

Mr Richard Lewis
Chief Constable
Cleveland Police

Cc: Mr Steve Turner
Police and Crime Commissioner, Cleveland Police

19 August 2021

Dear Richard,

CLEVELAND POLICE CAUSE OF CONCERN REVISIT – PREVENTING CRIME AND TACKLING ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Background

We inspected Cleveland Police, as part of our PEEL inspection programme, between 20 and 31 May 2019. During the inspection, we identified six causes of concern. One of them was about the way the force prioritised crime prevention. This was that:

“The force doesn’t appropriately prioritise crime prevention. There is a lack of strategic direction, and the force doesn’t allocate enough resources to prevention work. Staff who carry out prevention work lack an understanding of the priorities they should be tackling.

The force should take immediate steps to:

- provide strategic direction and co-ordination of all prevention activity;
- ensure there are the right resources, in the right place, to carry out structured problem-solving and prevention activity aligned to its priorities;
- ensure officers and staff working within neighbourhood teams understand the needs of local communities, their priorities, and the threats they face; and
- monitor the effectiveness of its crime prevention activity, evaluating and sharing effective practice both internally and with other organisations.”

2. We reviewed progress against this cause of concern between 7 and 24 June 2021. We did the revisit both remotely and on-site to allow for reality testing.

3. During the revisit, we interviewed staff from across the force, observed force meetings, and reviewed a range of documents and data. A summary of our findings is below.

Progress against the cause of concern recommendations

Provide strategic direction and co-ordination of all prevention activity – in progress

4. In 2019, we found that neighbourhood policing teams and the community safety team lacked strategic direction and leadership, and weren't working consistently to force priorities. While some strategic documents provided guidance, the teams lacked the direction and leadership required to focus their roles on force priorities.
5. We are pleased to find that there is improved strategic direction communicated through the force's crime priorities, identified in its annual assessment of crime and threat. This works well where specific work is tasked directly to neighbourhood policing teams. But the community safety team, and some neighbourhood teams, are not yet receiving and understanding how these priorities, information and intelligence can help prioritise their work.
6. The workforce receives further guidance and direction through a range of new and revised strategies, policies, guidance and toolkits. Although these have been communicated to the workforce, many of these documents are very recent and officers and staff had limited, or no, awareness of them or how they influence their roles.
7. There is improved governance in place through strategic performance meetings, senior leadership meetings and working groups. But the overall co-ordination of prevention activity is not yet in place. A superintendent has recently been appointed to provide this co-ordination from within the community safety team.

Ensure there are the right resources, in the right place, to carry out structured problem solving and prevention activity aligned to its priorities – in progress

Right people, right place

8. In 2019, we found that the force had limited resources allocated to neighbourhood teams. All neighbourhood constables had been removed, leaving only police community safety officers (PCSOs) and supervisors in these teams. As a result, the future of neighbourhood policing throughout Cleveland remained uncertain.
9. Later in 2019, a commitment was made by you, the chief constable, to reinstate neighbourhood policing as early as possible to reduce the demand on frontline officers, acknowledging that reducing demand through problem solving is a longer term and ongoing commitment.
10. A new neighbourhood policing team structure has been in place since March 2020. This includes 102 newly created police constable posts, plus more PCSO posts (bringing the total to 106). All the PCSOs, and many of the police officers, are now in place. But these officers are often being extracted to more urgent work (mainly responding to incidents following a 999 call). This is taking them away from their neighbourhood roles, including preventing the longer-term problems in communities.

11. The force has an ongoing review of its neighbourhood policing model to inform how it allocates officers and staff to these roles. This model is now informed by a wider set of data, with greater consideration given to the level of risk and harm in local communities. Further options are being considered so that the force can maintain its neighbourhood policing presence, while also responding to urgent calls for police assistance.

12. The community safety team, a separate central team, has also been reviewed and restructured. It has since been allocated extra resources. This team is now putting in place new ways of working, and a recently appointed superintendent is responsible for the leadership and direction it still needs.

Problem solving and prevention

13. In 2019, the force didn't have a consistent approach to problem solving to prevent crime. Methods and systems that were previously in place were no longer consistently used. Plans we reviewed didn't include enough analysis of the problem, or enough supervision and evaluation.

14. A consistent approach to problem solving has now been re-introduced gradually through pilots in each of the local policing areas. This happened between December 2020 and June 2021. Learning from each pilot has informed the next one. Problem-solving training has been given to neighbourhood teams, and other officers and staff across the force. However, many describe the training as poor.

15. Despite this, we are pleased to find that officers and staff in neighbourhood teams are starting to apply problem-solving principles. They are starting to think about solving problems longer term, rather than just responding to and dealing with incidents in isolation.

16. However, the problem-solving plans that we reviewed varied in content and quality. Officers and staff need to better understand a problem, consider the root cause, and be aware of the bigger picture, to properly plan and deal with the problem longer term.

17. The force continues to run operations at specific times of the year to prevent further crime. These operations bring together various teams from across the force area to target organised crime, violence, drug dealing, and anti-social behaviour. This is positive, and helping to keep communities safe. But some of these operations can only be run through officers working overtime, rather than business as usual.

18. In 2019, the force wasn't raising enough awareness in its communities to prevent crime and there was no co-ordinated approach to this communication.

19. The force is now better at publishing messages about crime prevention. These are overseen centrally. But there remains a lack of a co-ordinated approach in prioritising the volume of messages and other prevention activity from across the force, and ensuring that they align to both force and local priorities. The force intends this to be a part of its overall co-ordination of crime prevention activity.

Monitor the effectiveness of its crime prevention activity, evaluating and sharing effective practice both internally and with other organisations – in progress

20. In 2019, we found that the force wasn't using evidence to inform how it could prevent crime from occurring. It didn't evaluate enough the prevention and problem-solving work that is done.

21. The force continues to understand the individual successes it achieves from its prevention activity. For example, it reports how many arrests there have been, how many stop searches have been done, the volume of drugs recovered, and the reduction in calls for service. But it doesn't yet understand how effective its approaches are in solving problems longer term, and which approaches are having the most positive impact to sustain a reduction in calls, crime and harm.

22. Identification and sharing of problem-solving 'what works' is starting to happen in neighbourhood teams and managers are starting to recognise problem-solving activity that is worth sharing with other teams. There is a system to record this. But the assessment and evaluation of problem-solving plans need more work to better support this process.

23. The force plans to have a formal good practice awards to encourage problem solving and recognise and share 'what works'.

Ensure officers and staff working within neighbourhood teams understand the needs of local communities, their priorities, and the threats they face – in progress

24. In 2019, we found that the force had analysed the main threats facing its communities and had identified the priorities for the organisation. However, it hadn't considered feedback from the public about their concerns in each local area. Neighbourhood teams weren't sufficiently addressing the force priorities or local concerns and local officers didn't know enough about their communities and those who may pose a threat.

25. The force is trying to better understand the needs of its local communities. Community concerns are identified by PCSOs. This is mainly through local councillors communicating what their priorities are. But the force must ensure that local concerns reflect all communities living in Cleveland, and are prioritised with a wider range of information and intelligence that the force is aware of. Work has begun to better understand the needs of those communities who are heard less frequently or not at all.

26. A range of documents and tools inform officers and staff about the local area, such as 'ward profiles', intelligence documents, and a geographical mapping system. These contain information that is valuable in understanding the policing priorities and context of the local area. We found that use of these documents and systems varies considerably. Better use could be made of all this information and intelligence to determine; the purpose of each set of information, how it all works together, and how to best use this to keep neighbourhood teams and the community safety team informed about policing the local areas.

Conclusion

27. The force is making progress with this cause of concern. While it is taking more time to implement than some of the other concerns we raised, I recognise that progress has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

28. While we have continually monitored progress, this is the first time we have formally reviewed the force's results. As a result of our review, all recommendations remain in progress and will be further reviewed as part of our PEEL programme of inspection.

29. This is one of six PEEL causes of concern being monitored. As such, Cleveland Police remains in the engage phase of our monitoring process, at least until our next review period.

Yours sincerely,



Andy Cooke, QPM

HM Inspector of Constabulary

HMI Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services