



Durham Police and Crime Commissioner's **ANNUAL REPORT**



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Durham Police and Crime Commissioner

2024/25

MAKING OUR COMMUNITIES SAFER, STRONGER AND MORE RESILIENT TO DRUG AND ALCOHOL RELATED CRIME AND ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR



JOY ALLEN
DURHAM POLICE AND
CRIME COMMISSIONER

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Foreword

Serving County Durham and Darlington is a great honour and a responsibility I do not take lightly.

After three successful years, I was overjoyed to receive such compelling approval from the public for a second term, securing more than 50% of the vote.

Delivering what matters to the people of County Durham and Darlington is my chief concern. You have placed your faith in me, and I will do everything in my power to repay that trust.

Key performance highlights show that, compared to the previous year,

- Average time to answer 999 calls reduced by 16.5% – from 15.8 seconds to 13.2 seconds
- Neighbourhood crime reduced by 18.2%
- Violence against the person saw an 11.4% reduction
- Violence with injury achieved a 5.7% reduction

I was re-elected on a mandate to keep up the good work and I have not failed you. Over the past 12 months, I have continued to speak up for local residents and businesses to deliver change.

Thanks to my appointments on national bodies and as the national lead on behalf of my fellow PCCs, I have fought and secured immense national change over the past 12 months.

These successes include the wider roll out of overdose reversal drug Naloxone to police custody staff, police officers and community outreach workers to reduce drug-related deaths and a new standalone spiking law to increase the confidence of victims in reporting their experiences to the police.

In other success, I have continued to push gambling harm to the top of the national agenda, speaking alongside MPs and bereaved families in Westminster earlier this year to raise awareness of the impact of gambling-linked suicide and to call for tougher regulation of the industry.

I continue to jointly chair the National Gambling taskforce to implement the recommendations in the Commission on Crime and Gambling-related Harms, launched by the Howard League for Penal Reforms, putting me front and centre of the march for progress and have ensured Durham Constabulary leads by example by becoming the first force in the country to sign up to the Gambling Charter, cementing its commitment to tackling gambling harm in the workplace and the wider community.

In leading the road safety agenda, I helped secure the support of all PCCs nationally in backing the British Medical Association's (BMA) campaign for a reduction in the legal blood alcohol limit for drivers and I am rapidly advancing my mission to expand the roll out of workplace alcohol and drug testing and substance management in the private sector to save lives and secure an overhaul of licensing laws to protect young and novice drivers.

Other achievements continue to put the force on the national map for innovation and performance. Earlier this year, my Anti-Social Behaviour Champion Andrea Patterson, who was the first-ever Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Victims' Champion to be appointed by a PCC, secured the Exemplary Partnership Award in the final of the UK ASB Awards organised by ASB experts Resolve, beating off competition from dozens of entries nationwide.

My in-house Victim Care and Advice Service (VCAS) received the coveted Victims Choice Quality Mark in recognition of its outstanding performance in meeting the needs of victims of crime across County Durham and Darlington. This is the highest benchmark of success for any such service.

Meanwhile, a pioneering new digital tool I funded with AI provider Robiquity to speed up the way disclosures about a person's violent past are processed scooped a national technology award.

My first Plan delivered far-reaching improvements. Overall crime fell and services for victims got better. I kept my promise to break the cycle of crime by getting people more help for their problems.

My new Police Crime and Justice Plan 2025-29 will deliver even more. There will be no hiding place for those who threaten our safety and values and cause nuisance on our streets.

We will relentlessly pursue all offenders. Anyone who causes suffering or exploits our communities and our children by peddling drugs, preying on vulnerability and profiteering from crime will face the full force of the law.

We will stand up for victims and deliver first-class support. And we will make sure Durham Constabulary retains its place as one of the best performing forces in the country.

My new Plan speaks your language. You have been consulted at every stage of its development. Your priorities are my priorities, and I will double down on the issues you care about most. Victims will remain at the heart of everything I do.

I know that national policies don't always apply to the people who live in County Durham and Darlington. This is why I have a growing portfolio of national roles to fight for our county and secure change that is relevant and meaningful.

I promise to serve with passion and courage and will leave no stone unturned in my duty to protect you and your families and keep you safe.



Joy Allen – Durham Police and Crime Commissioner



Chief Constable

Rachel Bacon

It is a great privilege to serve the people of County Durham and Darlington and to lead an organisation of officers and staff who demonstrate unwavering dedication and commitment to our communities.

Nationally, Durham Constabulary has long been recognised as a top performing police force, something we continue to be immensely proud of. Our people remain committed to delivering effective, responsive and accountable policing services that enhance public safety, promote social cohesion and uphold the rule of law.

As I approach the beginning of my third year leading Durham Constabulary, I continue to be proud of that 'extra mile' which we are known for, or what we like to call the "Durham Difference".

Despite the volume of demand that we deal with, our purpose and vision remains steadfast, we will continue our focus on quality to build trust and confidence within our communities by:

- Relentlessly pursuing criminals;
- Being determined to protect vulnerable people;
- Providing a first-class service to victims;
- Being the best at preventing crime & ASB.

Our focus will always be on victims and victim satisfaction. Our latest survey results for crime victims show that in 2024/25, 87% of those that were surveyed, were satisfied with our policing response, which I am proud to say is an increase on last year's results.

Victims are at the heart of everything we do, we will continue to support them by designing our services to individual needs and ensuring we have an adaptive approach to policing.

Along with the increasing demand of calls for service, we also acknowledge the requirement for accountability, transparency and community engagement, which highlights the need for a modern, responsive police service.

The policing climate in County Durham and Darlington, much like in other regions, faces a mix of social, economic and technological factors, where rapid and evolving patterns of crime pose both challenges and opportunities.

Over the last twelve months we have shown extensive efforts to support and deliver the PCC's Police and Crime Plan. We have continued our investment in technological advancements, modernising our digital capability to improve our response and investigative standards.

In December 2024, alongside the PCC, we opened our brand-new Investigative Hub in Spennymoor, the hub is one of the most advanced police custody suites in the UK, putting Durham at the forefront of policing innovation nationally. It has been specially designed to provide enhanced care for vulnerable detainees, revolutionising operational capability and saving thousands of hours of police time.

We will continue to work with the Police and Crime Commissioner to ensure we do all we can to protect victims of crime and ASB.

Through our problem-solving approach, we will continue to deter offending and re-offending by recognising the symptoms of crime, understanding the causes, and intervening early to stop offending behaviour. We have a proud history of working collaboratively with our local partners to protect those who are less able to protect themselves, or others, from harm, exploitation or vulnerability. We know that local teamwork makes us stronger, and by working together we can build resilient, safer communities.

The threat of cybercrime, the proliferation of illicit drugs, Organised Crime Groups and County Lines, necessitate a proactive response to make the communities of County Durham and Darlington safer, stronger and more resilient to drug and alcohol related crime and anti-social behaviour..

We deal with many complex issues that demand our unwavering attention and innovative solutions. We will continue to demonstrate excellence in problem solving and will continue to foster the diverse skills and experience of our people to overcome challenges, such as:

- **Violent Crime:** Addressing the root causes of violence and working collaboratively with partners to prevent and intervene in instances of violent crime.
- **County Lines:** Combating the scourge of county lines drug trafficking, which exploits vulnerable individuals and communities while fuelling organised crime networks.
- **Cybersecurity:** Enhancing our capabilities to detect, investigate and prevent cyber-enabled crimes, including fraud, online exploitation and data breaches.
- **Community Policing:** Strengthening our engagement with local communities, building trust and empowering residents to play an active role in crime prevention and public safety initiatives.
- **Mental Health:** Developing tailored interventions and support mechanisms for individuals experiencing mental health crises, ensuring their welfare and minimising their involvement with the Criminal Justice System.
- **Equality and Diversity:** Promoting inclusivity, diversity and equality within our workforce and addressing disparities in the delivery of policing services.

These issues are not impossible to solve, but they require real effort, strategic foresight and working smarter, in collaboration with our partners.

It is no secret that finance plays a huge factor in all aspects of policing, but we remain committed to providing value for money policing to our communities.

We will do this by being innovative and productive to make best use of our resources. We will continue to monitor the climate and review our priorities and direction in line with the voice of our communities and the changes required to keep County Durham and Darlington safe.

I have no doubt we will achieve some fantastic milestones over the next three-years, and I am proud to be part of this journey with my colleagues.

Rachel Bacon

Rachel Bacon – Chief Constable

The Police, Crime and Justice Plan

Throughout the year I went to great lengths to ensure that the priorities in my Police, Crime and Justice Plan reflect the issues that matter most to the residents and businesses of County Durham and Darlington.

I consulted the public and stakeholders at every step of the process.

More than 1,400 residents responded to a force wide consultation, supported by an action-packed face-to-face engagement programme, consisting of 30 events, with the PCC and members of the OPCC team meeting residents, farmers and business owners to gauge their views on policing and crime. I consulted again before presenting my final draft to the Police and Crime Panel, to ensure that the public approved of my approach.

The resulting Police, Crime and Justice Plan is not 'my' plan, it is the public's plan. Their priorities are my priorities.

In drawing up these priority areas, I also took account of data, intelligence and evidence from multiple sources.

The final Plan, approved by the Police and Crime Panel, has a continuation of focus for the main themes as it seeks to build on the widely-recognised success of my first Plan, successfully delivered in just three years.

Victims of crime remain at the heart of everything we do. Their needs are paramount, and while we are working hard to reduce the number of victims, it is imperative that anyone affected by criminality receives an outstanding support service.



My vision:

Making our communities safer, stronger and more resilient to drug and alcohol related crime and anti-social behaviour.

To achieve this, my Plan is based on six overarching themes: Victims, Safer People Safer Places, Safer Neighbourhoods, Safer Countryside, Safer Roads and a fair, transparent and timely local criminal justice system.

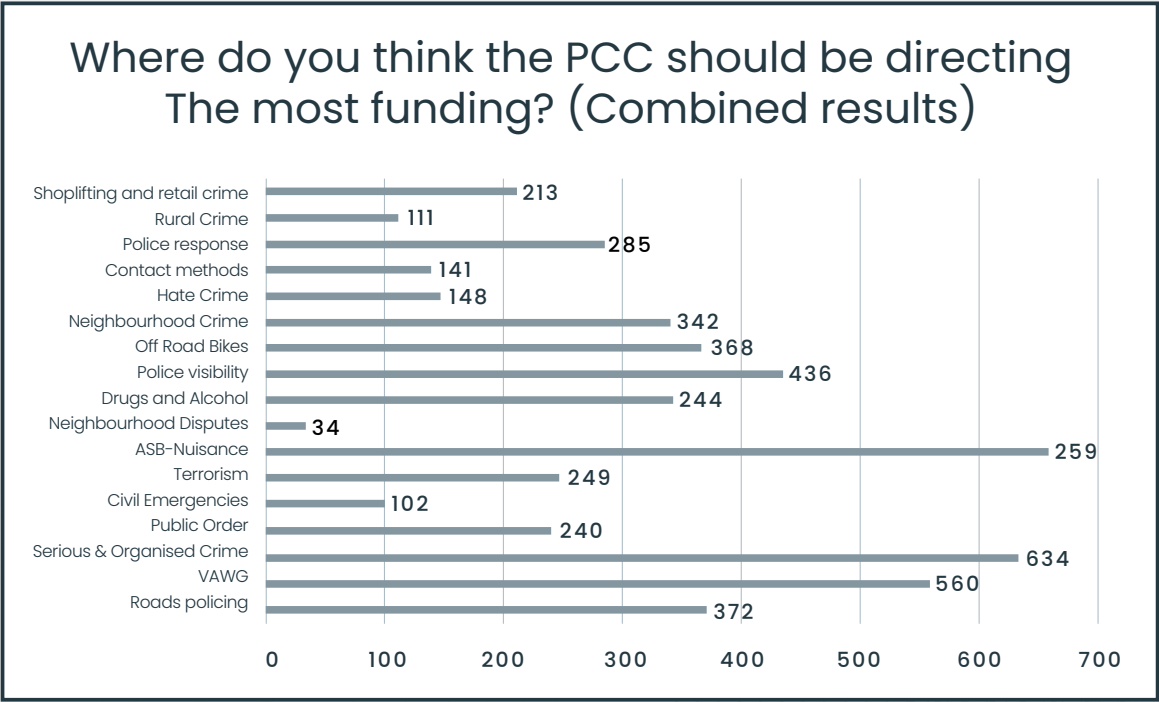
Priorities such as Alcohol and Drugs, Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), Addiction including gambling dependency, Neighbourhood Policing and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) take centre stage with the PCC pledging to work with partners at every opportunity to identify and protect those who are less able to protect themselves.

Throughout 2024-25 my team and I have focused on these areas of work as we set an ambitious plan for delivery.

You said, I listened, I acted

In analysing both the online survey findings and face-to-face engagement, several key issues had emerged as clear public priorities for funding.

- Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Nuisance,
- Serious and Organised Crime,
- Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG),
- Roads Policing,
- Policing Visibility,
- Off-Road Bikes,
- Drugs and Alcohol.



As you will see throughout this report, action has been taken and the results are there for all to see.



JOY ALLEN

DURHAM POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

GETTING SUPPORT

If you have been the victim of crime,
call us now on:

Telephone: 0800 138 2020
victimcare@durham-pcc.gov.uk

Further information can be found on our
website or call the above number.
victimcareandadvice.service.uk



Victims

I have been clear from the outset that victims of crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB) are at the front and centre of everything I do. I have been relentless in my drive for continual improvements, evidenced in my Police, Crime and Justice Plan which was developed throughout the year.

It's a fact that victims who receive appropriate support may be less vulnerable to future victimisation and less likely to suffer ongoing trauma. Not only is this beneficial to their wellbeing, but it reduces the future demands on other public services such as health and social care.

It is therefore rewarding to report that in June 2024, my in-house Victim Care and Advice Service (VCAS) was awarded the 'Victims Choice Quality Mark', a testament to the team's exceptional skills, experience, and commitment to the incredible support they provide to victims and witnesses and their dedication to continuous development.

The report accompanying the Quality Mark highlighted several innovative best practices including the role of the Criminal Justice Case Worker. This is just one of many things that sets VCAS apart as a service, proactively reaching out to victims and witnesses who will be required to give evidence at court and guiding them through the process alongside other services such as the police Witness Care Unit and the court-based Witness Service.

Recognising that victims of crime need specialist support depending on the trauma they have suffered, our specialist road death and serious injury Victim Care Officer and Rape and Serious Sexual Assault First Contact Navigator are yet more examples of the exemplary nature of our service.

VCAS Figures for Year 2024/2025		
	Number	%
Total Referrals to VCAS	12,569	
Victims supported by VCAS	5,020	40.0%
Referrals into VCAS Court Support	1,933	
Victims supported by VCAS through Court	605	31.3%
Victims who reported they were better able to engage in the Court process	62	100.0%
Victims surveyed to see whether their wellbeing had improved following support provided by VCAS	96	
Victims who reported their wellbeing had improved following the support	90	93.8%
Victims surveyed to see whether their needs had been met following support provided by VCAS	64	
Victims who reported their needs had been met following the support	61	95.4%

Championing Victims

At the forefront of my work to improve the experience of those who unfortunately have become a victim of crime are my Victims Champions.

Appointing three Victims' Champions was a national first, and their work continues to be recognised in national reports and inspections. Together, they bring the voices of victims directly to the agencies that shape their experience of the justice system, ensuring those voices lead to real change.

My approach is based on the 3Rs:

- Raise awareness of victims' issues
- Respond locally
- Reform nationally where required

Victims' Champion (Crime)

Over the past year, victims of offences ranging from rape and stalking to robbery and harassment shared 25 detailed accounts of their experiences. Despite their varied circumstances, their message was clear: victims need better communication, clearer explanations, consistent empathy, and more choice throughout the justice process.

These insights have already shaped national conversations. My Champion presented the findings at a Government Events National Conference and at Force CPD training and continues to contribute as a member of the MoJ Victims' Code Compliance Group and the Victims' Commissioner's Hub.

Locally, justice agencies reviewed these accounts and identified 18 improvements to processes and professional practice. In response, the LCJB has set up a Task & Finish Group to address the impact of court backlogs on victims – an issue that continues to affect their ability to cope, recover and fully participate.

My Champion also produced an influential report on harassment, highlighting low resolution rates and the wider impact on community confidence. This has been shared with the Chief Constable and the Victims' Commissioner and is informing discussions on potential changes to the Protection from Harassment Act.

Domestic Abuse Victims & Survivors Champion

With victims at the heart of my Police, Crime and Justice Plan, my Domestic Abuse Champion gathers lived experience to drive survivor centred change.

Working closely with commissioned and non commissioned services, the Champion has created trusted pathways for survivors to share their experiences using a trauma informed approach rooted in the SafeLives Authentic Voice Framework. These insights ensure that rights under the Domestic Abuse Act, the Victims' Code and the Victims and Prisoners Act are being promoted and upheld.



This work is already leading to tangible improvements. Survivor input has helped reshape the Domestic Abuse Workforce Training Programme with Local Authority and Public Health partners – making it more reflective of real experiences and aligned with the national ambition to halve domestic abuse within 10 years.

My Champion is ensuring survivor voices are not just heard, but embedded in policy, practice and partnership working.

Anti Social Behaviour Champion

This year, my ASB Champion received a National Exemplary Partnership Award, recognising the impact of their work and our commitment to supporting victims of ASB.

Their recommendations from the 2024 Victims' Champions Report have driven major improvements across the Force, including:

- A renewed commitment to first class victim services
- Implementation of eight HMIC PEEL recommendations
- Better online reporting and webchat options
- Reduced call handling times
- Introduction of the 'Salesforce' system to improve victim contact
- Appointment of two independent ASB Case Review Chairs
- A new ASB Strategy and Theory of Change across the Safer Durham Partnership

National reforms are also reshaping the landscape. The Housing Act 2024 abolished Section 21 "no fault" evictions, with further standards for social housing expected in 2025. The Crime and Policing Bill 2025 has been introduced, and final provisions of the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024 will determine how agencies must demonstrate compliance with the Victims' Code.

The upcoming Victims and Courts Bill will strengthen the Victims' Commissioner's powers and bring in stronger protections for victims – including compelling serious offenders to attend court for sentencing and restricting parental rights for offenders convicted of serious crimes against their children.

Lobbying for Change

To be truly effective, our justice system must be seen through the eyes of victims of crime themselves. I'm therefore pleased to report that I have been invited to join a new national advisory group to support efforts to improve the justice system for victims of crime, working with the Victims' Commissioner Baroness Newlove to shape future policy, planning and commissioning of services for victims.

In addition, following confirmation that more prisoners will be subject to early release to ease prison overcrowding, I immediately called for better resettlement packages to deter reoffending, writing to the Minister to explain my concerns.

I have also lobbied Ministers, the Judiciary and His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) to re-introduce an Inspectorate to HMCTS, the only criminal justice agency without an Inspectorate. This situation is detrimental to a cross-agency inspection which would identify recommendations to improve services to victims and improvements to the wider justice system. This proposal has gained traction with the Victims' Commissioner, London Victims' Commissioner and the Domestic Abuse Commissioner. Negotiations with Ministers continue.

Victims Conference

Highlighting my focus on the needs of victims, I hosted a high-profile conference drawing together leading UK justice experts. This was my second Victims' Conference at The Durham Centre, delivering a packed programme of speeches and workshops to highlight advances in the care and support of victims of crime.

We welcomed delegates from across health, education, policing, criminal justice, youth justice and the victim support landscape to increase our understanding of the new Victims and Prisoners Act 2024 and its implementation locally.

Strategic Victim Needs Assessment

To support the development of my Police, Crime and Justice Plan and my Commissioning framework, my office completed a Strategic Victim Needs Assessment.

The findings were also shared at the County Durham Joint Strategic Needs Assessment meetings to shape future service delivery.

Rape and Serious Sexual Offences

Providing appropriate support to victims of abuse and violence is vital for their recovery.

I'm pleased to report:

- I have provided funding to The Rape and Sexual Abuse Counselling Centre (RASCC) for the delivery of a Bystander training programme for nighttime economy workers in Durham City and specialist training to a number of agencies across Darlington and County Durham.
- I have provided funding to ensure The Meadows Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) for adults, and the Children and Young People's Clinic, based at Royal Victoria Infirmary in Newcastle upon Tyne, are compliant with the new forensic requirements.
- Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) support was provided to 457 adult victims and 67 child victims. Feedback shows that 85% felt well supported.
- The Believed Project delivers counselling to women in HMP Low Newton who have been victims of sexual violence and supported 34 people, with the counsellor receiving an award for her work.
- The Keystone Project was focused on support of the parent and carers of child victims of sexual violence. This programme was funded once again to support a further 12 people in 2024/25. 100% of people who completed the programme felt their wellbeing had improved, received the support they needed and were more optimistic moving forward.

Domestic Abuse

- I have continued to fund a Domestic Abuse Specialist who works in the force control room, to be on hand for help and advice when people call for assistance.
- The Darlington Domestic Abuse Service, delivered by Harbour, received referrals for 1490 people in 2024/25. The contract is in place until 31st March 2026 and is co-commissioned with Darlington Borough Council, with my Office contributing toward the IDVA service who supported 97 people in 2024/25.
- I agreed to co-commission the Harbour Domestic Abuse Support Service with Durham CC until 31st March 2026. The contract covers outreach (medium risk),



recovery, perpetrator programmes, ISAC (Independent Stalking Advisor Caseworker), CYP (Children and Young People) programmes and IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advisor) (high risk) services.

- I continued to contribute toward the costs for delivery of the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC).
- I continued funding for The HALO Project for employment of a specialist BME IDVA/ISVA. This service is delivered across Durham and Darlington and funded until 31 March 2026.

Hate Crime

- Too many hate-related incidents remain unreported, and I have continued to work to change this by

ensuring the public understand how seriously these crimes are taken by the police and the extensive support available for those victims who do come forward.

- I am determined to eradicate the hateful attitudes and behaviour that divide our communities and cause people to feel excluded, isolated and fearful.
- My VCAS Team has supported 323 referrals – 98% of whom were referred by the police, and 43 people took up support offered.

Stalking

- My Office was fundamental in establishing the Durham Stalking Intervention Project (D-SIP), a multi-agency collaboration between partners from statutory agencies, victim care services and the National Stalking Consortium. Its overarching aim is to reduce stalking and the harm caused to victims.
- The Paladin Police Stalking Champion's model, commissioned by my Office, was nominated for Alice Ruggles Trust Annual Award. The three-year project will see initially see 20 frontline or investigative police officers trained to understand the difference between stalking and harassment, current legislative options, the use of Stalking Protection Orders, the impact of stalking on victims, safety advice and the assessment of risk.
- I provided funding for the Alice Ruggles Trust Stalking School Assembly Project which delivered interventions to 11 schools and an estimated 5,200 pupils. The evaluated Project showed an increase in understanding and awareness of Stalking.
- I have provided funding for three independent Stalking Advocacy Caseworkers (ISACs) to work across County Durham and Darlington. These qualified caseworkers will support individuals experiencing stalking regardless of whether it is domestic or non-domestic related.
- The Independent Stalking Advocacy Casework (ISAC) Peer Support Network is up and running.



Modern Slavery & Exploitation



- Victims of modern slavery and exploitation are often hidden in plain sight. They need specialist help and support, alongside an understanding that they are likely to have been coerced into criminal activities. Many will not come forward due to concerns that they may be sentenced for their activities.
- We have a responsibility to recognise those victims and work with our partners to support them away from criminality.
- I have continued to support the County Durham and Darlington Anti-Slavery Network and funded training for Anti-Slavery Champions across the area. The Network continues to deliver on the strategy, the focus of which for 2024/25 was to identify and support training and awareness opportunities across all stakeholders, specifically the statutory duties.
- I have commissioned Changing Lives to deliver the Northeast Exploitation & Sex Work Project, funded to support victims of modern slavery and exploitation outside of the National Referral Mechanism. This service is delivered across Durham and Darlington and funded until 31 March 2026.



Road Crime

Approximately 20 people die and an average of 224 more suffer serious injuries on County Durham and Darlington’s roads each year.

In 2024-25 we welcomed the Specialist Victim Care Officer, funded by my Office, who provides practical and emotional support to anyone impacted by a serious road collision. This includes bereaved loved-ones, witnesses and those who provide life-saving care in the immediate aftermath of a fatal or life-changing road collision.

Number of fatal collisions where VCO was deployed.	31	Number of those affected.	93
Number of serious injury collisions where VCO deployed.	25	Number of those affected.	32
Other deployments 1 X Attempted Murder 1 X Police pursuit. 1 X Assault by ramming. 1 X Assault with vehicle. 1 X Burglary.	5	Number of those affected.	9



Community Peer Mentors

My award-winning Community Peers Mentors Team received confirmation that funding from Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust has been extended until February 2026 in support of the Alcohol and Substance Misuse Coordinator role. This role has proved integral in providing support to those with alcohol or substance misuse issues.

Arrangements have been put in place in partnership with the North-East Combined Authority to support those negatively impacted, directly and indirectly, by gambling addiction. This has enabled the appointment of a dedicated ‘Gambling Coordinator’ who is working with all services to provide additional and ongoing support to those affected, as well as their families. This includes those affected by suicide where they are also working alongside ‘Gambling With Lives’.

In addition to these projects my Community Peer Mentor Service also provides a service, through the deployment of volunteer peer mentors, to support vulnerable and/or isolated people right across County Durham and Darlington.

Amicable/Giving Time Project

A partnership between Giving Time and Amicable, managed by the Community Peer Mentor Scheme, has been established to provide a progression route for Problem Solving Mentors and to enable the programme to keep in touch with participants following their release from prison.

Giving Time provides Problem-Solving Mentor Training with the delivery of a volunteering workshop and will link with the mentors prior to and upon their release from prison to broker them into volunteering.

- Thirty-two Problem Support Mentors trained
- 360 recorded interactions where support was given to peers by Amicable-trained mentors.
- Eleven Problem Support Mentors currently active within the prison estate.
- Three Mentor Celebration Events taken place where all who completed the programme received a certificate of completion & reference for York University.

CPMs referrals	2024/25
All referrals	1439
Police	566
NHS	238
VCAS	310
Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub	243



Young Victims

Recognising the needs of young people as victims of crime is important to me and I provide both Darlington and Durham Youth Justice Services with funding to extend their victim liaison provision to all young victims of crime.

This includes delivery of the Youth in Mind programme in Durham where young people are supported through peer and group delivery and many of those attending go on to be group leaders offering the peer support which is so beneficial.

In Darlington young victims of crime are offered one to one support with the victim liaison officer as well as being offered the opportunity to be involved in the Duke of Edinburgh award.

Community Grants

In addition, I provide grants to local community services supporting victims of crime. These include:

- Just for Women Centre: £53,300 including £28,100 to establish a dedicated hub in Durham providing essential support to vulnerable individuals.
- The Cornforth Partnership: £40,162 for peer-led support and wellbeing services linked with domestic abuse and sexual violence.
- Aspire: £22,000 to support a community outreach service for women.



Campaigning for Victims

My campaigns team and I have been vociferous in our support for the following events:

Victim Care and Advice Service Support campaign:

This campaign promoted the excellent suite of support services available throughout the victim's journey. Victims who had been supported by the Service worked with us to create videos around their experiences.

Child to Parent Violence and Abuse Awareness Day:

An animation, created in partnership with Respect, Durham Arts and Investing in Children, raised awareness of child and adolescent to parent violence and abuse, with signposting to help available.

Anti-Slavery Awareness Week:

This campaign included ways in which people can spot signs of modern slavery, which is often a misunderstood area.

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG):

I used the 16 Days of Action campaign to challenge violence against women and girls, working with VCAS to create case studies based on lived experience.

The funding I provided for the Robiquity system has improved the process and wait times for Claire's Law requests and we worked with the Force and Claire's Aunt, Carol Whicher, to raise awareness of stories like Claire's to encourage victims to reach out for help and report their experiences.

VCAS Post Office scandal signposting communications:

This campaign, which ran across all our social media channels, encouraged those affected by the Post Office scandal to reach out for support.

Sexual Abuse and Sexual Violence Awareness Week:

Our week-long campaign was designed to encourage people to report incidents and signpost victims to the numerous organisations that we support which help to tackle sexual violence and abuse.

Retail Crime VCAS support awareness campaign

This campaign highlighted the violence that retail workers can experience and the impact this can have to their wider lives, alongside signposting them to the specific support available from VCAS.





SAFER People, SAFER Places

Following my extensive consultation I set the key themes within my Police, Crime and Justice Plan, designed to make County Durham and Darlington safer places in which to live, work and visit,

Residents and businesses were clear regarding their priorities, which I have made my priorities.

My overriding aim has always been to protect people and businesses from harm, crime and anti-social behaviour. I am therefore pleased to report that consistent progress has been made, illustrated by the highlights in this report.

In 2024-25 we welcomed additional police officers; the new Custody Hub; a new call handling telephone system and additional resources into the control room, plus additional PCSOs into neighbourhoods as well as more special constables.

I'm proud that we have kept our promises, it has improved community safety across the force area.

Serious Violence

I secured an additional £368, 947 from the Home Office in order to fund interventions to prevent and reduce Serious Violence for year 2024/2025. The achievements are remarkable.

- To ensure the money was invested to best possible effect, I asked a panel of subject matter experts, including representatives from Probation, Youth Justice, Public Health, Durham Constabulary and an independent representative from Northumbria Violence Reduction Unit to evaluate bids against the Serious Violence Strategy.
- Eleven interventions were commissioned, spread across the four strategic priorities identified within the Strategic Needs Assessment that would deliver over the course of 2024/2025.

- I set up four operational groups to provide governance and oversight of the activity, each focused on a priority area. These groups provided regular updates to the Strategic Group and had oversight of any operational issues.
- An initial evaluation of the four commissioned youth interventions highlighted key strengths to the approach and areas to improve
- I am pleased to report a 4.8% (279) reduction in recorded serious violence offences across the year.
- Recorded violence with injury offences achieved a 5.4% reduction to the previous year.
- For the year ending December 2024, Durham had a rate per 100,000 population of 60.0 for offences involving a knife or sharp instrument. Durham remains well below the England and Wales rate as well as below the rates seen for Durham's Most Similar Groups, bar South Wales.
- During the first three months of 2025 only three possession offences occurred in Darlington, the lowest figure seen in this dataset.
- My funding allocation for 2025/2026, announced in March, remained unchanged.





Alcohol, Drugs and Gambling related Crime and Harm

So much human misery is created by addiction. I feel strongly that people should receive help to overcome their addictions and I used World Suicide Prevention day to highlight the pressing need to address gambling

addiction as a contributing factor to suicide. In addition to signposting people to support, the campaign illustrated the ways in which those affected can be supported away from future harm.

Night-Time Economy

Alcohol

'Reducing Alcohol Harm' – Balance North-East Blueprint:

This campaign calls for urgent national action to address the significant impact alcohol has on health, crime and social care.

With 82% of North East adults recognising alcohol as a major issue, I robustly supported the blueprint's evidence-based approach to tackle alcohol-related harm. By working together with leaders across the region, together we are creating safer and healthier communities, free from the devastating effects of alcohol misuse.



Alcohol Awareness Week:

As the national lead for Addiction and Substance Misuse, I was keen to make more people aware of how to recognise disordered drinking habits and the support available. Alcohol is the driver for so many unwanted behaviours, and I will not relent in my work to tackle problems.

Drugs

Ketamine

I successfully lobbied the government to seek expert advice on the reclassification of ketamine to a Class A drug as part of my role as the national Joint Lead for Addictions and Substance Misuse on behalf of the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC).

Nitrous Oxide ban

After significant lobbying, I was instrumental in securing a ban on nitrous oxide – seen by many as a gateway to harder drugs – and supported the implementation of a 'drug testing on arrest' programme locally for acquisitive crime offenders to provide a direct referral to support services for those who test positive for drugs.

Naloxone

I have expanded the availability of opiate overdose reversal medication drug Naloxone to police custody staff, police officers on the street, those who are released from custody and more recently Community Peer Mentor and community outreach workers.

Chair National Drugs Forum

I became co-chair of the National Drugs Lead Forum, meeting stakeholders from across government and policing. I am responsible for tracking the progress of drug strategy priorities and steering future work to ensure the approach to drug harm in England and Wales remains as effective as possible in the long-term.

Seeking investment

I campaigned for further investment in Long-Acting Injectable Buprenorphine (LAIB), which has shown real benefits in reducing opioid withdrawal symptoms and the desire to use them.



Gambling

There are around 496 gambling-related suicides every year, a shocking figure. As the Joint Lead for Addictions and substance misuse I joined MPs and bereaved families in Westminster to raise awareness of the impact of gambling-linked suicide. The Gambling with Lives Annual Parliamentary Forum enabled parliamentarians and national safety leaders to meet families bereaved by gambling suicide. Unlike other gambling charities, Gambling with Lives supports the families and friends of those who have taken their lives through gambling.

Spiking

Freshers Week Spiking Awareness:

I provided a three-week awareness campaign to encourage young students to report spiking. This was not based around any known prevalence of spiking incidents but focused on educating students in relation to dangerous drinking habits and what can happen as a result. We must give victims confidence that they will be believed when they come forward.

Spiking has been made a separate offence following my lobbying.

Knife Crime

Zombie Knives surrender and compensation scheme:

Having supported the calls to make possession of “zombie-style” knives or machetes illegal I welcomed the legislation’s introduction on 24 September 2024. Every move we make to reduce knife crime is a step in the right direction and I was proud to support the Home Office campaign for a ‘Zombie’ surrender and compensation scheme. My campaign highlighted the ban and made people aware of how and where to dispose of these weapons safely.

Trauma Kits

I provided funding for trauma cabinets in key locations in Darlington and Durham City to help save lives in the event of an emergency. The new cabinets have been installed in highly visible areas of the city and borough and are accessible to the public to help people preserve or save a life in circumstances where a person has sustained an injury and is experiencing significant blood loss.

Business and Retail Crime

NEROCU Operation Nightstar

This initiative is a proactive intelligence gathering and evidence-led operation targeting shops selling illegal vapes and tobacco. I worked with officers from Durham Constabulary, the North East Regional Organised Crime Unit (NEROCU), Trading Standards, Public Health and local councils to protect the vulnerable and dismantle illegal activities.

Retail Crime VCAS support awareness campaign

This campaign highlighted the violence that retail workers can experience and the impact this can have to their wider lives, alongside signposting them to the specific support available from my Victim Care and Advice Service.

Safer Business Action Week

I was pleased to support this important week for local businesses by signposting where businesses and workers can obtain support in the aftermath of retail crime and highlighting residents' experiences of business crime in their workplaces with a series of testimonies. I attended the Chester Le Street market with the Force, to understand the issues that impact the safety of retail employees and the prevalence of shoplifting and anti-social behaviour that disrupt businesses and result in significant financial losses following the launch of our Safer Business Task Group last year.

ShopKind

The ShopKind campaign aims to unite the retail sector in tackling violence and abuse against shopworkers. The initiative encouraged retailers and their workers to become ShopKind Champions to help tackle and eliminate violence and abuse against shop workers.

Radio contact

I have funded 20 handheld radios to help tackle crime and anti-social behaviour on Aycliffe Business Park in Newton Aycliffe. The investment of £9k enables businesses to communicate with each other to warn of suspicious activity.

I am committed to supporting businesses and retailers against crime, this is part of a wider plan to expand Business Watch schemes across County Durham.



Protecting Young People

Young people living in Cornforth and nearby areas have improved access to leisure and learning opportunities thanks to a funding boost worth almost £37k.

I agreed to provide funding to The Cornforth Partnership to support its plans to expand youth provision in the Cornforth, Bishop Middleham, Ferryhill, Chilton and Newton Aycliffe areas to prevent crime and keep young people safe.

The award-winning charity has been delivering youth and community work for more than 26 years, clocking up significant experience designing projects aimed at reducing anti-social behaviour (ASB).

My grant will support a new pilot involving Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations, local authorities, schools and the police with four key goals:

- To create an Area Youth Forum bringing providers and services together regularly to discuss how to improve outcomes for young people in the area and agree a collective plan of action based on data.
- To deliver youth work training to increase the capacity and skills of the local community to provide additional

youth programmes and work and increase the skills of staff and volunteers at local organisations.

- To recruit dedicated youth work staff who will coordinate the project and work with schools, youth organisations and communities to gather feedback on the needs of youth people and relay this to the Area Youth Forum.
- To provide funding for social activities and new opportunities to engage young people, covering the purchase of equipment and resources to add value to existing provision.

Future Pathways

I provided a grant worth £118,010 to Future Pathways, an alternative provision provider working with young people who are disengaged from their communities, to deliver services for vulnerable young people living in the Darlington and Ferryhill areas.

This was a major new programme to boost opportunities for young people at risk of being drawn into crime and anti-social behaviour thanks to my six-figure investment.



The new scheme involves young people aged 10 to 16 in a range of positive activities including football, walking, boxing, bowling and biking to improve their mental health and wellbeing.

Workshops are also being delivered as part of the programme to address risk-taking behaviours, focusing on issues such as knife crime, gang involvement, child sexual exploitation, addiction and dependency, sex, relationships and consent, serious violence, county lines and mental health and wellbeing.

Participants are given the opportunity to become ambassadors of ASB prevention with the opportunity to work with professional bodies to discourage other young people from becoming involved in nuisance behaviour.

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

I used the 16 Days of Action campaign to challenge violence against women and girls, working with the in-house Victim Care and Advice Service to create case studies based on lived experience.

Domestic Abuse

I was one of the first PCCs to work alongside the force and introduce a domestic abuse specialist into the control room to ensure calls for help are managed appropriately from the earliest opportunity.

I am pleased to report that the Constabulary is part of a national pilot placing domestic abuse specialists in the 999 control rooms of five police forces.

The move is part of a new government approach to improve the police response to victims of domestic abuse and halve violence against women and girls in a decade.

The specialist:

- Provides advice to officers responding to incidents on the ground
- Reviews incoming domestic abuse cases and their risk assessments
- Listens to live calls and provides feedback to call handlers on how to engage with victims
- Facilitates training sessions on domestic abuse for force control room staff
- Ensures victims are referred to specialist support services and manually check over decisions made by 999 call handlers to identify missed opportunities to safeguard victims.



Domestic Abuse Outreach Service

The Durham Outreach Domestic Abuse Service, delivered by Harbour, received referrals for 8790 people in 2024/25. I co-commission this service with Durham County Council and feedback is reassuringly positive.

Feedback review:

"This girl is finally back!!! It may have taken longer than I would have liked but I have got there in the end. I can't help but wonder how life would have been if it wasn't for yourself, Heidi and the rest of the team. It has taken a huge amount of strength and determination to get us all to this point but we never gave up on our hopes and dreams. I am unbelievably proud of us all but we could not have done it without you and your colleagues. So thank you from the bottom of my heart. I may have felt at one point that I had lost everything mostly myself but I have gained far more. It's true what they say hard times only make you stronger and more resilient. So here's to the future, it certainly looks a whole lot brighter."



Clare's Law

In a milestone move, I funded a new digital solution which has revolutionised the way police in Durham process disclosures about a person's violent or abusive past to protect future victims.

The new system was developed by leading intelligence automation and artificial intelligence service provider Robiquity to streamline the way requests made under Clare's Law are managed.

Clare's Law, also known as the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS), gives members of the public the right to ask the police if their current or ex-partner may pose a risk to them.

The move has speeded up the disclosure process, which is, quite literally, a life-saver.

Sexual Abuse and Sexual Violence Awareness Week

This was a week-long campaign designed to encourage people to report incidents and signpost victims to the numerous organisations that we support which help to tackle sexual violence and abuse.

Rape and Serious Sexual Offences (RASSO)

These appalling crimes have a lifelong impact on their victims. It is paramount we provide the best care possible to support recovery and walk with survivors through every step of the justice process to eradicate any further trauma. This is why victims are front and centre in my new Police, Crime and Justice Plan. I am adamant that justice is seen through the eyes of victims of crime at all costs and will provide ongoing opportunities for victims to use their voice and actively contribute to future services.

The force relentlessly pursues the perpetrators of sexual crimes, employing new resources and investigative strategies that focus firmly on the suspect and ensure the rights of victims are 'front and centre'. These efforts have seen Durham Constabulary consistently securing a higher charge rate in comparison to other forces nationally for rape and sexual offences.

Stalking and Harassment

I provided funding for a 20-strong cohort of police officers to be trained as Stalking Champions. This covers the difference between stalking and harassment, current legislative options, the use of Stalking Protection Orders, the impact of stalking on victims, safety advice and the

assessment of risk. This is a groundbreaking pilot and part of my commitment to step up the response to Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG).

I have worked hard to raise awareness of both the Stalking Champions and our specially appointed Domestic Abuse Victim and Survivors Champion and the support they provide.

National Stalking Awareness Week support:

I worked with partners, including the Force, the Victim Care and Advice Service, Paladin and other providers, to create a video around available support for stalking and the ways victims can report these crimes if they are not ready to do so through the police.

Modern Slavery and Exploitation

I have funded a three-year partnership project, delivered by the County Durham Anti-Slavery Network, which brings multiple agencies together to share information, improve intelligence gathering and ensure the county is better equipped to respond to victims.

Anti-Slavery Champions will act as a single point of contact across the Durham force area and within their own organisations, providing advice and guidance to their peers and putting into practice what they have learnt to improve the response to victims of slavery and human trafficking.

The content of the training has been provided by several organisations including the Snowdrop Project, Barnardo's, B-Equipt with additional contributions from County Durham Anti-Slavery Network, The Children's Society, NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board and the Durham and Darlington Child Exploitation Group.

Champions pledged a three-year commitment to the model and received enhanced bespoke training throughout the project to take back to their organisations to prevent modern slavery.

Anti-Slavery Network

I also provided funding for the role of Chair of Durham Anti-Slavery Network, who works to provide expertise on modern slavery and human trafficking, alongside the creation of a multi-agency partnership in Durham to support these issues. The campaign included ways in which people can spot signs of modern slavery, as this is often quite a misunderstood area.

Hate Crime

The disturbances that followed the Southport atrocity, when three young girls were stabbed to death, were horrifying and disgusting. There is no place for hate of any kind in County Durham and Darlington. I was swift to work with our partners to make it clear that the mindless rioters responsible for these offences should be punished and held accountable for their actions. That includes those who plant the seed of such clashes under the cloak of anonymity on social media. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Durham Constabulary officers for their courage and bravery in very challenging and dangerous situations.

Problem Solving

Mental Health

I have also supported local programmes, through my Problem-solving orientated policing fund.

Response Policing Week

We all want to be confident that the police are there when we need them. The focus for Response Policing Week was to highlight the difficult, demanding, and unpredictable work that our response officers do to keep the people of County Durham and Darlington safe. I was delighted to join Seaham and Easington Response team to experience what a day in the life of a Response Officer is like. Inspirational.





SAFER NEIGHBOURHOODS

Neighbourhood policing is the bedrock of British policing and the foundation upon which public confidence and satisfaction is built.

The officers, PCSOs and volunteers who work on the ground in our communities are the face of the force and instrumental to solving the problems that cause harm and allow crime to thrive. I value them very highly which this is why I have fought continuously to protect them since I was first elected in 2021.

I am pleased to report that the number of officers and staff in our policing teams has been boosted by the recruitment of 18 PCSOs and the further 26 police officers funded as part of the Government's Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee. A further tranche is expected in the coming months.

My priorities for Neighbourhood Policing reflect the views of the people, businesses, and organisations that I have spoken to, consulted and work with every day.

Feedback from my consultation showed that for the public, police visibility, neighbourhood crime and anti-social behaviour were key priorities.

So I'm proud to report that strong progress is already being made in tackling the crimes that cause residents most harm with reductions in almost all categories of Neighbourhood Crime. This will only intensify with more boots on the ground.

Neighbourhood crime (which includes Robbery, Residential Burglary, Theft from the Person and Vehicle Crime) fell by 18.2% during in 2024/25 compared to 2023/24.

On a lighter note, I was also pleased to see my bulb planting scheme, which sees perpetrators of crime giving back to their communities, scooping a top award!

I was presented with the Judge's Discretionary Award at the Northumbria in Bloom Awards for the County Durham and Darlington Community Reparation Scheme.

My scheme involved planting bulbs in anti-social behaviour (ASB) hotspot locations across the county as part of a strategy to build pride in local communities and deter crime and nuisance behaviour.

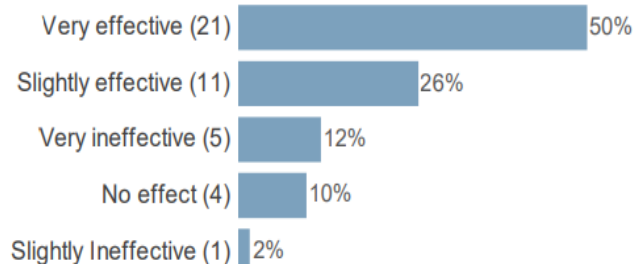
Anti-Social Behaviour

Great progress has been made thanks to a clear focus boosted by the £2m I secured from the Home Office to tackle Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB).

- In ASB 'hotspot' areas of the county 17,494 hours of additional patrols took place in 2024-25.
- 154 Arrests
- 57 Stop and Search
- 310 Informal Warnings
- 31 Community Protection Warning
- 17 Community Protection Notices
- 10 Dispersal Notice
- 196 enforcement actions due to PSPOs
- 127 Fixed Penalty Notices

I asked what those involved thought about the programme.

Based on your experience, how effective do you think hotspot police patrols have been in reducing ASB and crime in public places?



National Award

I was delighted to see my Anti-Social Behaviour Victims' Champion win a coveted national award.

Andrea Patterson, who was the first-ever Anti-social Behaviour (ASB) Victims' Champion to be appointed by a PCC nationally, secured the Exemplary Partnership Award in the final of the UK ASB Awards organised by ASB experts Resolve, beating off competition from dozens of entries nationwide.

So much human misery is created by addiction. I feel strongly that people should receive help to overcome their addictions and I used World Suicide Prevention day to highlight the pressing need to address gambling addiction as a contributing factor to suicide. In addition to signposting people to support, the campaign illustrated the ways in which those affected can be supported away from future harm.

I was delighted to see my Anti-Social Behaviour Victims' Champion win a coveted national award for 'exemplary partnership work' to tackle anti-social behaviour.

Andrea Patterson, who was the first-ever Anti-social Behaviour (ASB) Victims' Champion to be appointed by a PCC nationally, secured the Exemplary Partnership Award in the final of the UK ASB Awards organised by ASB experts Resolve, beating off competition from dozens of entries nationwide.

Immediate Justice

The £1m I secured from the Home Office to deliver Immediate Justice to the perpetrators of anti-social behaviour proved to be effective.

In 2024-25 the following referrals were made, with nearly 100% compliance rate of those completed.

Organisation	Number of Referrals
Darlington Youth Justice	37
Durham Youth Justice	48
Adults	17

I have also:

- Supported a new online tool launched in partnership with Durham Constabulary, Livin and Durham County Council to help victims of anti-social behaviour in Aycliffe access support to resolve the issue.
- Doubled the funding for neighbourhood warden patrols in Pelton to further boost public safety and tackle anti-social behaviour.
- Invested £18k into Durham Constabulary's Winter Nights 2024 operation to tackle burglary and car crime.
- Provided a grant worth £118,010 to Future Pathways, an alternative provision provider working with young people who are disengaged from their communities, to deliver services for vulnerable young people living in the Darlington and Ferryhill areas.

Community Safety Co-ordinators

- When it comes to increasing trust and confidence and tackling community-based issues, it is so important to have the right people in place, to reduce the demand on police officers' time.
- That's why I am delighted with the successful appointment of four Community Safety Coordinators through my funding, who are embedded in Neighbourhood Policing Teams. Their roles are to coordinate activities, strengthen community relationships and address local priorities, ensuring our neighbourhoods remain at the heart of policing.

Working with Children

- My Commissioner's Challenge, an interactive safety project to protect children from the risk of online harm and exploitation, has gone from strength to strength.
- The rewards-based scheme engages Year 7 secondary school pupils in a range of activities designed to boost their knowledge and awareness of online safety risks.
- Pupils are then encouraged to take their booklets home to carry out modules alongside their parents or guardians to ensure the adults at home are also up to speed with the threats posed to young people's safety.

- I have also supported the Durham Action Against Crime (DAAC) Mini Police project. This is a highly effective, established project run by DAAC on behalf of and alongside Durham Constabulary. This is an innovative project aimed at 9-11 year olds in primary schools across County Durham and Darlington, to provide a positive experience of policing, and encourage good citizenship.
- Both projects have received extremely positive feedback, and have reached nearly 5000 young people.

Mini Police and PCC Challenge	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Total
Total number of schools	46	56	34 (30)	136 (166)
ASB hotspot areas	14	14	19(18)	47(65)
Total number of sessions	56	75	47(24)	178(202)
Total number of children	1190	1941	1145(450)	4276(4726)

Public Contact

Call-handling has been revolutionised by my £1.5m investment.

Between April 2024 and March 2025, the control room handled more than 310,000 calls to 101 and I’m particularly pleased to report that call handling times were at a record low by the end of the year.

Real progress is being made thanks to the investment in technology, digital contact methods and people.

24 new call handlers completed training and mentoring as part of an ongoing recruitment drive to strengthen the control room team and further enhance service levels.

For emergency 999 calls, 91.7% are now answered within ten seconds, up from previous years and continuing a steady rise since the start of 2023/24. Performance is now matching national standards, with further improvements expected.

In March 2024, Durham Constabulary also transitioned to Single Online Home, a national website that allows the public to submit more queries, report crimes, and complete applications online. This move brings Durham in line with the majority of UK police forces and provides a convenient, accessible way for residents to engage with police services around the clock – helping to reduce pressure on call lines.

Additional enhancements introduced last year include the launch of an automated victim update system, which provides real-time updates via text or email.

After reporting a crime, victims can now register on the MyDurham Portal, where they can track the progress of their case, contact the officer in charge, and feel more informed and supported throughout the investigation.

Access to the secure portal is provided via a link sent by text or email once a crime is logged. The system is currently available for selected crime types, including:

- Criminal damage
- Vehicle crime
- Burglary (residential and business)
- Violence against the person
- Harassment
- Anti-social behaviour (nuisance and personal)
- Suspicious activity

For those who may not have access to the internet or prefer other means, traditional contact methods remain fully available.



EXEMPLARY PARTNERSHIP AWARD



Campaigning to keep our Neighbourhoods Safer

Throughout the year I have added my voice and support to the following campaign;

Neighbourhood Watch Week

I work with Neighbourhood Watch all year round to reach out to communities with crime prevention messages and to encourage crime reporting. In this special week, I was pleased to highlight the successes of our partnership, speaking with hundreds of residents in local towns, raising awareness of the Network across County Durham and Darlington, and showcasing how they make their communities safer and more resilient places to live.

Anti-Social Behaviour Roadshow

Tackling anti-social behaviour has been a key focus since I was elected and 2024-25 saw the Team visiting hotspot locations across County Durham and Darlington to see how the targeted approach, using the Trailblazer funding secured by my Office had delivered results. As a bonus, the Roadshow provided useful information as I developed my Police, Crime and Justice Plan 2025-29.

Anti-Social Behaviour Awareness Week

This week was a platform to share the progress being made to tackle anti-social behaviour as a result of the additional funding I secured from Anti-social behaviour Trailblazer and Safer Streets projects. We also highlighted the work of some of our 'Community Heros', who help us work with communities to encourage reporting and educate young people to divert them away from crime and anti-social behaviour.

We were able to shine a spotlight on the Durham Agency Against Crime Police Cadets - Winners of the Durham Difference Volunteer of the Year award. The cadets are heavily involved in the 'hotspots' policing scheme and are thought to be the first in the country to be given such a prominent role to play in its delivery.



Winter Nights

Crime prevention is key and I provided £18,000 to boost the Constabulary's efforts to prevent burglary and car crime over the winter months. The initiative, which ran until January 2025, saw hundreds of householders handed free crime prevention equipment and security devices including fake TVs, UV pens, light timers, window alarms and door chimes to reduce their risk of becoming a victim of crime.

NEROCU Operation Nightstar

This initiative is a proactive intelligence gathering and evidence-led operation targeting shops selling illegal vapes and tobacco. I worked with officers from Durham Constabulary, the North East Regional Organised Crime Unit (NEROCU), Trading Standards, Public Health and local councils to protect the vulnerable and dismantle illegal activities.

Additional targeted funding can make a huge difference. I'm proud to report that funding from my Problem-solving Orientated Policing (POP) fund has delivered the following:

Neighbourhoods	£	Neighbourhoods	£
Park it Right, Park it Safe: After a successful pilot, additional funding has been granted to role the project out to a further 11 schools in County Durham and Darlington.	£3,465.00	Bearpark Community Day: Providing a community event in Bearpark, Co Durham with the aim to improve Police engagements with residents and families, promoting the work Police and services do in the area, improving confidence in those services around tackling local problems including anti-social behaviour, encouraging community cohesion.	£500.00
Community Roadshow Chester Le Street: Funding to hold local Crime Prevention drop-ins throughout the year, give crime prevention advice and give out bespoke advice and equipment to local residents and victims.	£3,000.00	Sedgefield Gazebo: Purchase of a gazebo for the Neighbourhood Policing Team to take to community events and engage with the public to help tackle ASB.	£1,389.80
Thermal Imaging Cameras: After a successful pilot, additional funding was agreed to provide an extra seven thermal imaging cameras. These were distributed across the Neighbourhood Police Teams in the County.	£9,939.10	Chester Le Street Activity Week: Week of activities to reduce ASB within the Chester-Le-Street area whilst also providing a free event for families. The week-long event draws youths away from ASB throughout the week and is an ideal free event for those families in the area. The event runs in the Summer Holidays.	£5,000.00
Prevention Carousel: Delivering preventative messages empowering young people with the knowledge to keep themselves and others safe, and to prevent involvement in Crime and ASB.	£6,414.60	Bikesafe: Purchase of 120 copies of the Motorcycle Roadcraft 2020, to complement the day's education provided to participants in the BikeSafe scheme.	£1,679.16
Koper Curve: 'Cardboard Copper' to be used as a preventative measure in Durham City and across all force areas, targeting Anti-Social Behaviour and Crime Hot Spot locations particularly around retail premises.	£719.00	Thornley Pump Track: With £80,000 match funded contribution from local authority/councillors to provide facilities for youths to combat ASB in the area.	£10,000.00
Winter Nights: Initiative aimed to reduce the number of residential burglaries, theft from motor vehicles (TFMV) and theft of motor vehicles (TOMV), during the winter nights.	£16,000.00	Hotspot policing Training: Providing hotspot training to Officers and Staff will assist in being proactive when tackling crime and ASB as it will allow the Force respond to data in order to ensure we maximise the use of our existing resources to deliver maximum benefits and results.	£7,088.00
Seaham CCTV: With match funding of £2328 from local councillors, to allow for CCTV monitoring to continue in Seaham Town Centre to assist in deterring offenders/identifying offenders, capturing intelligence and evidence.	£5,000.00	Welfare Van: Contribution towards a van being converted into a welfare van.	£10,000.00





SAFER COUNTRYSIDE

County Durham and Darlington are primarily rural areas, home to some of the most beautiful countryside and coastal landscapes in Britain. These areas are home to thriving tourist attractions and agricultural businesses while making a valuable contribution to our mental and physical well-being.

Throughout the year I have worked to establish, with our rural specialist partners, how we can make our rural communities safer for all those who work, live and visit the area. I have backed this up with substantial investment to ensure we have the tools and technology to respond to the problems that matter most to our rural communities.

No one knows our communities better than the people who live in them which is why I consulted them on their policing priorities.

Priority	
Agricultural vehicle theft	35.4%
Livestock theft	21.1%
Plant theft	9.8%
Fly tipping	42.5%
Dog attacks	21.4%
Hare coursing	8.6%
Trespassing	15.2%
Crop damage	7.5%

National position

The National Rural Crime Unit seized and recovered £4.4m worth of stolen agricultural vehicles and machinery last year.

The estimated cost of tractor thefts reported to NFU Mutual saw a rise of 17% to £1.5m as criminals sought out machines and their parts. Likewise, trailer theft made a worrying resurgence, up 15% to £1.3m.

NFU Mutual's latest survey of 1,136 dog owners found only two-fifths could always recall their dog, yet only 43% believed their dog was capable of causing the death or injury of farm animals.

NFU Mutual is aware of distressing accounts from farmers who have fallen victim to illegal and anti-social activities such as hare-coursing, trespassing, joyriding, and fly-tipping, and are living in fear of further attacks and retaliation from organised criminals.

Farmers don't just work on their land, they live on it too, so these crimes, as with other types of rural crime, can be hugely distressing to the rural community. They are also usually in remote areas, or without close neighbours, making them vulnerable to criminality.

I am determined to do more to prevent such incidents from occurring and protect farmers and their families.

My Police, Crime and Justice Plan has clear commitments to:

- Understand and respond to the needs of rural communities by tailoring services and ensuring rural voices are heard.
- Build greater resilience to crime through Ruralwatch groups, parish partnerships, and better coordination with national bodies like the NFU and Countryside Alliance.
- Increase confidence in reporting to the police, exploring the potential for a dedicated Rural Special Constabulary team and ensuring victims are not disadvantaged.
- Invest in the latest technology including drones, GPS trackers, ANPR, CCTV, Speedwatch vans, and handheld thermal imaging cameras.
- Provide social value for victims by rural-proofing all policies and making sure rural victims receive the same access to justice as those in urban areas.



Action Already Underway

I have backed these priorities with substantial investment:

- Rurali Project (£200K from Safer Streets funding) – funding Ruralwatch Coordinators and an intelligence officer to share intelligence and bring offenders to justice. The project has seen more than £200k of Safer Streets funding directed into two new Ruralwatch Coordinators and a dedicated intelligence officer repetitive.
- “Police STOP ME!” stickers (£1,571.40) – helping officers identify stolen farm machinery, now adopted nationally. The stickers are applied to horseboxes and other agricultural trailers and the type of trailer and vehicle registration number noted. The idea is that if the horsebox/trailer is seen out on the road between 10pm and 5am, the police will stop the vehicle and check the driver details against these records.
- Hotspot patrols (£1m secured from Home Office) – targeting anti-social behaviour in both rural and urban areas.
- Community funding – including CCTV cameras for villages such as Coxhoe, helping locals directly tackle crime and ASB.
- New Campaign: ‘Don’t Stay Silent’ urging residents to report suspicious activities
- Funding for four Community Speedwatch vans.
- Funding of 16 new drone pilots and four drones, enabling the force to provide 24x7 coverage. This is particularly useful when searching for vulnerable persons, locating anti-social use of off-road bikes, tracking suspects fleeing the scene of an incident and covering vast swathes of isolated countryside.
- Funding for 10 new re-deployable CCTV covert cameras and related equipment in support of Durham County Council’s work to target fly-tipping hotspots across the county and bring more offenders to justice.
- Funding to address the menace of off-road bikes as part of Operation Endurance, which sees officers seizing bikes on the spot if they are being ridden illegally and anti-socially. The force now uses a range of tactics including drone technology to tackle this top public concern.





SAFER ROADS

Road Safety is another top priority for residents. I am campaigning at every level to change legislation and strengthen enforcement to make our roads safer for all users.

In my recent public consultation, 80% of residents said drink/drug driving should be a priority for the force while 50% prioritised mobile phone use, 39% speeding and 6% wearing of seatbelts. These are the Fatal Four causes of road deaths.

We know from our extensive engagement work with the public that they support increased activity including enforcement to make their roads safer.

- There has been a slight increase (3.5%) in all road casualties between January and December 2024-25 compared to 2023-24.
- The Durham Roads and Armed Policing Unit has been out in force throughout 2024/25 to address the Fatal Four with significant action taken against lawbreakers. During Q4, 8,560 speeding offences, 20 mobile phone offences and 14 seatbelt offences were detected.
- Operation Take Off launched in Q3/Q4. This is a first for the North East and sees roads policing officers targeting holidaymakers who decide to drive under the influence once they touch down at the airport. It follows the tragic deaths of eight-month old Zackary Blades and Karlene Warner last year.
- I funded Op Bonnet over Easter and it was shocking to see that over one weekend, there were 37 drink and drug driving arrests.
- I have jointly funded a new community Speedwatch van to improve safety on our roads and empower residents to support our efforts to tackle speeding. The vehicle is equipped with a large Speed Indication Device which displays each passing motorist's current speed as well as built-in ANPR technology to record registration plates, speed and an image of those vehicles breaching the limit.

Education is critical and during this last quarter, the County Durham and Darlington Road Safety Partnership has continued the delivery of sessions for young drivers and passengers aged 17-24. Over 100 sessions have been delivered to date since its launch with over 4000 young people reached.

We know from the statistics that young people are more likely to be killed or seriously injured in the first few months after they have passed their test. In my next report I will be able to update you on the work I'm doing to tackle that.

Campaigning

I have continued to work alongside bereaved families and the haulage industry in a series of high-profile campaigns to positively influence driver behaviour and push hard for tougher penalties for those who recklessly endanger other road users.

- The success of this campaigning is evident by the response from local companies and I am now building on this work, writing to haulage and transport firms across County Durham and Darlington to support our 'Life is Precious' campaign. The campaign was created by Mari Johnson following the death of her mother, Elaine Sullivan, and stepfather, David Daglish, from Seaham, on the A1 (M) in 2021 and has been strongly supported by the Constabulary.
- I have used my voice nationally as part of a powerful coalition of experts, emergency services leaders and bereaved families including Karen and John Rowlands from Durham in calling on the Government to implement Graduated Driving Licensing (GDL) to prevent more avoidable tragedies involving young drivers and passengers on the roads, hosting a webinar bringing together key decision makers. Karen and John Rowlands' son, Andrew, was tragically killed in a car crash in June 2020 at the age of 18 as a passenger.

- I am also supporting a campaign brought by Shalorna Warner to introduce mandatory lifelong driving bans for drink or drug drivers who claim lives and harsher sentencing tariffs, calling for parity with murder in extreme cases.
- Nationally, I have offered my full support to the British Medical Association's (BMA) national campaign to cut the drink-driving limit in England, Wales and Northern Ireland from 80mg per 100 ml of blood (0.08%), or 35 micrograms per 100 ml of breath, to lower levels seen in other countries, speaking at a national conference alongside health and road safety experts. I will continue to lobby Government and influencers to achieve this goal.
- I have called for more haulage, delivery and taxi firms to implement tighter checks of their employees to protect all road users from drink and drug drivers. I am preparing to host a national summit focused on tackling illicit substance use on the UK's roads which will bring together victims, safety advocates, industry experts and policy leaders to explore how organisations can take proactive steps to manage substance use, improve employee wellbeing, and keep the UK's roads safe.
- I have been tireless in my work with the Project EDWARD (Every Day Without a Road Death) team. Dozens of young apprentices were educated about the 'fatal four' driving risks as part of a project aimed at young people who may be missed by traditional road safety education streams, due to having not attended higher education settings. Durham County Council apprentices joined Durham Roads & Armed Policing, DCC Road Safety Team and representatives from Project EDWARD for a young drivers education session covering key risk areas for young drivers which can often be the cause of collisions, in the hope of eradicating road deaths.
- I was astonished that lessons had not already been learned in the wake of the countless deaths. So I was pleased to be asked to campaign for 'Forget Me Not Families United'. This campaign seeks to strengthen legislation around the purchase of illegal and unroadworthy vehicles without compulsory checks. I continue to support this campaign, lobbying MPs and calling for swift action with peer PCCs. :

Tackling local issues with funding support

Sometimes a small funding injection can make a huge difference. I'm proud to report that funding from my Problem-solving Orientated Policing (POP) fund has delivered the following

Roads	£
ASB/RTC Activity Day Barnard Castle: Plan to raise awareness to young people around the dangers of anti-social driving and dangerous driving.	£1,929.00
Preventing the use of Mobile Phones when driving: Funding to provide faraday pouches to driver to block phone signal and thus stop distraction whilst driving.	£2,199.00
ANPR Cameras Stanley: To allow the purchase of an additional 2 ANPR Cameras.	£3,400.00
Serious Collision Tents: Purchase of tents to use for forensic purposes at serious incidents.	£383.20







CRIMINAL JUSTICE

I have chaired the local Criminal Justice Board, at a time when the Justice System is being described nationally as 'broken'. I am committed to driving improvements locally on behalf of the victims of crime who should not have to wait for justice.

I want to ensure that all the partners work together to deliver the best possible local criminal justice system for the people of County Durham and Darlington by:

- Providing high quality service and support for all victims and witnesses
- Focusing on preventative and rehabilitative approaches to offending behaviour
- Delivering justice in a fair and timely way, which has the trust and confidence of all local communities.

The Board recognises the vital importance of collaboration and innovation in addressing the complex challenges within our criminal justice system. The criminal justice landscape is complex and multi-faceted, and no single agency is responsible for the system as a whole. It is vital that criminal justice agencies are unified in their ambition and work together in the most efficient and effective way possible, to improve outcomes both for victims of crime and people who offend.

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Effectiveness and Efficiency

In County Durham and Darlington, it takes on average (median):

- 25 days taken for police to charge an offender in victim-based cases
- 7 days from charge to case arrival at the Crown Court
- 154 days from charge to case completion at the Crown Court

While as an area our criminal justice agencies perform well against national targets, we recognise the concern being expressed regarding the failure of the justice system to manage those who offend and support victims and witnesses in a timely manner. A number of innovative approaches have been carried out in partnership to improve the situation including;

- Review of listings policy
- Focus by the Force and CPS on case management
- Piloting for the Soteria model to improve the experience of those impacted by rape and sexual offences



Victims and witnesses

Nearly a quarter of investigations are closed because the victim does not support police action.

19.0% of cases are stopped after the defendant has been charged because a victim no longer supports or is unable to support the prosecution.

Some of the key pieces of work which have been achieved to further support victims and witnesses include:

- Development of a toolkit identifying the victim's journey and allowing for a review of pathway provision for all victims
- Regular root cause analysis meetings involving all relevant CJ agencies and based on the victim's experience to recognise good practice and explore opportunities to improve where appropriate
- Partnership agreement on victim code measures and how to collate these prior to the full implementation of the victim's and court bill
- Review of the victim and witness experience at court to improve any special measures required
- I employ three victim champions to ensure that the lived experience and voice of the victim is included in any decisions made.

Reducing reoffending

Durham and Darlington have persistently high reoffending rates – currently 31.2% (April 22 – March 23) which is above the national rate.

Evidence suggests the key to reducing reoffending is to focus on the drivers of offending such as substance misuse, mental health, accommodation, education, training and employment which is captured in the Reducing Reoffending Group's priorities.

Examples of work carried out to date include:

- Review of local needs to develop associated priorities around drug and alcohol use, employment, accommodation. I have invested in a drug testing on arrest project to support these priorities, a pilot which will be evaluated both in terms of supporting those individuals who are arrested but also measuring the impact on reoffending rates and other associated crimes
- Ensuring a high performing integrated Offender Management Unit for those most prolific offenders
- Improving opportunities for those who offend to be placed in appropriate accommodation on release. County Durham's current draft Homelessness Strategy flags those under Probation supervision for specific consideration
- Reviewing current provision of out of court disposals through the checkpoint programme







VOLUNTEERS

I am grateful to the many volunteers who give their time to support my drive for ongoing improvements.

I was pleased, and proud, to celebrate their contribution during Volunteers Week, when we showcased their vital work, which makes such a difference to community safety.

I provided £10k to Durham Community Action (DCA) as part of a joint funding deal with Durham County Council to support its activities in 2024-25. DCA, which was one of the first organisations nationally to achieve reaccreditation from the Volunteer Centre Quality Accreditation, is a charity providing advice, support and assistance to frontline voluntary and community groups working across County Durham and Darlington.

Staff work closely with groups and individual volunteers to identify their needs, help them secure funding and resources and provide the support and encouragement they need to make a difference to their communities.

Community Peer Mentors:

During 2024/25 we had 49 Community Peer Mentors (Volunteers) many of whom have lived experience relating to a wide range of issues including Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol addiction, homelessness or have been victims or have an offending history.

Community Peer Mentor Coordinators manage the safe deployment of those volunteers within the community to support those who are, for example, vulnerable or perhaps isolated.

Independent Custody Visitors

I want to express my sincere thanks to our nine Independent Custody Visitors, who generously give their time and commitment to provide independent scrutiny of our custody arrangements.

They speak to detainees to ensure they are being treated fairly and that their needs and entitlements are being met and inspect the conditions of the cells and custody

accommodation as a whole. Where issues are identified, these are raised with the Custody Sergeant and included in an electronic report which is sent to the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC).

Their professionalism, diligence and compassion have driven many improvements locally to ensure detainees, especially the vulnerable or young, are heard and receive the best quality of support and care.

Scrutiny

My office carries out a wide-ranging programme of external scrutiny via groups and panels made up of partners and members of the community. The individual groups and panels scrutinise a wide range of topics in differing ways; for example, some look at process whilst others look at outcomes and quality of provision. Effective and meaningful scrutiny is a key tool for me in carrying out my duties and assists in holding the force to account and delivery of my Police, Crime and Justice Plan objectives.

Current external scrutiny panels are:

- BUSS (BAME arrests, Use of Force, Stop and Search)
- VAWG/DA/SV
- Complaints
- Independent Ethics Committee
- O OCD (Out of Court Disposal-Joint Panel with Cleveland OPCC).
- Custody Detention Panel

In total, I have 65 scrutiny panel volunteers.

Volunteer Police Cadets (VPC)

Since I was first elected in 2021, I have worked hard to create new platforms to get young people involved in policing. We are still one of only a few forces nationally to run both a junior and senior police cadet section.

The cadets are split into four units, each led by cadet leaders from Durham Agency Against Crime (DAAC), police staff, including apprentice youth workers, former cadets, project coordinators, police officers and PCSOs, as well as volunteers.

Police cadets	Academic year 24/25	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Total
Juniors 11-14yrs		42	42	46	
Seniors 15-18yrs		54	54	53	
Junior units	2				
Senior units	2				
Education Session Delivered		16	20	20	56
Community Social Action		4	4	4	12
Enrichment Activities		4	4	3	11
Volunteering Hours		1674	1814	1396	4884
Cadet Leaders		21	23	23	
Voluntary Hours		264	286	220	770

Community Speed Watch

Community Speed Watch (CSW) is a community volunteer scheme operated force-wide, supported by local neighbourhood policing teams who work with the police to monitor the speed of vehicles using speed detection devices.

CSW relies on volunteers to deploy equipment to specific areas of road safety concern.

I actively support this scheme. Improving road safety and increasing visibility of speeding measures across County Durham and Darlington are amongst my top priorities as Police and Crime Commissioner.

We now have 60 Community Speed Watch Volunteers across the force area.

Specials

Special Constables are volunteer police officers who give up their free time to support regular police officers, having the same powers, uniform and equipment. They respond to emergencies, conduct patrols, tackle anti-social behaviour and assist at road traffic collisions.

We now have 35 Special Constables who are fully warranted police officers who serve on a voluntary basis, working alongside regular colleagues to help keep County Durham and Darlington safe.

Many of our Specials operate independently or lead initial responses. Some go on to secure full-time policing roles or take on specialist volunteer responsibilities within areas such as Roads Policing or Neighbourhoods.

Specialist Community Safety Volunteers

I actively support Community Safety Volunteers who all contribute to a safer neighbourhood by assisting emergency services, local authorities and charities through roles like assisting police, supporting victims of crime and participating in community-led patrols like Street Watch and the Neighbourhood Watch scheme.





NATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

I am pleased to report that my work at national level has delivered benefits to the people of County Durham and Darlington.

On behalf of the Association for Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC), I am currently the Joint Lead for Addictions and Substance Misuse, Environment and Sustainability, Road Safety and Finance. As Joint Lead for Finance, this gives me a powerful voice to lobby on our unfair funding formula. I am also Chair of the BlueLight Commercial Board..

In addition, I co-chair of the National Drugs Leadership Forum, which is responsible for tracking the progress of drug strategy priorities and steering future work to ensure the approach to drug harm in England and Wales remains as effective as possible.

In the last year enormous progress has been made.

I was instrumental, though my lobbying, in securing a ban on nitrous oxide. I have led efforts to expand the availability of overdose prevention drug Naloxone to police custody staff, police officers and community outreach workers to reduce drug-related deaths.

I am a strong supporter of the 'drug testing on arrest' programme for acquisitive crime offenders to provide a direct referral to support services for those who test positive for drugs.

I am also at the forefront of efforts to tackle illicit substance use on the UK's roads, making the voices of grieving families heard through national meetings and summits with key decision-makers.

I am leading work to expand the roll out of workplace alcohol and drug testing and substance management in the private sector to save lives. These policies need to be the norm not the exception, especially in the logistics and transport sectors.

I was particularly pleased to see the introduction of a standalone offence for spiking in the Crime and Policing Bill, something I have long campaigned for and

recommended after giving evidence to the Home Affairs Committee chaired by Dame Diana Johnson.

I am also proud of the work done to see Gambling taken seriously as an addiction and a driver for suicide, so that preventative and rehabilitative support can be provided.

I have joined a new national advisory group to support efforts to improve the justice system for victims of crime. As a member of the Victims' Commissioner Advisory Group 2024-25, I am supporting the Victims' Commissioner Baroness Newlove on the implementation of the Victims' and Prisoners Act 2024 and compliance of the Victims' Code.

My campaigning for safer roads, graduated driving licences and many other road safety measures have been well documented, and recognised at national level. I will not stop until we are making tangible progress to Vision Zero.





COMMUNICATING WITH OUR COMMUNITIES

In 2024–25 I maintained a high public profile to ensure residents and businesses remain aware of my role and how I can support them.

It is particularly important that the policing and community safety issues that matter most to them are addressed and I can report that they were consulted at every stage of the development of my Police, Crime and Justice Plan 2025–29. Their priorities are my priorities.

I also consulted residents on the local precept, taking their views into account before setting the budget for the 2025–26 financial year.

I'm especially pleased to report that this year we sought the views of young people on serious violence, receiving 461 responses from across the force area. It's clear to me that young people feel strongly about policing and the need to tackle violence, and I can report that a Youth Police, Crime and Justice Plan is in development.

The year in numbers

- 66 Press Releases issued to keep public informed
- Over 100 comments in response to requests
- Weekly columns in local press
- 199 posts on social media
- 156,631 reach
- 9696 interactions on Facebook

Attended 140 engagement events, including Country Shows across the rural areas in County Durham, including Weardale Show, Stanhope Show and Wolsingham Show. Other events covered the Chester le Street activity week run by the Neighbourhood Policing Team and the Seaham Fun Day.

Events such as these enable me to listen to people from across the area, to hear first hand about issues at a very local level.



Communicating with local residents and business

My door, phone and email are always open. I, or my Office, will always respond.

There were 424 cases open between April 2024 and March 2025 and the above details the types of communication which entered the office in that time frame.

My Communications Team and I have played an active part in the following campaigns.

Emergency Services Day

Celebrating all workers and volunteers working for our emergency services and the sacrifices they make every day to protect the residents of County Durham, Darlington and beyond.

Association of Police and Crime Commissioner’s ‘Preventing Crime’ campaign

The campaign was shared across social media featuring videos on the work done by PCCs to prevent crime across their communities. The videos featured key responsibilities for PCCs, case studies on what support from their PCC meant and work with local partners. The aim was to raise the profile of PCCs and inform on how important their position is in holding the police force to account.

Police Staff Week of Celebration and Recognition

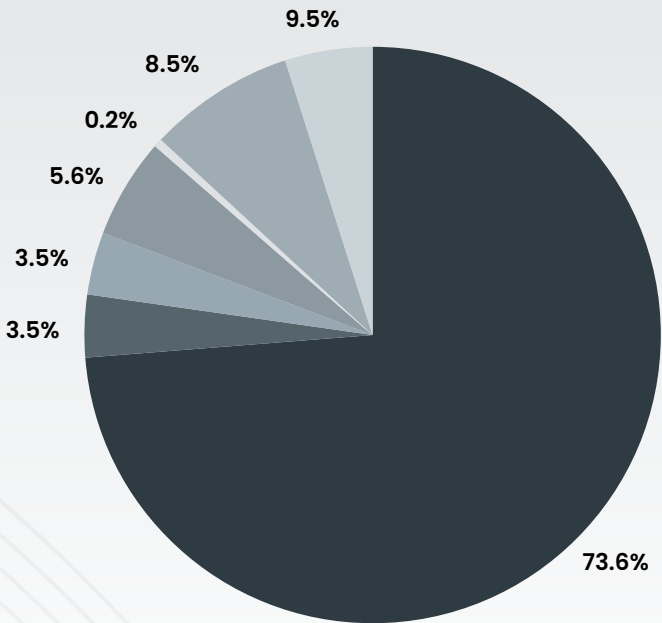
This week celebrates all the Police Staff such as call handlers, information technology, forensic officers, PCSOs, and communications. I was pleased to thank them all for the part they play in keeping us safe and highlight the excellent work they do to reduce crime across County Durham and Darlington.

Commissioning Strategy

My commissioning strategy sets out how I commission services to support the delivery of the Police and Crime Plan. Commissioning forms a crucial part of establishing, maintaining and improving services to help victims of crime cope and recover, prevent crime and anti-social behaviour and keep communities safe.

To help with this, I receive an annual grant from the Ministry of Justice. As well as my in- house Victim Care and Advice Service (VCAS) from which any victim of crime can receive

Caseworker Cases (2024/25)



Category Type

- 1 Expressions of Dissatisfaction
- 2 Complaint Reviews
- 3 Community Feedback / Intel
- 4 Freedom of Information Requests
- 5 Subject Access Requests
- 6 Internal Signposting
- 7 External Signposting

support, I also commission several specialist services to support young victims of crime, victims of domestic abuse, victims and their families of serious road traffic incidents and sexual violence. Support from these services is available, even if a victim chooses not to report the crime to the police.

I am adamant that every grant, big or small, delivers best value for money in the widest sense, taking the pragmatic view that the least expensive option may well not delivery the quality our citizens expect and deserve.

During 2024/25, in addition to government policing grant and precept, I also secured over £4m in grant funding. This funding has been applied thoughtfully and effectively as highlighted throughout this report.

Grant Income	
MoJ Core Victims Grant	£739,646
MoJ DA/SV Ringfenced Grant	£308,582
MoJ ISVA/IDVA Funding	£425,626
Home Office Safer Streets 5	£332,534
Home Office Serious Violence Grant	£364,376
Home Office ASB Hot Spot Grant	£905,000
Home Office Immediate Justice Grant	£933,000

Solving Problems

I also provided funding of over **£120,000** to support a number of very targeted projects in our communities. Details of these have been provided throughout the report.





POLICE BUDGET AND PRECEPT

Budget

I have responsibility for setting the budget for Durham Constabulary each year, ensuring that resources are allocated effectively to meet policing priorities and deliver value for money for the public. This includes determining the level of council tax precept, planning for both revenue and capital expenditure, and ensuring that funds are used efficiently to support frontline policing, crime prevention, victim services, and community safety initiatives.

Most of the funding available comes from government grant as part of the Home Office Police Settlement and Policing Precept which is paid as part of Council Tax payments by the public of Durham and Darlington.

For 2024/24, I had a budget of £161.6 million. Of the revenue budget, £158.5 million was delegated to the Chief Constable to fund the operational policing service. The balance of £3.1 million was held by me to commission services for victims and fund activities to prevent crime, protect individuals and communities, deter and pursue those who offend and reoffend and manage the administration of my office.

I set a capital budget of £10.2 million in 2024/25 which included vital investment in buildings, fleet, technology and equipment. As there is no longer government capital funding, this was funded from a combination of government grant, council tax precept and the proceeds from the sale of assets.

Precept

Durham currently receives 69% of its funding from government, and 31% from precept. The ability to raise funding through the local precept is limited by the high proportion of households in the Force area that fall into the Council Tax Band A category.

This means that a 1% rise in precept does not have the same impact as our neighbouring Force in North Yorkshire and the likes of Surrey (which raises the highest percentage of total funding through local precept).

Following public consultation in which 60% of respondents indicated they would be willing to pay a further £15 or

more towards policing, and approval by the Police and Crime Panel, the precept was increased by £14 for 2025/26 (£13 2024/25). This increased the precept to £282.24 for a Band D property in County Durham and Darlington, this is below the national average. Most other Police and Crime Commissioners also raised the precept by £14, with the exception of Welsh forces who have no cap and each increased precept by over £20.

The ability to raise local precept at a consistent rate across the county is a major factor when considering the overall funding distribution of police grants nationally. This underpins the need for a fair funding formula and adequate overall level of grant.

The precept levels for a Band D property for local Police and Crime Commissioner

Areas are:

Average	£289 (Excl. Wales).
Northumbria	£196
Cumbria	£324
North Yorkshire	£321
Cleveland	£318



Police Funding

There were many financial challenges faced during 2024–25 and we continued to operate in a financially constrained environment. Key challenges included:

Police Force	Govt. funding £m *	Precept £m	Total £m	Govt. funding %	Precept %	£ raised per 1% Precept £m
Durham	109.1	48.8	157.9	69%	31%	0.49
Northumbria	290.2	74.7	364.9	80%	20%	0.75
Cleveland	117	49.1	166.1	70%	30%	0.49
North Yorkshire	96.7	96.7	193.4	50%	50%	0.97
Surrey	127.8	168.5	296.3	43%	57%	1.69

**Figures taken from Home Office Police Grant Report 2024 to 2025*

1. Funding

- The way in which funding is allocated and precept is calculated means that some areas can raise proportionately more funding than others.
- PCCs receive government police grant allocations and the precept cap in December each year. This makes budget setting and medium-term financial planning difficult at a local level.

2. Revenue Pressures

- Inflationary costs: Rising prices for utilities, fuel, and equipment placed additional pressure on operational budgets.
- Staffing costs: The majority of budgeted spend is on police officer and staff pay. A small percentage increase in pay therefore has a huge impact on costs. Revenue funding allocations are not keeping pace with these rises.
- Demand-led services: Increased demand for policing services and victim support is putting further pressure on resources and available funding.

3. No Government Capital Funding

- Government no longer provides dedicated capital allocations for policing. This constrained investment in essential policing assets such as Estates, Fleet and ICT means that we rely on reserves and debt to finance the capital plan. This is not sustainable in the longer term.
- As PCC I will continue to lobby government for fair funding, capital allocations and multi-year settlements to help to address these issues. I will continue to focus on efficiency, collaboration, and prudent financial management to mitigate these pressures and enable us to put more police back on the streets.



Welcome to Durham Constabulary's
Attestation Evening & Academic Congregation
In Partnership with Northumbria University

Wednesday 15th January 2025



HOLDING THE

CHIEF CONSTABLE TO ACCOUNT

Throughout the year, I have met regularly with the Chief Constable to ensure performance of the Force and delivery against all my priorities in the Plan are monitored and tracked.

The scrutiny and assurance around performance has been achieved through the following existing governance arrangements:

- Weekly meetings with the Chief Constable to stay on top of emerging local and national issues.
- Formal monthly Executive Board meetings attended by my senior leadership team and the Chief Officer Team.
- Independent scrutiny and inspections by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Service (HMRCFRS).
- Publication of quarterly performance updates by Force on progress around the delivery of all the priorities in my Plan.
- Public Accountability Meetings which allow members of the public to submit questions in advance to my office about what policing issues matter to them the most. These meetings are recorded and uploaded on to YouTube for public viewing. This year, I have held 2 meetings and the themes have been Retail Crime and Trust and Confidence.
- OPCC attendance at strategic and operational force meetings.
- Independent Scrutiny Panels.

The Chief Constable has a delivery plan in place so that there is direct correlation to the priorities outlined in my Plan, providing that golden thread throughout. I have the full backing of the Chief Constable to deliver my Police, Crime and Justice Plan 2025-29 and achieve my vision. We do this in partnership and that, simply, is the Durham Difference.

Meeting the Strategic Policing Requirement

The Strategic Policing Requirement (SPR) sets out the Home Secretary's view of what the current national threats are, and the national policing capabilities needed to counter those threats.

I have considered the Strategic Policing Requirement (SPR) when developing my Police, Crime and Justice Plan 2025-29.

I am confident through my governance arrangements that the Constabulary has the ability to provide an effective and proportionate response to the national threats.

I have indicated in brackets below where I have prioritised the national threats in my Police, Crime and Justice Plan.

- Violence Against Women and Girls – (Safer People)
- Terrorism – (Safer Places)
- Serious and Organised Crime – (Safer People)
- National Cyber Incidents – (Safer People)
- Child Sexual Abuse – (Safer People)
- Public Disorder – (Safer Places)
- Civil Emergencies – (Safer Places)
- Road Safety – (Safer Roads)

The Chief Constable is responsible for having due regard to both my Plan and the Strategic Policing Requirement when exercising her functions and I hold the Chief Constable accountable for doing so.

Durham Constabulary has a good understanding of its legal and statutory requirements under the differing elements of the SPR and the wider national threats faced. There is a local governance structure in place in the differing command areas that oversee the specific strands with thematic leads reviewing the capability and capacity of the organisation.



Both at national and regional level, PCCs and respective Chief Constables collaborate across several specialist areas of policing, to increase efficiency and effectiveness and to meet their obligations under the Strategic Policing Requirement (SPR).

In County Durham and Darlington, formal collaborations are in place to tackle serious and organised crime, counter terrorism and deliver specialist capabilities.

VAWG (Violence Against Women and Girls)

There is now a national focus on supporting forces to prioritise VAWG-related crimes and I intend to do all I can to address this in County Durham and Darlington. Durham Constabulary continues to prioritise VAWG in its strategic planning. The organisation has already invested in focusing on VAWG and the significant work under the five pillars of Soteria, so are already ahead of the requirements.

Terrorism

Local officers work with Counter Terrorism Policing North-East to prevent or respond to terrorism and extremism. Durham Constabulary has a strategic lead and work is undertaken to ensure robust, regularly exercised, response plans are in place.

Serious and Organised Crime

Durham Constabulary use the expertise of the North- East Regional Organised Crime Unit (NEROCU) and the National Crime Agency (NCA), to reduce and eradicate emerging threats of serious and organised crime.

National Cyber Incidents

The NEROCU's cyber- crime team works proactively and reactively on significant cyber investigations. Durham Constabulary has its own Cyber Specialist officers and Tactical Advisors to reduce the risk communities face from online crime.

Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (CSAE)

This is a priority area for Durham Constabulary to ensure the number of officers and supervisors within the Multi -Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASH) meet projected demand increases. There is effective partnership working through regular meetings to improve safeguarding for young people at risk. Processes are in place to identify those at risk at an earlier stage giving more opportunity for partners to be involved thereby minimising risk further.

Public Disorder

The violence and disorder that took place across the country during the Summer of 2024 was deeply disturbing. There was absolutely no justification for the violence, bias and damage that has been witnessed in out towns and city. Durham Constabulary demonstrated at that time that appropriate command structures were in place to respond to disorder based on intelligence and close working with regional policing colleagues and partners.

Civil Emergencies

The subject of civil emergencies is coordinated through the Local Resilience Forum formed under the 'Civil Contingencies Act 2004' Exercises during the year have been attended by representatives of the OPCC to gain assurance regarding the effectiveness of the police response and their duty to assess, plan and advise.







Environment and Sustainability

We all have a responsibility to protect and sustain the environment in which we live and work and I'm delighted with the progress made in 2024-25.

Hub of success

The highlight of the year was of course the opening the new state-of-the-art Durham Investigative Hub.

This was a huge milestone in our history and represents the single largest investment ever undertaken by Durham's PCC.

The £26.3 million development puts Durham at the forefront of policing innovation in the UK with 48 modern cells across four wings, one of which is specially designed to provide enhanced care for vulnerable detainees, including children.

Alongside contemporary custody facilities, the two-storey hub will also house specialist detective teams, the crime scene investigation unit, evidence stores, and the firearms licensing department.

With the bulk of the development delivered by local contractors within Durham and the North East, the project has achieved more than £25m of social value to date, improving opportunities, life chances and wellbeing for people who live and work in County Durham and



Estates

I have continued to lobby for a return of capital funding to ensure that our Police stations and facilities enable officers and staff remain in the heart of our communities. I have given my word that we will never close a police station without putting in place a viable, accessible alternative.

But the fact of the matter is that much of our policing estate is ageing, presenting us with high maintenance costs and environmental inefficiencies. It needs significant investment – for which we need capital – to bring it up to the standard that we all want to see.

To this end, I am exploring every opportunity to stretch budgets further, with joint ventures, with sustainable energy solutions, and with external funding to create a modern, safe and efficient police estate.

Alongside optimising our infrastructure and technical capabilities, the social value ethos is embedded in every project I fund or support to deliver maximum value for our local economy, communities and our environment.

We will continue to deliver an estate that is fit for 21st century policing, putting our people and our communities at the very epicentre of our vision.



BlueLight Commercial

I was proud to become the new chair of the Board for BlueLight Commercial, which is focused on helping police forces and their suppliers to make a positive impact on their local economies.

BlueLight Commercial works to deliver value through commercial expertise and innovation and to promote the responsible and sustainable use of public resources.

My role is already bringing real benefits to County Durham and Darlington as we introduce innovative solutions to procurement, social value and sustainability.

The development of a Blueprint for Responsible Commissioning Cycle, led by BlueLight, is one of the most exciting projects in which I have been involved, and will bring untold fiscal and operative benefits.

County Durham £

I was delighted to be asked to provide the opening address at the Social Value Business Exchange event in November 2024, where 125 delegates gathered to share best practise and network.

This provided an excellent opportunity to share Best Practice and hear from some of the leading organisations in social value.

Darlington.

The Hub's multi-discipline facilities are already producing significant efficiencies, enabling officers to spend more time on the streets in local communities.

The on-site Total Health Care provision for example has negated the need for detainees to leave the suite for medical treatment – which previously required officers to accompany them. The on-site investigative teams are reducing the time detainees spend in custody, thereby freeing up staff time for other demands.

The new facility provides a safer environment for staff, detainees and visiting health workers and legal professionals. With multiple custody desks, officers are able to process several prisoners simultaneously, reducing the time spent booking in detainees and enabling them to return to frontline duties out on our streets more quickly.



JOY ALLEN
DURHAM POLICE AND
CRIME COMMISSIONER



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Durham Police and Crime Commissioner

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

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