

PEEL 2025–27

Police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy

An inspection of Staffordshire Police

Contents

Overall summary	1
Our judgments	1
PEEL 2025–2027	1
Terminology in this report	2
About the data	2
HM Inspector’s summary	2
Leadership and force management	5
Areas for improvement	5
Main findings	7
Attracting, developing and retaining the workforce and creating a diverse and inclusive workplace	12
Promising practice	12
Area for improvement	13
Main findings	13
Using powers fairly, appropriately and with justification	17
Promising practice	17
Area for improvement	18
Main findings	20
Preventing and deterring crime and antisocial behaviour, and reducing vulnerability	24
Promising practice	24
Area for improvement	25
Main findings	26
Responding to the public	30
Cause of concern	30
Main findings	32

Investigating crime	34
Areas for improvement	34
Main findings	36
Safeguarding children and adults at risk of harm	41
Areas for improvement	41
Main findings	43
Managing fraud	46
Areas for improvement	46
Main findings	47
Providing a safe and lawful custody environment	48
Area for improvement	48
Main findings	49

Overall summary

Our judgments

Our inspection assessed how good Staffordshire Police is in nine areas of policing. We make graded judgments as follows:

Outstanding	Good	Adequate	Requires improvement	Inadequate
		Developing a diverse and inclusive workforce	Leadership and force management	Responding to the public
		Police powers and public treatment	Investigating crime	
		Preventing and deterring crime	Managing fraud	
		Safeguarding children and adults		
		Providing a safe custody environment		

We set out our detailed findings about things the force is doing well and where the force should improve in the rest of this report.

We also assess the force's performance in a range of other areas, and we report on these separately. We make graded judgments for some of these areas.

PEEL 2025–2027

In 2014, we introduced our police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy (PEEL) inspections, which assess the performance of all 43 police forces in England and Wales. Since then, we have been continuously adapting our approach.

We have moved to a more [intelligence](#)-led, continual assessment approach, rather than the annual [PEEL inspections](#) we used in previous years. We assess forces against the [characteristics of good](#) performance, set out in the [PEEL assessment framework 2025–2027](#), and we more clearly link our judgments to [causes of concern](#) and [areas for improvement](#).

It isn't possible to make direct comparisons between the grades awarded in this PEEL inspection and those from the previous cycle of PEEL inspections. This is because we have increased our focus on making sure forces are achieving appropriate outcomes for the public. We have also changed the aspects of policing we inspect and added new areas.

Terminology in this report

Our reports contain references to, among other things, 'national' definitions, priorities, policies, systems, responsibilities and processes.

In some instances, 'national' means applying to England or Wales, or England and Wales. In others, it means applying to England, Wales and Scotland, or the whole of the United Kingdom.

About the data

For more information on data and analysis in this report, please [see the 'About the data' section of our website](#).

HM Inspector's summary

I am satisfied with the performance of Staffordshire Police in how it is working to attract, support and retain members of its workforce and how it is trying to improve how fairly and effectively its [officers](#) use their [powers of stop and search](#). The force has made some improvement to how it [safeguards vulnerable people](#) since our last inspection. I have concerns about how the force is responding to calls from the public, how it investigates crime on behalf of [victims](#) and how well it understands and responds to current and future demand.

The period of this inspection has been an unsettled time for the force, with the chief constable, deputy chief constable and two assistant chief constable positions being occupied on a temporary or acting basis. Although the force has invested in predictive technology, it struggles to understand and take cost-effective steps to meet its current and future demand. In some areas, we found the force's governance arrangements to be ineffective, meaning that some aspects of underperformance which affect public safety have gone undetected. The force needs to make sure that it has enough appropriately trained leaders to translate its strategic vision into effective performance.

The force is working to increase the diversity of the workforce it recruits from its communities. It needs to make sure that the workforce is sufficiently trained to put its [chief officers'](#) vision of an inclusive, supportive workplace into practice. Retaining a diverse workforce is as important as creating one. Although the force has processes to encourage members of its workforce to continue working for it, there is still work to do to create an environment where all of its [personnel](#) feel that their well-being, training and career development needs are met.

It is encouraging to see that the stop and search training the force gives to its personnel is leading to more frequent, appropriate and effectively carried out searches. The force now also needs to make sure that its officers record every occasion when it uses force on people. When the force stops and searches people or uses force on them, it needs to record their ethnicity accurately. This will help the force reassure the public that its personnel use their powers fairly and appropriately.

It is disappointing that, despite some promising work to reduce the frequency and impact of prolific retail theft, the force's overall performance in preventing and deterring crime and [antisocial behaviour](#) has deteriorated since our last inspection. Positively, the force communicates well with its communities, which helps it to understand the causes of antisocial behaviour and vulnerability. However, it is clear that the force is struggling to prevent its neighbourhood policing personnel being diverted from their core roles to support other areas of policing, or to understand the impact on its communities when this happens.

Answering calls for help from the public and attending incidents promptly is fundamental to making sure that victims are protected from harm, and that suspected offenders are apprehended and brought to justice. It is particularly concerning that, despite our 2024 inspection highlighting that the force needed to improve in this area, we found that the force's performance was inadequate. Although the quality of service the force provides to callers at the first point of contact has improved, too many calls are abandoned and help doesn't reach victims quickly or often enough. The force needs to urgently improve its response when the public call for help.

I am disappointed that, despite our 2024 inspection identifying that the force needed to carry out effective investigations on behalf of the public, this is now an enduring area for improvement. The force is still not recording crimes reported to it quickly enough, and not enough victims of crime are able to access their rights under the [Code of Practice for Victims of Crime \('the Victims' Code'\)](#). More positively, the force is achieving a higher proportion of [positive outcomes](#) and, where it arrests suspected offenders, is using [bail](#) to protect victims. The force's governance arrangements need to make sure that the overall quality of investigations on behalf of victims improves.

Encouragingly, we found that the force effectively recognised when crimes had been committed against vulnerable people and took steps, working with other agencies, to safeguard them. Multi-agency working is a strength for the force to build on. However, in order to provide a thoroughly good safeguarding service, the force must now make sure it can use its data to understand where opportunities to protect vulnerable people have been missed. In addition, more work is needed to allow the force to be confident that it safeguards [missing people](#) and protects victims of [stalking](#).

This is the first time that we have inspected the force's response to fraud. While it is positive that the force clearly understands the threat that this type of crime poses to its communities, it is equally clear that it needs more investment in training and investigative capacity to bring fraudsters to justice and to protect victims.

A safe and lawfully operating custody environment makes sure that detained people are properly controlled while being safe and able to exercise their lawful rights with dignity. It is reassuring that, overall, the force manages to do this. However, we found that the force needed to more diligently comply with [authorised professional practice](#) to ensure the safety of detained persons throughout their time in custody and following their release. Doing so will help the force to be confident that it is good at providing a safe and lawful custody environment.

I am concerned about the performance of Staffordshire Police, due to the issues I have outlined in this summary. While there are areas in which the force has improved, and our inspectors have highlighted several areas of [innovative](#) or [promising practice](#), there are still too many enduring issues that the force needs to address. I have given Staffordshire Police specific recommendations that highlight the areas of work it needs to focus on, and I will continue to monitor performance.



Kathryn Stone OBE

His Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary

Leadership and force management

Requires
improvement

Staffordshire Police's leadership and force management require improvement.

Areas for improvement

The force should make sure it can respond effectively to current and future demand

In [our last inspection](#), we found that the force needed to make sure it was effective at managing demand and could show that it had the right resources, processes and plans in place to meet that demand. The force hasn't made sufficient progress towards achieving this.

In our last inspection, we also identified that response teams were affected by high levels of demand. This remained the case in this inspection. Response [officers](#) told us their teams were frequently operating below the force's preferred staffing levels. This has a significant impact on officer morale and welfare, as well as the force's ability to meet important performance measures (such as attendance times).

We also found in this inspection that there was a reliance on [neighbourhood policing teams](#) to support response teams at times of high demand. This leads to neighbourhood officers having less time to fulfil their primary duties. It transfers a resourcing pressure from response to neighbourhood policing teams without effectively addressing the underlying issue.

In our last inspection, we identified that the force was spending more than it had budgeted for on overtime, and that this would likely not be sustainable if the force were fully staffed in line with its operating model. Since then, the force has reduced its spending on overtime. Despite this, it still overspent on overtime in every month in 2025. This shows the force still has more work to do to make sure its operating model reflects its planning assumptions. At the time of our inspection, the force was still finalising the details of its overtime policy.

This problem is likely to be compounded by a lack of accuracy and compatibility in workforce planning data. Officers and staff told us that the force's resourcing data wasn't always accurate. This led to difficulties in understanding exactly how many staff would be available and whether officers were or weren't on duty. We also found that the force's case management systems for workforce skills, duties and human resources didn't interact well enough. The inability of these systems to provide a coherent overview of resourcing has resulted in staff having to manually input or extract data. This can contribute to inefficiency in workforce planning.

The force is aware of these issues and is carrying out improvement activity to address them. The force's Project Maximus is reviewing resource allocation to meet demand more effectively. Examples include earlier attendance by the criminal investigation department to incidents that may need a more complex investigation, and revised processes in the force's [public protection unit](#) to maintain optimal staffing levels. However, these and other initiatives remain at an early stage.

The force uses predictive analytics in its [force management statement](#) as part of its business planning, but staffing levels aren't aligned to current or future demand in all operational areas. We also found gaps in how the force used predictive analytics for long-term forecasting, as its demand modelling relied too heavily on incident and crime data.

The force should continue to review its operating model and make sure that it can respond effectively to current and future demand.

The force should make sure its governance arrangements appropriately identify and resolve areas of risk and underperformance

The force has a clear governance structure, and during our inspection we observed performance meetings that effectively held leaders to account. The majority of the performance meetings we observed were well attended and supported by reliable data which aligned with the force's strategic objectives and focused on risk areas.

The force's expectations about performance are clear, and we saw evidence of it considering key performance indicators in performance meetings. During [our last inspection](#), we commented that the force had made considerable progress in collecting and disseminating data about performance. We saw the continued use of this data during this inspection.

Despite this positive work, we found that the force wasn't adequately identifying risk in some areas, including contact management and [safeguarding](#). For example, we found that incidents initially graded for a priority response (within two hours) were often downgraded to a lower priority without sufficient supervisory oversight or an assessment of the risk. The force also has limited oversight as to whether safeguarding referral forms have been submitted in a timely manner and in line with its policy. The force cannot have confidence that its current governance arrangements and data provision allow it to adequately detect and resolve areas of underperformance.

We also found that the force wasn't always making improvements quickly enough. It hasn't made sufficient progress in several important areas we identified in our previous inspection and, in some cases, in earlier inspections. The enduring challenges the force needs to resolve include incident attendance times, investigative supervisory standards, recording the use of force and the abandonment of [101](#) calls.

The force should make sure it can effectively address areas of risk and underperformance.

Main findings

In this section, we set out our main findings that relate to how good the force is at leadership and force management.

The force doesn't have effective systems to gather intelligence to make sure it can anticipate and respond to current and future demand

During our inspection, we found that the force lacked effective [intelligence](#) and functions to assign appropriate resources. This means that it struggles to anticipate and respond to both current and future demand. Without real-time data, predictive analytics and collaborative information-sharing networks, the force can't proactively identify emerging threats, allocate resources efficiently and prioritise operations based on risk and impact. Instead, its operations become reactive and poorly targeted. This leads to inefficient resource use and an inability to address both current challenges and emerging threats.

We found that many performance meetings did effectively share data and identify opportunities to respond to resourcing challenges. However, some of the meetings we observed (including some tasking and co-ordination group meetings, daily management meetings and daily pacesetter meetings) didn't clearly hold attendees to account for progress against important actions or clearly cover available opportunities to promote a greater understanding of risks.

The force should do more to make sure that its workforce understands strategic priorities and the need for change

The force has a communications strategy supported by accessible documentation and resources that outline its priorities and objectives. These priorities are covered in professional development reviews. We found that some members of the workforce were positive about how the force kept them updated, but this wasn't a universally expressed view. Some officers and staff were unable to explain the force's priorities or told us that these changed too frequently to have relevance for their everyday work.

The force does make efforts to consult with its workforce, including providing an app to submit ideas, a refreshed internal intranet and briefing sessions led by [chief officers](#). The force also has plans to increase its range of internal consultation activity. This should help staff understand the force's objectives and how and why things may change.

During our inspection, we carried out a workforce survey, open to all officers and [staff](#), between 17 November and 12 December 2025. We received 1,122 responses, which we estimate to represent 29.4 percent of the workforce at the time of the survey. Only 49.8 percent of respondents (559 of 1,122) agreed that change was managed well in the force. This finding was reflected in some of our conversations with the workforce. For example, officers and staff, including members of staff associations, didn't always feel they were consulted on relevant policies and procedures.

The force should continue its efforts to communicate with its workforce about strategic priorities and the changes it will make to align its operating model with demand.

The force makes performance data available to its staff, but should make sure that it addresses gaps

In our last inspection, we found that the force had made considerable progress in collecting and disseminating data about performance. During this inspection, we found this had continued. The force has well-used Microsoft Power BI dashboards that provide reliable data to officers and staff. We saw good examples of officers and staff using data to identify opportunities to manage performance or improve the service provided to [victims](#). For example, we found neighbourhood policing teams using force systems to research [antisocial behaviour](#) hotspots, and supervisors using Power BI to understand workloads and timelines for supervisory tasks.

Force performance packs (data prepared for performance meetings) contain a range of information and the force provides different levels of information depending on the subject. For example, the [missing persons](#) performance pack includes data on missing person profiles for gender and ethnicity.

Despite this, we found that the force's understanding and use of data from other organisations was limited. Only some tactical meetings shared relevant data of this kind, and there was limited use of it to understand all sources of demand. We also found that the force still manually recorded some data in spreadsheets, which can be inefficient or result in multiple versions of the same data set. And as we discuss in the [area for improvement](#) at the [start of this section](#), the force hasn't always managed to translate the understanding of performance that data provides into meaningful improvement.

The force is developing its leaders and preparing the force for the future, but should make sure a sufficient number of leaders are trained

The force has a scheduled programme of development for its leaders. Courses include the Inspired Leaders and Midline Leaders courses, which are aligned to the [College of Policing](#) curriculum. Officers and staff we spoke to generally reported good support from line managers. And in our workforce survey, 68.9 percent of respondents (241 of 350) agreed that the force gave them the necessary training to carry out line management or supervisory responsibilities. The force has a low proportion of acting or temporary supervisors and makes the same leadership training opportunities available to these as to permanent supervisors.

Despite this, leadership training isn't mandatory. And our survey found that only 51.1 percent of respondents (179 of 350) were currently participating, or had participated over the past two years, in force or College of Policing leadership courses, programmes or workshops.

The force's in-house leadership training includes modules on standards of behaviour including upstander training (skills and techniques to help staff intervene if they experience or witness inappropriate behaviour), the [Code of Ethics](#), and equality, diversity and inclusion. Officers and staff we spoke to were generally positive about the force's culture, reporting an inclusive approach supported by leaders. This finding was supported by our survey, which showed that 71.4 percent of respondents (801 of 1,122) would recommend the force as a great place to work, 92.9 percent (1,042 of 1,122) felt treated fairly at work by their co-workers and 78.5 percent (881 of 1,122) felt treated fairly at work by their managers and senior leaders.

The force hasn't yet completed the Code of Ethics national self-assessment but has plans to do this soon. It is also carrying out a force-wide culture audit, which should provide it with a greater insight into its culture.

The force is refreshing its approach to succession planning and is one of the pilot forces for the [National Police Chiefs' Council's](#) strategic workforce plan project.

The force has digital transformation plans that show how it uses technology to improve operational efficiency

We found that the force's digital transformation plans focused on using advanced technologies to enhance operational efficiency and service provision. By integrating tools such as artificial intelligence (AI), cloud storage systems and data analytics, the force is making workflows more efficient, improving decision-making and increasing productivity. This should enhance public safety and trust through more responsive policing.

The force has made progress in replacing some of its outdated systems. It has several projects running in 2026 which will introduce new systems for the [control room](#) and [digital forensics](#). Ongoing investment in IT and estate infrastructure should allow these areas to be more efficient and productive in the future. We observed a clear process for prioritising projects, with a robust approach to realising benefits.

The force is part of a national initiative on robotic process automation, and we found it had identified various opportunities to use AI to increase productivity. One example is an AI-enabled webchat tool, which the force adopted after successful testing in another force. The force is also considering whether robotic process automation can help cover some vacant posts to reduce its recruitment needs.

The force can show how it aligns finances to its priorities and how it decides if its expenditure offers value for money

The force could show its finances and its priorities were aligned. It clearly links its budget allocations to strategic objectives and operational needs. This involves transparent financial planning that shows how it uses resources in important areas such as investigations, neighbourhood policing and technological innovation. The force uses regular performance reviews and audits to help assess whether its spending leads to measurable outcomes and makes sure it is using public funds efficiently. The force uses [benchmarking](#) and cost-benefit analyses, and adopts best practices in procurement and resource management to further support value for money. By maintaining this alignment and accountability, the force can create public confidence in its financial leadership and operational effectiveness.

In the financial year 2024/25, the force received around £295 million in total funding. As with other forces in England and Wales, this is a combination of local revenue generated from the [police precept](#) and a core grant from central government. The precept income to the force that year was about £101 million. This is equivalent to about £86,000 per 1,000 population, which is within the typical range forces in England and Wales receive from the precept.

For 2025/26, the force received an increase of 5.12 percent in the police precept (£287.57 per band D property), which was forecast to provide about an extra £6 million of funding.

We found that the force had an effective efficiency programme which considered value for money and was connected to business planning processes. The force's financial investment and review board makes sure spending is aligned to strategic priorities through regular assessments. There is clear oversight of delegated budgets, and budget holders are supported with training and advice.

In 2025/26, the force had achieved 88 percent of its efficiency programme, and there is an annual forecast for further progress in successive years. The force has a target for 2026/27 of achieving a further £13.4 million in savings. Its efficiency programme gives reassurance this is achievable. The force uses limited internal borrowing from its reserves. This borrowing is managed wisely.

Attracting, developing and retaining the workforce and creating a diverse and inclusive workplace

Adequate

Staffordshire Police is adequate at attracting, developing and retaining its workforce and creating a diverse and inclusive workplace.

Promising practice

The force hosts career insight days for care leavers

The force told us that the county of Staffordshire had a high level of [looked after children](#) and young people in care, and that there was a need to support care leavers into employment and work experience.

The force has hosted a number of care leavers' events in partnership with Staffordshire County Council, Stoke-on-Trent City Council, the University of Staffordshire and the construction company Morgan Sindall. The events have been running since 2024, with the most recent taking place in April 2026.

The events are intended to inspire young people towards a variety of careers. The force, working with other organisations from the public and private sectors, is helping to improve communities by offering opportunities to young people from [under-represented backgrounds](#). So far, event themes have included forensic investigation and construction-related skills.

Area for improvement

The force needs to make sure its workforce has received equality, diversity and inclusion training, and that leaders understand their role in supporting people from under-represented groups

We found that [officers](#) and [staff](#) from [under-represented groups](#), including people with neurodivergent conditions and those from ethnic minority backgrounds, didn't always feel supported in the workplace.

The force has staff networks and an equality, diversity and inclusion team, as well as a neurodiversity officer. However, after the initial recruitment and on-boarding period, it provides little ongoing support. Officers and staff told us they could feel marginalised or treated unfairly by colleagues and supervisors.

[Personnel](#) told us that [chief officers](#) were supportive of under-represented groups, and the force had strategies and plans to support being an inclusive workplace. However, this isn't always well understood by everyone in the organisation. The force told us it included equality, diversity and inclusion in training for new recruits and in leadership courses. But it doesn't currently have a mandatory course for the whole workforce. The force told us it intended to reintroduce this once it knew the results of the leading inclusive teams [College of Policing](#) pilot programme. We will monitor the progress of its training implementation. The force needs to make sure its workforce, and, in particular, frontline and mid-level leaders, are sufficiently trained to understand the lived experience of their colleagues, and their role in supporting them to succeed in the organisation.

Main findings

In this section, we set out our main findings that relate to how good the force is at attracting, developing and retaining its workforce and creating a diverse and inclusive workplace.

The force doesn't always provide officers and staff with the right training to carry out specialist work

The force has a detective capabilities board that oversees progress on training detectives, using a tracker for all officers undergoing accreditation. It also funds revision sessions for national investigator exams. The force has a comprehensive investigator resilience action plan, which shows understanding of its current and future investigative demand.

However, it doesn't currently have sufficient numbers of [professionalising investigations programme \(PIP\) 2](#) investigator posts filled. As at 31 December 2025, the force had 290 full-time equivalent PIP 2 investigators in post compared to 446 who should have been in post. This means 65.0 percent of PIP 2 investigator posts were filled. The force is working to address the shortfall and, as at 31 December 2025, there were 64 full-time equivalent PIP 2 trainees.

The force has introduced the [College of Policing's neighbourhood policing programme](#). The College of Policing dashboard shows that, as at 17 March 2026, 505 individuals had completed the first part of the programme. The force had 359 neighbourhood officers and police community support officers eligible and required to complete the training. This suggests the force is comprehensively providing its workforce with an understanding of neighbourhood policing principles. The force also provides effective training for volunteers in specialist roles. Volunteers and special constables reported feeling well supported by line managers and were well integrated into teams.

Our workforce survey found that 69.5 percent of respondents (780 of 1,122) agreed that the force gave them the necessary training to carry out their role. Although the force suitably trains some personnel for their roles, it still needs to make sure that all its workforce has the necessary knowledge and skills to provide the public with an effective policing service.

The force doesn't have a clear understanding of the well-being challenges of its workforce

The force has a comprehensive well-being plan, which is clearly aligned with the five main areas of the '[National Police Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2024–2026](#)'. It communicates with its workforce and acts on information and feedback to improve its well-being.

In our workforce survey, 66.4 percent of respondents (745 of 1,122) said that the force took their well-being into account when setting their working pattern, and 73.0 percent of respondents (819 of 1,122) said that their line manager actively checked that their workload was manageable. However, officers and staff we spoke to during our inspection raised concerns about unmanageable workloads.

Officers and staff told us they generally felt well supported by supervisors, but that, at times, the demand on them was too high and this had a negative impact on their well-being. Officers told us that they were often unable to take rest breaks, and that they didn't feel there were sufficient numbers of officers to support them when needed. They also told us that supervisors didn't always have time to have regular discussions with them about well-being and were sometimes inflexible when they mentioned being affected by traumatic experiences.

The force needs to make sure that it balances the need to manage demand with maintaining the well-being of its workforce.

The force has processes in place to encourage officers and staff to stay in its workforce

The force checks on the satisfaction of its workforce through surveys and collects workforce data. It uses [stay interviews](#) to identify concerns early and discuss how it can encourage people to stay in its workforce. It has a well-established, transparent exit interview process, which is independent of the line management chain. In our workforce survey, 48.0 percent of respondents (465 of 968) said that they saw their future career continuing in the force beyond the next three years.

The force is gathering reasons for people leaving the workforce as part of the [National Police Chiefs' Council](#) national leavers framework, which is designed to improve the data collection on reasons for officers leaving police forces in England and Wales.

In the year ending 31 March 2025, the force had a 7.5 percent officer leaver rate. This is higher than the 6.0 percent national average officer leaver rate across all forces in England and Wales.

The main reason for police officers leaving is normal retirement, with 41.1 percent of officer leavers retiring in comparison with the 32.1 percent national average.

The force also has a higher proportion of officer leavers from an ethnic minority background and is carrying out further work to understand and address this.

In the year ending 31 March 2025, the ethnic minority officer leaver rate was 10.7 percent compared to 7.4 percent for White officers. Across all forces in England and Wales, the leaver rate is 6.5 percent for ethnic minority officers and 5.9 percent for White officers.

The force needs to strengthen its professional development review process to better support staff development and career progression

We found during our inspection that officers and staff didn't always value professional development reviews (PDRs).

In the year ending 31 March 2025, 79.3 percent of the workforce had a completed PDR recorded. Our audit of 20 PDRs found that 15 contained objectives. Of these, only five had measurable objectives and most lacked detail. Development needs were identified in five PDRs, but supervisors didn't consistently acknowledge them or generate a plan to meet the person's developmental needs.

We were told that supervisors were encouraged to have one-to-one conversations with officers and staff on at least a monthly basis to discuss workload manageability and general well-being. However, these conversations aren't recorded on the force's HR system, and some officers, staff and supervisors we spoke to said they didn't always take place.

The force told us it had a quality assurance process for PDRs which had helped it to identify ways it could improve the skills and confidence of its workforce. For example, it has provided training to better equip supervisors to have meaningful conversations about performance and development.

The force's talent strategy is aligned to the College of Policing's national talent development strategy. The force has no established process for identifying and managing talent within PDRs. However, its 2025–28 learning and organisational development strategy sets out how it plans to strengthen the PDR process, so it better supports staff development and career progression. The force intends to achieve this by ensuring 100 percent completion of PDRs across all commands, with progress closely monitored and reported. It told us it also intended to use PDR data better in the future when making decisions about learning and development, so that it had a comprehensive understanding of what training its workforce needed.

Using powers fairly, appropriately and with justification

Adequate

Staffordshire Police is adequate at using its powers fairly, appropriately and with justification.

Promising practice

The force has introduced support for officers who are assaulted

The force has introduced a support process for [officers](#) who are assaulted. This is informed by a Microsoft Power BI dashboard which highlights when officers are assaulted.

All officers with fewer than three years' service who are assaulted are provided with support. Officers of any length of service who are assaulted twice in a six-month period are also offered support. A public and personal safety training manager reviews [body-worn video](#) of the incident, and officers are asked if they would like to debrief the incident with a member of the training team. These conversations take place from a well-being perspective. They are mandatory for new recruits and optional for those with longer service.

The force told us it had seen a total uptake of around 30 percent for the process and had received positive feedback from those who had received the support. The force has seen a decrease in reported officer assaults, which it attributes to the one-to-one feedback and personal safety training elements of this scheme, as well as to improved recording practices.

Area for improvement

The force needs to improve how it records use of force

In [our last PEEL report](#), published in September 2024, we told the force it needed to make sure it accurately recorded the occasions when its officers used force. The force hasn't made sufficient progress and is still under-recording its use of force.

In the year ending 31 March 2025, the force recorded 10,579 use of force incidents. This is an increase of 28.9 percent compared to the previous year. This increase is due to improved recording practices, particularly relating to the recording of compliant handcuffing.

Officers are expected to record every use of force to make sure it is transparent and accountable. This includes recording low-level use of force such as handcuffing a compliant person and higher levels of force such as the use of a baton or [conducted energy device](#) (Taser). Where more than one officer uses force on an individual, each officer must submit their own use of force report. We reviewed the body-worn video of 21 [stop and search](#) incidents. We found that, although all subjects were handcuffed to facilitate the search, a use of force form was only submitted in 11 out of the 21 cases.

To determine if the force was recording use of force appropriately, we reviewed two different measures. We firstly examined the number of arrests and compared this to the number of recorded use of force reports. We expect the number of use of force reports to be at least as high as the number of arrests. Most arrests involve the use of handcuffs and multiple officers may have used force during the arrest.

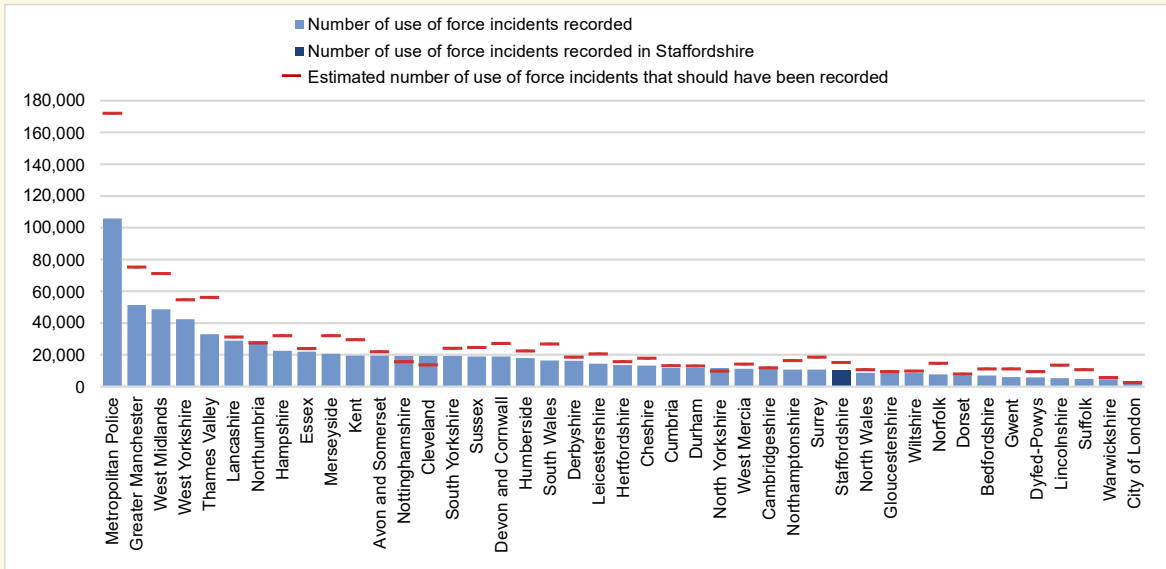
In the year ending 31 March 2025, the force carried out 12,730 arrests and recorded 10,579 use of force reports. This means it under-recorded its use of force by at least 2,151 incidents.

We then reviewed the overall expected number of use of force records compared to the actual recorded number. The expected number is estimated based on the average number of uses of force associated with each recorded arrest.

We estimate that, in the year ending 31 March 2025, the force should have recorded 15,169 use of force incidents. It actually recorded 10,579 incidents. This means it likely under-recorded its use of force by 4,590 incidents.

The data shows an improvement in recording use of force compared to the previous year when, based on this estimation, it didn't record 5,920 use of force incidents. However, the force told us that, despite the improvements it had made to its processes, it had still under-recorded the use of force in the year since March 2025. The force needs to make sure a form is submitted for all uses of force.

Figure 1: Number of use of force incidents that forces in England and Wales recorded and the estimated number that should have been recorded in the year ending 31 March 2025



Source: Police [use of force open data tables](#) and [arrests open data tables](#) from the Home Office

Chart description: A combination chart showing the number of use of force incidents that all forces in England and Wales recorded (represented by columns) and the estimated number of use of force incidents that should have been recorded (represented by red target lines) in the year ending 31 March 2025. Staffordshire Police recorded 10,579 use of force incidents. This was lower than the estimated 15,169 use of force incidents it should have recorded.

[The accessible data table for figure 1 is available on our website.](#)

Note: To understand how well forces record their use of force, we compare the number of incidents they recorded with the estimated number they should have recorded. To estimate the number of use of force incidents forces should have recorded, we use the number of recorded arrests and the number of recorded use of force incidents linked to an arrest.

Main findings

In this section, we set out our main findings that relate to how good the force is at using its powers fairly, appropriately and with justification.

Officers understand how to use stop and search powers fairly and appropriately

During our inspection, we reviewed a sample of 144 stop and search records from 1 November 2024 to 31 October 2025. Based on this sample, we estimate that 95.8 percent (+/- 2.7 percentage points) of stop and searches the force carried out during this period had reasonable grounds recorded.

This is a statistically significant improvement compared to the findings from our previous review of records from 1 December 2022 to 30 November 2023. In that review, we found that 80.0 percent (+/-5.0 percentage points) of stop and searches had reasonable grounds recorded.

The percentage that had reasonable grounds recorded suggests that officers are suitably trained and that they use stop and search powers in a fair and appropriate way. Officers told us that they felt confident to use their stop and search powers and had enough training. The force has improved its stop search training through online packages and short briefing documents. It is currently providing face-to-face training covering topics such as [adultification](#), stop and search case studies, governance and accountability, recent court rulings and scrutiny.

The force doesn't consistently collect ethnicity data to allow it to understand how fairly stop and search is being used

Good quality data on self-defined ethnicity (how individuals define their ethnicity) allows a force to understand the rate at which it uses stop and search on people from ethnic minority backgrounds in the local resident population.

As part of our review of stop and search records, we asked the force to provide 12 months of stop and search data from 1 November 2024 to 31 October 2025. We found that self-defined ethnicity information was unknown (not recorded, not stated or refused) for 21.3 percent of these records. In the year ending 31 March 2025, on average, self-defined ethnicity was unknown for 18.0 percent of stop and searches that forces in England and Wales recorded.

Our review of 21 stop and search encounters filmed on body-worn video found that in 20 of these encounters, officers didn't ask for self-defined ethnicity. There is no consensus on what constitutes an ethnic group and membership is something that is self-defined and subjectively meaningful to the person concerned. It is important that officers make sure they ask for this information and don't assign an assumed ethnicity. This will make sure the force has more accurate data to help identify any [disproportionate](#) use of the power. The force told us it had made efforts to address this issue by identifying officers who didn't regularly record self-defined ethnicity and providing feedback. The force has also circulated communications to remind officers of their responsibilities.

The force uses stop and search sufficiently

In the year ending 31 March 2025, the force carried out 6,230 stop and searches of people. This equals 5.3 stop and searches per 1,000 population. This is within the typical range for forces in England and Wales.

The number of stop and searches the force carried out increased by 10.6 percent compared to the year ending 31 March 2024. This is in contrast to the overall picture for forces in England and Wales in which, on average, the number of stop and searches decreased by 1.3 percent. The force told us that the increase in its stop and search activity was due to its officers proactively using their powers in problem-solving and hotspot policing, targeting areas with higher reported levels of crime and [antisocial behaviour](#).

In the year ending 31 March 2025, the force had an overall [find rate](#) of 33.7 percent from stop and search encounters. This was made up of 28.1 percent [linked finds](#) and 5.6 percent not linked finds.

Linked finds are when one or more items, which the officer suspected a person had in their possession, are found and were the reason for the search. Not linked finds are when items are found that a person may have been in unlawful possession of but weren't the reason for the search.

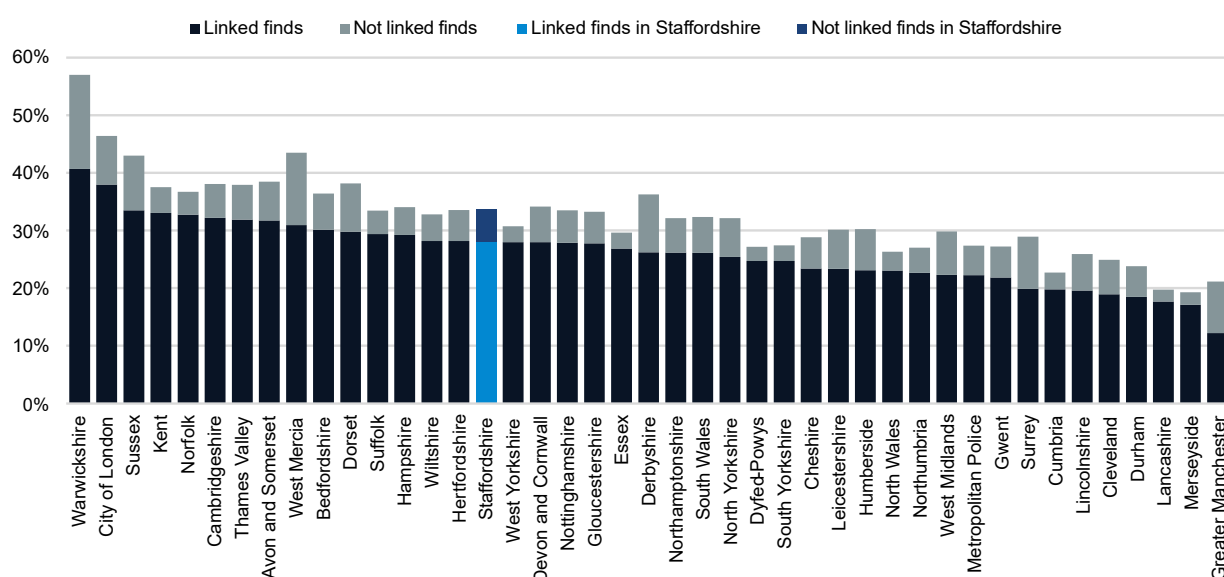
The force's linked find rate was within the typical range for forces in England and Wales. The linked find rate for the force increased by 3.4 percentage points compared to the year ending 31 March 2024.

We examined:

- the number of searches the force carried out;
- the number of searches that had reasonable grounds; and
- the percentage of linked finds.

The results of this review show that the force is using its stop and search powers well.

Figure 2: Percentage of stop and search encounters resulting in linked and not linked finds for forces in England and Wales in the year ending 31 March 2025



Source: [Stop and search open data tables](#) from the Home Office

Chart description: A stacked column chart showing the percentage of [stop and search](#) encounters where the item found was and wasn't linked to the reason for the search for all forces in England and Wales in the year ending 31 March 2025. In Staffordshire Police, 28.1 percent of stop and search encounters resulted in a [linked find](#) and 5.6 percent in a not linked find.

[The accessible data table for figure 2 is available on our website.](#)

Note: In the calculation, we have excluded records where it isn't known whether the item found was linked to the reason for the search. We have also excluded records where it isn't known whether the [officer](#) found any items. If the percentage of linked or not linked finds isn't included in the chart for some forces, it is because they haven't supplied it.

The force understands how it is using stop and search and use of force powers and is trying to do more to reduce disproportionality

In the year ending 31 March 2025, people from a Black ethnic minority background were 3.5 times more likely than White people to be the subject of a stop and search by the force. In our review of stop and search records of people from an ethnic minority background, we found that 27 of 29 had reasonable grounds. The force carries out some analysis of its disproportionate use of stop and search powers to help it understand why this exists. It needs to better understand its disproportionate use of stop and search powers and take action to reduce it.

In the year ending 31 March 2025, people from a Black ethnic minority background were 5.7 times more likely than White people to be subject to use of force (the England and Wales average is 3.0 times more likely). This suggests that force is used disproportionately on people from ethnic minority backgrounds. The force carries out analysis to help it understand why its use of force is disproportionate. It needs to better understand and explain its disproportionate use of force and take action to reduce it.

The force needs to improve its governance of its use of body-worn video

We were pleased to see that the force had a policy in place in relation to its use of body-worn video. The workforce understands this policy. Officers and staff told us they used body-worn video when attending all types of incident, including those where stop and search and use of force powers were involved.

The force is currently unable to monitor overall compliance with this policy. This is because its body-worn video footage is saved on a different system to incident reports, and because multiple officers may attend one incident and each records footage. The force is hoping to address these issues by developing an app. It needs to make sure leaders have the data to provide sufficient oversight and make sure that [personnel](#) follow the policy.

Preventing and deterring crime and antisocial behaviour, and reducing vulnerability

Adequate

Staffordshire Police is adequate at preventing and deterring crime and [antisocial behaviour](#), and reducing [vulnerability](#).

Promising practice

The force has introduced a business crime cohort to its integrated offender management scheme, reducing the impact of repeat retail crime offending

The force has introduced a new cohort to its [integrated offender management](#) scheme to address increasing reports of business and retail crime. This cohort is for offenders whose repeated shoplifting is affecting local communities. It is intended to support local policing teams in tackling persistent low-level offenders, and support local business communities.

The suitability of offenders for inclusion in the cohort is assessed using a matrix scoring system completed jointly by police, probation and other commissioned services.

Both the police and probation services can refer offenders for consideration. Being linked to 20 or more shoplifting offences triggers a police referral. The force gathers data to support referrals from its Microsoft Power BI dashboards and holds discussions with partner organisations to agree an approach. The force told us it had data indicating lower reoffending rates for integrated offender management participants. It was able to provide examples of repeat offenders who had been involved with the scheme and made positive changes to their lives.

Area for improvement

The force needs effective processes to monitor how often its neighbourhood teams are abstracted from their core roles

Specialist [neighbourhood officers](#) are responsible for building relationships with communities, solving problems and working with partner organisations to prevent crime and [antisocial behaviour](#). This requires local [officers](#) to be visible and have meaningful communication with those communities.

Sometimes neighbourhood officers are diverted from their usual work to carry out other duties in the force to meet demand. This is referred to as [abstraction](#). If this happens regularly and isn't monitored by the force, it can affect the ability of neighbourhood officers to carry out their main roles in their communities.

The force has a policy which provides clear guidance about how to manage abstractions. The force told us it anticipated that its investment in neighbourhood and response officers should help to reduce abstractions. The force also jointly funded a study with Keele University which helped it to understand the potential links between officers having reduced time for prevention and relationship-building and the likelihood that they may need to use force more often while carrying out their duties. Despite this, the force has struggled to reduce the rate at which it abstracts neighbourhood officers from their normal roles.

In our workforce survey, 51.3 percent of respondents involved in neighbourhood policing (82 of 160) said that they were abstracted from their main neighbourhood policing duties on a weekly basis. Officers and supervisors told us that they were being abstracted from their core roles for up to half of their shifts. This has affected their ability to carry out visible patrols in their communities, communicate with local residents and carry out preventative work.

Officers also told us that a central system with QR codes had been in place to record how often specialist neighbourhood officers were diverted from their core responsibilities. But officers told us that, due to a perceived lack of action by leaders within the force, they stopped using it, so the data gathered has become less reliable. This means that senior leaders aren't always aware of how abstraction affects the ability of neighbourhood teams to support the quality of life and confidence of their communities.

The force needs to make sure it fully implements its plans to protect neighbourhood policing.

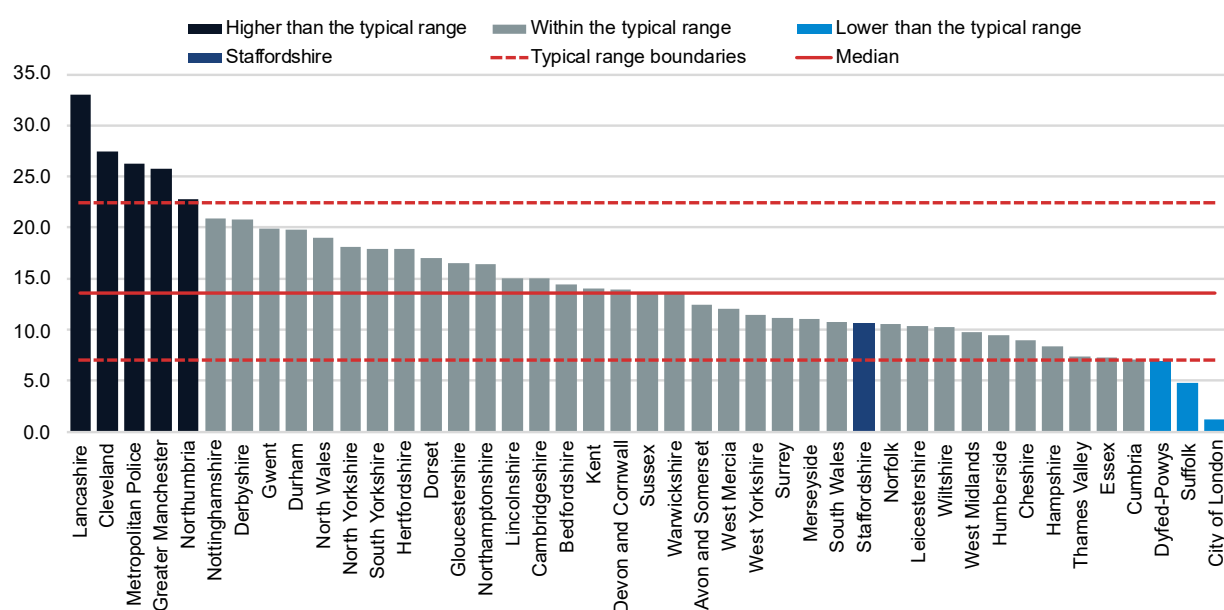
Main findings

In this section, we set out our main findings that relate to how good the force is at preventing and deterring crime and antisocial behaviour, and reducing vulnerability.

The force understands the causes of antisocial behaviour and vulnerability in its communities

During our inspection, we found the force had a clear understanding of antisocial behaviour and related vulnerability in its communities. The force has taken steps to understand trends in its antisocial behaviour reporting and the underlying causes. In the year ending 31 March 2025, it recorded 10.7 antisocial behaviour incidents per 1,000 population. This is within the typical range for forces in England and Wales.

Figure 3: Number of antisocial behaviour incidents per 1,000 population that forces in England and Wales recorded in the year ending 31 March 2025



Source: [Police-recorded antisocial behaviour incidents data](#) and [population estimates for England and Wales](#) from the Office for National Statistics

Chart description: Column chart showing the number of [antisocial behaviour](#) incidents per 1,000 population that all forces in England and Wales recorded in the year ending 31 March 2025. Staffordshire Police recorded 10.7 antisocial behaviour incidents per 1,000 population, which was within the typical range for forces in England and Wales. The typical range, represented by dashed red lines on the chart, is between 7.0 and 22.4 antisocial behaviour incidents per 1,000 population. The median value of 13.6 per 1,000 population is presented as a solid red line.

[The accessible data table for figure 3 is available on our website.](#)

The force has an antisocial behaviour working group with partner organisations, which scrutinises data trends. It understands the reasons for differences between the number of antisocial behaviour incidents per 1,000 population and those recorded in other forces. This should help it develop strategies to tackle the causes of the antisocial behaviour, allocate resources where they are most needed and keep its communities safe.

However, the force doesn't always record crimes that have occurred when [victims](#) report [antisocial behaviour personal](#). In our [quality service review](#), we found that in the cases we examined, the force had recorded 10 of 12 antisocial behaviour personal crimes correctly. We also found that officers and [staff](#) didn't always identify repeat victims of antisocial behaviour and only carried out effective checks in 11 of 19 cases we reviewed. Additional antisocial behaviour [risk assessments](#) were completed in 2 of 20 cases we reviewed, when they were needed in 5 of those cases. The force told us it identified repeat victims of antisocial behaviour where there had been frequent recent calls for service. However, officers and staff we spoke to weren't able to clearly articulate what constituted a repeat victim, or how they would identify these on force systems.

The force is using preventative and protective orders effectively to help it tackle antisocial behaviour

During our inspection, we found that neighbourhood policing teams worked with local authority antisocial behaviour officers, housing providers and community and business representatives to address the underlying causes of antisocial behaviour in their communities. We found that officers were using antisocial behaviour legislation effectively to prevent community problems from escalating. In the year ending 30 September 2025, the force issued 689 preventative and protective orders, which equals 0.59 orders per 1,000 population. This is within the typical range for forces in England and Wales.

In our quality service review, we examined 20 antisocial behaviour incidents and any crimes recorded from them. We found that in 14 of 17 cases where it was appropriate, the force used legislation to help tackle the underlying causes of antisocial behaviour.

During our inspection, the officers we spoke to told us they were confident in applying for and using measures such as [Criminal Behaviour Orders](#) and civil injunctions, particularly in more complex or persistent antisocial behaviour cases. This should help the force to tackle the causes of antisocial behaviour more effectively. The force also told us it was developing a Power BI dashboard to help it monitor existing orders and measure their effectiveness. At the time of our inspection, it hadn't yet implemented this.

The force has a good problem-solving culture, but could improve its evaluation processes

We found evidence that a problem-solving approach was accepted and understood within the force, supported by a number of organisational structures and tools. For example, the force uses Power BI products to help identify community issues that may benefit from a problem-solving response and works with other organisations to understand community perspectives. The force also has a working group led by a [chief officer](#) that identifies and considers complex internal organisational issues that it needs to address.

We found that the force had created a centrally managed problem-solving team, which included representation from each local policing area. This helps to promote a consistent approach. And our workforce survey found that 62.1 percent of respondents (284 of 457) agreed that senior leaders in the force valued and promoted problem-solving activity.

Our audit found that problem-solving plans had clear and measurable objectives. They demonstrated that detailed work had been carried out to understand the impact of problems, and included feedback from the public. We saw evidence of detailed and meaningful updates from officers, and well-considered supervisory reviews. However, we also found that plans weren't always linked to force or national priorities, and that there was inconsistent use of the problem analysis triangle, a framework for understanding crime and disorder. Many plans lacked supporting data, relying too heavily on narrative. Evaluation of the effectiveness of plans wasn't always thorough or supported by analysis. We also found that the central system used for storing examples of good problem-solving plans wasn't widely used. The force needs to improve its processes for overseeing and evaluating the quality and effectiveness of its problem-solving plans.

We found evidence that the force encouraged a problem-solving approach to organisational problems. However, our workforce survey indicated that not all members of the workforce who reported being involved in problem-solving were receiving problem-solving training. Of those who said they were involved, only 27.6 percent of respondents (126 of 457) reported that they had received training, 58.6 percent (268 of 457) reported that they hadn't received training and 13.8 percent (63 of 457) were unsure. Where training was received, 84.9 percent of respondents (107 of 126) agreed that this helped them confidently carry out problem-solving activity. The force should make sure that all staff involved in problem-solving, including those working outside traditional neighbourhood policing roles, have access to relevant training.

The force has invested in the capability of its neighbourhood policing teams

In the year ending 31 March 2025, 9.0 percent of the force's officers were in dedicated neighbourhood policing roles. This is within the typical range for forces in England and Wales. We found that the force had taken steps to improve the capability of neighbourhood officers and staff through training and the development of essential skills and knowledge. This indicates that the force is investing in its neighbourhood policing teams.

As we discuss in the [area for improvement](#) at [the start of this section](#), abstractions limit the time available for preventative work and problem-solving activity. But we found that neighbourhood policing teams were appropriately trained and equipped to work effectively within their communities and with other organisations to reduce crime and antisocial behaviour. As a result, officers are more confident in working with communities, problem-solving and tackling antisocial behaviour.

The force communicates well with its diverse communities to better understand their needs and help set its local priorities

During our inspection, we found that neighbourhood policing teams were regularly communicating with local people to understand their concerns and help them feel safe. The force had also developed an engagement plan to guide local teams in how to build relationships and set local priorities based on community feedback.

We also found that neighbourhood policing teams had made efforts to reach communities that traditionally have less contact with the police or may have lower levels of trust and confidence. Some teams were also tailoring their communication to include [seldom-heard groups](#), such as newly settled communities. We found examples of two-way communication with the public, through local meetings and digital platforms. There is regular contact between senior police officers and elected officials. The force promotes direct contact with the public through surgeries held in communities and less formal visits to care homes, schools and religious establishments. It records this activity in an event tracker.

In some areas of the force, officers were confident and proactive in contacting and communicating with their communities. But in others, we found there wasn't a clear understanding of how to build trust with communities who had limited contact with their local policing teams. We were told some engagement activity with these communities was carried out by staff networks and members of the workforce with existing links to the communities. The force needs to make sure that all of its communities can benefit from regular contact with local policing teams.

Responding to the public

Inadequate

Staffordshire Police is inadequate at responding to the public.

Cause of concern

The force should make sure it is answering calls and responding to reports from the public quickly enough to meet the needs of the public

In [our last PEEL report](#), published in September 2024, we told the force it needed to improve both abandonment rates for non-emergency calls, and incident attendance times. The force hasn't made sufficient progress towards meeting these recommendations. In addition, during our inspection we found evidence that incidents were being downgraded inappropriately. There were gaps in the force's performance data which meant it wasn't identifying risks early enough.

In our [quality service review](#), we found that attendance times were within the force's targets for 40 of the 54 cases we examined. This indicates some delayed responses, which can lead to the force missing opportunities to [safeguard victims](#) or collect evidence. The force introduced Operation Freshwater at the end of 2025 to address this issue. It told us that, since then, it was attending more emergency incidents within its target time frame of 20 minutes. But the force still isn't attending priority incidents within its target time frame of two hours often enough. The force told us it met the two-hour target less than 60 percent of the time. It needs to focus on improving its priority response times.

We found that incidents initially graded as a priority (requiring police attendance within two hours) were often changed later without sufficient assessment of risk or supervisory oversight. Sometimes the force justifiably regrades incidents because of updated information or reassessed risk. But in many of the cases we reviewed, the circumstances reported by the caller hadn't changed. The decision to delay attendance appeared to assume that risk would have reduced with the passing of time.

Some of the incidents we reviewed involved [vulnerable domestic abuse](#) victims, and opportunities to safeguard these people were missed. We commented on the force's response to domestic abuse in our previous report. The force needs to assure itself that it is responding quickly enough to domestic abuse reports.

In the year ending 30 September 2025, the force received 293 non-emergency [101](#) calls per 1,000 population. This was within the typical range for forces in England and Wales. The force told us that in the year ending 31 March 2026, 19.9 percent of calls to its non-emergency 101 facility were abandoned. While there is no formal national standard for how non-emergency performance is measured, the force's performance isn't at an acceptable level. The force has reduced the number of calls which are abandoned in recent months. It needs to make sure these improvements continue and are sustainable.

The force has a call back system which doesn't address call demand in an adequate, timely or fair way. It often delays call backs by several hours and then can't always establish contact, despite the caller requiring a service. This means that some callers reporting crimes and incidents can be left without a response, without the force clearly understanding or documenting the potential risk related to their calls.

The force has recently made improvements, including improved governance and data availability, increased control and scrutiny of grading decisions, and a dedicated member of [control room](#) staff to call people back. These steps are reassuring, but it is too soon to assess whether they have brought about sustainable change.

Recommendations

Within six months, the force should:

- make sure it has processes in place to supervise and manage grading decisions;
- reduce the number of non-emergency calls that are abandoned, in line with the national contact management principles; and
- attend priority calls for service in line with its published attendance times.

Main findings

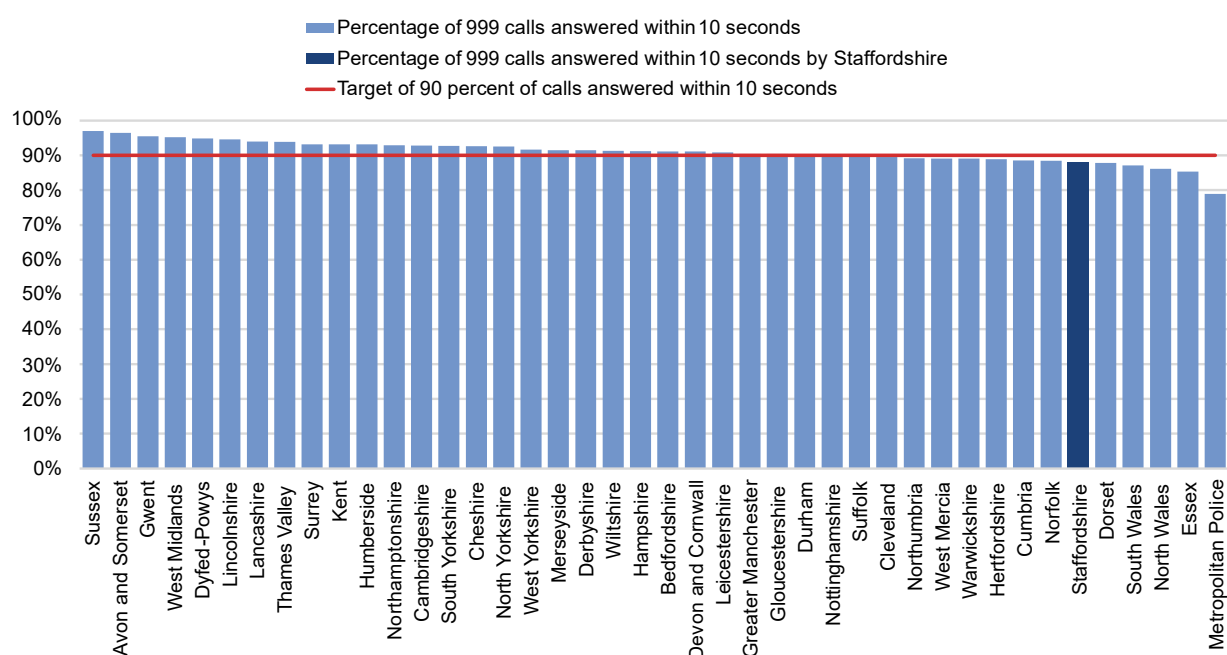
In this section, we set out our main findings that relate to how good the force is at responding to the public.

The force doesn't answer emergency calls quickly enough

In the year ending 28 February 2026, the force received 172 emergency 999 calls per 1,000 population. This was within the typical range for forces in England and Wales. It answered 88.2 percent of the 999 calls it received within 10 seconds. This was lower than the standard expected of forces in England and Wales of answering 90.0 percent of 999 calls within 10 seconds.

If a force fails to answer calls quickly enough, it can mean losing both public confidence and investigative opportunities. Although it has made steady progress since our previous inspection, the force needs to continue this improvement.

Figure 4: Percentage of 999 calls that forces in England and Wales answered within 10 seconds in the year ending 28 February 2026



Source: [999 call answering times from BT](#)

Chart description: Column chart showing the percentage of 999 calls that all forces in England and Wales answered within 10 seconds in the year ending 28 February 2026. Staffordshire Police answered 88.2 percent of the 999 calls it received within 10 seconds. This is below the expected standard of 90 percent for forces in England and Wales, which is marked with a solid red line on the chart. One third of forces were below the expected standard.

[The accessible data table for figure 4 is available on our website.](#)

Note: Call answering time is the time taken for a call to be transferred from BT to a force and then answered by that force.

The force has improved the quality of service it provides to callers at the first point of contact

In our [quality service review](#), we found that call handlers completed structured triage assessments in 61 out of 70 relevant cases. Of those, 60 were accurate and meaningful reflections of the circumstances of the call. The initial prioritisation of the call was appropriate in 77 out of 79 relevant cases.

Call handlers gave appropriate crime prevention advice in 26 out of 28 cases, advice about the preservation of evidence in 26 out of 32 relevant cases, and safeguarding advice in 27 out of 29 relevant cases. Our workforce survey indicates that control room staff who had received [threat, harm, risk, investigation, vulnerability and engagement \(THRIVE\)](#) training were confident in supplying this information. The service supports this through effective initial training.

In our workforce survey, almost all of the 79 respondents who received THRIVE training said that it helped them understand how to identify vulnerability at the first point of contact, and helped them confidently provide advice on safeguarding.

Responding officers receive information and intelligence to understand the risk and vulnerability of the calls for service they attend

In our inspection, we found that [officers](#) felt they received the information they needed when attending calls for service. In line with this, in our quality service review we found that attending officers completed appropriate [risk assessments](#) for victims and witnesses.

In our workforce survey, 83.0 percent of respondents (239 of 288) agreed that when attending calls for service, they received the necessary information and [intelligence](#) on risk and vulnerability to be able to provide an appropriate response to the public.

It is important that officers receive as much detail as possible to help them anticipate threats to their personal safety and allow them to consider appropriate safeguarding for victims of crime.

Investigating crime

Requires
improvement

Staffordshire Police requires improvement at investigating crime.

Areas for improvement

The force should make sure timely investigation plans are created, with supervisory oversight, so that all investigative opportunities are taken

In [our last PEEL report](#), published in September 2024, we told the force it needed to make sure all investigations were supervised effectively, that investigations were effective and that all proportionate investigative opportunities were taken. The force hasn't made sufficient progress in achieving this.

In our [quality service review](#), we found that the force took all appropriate and proportionate investigative opportunities in 60 out of 85 relevant cases. There were unjustified delays in 13 out of 85 relevant cases. We found evidence of effective supervision in 47 of 72 relevant cases, and 60 of 84 investigations were judged to be effective. We also found that crime finalisation had effective supervision in 46 of 71 relevant cases. And too many investigations were filed prematurely while there were still proportionate lines of enquiry available.

In our workforce survey, we asked investigators how often they received feedback from their supervisor on how to improve their investigations. In their responses, 66.2 percent (157 of 237) reported receiving feedback on a quarterly or more frequent basis, 15.2 percent (36 of 237) said they had never received feedback on their investigations, and 15.6 percent (37 of 237) were unsure.

Good supervision is an important factor in how well forces carry out investigations. When supervision is absent or isn't good enough, investigations become compromised and the service to [victims](#) declines. The force needs to make sure it consistently carries out thorough and timely investigations, completing all reasonable lines of enquiry.

The force needs to make sure that it complies with the requirements of the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime

We found during our [quality service review](#) that in 13 of 64 relevant cases, the force hadn't recorded victim needs assessments. This means that investigators hadn't assessed whether those victims needed support and if so, what type of support they needed or whether they were [vulnerable](#) or intimidated. We found that where a victim was entitled to an enhanced service, this was recorded in 19 of 33 relevant cases. Victims who are considered vulnerable or intimidated, are victims of the most serious crimes (including bereaved close relatives) or have been persistently targeted are more likely to require specialised assistance. It is important that investigators recognise and record these circumstances, so that victims receive the right support.

In 51 of 61 relevant cases we reviewed, we also found that the force had updated victims on the progress of investigations in line with an agreed victim contract. In our workforce survey, we asked investigators about barriers to updating victims of crime. The most frequently cited barriers were high workloads and a lack of time. And 74.4 percent of investigators (215 of 289) told us they experienced such barriers.

Victim needs assessments and victims being updated are two of the rights in [the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime \('the Victims' Code'\)](#). It is essential for the force to comply with the Victims' Code to give victims a high-quality service.

The force needs to improve the time it takes to record crimes

When we last inspected the effectiveness of the force's crime recording, in 2022, we said the force needed to improve the time it took to record crimes. The force has made progress and is now recording crimes more quickly. However, it isn't recording enough crimes within 24 hours.

In this inspection, as part of our [quality service review](#) crime recording audit, we found that the force had recorded 74 crimes, with 37 of these recorded within 24 hours. These included reports of crimes involving [vulnerable adults](#) and child protection cases, [domestic abuse](#) cases and crimes when victims reported [antisocial behaviour](#) to the force.

The force should record crimes at the earliest opportunity. Recording them without delay means victims promptly receive the support they require and supports the force to set up an effective investigation.

Main findings

In this section, we set out our main findings that relate to how good the force is at investigating crime.

The force needs to make sure its governance arrangements for investigating crime enable it to improve the quality of service for victims

The force has a governance structure that focuses on improving investigative standards. The quality investigations board operates at a strategic and a tactical level. Its meetings are well attended and well supported by data. The force carries out audits to assess whether investigations are thorough and effective and to identify themes for service improvement. It sets up working groups when needed to involve local policing commanders in improvement work.

The force monitors file quality against national file standards. It uses this information to identify good practice and areas of learning, and to provide feedback to investigators.

The force has data to support both senior leaders and frontline supervisors to oversee investigation quality and the service provided to victims. Dashboards display when supervisors have reviewed investigations, when [personnel](#) create investigation plans and when they update victims. As we discuss in the [areas for improvement](#) at [the start of this section](#), despite these measures being in place we still found investigations which weren't thorough or timely, or were missing victim updates.

[Officers](#) and supervisors told us that dashboards displayed information on whether investigators complied with the requirement to update investigations. However, they don't provide information on the quality of an investigator's work. We also spoke to sergeants and inspectors who weren't aware of the results of internal auditing into investigation quality or themes this had identified. The force needs to make sure that the governance measures it has in place are promoting improvements in both investigation quality and the service it provides to victims.

The force needs to make sure that its crime allocation policy results in criminal offences being assigned to appropriately skilled investigators

In our '[National child protection inspection](#)' report, published in December 2025, we told the force it needed to make sure that it allocated crimes to appropriately skilled investigators.

In our recent inspection, the force told us that it had introduced a new crime allocation policy in September 2025. It said that, as a result, it was now assigning more crimes to criminal investigation departments or specialist teams for investigating child abuse or sexual offences.

In our workforce survey, we asked participants how often they were allocated investigations outside their level of accreditation and training (such as [professionalising investigations programme \(PIP\)](#) 1 investigators being allocated PIP 2 cases, or complex child abuse investigations being given to investigators without specialist training). Of those who responded, 42.4 percent (101 of 238) said they were allocated investigations which were inappropriate for their level of accreditation or training on a quarterly or more frequent basis.

During our inspection, officers in response teams told us that they were investigating crimes that they felt they didn't have the capacity or appropriate skills to deal with. We found some examples of crimes, such as complex fraud or serious domestic abuse, being investigated by response officers. Most of these investigations had begun before the force introduced its new crime allocation policy.

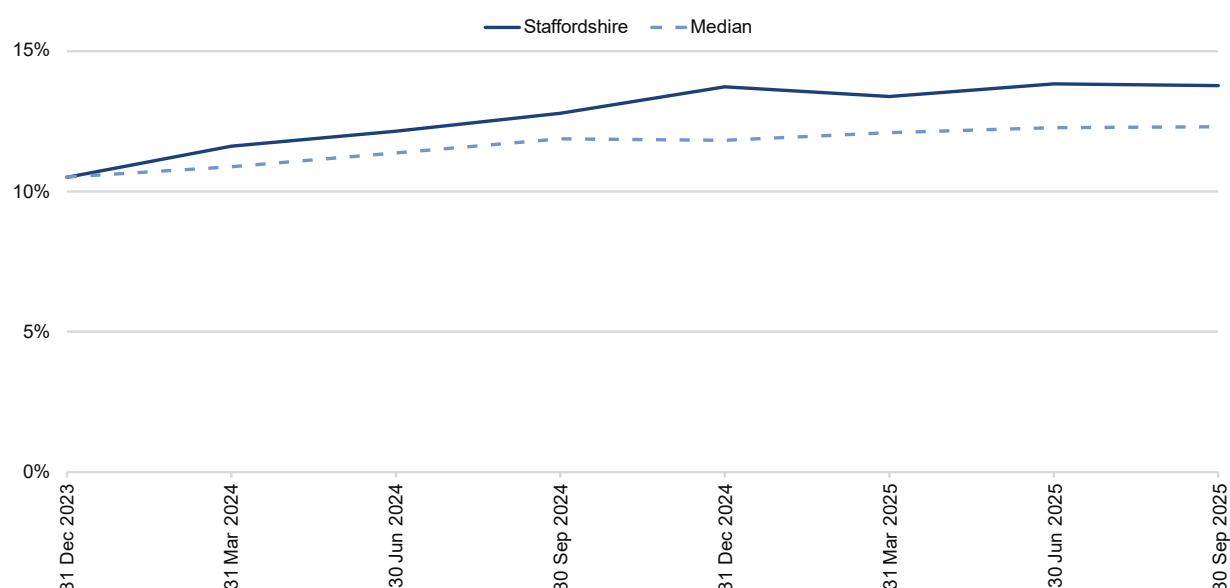
It is too soon for us to assess whether the new policy will mean the force allocates crimes to appropriate investigators. The force needs to make sure its workforce follows the policy, and that leaders provide sufficient scrutiny while it becomes established.

The force consistently achieves appropriate outcomes for victims

The force has shown a meaningful and sustained improvement in its positive outcome rates for victims of crime in the past two years.

In the year ending 30 September 2025, 13.8 percent of all [outcomes](#) that the force assigned to [victim-based crimes](#) were [positive outcomes](#).

Figure 5: Percentage of positive outcomes that Staffordshire Police and all forces in England and Wales assigned to victim-based crimes between the year ending 31 December 2023 and the year ending 30 September 2025



Source: [Police recorded crime and outcomes open data tables](#) from the Home Office

Chart description: Line chart showing the percentage of [positive outcomes](#) that Staffordshire Police assigned and the median for forces in England and Wales for each year from the year ending 31 December 2023 to the year ending 30 September 2025. The chart shows that 13.8 percent of [outcomes](#) that Staffordshire Police assigned to [victim-based crimes](#) were positive in the year ending 30 September 2025, compared to the median of 12.3 percent for forces in England and Wales. It also shows that the percentage of positive outcomes that Staffordshire Police assigned has been slowly increasing since the year ending 31 December 2023. And the median percentage of positive outcomes for forces in England and Wales has been slowly increasing in the same period.

Note: The percentage of positive outcomes that forces assign is calculated from all outcomes they assign in a given period. Victim-based crimes include all police-recorded crimes where there is a direct [victim](#), such as an individual, an organisation or corporate body. For a detailed description of crime and outcome types, please see the [Home Office statistics](#).

Figure 6: Percentage of unresolved, resolved and positive outcomes that Staffordshire Police and all forces in England and Wales assigned to victim-based crimes in the year ending 30 September 2025

Outcome types	Staffordshire percentage [%]	Median percentage [%] for forces in England and Wales
Unresolved crime outcomes (Outcomes 11–18)	83.5	84.0
Resolved crime outcomes (Outcomes 5, 9, 10 and 20–22)	2.7	3.2
Positive crime outcomes (Outcomes 1–4 and 8), of which:	13.8	12.3
1 – Charged/summonsed	9.8	9.1
2 and 3 – Caution – youths and adults	0.6	0.8
4 – Taken into consideration	0.1	0.1
8 – Community resolution	3.3	2.1

Source: [Police recorded crime and outcomes open data tables](#) from the Home Office

Note: The percentage of unresolved, resolved and positive outcomes that forces assign is calculated from all outcomes they assign in a given period. [Victim-based crimes](#) include all police-recorded crimes where there is a direct [victim](#), such as an individual, an organisation or corporate body. For a detailed description of crime and outcome types, please see the [Home Office statistics](#).

The force needs to make sure that its supervision and processes enable it to always close crimes with the appropriate outcome type

In the year ending 30 September 2025, of all the crime outcomes the force assigned to victim-based crimes, 9.86 percent were outcome 14 (evidential difficulties, suspect not identified; victim does not support further action). This is higher than the typical range for forces in England and Wales. In the same period, 27 percent of outcomes were outcome 18 (investigation complete – no suspect identified). This is lower than the typical range for forces in England and Wales. Both outcome types relate to circumstances where a suspect for the offence isn't identified. The force needs to assure itself that it is applying these two outcome types in line with national guidance.

We found that the force routinely audited and scrutinised use of outcome types. This means that leaders can be confident they understand what determines use of specific outcomes, whether the outcomes are appropriate and what improvements might be needed to give victims better justice.

However, as we discuss in [the area for improvement at the start of this section](#), we found during our quality service review that the force finalised some crimes prematurely. Thirteen of the 70 cases we reviewed had been finalised too soon.

If the force doesn't finalise crimes using the correct outcome, it may be unable to identify trends relating to why investigations on behalf of victims of crime are unsuccessful. The force needs to make sure that its supervision and crime finalisation processes result in it assigning appropriate outcomes when investigations finish.

The force is using pre-charge bail to safeguard victims and manages suspects well

During our inspection, officers told us that they used [bail](#) conditions to [safeguard](#) victims. They were able to demonstrate that they understood the requirements of bail legislation under the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022.

We would expect to see an increase in pre-charge bail after October 2022, as changes to the bail legislation removed the presumption that [released under investigation \(RUI\)](#) was the default position when releasing suspects from custody. The force increased its use of pre-charge bail between the years ending 30 September 2023 and 30 September 2025. During the same period, the force's use of RUI remained stable. There were 122.0 uses per 1,000 arrests during the year ending 30 September 2023 and 125.3 uses per 1,000 arrests in the year ending 30 September 2025.

We also found that the number of cases where bail lapsed into RUI reduced from 95.8 per 1,000 arrests in the year ending 30 September 2023 to 74.0 per 1,000 arrests in the year ending 30 September 2025. Officers told us that they got reminders when suspects' bail periods were ending. This allows them to make sure they are able to apply for bail periods to be extended if needed.

We found that the force risk assessed suspected offenders who needed to be arrested based on the recency, frequency and gravity of their offending. The force's daily pacesetter meetings make sure it prioritises any high-risk suspects for arrest.

Safeguarding children and adults at risk of harm

Adequate

Staffordshire Police is adequate at [safeguarding children](#) and [adults at risk of harm](#).

Areas for improvement

The force should improve its governance of public protection by making sure it has effective performance data

We found that the force's public protection performance boards and strategic vulnerability board provided governance and oversight of its ability to [safeguard](#) adults and [children](#). Performance meetings consider comprehensive data packs. But much of the data in these is produced manually, and there are gaps in some important areas.

We found that the safeguarding referral forms the force should send to other agencies were sometimes submitted late and sometimes not submitted at all. The force told us that the way reports were recorded on its systems meant it was unable to identify when incidents or crimes involving [vulnerable people](#) didn't have a submitted safeguarding referral. This includes when children are subject to [stop and search](#) or the use of force. Although the force does have quality assurance processes in place to identify missed referrals, these don't take place immediately. This means there could be a delay in sharing relevant information with safeguarding partners.

The force told us it was building a new Microsoft Power BI dashboard for public protection. At the time of our inspection, this was still under development. The force needs to prioritise this work and make sure the dashboard includes enough data to allow senior leaders to make sure the force is safeguarding vulnerable people effectively and consistently.

The force should make sure it takes a clear, focused approach to identifying, locating, and safeguarding missing people

The force's process for managing [missing persons](#) reports doesn't provide a consistent approach across all areas.

During our inspection, we spoke to [officers](#) and [staff](#) who expressed concern about how the force managed missing persons cases. The force has a central missing persons support team and a missing person co-ordinator. However, local policing teams hold responsibility for missing persons investigations. We found that there was inconsistency in attendance times due to demand in busier areas. In our [quality service review](#), we found that in 7 of 20 cases, officers didn't attend within the required time frames.

We also found that the force wasn't making use of the [Philomena](#) and [Herbert](#) protocols often enough. The Philomena protocol is a form completed for children in care who regularly go missing, including information on where they have previously been found. The Herbert protocol is a form completed by families of people with dementia, which can include important information such as any medication they need. These protocols can help [vulnerable people](#) be found more quickly. In our quality service review, we found that call handlers mentioned them in 6 out of 10 relevant cases, and that they were used in assessment and response in 3 out of 9 relevant cases.

We reviewed an additional 20 missing persons reports in March 2026. Although these were all investigated appropriately, we found that some reports weren't recorded properly. This could lead to [safeguarding](#) checks being delayed or not completed at all, and missed opportunities to identify repeat cases or those involving vulnerable people. We also identified cases where there had been a lack of progress in trying to find missing persons overnight. This meant that the force wasn't always allocating or making important enquiries until the following morning.

In our workforce survey, 53.9 percent of respondents (233 of 477) confirmed they had received training in safeguarding missing persons in the past two years. The force should make sure that all officers and staff involved in missing persons investigations have the right training and capacity to carry out effective investigations and provide safeguarding.

The force should improve how it protects stalking victims through timely and consistent risk assessment and the proactive use of safeguarding measures

The force should increase the priority it places on [stalking](#), including its [risk assessment](#), training and awareness of [safeguarding](#) measures such as [Stalking Protection Orders \(SPOs\)](#).

In our [quality service review](#), we found that [personnel](#) had completed an appropriate stalking risk assessment (such as a stalking screening tool) in only 5 of 17 relevant cases. And they considered referral to a multi-agency forum in only one of three relevant cases. Overall, effective safeguarding had taken place in 12 of 15 cases.

In the year ending 30 September 2025, the force had two full SPOs granted at court. This equates to 1.1 SPOs per 1,000 stalking offences.

During our inspection, we found [officers](#) and [staff](#) weren't as aware of or confident in the use of SPOs as they were for other protective orders. In our workforce survey, 53.2 percent of respondents (230 of 477) confirmed they had received training in safeguarding [victims](#) of stalking in the past two years.

The force should make sure its officers and staff are trained to effectively risk assess reports of stalking and apply for protective orders where appropriate.

Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to how good the force is at safeguarding children and adults at risk of harm.

The force records crimes committed against vulnerable victims effectively

The force records nearly all crimes committed against vulnerable victims. In our quality service review, we examined 50 records involving referrals made to the force about vulnerable adults and child protection cases, 48 incidents involving victims of [domestic abuse](#), 50 reported incidents of rape and 18 decisions to cancel crimes of rape.

We found the following:

- Vulnerable adult and child protection cases: 28 crimes should have been recorded and 26 were recorded correctly.
- Domestic abuse incidents: 36 crimes should have been recorded and 34 crimes were recorded correctly.
- Reported incidents of rape: six crimes of rape should have been recorded and three crimes were recorded correctly.
- Cancelled crimes of rape: 18 out of 18 crimes were cancelled correctly.

It is especially important that the force accurately records crimes involving vulnerable victims. It is equally important to cancel crimes only when it is certain that no crime was committed. Recording and cancelling crimes correctly helps to make sure victims receive the service and support they expect and deserve from the police. If the force doesn't record or cancel crimes correctly, offenders may go on to commit further crimes against their victims or against other vulnerable victims.

The force safeguards children and adults at risk of harm

As part of our quality service review, we reviewed 60 cases to determine how well the force safeguards victims.

We found that in 27 of 29 cases, safeguarding advice was appropriately given to victims. This suggests that officers are aware of their duty to identify and reduce the risk of harm to vulnerable victims. In 13 of 14 cases we reviewed, officers recorded the [voice of the child](#) in referrals, making sure that the child's experiences and needs were considered in safeguarding decisions.

When attending incidents, officers consistently show [professional curiosity](#) and look beyond the obvious to identify signs of hidden harm, exploitation or vulnerability. In 36 of 39 cases we reviewed, officers completed appropriate risk assessments, which shows they had a clear understanding of the risks that victims faced. Officers made relevant referrals to specialist partners in seven of eight cases, which shows that, on most occasions, they were aware of available support services and the importance of connecting victims with the help they need.

The force works well with multi-agency partners to safeguard and reduce the risk of harm to vulnerable people

Multi-agency working is an important part of the force's safeguarding strategy. The [multi-agency safeguarding hub](#) includes a wide range of partners covering both child and adult safeguarding. The force works with the Staffordshire Families Integrated [Front Door](#), which manages safeguarding concerns for children and young people. Police safeguarding officers and staff share office space with other agencies, including children's services. And the force has a public protection team (called the harm reduction hub) within each local policing area, which focuses on safeguarding vulnerable adults. In 28 of 29 relevant cases we reviewed, the force shared information with appropriate agencies, which allowed for a co-ordinated response to safeguarding. The force deals with multi-agency referrals promptly, with few backlogs reported.

The force has systems or processes in place for promptly notifying schools of pupils living with domestic abuse ([Operation Encompass](#)). In 12 of 14 relevant cases we reviewed, officers notified schools about children exposed to domestic abuse. This means children may have received the required support in school.

The force uses appropriate measures to safeguard vulnerable people and reduce any risk from offenders

The force uses preventative orders and schemes to manage risk and protect vulnerable people. In eight of nine cases we reviewed, the force considered preventative orders to reduce the risk of further harm to victims. These include [Domestic Violence Protection Notices](#) and [Domestic Violence Protection Orders](#). This shows that the force is using tools available to safeguard victims. Processes for monitoring and enforcing these orders are well established within the force's daily management meetings. In addition, all supervisor templates for domestic abuse and domestic violence incidents include a reminder to consider them.

The force operates disclosure schemes such as the [Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme](#) and the [Child Sex Offender Disclosure Scheme](#) in compliance with national statutory guidance, with timely disclosure to applicants. This empowers individuals to make informed decisions about their relationships and personal safety.

When working with partners, the force considers additional ways to safeguard and protect vulnerable people and challenge offenders

When working with partners, the force considers all appropriate ways to safeguard vulnerable people and challenge offenders. In three of three cases we reviewed, the force referred the case to the [multi-agency risk assessment conference \(MARAC\)](#) and made [multi-agency tasking and co-ordination](#) arrangements. This allows the force and partners to create a multi-agency plan to reduce the harm to [high-risk domestic abuse](#) victims or their children and manage the risk from offenders.

We observed a number of MARACs and found them to be well managed, with risks to all parties fully explored and mitigating actions agreed between the organisations present. There was good involvement by partner agencies to establish a full understanding of the circumstances and explore all opportunities to provide support. Police attendees demonstrated a thorough understanding of the risk of serious harm posed to victims and their children, and made sure mitigating actions were put in place.

The force explained that it had achieved this by strengthening the consistency of MARAC chairing. It supports new MARAC chairs through a structured shadowing period, when they work alongside experienced chairs across the force area.

The force's internal MARAC assurance officer provides additional oversight to support continual improvement, making sure standards remain consistent and effective. This officer recommends themes for continual improvement to a MARAC steering group to support consistency across the force.

Managing fraud

Requires
improvement

Staffordshire Police requires improvement at managing fraud.

Areas for improvement

The force should adequately train investigators and call takers

We found that not all investigators investigating fraud had adequate training. The force has a dedicated specialist team for investigating complex fraud, and these investigators are well trained. But [officers](#) outside this team don't receive sufficient training. In our workforce survey, only 15.1 percent of respondents who stated that fraud was part of their responsibilities (25 of 166) reported that they had received fraud training. A lack of training has negatively affected investigation standards in fraud, as well as the identification of and response to fraud calls for service. The force recognises this and is planning to provide additional training in the future.

The force should correctly identify fraud calls for service and respond appropriately

We found that the force doesn't always respond appropriately when a member of the public contacts it about fraud. Data provided by the force shows that in the quarter ending 30 September 2025, the force responded to 189 calls but only recorded 47 crimes. Our audit showed that in six out of nine cases, call takers didn't give correct information to the public about referral to Report Fraud. This indicates that the force isn't correctly identifying fraud calls for service. This may increase the demand on responding [officers](#), leading to delays, or confusing messaging being given to the public. The force told us it had provided further training to [control room](#) staff and regularly communicated with [personnel](#) to improve understanding.

Main findings

In this section, we set out our main findings that relate to how good the force is at managing fraud.

The force has effective accountability for fraud, and it understands and manages the threat of fraud in its communities

During our inspection, we found that the force had assessed the threat from fraud and understood how this affected its communities. This assessment shows the local and national threat picture for fraud, and the force has a fraud improvement plan.

The force's fraud policy is clear and consistently gives direction for allocating fraud investigations and [safeguarding victims](#). The force has a named fraud lead and has clear governance at both a strategic and an operational level. The force effectively monitors performance in relation to fraud at a force-level performance board.

The force doesn't have enough capacity and capability to manage fraud in its communities and provide support to victims

During our inspection, we found that the force didn't have enough capacity or capability to manage fraud. It has a dedicated [4P approach](#) to manage its fraud response but doesn't target high-threat fraud types. The force doesn't follow the [fraud investigation model](#), and too many investigations are either closed too early or aren't carried out in a proportionate, thorough and timely way. Our audit showed that fraud investigation standards aren't of sufficient quality. In 10 out of 15 cases, not all investigation opportunities were taken and we found that the fraud investigation was effective in only 7 out of 17 cases. This has resulted in the force having a low judicial outcome rate for fraud. In the two years ending 31 March 2025, 4.5 percent of cases had a judicial outcome. This value is within the lower half of the typical range for forces in England and Wales.

The force provides additional support to [vulnerable](#) victims and communicates with its communities to protect them from the risk of fraud. This work would benefit from using the local threat profile to target activity. The force uses preventative orders to target offenders and protect the public from reoffending. The force works with several other agencies to support victims and protect the public from fraud. It holds a multi-agency meeting every quarter to support this work.

Providing a safe and lawful custody environment

Adequate

Staffordshire Police is adequate at providing a safe and lawful custody environment.

Area for improvement

The force needs to improve how it assesses, manages and reviews risk throughout detention and on release

The force has an effective booking-in procedure for detained people, which helps [custody officers](#) to identify and manage risk. We saw officers triaging and prioritising detainees, including [children](#), through custody. Custody officers clearly explain their [risk assessments](#) and consider all relevant information about the detainee. However, custody officers don't always put in place appropriate care plans and observation levels to [safeguard](#) detainees who are under the influence of intoxicating substances. Observation levels for detainees who show signs of intoxication aren't always set for the detainee to be roused, as required by the [Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 \(PACE\)](#) code C annex H. And rousing checks aren't always completed or recorded as having complied with the PACE code C annex H. Custody officers don't always record when rousing checks are no longer required with a rationale.

The removal of clothing or other items is mainly based on an individual risk assessment. But we found that there were some occasions when officers didn't provide a rationale for removing corded clothing. Custody officers regularly revisit the detainee and reassess their risk to make sure all risks of harm are reduced.

The force doesn't have an effective handover process for [officers](#) and [staff](#) in Stoke. Custody officers and detention officers in each wing of the custody suite receive briefings separately, not as a team. This practice could lead to risks being missed and isn't consistent with [authorised professional practice](#). In Gailey, officers and staff carry out handovers in line with authorised professional practice. But during these, not all non-police personnel are cleared from the suite. Those remaining can hear the handover, including discussions about risk factors and the progress of investigations.

When a detainee is ready to be released, custody officers don't always carry out a thorough pre-release risk assessment in the presence of the detainee. We found that officers didn't always speak to detainees being transferred to court or complete a risk assessment with the detainee present before they left custody. In addition, pre-release risk assessments don't always contain sufficient detail about the risk presented by a detainee or the mitigation the force put in place while they were in custody.

Main findings

In this section, we set out our main findings that relate to how good the force is at providing a safe and lawful custody environment.

The force has some effective governance and quality assurance processes to manage the safety and well-being of detainees

The force has some effective monthly and quarterly performance meetings to make sure its custody service is safe and lawful. It can show it has a structured approach to oversight of its custody service with quantitative and qualitative performance measures in place. There are enough custody officers on duty to meet demand. However, detention staff said they were sometimes unable to take regular breaks as there were often too few staff on duty. The force should improve the way it monitors staffing levels and their capacity to meet demand.

The force understands its responsibilities under the [public sector equality duty](#). However, it should improve its monitoring of custody data to identify [disproportionality](#). Some custody officers and staff told us that they had received training in supporting detainees with mental health difficulties and neurodivergent conditions, but that they would welcome more regular, face-to-face training.

The force is open to effective external scrutiny. It could show that external bodies regularly visit the custody suites and work with custody officers and staff. The force was able to show how it documents and responds to feedback from external bodies such as the [Independent Custody Visiting Association](#), the [independent advisory group](#) and three thematic scrutiny panels.

The force protects detainees from neglect and harm

We visited the custody suites and found that they were clean and the physical environment provided enough privacy for detainees. We found some potential [ligature points](#) at the suite in Stoke, which were due to the design of some of the toilets and sinks. The force planned to carry out refurbishment work, starting in June 2026, which would remove these potential ligature points and increase the number of cells with CCTV.

Custody officers and staff carry daily cell checks as recommended by authorised professional practice and usually deal with repairs quickly. However, we found that there was a prolonged delay in fixing a fault with the door of a specially adapted cell at the facility in Stoke. This meant that detainees with physical disabilities, who needed to use this cell, couldn't do so. The custody environment is, however, generally safe.

Custody officers and staff treat detainees with sensitivity, dignity and respect, and provide timely and appropriate care. Detainees' individual needs are met. For example, there are adaptations for detainees with mobility issues or hearing or sight difficulties, and religious materials are available for detainees to practise their faith. Food to meet most dietary needs is available, and the force considers the specific needs of female detainees.

The force only arrests children as a last resort. However, children sometimes spend a long time in police custody. Decisions to detain children overnight are generally appropriate and are clearly recorded. Custody officers mainly request suitable [alternative accommodation](#) that the local authority provides. But custody officers have limited knowledge of the certificate of impracticability, which is intended to account for why children haven't been provided with alternative accommodation. It is likely that this is why we didn't see any such certificates completed in the audits we carried out. The force and partner agencies provide oversight of children. Female children are allocated a female member of staff to oversee their care.

There are safeguarding measures in place to protect [vulnerable adults](#) and children. Provision of an [appropriate adult](#) for children and vulnerable adults isn't always available, and therefore these arrangements aren't effective. This can lead to the force bailing detainees, which is often not in their best interests.

Detainees can exercise their legal rights

Custody officers authorise detention appropriately. They explain the booking-in process in a way that detainees can understand by considering individual circumstances. They clearly explain detainees' rights and entitlements and provide written notices setting these out. Both suites have easy-read and Braille versions of these notices. For detainees who don't speak English, custody officers provide translated documents and arrange interpreters.

When detainees request legal advice, [custody detention officers](#) promptly contact legal representatives. Detainees can speak with their legal representatives in private, either in person or on the phone. If detainees waive their right to legal advice, custody officers explore the reasons why they wish to do so.

Custody officers refuse detention when it is appropriate to do so – for example, when considering whether it is necessary for children to be in police custody.

The force follows the [Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984](#) and its codes of practice when carrying out reviews of detention. Reviewing officers carry out reviews in the best interests of detainees and consider the needs of children and vulnerable adults. They ask detainees how they are coping in custody, and whether there are any risks to consider when they are released.

During our observations in custody suites, we saw that some reviews lacked structure. We gave feedback to reviewing officers and saw immediate improvements during the rest of our inspection.

When detainees were asleep when reviews were carried out, the force didn't always inform them of these reviews as soon as practicable. This means these detainees weren't reminded of their legal rights and didn't have the opportunity to make representations about whether they needed to continue being detained.

Overall, we found there was a good standard of recording on custody records. Reviewing officers made detailed records of reviews that reflected each detainee's circumstances. However, in our case audits we found some examples where reviewing officers relied on the generic template without adapting the text to reflect the detainee's circumstances.

Initial training for permanent and temporary custody officers and staff is comprehensive and follows the national courses developed by the [College of Policing](#). Custody officers and staff spend time shadowing more experienced colleagues and complete a workplace assessment before carrying out duties on their own. The force provides regular training days each year to all custody officers and staff for their [continuing professional development](#).

Use of force and strip search in custody is lawful, necessary and proportionate and is subject to some oversight and scrutiny

We reviewed 20 custody records involving use of force incidents as well as CCTV footage to make sure that when force was used in custody, it was proportionate, necessary and justified. Records were inconsistent and lacked relevant detail that accurately reflected incidents. Of 20 use of force records relating to the custody environment we viewed, 17 lacked relevant detail to accurately summarise the incident, including identifying officers involved and the location.

Custody officers showed good leadership and gave clear direction to keep officers and detainees safe. Officers who use force in custody mostly submit individual use of force forms. We asked for use of force forms for the incidents we reviewed and received 47 of the 50 we expected. The force has some quality assurance processes in place, but it can't always show that when it uses force in custody, it is necessary, justified and proportionate.

We found that 98 percent of custody officers and staff were up to date with their officer safety and first aid training.

We reviewed seven cases that involved strip searches authorised under [section 54 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984](#) and nine cases where clothing was removed for safety reasons. In most cases, custody officers recorded appropriate grounds for these searches. But we found custody officers weren't always recording the location or the officers involved in the search. We also found that of the nine clothing exchanges, none had been authorised by custody officers or recorded as a strip search. Three clothing exchanges lacked sufficient detail in the rationale.

There is effective healthcare provision for detainees with sufficient oversight from the force and NHS England

The force has a contract with Mitie to make sure detainees' healthcare needs are met. The force and NHS England effectively monitor the contract for all health provision for detainees. Health staff are available in the custody suites and carry out timely assessments of detainees' healthcare needs. Health staff treat detainees in an appropriate clinical space that protects their privacy and dignity. Health staff gain appropriate consent from detainees to access medical records and make onward referrals for ongoing support. Detainees have access to appropriate medicines while in custody, including those to manage withdrawal from substances.

