



**Police & Crime Commissioner for Cleveland**  
**c/o Steria Shared Service Centre**  
**Ash House**  
**III Acres**  
**Princeton Drive**  
**Thornaby**  
**Stockton-On-Tees**  
**TS17 6AJ**

Email: [pcc@cleveland.pnn.police.uk](mailto:pcc@cleveland.pnn.police.uk)  
Website: <http://www.cleveland.pcc.police.uk>

Police and Crime Commissioner:  
Chief Executive & Monitoring Officer:

Barry Coppinger  
Simon Dennis BA, Solicitor

Tel: 01642 301861  
Tel: 01642 301861

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Rt Hon Kit Malthouse MP  
Policing Minister  
Via email only: [kit.malthouse.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:kit.malthouse.mp@parliament.uk)

22 May, 2020

Dear Kit,

### **Tackling Serious Violence in Cleveland**

Thank you again for your continuing constructive engagement with PCCs during the Covid-19 crisis. Your commitment to the weekly catch-up calls with us, together with your officials, is welcome and is hopefully mutually beneficial. We appreciate your perspective nationally on how policing and community safety is operating. We also value the opportunity as PCCs to raise issues and concerns from our perspective locally, regarding policing, criminal justice and community safety.

During those collective discussions the issue of violent crime is never far from our thoughts and has been covered on several occasions. Within the 17 Force areas, tranches of £35m Violence reduction funding has been allocated and you have commented that discussions are ongoing about whether further resources can be identified and invested.

I am grateful that on yesterday's call you listened to my concerns and have agreed to look at the situation in Cleveland as regards serious violence resourcing.

To reiterate and give some background to our discussions:

Serious violent crime in Cleveland continues to climb.

**In fact Cleveland's rate of serious crime has risen 23% in the past 12 months - with an increase of 18.9% in knife crime compared to the same period a year earlier.**



*The Police & Crime Commissioner for Cleveland is an accredited Living Wage Employer with the Living Wage Foundation.*

**This gives Cleveland the 2nd highest violent crime rate in the country per 100,000 population - and for knife crime we are now ranked 6th nationally.**

Over the course of 2019 and early 2020 we saw a steady increase in serious violence crime, peaking in December 2019. In just five days between Christmas and the New Year, our area of less than 600,000 residents experienced four alleged homicides and 13 incidents involving violence serious enough to be brought to the attention of the Force's senior leadership.

Levels remained high through January and February 2020.

In order to manage the risk - partnership working, early intervention, early action and problem solving must be at the forefront of our response.

Cleveland has some of the most deprived wards and neighbourhoods in the United Kingdom and this is one of many contributing factors which impact on a year-on-year rise in serious violence.

Cleveland has faced significant socio-economic challenges in the recent past, including reductions in partner agency funding, high levels of deprivation and unemployment, and the unsustainability caused by time limited funding.

Serious violence is highlighted as one of the highest risk areas in the force's *Strategic Threat and Risk Assessment (STRA)*.

Recent analysis of this problem identifies that serious violence is likely to continue to follow an increasing trend. A significant number of these offences (20%) are domestic abuse related, however a number of other factors have been identified including repeat offending against vulnerable victims, emergence of county lines activity, a link with the night time economy as well as alcohol and drug abuse and associated markets. There is a clear link with serious violence and organised criminality.

My current Police & Crime Plan 2019/20 commits me to work with community safety partners to develop violence reduction interventions. I am preparing a new Police & Crime Plan for 2020/21, effective from early July, which will draw on good practice from across the country in this respect.

In February this year my office (OPCC) organised - and I chaired - a Cleveland-wide multi-agency Serious Violence summit in Hartlepool. A multi-agency partnership strategy is under development to prevent further escalation of this problem and to provide focus and co-ordination to address serious violence. The key principles of this strategy are:

- Enhancing our understanding of the problem;
- Managing and responding to risk;

- Safeguarding vulnerable people;
- Working in local partnerships.

If resourced, Cleveland's unit for violence reduction would:

- Ensure a standard and agreed data collection process across all partners including NHS;
- Deliver and commission an enhanced model of youth provision, incorporating prevention and early intervention to ensure young people are diverted from serious violence pathways at the earliest opportunity;
- Identify clearly the most at risk cohorts of young people and adults and enhance support to those groups;
- Support working with families;
- Support and involve all partners in delivery of a unit.

Working with partners our key outcomes would be:

- Reduce involvement in serious violence by preventing violence from happening in the first place;
- Prevent violence from escalating to serious criminality;
- Reduce re-offending by those already involved in serious and violent crime;
- Reduce victims of serious crime.

Despite the socio-economic challenges set out earlier in this letter, the OPCC works effectively through high quality partnership working and we pride ourselves on our truly collaborative approach to issues in Cleveland. Partnership working is at the heart of our practice. Our positive links with partner agencies place us in a strong position to drive forward the public health approach to serious violence, should we have the resources to do so.

The funding formulation has not taken account of the true situation in Cleveland, as the statistics above show. Having taken account of this, we are currently building a problem profile for serious crime and are actively involving all partners to ensure that our response is truly a 'Cleveland-wide' one. This includes Public Health England and the Royal College of Surgeons, amongst many others, whose NHS returns are a key part of the current government funding formulation.

I am sure that you have heard this many times before. Short-term funding has been a real challenge. Time limited resources, often only 12 months, has proved challenging, especially when the services are positively evaluated and then cannot continue. This, in particular, has an impact on prevention and early intervention services.

I study the Force Serious Incidents log every day and see for myself the horrifying incidents of violent acts, including use of knives and other weapons, and we need to get upstream of these acts of violence to try and prevent them happening. We need to

prevent such acts taking place by looking further at the conditions in which they can arise and doing our best with other partners to mitigate against them.

I know all our local MPs, and council leaders, whose authorities are valued partners and to whom I am copying this, would wish to work with us to make progress in this critical issue.

I've enclosed my previous letters of 16<sup>th</sup> August 2019 and 16<sup>th</sup> January 2020, by way of background as there is some further information within them.

We will put together a more detailed submission within the near future to you and your officials with our suggested approach to move forward, including with costings, and I will be happy, with senior staff from my office and the Force, to discuss our request in more detail.

I thank you again for the opportunity and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Barry Coppinger', written in a cursive style.

**Barry Coppinger**  
**Police and Crime Commissioner for Cleveland**

c.c. Chief Constable Richard Lewis, Cleveland MPs and Cleveland Council Leaders