

POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR CLEVELAND

Vulnerability

Final Internal Audit Report 2.25/26

3 November 2025

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AUDIT OUTCOME OVERVIEW

In line with our scope, the overview of our findings is detailed below.

Background: As part of the internal audit plan for 2025/26, we have undertaken a review of the Force's approach to vulnerability and how it recognises and responds to risks when working with vulnerable people. Our audit has taken a strategic view of the Force's approach to vulnerability, in comparison to other audits undertaken previously that have focused on more operational areas and sample testing of cases (see Evidence Led Prosecution – 9. 24/25). In particular, our audit has considered the response to the National Vulnerability Strategy and 14 strands of vulnerability, the governance structure in place to manage and monitor vulnerability, reviews and sampling undertaken internally with respect to vulnerability areas, as well as training and partnership arrangements.

The most recent National Child Protection Inspection (NCPI) for Cleveland Police was published in January 2025 and resulted in five graded judgements, with one being "adequate", two being "requires improvement", and two being "inadequate" (the lowest grade). In particular, one area that was highlighted by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) was missing person cases. Furthermore, the most recent PEEL (Police Efficiency, Effectiveness and Legitimacy) inspection published (in April 2025) by HMICFRS noted that the Force "requires improvement" with respect to protecting vulnerable people.

Given the size and range of areas that vulnerability covers, we agreed with management prior to the audit that for areas in which we undertake a deep dive into processes, a focus will be applied to Missing Persons, and Domestic Abuse.

Conclusion: Our review identified that work is underway to improve the Force's management and response to vulnerability following recent HMICFRS inspections. An updated Vulnerability Strategy was in draft, and the Force had produced a 4P (Prevent, Prepare, Protect and Pursue) Plan for 10 of the 14 vulnerability strands (with the remaining four in development). A number of governance groups were in place covering different vulnerability areas, with input from a range of individuals across the Force including members of the Chief Officer Team. Alongside this, the Force had an audit programme that is run by the Review and Assurance Team and covered a range of areas on a four-monthly cycle, including missing person cases, stop and search, and public protection notices (PPNs). Training was provided to officers regarding individual vulnerability areas, and there were several processes in place whereby the Force work with partner agencies to provide support to vulnerable individuals.

However, our review and discussions with management identified a number of areas for improvement, including the finalisation of all 4P Plans, and ensuring greater clarity over responsibilities for certain vulnerability cases. It was noted that the Force are currently reviewing the structure of certain commands as part of Operation Unify, as well as responsibilities for specific cases and areas.

As a result of our audit we agreed **one high, three medium and one low** priority management action. It should be noted that our findings have also taken into account the results of previous audits undertaken by RSM, as well as the findings of HMICFRS inspections (such as the NCPI), ensuring duplicate actions have not been agreed. Our review has also focused on vulnerability at a strategic level and did not consider individual cases, nor has sample testing been undertaken.

Audit themes: Our review identified the following issues resulting in the agreement of one high and three medium priority management actions:

- **4P Plans**
We confirmed that the Force has produced 4P (Prevent, Prepare, Protect and Pursue) Plans for 10 of the 14 vulnerability strands, with the remaining four in development. If 4P Plans are not in place for all vulnerability strands, there is a risk that progress in these areas may lack oversight and monitoring. **(Medium)**
- **Power BI dashboard**
During discussion with the PVP Hub Manager, it was noted that a Power BI dashboard is in place that is used to identify the children of victims in domestic abuse cases. However, this dashboard does not show the children linked to suspects in domestic abuse cases. This has been flagged internally, and it was highlighted during our debrief meeting that work is underway to rectify this. However, there is a risk that a child (or children) could go unidentified, which could be a significant safeguarding concern, particularly in high-risk cases. **(High)**
- **HOTH**
The Force have introduced a Harm Outside the Home (HOTH) Team, that works with partner agencies to identify, support and protect children from harm occurring outside the home. However, during discussion with management, there were concerns that the Missing Person Team and the HOTH Team are currently separated and do not have a clear link. Furthermore, there were also concerns from management regarding cases sitting within the Missing Person Team, and whether they would be suited to being managed by the Complex Exploitation Team. Work is underway to resolve these issues, however there is a risk that these cases may not be being managed as effectively as they could be. **(Medium)**
- **Missing person cases**
During discussion with the Chief Inspector (Prevent) (responsible for the Missing Person Team), it was highlighted that there were concerns regarding the current arrangements for missing person cases, and whether additional clarity would be beneficial to ensure responsibilities are clear and an appropriate focus can be applied. If arrangements for missing person cases are not clear, there is a risk that this could cause confusion, which could result in cases not being appropriately managed. **(Medium)**

Further details of the low priority management action agreed can be found under section two of this report.

We found the following control areas to be adequately designed and operating effectively:

- **Vulnerability Strategy**
The Force have a Vulnerability Strategy in place, with an updated version currently in draft. The Vulnerability Strategy sets out the Force's approach to managing vulnerability and cases involving vulnerable people, and is supported by a number of policies and guidance documents (such as the Domestic Abuse Policy and the Adult Protection Policy).
- **Governance structure**
A number of governance meetings and groups covering vulnerability are in place across the Force, including the Tactical Vulnerability Group, Safeguarding Governance Group, Domestic Abuse Improvement Board, and the Victim and Witness Tactical Group. The Force also has a Governance of Audit and Inspection Board (GAIN) and whilst this does not focus on vulnerability, we have confirmed that topics relating to vulnerability are covered, such as the Force's response to the NCPI review and other audits and reviews undertaken.

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- **Internal reviews and sampling**
The Force have a four monthly review programme in which key topics or areas are subject to a deep dive by management and other relevant individuals. Recent examples include a missing persons review in April 2025 (following the NCPI and PEEL reports), and a PPN review in March 2025 covering domestic abuse, honour based abuse, missing children and arrested children cases. The Force Control Room (FCR) also has an audit function which includes reviewing calls to ensure they are correctly processed and key information has been recorded. This included checks to ensure vulnerability has been correctly identified and processed appropriately. Additional testing of this was included as part of the RSM Data Quality audit (11.24/25).
 - **Training and awareness**
Specific vulnerability training is provided to staff and officers, and is provided by a range of different teams. Vulnerability is covered as part of the Police Constable Entry Programme (PCEP), and individual training and awareness presentations are provided by the PVP Hub, the FCR, the Learning and Development Team, as well as the Missing Person Team.
 - **MARAC**
An Independent MARAC Chair works with the Force and partner agencies to discuss and monitor high-risk domestic abuse cases. The Independent MARAC Chair confirmed they have access to the risk assessments for domestic abuse cases, and review these on a regular basis to ensure appropriate assessments have been completed, and where appropriate a referral is made to MARAC.

SUMMARY OF MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

The action priorities are defined as*:

High

Immediate management attention is necessary.

Medium

Timely management attention is necessary.

Low

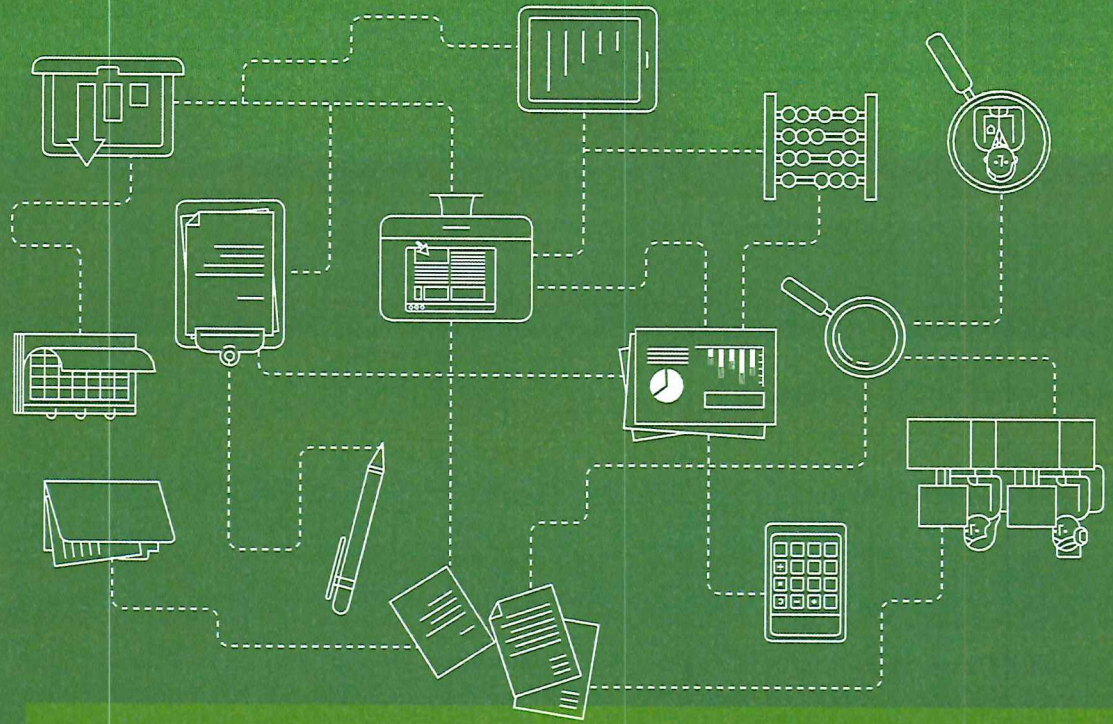
There is scope for enhancing control or improving efficiency.

Ref	Action	Priority	Responsible Owner	Date
1	<p>The 4P Plan for each vulnerability strand will be created and used to monitor and track actions. Alongside this, target completion dates within each plan will be added for each action, to enable the Force to identify slippage and more accurately track progress.</p> <p>Reporting to a governance group or committee will be documented for each plan to ensure adequate oversight is in place.</p>	Medium	Detective Chief Inspector (Child Abuse and Vulnerable Adults (CAVA))	31 October 2025
2	The Force will consider whether capacity can be secured to implement a compliance function within the PVP Hub to identify trends and patterns.	Low	Detective Chief Inspector (Child Abuse and Vulnerable Adults (CAVA))	31 March 2026
3	The Force will urgently strengthen the functionality and accuracy regarding Power BI dashboards with respect to recording any linked children to a domestic abuse suspect and not just a victim.	High	PVP Hub Manager	31 August 2025
4	The Force will ensure responsibilities for missing persons and child exploitation cases are clear, and introduce processes to enable communication between different teams.	Medium	Chief Inspector (Complex Exploitation Team)	31 August 2025
5	The Force will review the current arrangements for the Missing Person Team, with any outcomes actioned and implemented.	Medium	Superintendent (Prevention)	31 December 2025

* Refer to Appendix A for more detail

Detailed Findings and Actions

02



DETAILED FINDINGS AND ACTIONS

This report has been prepared by exception. Therefore, we have included in this section, only those areas of weakness in control or examples of lapses in control identified from our testing and not the outcome of all audit testing undertaken.

Area: Vulnerability		
Control	<p>The Force have developed 4P Plans for each of the 14 vulnerability strands, setting out any actions and improvements to be made.</p> <p>Governance of the plans are managed by the Tactical Vulnerability Group and relevant governance groups.</p>	<p>Assessment:</p> <p>Design ✓</p> <p>Compliance x</p>
Findings / Implications	<p>Through discussion with Detective Chief Inspector (Adult Safeguarding) we confirmed that 4P delivery plans have been developed which cover the 14 vulnerability strands identified within the National Vulnerability Strategy. Through review of the plans for Domestic Abuse and Missing Persons, we confirmed that each plan sets out the actions that are required in relation to each area, action owner, a progress update, target completion date, delivery confidence rating and completion date.</p> <p>During discussion with the Detective Chief Inspector (Adult Safeguarding), it was highlighted that the Force are in the early stages of identifying the process to track these plans, but that it is anticipated that each plan owner will be required to provide an exception report to the Tactical Vulnerability Group if there were any issues. From review of the agenda for the Tactical Vulnerability Group meeting on 22 April 2025, we confirmed that seven 4P Plans had been presented by the plan owners for discussion. Alongside the Tactical Vulnerability Group, each plan will report to another relevant governance group to provide additional oversight. For example, the Domestic Abuse 4P Plan will report to the Domestic Abuse Improvement Board. However, as noted above, the Force are in the early stages of this process, and we cannot yet comment that this is fully in place and embedded.</p> <p>We noted that although some of the plans are still being produced, the majority are now in place, with actions having been assigned to owners which are currently in progress. We noted that of the 14 strands, a 4P Plan is in place for 10, with the remaining four currently in development (Forced Marriage, Honour Based Abuse, Rape and Sexual Violence, and Stalking and Harassment). During our audit, the individual responsible for the Stalking and Harassment 4P Plan confirmed that it is currently in draft and close to being finalised. It should also be noted that two strands (FGM and Child Abuse) have been merged into one 4P Plan, and that whilst a dedicated Modern Day Slavery 4P Plan is not in place, this is covered as part of a Human Trafficking (which is not a vulnerability strand) 4P Plan.</p> <p>We confirmed that each 4P Plan is available to staff via the Force's SharePoint Page.</p> <p>Whilst a 4P Plan is in place for 10 of the 14 strands, we noted that some of the plans do not appear fully complete and lack target completion dates for all actions. Most notably, we identified four plans in which there are no target completion dates for any action, or no target completion dates for more than half of actions. These were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adults at Risk; • Child Abuse and FGM (these are two separate strands but covered within one 4P Plan); • Sex Work; and 	

Area: Vulnerability

- Vulnerability to Radicalisation.

Whilst some of the plans are in the early stages and not fully complete, the structure applied to the 10 strands captures the required criteria including clear actions and owners, and adopting this for the remaining four strands will ensure a consistent approach to delivering and tracking progress.

If a 4P Plan is not in place for each vulnerability strand, and actions within plans do not have target completion dates, there is a risk that the Force may not be able to adequately or accurately track progress or identify actions which are overdue and may require further oversight.

Management Action 1	The 4P Plan for each vulnerability strand will be created and used to monitor and track actions. Alongside this, target completion dates within each plan will be added for each action, to enable the Force to identify slippage and more accurately track progress. Reporting to a governance group or committee will be documented for each plan to ensure adequate oversight is in place.	Responsible Owner: Detective Chief Inspector (Adult Safeguarding)	Date: 31 October 2025	Priority: Medium
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Area: Vulnerability

Control	Partially missing control The PVP Hub does not have a dedicated compliance function that could be used to proactively monitor trends, training needs and lessons learned.	Assessment:
		Design × Compliance -

Findings / Implications

During discussion with the PVP Hub Manager, it was highlighted that the PVP Hub does not have a Compliance Officer or individual responsible for identifying trends and training needs, and escalating this to the wider Force. They highlighted that one member of the PVP Hub undertook similar work (regarding missing person cases) for a period, resulting in significant improvement to performance metrics. However, this individual has since returned to their initial responsibilities and performance metrics have also returned to their original numbers.

The PVP Hub Manager also noted that whilst the Power BI dashboard in place is used by the Force to identify gaps relating to vulnerable cases (such as domestic abuse cases), the dashboard is used proactively rather than reactively. As a result, additional work is undertaken after discrepancies or problems have been identified. If a compliance process was implemented within the PVP Hub, this could be used to proactively monitor issues and discrepancies relating to areas within the PVP Hub and move the Force away from a reactive approach.

Given the nature of this finding and the lack of a dedicated compliance function, there is no evidence supporting the existence of a compliance function. As such, we have captured the key steps being taken by the PVP Hub from meetings with management.

Management Action 2	The Force will consider whether capacity can be secured to implement a compliance function within the PVP Hub to identify trends and patterns.	Responsible Owner: Detective Chief Inspector (Adult Safeguarding)	Date: 31 March 2026	Priority: Low
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Area: Vulnerability				
Control	<p>Officers and Sergeants undertake the initial risk assessment for domestic abuse cases, using a standard template to grade risk.</p> <p>The Force's PVP Hub is responsible for the secondary risk assessment for domestic abuse cases, using a standard template and making referrals where required.</p>	Assessment:		
		Design		✓
		Compliance		×
Findings / Implications	<p>We confirmed that the PVP Hub is responsible for assisting the wider Force with regards to vulnerable individuals, particularly relating to domestic abuse cases. Part of the responsibilities of the PVP Hub is to undertake a secondary risk assessment of domestic abuse cases, and ensure that they have been completed correctly and key information has not been missed. This is following the initial risk assessment that is completed by the Sergeant. The PVP Hub ensure risk assessments are complete, and can also make referrals such as to children's social care, MARAC, or the Local Authority. Alongside this, the PVP Hub also assist with the Operation Encompass process, enabling schools to be aware of children that may have been present in a domestic abuse case.</p> <p>We confirmed that the PVP Hub's secondary risk assessments are documented on Niche, and further testing of this has been undertaken as part of the RSM evidence-led prosecutions audit (9. 24/25).</p> <p>The PVP Hub Manager noted that the Power BI dashboard used by the PVP Hub for domestic abuse cases has the functionality to show linked children for each victim. This enables officers to ensure important information is recorded and considered, particularly in serious cases where children's social care are required to be informed of the incident. However, it was noted that the dashboard only shows children linked to the victim and not the suspect. As such, if the suspect for a domestic abuse case is responsible for children but the victim isn't, these children would not be identified.</p> <p>The PVP Hub Manager noted that this has been flagged, and a request made for this to be addressed. However, there is a significant risk that the children of a suspect in a domestic abuse case could go unidentified, and the Force may not make the relevant referrals or undertake the appropriate safeguarding checks required. In particular, Operation Encompass requires the Force to notify schools if police have attended a domestic violence or abuse incident in which the child has been directly or indirectly involved. Whilst this should be clear where the child is directly involved and present during the incident, there is a risk that a child could go unidentified if they are not present at the incident, they are indirectly involved, and they are not linked to the victim.</p> <p>It should be noted that during our debrief meeting, the T/Superintendent (Adult Safeguarding) confirmed that work is underway to address this, however we have agreed that the action will remain to ensure this is resolved and embedded and providing further clarity as part of our follow up audits.</p>			
Management Action 3	The Force will urgently strengthen the functionality and accuracy regarding Power BI dashboards with respect to recording any linked children to a domestic abuse suspect and not just a victim.	Responsible Owner:	Date:	Priority:
		PVP Hub Manager	31 August 2025	High

Area: Vulnerability

Control	The Force have a HOTH Team which works with partners and the Local Authority to identify, assess and manage cases in which there is significant risk to children. Daily meetings are undertaken to assess and discuss these cases and ensure appropriate support has been provided.	Assessment:	
		Design	✓
		Compliance	×

Findings / Implications

Through discussion with Detective Chief Inspector (Complex Exploitation Team), we noted that a new team has been created called HOTH, with the purpose of this team being to work with partner agencies to identify, support and protect children from harm occurring outside the home. Through review of the HOTH SOP and discussion with the Detective Chief Inspector (Complex Exploitation Team), we identified that the HOTH Team work with members of the Local Authority HOTH Team to discuss children referred or flagged since the previous meeting. For example, this could be a child that has been arrested or reported missing or referred by a partner agency.

Via a screenshot of Outlook calendars, we confirmed that daily meetings are held with all members of HOTH in the area, to discuss the flagged and referred children and assess them via the screening tool. Each child is RAG rated to identify the risk associated with them, with any scoring red or amber going through HOTH. The HOTH process is led by each Local Authority within the area, with the Force being a key partner within the process. It was noted that there is one remaining Local Authority which has not fully rolled out this process yet but is in the process of doing so.

Whilst HOTH does not exclusively cover a specific type of area (such as domestic abuse or missing persons), it was noted by the Detective Chief Inspector (Complex Exploitation Team) that many of the vulnerability areas are intrinsically linked. Furthermore, it was flagged that HOTH is aligned to the Complex Exploitation Team, and whilst this is relevant to the cases seen by HOTH, there are other teams within the Force where it could be beneficial for them to have more involvement. The Detective Chief Inspector (Complex Exploitation Team) confirmed that work is underway to schedule regular meetings between the HOTH Team and the Missing Person Team to address this. However, if relevant teams are not fully linked, there is a risk that key indicators for escalation could go unidentified.

During discussion with the Chief Inspector (Prevention Command) (responsible for the Missing Person Team) they also highlighted the issue with responsibilities, noting that in some instances it can be unclear where responsibility for certain cases sits.

It should be noted that following the audit debrief meeting and issuing of the draft report, management have confirmed that work has been undertaken to address this, and responsibilities are now clearer. Daily meetings have been introduced to ensure communication and collaboration with other teams, including the Missing Person Team and other partner agencies. However, as this was not in place at the time of the audit, we have agreed to retain the action and that this will be reviewed as part of a future follow up audit.

Management Action 4	The Force will ensure responsibilities for missing persons and child exploitation cases are clear, and introduce processes to enable communication between different teams.	Responsible Owner: Chief Inspector (Complex Exploitation Team)	Date: 31 August 2025	Priority: Medium
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Area: Vulnerability

Control	The Force have a Missing Person Team responsible for tracking relevant cases and supporting officers.	Assessment:	
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Area: Vulnerability

Design ✓
Compliance ×

Findings / Implications

During discussion with the Chief Inspector (Prevent), they highlighted that they are responsible for the Missing Person Team who review and track live missing person cases. As part of this process, the team review the risk assessment assigned to confirm it is accurate and reflective of the circumstances.

However, the Chief Inspector flagged that whilst the team have had a positive impact on locating missing people and reducing individuals that are repeatedly missing, it wasn't clear on the position of the team and whether responsibility would be kept, moved back to Local Policing, and whether individual resources would be available. Currently, cases are handed back to operational policing after 4pm as there is insufficient resource to appropriately manage the cases.

However, due to the risk involved associated with missing person cases, the Chief Inspector (Prevent) highlighted that these can be significantly high risk as it is not initially clear whether the missing individual is the victim of a serious crime. The Force should therefore review the arrangements in place for missing person cases to ensure they can be appropriately managed and there is a clear structure in place.

It should be noted that following the debrief meeting and issuing of the draft report, management have confirmed that an evaluation of the Missing Person Team has been undertaken and is scheduled to be presented to the ACC on 22 August 2025. This will enable the Force to assess the progress of the Team, and the next steps going forward. As such, we have agreed an action that reflects this work and will allow us to provide further assurance in future follow up audits.

Management Action 5

The Force will review the current arrangements for the Missing Person Team, with any outcomes actioned and implemented.

Responsible Owner:
 Superintendent
 (Prevention)

Date:
 31 December 2025

Priority:
Medium

APPENDIX A: CATEGORISATION OF FINDINGS

Categorisation of internal audit findings

Low

There is scope for enhancing control or improving efficiency.

Medium

Timely management attention is necessary. This is an internal control risk management issue that could lead to: Financial losses which could affect the effective function of a department, loss of controls or process being audited or possible reputational damage, negative publicity in local or regional media.

High

Immediate management attention is necessary. This is a serious internal control or risk management issue that may lead to: Substantial losses, violation of corporate strategies, policies or values, reputational damage, negative publicity in national or international media or adverse regulatory impact, such as loss of operating licences or material fines.

The following table highlights the number and categories of management actions made as a result of this audit.

Area	Control design not effective*	Non-compliance with controls*	Agreed actions		
			Low	Medium	High
Vulnerability	1 (12)	5 (12)	1	3	1
Total			1	3	1

* Shows the number of controls not adequately designed or not complied with. The number in brackets represents the total number of controls reviewed in this area.

Debrief held 25 June 2025
Draft report issued 11 July 2025
Revised Draft report issued 8 August 2025
Responses received 3 November 2025

Final report issued 3 November 2025

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The matters raised in this report are only those which came to our attention during the course of our review and are not necessarily a comprehensive statement of all the weaknesses that exist or all improvements that might be made. Actions for improvements should be assessed by you for their full impact. This report, or our work, should not be taken as a substitute for management's responsibilities for the application of sound commercial practices. We emphasise that the responsibility for a sound system of internal controls rests with management and our work should not be relied upon to identify all strengths and weaknesses that may exist. Neither should our work be relied upon to identify all circumstances of fraud and irregularity should there be any.

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RESPONSE BY THE PCC TO HMICFRS INSPECTIONS OF CLEVELAND POLICE

INSPECTION DETAILS

Title of Inspection - Inspection of the effectiveness of police and law enforcement bodies' response to group-based child sexual exploitation - A progress report

Date Inspection Published - 24 October 2025

Type of Inspection:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cleveland Specific | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> National |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Follow Up | <input type="checkbox"/> Thematic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Partner Inspection | |

Is Cleveland Police quoted in the Report? Yes No

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT

Between 2015 and 2022, the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) exposed harrowing failures across public institutions to protect children from organised and group-based child sexual exploitation. Its findings revealed not only the devastating scale of these crimes but also how agencies repeatedly failed to recognise, prevent and respond to them.

In 2023, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspected how the police, law enforcement agencies and other public bodies were tackling this challenge. While HMICFRS identified some progress, the Inspectorate found that deep-rooted problems remained. HMICFRS made nine recommendations and identified one area for improvement.

In this report, HMICFRS review progress against those nine recommendations, and issue six new recommendations to make sure group-based child sexual exploitation is consistently identified, properly understood and addressed with urgency.

HMICFRS's 2023 report

In March 2022, the then Home Secretary commissioned HMICFRS to carry out an inspection into the policing of this especially harmful form of criminality.

HMICFRS published its findings in its 2023 report, 'An inspection of the effectiveness of the police and law enforcement bodies' response to group-based child sexual exploitation in England and Wales'.

HMICFRS found that the challenges previously identified in academic literature and reported through public inquiries persisted. These included the lack of a clear definition for group-based child sexual exploitation. This meant that there was no common understanding of the threat. And the use of victim-blaming language during investigations meant that vulnerable children might not be safeguarded promptly enough, or at all, and instead left at risk of exploitation. HMICFRS also found that the police, law enforcement bodies and the Government still didn't

have a full understanding of the scale or nature of these crimes.

Progress since 2023

In January 2025, the then Home Secretary commissioned HMICFRS to review the progress made since its 2023 report.

Based on HMICFRS's most recent findings in respect of the area for improvement issued in 2023, the Inspectorate consider that police forces have made the necessary improvements. HMICFRS has therefore closed this area for improvement. Four recommendations have either been met in full or are nearing completion in a clear programme of work. One recommendation isn't due for completion until March 2026. However, four recommendations, all of which relate to data, flagging and the IICSA definition of group-based child sexual exploitation, haven't been met and are overdue. In this progress report, HMICFRS makes six new recommendations.

Key findings are detailed below:

- Not all bodies have made enough progress to adopt a common definition of group-based child sexual exploitation
- Police forces who use the Hydrant Programme template develop better strategic assessments of child sexual exploitation
- The National Crime Agency has provided insight into the scale and nature of group-based child sexual exploitation as a national threat
- Despite efforts by many forces to improve how they identify and flag child sexual exploitation cases, a robust national solution is still needed
- The Home Office hasn't yet made progress to collect meaningful police custody data on group-based child sexual exploitation
- The quality of police investigations into group-based child sexual exploitation is improving
- National police training to improve the police response to group-based child sexual exploitation is still being developed, but all forces have invested in Hydrant Programme specialist training
- The police are making efforts to eradicate victim-blaming language
- Forces need to adopt Operation Makesafe consistently to maximise its preventative effects
- The Hydrant Programme has laid a positive foundation to tackle child sexual abuse, but some critical gaps still remain

Recommendations from HMICFRS's 2023 report

In HMICFRS's 2023 report, nine recommendations and one area for improvement were issued. Of these, HMICFRS consider that two recommendations have been completed and three recommendations are in progress. The remaining four aren't yet completed and require further action. HMICFRS has closed the area for improvement.

Recommendation 1

By 31 December 2024, the Home Office, the Department for Education, the Welsh Government, the National Crime Agency, the National Police Chiefs' Council and the College of Policing should adopt the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse's definition of an 'organised network' as a definition of group-based child sexual exploitation. Or they should devise and implement a suitable alternative.

Status: Incomplete

Recommendation 2

By 31 December 2024, all chief constables should make sure that their forces have problem profiles for child sexual exploitation, each of which should include an assessment of the nature and extent of group-based child sexual exploitation. This should include relevant data from local partner agencies and should be updated frequently, at least annually.

Status: Incomplete

Recommendation 3

By 30 May 2025, the National Crime Agency should produce an assessment of group-based child sexual exploitation as part of its annual 'Strategic Assessment of Serious and Organised Crime'. The assessment should use the agreed definition of group-based child sexual exploitation from our recommendation 1.

Status: In progress

Recommendation 4

By 31 December 2024, all chief constables and the relevant business user groups for police record management systems should make sure there are sufficient measures in place to identify group-based child sexual exploitation.

Status: Incomplete

Recommendation 5

By 31 March 2025, the Home Office should stop collecting group-based child sexual exploitation data through its annual data requirement on custody known as ADR149.

Status: Incomplete

Recommendation 6

By 31 March 2026, the Home Office should introduce a new and specific annual data requirement on group-based child sexual exploitation. This should be aligned with its existing child sexual abuse and exploitation crimes annual data requirement. The supporting guidance to forces should use the agreed definition of group-based child sexual exploitation from our recommendation 1.

Status: In progress

Recommendation 7

By 31 December 2024, the College of Policing should update its authorised professional practice on child sexual exploitation to include group-based child sexual exploitation. And it should use the agreed definition from our recommendation 1.

Status: In progress

Recommendation 8

By 30 June 2024, all chief constables of forces that are yet to receive the Hydrant Programme's continuing professional development offer should arrange it.

Status: Completed

Recommendation 9

With immediate effect, all chief constables should take effective steps to eradicate victim-blaming language in their forces.

Status: Completed

Area for improvement

All chief constables should work with their statutory safeguarding partners to review, promote and make sure relevant group-based child sexual exploitation disruption and prevention initiatives are implemented effectively in their forces. This should include consideration of options such as the advice given in the Home Office child exploitation disruption toolkit and an Operation Makesafe (a national police initiative to raise awareness of child sexual exploitation in the business community) type of approach.

Status: Closed

Recommendations in this report

In this report, HMICFRS make six new recommendations.

Recommendation 1

By 31 March 2026, the Home Office, Department for Education and all police forces and law

enforcement bodies that are yet to do so should adopt the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse's definition of an 'organised network' as a definition of group-based child sexual exploitation. And they should make sure they use this definition in all relevant policies, training products, procedures and guidance.

Recommendation 2

By 31 March 2026, all police forces should fully adopt and use the Hydrant Programme's child sexual exploitation problem profile template as a minimum when preparing their 2025/26 child sexual exploitation problem profiles.

Recommendation 3

By 31 March 2026, the Hydrant Programme should develop quality assurance guidance for all police forces so they can accurately and efficiently identify child sexual exploitation and group-based child sexual exploitation in their child protection and abuse investigation data returns and police record management systems.

Recommendation 4

By 31 July 2026, all chief constables should use the Hydrant Programme's guidance so forces can efficiently and accurately identify child sexual exploitation and group-based child sexual exploitation in their police record management systems.

Recommendation 5

By 31 December 2026, the National Police Chiefs' Council, the Hydrant Programme and the Home Office should work together to create and implement a robust and reliable method of identifying and collecting all child sexual exploitation data, including group-based child sexual exploitation data, in police record management systems.

Recommendation 6

By 31 July 2026, all police forces should devise a strategy to implement Operation Makesafe consistently and include this in their child sexual exploitation data returns to the Hydrant Programme. This strategy should include the adoption and use of the rebranded Operation Makesafe police and partnership marketing materials.

A copy of the full report can be accessed here: [Inspection of the effectiveness of police and law enforcement bodies' response to group-based child sexual exploitation – a progress report](#)

FORCE RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS

The Force is in a good position nationally regarding the adoption of the IICSA definition and the work it conducts with Hydrant. The Force has made good progress with the actions from the original publication; of the 4 recommendations and 1 AFI issued all have been completed and signed off except for Recommendation 2; for which an update has been provided below.

The Force fully accepts its role in providing protection and safeguarding for the most vulnerable in Cleveland's communities. The Force works closely with its safeguarding partners to review, promote and make sure that relevant group-based child sexual exploitation disruption and prevention initiatives are implemented effectively.

The Force has adopted a standard process to ensure that any recommendations resulting from local and national inspection activity are promptly considered and allocated for action. Facilitated plenary sessions are held upon receipt of all new inspection reports and any identified improvement activity is incorporated into the relevant PEEL Assessment Framework (PAF) improvement plan. In line with this process, the 4 recommendations for forces made within this report have been considered at the Force Governance of Audit and Inspection (GAIN) Board, chaired by the Deputy Chief Constable, and a Chief Officer lead and delivery lead have been assigned to both identify and implement any improvement activity required.

A plenary session has taken place to discuss the actions, detail the Force's current position, identify what if any activity is required to satisfy the action and to collate evidence that would support the closure of the action.

Initial results of the discussions are detailed below:

Recommendation 1; The Force has already adopted the IICSA definition of 'organised network'. And used the definition in the latest Group Based CSE profile. The Force will perform a review of relevant policies and training packages to determine if the definition should be included or amended if any previous definitions are quoted.

Recommendation 2; The Force has committed to updating the CSE profile every two years in line with current resourcing capacity. (last completed 2024). The Hydrant template was used in the production of the last profile and will be used going forward. The Force goes above and beyond the content on the Hydrant template to ensure the profile includes enough information to match requirements locally.

Recommendation 4; This action cannot be progressed until the Hydrant Programme develop the guidance as detailed in recommendation 3.

Recommendation 6; The Force is in a strong position nationally, with Operation Makesafe fully embedded. As part of Operation Makesafe, the Force works in partnership with Barnardo's and other networks. The Force delivers bespoke training to the hotel sector on child sexual exploitation and regular meetings are held with the hotel sector to ensure their continued support. The Force submits a quarterly return to Hydrant on the template they provide. Branded materials are available to officers and staff on the Force SharePoint system.

Recommendation 2 (from original report): When this recommendation was initially issued the Force introduced processes to ensure CSE cases were flagged on Force systems; the Force has worked with the National Child Sexual Abuse/Exploitation (CSAE) taskforce to gain assurance relating to data and levels of flagging. They have reviewed the Force's cases and found its data to be reasonable and in line with its peer groups. This action is linked to recommendation 4 in the new report awaiting action by Hydrant Programme to produce definitive guidance for all forces to follow, as such the Force will look to close this action, as superseded, and follow the new guidance once it has been produced.

Ongoing progress will be tracked through the relevant Force delivery group and overseen by the GAIN Board until sufficient evidence is provided that the recommendations have been met.

PCC RESPONSE TO INSPECTION

Comment by the PCC:

The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) welcomes the encouraging progress made in responding to HMICFRS's 2023 recommendations. However, it is acknowledged that significant challenges remain and therefore the PCC fully endorses the six new recommendations.

The PCC acknowledges police and partners have a crucial role to play in protecting and safeguarding the most vulnerable people in Cleveland's communities, especially children, to prevent them being exposed to exploitation and harm. Where young people are identified as 'at-risk' of criminality, the PCC understands agencies must work quickly to consider appropriate and meaningful interventions to prevent escalating behaviour.

The PCC's Police and Crime Plan 2024-29 recognises that sadly, young people can be vulnerable and at risk of becoming involved in criminality. The PCC pledges to work with

organisations to educate teachers, professionals and parents about the signs of criminal and sexual exploitation of children - and ensure they know how to reach out for support if they think a young person may be at risk. The plan highlights that education is key to make sure young people understand the dangers and risks they may face. The PCC wants to see better educational provision for young people on topics such as knife crime, hate crime, exploitation, healthy relationships and antisocial behaviour.

At the Scrutiny Meeting held on 1 April 2025, the topic of Child Protection and Child Exploitation was considered. During this session, the PCC was looking to:

- seek assurance that the Force is proactive in protecting and safeguarding children and preventing them being exposed to exploitation and harm; and
- provide reassurance to the public that the Force is making the necessary improvements at pace.

At the meeting, the PCC requested an update on the progress the Force had made with implementing the recommendations outlined in HMICFRS's 2023 report - 'An inspection of the effectiveness of the police and law enforcement bodies' response to group-based child sexual exploitation in England and Wales'. In response, the following evidence was provided:

- The Force is making good progress with implementing the recommendations outlined in the report.
- The Force has recently submitted a progress update to HMICFRS.
- The Force is currently developing a problem profiles for Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Child Sexual Abuse (CSA). The CSE profile will include an assessment of the nature and extent of group-based child sexual exploitation.
- The Force has received the Hydrant Programme's continuing professional development offer. The Force takes part in peer reviews, peer support, debriefs and Continuing Professional Development (CPD).
- The Force continues to take effective steps to eradicate victim-blaming language and regular audits of case files are undertaken.
- The Force continues to work with statutory safeguarding partners to review, promote and make sure that relevant group-based child sexual exploitation disruption and prevention initiatives are implemented effectively.
- The Force recognises the importance of outreach work to improve intelligence and target resources effectively.
- The Force is reviewing its Niche operational platform to ensure group-based child sexual exploitation can be identified.

The PCC was partly assured by the evidence submitted by the Force. The PCC commended the commitment and dedication of the Force in making immediate and ongoing improvements to safeguard children at risk. The PCC will continue to monitor performance in this area.

The PCC will revisit the topic of Child Protection and Child Exploitation at a forthcoming Scrutiny Meeting in 2026. During this session, the Force will present performance data demonstrating the impact of its work in this area. Furthermore, the Force will be required to provide evidence of progress made in response to the recommendations issued in 2023, as well as the six further recommendations detailed in the subsequent progress report.

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Response forwarded to Home Office

Response published on PCC website



RESPONSE BY THE PCC TO HMICFRS INSPECTIONS OF CLEVELAND POLICE

INSPECTION DETAILS

Title of Inspection - PEEL 2023-2025: An inspection of Cleveland Police

Date Inspection Published - 10 April 2025

Type of Inspection:

- | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|----------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Cleveland Specific | <input type="checkbox"/> | National |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Follow Up | <input type="checkbox"/> | Thematic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Partner Inspection | | |

Is Cleveland Police quoted in the Report? Yes No

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT

In 2014, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) introduced its PEEL (police efficiency, effectiveness and legitimacy) inspections, which assess the performance of all 43 police forces in England and Wales. Since then, HMICFRS has been continuously adapting its approach and has moved to a more intelligence-led, continual assessment approach.

On 10 April 2025, HMICFRS published its PEEL Assessment 2023-25 for Cleveland Police.

The report covers the inspection findings across the areas of the PEEL assessment framework. It is informed by evidence gathered through the continuous assessment activity and final evidence collection period of the PEEL programme. It does not take account of any developments or action carried out since the final evidence collection period.

In the financial year 2023/24, Cleveland Police received the equivalent of £273 per resident. This is within the typical range for forces in England and Wales. The force received 28.9 percent of its funding from precept, which is at the lower end of the typical range for forces across England and Wales for which the average is 35.6 percent.

In the Cleveland Police area, 33.5 percent of neighbourhoods were in the top 10 percent most deprived for employment across England and Wales, and 32.1 percent of neighbourhoods were in the top 10 percent most deprived for household income. For household income deprivation, this is the highest level of any police area, and much higher than the England and Wales average of 9.2 percent.

In the year ending 31 March 2024, Cleveland Police had the highest level of recorded incidents per 100,000 population among forces in England and Wales. It also received an above-average number of 999 calls per 1,000 population than England and Wales. The force answers most of those calls quickly, and it assesses the level of risk appropriately.

Since the HMICFRS's earlier PEEL Assessment 2021-22, the force has improved the policing service it provides for the public. Officers, staff and volunteers continue to work hard to serve the communities of Cleveland. Because of that work, the force has made progress in all areas since its last PEEL inspection and has improved in most judgment grades. But it recognises that there

is still work to do, and HMICFRS has identified areas in which it needs to improve.

HMICFRS’s inspection assessed how good Cleveland Police is in nine areas of policing. The HMICFRS graded judgments in eight of these nine as follows:

Outstanding	Good	Adequate	Requires improvement	Inadequate
	Police powers and public treatment	Responding to the public	Investigating crime	
	Preventing crime	Leadership and force management	Protecting vulnerable people	
	Managing offenders			
	Developing a positive workplace			

HMICFRS also inspected how effective a service Cleveland Police gives to victims of crime. HMICFRS do not make a graded judgment for this area.

Leadership

Using the College of Policing leadership standards as a framework, in this section HMICFRS set out the most important findings relating to the force’s leadership at all levels.

The force’s investments and change plans align with its clear strategy. The force uses data and analysis to understand its current and future demand. It has reviewed its policing model and resources to meet the demand it faces.

The force’s structured governance and performance arrangements correspond to its strategy and priorities. Through these arrangements, the force holds senior leaders to account for its productivity and proactivity, and the quality of the service it provides for the public. During the inspection, HMICFRS found improvements to the way the force approaches prevention. HMICFRS also found a developing culture of problem-solving.

The chief constable has a cohesive chief officer team. The force has a clear strategic direction, and officers and staff understand the priorities.

Officers and staff see the chief officer team at policing operations and roadshows, where chief officers reiterate force plans, investments and priorities. They also celebrate success and remind the workforce of the force’s values and expected standards. HMICFRS found that officers and staff were highly complimentary about the chief officer team and its leadership.

The force understands what it needs from its leaders and there is a development route for achieving this. The force supports student officers well. The local police development units act as a point of contact, giving student officers support and mentorship during the assessment phase of their training.

The force is also now successfully attracting more experienced and skilled officers than it is losing to other areas. First-line managers support the workforce’s well-being.

More detail on Cleveland Police’s leadership is included in the main body of the report.

Reducing crime assessment

The reducing crime assessment sets out what Cleveland Police is doing to reduce crime and how effective this action is. This assessment doesn’t include police recorded crime figures. This is because they can be affected by variations and changes in recording policy and practice,

making it difficult to draw comparisons over time.

The force understands its current and future demand. It has invested in a prevention command and is developing a problem-solving culture across the force. The neighbourhood policing teams work well with communities to understand and meet their needs. They are working on building the public's trust and confidence, and they encourage members of the public to share information to help reduce and detect crime.

The force works well with other organisations. This helps it develop long-term, sustainable plans to find the root cause of repeat problems and to make changes that will benefit communities. When crimes take place, officers generally take positive action to arrest offenders. The force is working on improving the way it supervises its investigations, and on making sure it follows all reasonable lines of enquiry.

The force has early intervention programmes to divert young and vulnerable people from committing crime. The force has problem-solving plans to reduce and detect neighbourhood crime such as robbery and burglary. Good governance and performance arrangements evaluate the effectiveness of its problem-solving.

The overwhelming majority of recorded grounds for stop and search are reasonable. This helps the force reduce crime. The force uses analysis and monitoring at force-level meetings to understand and improve the way it uses stop and search powers. It can show that its use of stop and search is fair and effective, and that it helps to reduce crime.

More detail on what Cleveland Police is doing to reduce crime is included in the main body of the report.

Providing a service to victims of crime

Victim service assessment

This section of the report describes HMICFRS's assessment of the service Cleveland Police provides to victims. This is from the point of reporting a crime and throughout the investigation. As part of this assessment, HMICFRS reviewed 100 case files. Although the victim service assessment is ungraded, it influences graded judgments in the other areas inspected.

Main findings:

- The force carries out a structured initial triage when it receives calls for service, but it doesn't always record the vulnerability of the caller
- In most cases, the force responds promptly to calls for service
- The force carries out timely investigations, but they aren't always thorough or effective
- The force assigns the right outcome types to investigations

Police powers and treating the public fairly and respectfully

Grade: Good

Cleveland Police is good at using police powers and treating people fairly and respectfully.

Main findings:

In this section of the report, HMICFRS sets out its main findings that relate to police powers and treating people fairly and respectfully.

- The force trains its officers and staff to work and communicate with the public respectfully
- The force uses stop and search powers fairly and respectfully
- The force has external scrutiny of stop and search and use of force
- The force is improving the way it records use of force

Preventing and deterring crime and antisocial behaviour, and reducing vulnerability

Grade: Good

Cleveland Police is good at prevention and deterrence.

Promising practice:

Cleveland Police deploys a medicar - a car containing a police officer, a paramedic and

emergency equipment

Main findings:

In this section of the report, HMICFRS sets out its main findings that relate to prevention and deterrence.

- The force prioritises prevention
- The force is developing a culture of problem-solving
- The force works well with partners to prevent crime and antisocial behaviour
- The force has a good understanding of antisocial behaviour, and it uses prevention powers well
- The force listens to communities and works with them to make the area safer
- The force supports local people to volunteer and get involved in local policing activities
- The force has an effective neighbourhood policing model

Responding to the public

Grade: Adequate

Cleveland Police is adequate at responding to the public.

Areas for improvement

- Cleveland Police should improve the way it flags vulnerable people on its incident logs
- Cleveland Police needs to attend calls for service in line with its published attendance times

Main findings

In this section of the report, HMICFRS sets out its main findings that relate to how well the force responds to the public.

- The force effectively oversees control room performance
- The force needs to make sure call handlers give appropriate advice on preserving evidence and preventing crime
- The force gives its call handlers technology to help them carry out risk assessments, and access specialist support and external experts
- The force performs well in relation to non-emergency calls
- The force should continue to focus on improving its performance in relation to emergency calls
- The force appropriately prioritises the calls it receives for service

Investigating crime

Grade: Requires improvement

Cleveland Police requires improvement at investigating crime.

Areas for improvement:

- Cleveland Police doesn't consistently achieve appropriate outcomes for victims
- Cleveland Police needs to make sure it completes a victim needs assessment when appropriate

Main findings:

In this section of the report, HMICFRS sets out its main findings that relate to how well the force investigates crime.

- The force is improving the way it governs and oversees investigations
- The force needs to make sure it allocates investigations to people with the right skills and experience to carry out high-quality investigations
- The force supports response officers to manage their investigations
- The digital forensic unit has the capacity and capability to manage demand

Protecting vulnerable people

Grade: Requires improvement

Cleveland Police requires improvement at protecting vulnerable people.

Areas for improvement:

- Cleveland Police should continue to improve the strategic and tactical oversight of its safeguarding strategy and tactical plans
- Cleveland Police should improve its initial response to reports of domestic abuse

Main findings:

In this section of the report, HMICFRS set out its main findings that relate to how well the force protects vulnerable people.

- The force is changing the way it uses its investigative resources to meet the demand for its services
- The force listens to feedback from victims and other organisations to help it improve its service to the public
- To protect victims of domestic abuse, the force applies for prevention orders and monitors its use of them
- The force makes good use of the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme
- The force works well with other organisations to help keep vulnerable people safe

Managing offenders and suspects

Grade: Good

Cleveland Police is good at managing offenders and suspects.

Main findings:

In this section of the report, HMICFRS sets out its main findings that relate to how well the force manages offenders and suspects.

- The force has clear policies on arresting wanted suspects
- The force effectively monitors its use of pre-charge bail to safeguard victims
- The force effectively manages the risks posed by the most dangerous offenders
- The force routinely considers using ancillary or prevention orders to protect the public from the most dangerous offenders
- The force investigates online child abuse images in line with nationally recognised risk assessment time limits

Building, supporting and protecting the workforce

Grade: Good

Cleveland Police is good at building, supporting and protecting the workforce.

Promising practice:

- Cleveland Police has a culture that focuses on well-being

Main findings:

In this section of the report, HMICFRS sets out its main findings that relate to how well the force builds, supports and protects the workforce.

- The force has improved its governance arrangements for building, supporting and protecting the workforce
- The force's occupational health unit supports and improves workforce well-being
- The force is improving its support for the well-being of officers and staff in high-risk roles, and for those who attend potentially traumatic incidents
- The force effectively supports new recruits and encourages them to stay in policing
- The force is making efforts to retain new recruits
- The force is committed to developing its first-line leaders
- The force offers some support for officers and staff from under-represented groups to develop and progress

Leadership and force management

Grade: Adequate

Cleveland Police's leadership and management is adequate.

Areas for improvement:

- Cleveland Police's operating model should allow it to respond effectively and consistently to priorities, and to assess current and future demand
- Cleveland Police has invested in some new digital processes to help reduce sources of internal demand, but several processes are still inefficient

Main findings:

In this section of the report, HMICFRS sets out its main findings that relate to leadership and management.

- The force has improved its governance structure and performance framework, and it is working with its community to provide a better service
- The force's leadership is more visible and engaging
- The force's operating model doesn't always help its workforce respond to current and future demand
- The force collaborates well with other organisations, but it needs to invest in technology
- The force understands its finances and is using its reserves to smooth the impact of expenditure

The full report is available to read on the HMICFRS website here: [PEEL 2023–2025: An inspection of Cleveland Police - His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services](#)

FORCE RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS

All new reports into the Force follow a specific process which involves informing the Governance of Audit and Inspection (GAIN) Board, chaired by the Deputy Chief Constable, of the report's publication and identifying an Executive Lead to monitor/drive progress of the actions going forward.

The Force has accepted all 8 Areas for Improvement (AFI), which have designated Executive Leads and delivery owners. Updates will be monitored through the appropriate Governance Groups and the GAIN Board until such a time as the action is considered complete.

Initial response to the actions is as follows:

- Cleveland Police should improve the way it flags vulnerable people on its incident logs

The Force has made improvements to technology to assist with the recording of risk assessments, changes to call taker question sets to assist with the capture of information and improvements to the methodology for quality assurance audits.

- Cleveland Police needs to attend calls for service in line with its published attendance times

The Force has made changes to systems, so it is easier to identify how long an incident has been in the queue. Force policies have been reviewed and a comparison with other forces to ensure response targets are in line. Further work continues around demand modelling.

- Cleveland Police doesn't consistently achieve appropriate outcomes for victims

The Force continues its coordinated approach to make improvements in this area. Focussing on detective resilience, automation and supervisory oversight.

- Cleveland Police needs to make sure it completes a victim needs assessment when appropriate

Progress in this area is being actively addressed through Force governance meetings. With more robust and visible performance management in relation to the Victims' Code. Gaps are being identified through the development of problem-solving plans.

- Cleveland Police should continue to improve the strategic and tactical oversight of its safeguarding strategy and tactical plans

The Force has refreshed its Vulnerability Strategy which is aligned to the national strategy and covers 14 strands of vulnerability. A performance group has been introduced to monitor delivery of the strategy, which is being monitored through Force governance groups.

- Cleveland Police should improve its initial response to reports of domestic abuse

Changes have been made to the deployment policy regarding use of appointments, where appropriate. New reporting routes have been introduced and call taker question sets enhanced. A new governance group has been developed purely to drive and scrutinise progress around domestic abuse.

- Cleveland Police's operating model should allow it to respond effectively and consistently to priorities, and to assess current and future demand

There are planned changes to the Force Operating Model to improve service delivery and resource efficiency, including detective resilience (as previously mentioned) and training and upskilling.

- Cleveland Police has invested in some new digital processes to help reduce sources of internal demand, but several processes are still inefficient

The Force continues to improve existing digital processes and develop and deploy Robotic Process Engineering and artificial intelligence where this is possible. A new digital strategy is under development and a quality improvement programme launched to improve process efficiency and reduce failure demand.

Force specific actions from PEEL reports, like these, can only be closed by HMICFRS. When the Force is satisfied the action can be considered for closure; HMICFRS will be informed and will arrange a revisit so they can satisfy themselves the Force has done enough to allow the action to be closed.

The Force continues to actively work to satisfy all recommendations and AFIs.

PCC RESPONSE TO INSPECTION

Comment by the PCC:

The PCC is pleased that the scale and impact of Cleveland Police's improvement has been acknowledged by HMICFRS in their latest report on the force's performance. The PCC values the significant improvements achieved in the way the force treats the public, prevents and deters crime, manages offenders and suspects and supports the workforce.

The PCC recognises that Cleveland Police is one of the country's top performing police forces and the scale of the force's transformation is testament to the leadership and vision of the chief constable and the force's hardworking and dedicated officers, staff and volunteers. Despite high demand and resourcing challenges, they make every effort to protect Cleveland's communities from harm, keep people safe, reduce crime and give victims an effective service.

HMICFRS acknowledged that the Cleveland force area has the highest levels of income deprivation and the highest level of recorded incidents per 100,000 population among forces in England and Wales. The PCC recognises that the current funding formula means policing in Cleveland is not appropriately funded to tackle these significant challenges. The PCC is lobbying for fairer funding and has written to the Home Secretary calling for the Government to revise the way Cleveland Police is funded.

The PCC appreciates that there are still areas in which force needs to do better, such as protecting vulnerable people and carrying out investigations. However, the PCC is optimistic that the force will sufficiently address the areas of improvement identified by the HMICFRS and will continue to improve the policing service it provides to the public.

The force is open and transparent with the OPCC in terms of performance in these areas. To maintain oversight, appropriate staff members from the OPCC are invited to attend the force's IMPACT Board. The IMPACT Board helps the force gain insight about performance and senior police officers are held to account for making improvements to services.

A Scrutiny Meeting is scheduled to be held on 21 May 2025. At this meeting, the PCC will be looking to:

- seek assurance that the force has sufficient plans in place to address the areas of improvement identified by the HMICFRS;
- provide reassurance to the public that the force is making the necessary improvements at pace; and
- seek confirmation that performance will be monitored to clearly demonstrate the impact of improvements on outcomes for victims of crime, the public, officers and staff.

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