

NOTES - SCRUTINY MEETING (SERIOUS VIOLENCE, INCLUDING DRUG-RELATED OFFENCES) - 19 DECEMBER 2025

Question	Brief Summary of Evidence	Decision of PCC
<p>1. What trends has the Force observed in serious violence linked to drug activity in the Cleveland area, and are particular types of drugs more commonly associated with these incidents?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Violence, serious violence, and most serious violence remain key priorities for the Force. Serious violence in Cleveland refers to offences that cause significant harm to individuals or communities. This includes: homicide, attempted murder, manslaughter, assault with intent to cause serious harm, malicious wounding (GBH), arson with intent to endanger life, aggravated burglary, death or serious injury caused by unlawful driving, causing death by aggravated vehicle taking, kidnap, robbery, threats to kill, and assault-with-injury offences involving the use or threat of knives, sharp instruments, or firearms. Most serious violence is a defined subset of serious violence, capturing the highest-harm offences. This includes murder, attempted murder, wounding with intent, and causing death through dangerous acts. A range of offences overlap between serious violence and most serious violence. In the 12 months to June 2025, Cleveland recorded: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The highest rate of most serious violence per 1,000 population. The second-highest level of knife crime. The second-highest level of firearms offences. In terms of serious violence trends: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A sharp increase occurred in early 2023. This was followed by a sustained downward trend from July 2023 to August 2024. Afterward, levels entered a period of relative stability. Over the most recent 12-month period, serious violence increased by 11.8%. Despite this rise, current rates remain 5.8% below the August 2023 peak. In the 12 months to November 2025, Cleveland's serious violence involved the following crime categories and contextual flags: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knife crime: 38% Youth-related: 31% Domestic-related: 29% Drugs-related: 20% Robbery: 14% Firearms: 2% Homicide: <1% <p><i>N.B. These categories are not mutually exclusive; incidents may fall into multiple categories. With the exception of drug-related offences, figures are derived from crime categories and contextual flags added to crime reports, rather than in-depth problem-profiling.</i></p> 	<p style="text-align: center;">Assured</p> <p><i>Although serious violence in Cleveland remains at a high level, the PCC expressed confidence - based on the evidence provided - that the Force is responding effectively to these offences and is making the best possible use of its available resources. It was acknowledged that Cleveland continues to face significant socio-economic challenges, including high levels of deprivation. The PCC recognises that a robust, preventative, and partnership led approach is essential to reducing serious violence.</i></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Force closely monitors serious violence data across all four districts, with the capability to analyse trends down to ward level. Over the past 12 months, Hartlepool has seen a 0.8% rise (3 additional offences), Redcar and Cleveland a 16% increase (69 additional offences), Middlesbrough a 10.5% increase (75 additional offences), and Stockton a 16.6% increase (101 additional offences) • In terms of Cleveland's intelligence picture: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a clear and evidenced link between serious violence and serious and organised crime (SOC), with at least 17% of homicide and near-miss offences connected to organised crime, often involving weapons. • Approximately 90% of organised crime groups (OCGs) are involved in drug supply and distribution. Those operating within the drug supply chain account for nearly one-fifth of Cleveland's serious violence offences. • Organised crime activity increasingly involves multi-commodity drug supply, spanning a range of substances and closely associated with criminal exploitation, including the coercion of young people into drug distribution. • Cleveland continues to experience high levels of drug misuse and drug-related deaths, placing significant pressure on local services and demand. • The SOC profile is currently being refreshed, with publication planned for early 2026. • In terms of the operating context, in Cleveland, a range of socio-economic factors contribute to high levels of serious violence, for example - factors such as levels of high deprivation increase vulnerability to exploitation. 	
<p>2. How can the Force and the OPCC work together to address these crimes and reduce their impact on local communities?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In terms of working with the OPCC: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Force continues to maintain a strong working relationship with the Cleveland Unit for the Reduction of Violence (CURV), ensuring clear links into Force Strategic Governance. • The partnership between the Force and CURV creates valuable opportunities to strengthen joint working, including initiatives such as the Knife Crime Summit, the Custody Navigators initiative, and exploring the potential re-introduction of drug testing on arrival at custody for domestic abuse perpetrators. The next multi-agency Knife Crime Summit is scheduled for March 2026 and will focus on county lines, alongside the associated threats and risks linked to county lines activity. • Analysis and research have been commissioned, and a Prevention Panel trial is scheduled to begin in early 2026. Through a preventative, multi-agency approach, the trial will work with educational settings to identify children who are most at risk and vulnerable to becoming involved in serious violence. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work has also been undertaken to encourage greater engagement from the education sector and advocate for a more robust approach toward families who consistently fail to engage. • Through promoting and coordinating a public health approach, the Force and OPCC is strengthening their ability to understand and respond to the concerns of Cleveland's local communities. 	
3. How is the Force working collaboratively with partner agencies to prevent serious violence - including drug-related offences - through strategic problem-solving approaches?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Force's partnership-led problem-solving approach is built around a series of coordinated operations, governance structures, and targeted interventions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operation Deterrence focuses on 36 identified hotspots for serious violence and antisocial behaviour, with five priority locations supported by detailed problem-solving plans. Areas have been identified through a multi-layered analysis of victim, offender, and location data, supported by problem-solving expertise. • The Force applies the Clear, Hold, Build methodology to stabilise high-harm areas, maintain control, and enable long-term community resilience. • Multi-agency response to serious and organised crime (MARSOC) and local Tasking & Coordination Groups (TCGs) are fully integrated with regional tasking processes and the National Crime Agency (NCA), ensuring alignment from local to national level. • The Harm Outside the Home (HOTH) framework strengthens multi-agency responses to familial risk and vulnerability. • Partnership Prevention Meetings bring together key agencies to coordinate early intervention, share intelligence, and reduce harm. • Project Minerva supports analytical insight, prevention activity, and targeted disruption of high-risk individuals and networks. 	
4. In what ways is the impact of this joint work being measured and evidenced, and can you provide recent case study examples that illustrate successful outcomes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although Cleveland has the highest rate of serious violence per 1,000 residents, it also achieves one of the highest rates of positive outcomes in the country. For example, in respect of homicides, there is currently only 1 historical cold case that is categorised as unsolved. • The Force is committed to reducing serious violence through a coordinated, intelligence-led approach that targets the highest-harm offenders, protects vulnerable communities, and works proactively with partners to prevent harm before it occurs. The following operations have been undertaken to tackle serious violence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operation Deterrence: The most recent phase of this operation, delivered between 17 July 2023 and 14 July 2024, focused on 24 identified hot spots with targeted 40-60-minute patrols. This phase resulted in a Force-wide reduction of 217 offences, including 151 fewer offences within the hot spot areas. Cambridge Harm - an indicator of crime severity based on actual harm caused - fell by 45% 	

	<p>in those locations. Using Home Office research on the economic and social costs of different offences, this phase is estimated to have generated £5.1 million in savings to society.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operation Bayport/Belmore: In May 2025, a surge of serious violence - including multiple firearms discharges, a series of arsons, and several stabbings - generated around 40 linked investigations in a short period. In response, the Force worked jointly with neighbouring forces and the North East Regional Organised Crime Unit (NEROCU). The operation led to 48 arrests and 10 remands in custody, including three key OCG members and six SOC subjects. 19 children were safeguarded. Officers recovered over £100,000 in cash, a similar value in Class A drugs, and firearms. Trials are pending for attempted murder, arson with intent, and possession of firearms. • Operation Stamford: A complex investigation into a series of violent incidents between two rival drug gangs, escalating to an attempted murder involving a firearm. Multiple strike days led to 30 arrests, the recovery of a firearm with ammunition, several machetes, and significant quantities of drugs. Five individuals have been charged with attempted murder; three have entered guilty pleas and are awaiting sentencing. Two of the charged individuals are confirmed members of an OCG. • Operation Blackberry: A covert operation focused on a Clear, Hold, Build area in Middlesbrough, targeting an OCG and the exploitation of several young people used as runners. The operation involved two coordinated strike days, resulting in 17 arrests and the immediate closure of nine deal lines. Five individuals were charged and remanded in custody. One key offender received a 4.5-year sentence for conspiracy to supply, and a juvenile associate was sentenced to three years. An OCG member was arrested, charged, and remanded pending trial, with two additional suspects also arrested and currently awaiting trial. 	
<p>5. What measures has the Force implemented to reassure the public of its commitment to tackling serious violence, including drug-related offences?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To reassure the public and demonstrate its commitment to tackling serious violence, the Force: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • delivers clear, consistent, and timely public reassurance messaging; • shows a visible and sustained commitment to addressing serious violence through proactive policing and strong partnership working; • delivers its Homicide and Violence Reduction Strategy, structured around the 4P framework (Prepare, Prevent, Pursue, Protect); • strives to ensure investigations are led by Senior Investigating Officers (SIOs), supported by continued investment in training additional SIOs; • makes effective use of drug expert witnesses to strengthen case files and improve judicial outcomes; 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provides active support for regional and national initiatives, including Operation Sceptre, which focuses on tackling knife crime through intensified action, education, and community engagement; • conducts themed Operation Artemis days focused on identifying, disrupting, and targeting perpetrators of serious violence. • In terms of positive messaging: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Chief Officer-led media response has followed recent incidents in Middlesbrough and Grangetown, offering clear reassurance and demonstrating visible leadership. • High-profile media coverage of Operation Artemis has highlighted enforcement activity and arrests, reinforcing the force's proactive approach. • Ongoing publication of sentencing outcomes for drug-related offences continues to strengthen deterrence, maintain transparency, and demonstrate effective criminal justice results. • Communications support for the OPCC's Project Salus launch has helped promote efforts to tackle serious violence and antisocial behaviour in Cleveland hotspots. • The Force is extremely committed to providing a proactive and robust response to tackling serious violence. The Force uses the Cambridge Crime Harm Index (CCHI) to tackle serious violence by moving beyond simple crime counts and instead measuring the actual harm caused to victims and society. • The Force invests significantly in developing its investigators and strengthening problem-solving capabilities, which greatly contributes to securing positive outcomes. • The Force plans to introduce precision policing in January 2026. This data-driven, technology-focused model will enable more effective and efficient deployment of resources. As part of this evidence-based approach, the Force will redevelop and redeploy assets to ensure they are aligned with operational demand. • The Force holds Tactical Serious Violence Meetings, chaired by the Chief Superintendent for Safeguarding and Prevention, who is also the Serious Violence Lead. The discussions and outcomes of these meetings feed into a range of groups and boards, ensuring sustained strategic focus on serious violence to analyse intelligence and assess threats, priorities and risks. • The Chief Constable is the NPCC Portfolio Lead for the public health approach to serious violence, focussing on multi-agency partnerships to identify and address risk factors for violence. 	
6. How is the Force demonstrating the impact of these efforts,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please refer to the evidence detailed at question 4 above. 	

for example through police actions, justice system responses, or other tangible outcomes?		
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Other areas discussed included:

- The Force has recently carried out fewer stop searches overall; however, the proportion of searches resulting in a positive outcome has increased slightly. This indicates that stop searches are being applied more effectively and in a more targeted manner. For example, last month had seen just under a 15% reduction in the number of stop searches (82 less searches than in the same month last year), however, as a result of the searches that the Force did carry out, the positive outcome rate increased by 5.4% (up to 24%) meaning 1 in 4 searches resulted in a positive outcome. This suggests that the quality of the Force's stop and search activity is improving and becoming increasingly intelligence-led.
- The Force also makes use of Section 60 powers, which permit officers to conduct stop and search activity without the need for individual reasonable suspicion. These powers are deployed solely as a reactive measure and are limited to locations experiencing heightened levels of serious violence.
- The use of stop searches is subject to rigorous internal and external scrutiny to ensure they are applied consistently and appropriately. The Force has an external scrutiny panel, involving members of the public, which examines officers' use of force and stop and search.

Action

1.	That, once published, the PCC/OPCC receive a copy of the SOC local profile.
2.	That the PCC/OPCC undertakes work to encourage the use of parenting orders by local authorities.