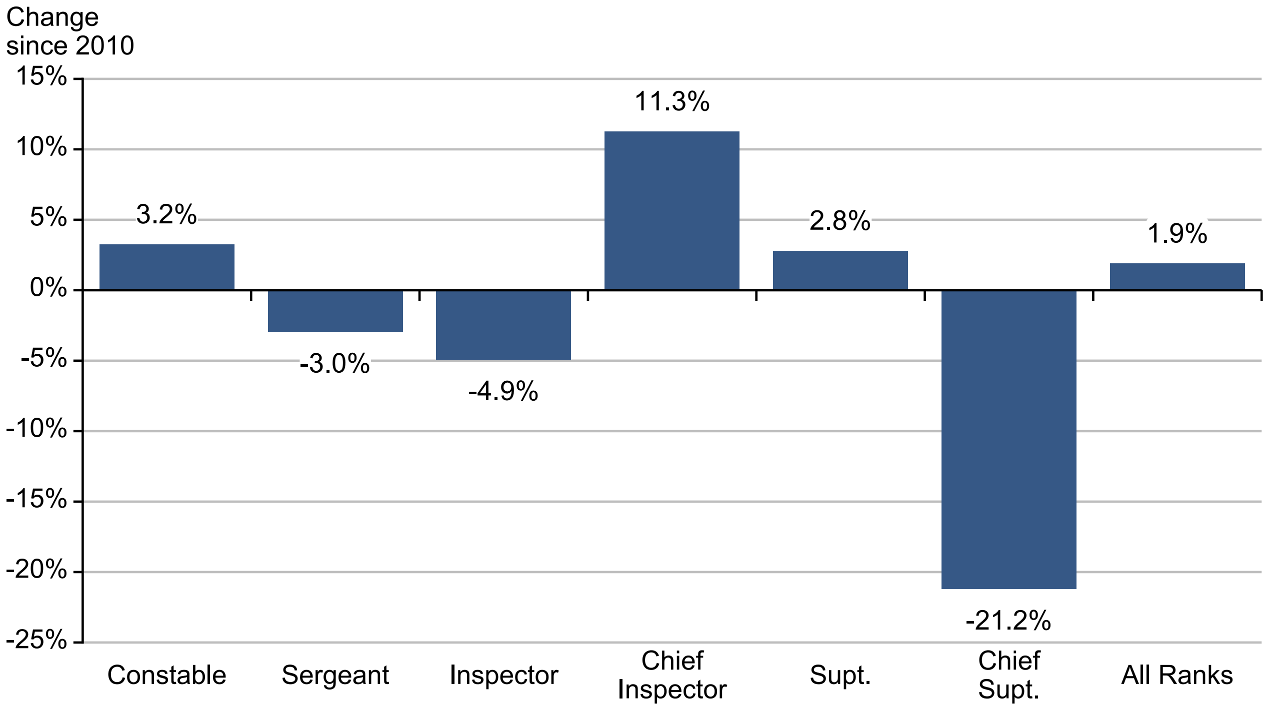
E.26 Although overall police officer numbers are now above 2010 levels, this is not the case for all ranks (Chart E.9), chief superintendents have seen the largest proportional decrease (21%) but the greatest absolute decreases have been for sergeants (nearly 700 FTE officers) and inspectors (approximately 400 officers).

Chart E.8: Annual change in the FTE number of police officers, by rank, England and Wales, March 2003 – March 2025



Source: OPRB analysis of Police Workforce Statistics, Home Office.
Note: Lower numbers of officers in higher ranks mean smaller changes in actual numbers represent larger change in percentage terms compared with lower ranks.

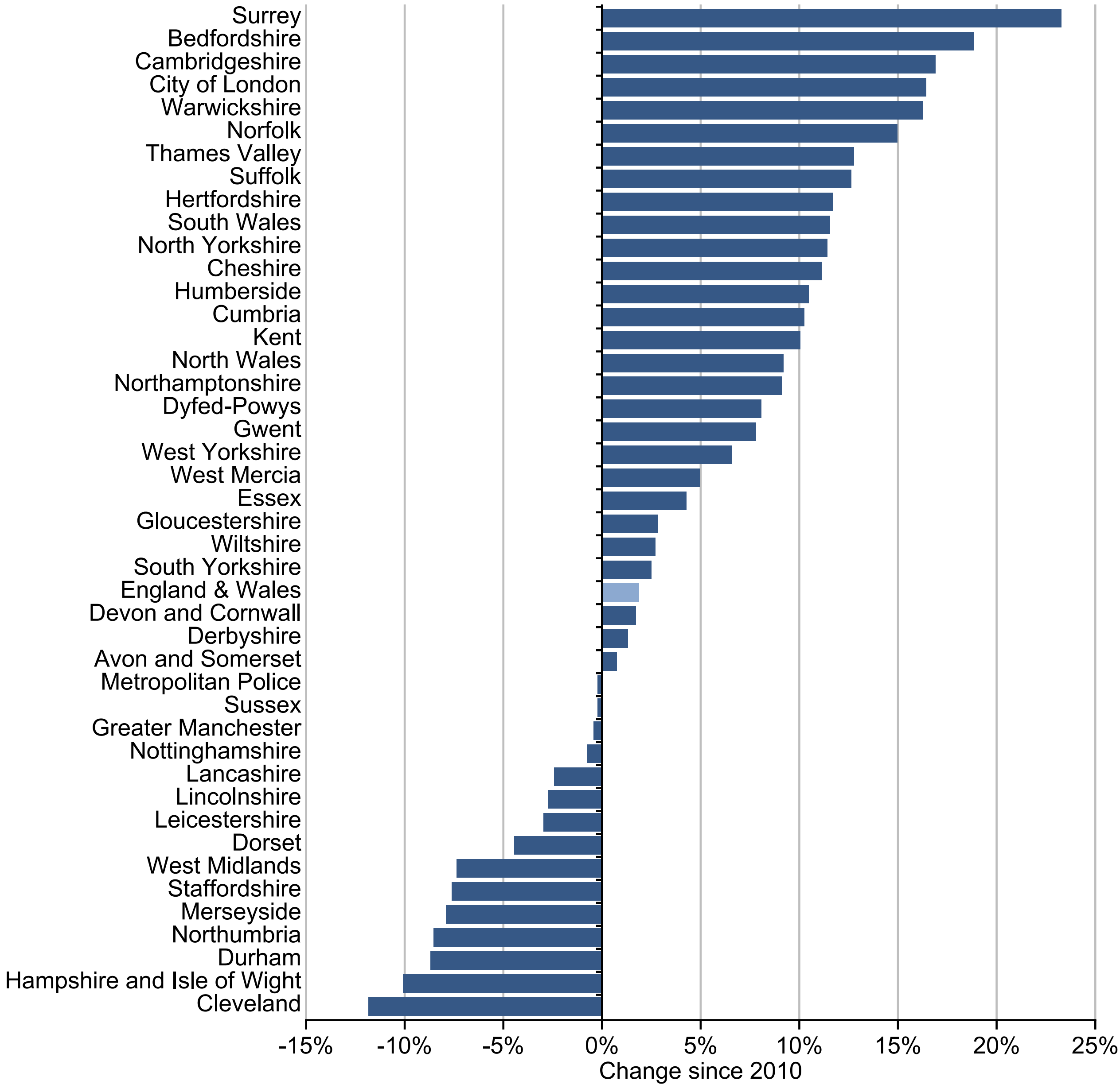
Chart E.9: Percentage change in the FTE number of police officers between March 2010 and March 2025, by rank, England and Wales



Source: OPRB analysis of Police Workforce Statistics, Home Office.

E.27 The majority of forces had more officers in March 2025 than in March 2010 (Chart E.10), with Surrey having the largest percentage increase since March 2010 (23%). However, in 15 forces (including several of the larger forces) officer numbers continue to be significantly below March 2010 levels, with Cleveland showing the largest percentage reduction over this period (12%).

Chart E.10: Percentage change in FTE police officer numbers between March 2010 and March 2025, by force, England and Wales



Source: OPRB analysis of Police Workforce Statistics, Home Office.

Officer roles

E.28 His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services assigns the work of police officers to three broad roles – frontline, frontline support, and business support (Table E.4). Between March 2010 and March 2016, the numbers of officers in all roles fell. However, the proportion of officers in frontline roles increased over this period from 91.0% to 93.4%, as a result of proportionally lower reductions in these roles.

E.29 The number of business support roles increased each year between March 2016 and March 2024, but fell by 12% in the latest year. However, it still remains above the March 2010 level. The number of frontline support roles has increased substantially over the last five years and is at the highest level since March 2011. The number of officers in frontline roles continued to fall between March 2016 and March 2019, then saw substantial increases between March 2019 and March 2023, before falling again in the latest two years. The proportion of officers in frontline roles has fallen from its peak of 93.4% in March 2016 to 90.3% in March 2025, the lowest since the data series started (in 2010).

Table E.4: FTE number of police officers, by role, England and Wales, March 2010 – March 2025

Full-time equivalent

Year	Frontline	Frontline Support	Business Support	Proportion of officers in frontline roles
2010	123,384	6,499	5,670	91.0%
2011	119,729	6,469	4,912	91.3%
2012	116,122	5,971	4,161	92.0%
2013	113,009	5,215	3,762	92.6%
2014	111,383	4,706	3,309	93.3%
2015	110,396	4,315	3,516	93.4%
2016	106,411	4,087	3,401	93.4%
2017	105,571	4,114	3,471	93.3%
2018	103,837	4,348	4,428	92.2%
2019	103,347	4,176	4,645	92.1%
2020	108,856	4,140	4,846	92.4%
2021	113,645	4,677	5,749	91.6%
2022	117,132	5,478	5,989	91.1%
2023	123,465	5,699	6,352	91.1%
2024	121,630	6,010	7,086	90.3%
2025	117,270	6,426	6,205	90.3%
2010 – 2025	*−5.0%*	*−1.1%*	*9.4%*	
2010 – 2016	*−13.8%*	*−37.1%*	*−40.0%*	
2016 – 2025	*10.2%*	*57.2%*	*82.5%*	

Source: OPRB analysis of Police Workforce Statistics, Home Office.

Notes:

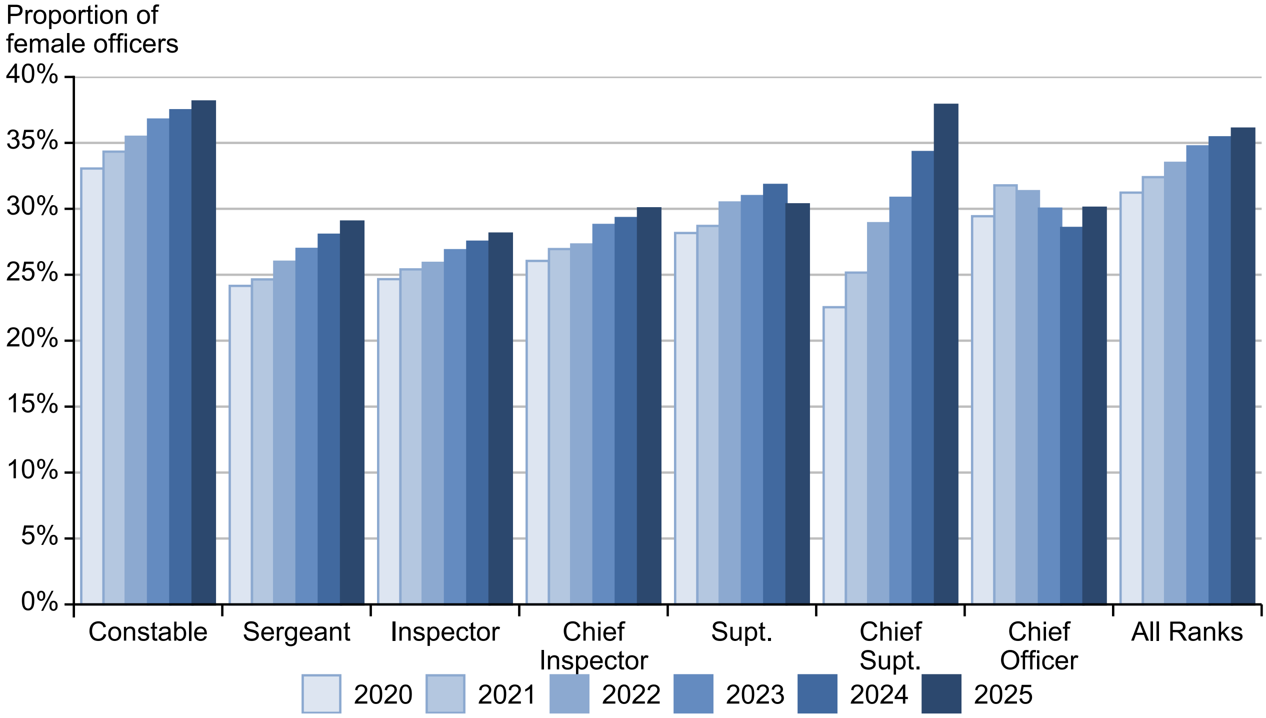
– Data for 2010 to 2014 were collected on a different basis to those for 2015 onwards. The figures presented for these earlier years have been estimated based on a parallel running year (2015) where data were collected on both bases.

– Officers who are classified as being in 'National Policing' or 'Other' roles are excluded.

Workforce diversity

E.30 The overall proportion of FTE officers who were female[33] (Chart E.11) increased from 31% to 36% between 2020 and 2025, but the proportion of female officers for most ranks above constable was lower than the overall proportion. The overall proportion of FTE ethnic minority[34] officers (Chart E.12) increased from 7.3% to 8.5% between 2020 and 2025, continuing a steadily upward path over the past decade, but again the proportion of ethnic minority officers for ranks above constable was lower than the overall proportion. These indicators show improvement in diversity across the officer workforce in recent years, but remain below levels representative of the communities served by the police.

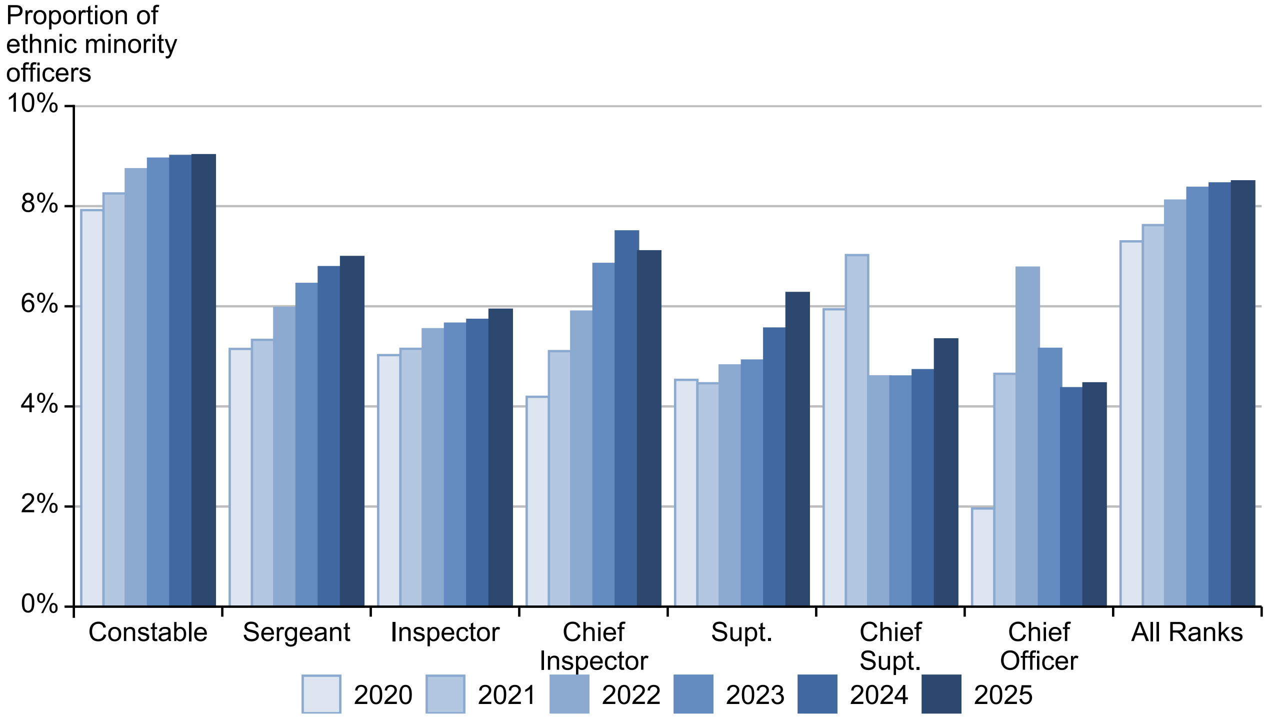
Chart E.11: Percentage of female officers (FTE), by rank, England and Wales, March 2020 – March 2025



Source: OPRB analysis of Police Workforce Statistics, Home Office.
Note: Officers who did not state their sex are excluded from calculations.

[33] Proportions of female officers exclude officers who did not state their sex from the denominator.
[34] Proportions of ethnic minority officers exclude officers who did not state their ethnicity from the denominator.

Chart E.12: Percentage of ethnic minority officers (FTE), by rank, England and Wales, March 2020 – March 2025



Source: OPRB analysis of Police Workforce Statistics, Home Office.

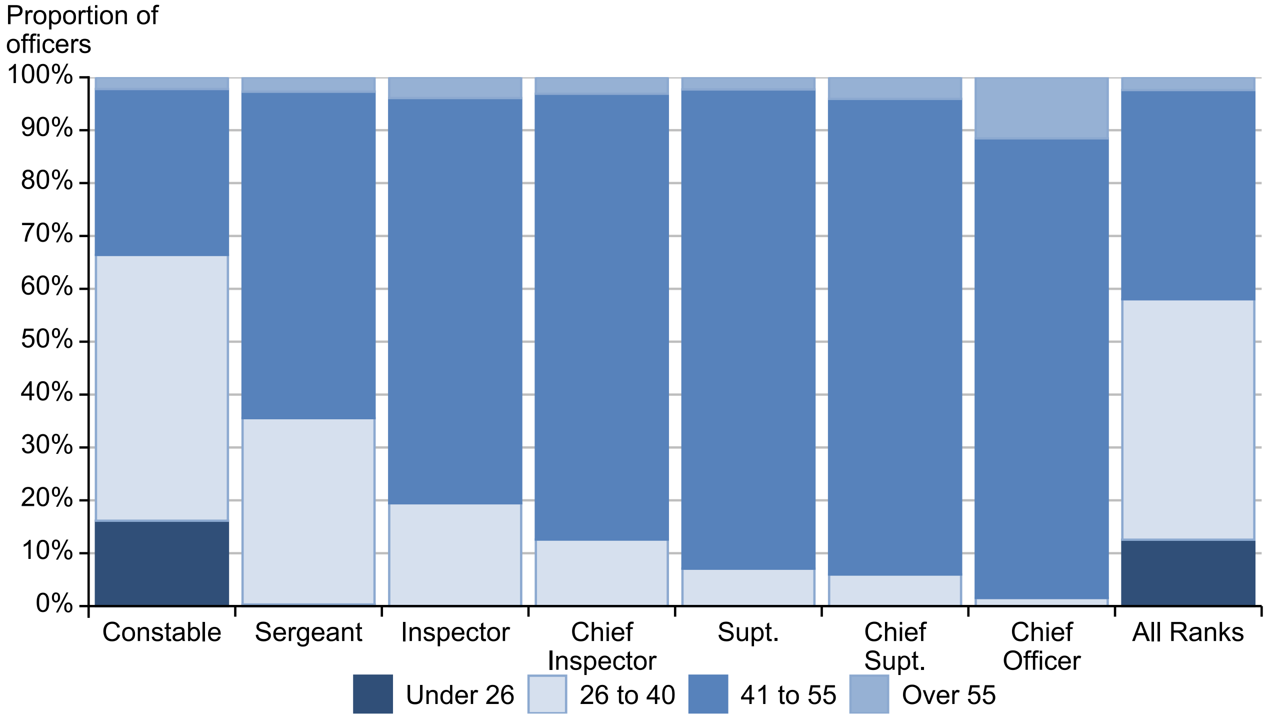
Note: Officers who did not state their ethnicity are excluded from calculations.

E.31 Nearly three-fifths (58%) of all police officers (by headcount) were aged 40 or under[35] on 31 March 2025, with 13% of all officers aged under 26 (Chart E.13). The proportion of officers aged under 40 decreases as rank increases: 66% of constables were under 40, but only 2% of chief officers.

E.32 Looking at change over time (Chart E.14), the overall proportion of officers aged 40 and under rose from 56% in March 2020 to 59% in March 2023, but fell slightly to 58% in March 2025. Only the chief superintendent and chief officer ranks have seen increases in the proportions of officers in this age group during the last two years.

[35] Proportions of officers by age group exclude officers who did not state their age from the denominator.

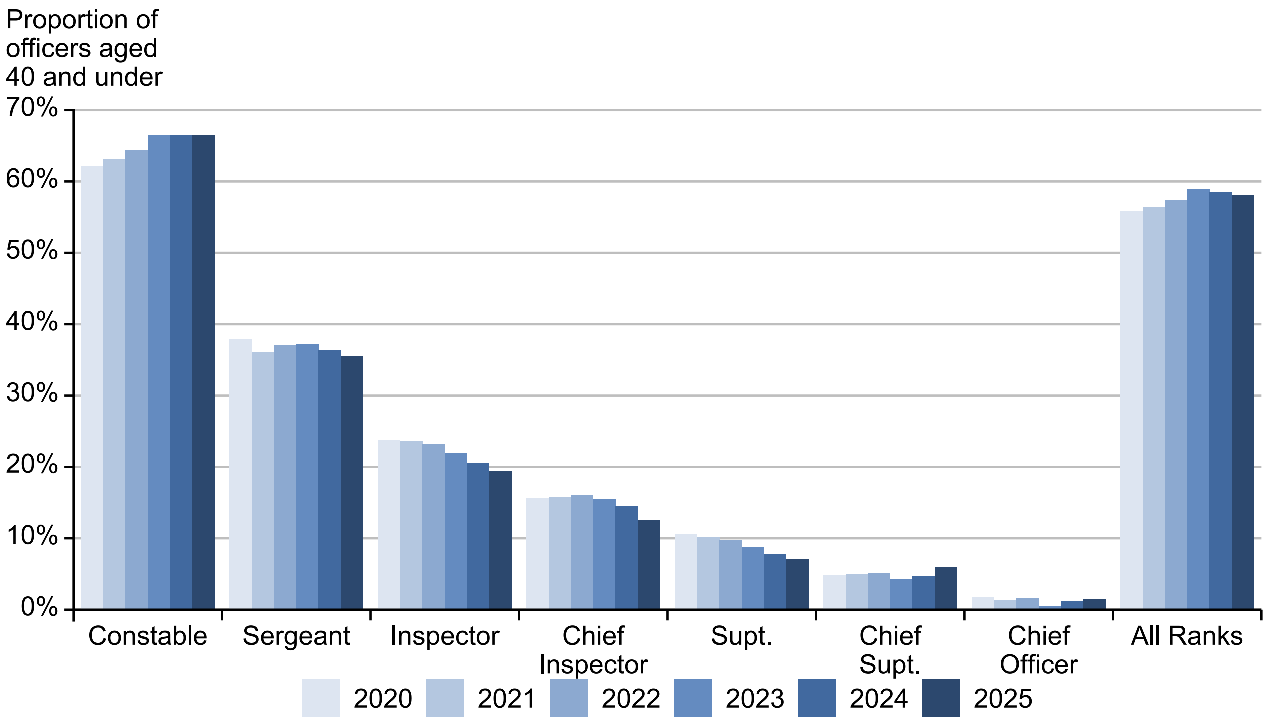
Chart E.13: Age breakdown of police officers (headcount basis), by rank, England and Wales, March 2025



Source: OPRB analysis of Police Workforce Statistics, Home Office.

Note: Officers who did not state their age are excluded from calculations.

Chart E.14: Proportion of police officers aged 40 and under (headcount basis), by rank, England and Wales, March 2020 – March 2025



Source: OPRB analysis of Police Workforce Statistics, Home Office.

Note: Officers who did not state their age are excluded from calculations.

E.33 The Home Office, NPCC and College of Policing have been collaborating in developing a National Standard for Workforce Data, with an aim to bring more standardisation within policing for the collection of data on protected characteristics. The variables currently covered are: ethnicity, age, religion or belief, disability, sexual orientation, gender, sex, and gender reassignment. Information on their protected characteristics is self-reported by officers on police force human resource systems, and many officers are yet to provide such information. Therefore, the data are not currently complete.

E.34 In addition to the data presented above on sex, ethnicity and age, the Home Office publishes information on the disability status, sexual orientation, and religious beliefs of officers. These show that:

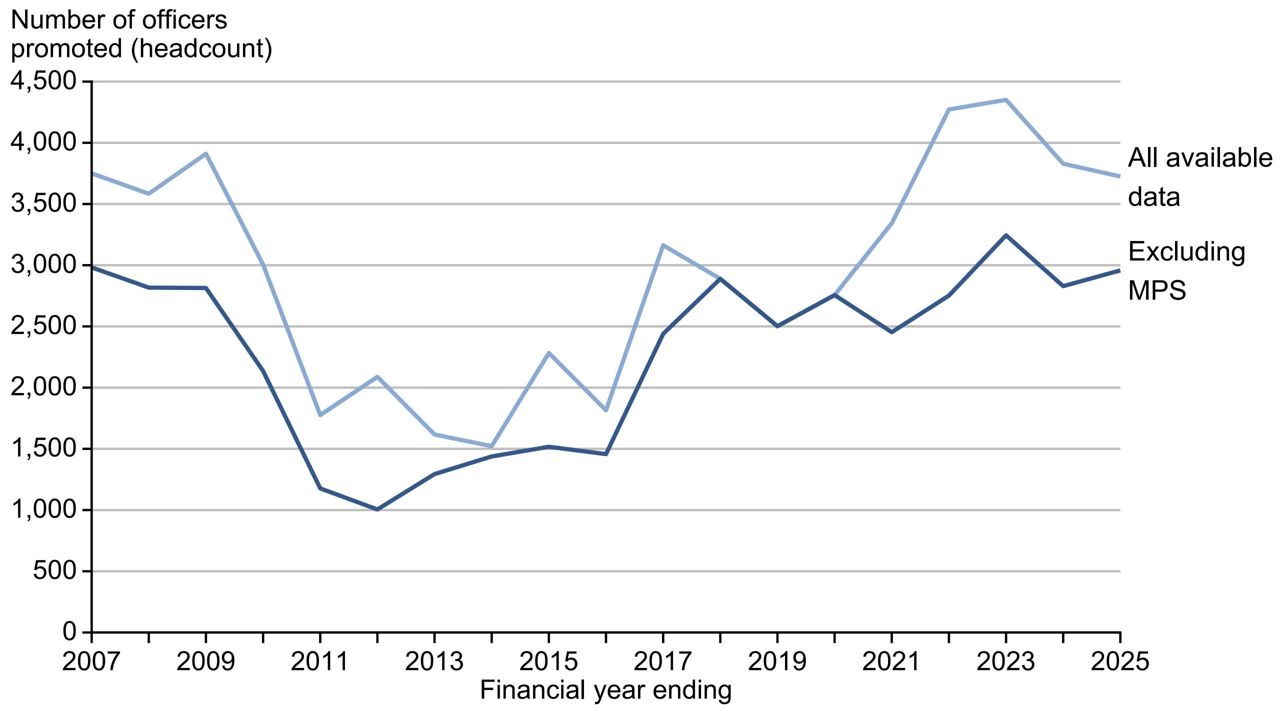
- 64% of officers had declared their disability status, of these 10% reported a disability;
- 68% of officers had declared their religious belief, of these 51% had no religion, 41% were Christian, 3% were Muslim and 5% reported other religions or beliefs; and
- 66% of officers had declared their sexual orientation, of these 5% were gay or lesbian and 3% were bisexual.

Promotions

E.35 Promotion figures for any given financial year are on a headcount basis, rather than FTE, and exclude officers on temporary promotion and those promoted on transfer from another force. Following the implementation of a new human resource system in 2018, data from the Metropolitan Police Service were unavailable for FYEs 2018 to 2020.

E.36 Around 3,750 officers were promoted in FYE 2025 (Chart E.15). This was a decrease of 3% compared with the number of promotions in FYE 2024. Promoted officers represented 3% of all officers in post at the end of the financial year.

Chart E.15: Police officer promotions, England and Wales, FYE 2007–2025



Source: Police Workforce Statistics, Home Office.

Notes:

– No data are available for the MPS for FYEs 2018 to 2020.

– Additionally, some years' figures are subject to more minor exclusions, due to smaller forces occasionally being unable to provide data.

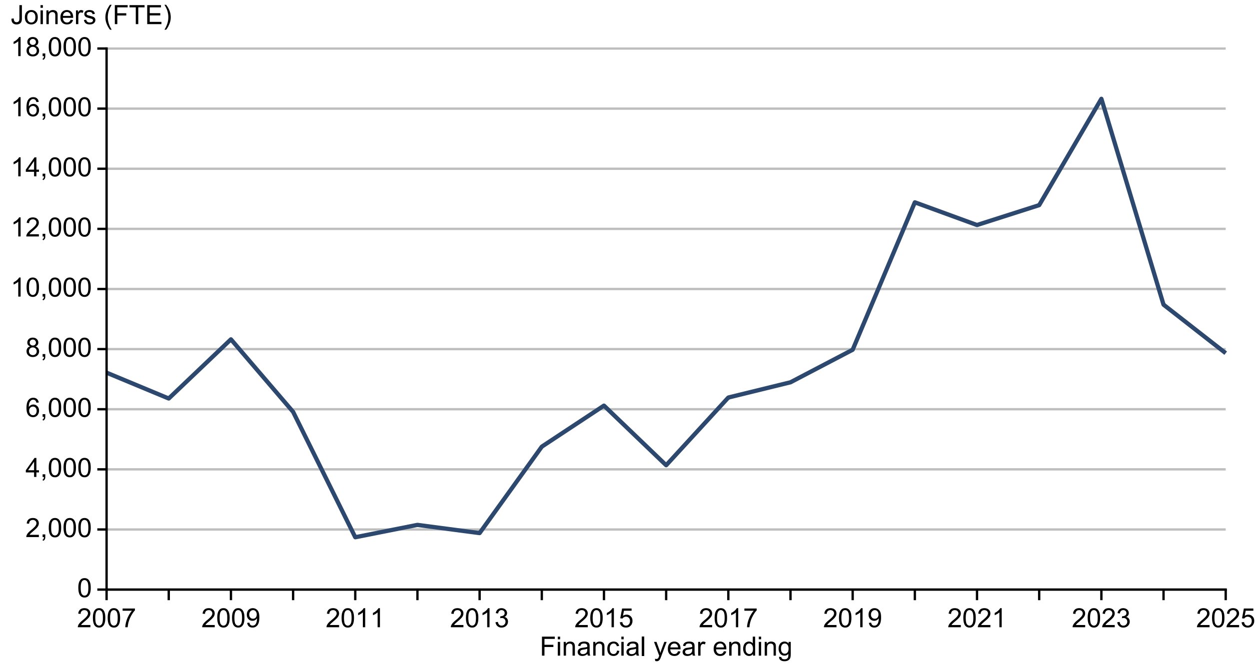
Recruitment

E.37 Excluding officers transferring between forces, the FTE number of officers joining the police (Chart 17) fell sharply after FYE 2009, with around 2,000 FTE joiners annually between FYEs 2011 and 2013 (due to most forces freezing recruitment as a response to public sector austerity). The number of joiners then increased in most years from FYE 2014 to 2019, before the Uplift Programme led to a sharp increase between FYEs 2019 and 2023. Since the end of the Uplift Programme in March 2023 joiner numbers have fallen and there were around 7,900 FTE joiners in FYE 2025, 17% (1,600 FTE) lower than the previous year.

E.38 The joiner rate[36] (excluding transfers) for FYE 2025 was 5.4%. This rose to 6.2% when transfers were included.

[36] The number of joiners during a financial year as a proportion of the total numbers of officers in post at the end of the financial year (31 March).

Chart E.16: FTE police officer joiners excluding transfers, England and Wales, FYE 2007–2025



Source: Police Workforce Statistics, Home Office.

E.39 In FYE 2025, around 7,500 FTE joiners were new recruits joining as an officer for the first time (Chart E.17). This represented 83% of all joiners (including transfers), a slightly lower proportion than was seen during the Uplift Programme (around 85% a year) but higher than the proportion seen between FYEs 2007 and 2019 (when it ranged between 59% and 78%).

E.40 The number of officers rejoining the police service in England and Wales fell significantly in FYE 2011 (from around 370 FTE the previous year to around 80 FTE) and had remained below 100 FTE a year until FYE 2019. However, the number of rejoiners increased after the announcement of the Uplift Programme, and peaked at nearly 480 in FYE 2023. In FYE 2025 there were around 190 FTE rejoining officers.

E.41 The number of transfers between forces fell from a peak of 1,630 in FYE 2008 to around 240 in FYE 2012, before slowly recovering. In FYE 2025 there were around 1,200 transfers, 12% fewer than the previous year, and accounting for around 13% of all officers joining a force.

Chart E.17: FTE police officer joiners, by route of entry, England and Wales, FYE 2007–2025

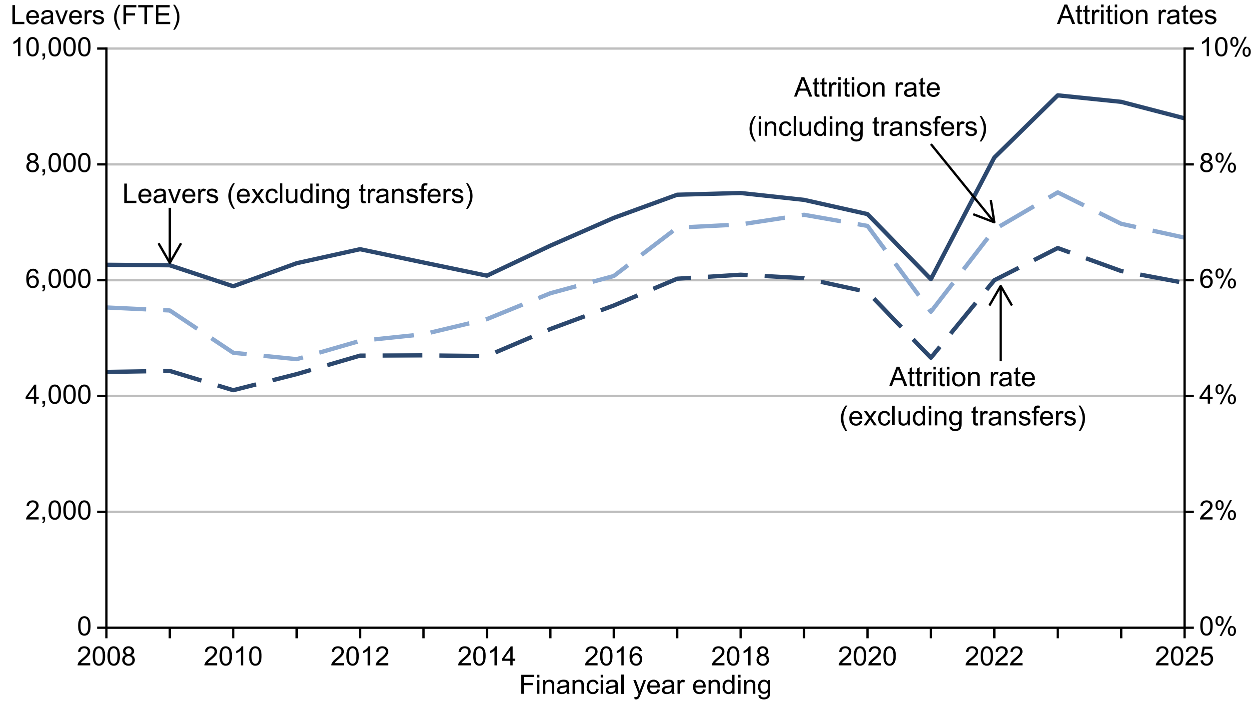
Source: Police Workforce Statistics, Home Office.
Note: Standard direct recruit includes officers joining via Direct Entry, Fast Track and Police Now schemes.

Retention and attrition rates

E.42 Excluding transfers between forces, the number of officers leaving the police service in FYE 2025 was 8,800 FTE (Chart E.18). This represented a fall of 3% (300 FTE officers) compared with the previous year. The attrition rate[37] rose each year from 4.1% in FYE 2010 to 6.1% in FYE 2018, but had dropped to 4.7% by FYE 2021 (partly as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic). By FYE 2023 it had increased to 6.6%, the highest since the data series started (in FYE 2004), before falling again – in FYE 2025 it was 6.0%. Including officers who transferred to other forces rather than leaving the service altogether, the attrition rate was 6.7% in FYE 2025, also a drop on the previous two years.

[37] The total number of police officers leaving the service in the financial year as a proportion of the total officers in post in the March just before the financial year began.

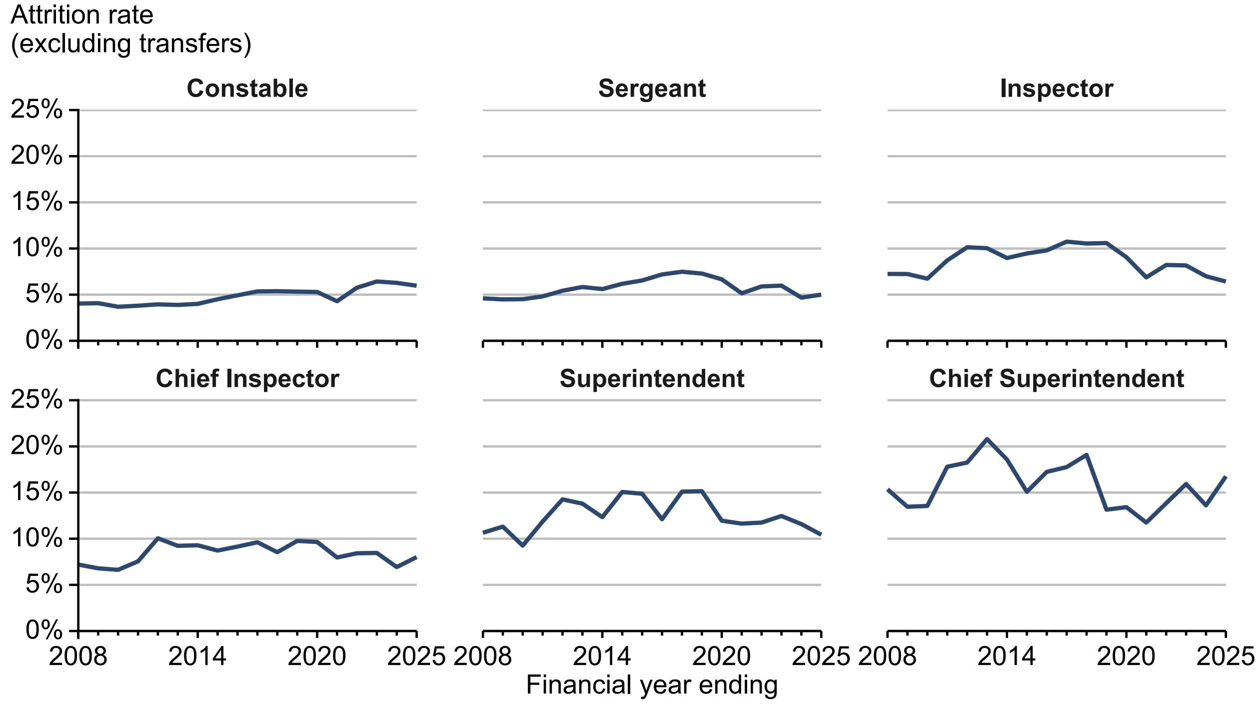
Chart E.18: FTE police officer leavers and attrition rates, England and Wales, FYE 2008–2025



Source: OPRB analysis of Police Workforce Statistics, Home Office.

E.43 By rank, the attrition rate excluding transfers (Chart E.19) in FYE 2025 was lowest for constables and sergeants (6.0% and 5.0% respectively) and generally increased with rank to be highest for chief superintendents (16.8%). This reflects higher proportions of officers with longer service at higher ranks.

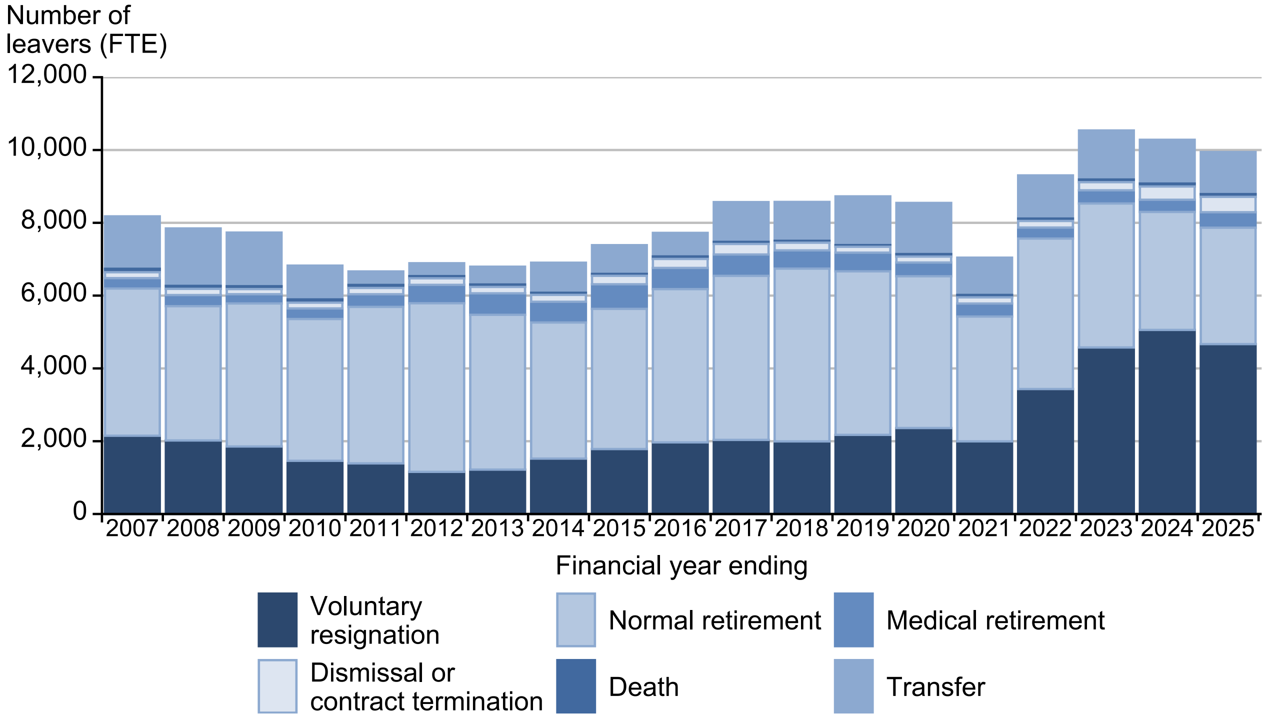
Chart E.19: FTE police officer attrition rates (excluding transfers), by rank, England and Wales, FYE 2008–2025



Source: OPRB analysis of Police Workforce Statistics, Home Office.

E.44 Both the number of voluntary resignations (Chart E.20) and the voluntary resignation attrition rate (Chart E.21) have been rising since FYE 2012, but the rate of these rises increased after the COVID-19 pandemic. However, in 2025 the number of voluntary resignations fell by 8% (400 FTE) to 4,700 FTE. This represented 53% of leavers excluding transfers, down from 56% in FYE 2024 but up from 33% in FYE 2020 (before the pandemic) and 18% in 2012. The voluntary resignation attrition rate was 3.2% in FYE 2025, down from 3.4% in FYE 2024. While this still represents a sharp increase from 0.8% in FYE 2012, it remains low compared with other areas of the public sector.

Chart E.20: FTE police officer leavers, by leaver type, England and Wales, FYE 2007–2025

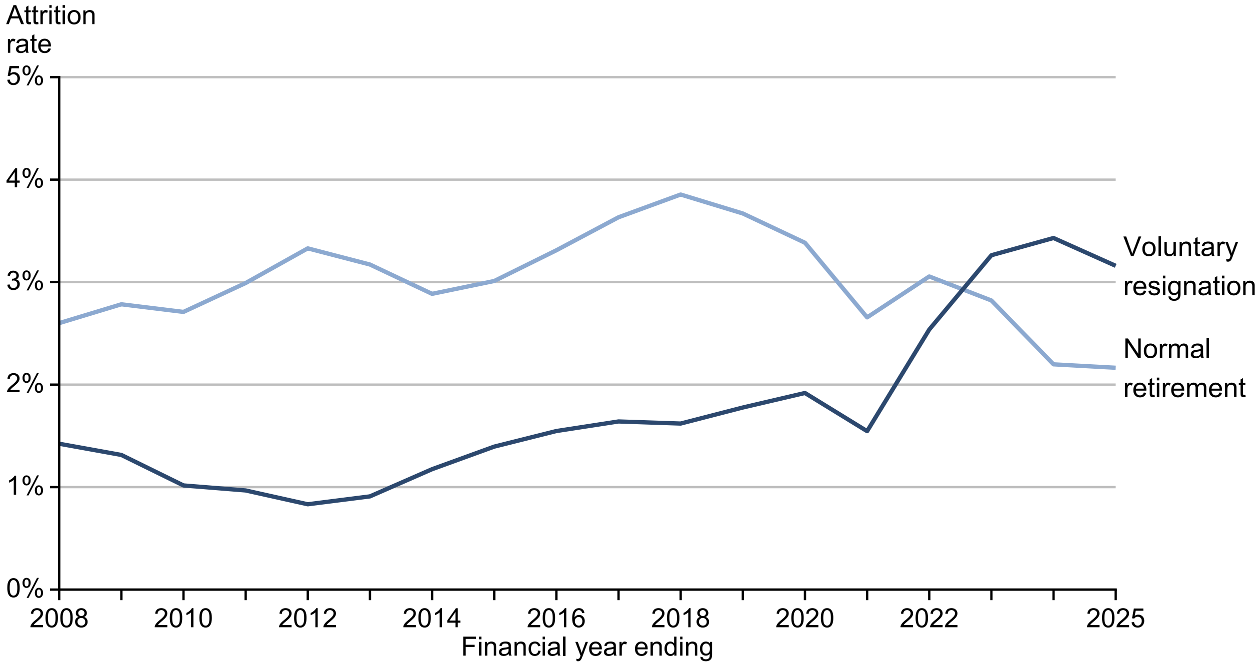


Source: Police Workforce Statistics, Home Office.

E.45 In FYE 2025, 36% of police leavers (excluding transfers) were normal retirements[38]. This was down from 58% in FYE 2020 and 71% in 2012. This decrease has resulted from a combination of falling numbers of retirements and rising numbers of voluntary resignations. The number of normal retirements in FYE 2025 was 33% lower than in FYE 2018. The normal retirement attrition rate was 2.2% in FYE 2025, the lowest since the data series began in FYE 2008.

[38] Individuals who retired, not on ill-health grounds.

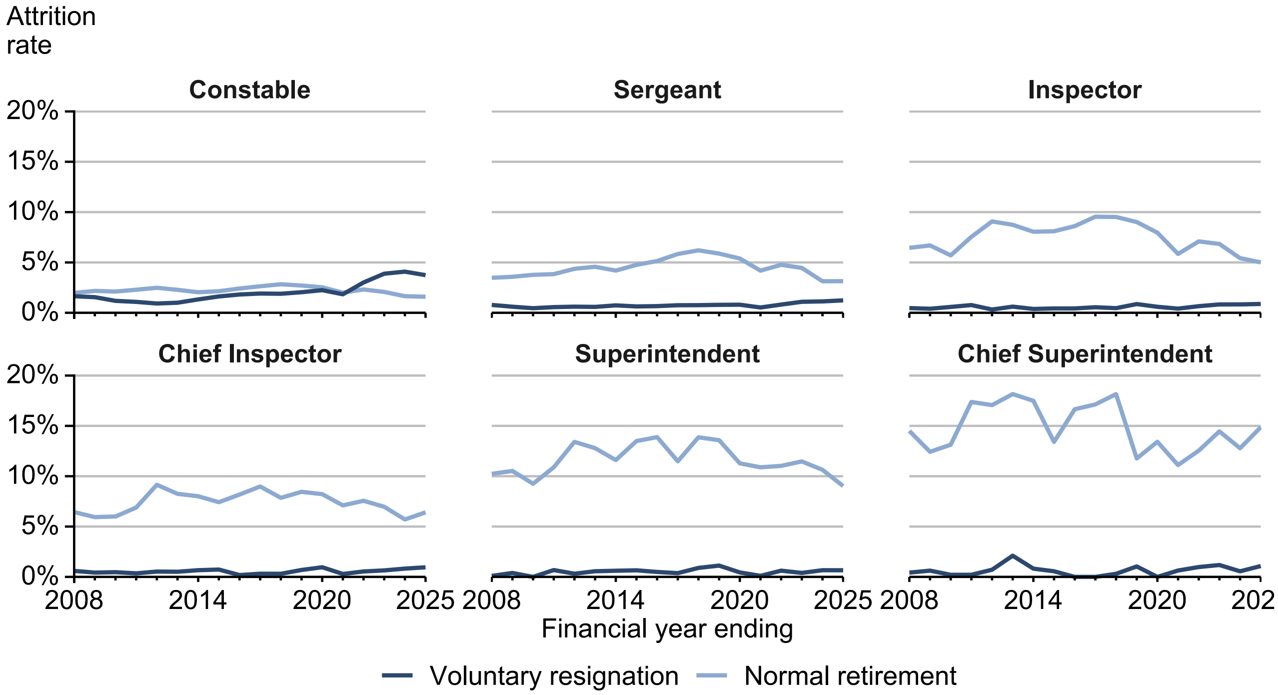
Chart E.21: FTE police officer attrition rate, by selected leaver type, England and Wales, FYE 2008–2025



Source: Police Workforce Statistics, Home Office.

E.46 The voluntary resignation rate (Chart E.22) was highest for constables (3.7% in FYE 2025). For all other ranks, normal retirement was the most common type of leaver. However, voluntary resignation rates have been increasing gradually for sergeants and the inspecting ranks in recent years.

Chart E.22: FTE police officer attrition rate, by rank and selected leaver type, England and Wales, FYE 2008–2025



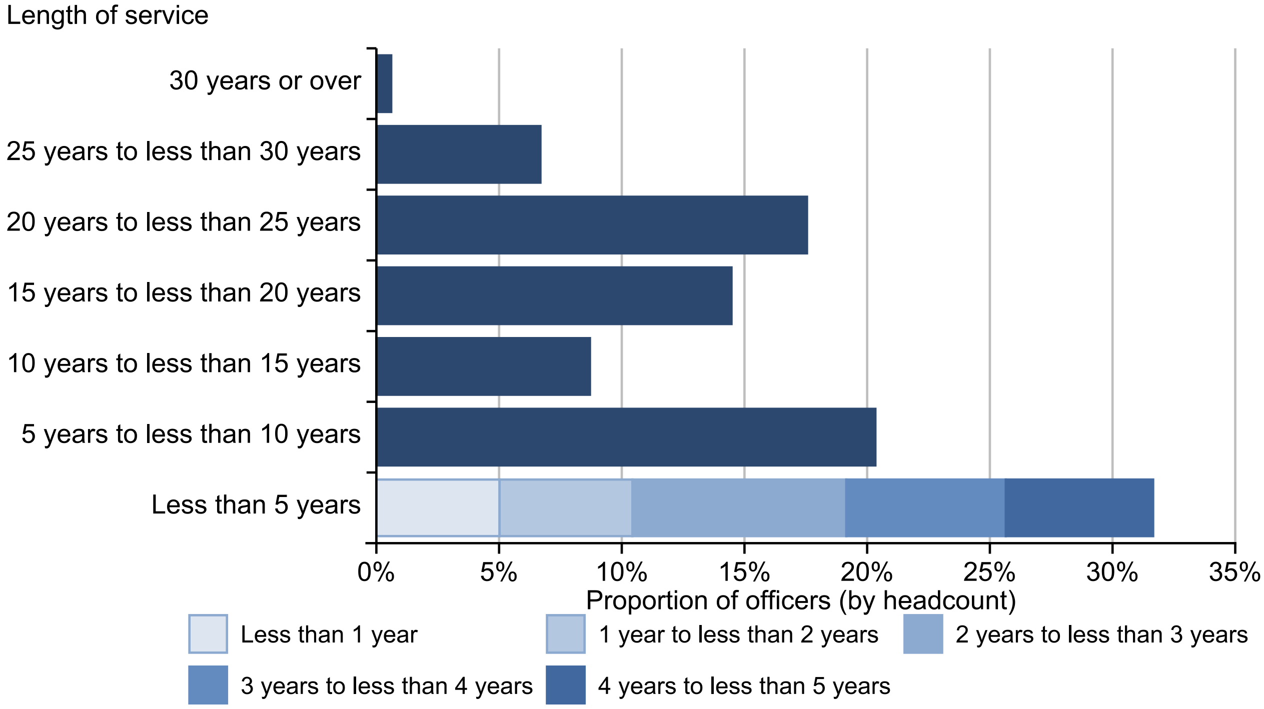
Source: Police Workforce Statistics, Home Office.

Length of service

E.47 Length of service data are less reliable than other workforce data. Where officers have transferred forces, or changed roles within a force, some forces record the length of service based on the date the officer started their current role (rather than the date the officer joined the police service). This skews the data towards shorter service periods and under-records longer periods of service where individuals may have moved posts or forces.

E.48 Patterns in length of service data tend to reflect recruitment trends over time. The most common length of service in March 2025 was less than five years (Chart E.23), due to the scale of recruitment during the Uplift Programme. Officers with this length of service accounted for 32% of all police officers.

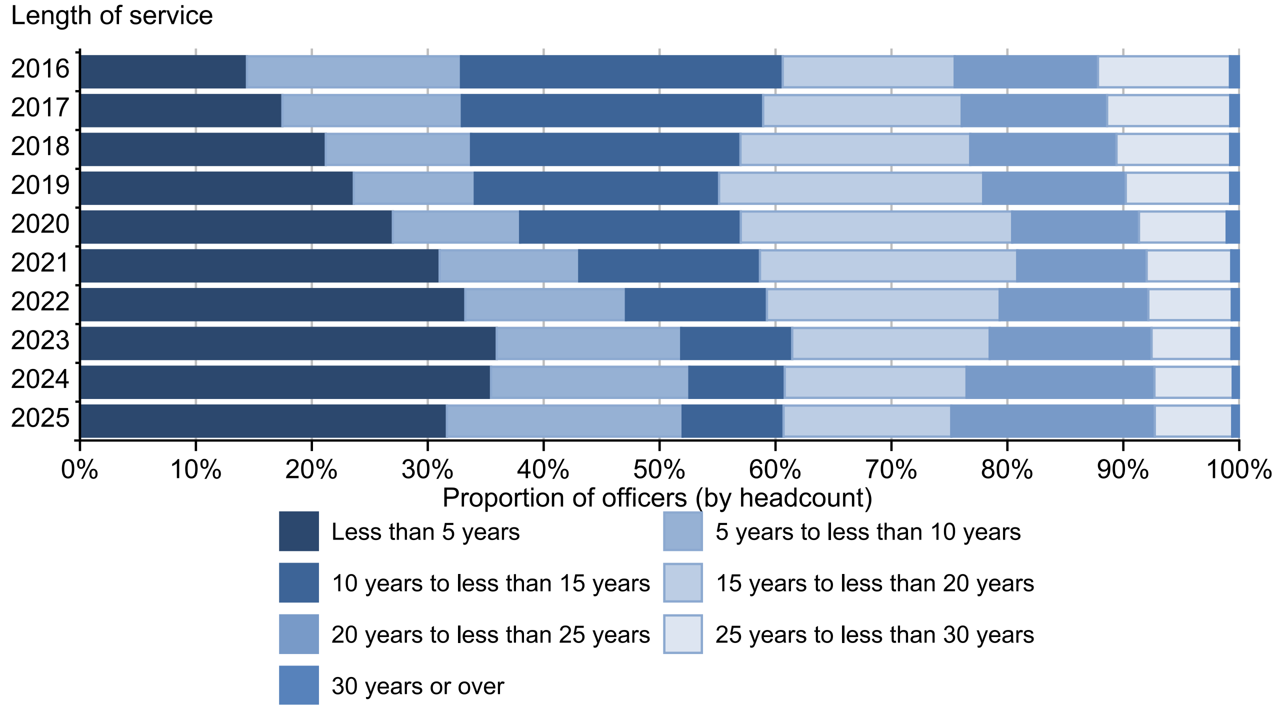
Chart E.23: Length of service of police officers (headcount basis), England and Wales, as at 31 March 2025



Source: OPRB analysis of Police Workforce Statistics, Home Office.

E.49 The proportion of officers with less than five years' service increased from 14% in 2016 to 24% in 2019 (Chart E.24), as recruitment picked up following the period of austerity in the early 2010s. This proportion then increased further to peak at 36% in 2023 as a result of the Uplift Programme. The reduction in recruitment since the end of the Uplift Programme has resulted in it dropping back slightly.

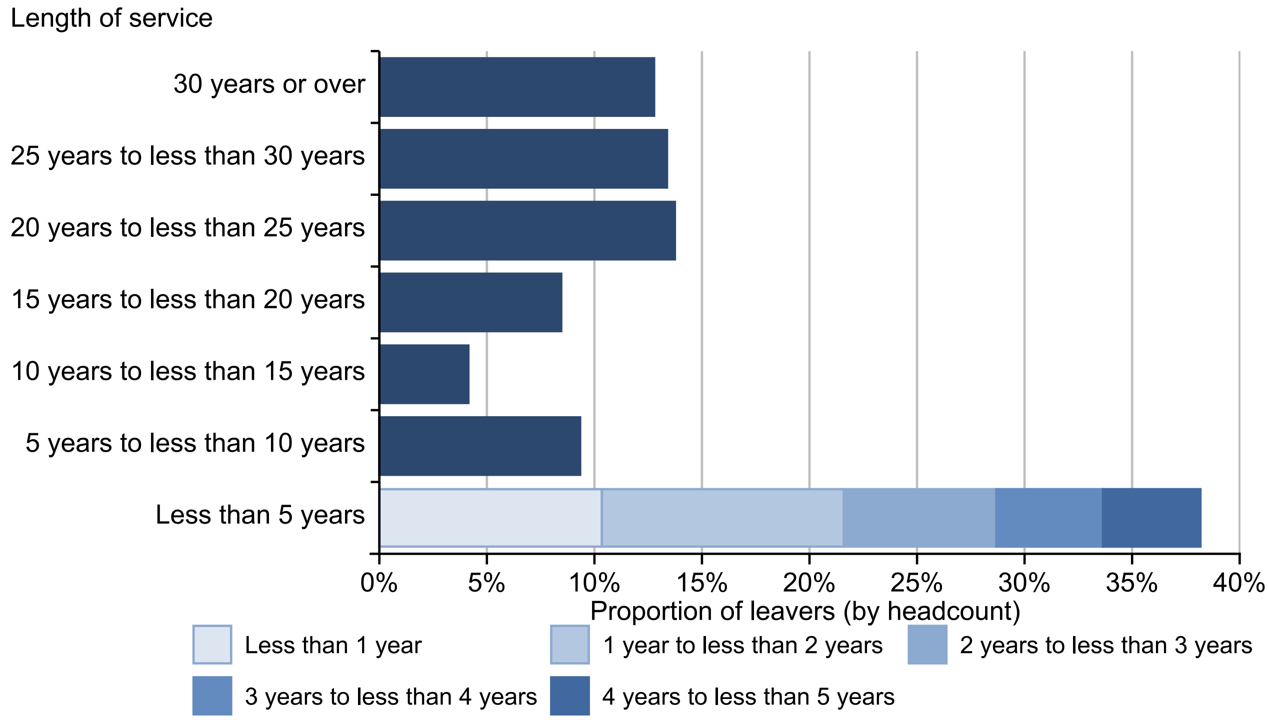
Chart E.24: Length of service of police officers (headcount basis), England and Wales, March 2016 – March 2025



Source: OPRB analysis of Police Workforce Statistics, Home Office.

E.50 Information on the length of service of leavers shows that 10% of leavers in FYE 2025 (on a headcount basis and excluding transfers between forces) had less than one year's service and 38% had less than five years' service (Chart E.25).

Chart E.25: Police officer leavers (headcount basis), by length of service, England and Wales, FYE 2025



Source: Police Workforce Statistics, Home Office.

E.51 This is only the second year that these data have been published. Therefore, it is too early to tell how volatile the figures are. In FYE 2024, 16% of leavers were in their first year of service and 43% were in the first five years.

Appendix F – Recommended Changes to Police Officer Pay Scales and Allowances from 1 September 2026

Salary scales

The salary scales for the federated and superintending ranks in effect from 1 September 2025 are set out below, along with our recommendations for effect from 1 September 2026.

Federated ranks

Rank	Pay point	With effect from 1 September 2025	Recommended for effect from 1 September 2026	Notes
Constable (appointed on or after 1 April 2013)	1	£31,164	£32,379	a
	2	£32,472	£33,738	b
	3	£33,789	£35,106	
	4	£35,106	£36,474	
	5	£37,737	£39,210	
	6	£43,038	£44,715	
	7	£50,256	£52,215	
Sergeant	2	£53,568	£55,656	
	3	£54,660	£56,793	
	4	£56,208	£58,401	
Inspector	0	£63,768	£66,255	
	1	£65,505	£68,061	
	2	£67,236	£69,858	
	3	£68,982	£71,673	
Inspector (London)	0	£66,462	£69,054	
	1	£68,202	£70,863	
	2	£69,954	£72,681	
	3	£71,697	£74,493	
Chief Inspector	1	£70,344	£73,086	c
	2	£71,715	£74,511	
	3	£73,149	£76,002	
Chief Inspector (London)	1	£73,062	£75,912	c
	2	£74,427	£77,331	
	3	£75,855	£78,813	

Superintending ranks

Rank	Pay point	With effect from 1 September 2025	Recommended for effect from 1 September 2026	Notes
Superintendent	1	£84,177	£87,459	
	2	£88,449	£91,899	
	3	£92,955	£96,579	
	4	£99,015	£102,876	
Chief Superintendent	1	£103,797	£107,844	
	2	£107,226	£111,408	
	3	£115,785	£120,300	

Legacy pay scales

Constables appointed before 1 April 2013 remain on the old pay scale, and there are also legacy pay points for any chief inspectors who were in post on 31 August 1994. The value of these pay points in effect from 1 September 2025 are set out below, along with our recommendations for effect from 1 September 2026.

Rank	Pay point	With effect from 1 September 2025	Recommended for effect from 1 September 2026	Notes
Constable (appointed before 1 April 2013)	0	£32,820	£34,101	
	1	£36,375	£37,794	d
	2	£38,346	£39,840	e
	3	£40,557	£42,138	
	4	£41,766	£43,395	
	5	£43,038	£44,715	
	6	£46,626	£48,444	
	7	£50,256	£52,215	
Chief Inspector (in post 31 August 1994)	Outside London	£74,310	£77,208	
	London	£77,004	£80,007	

Allowances

The recommended revised values of allowances from 1 September 2026 are set out below:

London Weighting	£3,273 per annum
Dog Handlers' Allowance	£3,060 per annum
London Allowance maximum	£6,845 per annum
South East Allowance maxima	
– Essex, Hertfordshire, Kent, Surrey, and Thames Valley	£3,117 per annum
– Bedfordshire, Hampshire, and Sussex	£2,078 per annum
Protection Allowance	
– Rate 1	£48 per qualifying shift
– Rate 2 (constable and sergeant)	£98 per qualifying shift
– Rate 2 (inspecting ranks)	£133 per qualifying shift
– Rate 3 (constable and sergeant)	£133 per day deployed to a qualifying country
– Rate 3 (inspecting ranks)	£168 per day deployed to a qualifying country

The values of all other allowances and payments remain unchanged.

Notes:

a. Officers appointed to the rank of constable join at pay point 1. This is subject to (b).

b. With effect from 1 April 2025, the chief officer of police, on determining that it is necessary to do so in order to meet local recruitment needs may, after consultation with the local policing body, assign all constables appointed on or after that date to pay point 2.

    a. Where the chief officer determines that officers will be appointed on pay point 2, officers on pay point 1 on the date that the decision takes effect are immediately moved to pay point 2. This date will become their new increment date.

    b. Officers move up to the next pay point annually in accordance with the provisions on incremental progression set out in Part 1BA of Annex F under Regulation 24 of the Police Regulations 2003.

c. Entry point for an officer appointed to the rank, unless the chief officer of police assigns the officer to a higher point.

d. On completion of initial training, officers will move to pay point 1.

e. All officers move to this salary point on completion of two years' service as a constable.

Incremental progression through the pay scale is dependent upon confirmation that an officer meets the Pay Progression Standard.

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