



**Office of the Police and Crime
Commissioner**

**Communications and Engagement
Strategy 2024-2029**

Purpose of the strategy

This strategy will set out how the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Cleveland (OPCC) will support the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) to communicate and engage clearly, consistently and credibly with residents, partners and stakeholders.

Our communications and engagement activities will:

- Increase public awareness of the PCC's role and responsibilities
- Build trust and confidence in policing and community safety
- Ensure communities' voices inform priorities and decision-making – and are heard at a regional and national level.
- Demonstrate transparency, accountability and value for money
- To assist in the delivery of the PCC's Police and Crime Plan

Context

The Cleveland Police force area has the highest crime rate in England and Wales. It experiences high levels of serious violence, antisocial behaviour, domestic abuse and socio-economic deprivation. This can lead to reduced public confidence in policing and reduced engagement with public services.

We want to deliver effective communication to:

- Explain how policing priorities are set and delivered
- Show how funding decisions are made and what impact they have
- Support public understanding during periods of scrutiny or change
- Strengthen collaboration with statutory, voluntary and community partners
- Empower Cleveland communities to take ownership of the agenda and help drive improvements in policing, crime and community safety

This strategy aligns with:

- Cleveland Police and Crime Plan 2024-2029
- The PCC's statutory duties
- National policing and criminal justice priorities
- Local authority and partnership strategies

Communications and digital media

Effective communications and media engagement are essential to ensuring transparency, accountability and public understanding of the role of the PCC. Through clear, consistent and timely communication, the OPCC will explain decisions, highlight progress against priorities, and support public confidence in policing and community safety.

Communications activity will not only inform but also support engagement, accountability and trust, ensuring communities understand how their views shape policing priorities and commissioning decisions.

Our objectives

Our communications and media activity will aim to:

1. Increase public awareness and understanding of the PCC's role, powers and responsibilities
2. Communicate the priorities, outcomes and impact of the Police and Crime Plan
3. Support transparency and accountability in decision-making
4. Provide clear, accessible information on a range of public safety issues
5. Promote the effective use of public funding and commissioned services
6. Enable two-way communication between the OPCC and the public
7. Represent the PCC and Cleveland's communities at a national level

Our principles

Our communications and media activity will follow these key principles:

- **Accuracy** – information will be factual, verified and reliable
- **Clarity** – messages will be clear, concise and in plain English
- **Timeliness** – communications will be prompt and responsive
- **Consistency** – messaging will be aligned across platforms and partners
- **Accessibility** – communications will be inclusive and available in appropriate formats

Key messages

The OPCC will maintain a consistent narrative that explains:

- The PCC's role as the public's voice in policing and community safety
- How community priorities shape the PCC's Police and Crime Plan
- How the PCC holds the Chief Constable and Cleveland Police to account
- How funding decisions are made and the impact of our commissioned services
- Progress, challenges and outcomes against Plan objectives and community priorities
- How the PCC's work fits into the work of other PCCs, forces and other relevant organisations nationally, regionally and locally

We will take opportunities to reiterate the PCC's independent governance role and how it does not interfere with operational policing.

How we will communicate

Media relations

We will engage proactively and professionally with local, regional and national media by:

- Issuing press releases and media statements
- Facilitating interviews, briefing sessions and media calls
- Responding promptly to media enquiries
- Providing clear, accurate information or addressing inaccuracy

Digital communications

Our digital channels will play a key role in reaching and engaging with communities.

We will use:

- The OPCC website as the primary source of information and records
- Social media platforms to share updates, key messages and opportunities to engage
- Cleveland Connected to provide updates to subscribers

Proactive campaigns and public safety information

We will deliver planned communications campaigns aligned to Police and Crime Plan priorities.

These may include:

- Public awareness campaigns on crime prevention and community safety
- Communications highlighting commissioned services and support available to victims
- Campaigns to encourage participation in consultations or commissioning opportunities
- Communications shared from valued partners and other reliable sources

Stakeholder and partner communications

Regular communication and collaboration with partner organisations and other stakeholders will assist delivery.

This may include:

- Communicating directly with commissioned service providers
- Sharing key messages and updates with Cleveland Police and other partner organisations
- Collaboration and joint working with partners where relevant
- Sharing key messages from trusted third parties

Crisis and reactive communications

It will be necessary on occasion for the OPCC to respond to ongoing matters, emerging issues and periods of significant public concern.

We will respond by:

- Providing rapid, accurate and proportionate responses
- Coordinating with Cleveland Police and other partners, where appropriate
- Making a clear differentiation between governance responsibilities and operational matters
- Prioritising public reassurance and transparency

Accessibility and standards

It is important that our communications and media activity is suitable for as many people as possible, including those with additional needs or those who may face barriers to accessing our materials.

All communications will:

- Use plain English and accessible language
- Meet recognised accessibility standards (such as Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1)
- Reflect the diversity of Cleveland's communities
- Be available in alternative formats on request

A full Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken for the OPCC's communications activity.

Style guide

Our communications activity will always follow the OPCC Brand Guidelines, which sets out key graphic design elements such as use of the OPCC logo, fonts and photography/videography style.

The guide also sets out the OPCC 'tone of voice' and writing style, to ensure staff members can develop materials that are consistent with the overall OPCC brand.

Monitoring

We will monitor our media and communications activity via the following measures:

- Social media engagement, including reach, impressions and followers
- Media coverage, captured via an online media monitoring system
- Results of any 'call to action' – e.g. event registrations, email sign-ups, job applications
- Comments and reaction to coverage from staff, partners, media and public

Community engagement

As set out in the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act, the PCC has a duty to consult with local communities on issues relating to policing in their local area, during the development of the Police and Crime Plan and in seeking views on the police precept.

We recognise that communities across Cleveland are diverse, with differing experiences of crime, policing and public services. It is important that our engagement with residents, businesses and organisations is meaningful, inclusive and purposeful in fulfilling the PCC's statutory duties.

Please note: the PCC or OPCCs attendance at events is not an endorsement of any the views or beliefs of an individual, group or organisation associated with the event.

Our objectives

Our consultation and engagement activity seeks to:

1. Ensure community concerns shape the Police and Crime Plan and commissioning decisions
2. Improve public understanding of the PCC's role and responsibilities
3. Strengthen trust and confidence in policing and the wider criminal justice system
4. Identify emerging issues, risks and opportunities at a community level
5. Support effective scrutiny of Cleveland Police on behalf of the public
6. Place the voice of victim-survivors at the heart of policy development and system improvement

Our principles

Our engagement activity will be guided by these key principles:

- **Purposeful** – our engagement must have a clear purpose, linked to the Police and Crime Plan. This purpose must be clearly communicated to participants.
- **Two-way dialogue** – communities will have opportunities to influence priorities and provide feedback. When possible, we consult before decisions are made, not after.

- **Inclusivity** – engagement will actively seek to involve under-represented and marginalised groups.
- **Consistency** – engagement will be sustained over time, not limited to one-off consultations.
- **Feedback** – communities will be informed of outcomes through “you said, we did” reporting.



Shape Your Safety Programme

The *Shape Your Safety* programme has been developed to pull together all OPCC and PCC engagement under one framework. This is to provide more effective delivery and monitoring.

The programme has six main strands:

Public	We will seek the views of people who live, work in or visit the Cleveland Police force area to understand community needs and concerns in specific locations.
Partners and stakeholders	We will consult with other public bodies, criminal justice agencies, victim support services and the voluntary community sector on matters of public safety.
Lived experience	We will champion the rights, needs and concerns of victim-survivors, ensuring their views are factored into the design of services. When working on challenges around re-offending, we will seek insight from those in the criminal justice system.
Young people	We will recognise the unique insight of young people, who may have new and innovative ideas to address the challenges facing Cleveland.

Underrepresented groups	We will make efforts to identify marginalised or minoritised voices, who often face additional barriers to discussions on community safety and policing.
Policing insight	Where appropriate, we will seek the views of police officers, staff and volunteers to help improve our understanding of operational policing and to shape policy development.

For each specific engagement project, we will use the aims and objectives of the project to identify which of the above groups we seek to engage with.

The Shape Your Safety programme is delivered day-to-day by the OPCC Engagement Officer.

How we will engage

We will engage with communities, partners and organisations via one of the mechanisms listed below:

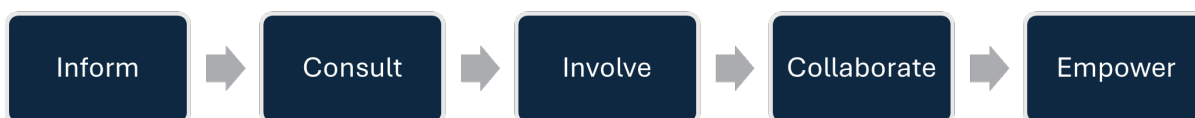
Inform – to provide balanced, objective information that the public should know and act upon

Consult – obtain and consider feedback or input on issues, ideas and discussions

Involve – work with public to understand issues and include them in identifying solutions

Collaborate – partner with the public, ensuring their views become embedded in decisions

Empower – final decisions are made by the public and they play a role in delivering them



Wherever possible, we will seek to move beyond the ‘consult’ phase, by designing consultations and engagements that involve the public in identifying solutions

Listening to local communities

We will support the PCC to spend time listening to residents in local communities by:

- Attending community councils and residents’ meetings

- Attending community events and civic celebrations
- Joining residents and stakeholders on walkabouts to see issues first-hand
- Hosting engagement stalls in local public spaces such as supermarkets
- Joining partner events and meetings

Targeted engagement

When feedback is required on a specific issue - or from a specific group - we will facilitate this by:

- Hosting themed focus groups (e.g. violence against women and girls, antisocial behaviour etc)
- Working with established networks and forums to reach under-represented groups
- Attending established community forums or groups
- Where necessary, use independent facilitators for sensitive topics or groups

Digital engagement

We will use technology to assist us in reaching more residents by:

- Using online platforms to conduct surveys
- Using social media to pose questions, hold polls and seek views on key topics
- Utilise Cleveland Connected to maintain two-way dialogue with users
- Host virtual briefings for key stakeholders and partners

Partner data sharing

To avoid duplication or consultation fatigue, we will speak regularly with our partners to identify any opportunities to:

- Share the results of surveys and consultations that may be of mutual benefit
- Undertake joint consultations or surveys where appropriate
- Work collaboratively on events or meetings
- Use existing networks or groups owned or facilitated by partner organisations

Feedback and accountability

We are committed to demonstrating the impact of our engagement with communities, partners and organisations across the Cleveland area.

Where does the feedback go?

Within the OPCC, it's important that the information we collect is used to make a difference in policy development, commissioning decisions and scrutiny activity. We will also ensure summaries of our engagement activity is given to appropriate partners, such as Cleveland Police.

To assist with this, we will produce quarterly engagement reports summarising our activity and identify key themes during the reporting period.

We will provide this information to:

- The PCC
- OPCC Scrutiny Lead
- OPCC Policy, Partnerships and Delivery Team
- CURV Team
- Cleveland Police's Confidence and Legitimacy Group
- Cleveland Police's Engagement Group
- Victim and Witnesses Group (LCJB?)
- Other commissioning bodies
- Other relevant partners and third parties

There is an expectation that the recipients of our reports will use this information to make the best decision based on the feedback and needs of participants of our consultation. The Head of Communications and Engagement will seek updates on how this information has been used for monitoring purposes.

“Closing the loop”

For those who take part in our engagements, we need to tell them how their feedback has made a difference. We will do this by:

- Publishing reports summarising the results of our consultations and surveys
- Providing summaries of our engagement activity and key themes in Police and Crime Plan quarterly updates
- Reporting how feedback has influenced decisions and priorities
- Use consultations and their results to drive communications activity
- Communicate results to relevant partners and groups specifically involved or targeted in activity
- Explain – if necessary – why some views cannot be taken forward and why

This approach will help to build trust and confidence towards the OPCC and other criminal justice bodies, in that engagement will lead to tangible outcomes.

Accessibility

We want to make sure our engagement activity reaches as many people as possible, including those who may face additional barriers to participating in surveys, meetings, focus groups or any other type of engagement.

We will tailor our engagement to meet the needs of the groups, with whom we seek to engage. Approaches include - but are not limited - to:

- Using translation services, including British Sign Language
- Using venues which are accessible to disabled people
- Simplifying language or content to meet the needs of those with difficulties in reading
- Use digital options for those unable to attend in-person events
- Ensuring on and offline methods are considered as part of every consultation

A full Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken for the OPCC's engagement activity.

Monitoring and innovation

As a statutory responsibility of the PCC, we will track and monitor the effectiveness of our engagement activity, as part of the delivery of the Police and Crime Plan.

Engagement tracker and map

Any engagement undertaken by the PCC or the OPCC will be logged in an engagement tracker.

This tracker allows us to monitor:

- What type of engagements we are conducting
- Which geographical locations we are engaging in
- How many engagements the PCC is attending personally
- Feedback from specific groups and how it is being used

To showcase the variety of engagements undertaken by the OPCC, we will host an interactive engagement map on the OPCC website. This map will be updated regularly to reflect where in Cleveland the PCC or OPCC has been engaging with communities.

Evaluation and learning

In the interests of continuous development, our community engagement activity will be reviewed to ensure it remains effective and meets the needs of the organisation and Cleveland's communities.

We will:

- Evaluate participation in our surveys and consultations
- Seek feedback on events or focus groups
- Carry out qualitative as well as quantitative evaluations and research
- Reflect on any missed opportunities or feedback to make improvements