

PEEL 2021/22

Police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy

An inspection of Lancashire Constabulary

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Overall summary

Our judgments

Our inspection assessed how good Lancashire Constabulary is in nine areas of policing. We make graded judgments in eight of these nine as follows:

Outstanding	Good	Adequate	Requires improvement	Inadequate
	Preventing crime	Responding to the public	Investigating crime	
	Protecting vulnerable people			
	Managing offenders			
	Developing a positive workplace			
	Good use of resources			
	Treatment of the public			

We also inspected how effective a service Lancashire Constabulary gives to victims of crime. We don't make a graded judgment in this overall area.

We set out our detailed findings about things the constabulary is doing well and where the constabulary should improve in the rest of this report.

Data in this report

For more information, please [view this report on our website](#) and select the 'About the data' section.

Important changes to PEEL

In 2014, we introduced our police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy (PEEL) inspections, which assess the performance of all 43 police forces in England and Wales. Since then, we have been continuously adapting our approach and this year has seen the most significant changes yet.

We are moving to a more intelligence-led, continual assessment approach, rather than the annual [PEEL inspections](#) we used in previous years. For instance, we have integrated our rolling crime data integrity inspections into these PEEL assessments. Our PEEL victim service assessment will now include a crime data integrity element in at least every other assessment. We have also changed our approach to graded judgments. We now assess forces against the characteristics of good performance, set out in the [PEEL Assessment Framework 2021/22](#), and we more clearly link our judgments to causes of concern and areas for improvement. We have also expanded our previous four-tier system of judgments to five tiers. As a result, we can state more precisely where we consider improvement is needed and highlight more effectively the best ways of doing things.

However, these changes mean that it isn't possible to make direct comparisons between the grades awarded this year with those from previous PEEL inspections. A reduction in grade, particularly from good to adequate, doesn't necessarily mean that there has been a reduction in performance, unless we say so in the report.

HM Inspector's observations

I am pleased with the performance of Lancashire Constabulary in keeping people safe and reducing crime, although it needs to improve in some areas to provide a consistently good service.

These are the findings I consider most important from our assessments of the constabulary over the last year.

The new leadership team has made a very positive start and is acting quickly on issues we have raised

Throughout this inspection, I have been impressed by the commitment and dedication of the constabulary's officers and staff to make people safer in Lancashire. I am pleased to see that the new chief officer team has revised its approach to performance management to improve its service to victims. Each of the three areas of Lancashire now has a dedicated commander responsible for policing in those communities. This has increased accountability from the frontline to the most senior levels. The inspection team has been impressed by the speed at which the constabulary has made changes to improve its services. The constabulary has responded positively to inspectors' feedback and quickly worked to address any issues raised, which is why some areas for improvement highlighted by inspectors will have been addressed by the time the report is published.

The constabulary works well with partner organisations to keep communities safe

Many initiatives show how the constabulary works with partner organisations to prioritise prevention and the [safeguarding](#) of [vulnerable](#) people. These include the Lancashire violence reduction network, which locates independent domestic violence advisors closer to the first response to incidents. I have highlighted this as good practice.

The constabulary engages well with its communities

The constabulary has strong links with local communities. The neighbourhood policing approach is supported by a new command focused on improving the constabulary's ability to solve complex problems that affect communities. Operation Vanquish, a policing approach that proactively targets crime within neighbourhoods, is a good example of effective response to the concerns of communities.

The constabulary needs to continue improving the quality of its investigations and its recording of communication with victims

I am pleased that the new chief officer team has made improvements in the quality of the constabulary's investigations and its recording of communication with victims. However, it should review how it investigates [domestic abuse](#) following its initial response. There is still more to be done in these areas to be consistently good.

The constabulary needs to improve its understanding of the responsibilities and capacity of response officers

The constabulary needs to review the role and responsibilities of its response officers to ensure it has the capability and availability of resources to meet the demands placed upon it.

My report now sets out the fuller findings of this inspection. While I congratulate the officers and staff of Lancashire Constabulary for their efforts in keeping the public safe, I will monitor the progress towards addressing the areas for improvement I have identified.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Parr', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Matt Parr

HM Inspector of Constabulary

Reducing crime assessment

We have identified seven themes underpinning a force's ability to reduce crime effectively which, taken together, allow an assessment of the extent to which the force is doing all it can to reduce crime. This is a narrative assessment, as police recorded crime figures can be affected by variations and changes in recording policy and practice, making it difficult to make comparisons over time.

The constabulary benefits from comprehensive performance information and uses analysis to effectively identify and tackle crime and to protect the vulnerable. The constabulary has a focus on early intervention and problem solving. We found good examples of the constabulary working with other organisations to divert young people away from offending and reduce [anti-social behaviour](#).

Other factors contributing to the constabulary's ability to reduce crime are:

- It has a proactive approach to community involvement in the prevention of crime and builds trust effectively so the public will share intelligence.
- It takes a structured and robust approach to performance management. This is integrated with governance and accountability meetings.
- It has improved its processes for identifying repeat callers and vulnerability at the first point of contact.

I am pleased that the constabulary is addressing the right areas of policing to reduce crime.

But the following areas may limit its ability to reduce crime:

- The constabulary's operating model for response isn't sufficiently meeting demand. This is exacerbated by the abstraction of officers for the Policing Education Qualifications Framework programme.
- Investigations, particularly those by response officers, aren't always carried out in a timely manner and sometimes lack effective investigation plans, which are poorly supervised. This means relevant lines of enquiry may be missed.
- The constabulary doesn't consistently comply with the [Code of Practice for Victims of Crime \(VCOP\)](#), particularly in providing victims with investigation updates, completing victim needs assessments and recording victims' personal statements on the crime's impact. The constabulary also needs to ensure there is an auditable record of the reasons why a victim has withdrawn their support for an investigation.

Providing a service to the victims of crime

Victim service assessment

This section describes our assessment of the service victims receive from Lancashire Constabulary, from the point of reporting a crime through to the end result. As part of this assessment, we reviewed 90 case files.

When the police close a case of a reported crime, it will be assigned what is referred to as an 'outcome type'. This describes the reason for closing it.

We also reviewed 20 cases of when the following outcome types were used:

- A suspect was identified, and the victim supported police action, but evidential difficulties prevented further action ([outcome 15](#)).
- A suspect was identified, but there were evidential difficulties, and the victim didn't support or withdrew their support for police action ([outcome 16](#)).
- A suspect was identified, but the time limit for prosecution had expired (outcome 17).

The cases reviewed were from investigations that were open between October and November 2021. While this assessment is ungraded, it influences graded judgments in the other areas we have inspected.

Main findings

In this section, we set out our main findings that relate to how well the constabulary provides a service to victims of crime.

The constabulary needs to improve the time it takes to answer emergency and non-emergency calls and the identification of repeat or vulnerable victims

When a victim contacts the police, it is important that their call is answered quickly and that the right information is recorded accurately on police systems. The caller should be spoken to in a professional manner. The information should be assessed, taking into consideration threat, harm, risk and vulnerability. And the victim should get safeguarding advice.

The constabulary needs to improve the time it takes to answer emergency calls as it isn't meeting national standards. It also needs to improve the time it takes to answer non-emergency calls to prevent them from being abandoned by the caller. When calls are answered, the victim's vulnerability is often not assessed using a structured process. Repeat victims aren't always identified, which means this isn't taken into account when considering the response. Victims aren't always given crime prevention advice and advice on the preservation of evidence.

The constabulary doesn't always respond to calls for service in a timely way

A force should aim to respond to calls for service within its published time frames, based on the prioritisation given to the call. It should change call priority only if the original prioritisation is deemed incorrect or if further information suggests a change is needed. The response should take into consideration risk and victim vulnerability, including information obtained after the call.

Attendance was sometimes outside agreed constabulary timescales. Victims were sometimes not informed of the delay, and their expectations weren't met. This may cause victims to lose confidence and disengage.

The constabulary allocates crimes to appropriate staff

Police forces should have a policy to make sure crimes are allocated to properly trained officers or staff for investigation or, if appropriate, not investigated further. The policy should be applied consistently. The victim of the crime should be kept informed of who is dealing with their case and whether the crime is to be investigated further.

The arrangements for allocating recorded crimes for investigation were in accordance with constabulary policy, and in all cases the crime was allocated to the right department for further investigation.

The constabulary isn't always carrying out thorough and timely investigations, and victims aren't always updated on progress

Police forces should investigate reported crimes quickly, proportionately and thoroughly. Victims should be kept updated about the investigation, and the constabulary should have effective governance arrangements to make sure investigation standards are high.

There was frequently a lack of effective supervision of investigations. This resulted in some investigations not being thorough or progressed quickly. Victims are potentially being let down and offenders may not be brought to justice.

Officers didn't always record when victims were updated about an investigation's progress, particularly for serious crimes. This can result in victims losing confidence in the constabulary. When domestic abuse victims withdrew their support for a prosecution, the constabulary didn't always consider the use of orders designed to protect victims from further abuse, such as a [domestic violence protection notice](#) or [domestic violence protection order](#) (DVPN/O).

Under the VCOP, there is a requirement to conduct a needs assessment at an early stage to decide whether a victim requires additional support. The outcome of the assessment and the request for additional support should be recorded. The constabulary isn't always completing the assessment, which means not all victims will get the appropriate level of service.

The constabulary isn't always using the appropriate outcome or obtaining an auditable record of the victim's wishes

The constabulary should make sure it follows national guidance and rules for deciding the outcome of each report of crime. In deciding the outcome, the constabulary should consider the nature of the crime, the offender and the victim. And the constabulary should show the necessary leadership and culture to make sure the use of outcomes is correct.

When a suspect is identified but there are evidential difficulties in progressing a prosecution, the victim should be informed of the decision to end the investigation. This didn't always happen.

Where a suspect is identified but the victim doesn't support or withdraws support for police action, the constabulary should have an auditable record to confirm the victim's decision so that it can close the investigation. Evidence of the victim's decision was absent in most of the cases reviewed. This represents a risk that victims' wishes may not be fully represented and considered before the crime is finalised.

When a suspect is identified and there is sufficient evidence to prosecute the case, there are occasions when the police can decide it isn't reasonable to do so due to the nature of the offence. Outcome 10 wasn't always used properly as on some occasions there was insufficient evidence to prosecute or the victim's views weren't considered.

Engaging with and treating the public with fairness and respect

Good

Lancashire Constabulary is good at treating people fairly and with respect.

Innovative practice

The constabulary works with diverse communities to increase the understanding of officers and staff

Lancashire Constabulary has developed a training approach called 'people's voice', which allows members of differing communities, backgrounds and faiths to speak with groups of officers and staff. This gives officers and staff a greater understanding of communities' experiences of policing. Training is recorded for officers and staff that are unable to attend. Inspection staff met a victim of criminal exploitation who is now supporting the constabulary, through the programme, to improve its understanding of criminal exploitation. The positive effect of the programme is clear from workforce feedback.

Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to treating people fairly and with respect.

The constabulary engages well with the communities it serves and understands and responds to their priorities

The constabulary's approach to policing is built around a neighbourhood policing model, which actively engages with communities through a range of methods. It has a community engagement platform, Lancashire Talking, which it uses well to understand what is concerning its communities. This knowledge is used to prioritise policing activities.

Operation Vanquish is a proactive approach that brings together officers and staff from throughout the constabulary on a monthly basis to support neighbourhood policing in executing warrants and dealing with community concerns, such as disrupting drug dealers. The results are fed back to the community through Lancashire Talking and by neighbourhood teams distributing leaflets and talking with residents. The teams encourage communities to connect with Lancashire Talking through these conversations.

The workforce understands the importance of treating the public with fairness and respect

The constabulary threads [unconscious bias](#) training throughout all training courses. This allows individuals to identify and avoid allowing stereotypes and cultural influences to affect their behaviour and decisions. All police officers have received training in the use of [stop and search powers](#), effective communication, and the use of force. The training emphasises the importance of explaining each stop and search and considering how the search is conducted.

The constabulary's stop and search training is a particularly powerful example of the quality of unconscious bias training. Small groups of officers are asked to make decisions about scenarios presented to them that were designed to challenge preconceived ideas. Officers spoke very positively of the training, and those who hadn't undertaken it were keen to.

The constabulary monitors the use of force and stop and search powers well

Officers are aware that they must use [body-worn video](#) (BWV) for all stop and search encounters and when they use force. The video is used as part of ongoing monitoring. Supervisors review the records of searches and the footage itself, and they provide feedback to officers. Themes from the feedback are shared through the constabulary standards board. Learning and development staff attend these meetings and amend training to address any issues.

The constabulary has relatively new internal and external scrutiny groups that monitor stop and search and the use of force. The external scrutiny group is independently chaired and attended by a good representation of the community. All attendees have received training on stop and search and have been offered the opportunity to go on patrol with officers. The panel scrutinises randomly selected incidents when stop and search powers or force are used. It reviews connected documents, watches the BWV footage and feeds back to officers. The constabulary responds to this feedback. This has resulted in the purchase of different BWV holders for officers that don't wear uniforms and improvements to the system that plays back the footage.

As part of this inspection, we conducted an audit of stop and search records. This assesses the grounds the searching officer recorded when completing the stop search form. 'Reasonable grounds for suspicion' is an objective test, in that it expects that a reasonable person given the same information would also suspect that the individual is carrying the item sought. We reviewed a sample of 183 stop and search records from 1 January to 31 December 2021. Based on this sample, we estimate that 85.2 percent (with a confidence interval of +/- 5.1 percent) of all stop and searches by the constabulary during this period had reasonable grounds recorded. This is broadly unchanged compared with the findings of our review of 2019 records, where we found 86.3 percent (with a confidence interval of +/- 4.3 percent). Of the records we reviewed for stop and searches on people from ethnic minorities, 21 of 27 had reasonable grounds recorded.

The constabulary uses analytical reports to understand the effect of stop and search and use of force on communities, which is changing operational practice and training. One example of this is refresher training for student officers who received their initial training online during the COVID-19 restrictions. It addresses a lack of understanding of stop and search legislation and builds their confidence in undertaking appropriate searches.

The constabulary is making progress in understanding disproportionality in these areas and improving the recording of the self-defined ethnicity of those involved.

Preventing crime and anti-social behaviour

Good

Lancashire Constabulary is good at prevention and deterrence.

Innovative practice

The constabulary has created a rural crime taskforce and successfully used a problem-solving approach to reduce rural crime

The constabulary has worked with the National Farmers Union and the RSPCA to engage with rural communities to understand the crimes they are affected by. The rural taskforce has benefitted from training and joint operations with the rural community, British Association for Shooting and Conservation, the RSPB and United Utilities. As a result, the team has successfully secured [criminal behaviour orders](#) and seized £1m of plant, equipment and vehicles.

Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to prevention and deterrence.

The constabulary prioritises the prevention of crime, anti-social behaviour and vulnerability

The constabulary's operating model is built around neighbourhood policing. The neighbourhood policing and early intervention model is made up of 627 officers and staff, split between 14 teams aligned to local authorities.

The constabulary has developed a neighbourhood policing strategy aligned to its strategic plan. Its performance framework uses the [College of Policing](#) guidelines of engaging communities, targeting activity and problem solving, and it identifies the key tasks that will help to achieve those objectives. Strategies are supported by operational delivery plans, and there is effective governance in place to drive and monitor action.

The constabulary works in partnership to solve problems and prevent crime, anti-social behaviour and reduce vulnerability

Each division has an established early intervention team, developed under the 2019 Police Innovation Fund. The teams work together with key workers for vulnerable callers and mental health professionals to reduce vulnerability.

The recent serious youth violence thematic inspection with the Care Quality Commission and Ofsted praised the partnership work in Lancashire, particularly the partnership's understanding of local issues and its joint approach to tackling them.

The constabulary understands demand facing neighbourhood policing teams and manages resources to meet it

The constabulary has a detailed understanding of demand and has allocated additional staff to neighbourhood policing. It has developed training and continuous professional development for all neighbourhood policing staff, including police community support officers, to improve its approach.

Neighbourhood policing is valued, and it was observed to be a key contributor to effective policing in Lancashire. Operation Blackrock started as a neighbourhood investigation into anti-social behaviour, but criminal exploitation was quickly identified. With co-ordinated work throughout the constabulary and with partner organisations, vulnerable children were protected and the criminal group that sought to exploit them was brought to justice.

The constabulary would benefit from reviewing the deployment of neighbourhood officers to other tasks. Neighbourhood officers throughout the constabulary raised concerns about being removed at times of high demand from their core role of problem solving. At the time of the inspection, the recorded abstraction rate for neighbourhood officers was 29 percent, a level deemed to be acceptable by the constabulary's abstraction policy.

Responding to the public

Adequate

Lancashire Constabulary is adequate at responding to the public.

Areas for improvement

The constabulary should ensure control room staff use and correctly record structured risk assessments where police attendance has been delayed

We found that call handlers were polite and professional and showed empathy to callers in 55 out of 57 calls audited. And the initial prioritisation and response to calls for service were appropriate in 71 out of 74 calls audited. Supervision, when required, was found in 12 out of 15 suitable cases. However, the constabulary needs to improve the reassessment of incidents where police attendance has been delayed. The risk associated with an incident can change, and this should be reassessed to inform the prioritisation of police attendance.

The constabulary needs to make sure that call takers give appropriate advice and pass on all relevant information to responding officers

The constabulary should develop a more structured approach to the handling of initial calls to ensure that all relevant information is gathered and passed to responding officers. Callers should also be consistently provided with relevant crime prevention and on-scene preservation advice whenever possible.

Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to how well the constabulary responds to the public.

The constabulary is improving how it identifies and understands risk effectively at initial contact but there is more to do

We identified that the constabulary wasn't using a structured assessment tool to effectively understand the risk from initial calls. While the grading and attendance at calls were correct, in a few cases the fact the caller was vulnerable or a repeat caller was missed. This was raised with the constabulary, which has now adopted a nationally recognised approach to call assessment and provided training to staff taking calls. We saw the positive effect of this training during our fieldwork, and the constabulary is doing more to improve how it identifies vulnerable and repeat callers.

The constabulary provides a satisfactory response to incidents, including those involving vulnerable people

The constabulary uses experts in its [control room](#) to improve the service it provides to vulnerable people. The constabulary has worked with partner organisations, such as mental health services, and provided training to staff to ensure callers receive the right care from the right professional.

There are limited alternative ways for the public to contact the constabulary, primarily through the constabulary webpage and Lancashire Talking. The constabulary has invested in a new digital team of 18 staff and a supervisor to communicate with the public through digital channels, such as social media. At the time of our inspection, we found that there were nine vacancies in this team, which was delaying its ability to assess contact from the public through digital channels. The constabulary told us this contact would be risk-assessed within one hour, but we found cases where this hadn't been done effectively for a considerable time. This could mean early investigative opportunities were missed.

The constabulary was aware of this and was working to fill the vacancies. Once the staff are in place, there will be opportunities to publicise this service further. This will benefit communities and reduce the number of calls to the 101 police non-emergency number, enhancing public confidence.

The constabulary understands the demand faced by officers responding to calls for service, but it needs to assure itself that its resources can meet them

The constabulary has detailed performance information about calls for service and it acts on the data. The constabulary has used computer simulation modelling in other areas, such as the criminal investigation department, to understand the numbers of officers and staff required to meet demand, but it needs to review its predictions for response. It has increased resources for the control room, and the constabulary is changing its operating model to ensure the level and spread of resources are sufficient to meet demand. These changes should reduce the number of incidents where the response hasn't met published timescales.

The constabulary has a good understanding of the wellbeing needs of its contact management staff and officers initially responding to emergency calls

The constabulary focuses on the wellbeing of its officers and staff through one-to-one meetings conducted by all supervisors. We saw that officers and staff in the control room also look after each other. When they see a call taker with a difficult call, they ensure this is brought to the attention of a supervisor, who will speak to the member of staff and offer support.

There is an established system that identifies officers and staff who have been affected by a traumatic incident. They are brought together for a debrief, known as a defusion session, with a trained member of staff who emphasises the support available. The occupational health unit also has drop-in sessions within the control room and throughout the constabulary.

Investigating crime

Requires
improvement

Lancashire Constabulary requires improvement at investigating crime.

Areas for improvement

The constabulary should make sure it carries out timely, proportionate and thorough investigations into reported crimes, with supervision where required

The constabulary has demonstrated that it has focused on improving the quality of its investigations, particularly those into more serious offences. However, further work is required to improve the quality of its investigations into less serious offences, particularly those led by response officers. Due to their inexperience, investigation plans should be created, and increased supervisory oversight is needed to ensure all investigative opportunities are taken.

The constabulary needs to make sure it consistently complies with the VCOP

We found that the service to victims was mixed. Of 35 relevant cases reviewed, 21 had good victim engagement. The completion of victim needs assessments and personal statements was disappointing. It appeared at times that entries and templates weren't always appropriate to the details of the case and may have been generated automatically. Auditors at times got the impression that more was being done but action wasn't recorded on an investigation log.

We examined 20 crime files that had been finalised using [outcome 16](#), when a suspect has been identified but the investigation has ended because the victim doesn't support further action. The standard of records of outcome 16s was generally higher than other outcome types. In 19 of the cases, the outcome was justifiable, and 18 files had appropriate supervision. However, in 17 cases where the victim didn't support the prosecution from the start of the investigation, only 13 had an auditable record of that decision signed by the victim.

Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to how well the constabulary investigates crime.

The constabulary understands how to carry out quality investigations on behalf of victims and their families

The constabulary has created an assistant chief constable-led investigation standards board, as the chief constable identified this as an area for improvement. It was also identified in our last inspection. The constabulary has created a victim focus review board, chaired by the deputy chief constable, to place the victim at the heart of its approach. We have found improvements in the quality of investigations during our fieldwork, but the constabulary needs to maintain its focus, particularly on uniform response staff.

There is a policy to make sure crimes are allocated to appropriately trained officers or staff for investigation. We found that crimes were appropriately allocated on most (86 of 90) occasions. However, the constabulary would benefit from reviewing its policy for allocating officers to domestic abuse investigations.

The constabulary understands the crime demand it faces and what resources it needs to meet it effectively

The constabulary has a detailed understanding of its crime demand and the number of officers and staff it requires. It has increased the number of officers in investigative roles and the number of investigation training courses to develop the additional skills needed.

The constabulary has developed systems to monitor the number of crimes being investigated by officers, how long investigations take and their quality. This evaluation is undertaken by a locally-based team of supervisors designated as quality sergeants, which is aligned to the three geographical divisions of Lancashire. The team works directly with officers to improve investigation standards. We saw the effect of this. Officer workloads have reduced, and constabulary data shows that ongoing investigations have decreased from 30,000 to 16,000. The sergeants engage with officers to improve the standard of their investigations and make their workloads manageable. The divisions' audit results are presented to the investigations standards board. The victim focus review board provides challenge to the investigations standards board, demonstrating that constabulary leadership is focused on improving its ability to support victims.

The constabulary has reviewed its ability to manage the demand for digital and cyber forensic analysis, and we were impressed with its capabilities. The constabulary can obtain information from devices, in urgent cases, on the day they are seized. We also found the waiting times for non-urgent cases were low compared to similar forces. Its collaboration with forces in the north-west and with the University of Central Lancashire is improving its ability to investigate – for example, students have developed software to simplify digital investigations.

As part of its domestic abuse action plan, the constabulary has increased awareness of evidence-led prosecutions in cases where the victim doesn't support police action. Several officers were able to give examples of where they had successfully pursued these prosecutions.

The constabulary is experiencing delays in the court process due to the impact of COVID-19 and is working with criminal justice partners to reduce the number of outstanding cases. It has increased the number of staff in its witness care team to maintain support for victims and witnesses.

Protecting vulnerable people

Good

Lancashire Constabulary is good at protecting vulnerable people.

Area for improvement

The constabulary should evaluate its approach to domestic abuse to ensure it is efficient and effective for victims

The constabulary's approach to domestic abuse uses different teams to deal with different elements of the incident. The efficiency and effectiveness of this approach is an area for improvement.

Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to how well the constabulary protects vulnerable people.

The constabulary understands the nature and scale of vulnerability

The constabulary has a vulnerability strategy, with effective governance led by the deputy chief constable. The assistant chief constable is the strategic link with partner organisations.

The constabulary receives information from partner organisations to help it understand the nature and scale of vulnerability. This understanding is used during corporate planning and the alignment of officers and staff to the areas of greatest concern.

The constabulary provides safeguarding and support for vulnerable people, including those at risk of criminal exploitation

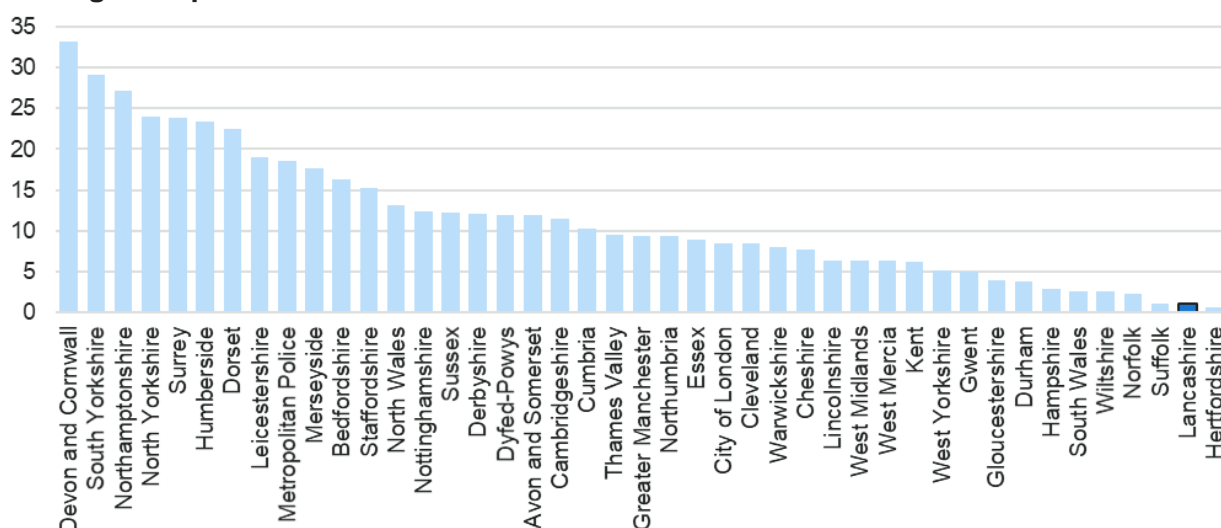
The constabulary has a focus on criminal exploitation. Established partnership meetings help agencies to work together to safeguard those at risk. The constabulary uses its enforcement powers to tackle those who seek to exploit vulnerable people. Project Adder in Blackpool is an example of a proactive multi-agency operation to safeguard vulnerable people from exploitation.

The constabulary uses a variety of methods to safeguard vulnerable people. A good example of this includes the use of independent domestic violence advocates (IDVAs) at an early stage of an investigation. The constabulary has successfully led a pilot project to provide video doorbells to vulnerable victims. The victim benefits from a camera outside their home and they can speak to callers remotely.

The constabulary's initial response to a report of domestic abuse is usually positive. We saw a prompt response, early arrest of suspects and immediate actions to safeguard the victim. However, in several cases the standard of subsequent investigations deteriorated.

The constabulary has recently trained staff in the use of DVPOs. In the year ending 30 September 2021, Lancashire Constabulary's applications for DVPOs in court were very low compared to other forces throughout England and Wales.

DVPO applications per 1,000 domestic abuse related offences recorded in the year ending 30 September 2021



The constabulary needs to evaluate its approach following its initial response to domestic abuse to make sure it is using its full range of tools to keep victims safe. In response to our feedback, the constabulary has adopted a proactive approach to the use and monitoring of DVPOs. This was seen during the inspection, and constabulary data for the month of May 2022 shows that 26 domestic violence prevention notices were served and presented to the court to seek a DVPO.

The constabulary works with other organisations to keep vulnerable people safe

In line with the constabulary's approach to problem solving, there is an emphasis on identifying and tackling repeat victimisation. We saw this approach during briefings to officers and when we spoke to officers. There was an awareness of, and engagement with, both repeat victims and repeat offenders.

The constabulary has IDVAs working alongside uniformed response officers, which we have highlighted as good practice. This approach helps the IDVA to work quickly to

support a victim of domestic abuse and contribute to their safeguarding. We saw the positive effect of this support in the investigations we reviewed.

We were satisfied with [multi-agency safeguarding hub](#) arrangements, and we found significant evidence of meaningful working with partner organisations. There is an emphasis on the police gaining consent from families prior to referral to children's social care (CSC). While consent isn't necessary in [guidance on working with safeguarding partners](#), we found this was done in the child's interest. The initial contact with a family by CSC was found to be more successful where consent had been obtained. The constabulary was clear that it would refer to CSC if needed where consent hadn't been obtained. The constabulary's own audit of 592 cases confirmed this approach was appropriate in most (588 of 592) cases.

[Multi-agency risk assessment conferences \(MARACs\)](#) are established in all three police divisions with positive engagement from partner organisations. These conferences follow the nationally recognised [SafeLives](#) guidance when considering domestic abuse cases. There has been a successful pilot in Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council where the MARAC meetings have been daily. This approach is now being introduced throughout Lancashire.

Managing offenders and suspects

Good

Lancashire Constabulary is good at managing offenders and suspects.

Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to how well the constabulary manages offenders and suspects.

The constabulary is effective in apprehending and managing suspects and offenders to protect the public from harm

The constabulary takes a risk-based approach to arresting outstanding suspects, and we saw some particularly good work with perpetrators of domestic abuse who pose the highest risk. The three divisions hold daily management meetings each morning, which review the previous day's activities and plan for the day ahead. They discuss the management of suspects and wanted offenders, informed by a sergeant who prioritises them based on the risk they pose to the public. Suspects considered a higher risk, or who have been difficult to arrest, can be escalated to the constabulary's daily management meeting so constabulary-wide resources can be deployed to arrest them.

The management of police bail and when suspects are [released under investigation \(RUI\)](#) has improved due to a change in constabulary systems where it links with the [Police National Computer](#) and allows any custody record to be finalised.

The investigations standards board oversees both the use of police bail and RUI. Cases are individually assessed, and consideration is given to safeguarding the victim. The constabulary's use of both bail and RUI is comparable to other police forces of similar size. Inspection staff found a small number of cases where bail had lapsed, so focus should be maintained in this area.

The constabulary effectively manages the risk posed by registered sex offenders

The constabulary manages registered sex offenders (RSOs) in line with [authorised professional practice](#) and uses a nationally recognised risk assessment tool. We found that some officers were following outdated guidance for visits to RSOs, completing home visits around rigid timescales rather than a dynamic risk-based approach. The constabulary has now changed its practice to reflect the updated guidance.

The constabulary has clear processes to secure [sexual harm prevention orders](#) and other civil court orders to prevent offending by RSOs and has created a small team to support applications. There is a structured approach to identifying and enforcing breaches.

The inspection team found good links between officers managing RSOs and neighbourhood policing. Neighbourhood officers and staff had a good knowledge of the RSOs in their areas.

The constabulary works well with the probation service in managing RSOs through proactive joint home visits, although police conducted these visits alone during COVID-19 restrictions. Currently, joint visits are undertaken with probation when the sex offender is leaving the system. However, the constabulary completes the final risk assessment, although national guidance states this is the probation service's responsibility. This adds to the demand placed on police officers, and the constabulary should consider raising this with the probation service.

The constabulary has a specialist online child abuse investigation team (OCAIT) that deals with all levels of online child abuse. The inspection team found backlogs, with some cases not being checked promptly with CSC, and we identified cases where suspects may have had access to children that weren't addressed quickly enough. The constabulary responded promptly, and the backlogs were addressed during the inspection. It also reviewed the cases and didn't identify any instances where a child had been abused. The constabulary had identified the need for a further eight officers in OCAIT. These have now been recruited to ensure that demand is managed and further backlogs don't occur.

The constabulary has an integrated offender management programme

The constabulary's refreshed approach follows the guidance from the College of Policing. It benefits from an independently chaired reducing reoffending board, which brings together police and partner organisations to identify offenders to be managed to reduce their offending. Offenders are selected using a scoring system that considers how recent, frequent and serious the offending was and how many victims were affected. The public protection unit strategic lead oversees and co-ordinates the programme. As the programme matures, the constabulary will be able to measure its effect on reoffending.

Disrupting serious organised crime

We now inspect [serious and organised crime \(SOC\)](#) on a regional basis, rather than inspecting each force individually in this area. This is so we can be more effective and efficient in how we inspect the whole SOC system, as set out in HM Government's SOC strategy.

SOC is tackled by each force working with [regional organised crime units \(ROCU\)](#). These units lead the regional response to SOC by providing access to specialist resources and assets to disrupt [organised crime groups](#) that pose the highest harm.

Through our new inspections we seek to understand how well forces and ROCUs work in partnership. As a result, we now inspect ROCUs and their forces together and report on regional performance. Forces and ROCUs are now graded and reported on in regional SOC reports.

Our SOC inspection of Lancashire Constabulary hasn't yet been completed. We will update our website with our findings (including the constabulary's grade) and a link to the regional report once the inspection is complete.

Building, supporting and protecting the workforce

Good

Lancashire Constabulary is good at building and developing its workforce.

Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to how well the constabulary builds and develops its workforce.

The constabulary promotes an ethical and inclusive culture at all levels

The constabulary's purpose, vision and values are clearly and consistently set out by the chief constable. [Chief officers](#) personally brief all teams about the strategic plan, resulting in good awareness and understanding throughout the constabulary. Officers and staff reported that the new chief constable listens to them to identify and resolve problems. Officers and staff throughout the inspection talked about their pride in working for the constabulary with its expected high standards of professional behaviour. They were overwhelmingly receptive to the changes made by the new chief constable, which they saw as necessary for the constabulary to improve. Officers and staff felt part of this process. There was a sense of belonging, and officers and staff felt included and part of the constabulary's work to improve.

The inspection team saw an established ethics board made up of representatives throughout the constabulary that discusses relevant themes and feeds into policy changes. The commitment to this ethical decision-making approach is supported by a culture of learning within the organisation. We saw the professional standards department using reflective practice to improve how officers and staff discharged their duties.

The constabulary understands and responds to the wellbeing needs of the workforce

The constabulary has a wellbeing strategy personally led by the chief constable, who chairs the wellbeing board. It has invested in a wellbeing officer in each of the three divisions. These officers work with managers, staff associations and unions to identify colleagues who may benefit from support, and to identify broader issues affecting staff. The wellbeing officers feed into the occupational health unit (OHU) to tailor support to individuals and throughout the division. We found that staff feel that their wellbeing is supported, and we spoke to several officers who had directly benefitted from the support.

To understand officer and staff needs, the OHU undertakes surveys and locates its staff within the divisions and departments. This understanding is used to develop services to meet the needs of all staff and volunteers.

The constabulary has also invested in a team of psychologists with 4 core staff and 24 associate therapists. The prompt response to referrals is seen positively throughout the workforce.

We found that some officers felt under pressure from their workloads. The constabulary has developed dashboards to monitor workloads of individual officers and teams, so managers can ensure workloads are appropriate. The divisional investigative quality boards maintain oversight of the dashboards. They have worked to reduce the demand on officers, with action plans for those with the highest workloads. Through the course of the inspection, we saw a marked reduction in workloads for individual officers.

The constabulary is building its workforce for the future

The constabulary has a strategic workforce planning board, which oversees recruitment, finance and training. There is a detailed understanding of the minimum number of officers required in each area and a plan to move officers between them. This information is recorded in spreadsheets to inform the board of the impact of its decisions to move officers to different areas. It also identifies the best date for staff moves.

The constabulary has established plans and activities to narrow the gap between workforce representation and the communities it serves. These plans are led by the chief constable through the diversity, equality and inclusion board.

The constabulary commissioned an external company to research the community's perception of policing and the barriers to joining. This identified a lack of understanding of police roles, so the constabulary increased its marketing to highlight the roles available. It also adopted community engagement software that has allowed the constabulary to identify differing career opportunities in policing, and members of the public can register their interest in specific areas. Using QR codes, the constabulary can understand which elements people are interested in and target their recruitment. Due to the unique QR codes, it can map the most successful recruitment approaches. The constabulary has 7,000 community members signed up to the software.

The constabulary has developed its police education qualifications framework (PEQF) with the University of Central Lancashire. The courses have been developed for the Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship and the Degree Holders Entry Programme. The transition to PEQF was completed within the College of Policing timeframes. The constabulary has methods in place to monitor the progress of officers from the start of the programme. It can demonstrate its understanding of the supportive interventions required to ensure students improve and maximise attainment in scored assessments.

The constabulary has described considerable pressure on response due to the increased proportion of PEQF officers attending university. It should be noted that the constabulary was an early adopter of the PEQF scheme and therefore wasn't able to learn from other forces how to overcome the associated challenges. This has affected the constabulary's performance in responding to calls and increased individual officer workloads. As a result, the constabulary is recruiting two intakes of officers under the previous training approach, which isn't degree-accredited and requires less time away from the workplace. The constabulary believes that this will help it to maintain its services to the public as PEQF officers complete the degree-level training.

The constabulary is developing its workforce to be fit for the future

The constabulary has a responsive and affordable learning and development plan. It has increased detective and driver training in line with the increase in officer numbers. The learning and development team is involved in strategic planning, which gives it an understanding of the training requirements needed.

The constabulary recently ran a two-day 'leading the way' programme designed to empower first and second-line managers to challenge poor performance and support their teams. We saw that teams were being supported and individuals challenged when their performance fell below the organisation's standard.

The constabulary has introduced a new approach to [performance development reviews \(PDRs\)](#). Every member of staff has an annual review that links performance goals to the constabulary strategic plan. Monthly meetings with line managers are designed to support staff to achieve their goals. This process replaces the previous approach, which had fallen into disrepute throughout the constabulary. In the year ending 31 March 2021, only 44 percent of the workforce had completed an annual performance assessment. By the end of May 2022, constabulary data indicated that 80 percent of the workforce had engaged with the new PDR process.

The constabulary needs to ensure the process is understood and that reviews are consistently and fairly applied throughout the workforce and valued by all. We saw evidence of honest, fair and effective assessments of individual performance. The staff we spoke to knew about the talent management strategy, with several having been supported through this new approach.

Vetting and counter corruption

We now inspect how forces deal with vetting and counter corruption differently. This is so we can be more effective and efficient in how we inspect this high-risk area of police business.

Corruption in forces is tackled by specialist units, designed to proactively target corruption threats. Police corruption is corrosive and poses a significant risk to public trust and confidence. There is a national expectation of standards and how they should use specialist resources and assets to target and arrest those that pose the highest threat.

Through our new inspections, we seek to understand how well forces apply these standards. As a result, we now inspect forces and report on national risks and performance in this area. We now grade and report on forces' performance separately.

Lancashire Constabulary's vetting and counter corruption inspection hasn't yet been completed. We will update our website with our findings and the separate report once the inspection is complete.

Strategic planning, organisational management and value for money

Good

Lancashire Constabulary is good at operating efficiently.

Area for improvement

The constabulary needs to develop a comprehensive understanding of its response capability and capacity

The constabulary demonstrates that it has a good awareness of current demand, and it moves resources to meet its calls for service. However, it needs to better understand how its approach affects the overall quality of service to the public.

The movement of officers to address demand doesn't consider response officers' roles or responsibilities in sufficient detail. The constabulary has sufficient officers in its response function. When allocating crimes for investigation, the constabulary should fully consider response capacity and the impact on response officers who are balancing investigations while still responding to the public. The effect that prolonged inquiries have on its response officers needs to be understood. The allocation of crime investigations removes resources from the frontline, which means other resources are moved to cover the gaps created.

Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to how well the constabulary operates efficiently.

The constabulary has an effective strategic planning and performance framework that ensures it tackles what is important locally and nationally

The constabulary has good governance arrangements, with senior leaders actively engaged in corporate planning, including workforce and financial planning. There are positive and constructive working relationships with the office of the police and crime commissioner to ensure the constabulary's plans align with the Police and Crime Plan. There is a sophisticated and mature process for monitoring current demand and predicting changes. The corporate planning process provides an opportunity for senior leaders to maintain oversight, scrutinise all areas of operations and ensure that resources follow priorities.

The constabulary reviewed and updated its performance framework in 2021 so it is victim-focused and provides a structure for accountability throughout the senior leadership team. As part of the new approach, there is a monthly victim-focused review board and revised monthly chief officer meetings with divisional and departmental heads.

The constabulary understands its demands and is planning to make sure it has the right resources in place to meet future needs

The process for developing the constabulary's management statement is a sophisticated and complex approach to modelling future demand, which predicts likely changes based on a detailed analysis of current activity. The constabulary understands the areas where demand is outstripping capacity, and we saw that resources are moved to respond to meet changing demands.

Additional officers recruited through Operation Uplift, the government's drive to increase officer numbers, have been targeted at areas of the highest priority and greatest demand. The constabulary is on track to achieve its recruitment target and, by the end of 2022/23, will have an extra 496 police officers funded through the programme.

In addition, the police and crime commissioner made additional funding available to recruit a further 58 officers in 2021/22 and 45 extra officers in 2022/23. The officers will be targeted at tackling priority areas, such as managing sex offenders and supporting the rural taskforce.

Structural changes to the constabulary's operating model are already improving performance, but capacity in response is still stretched and remains an area for improvement.

The constabulary manages its finances well

Financial planning is closely aligned with other corporate planning, and there is a strong governance structure in place to scrutinise the use of resources.

The constabulary is facing some significant financial challenges over the next two years, with likely savings needed of around £20m. Most savings will need to be made in 2023/24. The constabulary has a strong track record of fiscal management and has made over £88m savings over the last ten years. However, it needs to continue to drive further savings to sustain the increase in police officer numbers.

Several uncertainties remain which will determine the true scale of the challenge ahead. The constabulary has made prudent assumptions about income – for example, that government funding will rise only marginally and income from council tax may not increase at all. The constabulary is currently developing outline plans to meet the funding challenges. It isn't clear whether these are achievable within the timescale or what effect they may have on the operating model and, in turn, on service to the public and value for money.

The constabulary makes the most of the benefits of working collaboratively

The constabulary recognises the benefits of collaborating to reduce costs and add resilience, and it actively seeks out opportunities. There are several mature, well-established police collaborations which bring better, more efficient services throughout the county. It has explored ambitious plans to collaborate with Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service, but both organisations have established that neither would benefit. We are particularly impressed by the value added from the innovative joint working with the University of Central Lancashire, which is helping the constabulary to develop improved evidence-based practice and consequently better services for the public.

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