



JOY ALLEN
DURHAM POLICE AND
CRIME COMMISSIONER

DURHAM POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER'S

END OF YEAR REPORT



@durhampcc



Durham Police and Crime Commissioner

April-Dec 2023

Making the communities of County Durham and Darlington safer, stronger and more resilient to crime, drugs and anti-social behaviour



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FOREWORD



Darlington

JOY ALLEN

DURHAM POLICE CRIME COMMISSIONER



Welcome to my April to December 2023 End of Year Report. We have seen great transformation across County Durham and Darlington during the period in which this report covers and I am proud of every single agency that has had a hand in our success. Police forces cannot make a difference working in isolation, and fortunately, here in Durham, we know exactly how to harness the expertise and experiences of a great many organisations to achieve the results we strive for.

When I was elected, I took a good deal of time understanding what local people wanted out of their policing service. It was no surprise that a stronger policing presence was high on the list. By the end of December 2023, Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) numbers had increased by 7.3 per cent and Special Constables by 55 per cent. Since March 2019, our headcount has grown by an extra 199 officers – boosting our frontline capacity by 17.5 per cent. This uplift will be crucial for our future stability. Nevertheless, we remain 144 officers short of total police strength in 2010. This obviously poses us great challenges, and I continue to push for greater recognition of Durham's unique social pressures which restrict the force's ability to meet demand within the confines of our settlement. As I have stated previously, the only solution is a change of policy and an overhaul of the outdated formula by which police are allocated central funding – something I am campaigning very strongly to secure.

Alongside visible and accessible police officers, residents continue to place anti-social behaviour (ASB) in their top five priorities. Last year, I secured more than £2m from the Government for an ASB hotspot policing and Immediate Justice pilot. This has delivered extra proactive enforcement patrols in the areas worst affected by ASB and swifter punishment for perpetrators who have had to repay their communities for any wrongdoing with unpaid work. Working with partners, we have successfully delivered more than 3,750 extra hours of patrols across hotspot areas resulting in a raft of positive outcomes including arrests, stop and searches and community protection and dispersal notices. In the first six months of the pilot, 11 hotspot areas have reported a reduction in ASB. Meanwhile, in December 2023, ASB reporting increased significantly, indicating rising levels of trust and confidence from residents that ASB is being dealt with robustly.

In further work to tackle ASB last year, I implemented the ASB Case Review so that victims can request a review of their case if they believe agencies have not responded sufficiently to their experiences of ASB. There have been 16 ASB Case Reviews in 2023 and the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, with victims expressing gratitude for the increased priority and support given to their experiences.

Last year brought further transformation of our public contact processes. My budget supported

the recruitment of new staff to the Force's call handling team and improved technology. These reinforcements have made a huge difference to the quality of service received with a 24.2 per cent reduction in call abandonment rates and a 13.4 per cent increase in the number of 999 calls answered within 10 seconds.

There was also a huge push to strengthen our response to Retail Crime. I have supported the roll out of SentrySIS across the Force – an online tool enabling businesses and retailers to share information, report crime and even upload evidence such as CCTV footage directly to Durham Constabulary in real-time, shortening investigation times and promoting swift justice. So far, more than 100 businesses are signed up. I also unveiled a new Safer Business Task Group with local retailers, police and other partners to share best practice on how to deter shoplifting and other retail crimes.

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In other investment, I have continued to direct funding into a joint project with the North East Business Resilience Centre to provide advice and support to educational institutions to reduce their risk of cyberattack. Already this year, the project has supported a secondary school to address weaknesses in its network following an incident of data theft.

In my work to support victims of crime, I have funded specialist resources to amplify the victim's voice during police investigations and bring more offenders to justice. This includes a new Domestic Abuse Navigator based in the police control room to improve the support provided to victims on initial contact with the police and an Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) to support victims of sexual violence during the early stages of a police investigation as part of the Force's role in the national Operation Soteria pilot. Elsewhere, I have commissioned the Alice Ruggles Trust to deliver sessions in 52 schools to protect children and young people from stalking.

Nationally, through my role as Addictions and Substance Misuse Lead for the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC), I successfully lobbied for a ban on nitrous oxide in response to growing concerns about its role in ASB and road collisions across England and

Wales. Possession of the drug became illegal in November 2023. Additionally, I have been instrumental in the wider roll out of Naloxone – the life-saving antidote to reverse overdose from opioids such as cocaine and heroin. Locally, I have overseen a 174 per cent increase in the number of staff and officers trained to administer the drug.

In fulfilling my promise to tackle Road Safety, I have funded a new specialist victims' worker to enhance support for victims and witnesses of road fatalities and serious collisions including those who provide life-saving care at the scene. Meanwhile, the success of Operation Snap – the portal that allows the public to upload their own journey cam footage of traffic offences – has continued. Around 90 per cent of the 729 submissions made in 2023 resulted in a positive outcome.

There is further good news for our rural communities. In November, it was confirmed my office had secured an extra £1m to improve safety in rural and urban areas of the county. More than £200k of the Safer Streets 5 grant is being invested in measures to protect people and property in the countryside including new technology such as drones, GPS trackers and Rural Watch coordinators and upgraded rural vehicles. In other success, ten Rural Watch WhatsApp groups are now in action across the force to boost engagement and intelligence opportunities.

In summary, there is much to be pleased about in this End of Year report. Despite our well-publicised funding restraints, the Force continues to go above and beyond to secure a safer future for all our communities including victims of crime who remain at the centre of everything I do. There is still much more to achieve but we cannot ignore the fact that significant additional investment is vital to drive forward the pace and scale of change needed to deliver the modern and responsive policing our communities deserve. As we move forward, I will continue to do everything in my power to bring about change to address the inequalities that are preventing us from doing even more for the people of County Durham and Darlington.

SAFER COMMUNITIES

When I meet residents, they consistently raise anti-social behaviour as their number one priority. This issue impacts quality of life and feelings of safety. In fulfilling my Police and Crime Plan priorities, I have invested in neighbourhood policing to better tackle these problems and other neighbourhood crimes. I have also delivered early education and diversion schemes to prevent offending and rehabilitate those on a destructive path. My office has been instrumental in elevating the victim's voice within the justice system and bringing partners together to identify and bring to justice those who persistently cause harm across the communities of County Durham and Darlington.

SAFER STREETS 4

My office secured almost £1.5m in funding from the Home Office's Safer Streets 4 Fund to crackdown on anti-social behaviour and neighbourhood crime and boost women's safety.

The funding supported:

- **463 streetlight upgrades** across Durham and Darlington. Through the Call It Out Project, women identified streetlighting as an area for improvement
- The implementation of **Night Safety Hubs in Durham and Darlington**. These hubs have supported more than **1,850 people** with issues such as assault, spiking, drugs and alcohol, crime and personal safety
- **A dedicated VAWG car** (Violence Against Women and Girls) is deployed by the Force, based in the night time economy in Durham and Darlington city centres, to look out for vulnerability and respond to VAWG incidents
- **Alcohol Changes Things** campaign to raise awareness of the dangers of pre-loading alcohol before an evening out
- Don't Suffer in Silence to help people report and get support for ASB
- **3664 activities in Darlington, Ferryhill and Peterlee** to divert young people involved in, or at risk of becoming involved in, anti-social behaviour
- **774 homes** fitted with crime prevention devices and security measures including Ring doorbells, window and door lock upgrades, property lighting and alarms.

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SAFER STREETS 5

My office has secured a further £820k in the Safer Streets 5 funding round. Working with partners, we successfully bid for three projects across County Durham and Darlington which will run for 18 months from 1 October 2023 to 31 March 2025. These interventions aim to reduce levels of ASB, neighbourhood crime and VAWG in areas persistently impacted by these crimes.

The investment includes:

County Durham and Darlington

- Deployable CCTV cameras, three new ASB/Neighbourhood Watch Engagement Officers, purchase and installation of crime security equipment, crime security assessments and advice for burgled households and neighbouring properties.

Rural County Durham and Darlington

- Rural Watch coordinators, an intelligence analyst and admin support officers from the National Farmers' Union, crime prevention equipment including GPS trackers, body worn cameras, aerial surveillance (drones and pilot licenses) and upgrades to rural vehicles.

Durham City

- Public Space CCTV and Deployable CCTV cameras, VAWG Engagement Officer.

ASB CASE REVIEW

- I implemented ASB Case Review so victims can request a review of their case if they believe agencies have not responded sufficiently to complaints of anti-social behaviour.
- There have been 16 ASB Case Reviews during 2023. Residents said:

"After years of knocking on doors to get someone to help us sort out the ASB, the PCC office are the first people to listen and take action."

YOUTH JUSTICE

I contributed **£264,325 and £142,300 respectively** to the operational delivery of Youth Justice Services for Durham and Darlington. This year:

- 2000 hours of reparation activity has been carried out by young people who have offended. Reparation is a practical way to pay back for the harm caused by the offence, either by directly repairing the harm or through constructive work to help the local community or the victim.
- 200 young people who have been victims of crime have been supported.



OFFROAD BIKES AND QUADS

- More than **£10,000 invested in Operation Endurance** to tackle illegal off road bikes and quad bikes causing anti-social behaviour in our communities. This includes:
 - The installation of Section 59 notices in local areas which provide initial warnings that any illegal vehicle will be seized
 - Through the Lens project – the purchase of long lens cameras to take high resolution images of those engaged in off road bike ASB to support the identification and prosecution of offenders
- All fuel stations across Durham and Darlington signed up to Garage Watch to restrict fuel sales to anyone hiding their identity.



ASB HOTSPOT/IMMEDIATE JUSTICE PILOTS

Durham Constabulary is one of sixteen Police Force areas piloting the ASB Hotspot and Immediate Justice approaches ahead of a wider rollout nationally (Durham is only one of four forces to be piloting both). In July 2023, regular patrols began in identified 'hotspot' areas, including police and partners from local authority, fire and rescue service, housing and voluntary and community sector.

- My office brought in over **£2m for ASB** hotspot policing and Immediate Justice working with partners to reduce ASB.
- More than 2000 leaflets have been posted to local residents in the hotspot areas to encourage reporting and advise where to report
- Hotspot patrols have been carried out in the hotspot areas. These have resulted in:



- In December 2023 ASB reporting increased by: **11% in Darlington** and **18% in Durham** compared to December 2022.
- This is a positive outcome which suggests rising levels of trust and confidence from residents that ASB will be dealt with and prevented going forward.
- In some areas, ASB is reducing. In the first 6 months, Darlington has seen a reduction in 3 out of 8 hotspot areas and Durham has seen a reduction in 8 out of 26 hotspot areas.
- Immediate Justice has resulted in:



WHAT PEOPLE SAID:

"I just wanted to pass on my thanks and appreciation for placing the section 59 signs in the area surrounding Moorside, Consett. As far as I am aware we have not had one single issue with off-road vehicles in Moorside this last week which is unprecedented for this area!"

SAFER BUSINESS



Throughout 2023, shoplifting has remained the most prevalent issue impacting local businesses. Supporting retailers has been a key focus this year under my Safer Business theme and I am working closely with local businesses and retail partners to increase confidence and trust across the sector. I regularly engage with businesses to understand the challenges they face in relation to shoplifting and abuse against shopworkers. These lived experiences and the feedback from my ongoing discussions with retailers have been used to hold the police to account. We know the incidents of shoplifting and abuse against staff that are reported to the police are just the tip of the iceberg, and that many are not reported. In fulfilling the priorities in my Police and Crime Plan, my office has delivered far-reaching improvements to the way the force manages and tackles retail crime and enhanced the support we provide to businesses to reduce risk.

- **£5,000 to a local youth club** to reduce the ASB around Coop and Brandon shopping precinct.
- **£43,000 to improve security** including CCTV in Castle Dean, Peterlee.
- **£9,000 for handheld radios** to tackle anti-social behaviour and crime in Newton Aycliffe.
- Promoted **Shop Watch** to retailers
- Retail Crime Survey showed - **89% of retailers** would like further support to tackle theft.
- **67%** would like more support to prevent anti-social behaviour in or around their store.
- Promoted **SentrySis** across Durham and Darlington to upload CCTV images of retail crime
- Around **100 businesses** are signed up to SentrySis
- Took part in **Safer Business Week** engaging with retailers across the area to promote prevention advice and hear their views.
- Implemented a **Safer Business Group** with partners and stakeholders, ensuring that retailers can be a part of the solution to rid our communities of shoplifting.
- **Supported the USDAW** (Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers) Safer Shop Workers campaign
- **Funded hotspot patrols** who provided additional support to local businesses.
- Worked with the Force who identified '**Top 5' retailers** affected by crime and worked with them to implement crime prevention strategies.
- Supported the Force who identified **Retail SPOCs** (single points of contact) for each area to work closely with retailers, providing crime prevention advice
- **The Victim Care and Advisory Service** supported over 100 retail workers who have been victims of crime in the workplace

WHAT PEOPLE SAID:

"Through sharing best practice at the Safer Business Group, myself and other independent retailers in the local area have implemented our own Shop Watch scheme. This has been great in enabling us to share information with each other through WhatsApp if we have had goods stolen from our stores" - Independent Retailer, East Durham.

SAFER ONLINE



In a world where smartphones, computers and the internet are a fundamental part of modern life, online crime has become much more prevalent with the risks of fraud, harassment and exploitation ever growing. Nationally, around 40% of all crime is fraud – 90% of which takes place online – while the cost of a cyberattack costing each business more than £3k. I have delivered on my Police and Crime Plan priority to tackle online crime in all its forms, funding proactive activity to reduce the risk. This includes increasing access to cost-effective advice and resources to help educational institutions strengthen their resilience to future attacks and raising awareness of the threats to keep young people, businesses and the wider public safe online.

- **£2,500 to North East Business Resilience Centre** to deliver advice and support to a multi-academy educational trust to reduce its risk of cyberattack
- **£1,575 to North East Business Resilience Centre** to work with a large secondary Academy in Durham to understand if they had any weaknesses in their network, that could be exploited to steal data.
- **Contributed £400** to target online sextortion offences 'Heads or Tails – Not Both'
- **£3,204 for a youth club** cyber project to educate young people about online and internet safety.
- Barclays Digital Eagles provided two online safety awareness sessions to **148 children across five schools** in Ferryhill and West Cornforth
- Barclays Digital Eagles trained 23 'Cyber Champions'. Those champions have supported **1633 members** of the community with digital safety.
- Victim Care and Advisory Service provided support to more than **50 victims of cybercrime** and fraud.
- The Force's Cyber Prevention Team focuses on cyber dependant crime including **Prevention, Preparation and Protection** of those most at risk of being a victim of crime.

WHAT PEOPLE SAID:

"Victim scammed into believing she must transfer a large sum of money out of her personal banking account, scam prevented by bank staff when victim attended premises to make the transfer. Following support from VCAS the victim said "I do feel safer and do feel like a difference has been made. Thank you so much for all of your hard work, sympathy and understanding." - 83-year-old Female victim of Fraud

SAFER PEOPLE



SUPPORTING VICTIMS OF CRIME

Victims of crime are at the heart of my Police and Crime Plan. Alongside commissioning high-quality services to aid their recovery from crime, I continue to fund research to understand the victim's journey so we can address the barriers preventing individuals from reporting their experiences to the police and getting the help they need. Our focus on capturing 'lived experiences' has helped identify where change is needed and has resulted in action to improve the care of victims of crime at all stages of their criminal justice journey. I am also delivering on my priority to bring partners together to divert people from becoming involved in crime or reoffending through a range of education, employment, leisure and training activities,

I commission services for victims of crime through Ministry of Justice funding.

A satisfaction survey of those services showed that **93% of victims felt better able to cope and build resilience to move forward with daily life.**

I continue to work innovatively to improve the services provided for victims. I have:

- Funded the FREE programme for a further 2 years - a peer lead programme supporting those who have experienced abuse, addiction or mental health.
- Commissioned Alice Ruggles Trust to deliver sessions in 52 schools to raising awareness of stalking.
- Commissioned Harbour to deliver support for people impacted by domestic abuse.
- Funded a second Domestic Abuse Navigator based in the police control room to improve the support available from initial contact.
- Provided training, using theatre production, for police officers and partners to improve awareness of the needs of victims of sexual violence who have a cognitive impairment or learning disability.
- Funded Operation Soteria Engagement Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) to support the implementation of Operation Soteria locally
- Funded Advocacy After Fatal Domestic Abuse (AAFDA) to deliver training and support a Community Safety Partnerships to carry Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHR).

DETER OFFENDING AND REOFFENDING

- Reviewed the Local Criminal Justice Board in order to influence the criminal justice sector and hold partners to ensure offenders are brought to justice and are supported to rehabilitate and turn their lives around.
- Strengthened the Integrated Offender Management Unit to manage persistent and prolific offenders in the community. This has resulted in 72% of offenders working with IOM not committing further crimes.
- Recruited Serious Violence Project Officer through Home Office funding to support the progression of the Serious Violence Duty Fund.
- Contributed to the development of a Serious Violence Strategy.
- Managed the commissioning of intervention services, through Serious Violence funding. These services will support the prevention of serious violence, support for violence against women and girls and perpetrator interventions.
- £1,000 for handheld metal detectors to find knives and weapons during stop and searches or searches following arrest.

ADDICTIONS

- I am the national joint lead for Addictions and Substance Misuse for the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners
- I lobbied for a ban on nitrous oxide – also known as laughing gas – because of the dangers this presents in our communities and on our roads. I am pleased that the Government classified this as a Class C drug in November 2023, making possession of this drug illegal
- I have been instrumental in the local roll out of Naloxone, the life saving antidote to overdose from opioids, such as cocaine and heroin. There are now 493 front line police staff trained to administer Naloxone. This is a 174% increase in the numbers trained.
- In addition, all Community Peer Mentors are trained in the use of Naloxone as well as other frontline workers across emergency services, health, housing and local authorities.
- Naloxone was used 21 times in the last year to prevent an opioid-related death.
- I am committed to tackling gambling harms in our area and I ensured that Durham Constabulary was the first force in the country to sign up to the Gambling Charter, setting out its commitment to work collaboratively to tackle gambling harm in the workplace and the wider community.

WHAT PEOPLE SAID:

"Aspire is an amazing service and I am so pleased to know about it and use the services." – Aspire

"I've loved working with you and wish I could work with you forever. I loved the Christmas party and met some lush lasses. The staff were really welcoming and I didn't feel judged." – Changing Lives

"It has been a breath of fresh air, very refreshing. I am privileged and glad that I have accessed counselling with RSACC. I am now really happy in life, for once I have met someone who understands and I am very grateful for that." RSACC Counselling Service.

SAFER ROADS

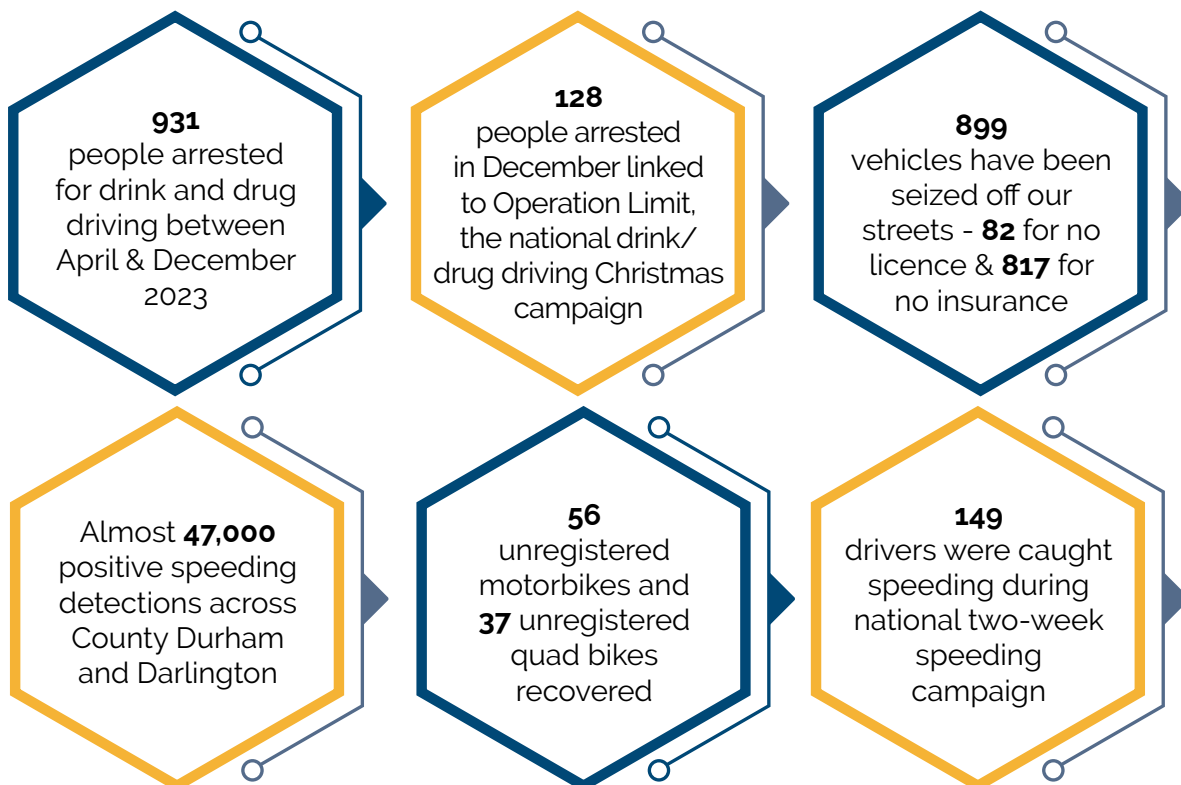


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The safety of our roads is important to all of us. Working closely with the Force, I continue to support the delivery of proactive enforcement to ensure illegal and dangerous drivers are held accountable for their actions. I have also funded new technology and resources to empower the public to take action to bring dangerous drivers to justice. Our approach is balanced with prevention and education, and we continue to raise awareness of the Fatal 4 risks to driver and pedestrian safety – speeding, mobile phones, drug and drink driving and seatbelts. As Deputy National Lead for Roads Policing and Transport, I continue to share good practice with colleagues and advocate new and innovative road safety pilots.

- **Operation Snap** – the public can submit their own video footage of road traffic offences, from dashcams or mobiles, direct to the Police who can use to prosecute. There were **729** submissions in 2023 with 90% positive outcome rate following the public submitting footage.
- Pledged my support to **Project EDWARD** (Every Day Without A Road Death)
- **Seatbelt Campaign** – to educate the public and young people in schools on the importance of wearing a seatbelt. During a week of action, 23 seatbelt violations captured and education or enforcement provided
- **Operation Tramline** - 10 day use of an unmarked HGV cab around the strategic road network across the Force area. The elevated position allows the passenger to observe and record traffic offences by drivers of other HGVs, vans and cars resulting in **54** driving violations identified
- **BikeSafe** – education programme for motorcyclists:
 - **151** motorcyclists upskilled
 - **100%** attended course to become a safer rider.
 - **88%** said they would be likely to act on feedback.
- Provided over **£3,000** for **Section 59** warning notices across Durham and Darlington to allow quads and motorcycles being used illegally to be seized
- **Funded a new specialist victims' worker** to enhance support for victims and witnesses of road tragedies.

- **Operation Close Pass** - 31 people were educated for driving too close to bicycles and more than 20 for driving too close to horses.
- **Community Speed Watch (CSW)** is a way the public can get involved in problem solving in relation to speeding in their communities. Between April and November 2023 there were:
 - **414 deployments** of the CSW van
 - **253hrs 35mins** were spent on CSW activities
 - **38,930** vehicles travelled through areas where CSW was in operation
 - **2180 people were sent warning letters for excessive speed.**
- **£1000 for 'Faraday Pouches'** - these allow motorists to place their mobile inside them to prevent any signal and prevent distractions. Additionally, owners of 'keyless ignition' vehicles place their keys inside to prevent thieves amplifying the signal from the keys to steal it
- **£20,000 contribution to Three Towns Area Action Partnership** for speed limit projects
- **£30,000 contribution to Derwent Valley Area Action Partnership** for speeding and traffic management project including the provision of speeding visors and local road safety measures
- **Police & Crime Commissioner is national Deputy Lead for Roads Policing**



WHAT PEOPLE SAID:

"Had a brilliant time yesterday. Thoroughly recommend this course. Very well organised and I learned a lot from it." - BikeSafe attendee

"I just wanted to say, what a fantastic course and great way to learn about safer riding especially positioning and the use of IPSGA. The Officer who I was riding with on the day was very professional and offered sound advice throughout the ride/day". - BikeSafe attendee

SAFER COUNTRYSIDE



Durham has a vast rural landscape drawing millions of visitors every year. While idyllic, our rural communities are not immune to criminal activity. The National Farmers Union reports that the Durham is one of the safest rural communities in the country and strong partnerships between residents, businesses and the Police is ensuring it stays that way. However, we must not be complacent. Safer Countryside is a key priority in my Police and Crime Plan, and I continue to deliver on my promise to provide rural officers with the technology, equipment and training they need to effectively protect people, property and livelihoods from rural criminals.

- **Rural Watch** - Durham Dales held up as best practice by the National Rural Crime Unit.
- **Rural Watch volunteers** - Signpost and support victims with rural crime prevention support and advice
- **Rural Watch WhatsApp Groups** - Ten Rural Watch WhatsApp groups established across the force, all administered by local Rural Watch volunteers. The force uses these for engagement and intelligence purposes
- **Checkpoint Operations** - Operations with rural volunteers and police to target suspicious activities and engage with residents to understand concerns
- **Operation Hawkeye** - the lynchpin to cross-border intelligence sharing across the North of England to review OCG movements, crime trends and other rural issues.
- **Safety Camera Bureau** - Increased deployments and new sites for the van
- **Rurali** - £205,000 invested for rural communities through Safer Street 5. Rurali will provide:



WHAT PEOPLE SAID:

"[The WhatsApp Group] really is working. It's producing results. It's making policing easier for the police and it's making better use of resources in general. I think we all feel more confident about our security and safety and we generally have a better relationship with police on the ground."

VICTIM CARE AND ADVISORY SERVICE

- VCAS provides help and support to people adversely affected by crime.
- I brought them into my team in 2022 to complement the already fantastic work we do to support victims.
- Between 1 April and 31 December 2023, the service:
 - Received 9,785 referrals
 - Offered support to 2,591 people
 - Provided support to 1,018 people.

OUTCOMES

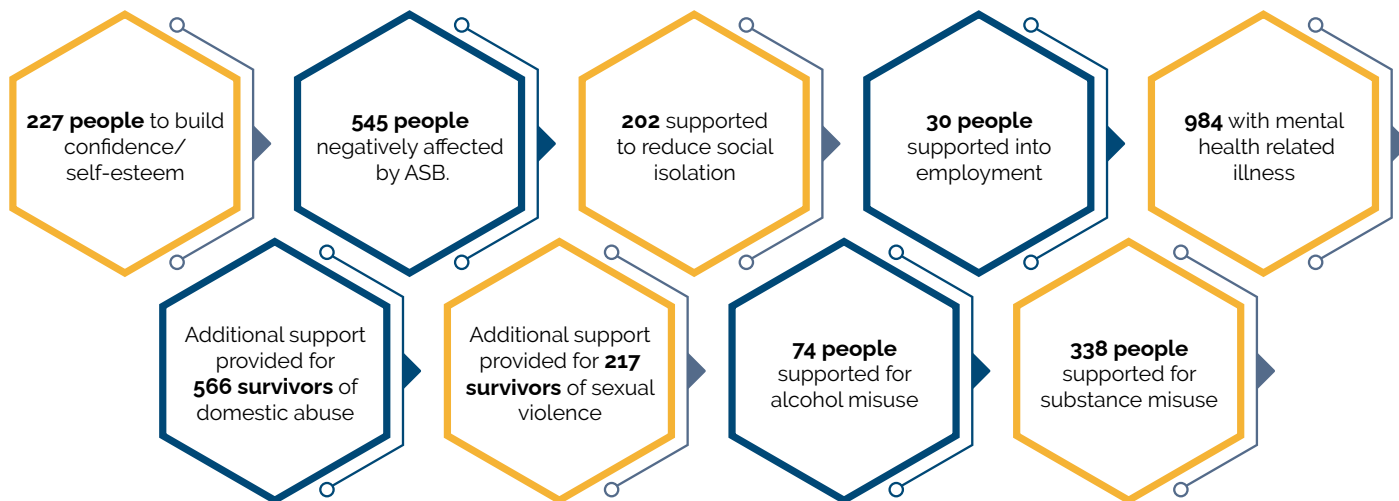




COMMUNITY PEER MENTORS

- Community Peer Mentors (CPMs) provide support to people affected by anti-social behaviour, addictions and mental health
- Between 1 April and 31 December 2023, CPMs:
 - Received **1422** referrals to the service between April and December 2023 - an increase of **42%** on previous year.
 - **76%** of those referred to the service took up support
- Over **100 volunteers** and staff have provided **70,492 days** of support to clients.
- CPMs have supported:

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DEMAND REDUCTION

Using agreed formula from the Force, reduction on demand through CPM support is estimated as 88.5% for 2023 and 78.3% for the last 5 years.

Between April and December, CPMs have saved the force approximately:



IMPROVING YOUR SERVICE



POLICE OFFICER NUMBERS

- Since March 2019, our headcount has grown by an extra 199 officers – boosting our frontline capacity by 17.5 per cent.
- By the end of this year PCSO numbers have increased by 7.3% and Specials have grown by 55.0%.
- As we move forward, I will continue to focus on attracting, developing and retaining a diverse workforce that reflects and represents our communities.

PUBLIC CONTACT METHODS

In keeping with my promise to improve your initial contact with the police, I have supported the recruitment of new staff to the Force's call handling team to respond to the increased 101 and 999 calls. All crime and incident related calls are now triaged by the Force switchboard which has been expanded from 3 to 11 operatives. I have also provided financial resources to the force to maximise technology.

These reinforcements have made a huge difference to the service you receive, with achievements including:

- Decreases in 101 call abandonment – 24.2% reduction
- 13.4% increase in the number of 999 calls answered within 10 seconds compared to the same period last year
- Reduction in 999 call answering time – averaging 15.8 seconds this year despite an 8.3% increase in 999 calls into the force control room
- Implementation of a 24/7-seven days a week non-emergency live chat facility for general enquiries and a means of reporting non-urgent incidents or crime – a popular choice averaging 400 contacts per week



ENGAGING WITH COMMUNITIES



It is exceptionally important to me to engage with communities, understand what concerns them most and act on this by holding the Force to account and working in partnership with other agencies, such as the local authorities and criminal justice system partners to improve the services they provide to residents.

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES:

- I regularly take my engagement van across the county to speak with community groups, residents, schools, retailers, youth groups and many others
- Throughout the year I have visited county shows and community events across County Durham and Darlington with our engagement van, to meet with members of the public and consult on topical issues.
- Your Police, Your Say sessions – engagement with councillors across Durham and Darlington to understand concerns they hear from residents in their areas and act on this
- In September, I worked with the Durham City response team to ask the public on their feelings towards begging and rough sleeping in the city centre, to inform the progression of a Public Space Protection Order.
- In October/November, we carried out a consultation to find out preferences of Newton Aycliffe residents for the future of their police station, following the lease on the current premises coming to an end.
- During 2023, the OPCC carried out a series of online surveys including retail crime and adults and young peoples' opinions on serious violence to inform future commissioning of services and plans for the office.

HOLDING THE FORCE TO ACCOUNT

Over the past 12 months, I have continued to scrutinise the Force's progress against my six Safer Themes in my Police and Crime Plan, focussing on:

- enhancing public contact processes
- investing in prevention and early intervention provisions around serious violence
- supporting the enforcement and educational campaigns around driver safety
- consideration of His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) recent PEEL inspection findings
- supporting the force in the roll-out of Right Care Right Person to enhance the care of vulnerable people and improve capacity for the force to respond to crime.

Through Executive Boards, I hold the Chief Constable to account. Executive Boards have focussed on victims and vulnerable people, force performance, managing and pursuing offenders, neighbourhood crime, and safer roads. These are available on my website.

Independent scrutiny panels under my responsibility met to consider issues such as best use of stop and search, domestic abuse, rape, hate crime, ethical issues, complaints and out of court disposals.

In March 2023 I held a Public Accountability Meeting where partners and the public asked questions of the Force in relation to Stop and Search.

The Force was rated as "Outstanding" in its work to tackle serious and organised crime by HMICFRS and "Good" at preventing and deterring crime as well as in its crime recording practices.

Exercising my duty as PCC to appoint Durham's next Chief Constable, I put forward my preferred candidate Rachel Bacon to the Police and Crime Panel following a rigorous selection and interview process which tested her suitability and experience for the role. Mrs Bacon was welcomed to the Force in November 2023.



I have now agreed a Holding to Account Framework and Objectives linked to my Police and Crime Plan, which includes:

- Weekly meetings with the Chief Constable
- Formal monthly Executive Board meetings
- Quarterly updates by Force on progress around the delivery of all the priorities in the Police and Crime Plan
- The continuation of Public Accountability Meetings which allow members of the public to submit questions in advance to the OPCC about what policing issues matter to them the most. These meetings are recorded and downloaded on to YouTube for public viewing
- OPCC attendance at strategic and operational force meetings.

The Chief Constable is developing a delivery plan so that there is direct correlation to the priorities in my Police and Crime Plan, providing that golden thread which then goes through to individual PDRs.

I have the full backing of the Force to deliver my Police and Crime Plan and achieve my vision. We do this in partnership and that, simply, is the Durham Difference.



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Durham Police and Crime Commissioner