

PEEL 2021/22

Police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy

An inspection of Staffordshire Police

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Overall summary

Our judgments

Our inspection assessed how good Staffordshire Police is in ten areas of policing. We make graded judgments in nine of these ten as follows:

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

We also inspected how effective a service Staffordshire Police 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 force is doing well and where the force 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 have concerns about the performance of Staffordshire Police in keeping people safe and reducing crime.

In particular, I have serious concerns about how the force is responding to the public, investigating crime and managing its offenders and suspects. In view of these findings, I have been in regular contact with the chief constable as I do not underestimate how much improvement is needed.

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

The force needs to improve how it identifies vulnerable [victims](#) at the first point of contact

Staffordshire Police is missing opportunities to [safeguard vulnerable people](#). It needs to improve the way it assesses initial calls to the force so that vulnerable people and repeat callers are routinely identified. The force needs to improve how it provides advice about preventing crime and preserving evidence when taking calls from the public.

The force needs to make sure that it carries out effective investigations, giving victims the support they need

From the outset, the force needs to complete investigation plans. Through regular supervision, it needs to set lines of enquiry to be followed and review the progress of investigations. The force doesn't always pursue evidence-led prosecutions where appropriate. It doesn't always follow the [Code of Practice for Victims of Crime \(VCOP\)](#) nor does it support victims by accurately assessing their needs.

The force needs to improve how it manages offenders and outstanding suspects

Staffordshire Police needs to improve how it monitors known offenders and those who are outstanding suspects (suspects who are yet to be detained). The force isn't always able to meet the demands of this work and oversight from supervisors needs to improve. The force also needs to introduce processes to help it review its [intelligence](#) assessments and to improve how it manages workloads in this area.

The force has recently introduced a new operating model. This model is designed to create a better understanding of the demand for its service and improve how it manages its resources.

My report sets out the more detailed findings of this inspection. I will continue to monitor the force's progress in addressing these in the coming months.



Wendy Williams

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.

Staffordshire Police has developed a new performance framework to support its new operating model. To support the model, it has put in plans to rebuild and invest in a corporate development function, which will include performance analysis, the development of policing and business intelligence supported by data, and audit and compliance. This will support the work to determine where crime needs to be reduced.

A positive factor contributing to the force's ability to reduce crime is:

- The force's work in early intervention with other organisations, such as health and children's services, to prevent crime at the earliest opportunity.

But the following areas may negatively affect the force's ability to reduce crime:

- Investigations lack quality and investigators don't have enough capacity to deal with investigations at all levels, including high-risk cases.
- The force can't show that it assesses repeat victims. The force fails to identify all repeat victims (including victims of [domestic abuse](#)) when an initial call is received, meaning the assessment of risk isn't carried out at the earliest opportunity.
- The force's identification and assessment of risk to vulnerable people at initial point of contact are ineffective. The workforce doesn't consistently use approved force processes, which are designed to support the assessment of risk.
- Local policing teams don't consistently involve local communities or carry out structured problem solving alongside other organisations to prevent crime and [anti-social behaviour](#).
- The force doesn't hold leaders to account when evaluating the results of crime reduction activities.
- The force doesn't have a clear understanding of crime demand and can't determine whether enough resources are available to deal effectively with crimes and other incidents.

Until the force improves its understanding of its capacity, capability and effectiveness in investigations, vulnerability and neighbourhoods, it won't be able to reduce crime effectively.

Providing a service to the victims of crime

Victim service assessment

This section describes our assessment of the service victims receive from Staffordshire Police, from the point of reporting a crime through to the end result. As part of this assessment, we reviewed 130 case files as well as 18 cautions, 20 [community resolutions](#) and 19 cases where a suspect was identified but the victim didn't support, or withdrew support for, police action.

While this assessment is ungraded, it influences graded judgments in the other areas we have inspected.

The force 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 receive appropriate safeguarding advice.

The force needs to improve the time it takes to answer emergency calls as it isn't meeting national standards. It also needs to improve its answering of non-emergency calls to prevent them from being abandoned by the caller. When the force answers calls, it is often failing to assess the victim's vulnerability using a structured process. The force isn't always identifying repeat victims, which means that their situations isn't taken into account when considering the response the victim should receive. The force isn't always giving advice how to prevent crime and preserve evidence.

The force 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 on the basis of the level of prioritisation given to the call. It should change call priority only if the original prioritisation is deemed inappropriate 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.

Often, police response times exceeded recognised target times. Sometimes, victims weren't told of the delay, and therefore their expectations weren't met. This may cause victims to lose confidence and disengage.

The force's crime recording requires improvement to make sure victims receive an appropriate level of service

The force's crime recording should be trustworthy. It should be effective at recording reported crime in line with national standards and have effective systems and processes, supported by the necessary leadership and culture.

The force needs to improve its crime recording processes to make sure crimes reported to the force are recorded correctly and without delay. We set out more details about the force's crime recording in the [crime data integrity](#) section below.

The force isn't always carrying out investigations in an effective or timely way or providing victims with the appropriate levels of advice and support for the crime

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

In some cases, investigations weren't carried out in a timely manner, and relevant and proportionate lines of enquiry weren't always completed. Many investigations weren't properly reviewed by supervisors and lacked investigation plans. Victims were sometimes not updated throughout investigations. Victims are more likely to have confidence in a police investigation when they are regularly updated. A thorough investigation increases the likelihood of perpetrators being identified and a positive outcome for the victim.

The force didn't always take victim personal statements which can deprive victims of the opportunity to describe the effect that crime has had on their lives. When victims withdrew support for an investigation, the force didn't always consider progressing the case without the victim's support, which can be an important way of safeguarding the victim and preventing further offences. The force didn't always consider the use of measures designed to protect victims, such as a [domestic violence protection notice \(DVPN\)](#) or [domestic violence protection order \(DVPO\)](#).

Under the VCOP, there is a requirement to conduct a needs assessment at an early stage to decide whether victims require additional support. The outcome of the assessment and the request for additional support should be recorded. The force often failed to complete a victim needs assessment, which can mean victims don't get the appropriate level of service.

The force generally finalises reports of crimes appropriately but sometimes fails to consult victims for their views or to record them

The force should make sure it follows national guidance and rules for deciding the outcome of each report of crime. In deciding the outcome, the force should consider the nature of the crime, the offender and the victim. And the force should make sure that its leadership arrangements are robust and that its culture and values are well understood to make sure the use of outcomes is appropriate.

In appropriate cases, those offenders who are brought to justice can be dealt with by means of a caution or community resolution. To be correctly applied and recorded, it must be appropriate for the offender, and the views of the victim must be considered. In most of the cases reviewed, the offender met the national criteria for the use of these outcomes, but the force didn't always seek and consider the victim's views.

Where a suspect is identified but the victim doesn't support, or withdraws support for, police action, the force should have an auditable record to confirm the victim's decision so that it can close the investigation. In most cases reviewed, there was no evidence of the victim's decision. This creates a risk that the victim's wishes may not be fully represented and considered before the crime is finalised.

Crime data integrity

Requires
improvement

Staffordshire Police requires improvement at recording crime.

We estimate that Staffordshire Police is recording 88.4 percent (with a confidence interval of +/- 2.8 percent) of all reported crime (excluding fraud). This is broadly unchanged compared with the findings from our previous 2016 inspection, where we found it recorded 91.0 percent (with a confidence interval of +/- 1.8 percent) of all reported crime. We estimate that the force didn't record more than 8,900 crimes during the year covered by our inspection.

We estimate that the force is recording 85.8 percent (with a confidence interval of +/- 4.5 percent) of violent offences. This is broadly unchanged compared with the findings of our previous 2016 inspection, where we found it recorded 89.9 percent (with a confidence interval of +/- 3.0 percent) of violent offences.

We estimate that the force is recording 96.3 percent (with a confidence interval of +/- 3.2 percent) of sexual offences. This is broadly unchanged compared with the findings of our previous 2016 inspection, where we found it recorded 94.7 percent (with a confidence interval of +/- 2.4 percent) of sexual offences.

Areas for improvement

The force needs to improve the time it takes to record crimes

The force took more than a week to record and classify 377 of the 429 reports of crime we reviewed. These include reports of rape, crimes involving vulnerable adults and child protection cases. Crimes must be recorded at the earliest opportunity. Recording them without delay means victims of crime promptly receive the support they require and ensures an effective investigation is established.

The force is poor at recording crime when anti-social behaviour is reported

The force recorded very few (3 of 23) crimes we reviewed that were reported by victims of anti-social behaviour. Victims of anti-social behaviour are often the subject of abuse and torment for long periods of time. Failing to record crimes and tackle anti-social behaviour effectively can mean victims live in fear in their own community.

The force needs to improve the recording of equality data

The force's data for victims of crime shows that age and gender are well recorded. However, other [protected characteristics](#), particularly ethnicity, are often not recorded at all. The force should be collecting this information to understand the extent to which each protected group is affected by crime, how this differs from those without protected characteristics, and whether a different approach is needed for these victims.

Main findings

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

The force needs to improve the recording of rape crimes from reported incidents of rape

The force sometimes fails to record and classify crimes of rape correctly, often only recording them as reported incidents of rape (N100 – crimes of rape which haven't yet been confirmed). It is important that reports of rape are recorded correctly so the force can clearly understand how many crimes are reported to them and victims can receive the service they expect and deserve.

The force should take more care when cancelling crimes of rape

The force should make sure there is enough information available which determines that no crime has been committed. There must be enough additional information to provide a satisfactory explanation that a crime hasn't been committed, particularly when victims later retract a report of rape. If crime records are cancelled when they should have remained recorded, they won't be investigated any further. This could result in victims being denied justice.

Engaging with and treating the public with fairness and respect

Requires
improvement

Staffordshire Police requires improvement at treating people fairly and with respect.

Areas for improvement

The force should develop and implement an effective strategy to work with its local communities so it can identify and respond to their needs

At the time of our inspection, Staffordshire Police was revising its current plan for working with its local communities and intends to implement a new plan in autumn 2022. As a result, we couldn't assess how effective this plan is as part of our inspection.

While the pandemic made it difficult for the force to physically meet members of its local communities, we found that the force doesn't make enough use of other methods to contact members of the public. For example, the force doesn't use social media consistently in every local area. The force could also make the public more aware of its website and highlight the ways in which people can contact the police.

Some officers use forums such as parish council meetings to help them understand the needs of local communities. But the force needs to do more to establish the needs of all members of its communities, such as people from ethnic minority backgrounds and people with protected characteristics. Providing officers with formal cultural awareness training would help the force to have a better understanding of the needs of all the communities it serves.

The force is missing opportunities to develop relationships with all its communities. This means it isn't getting constructive feedback on its actions, decisions and how it works with them. We found little evidence of the force analysing who is being reached by its activities, whether online or face-to-face. We also found that the force doesn't evaluate these methods well enough to determine how effective they are. This means that the force doesn't know whether its methods for working with its communities are successful. This may also mean that it is missing opportunities to safeguard some members of the public who are vulnerable or at risk of harm.

The force has an [independent advisory group \(IAG\)](#), which is independently chaired. However, the group isn't diverse enough, and the force needs to encourage people from different ethnic minorities, socio-economic backgrounds, sexual orientations and religions, as well as young people, to join. This will help the force understand the diverse perspectives and experiences of its local communities.

The force needs to improve certain aspects of its use of force and stop and search

The force needs to:

- improve how it records reasonable grounds in its stop and search records to make sure that those people who have been searched can understand why the officer has decided to use their powers to stop and search;
- make sure officers are well trained in the use of stop and search, use it fairly and appropriately, and have the active listening, empathy and other communication skills they need to carry out these interactions successfully;
- make sure it complies with the requirement from the [National Police Chiefs' Council](#) to record all use of force; and
- make sure its data on use of force and on stop and search is robust and accurate, allowing it to understand any reasons for disparity; if the force does find disproportionate use of force or stop and search, it needs to understand why this is the case and take action to reduce it.

We found that officers don't record their grounds for using [stop and search powers](#) well enough. If these grounds aren't recorded properly, there won't be enough information for the person who was searched to be able to understand whether they have been treated fairly.

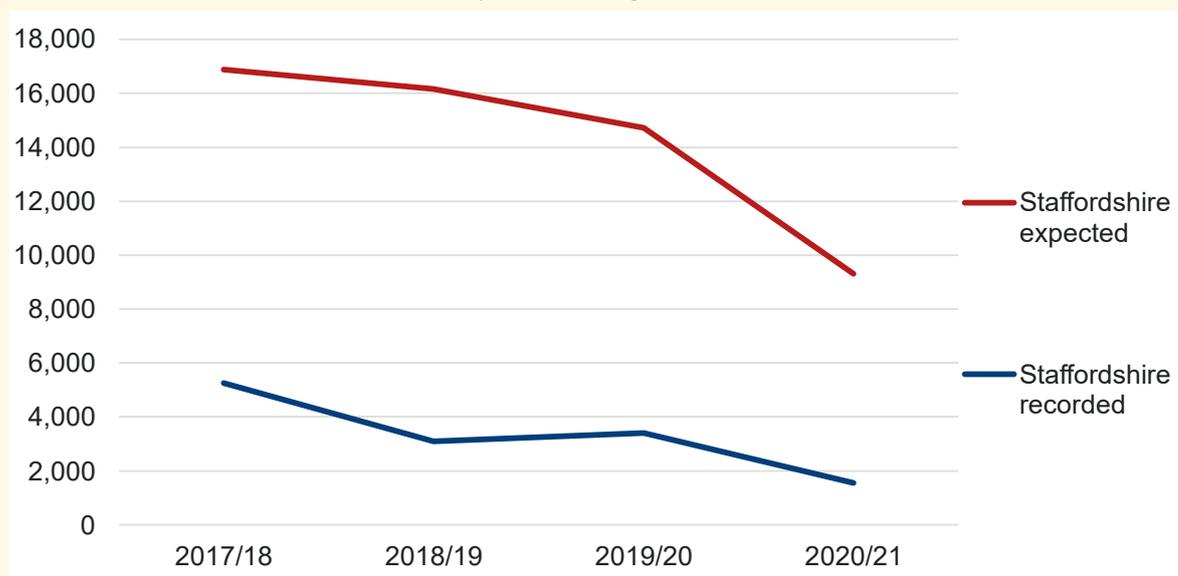
During our inspection, we reviewed 240 stop and search records from 1 January to 31 December 2021. Based on this sample, we estimate that 75.4 percent (with a confidence interval of +/- 5.3 percent) of all stop and searches by the force during this period had reasonable grounds recorded. Of the records we reviewed for stop and searches on people from ethnic minorities, 25 of 36 had reasonable grounds recorded.

Not all officers had a good enough understanding of their stop and search powers. The importance of active listening, empathy and having an understanding of bias wasn't widely recognised. We found that some officers had received limited training in these areas. Officers must be confident and skilled in knowing when stop and search is appropriate and how to record the grounds used.

The force has recently instructed supervisors to check all stop and search forms that are submitted by officers. And it has circulated information to officers about what constitutes reasonable grounds. However, we could only find a few examples of when officers had received feedback from their supervisors.

Since 1 April 2017, police forces have been required to record all use of force incidents. At that time, not all incidents were being recorded. Therefore, the number of recorded incidents was expected to increase until recording practices had been fully established.

Recorded use of force incidents by Staffordshire Police compared to the expected number of incidents between the year ending 31 March 2018 and 31 March 2021



In the year ending 31 March 2018, Staffordshire Police recorded 5,255 use of force incidents. Since then, there has been a reduction in the force's recording of these incidents, to 1,541 incidents recorded in the year ending 31 March 2021. It was expected that Staffordshire Police would have recorded 9,311 use of force incidents during the latest period (2020/21), meaning an estimated 7,770 incidents weren't recorded and that the force's overall recording of use of force is declining.

Officers receive regular training in how to use force. The force monitors this training, making sure it is relevant and current for all officers. However, some officers said they didn't always complete records when they used force. Staffordshire Police provided limited evidence of its understanding of how well it complies with the National Police Chiefs' Council recording requirement. It has taken steps to address this, such as changing how it scrutinises the use of force. But it still needs to make sure that the use of force is recorded accurately so that it can learn, improve and show that its use is fair and legitimate.

The force also needs to understand the reasons for any disparity in its use of these powers. When the force does find disproportionate use of force, or stop and search, it must clearly explain to the public why this is happening. More robust internal monitoring and external scrutiny will help to reassure the public that stop and search powers and the use of force are being used appropriately.

Staffordshire Police's internal scrutiny panel meets regularly to scrutinise the use of stop and search powers and the use of force. A new data-enabling system is being developed, with the aim of improving understanding of performance and outcomes. The aim is for this information to support the panel's consideration and analysis, and a nominated analyst is supporting this work.

But we found that some gaps remain when interpreting the data. For example, disproportionality rates aren't explored in depth to understand the reasons for them, so the force can't take action to address this effectively. And we found no evidence that the force had published any analysis of disproportionality.

Main findings

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

The force is developing opportunities to get local people involved in policing, but it could advertise them more clearly

We found that Staffordshire Police is introducing new projects to encourage people to volunteer. Examples include community sporting events, community work with local mosques and a cadets' programme. But these initiatives would benefit from better co-ordination and planning so they can be more effective. The force recognises that it needs to work more with young people, and it plans to introduce a youth IAG and a citizens' academy to get more perspectives on areas of policing, including on violence against women and girls. As these projects haven't been introduced yet, we can't comment on how effective they are.

The force should make sure it scrutinises its own use of stop and search powers and use of force

The force has internal monitoring groups that consider how its officers are using its stop and search powers and the use of force. But at the time of our inspection, we found limited examples of the force showing how it had acted to improve policies and practices. For example, these internal monitoring groups didn't scrutinise [body-worn video](#) effectively to understand whether the use of stop and search powers or the use of force was fair and proportionate.

The force has re-introduced external scrutiny panels, but these are still under development

The force has introduced an independent panel, which has an independent chair, to help it improve officers' use of stop and search powers and the use of force. We found that training packages had been developed for members. But the panel doesn't reflect the composition of its local communities, and it struggles to involve younger people. This is a re-launched panel, so we haven't been able to assess how effective it is.

Preventing crime and anti-social behaviour

Adequate

Staffordshire Police is adequate at prevention and deterrence.

Area for improvement

The force should make sure there is a clear strategy for neighbourhood policing that is understood by all its staff. This should be supported by a governance framework which monitors effectiveness and promotes improvement

Staffordshire Police should make sure that its neighbourhood policing strategy reflects the [College of Policing](#)'s guidelines and that its neighbourhood teams understand and implement it effectively. The strategy should be complemented by a performance framework that directs activity and monitors outcomes. This is so that the force can understand how well it prevents and tackles crime, incidents and vulnerability against the priorities it has set.

The force should improve its use of problem solving, with a structured and effective model that includes evaluation and sharing of effective practice

We found that the force doesn't adequately record, monitor, or evaluate how it tackles policing problems. The force has trained senior members of staff in problem-solving techniques, but training hasn't been given to all frontline staff yet. This has created a knowledge gap. Problem-solving plans and activities aren't always recorded or easy to find on the force's records management system. This means they aren't being supervised well enough and senior managers won't be able to evaluate performance accurately.

We also found that, although partnership working was apparent at a local level, the approach to problem solving and how partners are involved in it varies throughout the force. So it needs to find a way to share information and involve partner organisations in its problem-solving. Good problem-solving practice should be recorded and shared.

The force should review its neighbourhood policing abstraction policy and ensure that abstractions are effectively monitored

The force has a policy in place for [neighbourhood policing](#) ('abstraction' means diversion to duties that are not part of the officer's core duties, and not necessarily emergencies, for an extended period). However, neighbourhood police officers told us they are frequently taken away from their normal duties to support other teams. This can prevent them from working on problems in their community or working with other organisations to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour.

While the force must maintain its ability to respond quickly to emergencies, routinely abstracting neighbourhood staff from their roles will affect its ability to reduce demand within neighbourhood policing. Neighbourhood police officers carry high workloads and support their colleagues in other departments. This means that they don't always have enough time to prevent crime.

Staffordshire Police has developed its new operating model, which was due to be implemented in June 2022. The force intends that neighbourhood teams will be ring-fenced so they can concentrate on community problems. We will review how well the force has improved in this area as part of our continuous assessment approach.

Main findings

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

The force analyses its own and partnership data to establish where demands are highest and vulnerable people need help

Harm reduction hubs are situated in each area. They help neighbourhood teams understand current crime data and emerging patterns such as repeat locations, vulnerable people and specific crime types. The hubs produce daily intelligence packs that provide neighbourhood officers with information about priorities. We saw how this sort of analysis was used to prepare an effective response to anti-social behaviour in parks, called Operation Syncro.

The harm reduction hub contributes to well-established [multi-agency risk assessment conference \(MARAC\)](#) meetings that are attended by partner organisations. The force has invested in an early intervention and prevention unit (EIPU). Information from the MARAC is used by problem-solving specialists who give advice to local early intervention officers. They, in turn, identify vulnerable people and locations and work to reduce vulnerability and victimisation.

The force focuses on early intervention and is developing an evidence-based policing culture

We found that the force was addressing repetitive demand successfully, working with partner organisations to determine the root causes of problems and reach diverse and wider communities.

We saw some examples where the force was acting in accordance with local and national good practice. However, we found that the EIPU's existence isn't widely known throughout the force. Therefore, the force is missing opportunities to make best use of the team's skills to drive down demand and to support officers in safeguarding vulnerable people.

The force is undertaking several research projects with academics and partners to support its approach to early intervention. This includes a pilot scheme of using SmartWater forensic products to tackle domestic abuse and [stalking](#). The force works with a range of organisations, using an evidence-based policing panel to review the results of research. However, the force recognises that it needs to improve overall how these sorts of initiatives are communicated across the force so that they can be put into practice.

Responding to the public

Inadequate

Staffordshire Police is inadequate at responding to the public.

Cause of concern

On 29 March 2022, we published some of our findings as an [accelerated cause of concern](#).

Staffordshire Police needs to improve how it determines and assesses vulnerability at the first point of contact

The force has developed strategic and tactical plans to address the recommendations outlined within the cause of concern. We will continue to monitor the force's progress against our cause of concern and recommendations.

Areas for improvement

The force should take steps to understand the demand on its officers to respond to calls for service and manage its resources effectively to cope with that demand

We found that Staffordshire Police has a willing workforce, and officers are trying their best to meet response times. However, we found that sometimes there aren't enough officers available to meet demand. As a result, the force doesn't consistently respond to calls for service within its own target times, and our inspection found backlogs of calls needing police attendance. We found that due to these delays, [golden hour principles](#) and the gathering or preservation of forensic evidence are being compromised. This can hamper any subsequent investigation. The need to respond to new calls for service also prevents response officers from giving a consistent or timely service to victims of the crimes that they are already investigating.

Staffordshire Police has developed its new operating model, which was due to be implemented in June 2022. The modelling for this shows an increase of officers in response and predicts that this will improve the time they have to manage their investigations.

The force needs to attend calls for service in line with its published attendance times and ensure that when this doesn't occur, victims are fully updated

On 31 May 2022, the Home Office published data on 999 call answering times. Call answering time is the time taken for a call to be transferred to a force, and the time taken by that force to answer it. In England and Wales, forces should aim to answer 90 percent of these calls within 10 seconds.

Since the Home Office hadn't published this data at the time we made our judgment, we have used data provided by forces to assess how quickly they answer 999 calls. In future, we will use the data supplied by the Home Office.

The force isn't always responding to and attending calls within its own target times or an appropriate time for the nature of the call. The force isn't always updating the victims to inform them of the delay. By not attending calls promptly, it increases the likelihood of evidence being lost, witnesses leaving the scene and victims losing confidence in the police response.

Main findings

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

The force has several ways for the public to make calls for service

The force has a dedicated digital 101 desk that processes web chat interactions with the public. The digital desk staff are dedicated to web chat for their shift, and it operates seven days a week. They don't take 999 or [101](#) calls unless there is excessive demand on these lines.

In addition, the force uses an IT platform called 'Single Online Home'. This allows members of the public to report a full range of crimes and incidents online. The force has also introduced direct contact through social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. The force has found that they receive more contact through these channels, receiving on average 102 contacts a day, of which 30 percent result in a recorded incident. These channels have matured sufficiently, allowing the public to make digital contact through their mobile device or computer while also maintaining more traditional contact methods of 999 and non-emergency 101.

The force assesses vulnerability and completes risk assessments at initial response

When Staffordshire Police officers attend incidents, they look for signs of vulnerability and carry out risk assessments, such as public protection notifications (a summary record made of the vulnerabilities of victims). Inspection activity identified that officers were recently trained in the [voice of the child](#) and, therefore, had a greater understanding of the importance of recording their observations about children who were present, including their living conditions.

We found that officers were confident about the processes once any vulnerability had been identified. And they were aware of their local harm reduction hubs and the relevant partner organisations from which to seek advice. We found that officers are clear on their responsibilities to safeguard [vulnerable people](#).

Supervisors are not always able to provide visible leadership due to demand

We found that due to high demands coming from office and IT-based work, supervisors were unable to attend many incidents in person to support their staff and aid their learning in the role where necessary.

We found that supervisors attempt to attend major or more serious incidents or where there is a need to attend in person to provide direction. However, if there is no essential operational or tactical requirement to attend, then supervisors will often use remote radio contact with the officers in attendance to receive updates, provide direction and give officers reassurance. This can restrict the benefits of direct coaching, learning and development for officers who are inexperienced in the role.

We found that some response teams didn't always receive a briefing directly from their supervisors and that officers briefed themselves before going on duty. These teams are therefore unable to share information or intelligence, and supervisors are unable to provide direction or monitor team wellbeing.

Workloads in the [control room](#) and for response officers are not always manageable, and wellbeing support is inconsistent

Staffordshire Police officers are carrying high investigative workloads while attempting to manage response demand. We found that the force has been unable to manage demand effectively. And due to the lack of a formal check-in process being in place, we found that on occasions officers haven't been supported after attending traumatic incidents. As a result, some officers and [staff](#) feel that morale is low and that the organisation doesn't show an understanding of their wellbeing needs.

Investigating crime

Inadequate

Staffordshire Police is inadequate at investigating crime.

Cause of concern

On 29 March 2022, we published some of our findings as an [accelerated cause of concern](#).

The force needs to make sure that it carries out effective investigations and that it gives victims the support they need

The force has governance and performance arrangements in place, which are made up of all directorates who have overall accountability for performance. The service effectiveness group (SEG) carries out monthly audits and specifically focuses on the force's investigation plans, how well the force complies with the VCOP and how well investigations are supervised. This is in addition to the work carried out by the central audit team, which assesses the quality of the force's investigations more regularly.

Although the force does have these governance arrangements and processes in place, we found that the performance of crime investigation wasn't managed as effectively as it could be. We found that some processes are missing, ineffective or aren't clearly defined.

Areas for improvement

The force needs to be more efficient at retrieving digital evidence from mobile phones, computers and other electronic devices to make sure investigations aren't delayed

The force has taken steps to tackle forensic unit backlogs. But these measures aren't fully effective, meaning that some investigations are likely to be delayed. In some cases, this affects decisions about suspects who are subject to [bail](#) or [released under investigation](#).

The force recognises that it needs to hire and train more staff so it can be more effective at carrying out digitally-enabled crime investigations. The force has invested in new technology systems which will allow officers to submit mobile phone devices for examination locally and retrieve evidence more quickly. This, in turn, will mean that investigations can be carried out more quickly. It will also introduce mobile labs – vehicles that will be able to attend scenes and digitally examine certain electronic devices.

The force needs to make sure that all appropriate investigative opportunities are carried out before closing an investigation

As part of our victim service assessment, in 19 of the 70 cases we reviewed, we found that not all investigative opportunities were completed. In many of these cases (36 of 60), we also found ineffective supervision and direction. A supervisor wasn't always involved when determining what outcome type to allocate to the reported crime, and this has a negative effect on the standards of some investigations.

The force should make sure that supervisors are consistently involved in all investigations and that they provide direction and quality assure the outcome of the investigation.

The force should make sure it holds an auditable record of victims' decisions and their reasons for withdrawing their support and that victims' wishes for an out-of-court disposal or a caution are fully documented

We reviewed 18 cautions administered by the force, and in most cases (10 of 18), the force administered a caution when it wasn't suitable for the nature of the offence. It was apparent that the force didn't always consult victims before the caution was administered. And in 11 of 18 of the cases we reviewed, the force didn't take the victims' views into account.

The force doesn't always keep an adequate record of victims' wishes. It should do more to get supervisors involved to make sure that officers give careful consideration to administering cautions and only administer them in appropriate cases. Supervisors should also make sure that officers consult victims before administering cautions. The force should record all contact it has with victims, and supervisors should check these files more rigorously before approving the outcome type assigned to the reported crime.

Main findings

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

The force should make sure it offers victim personal statements when appropriate and that it records them

We identified that victim personal statements weren't taken, and opportunities to progress or try to progress the case without the support of the victim weren't always taken when they should have been. This means the force may be missing opportunities to pursue offenders when victims disengage or don't support prosecutions.

The force has focused on its governance arrangements to improve investigative performance

The force has developed the way it scrutinises investigations to improve results for victims through its SEG.

While there is a governance structure in place, our inspection found some gaps in how the force manages performance. This means that some aspects of the investigation process aren't being reviewed effectively. The force should make sure the entire process of an investigation is monitored at a strategic level to help improve its overall performance.

Protecting vulnerable people

Requires
improvement

Staffordshire Police requires improvement at [protecting vulnerable people](#).

Areas for improvement

The force requires a clear governance and performance reporting structure for vulnerability which is understood throughout the force

The force has recently introduced a vulnerability strategy. This will be led by a [chief officer](#) and linked to the EIPU. However, before the strategy was introduced, support for staff and the force in understanding and dealing with vulnerability was limited. We found that officers are identifying vulnerability using professional judgment based on their existing experience and knowledge and without strategic direction. Consequently, we found that the force isn't always identifying risk.

A lack of strategy and governance means that the force is unable to measure whether it is safeguarding vulnerable people effectively.

A performance framework is being developed and is informed by advice from the National Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme and aligns to the National Vulnerability Action Plan. As this is a new initiative, we can't comment on its effectiveness.

The force should collect victim feedback on a regular basis, including through partner agencies and use this information to improve services, both at an organisational and individual level

The use of victim feedback in policy and process development is important to make sure that victims experience a good quality service. Currently the force's opportunities for obtaining victim feedback are very limited and there appears to be limited consideration of victims' views in strategic or operational policing.

We recognise that the force has plans to develop victim feedback methods, including from other organisations it works with. However, we can't comment on the success of this at this time.

The force should review its capacity and capability to better understand future demand and the resources it needs

We found that the force is unable to monitor how much demand is being placed on officers to consider and manage vulnerability. This means that the right level of resource needed to safeguard vulnerable people may not be allocated.

There is no performance framework currently in place to help understand or analyse the volume of demand or officers' workloads in managing vulnerability.

The force is introducing a new operating model and, as part of this, it is introducing a [public protection unit](#). Under the new governance structure, the force should seek to understand current workloads and ensure that resources are allocated appropriately.

Main findings

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

The force works proactively with other organisations to reduce vulnerability and repeat victimisation but lacks capacity to do this in some areas

MARACs are well established throughout the force and its local authority areas. The frequency of the meetings is dependent on each district and the referral rate for that area. At the conferences we observed, we found good attendance and participation from statutory and non-statutory bodies, including social services, children's services, housing and health organisations and independent advisers on domestic and sexual violence. The conferences demonstrated proactive information sharing and activities to support the safeguarding of victims and families. The organisations we spoke to that had attended MARACs were positive about the meetings and the plans produced to secure the safety of those victims discussed.

The force has [multi-agency safeguarding hubs \(MASHs\)](#) that manage all medium and high-risk referrals for domestic abuse cases. The hubs assess the level of risk of harm involved and refer onto other agencies – such as mental health organisations and social care services – which provide continuing and appropriate support.

However, we found that while the MASHs sometimes check standard risk referrals, this isn't an established or properly resourced process. Instead, this takes place when staff have the capacity to do so. This could mean that these types of records may not be adequately assessed or scrutinised, and the force may miss opportunities to identify vulnerable people.

The force should make sure that DVPN/Os are considered in all appropriate cases

To support the safeguarding of victims, investigators can use ancillary orders to protect victims and keep perpetrators from contacting them.

We found that officers understood how they can use DVPN/Os to safeguard a victim. However, we found little evidence of how the force assesses whether these measures are being used effectively and appropriately. Our victim service assessment identified that the force is often failing to consider using DVPN/Os in appropriate cases. This means that opportunities to safeguard some victims may not always be taken.

The force provides continuing safeguarding support for vulnerable people

We found that officers are aware of the processes to complete public protection notices (PPNs) for incidents involving vulnerable people.

A PPN is a summary record made of the vulnerabilities of victims. PPNs are automatically directed to the police team within the MASH where they are reviewed by specialist staff before sharing police information with other organisations such as children's social care services and New Era, a service offering help for all those affected by domestic violence in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.

Staff generally understand the need to look for signs of hidden harm. For example, there was a clear understanding of the Herbert protocols. This is a scheme adopted by several police forces in England and Wales in partnership with local authorities and other organisations. It is a simple risk reduction tool to be used if an adult with care and support needs is reported missing. Officers were applying these protocols when interacting with people living with dementia. The force has also developed the way it shares information about vulnerable children with schools ([Operation Encompass](#)). This is operating in all schools, and schools are notified when police are called to domestic abuse incidents or crimes taking place in a house where a child lives or is identified.

Managing offenders and suspects

Inadequate

Staffordshire Police is inadequate at managing offenders and suspects.

Areas for improvement

The force needs to improve its monitoring and oversight of outstanding suspects and wanted people

We found that wanted and outstanding suspects are prioritised for discussion at daily briefings. Officers know how to record details of outstanding suspects on the [Police National Computer](#), and [high-risk domestic abuse](#) suspects are prioritised. However, we found that they aren't always able to dedicate time to finding outstanding suspects due to other response policing demands.

Supervision of managing outstanding suspects isn't always effective. The force should take steps to ensure that its supervisors have the time to monitor the number of outstanding suspects and wanted persons, using the relevant systems in place. The force should revise how it reviews performance in these areas to improve the effectiveness of its investigations.

The force should urgently review its staffing levels within the Safenet team in order to manage the demand and ensure the wellbeing of its staff

Operation Safenet aims to safeguard children by detecting abuse and prosecuting offenders for the possession and distribution of indecent images of children.

We found that the Safenet team wasn't operating with the appropriate levels of staff as set out by the force. This meant that there were a limited number of operational officers available to manage all Safenet warrants, arrests, searches, seizures and interviews.

We identified that the force is unable to keep up with the current demand for enforcements, and as a result, there is a backlog of work. We also found that there is little resilience to manage referrals, meaning that productivity is reduced, which adds to the backlog. Therefore, there is a potential level of risk to children who could be exposed to further harm. And high demands have had a significant effect on staff wellbeing.

Staffordshire Police has developed a proposal for the service outlining what resources and technology are required to manage demand. As this is in its infancy, we are unable to comment on its effectiveness.

The force should implement an intelligence review process for cases awaiting enforcement action

The Safenet team receives referrals from several organisations including the [National Crime Agency](#) and social services. These referrals contain intelligence linked to possible online child abuse. The Safenet team reviews these referrals and completes risk assessments. This allows them to prioritise action – for example, obtaining warrants or arresting suspects of the highest-risk cases first.

Due to backlogs resulting from not having enough staff, many referrals may wait several months before any action is taken. The force doesn't have a process in place to review the intelligence it holds on possible suspects to see if the case is high risk and therefore needs to be prioritised. Without a regular review of risk, there may be missed opportunities to safeguard children quickly and prevent further abuse from happening.

The force should implement high-quality supervisor reviews within its sexual offender management unit team, to monitor outstanding and overdue work

As part of the management of sex offenders, Staffordshire Police's sexual offender management unit (SOMU) team undertakes home visits and completes risk assessments. This allows the force to understand the level of risk posed by sex offenders in its local areas and actions the force can take to manage the risk.

However, we found that the force doesn't have a structured process to monitor overdue home visits and risk assessments. While supervisors can view any overdue work via the [ViSOR](#) records management system, there is no formal process in place for supervisors to routinely check the quality and timeliness of risk assessments and contact with sex offenders.

This has increased the backlog of work within the SOMU team. The force has addressed the 5,000 backlog of supervisory reviews of risk assessments on ViSOR highlighted by the National Child Protection Inspection (NCPI) programme.

A change in structure from April 2022 will provide additional resources to help ensure that the backlog of supervisory reviews doesn't become unmanageable again in the future.

The quality of supervisory reviews within the SOMU also requires improvement. We found that some records contained limited supervisory oversight, and no meaningful direction was set to support a reduction in risk to the public from further offending.

Actions to address the risk posed by registered sex offenders (RSOs) were set out clearly within the ViSOR records by staff. However, follow-up work and the results of these actions weren't always documented.

Main findings

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

The force has an effective integrated offender management programme

The force has an [integrated offender management \(IOM\)](#) programme for offenders who pose the greatest threat, risk and harm. We found a clear focus and good partnership working towards the rehabilitation of offenders. We also found that there was a clear understanding throughout the force of who its repeat offenders are and therefore who should be considered for inclusion in the programme.

The force uses a scoring tool to assess information and intelligence relating to offender activity. It also reviews data from other organisations to decide whether offenders are to be managed under the IOM programme. We found that referrals can be made by officers from the IOM team and neighbourhood officers. There are monitoring processes in place to score and manage offenders while they are on the programme. Intelligence is used to support decisions on what measures to reduce crime and offending should be used for each offender – for example, focusing on substance misuse issues or lack of accommodation, which may lead to further offending.

The IOM unit shares details of its identified individuals with community policing teams via the force briefing system for information and awareness. This encourages intelligence gathering and submission of relevant information.

The force manages the risk that RSOs pose but should ensure that officers complete an active risk management systems assessment when they take over responsibility from probation. The force should ensure that there is a system in place to remind officers when these assessments are due

The force uses recognised assessment tools for measuring the risk posed by RSOs. Risk management plans and [active risk management systems \(ARMS\)](#) assessments are well structured and provide a good level of detail to allow the identification of risk factors so that action can be taken to address them.

The force places flags for RSOs on both its crime recording system and its command and control system. This ensures that any incident reported to the force that is linked to an RSO is flagged to attending officers and the SOMU team for action to be taken where necessary to deal with any apparent risks.

As a result of the most recent NCPI inspection, we found that the force is now adhering to [Authorised Professional Practice \(APP\)](#) criteria to allow offenders to be placed into [reactive management](#) when the risk they pose is low enough.

The [multi-agency public protection arrangements \(MAPPA\)](#) is a process through which organisations such as the police, prison service and probation work together to protect the public by managing the risks posed by violent and sexual offenders living in the community. We found in some cases MAPPA guidance was not adhered to in terms of

the expected timeframes for police to complete an ARMS assessment when probation involvement ended.

The force uses sexual harm prevention orders but can improve its monitoring and enforcement of them

A [sexual harm prevention order \(SHPO\)](#) is an order imposed by magistrates or a crown court on an individual who is considered to pose a risk of sexual harm to either the general public or a certain group of people or individuals. SHPOs can be imposed in court at the point of conviction or at a later date upon an application by the police. Restrictions and prohibitions can be tailored to the SHPO as considered necessary for the purposes of either protecting the public from sexual harm or protecting children or vulnerable adults generally.

We found that the Safenet team seeks SHPOs in all eligible cases and SOMU is consulted where necessary in relation to securing these orders and ensuring conditions are suitable. However, the force doesn't have access to on-scene device triaging tools nor does it have monitoring software which allows continual monitoring of devices used by RSOs. Both of these tools would assist in the early identification of potential further offending or breaches of orders. The lack of digital capability means that there is unnecessary demand, whereby devices are referred for review by the force's digital investigation team that may otherwise have been discounted at an early stage.

The force is improving its use of bail and released under investigation, but improved governance and performance management is needed

The force has increased its use of bail, and to ensure its use is appropriate, bail is quality assured by a superintendent who reviews and authorises bail applications. Custody inspectors authorise and monitor bail conditions to assess safeguarding opportunities.

There is a risk that, due to high demands and a delay in receiving the results from forensic submissions, officers may choose to release under investigation (RUI) to avoid the re-bail process. However, the force has effective supervision of the use of RUI, and a quality assurance process ensures that RUI has been used appropriately and safeguarding opportunities have been considered in all domestic abuse cases.

However, force-level oversight of the use of bail and RUI could be improved to better understand performance and good practice. Bail and RUI are discussed at weekly custody performance meetings. But it is unclear how the force is using or collating its force-wide data on the use of bail and RUI to inform its practices or make improvements.

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 Staffordshire Police hasn't yet been completed. We will update our website with our findings (including the force's grade) and a link to the regional report once the inspection is complete.

Building, supporting and protecting the workforce

Requires improvement

Staffordshire Police requires improvement at building and developing its workforce.

Areas for improvement

The force should ensure that its officers and staff have manageable workloads and a good work-life balance

The most significant wellbeing effect on staff throughout the force was unmanageable workloads. We found that officers' rest days were being cancelled due to high demands. And officers didn't feel that senior leaders considered their wellbeing or work-life balance when making changes to tackle demand. We found that this was affecting staff morale, and some officers told us they have often considered leaving the force.

Overtime is used to address day-to-day demand issues but too often staff found this to be ineffective, and workloads continued to increase.

As a result, officers are unable to provide victims with the service they deserve, which further affects their wellbeing. High workloads are also preventing some staff from accessing initiatives designed to support them such as the wellbeing bus and wellbeing support mobile apps.

The force should ensure that it provides suitable support and capacity for its supervisors so that they are fully equipped and confident to manage the performance and development of its staff

Staffordshire Police used to use software to track annual continuous professional development meetings held with staff. However, we found that this no longer takes place. And staff we spoke to told us that there is no formal structure for supervisors to discuss development, performance or any wellbeing issues with their teams.

We were told that the force has introduced ‘check-ins’, with the onus being on the member of staff to ask a supervisor for a check-in to discuss development and wellbeing. However, we found that this wasn’t taking place, and when discussions did take place, these weren’t recorded to support any future development or learning.

This means that declining performance in important areas like the VCOP, quality of investigation plans and victim satisfaction aren’t being addressed. It also means that Staffordshire Police is sometimes missing opportunities to identify and nurture talent. And its supervisors may be focused on reactive wellbeing support rather than offering preventative measures and continuing wellbeing support.

We found that supervisors weren’t being given the time to confidently manage the performance and development of their staff. High operational demands mean that supervisors have absorbed other responsibilities, which limits their ability to monitor and review the quality of their team’s work. We found that having no formal appraisal process made it very difficult for supervisors to tackle poor behaviours and resolve any associated problems.

The force should continue to improve the visibility of its senior leadership

Our inspection found that staff feel disconnected and unable to approach their senior leaders. Senior leaders have been working hard to rebuild trust throughout the workforce and we found that chief officers understand the value of making personal connections with staff. We found that face-to-face sessions and meetings with the chief constable have been held with staff aimed at creating an environment for open discussion and debate. We encourage the force to continue to promote a sense of belonging and being part of a wider team.

Main findings

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

Ethical standards are clearly promoted throughout the force

Chief officers are working to promote an ethical culture and environment where the workforce understands what is expected of it.

Ethical behaviour is part of staff training and there is a strong focus on the 'Know the Line' campaign, which examines the use of social media and its link to sexual harassment in the workplace and beyond. We found that officers understood the standards of behaviour expected. And they felt confident to report any incidents to their supervisor or [professional standards department](#) or through the 'Bad Apple' report system.

We found that the professional standards department promotes standards of ethical behaviours through a variety of means including communal television screens that display key messages about conduct and the force's expectations. The department also circulates an internal bulletin each month which includes a section discussing ethical dilemmas. This shows that the force is developing a learning culture that is supported by the professional standards department.

The force has recently introduced an [ethics committee](#), and the chair is independent of the force. This is a positive step; however, we are unable to make comment on the effectiveness of this group as it is newly formed.

The force promotes a positive and inclusive culture for its workforce but must do more to encourage wider staff feedback

We found that the force has several staff networks that work with the diversity and inclusion board to ensure that the workforce has a sense of belonging and feels included within the organisation. For example, the board has worked with the force's neurodiversity steering group to better understand this area and how it can support any staff who require reasonable adjustments. As a result, the force now has trained dyslexia assessors who can support colleagues who are neurodivergent.

While the force is investing in building an inclusive culture, we found that the force-wide people survey, known as HIVE, doesn't have a good response rate. The force told us that only 16 percent of its workforce responded to this form of feedback; therefore, the force will need to improve how it gains feedback from its workforce. This will help the force understand the needs of its workforce so that it can introduce preventative measures and ongoing wellbeing support.

The force is taking effective action to build a workforce that better reflects its communities

We found that the force's equality, diversity and inclusion unit has created a pre-recruitment positive action project called Step In, which supports under-represented groups through each stage of the recruitment process. The force holds workshop sessions during the advertising of a role, aiming to engage with applicants who are from under-represented groups, including ethnic minorities, women, people with a disability and LGBT+. As a result of the Step In process, the force has experienced a high success rate for women wanting to join Staffordshire Police.

The force also holds a similar programme, called Step Up, for its current officers who are seeking promotion but are from an under-represented group. Step Up runs positive action workshops, designed to encourage applicants to apply. This work helps

the force understand where barriers exist within its promotion processes and gains feedback from candidates to help inform future support for staff seeking promotion.

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.

Staffordshire Police'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

Requires improvement

Staffordshire Police requires improvement at operating efficiently.

Areas for improvement

The force should make sure it improves its understanding of current demand

The force has developed a new operating model, and the first phase of this is due to be implemented in June 2022. The model aims to improve response times to calls for service and reduce the demand on frontline patrol officers. Some of the objectives of the model are positive – for example increasing the time officers spend on initial investigations. The model has been developed using pre-pandemic data. We found that the force needs to assess in more detail some of the decisions it makes. For example, the force has moved 40 percent of its neighbourhood policing resource into response to support its new operating model. However, there was no evidence that the reduction in neighbourhood resource was subject to review or that the intended increase in visibility could be achieved. The force also lacks a wider understanding of the demand on the force, as compared to the demand on partners.

The force has increased its number of response officers by reducing its neighbourhood resource. The force's objective is to improve the visibility of its officers by aligning its response and neighbourhood officers, but it hasn't considered the effect of the reduction in neighbourhood officers in enough detail to understand how this decision could affect local policing. In addition, the force has nominally aligned additional officers, which have been funded by the Government's Police Uplift Programme, to response teams pending implementation of the new operating model. This means the force hasn't planned for the effective deployment of this additional investment.

The force should make sure that it has effective plans to meet future demand

Staffordshire Police should revise its plans for the implementation and review of its operating model to make sure that there is clarity on what is required – for example, when further pieces of work are due and who will be responsible.

The force is focused on implementing the new operating model. But at the time of our inspection, the force couldn't clearly show how it would evaluate phase one of its change or what it would prioritise in phase two. In some of the documents the force gave us, there wasn't enough detail on current demand; the force recognised this lack of detail. This means that the force can't always adequately assess potential future demand or the capability or capacity required to meet future challenges in its current plans. We were told that the redesign of performance meetings, work processes and some systems is still required. We found a limited understanding in some areas of how processes were being developed or whether new suggestions had been considered, for example, in relation to the crime recording system.

The force encourages and supports all officers to complete the national investigators' exam but didn't have a plan for how this would be progressed or how it fitted into the new model. The force advised that it would take up to 18 months to fully implement the new model, and more detail is required on the model for the force to better understand how this will function and be managed.

The force should make sure it has a good understanding of capability and capacity and that it makes best use of the resources it has at its disposal

The force will benefit from an extra 120 officers in 2022/23 through the police uplift programme. The force advised that these officers are to be nominally allocated to response teams. At the time of our inspection, the force hadn't completed detailed planning for how they will be used most effectively. The force has several challenges in meeting its demand but needs to improve its understanding of how these extra resources could be better used to address the challenges it faces.

The new model places 550 officers in its response function, and there is a comprehensive data set that supports the planning of this. However, the same rigour hasn't been applied to other areas of operation. This could mean that other service areas are adversely impacted during the delivery phase of the new operating model.

Main findings

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

The force cannot show that its investment in technology is improving productivity

The force doesn't have sufficiently reliable data to understand if its services are providing value for money or are effective. There are many different plans throughout the force designed to improve performance. Despite this, its systems aren't yet mature enough to ensure that the force is making the best use of its resources.

We were told that implementation hasn't always gone smoothly because operational users haven't been fully involved. For example, the implementation of the force's record management system lacked user engagement, and delays in implementation caused challenges for front-end users. This has now been rectified by the force, but a legacy of data issues must now be resolved. The force should make sure that the delivery of its ICT programmes considers the users more effectively and that feedback is sought out and acted upon.

There have been significant investments in digital technology to improve productivity. The force has a technology board that is driving improved performance with good programme delivery and sound operational cases being developed, such as the delivery of the National Enabling Programmes and a network upgrade. The force has recently invested in laptops for all frontline officers and police staff. This is positive; however, the force should make sure that it is able to realise the benefits of this investment.

The force has an effective long-term planning and performance framework and makes sure that it tackles what is important locally and nationally

Recognising the need for an improvement in performance, the chief constable commissioned a review and the development of an operating model, which began to be implemented in June 2022. The plan outlines a new force structure that intends to improve local policing and local response and has a strong focus on making officers visible to the public. It is based on the police and crime plan presented by the [police and crime commissioner \(PCC\)](#) and shows that the force has determined the need to improve performance and public service.

However, we found that the force still has several challenges to consider and not all areas have yet been worked through. The focus on response policing means that other areas such as investigations and the vulnerability of victims are still to be developed. There isn't enough detail to show that the force understands how this will work under the new model. The force's clear direction and long-term plan will take time to develop and bring about the improvements needed, and this has been identified by the chief constable.

The force's financial plans are affordable and will support it to continue to meet future demands

The new PCC has supported a full £10 increase in precept which has allowed the force to present a balanced [medium term financial plan \(MTFP\)](#) over the next four year period. The MTFP clearly links into the force's plans and priorities and shows that [reserves](#) are sustainable. There is good financial management at a strategic level, and the force is in a good financial position.

The force states that it needs to do more to drive savings through efficiency. Investment has been made to improve efficiency and achieve savings through technology, but more understanding is required to allow the force to realise a return on this investment. There has been a history of achieving savings through budget management. The force recognises this, and it is envisaged that the new operating model will allow it to seek efficiencies through improved processes.

It is important that the force understands this in more detail; if savings aren't delivered through efficiency, reserves will be used. The combination of investment and development in technology needs to be supported by an efficiency plan.

The force is working effectively with partner organisations, demonstrably leading to better value for money

The force has an effective collaboration processes in place with Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service for shared services. These services include finance, HR, procurement, estates, vehicles and [occupational health](#). This provides resilience for both emergency services and, we were informed, has achieved savings of £1m over the last three years. The force is looking at how this collaboration can be expanded to manage wider demand such as demand from health organisations.

It is evident that the force is starting to re-establish opportunities for further collaboration. However, the force has several challenges internally which it is working through in relation to ICT and performance. And it recognises that while this work is happening, it may not be able to make progress with wider collaboration opportunities.

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