

PEEL 2023–25

Police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy

An inspection of Suffolk Constabulary

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Overall summary

Our judgments

Our inspection assessed how good Suffolk Constabulary is in ten areas of policing. We make graded judgments in nine of these ten as follows:

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

We also inspected how effective a service Suffolk Constabulary gives to victims of crime. We don't make a graded judgment in this overall area.

In the rest of this report, we set out our detailed findings about things the constabulary is doing well and where it should improve.

Data in this report

For more information, please [view this report on our website](#) and select the 'About the data' section.

PEEL 2023–2025

In 2014, we introduced our police efficiency, effectiveness 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. Forces are assessed against the characteristics of good performance, set out in the [PEEL Assessment Framework 2023–2025](#), 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, and in some cases we have changed the aspects of policing we inspect.

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

HM Inspector's summary

I am pleased with some aspects of the performance of Suffolk Constabulary in keeping people safe, reducing crime and providing victims with an effective service.

Since our last inspection, the constabulary has made a significant effort to review and improve its investigative standards. This has led to improvements in its ability to achieve well-supervised, better-quality investigations. I commend Suffolk Constabulary on the progress it has made. But there is still work to do to achieve appropriate outcomes for victims.

I recognise that the constabulary is the seventh lowest funded force per head of population in England and Wales, and that it records an average number of incidents for forces in England. The county has low levels of deprivation.

Officers understand the importance of appropriate behaviours and communicate effectively with the public. There is strong stop and search scrutiny and challenge, and in the overwhelming majority of cases there are reasonable grounds for stop and search activity. The constabulary does need to improve its external scrutiny arrangements on use of force.

I am satisfied with most other aspects of the constabulary's performance, including how it prevents crime, but there are areas in which it needs to improve.

I have concerns about how the constabulary is responding to the public. In particular, it must improve the number of emergency and non-emergency calls that it answers promptly. The constabulary isn't answering 999 calls within national targets, and the abandonment rate of (non-emergency) [101](#) calls is too high. There are currently not enough staff working within the control room. Despite highlighting the high non-emergency abandonment rate during the last inspection, we found that performance had declined. In view of these findings, I have been in contact with the chief constable as I do not underestimate how much improvement is needed.

The constabulary also needs to make sure it has effective and consistent processes in place to protect vulnerable victims, and that opportunities are taken to safeguard victims.

We found that force plans weren't always supported by effective processes. The constabulary needs to make sure that it is effective in monitoring performance at all levels of the organisation. It also needs to make sure it develops robust performance frameworks and has a thorough understanding of data, to inform actions to make required improvements.

The constabulary had a change in leadership in the six months leading up to our inspection, with the appointment of a new [chief officer](#) team, although the current chief was the deputy chief constable before promotion. The new leadership team has a clear objective, focusing on workforce culture, behaviour and standards. I accept that it will take time for the new five-year plan to be fully integrated.

I am pleased with the way the constabulary has responded to my concerns, and I will be monitoring progress closely.

Roy Wilsher

HM Inspector of Constabulary

Leadership

Using the [College of Policing](#) leadership expectations as a framework, in this section we set out the most important findings relating to the constabulary's leadership at all levels.

The chief officer team at Suffolk Constabulary is newly established. The recently appointed chief constable, who was the deputy chief constable, has strong objectives, which are clearly communicated through a published force delivery plan.

Although senior leaders have clear plans and priorities for the constabulary, operational activity isn't always focused on these. Elements of governance and planning processes in some essential areas of policing aren't effective. Not all leaders are taking responsibility for their plans. And the constabulary hasn't yet prioritised or addressed some concerns in line with the objectives in the new force delivery plan. This means decisions that affect force performance and the effectiveness of operational policing are sometimes being made without scrutiny and sufficient chief officer oversight.

Senior leaders have several challenges to contend with. The command and control room is currently the most pressing concern. Other challenges include an ageing estate, investment in ICT and high demand. Internal departments need to work better together, and there is lack of scrutiny of existing programmes of work to tackle these problems. Suffolk Constabulary has demonstrated that it understands the challenges and is working to improve.

Senior officers promote and instil an inclusive and supportive force culture and our survey found that the workforce is generally proud to work for Suffolk Constabulary. The force delivery plan provides clear direction on the standards of behaviour expected from the workforce.

Senior leadership has made sure the constabulary is investing in the skills and capability of its leaders to support the workforce and improve performance. The constabulary has shown a clear commitment to developing leadership at all levels. Support is in place or available for police officers and staff entering leadership roles for the first time. We found that leaders with responsibility for the management of staff were focused on providing them with development opportunities. Overall, this investment is concentrated on making sure the constabulary has the right people in the right place to improve performance.

More detail on Suffolk Constabulary's leadership is included in the main body of the report.

Reducing crime assessment

The reducing crime assessment sets out what Suffolk Constabulary is doing to reduce crime and how effective this action is. This assessment doesn't include police-recorded crime figures. This is because they can be affected by variations and changes in recording policy and practice, making it difficult to make comparisons over time.

In order to provide the public with an effective service, Suffolk Constabulary needs to make sure it answers emergency and non-emergency calls quickly enough. By not always doing so, it is missing opportunities to safeguard the public and reduce crime. The constabulary also needs to respond to incidents within published timescales. It should also make sure it can identify repeat victims when it receives an initial call. This is so it can assess risk at the earliest opportunity and help to reduce further crime.

The constabulary's [neighbourhood policing teams](#) work well with communities to understand and meet their needs. They are building trust and confidence with the public, actively seeking views from communities and encouraging them to share information. This helps to identify local problems and gather intelligence that helps to reduce crime. The constabulary is working towards better understanding how it records antisocial behaviour, which will help form long-term sustainable solutions to reduce crime.

The constabulary understands and improves the way it uses [stop and search powers](#) through analysis and monitoring at force-level meetings. It can show its use of stop and search is fair and effective, helping to reduce crime. The overwhelming majority of recorded grounds for stop and search are reasonable.

It has effective governance arrangements for investigative standards, resulting in thorough and well-supervised investigations. It aims to improve outcomes for victims by pursuing all appropriate lines of enquiry. However, more needs to be done to achieve appropriate outcomes for victims. This will help reduce future crime.

While the constabulary has effective systems in place to monitor and pursue wanted persons and outstanding suspects, it should improve the way it prioritises high-risk safeguarding cases. This will help it reduce crime by preventing further reoffending.

The constabulary doesn't currently comprehensively understand the skills and capabilities of its officers and staff. This would help to make sure it can meet demand and work on preventing and reducing crime.

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

Providing a service to victims of crime

Victim service assessment

This section describes our assessment of the service Suffolk Constabulary provides to victims. This is from the point of reporting a crime and throughout the investigation. As part of this assessment, we reviewed 100 case files.

When the police close a case of a reported crime, they assign it an 'outcome type'. This describes the reason for closing it.

We selected 100 cases to review, including at least 20 that the constabulary had closed with the following outcome:

Action is undertaken by another body or agency. This includes safeguarding the victim and managing the behaviour of the person responsible (outcome 20).

Although our victim assessment is ungraded, it influences graded judgments in the other areas we have inspected.

The constabulary needs to improve the time it takes to answer emergency and non-emergency calls. It doesn't always identify repeat victims

The constabulary needs to improve the time it takes to answer emergency calls. It also needs to reduce the number of non-emergency calls sent to the contact and control room after triage that are abandoned by the caller because the call isn't answered in a timely manner. When the constabulary answers calls, it considers threat, harm, risk and vulnerability. However, it doesn't always identify repeat victims, meaning that it isn't always fully aware of the victim's circumstances when considering what response it should give. Call handlers give victims advice on crime prevention and how to preserve evidence.

The constabulary doesn't always respond promptly to calls for service

On most occasions, the constabulary responds to calls for service appropriately. But it doesn't always respond within set timescales. It doesn't always inform victims of delays, meaning that victims' expectations aren't always met. This may cause victims to lose confidence and disengage from the process.

The constabulary's crime recording is of a good standard when it comes to making sure victims receive an appropriate level of service

The constabulary has crime recording processes in place that make sure that all crimes reported to it are recorded correctly and without delay. We set out more details about the constabulary's crime recording in the [crime data integrity](#) section below.

The constabulary carries out effective and timely investigations

We found that in most cases, the constabulary carried out investigations in a timely way, completing relevant and proportionate lines of enquiry. The constabulary supervised investigations well and regularly updated victims. Victims are more likely to have confidence in a police investigation when they receive regular updates.

A thorough investigation increases the likelihood of perpetrators being identified and arrested, providing a positive end result for the victim. In most cases, victim personal statements were taken, giving victims the opportunity to describe how that crime has affected their lives.

When victims withdrew support for an investigation, the constabulary considered progressing the case without the victim's support. This can be an important method of safeguarding the victim and preventing further offences from being committed. In some cases, the constabulary didn't always record whether it considered using orders designed to protect victims, such as a [Domestic Violence Protection Notice](#) or [Domestic Violence Protection Order](#).

The [Code of Practice for Victims of Crime](#) requires forces to carry out a needs assessment at an early stage to determine whether victims need additional support. We found the constabulary usually carried out the assessment but didn't always record the request for additional support.

The constabulary usually assigns the right outcome type to an investigation. It considers victims' wishes and the offender's background but doesn't always hold an auditable record of victims' wishes

The constabulary isn't consistently providing a level of service to make sure that it achieves appropriate outcomes for victims of crime. The constabulary closes crimes with the appropriate outcome type. It records a clear rationale for using a certain outcome and this is effectively supervised. It seeks victims' views when deciding which outcome type to assign to a closed investigation. However, it didn't always maintain an auditable record of the victim's wishes when required. We found that the constabulary did usually inform victims of what outcome code was assigned to the investigation.

Crime data integrity

Good

Suffolk Constabulary is good at recording crime.

The Home Office Counting Rules, which provide the standard for crime recording in England and Wales, have changed since the last time we inspected the constabulary for crime data integrity.

This change mainly relates to the way forces record violent crime. This means we can no longer compare the findings from this audit to those from previous audits.

We estimate that Suffolk Constabulary is recording 94.5 percent (with a confidence interval of +/- 2.1 percent) of all reported crime (excluding fraud).

We estimate that the constabulary is recording 92.1 percent (with a confidence interval of +/- 3.6 percent) of violent offences.

We estimate that the constabulary is recording 94.2 percent (with a confidence interval of +/- 3.7 percent) of sexual offences.

Areas for improvement

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

In January 2020, we published our [Crime Data Integrity report for Suffolk Constabulary](#), in which we found that just under 3 quarters of crimes were recorded within 24 hours. We said that this was an [area for improvement](#) and that the constabulary should immediately make sure that it records more crimes within 24 hours, as the [national crime recording standard](#) requires. The constabulary has made little improvement and is still recording about 3 quarters of crimes within 24 hours. For rape crimes in 2020 we found that just under 9 out of 10 were recorded within 24 hours; in 2023 this had dropped to just over 8 out of 10 crimes recorded within 24 hours. Recording crime without delay helps make sure that victims receive the support they require, as well as establishing an effective investigation.

The constabulary needs to improve how it records crime when antisocial behaviour personal is reported

The constabulary is failing to record enough crimes and tackle problems when antisocial behaviour is reported by victims. We examined 50 incidents. Of these, 18 crimes should have been recorded and 12 were actually recorded. Victims of antisocial behaviour are often subjected to abuse for substantial periods of time, and crime is often committed by their neighbours. Failing to record crimes and provide an effective service to tackle antisocial behaviour can mean victims live in fear in their own homes while being subjected to long-term abuse by people living next door or in the local community.

The constabulary needs to improve how it records equality data

The constabulary's data for victims of crime shows that age and gender are well recorded, ethnicity is less well recorded and other [protected characteristics](#) aren't well recorded. The constabulary should be collecting this information to understand the extent to which each protected group is affected by crime, how this differs from those without the protected characteristics, and whether a different approach is needed for these victims.

Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to crime data integrity.

The constabulary records rape offences effectively

The constabulary has continued to record rape offences well. Rape is one of the most serious crimes a victim can experience. Therefore, it is especially important that crimes are recorded accurately to make sure victims receive the service and support they expect and deserve.

The constabulary doesn't always record crimes against vulnerable victims

The constabulary doesn't always record crimes against vulnerable victims. We examined 69 incidents. Of these incidents, 54 crimes should have been recorded but 50 were actually recorded. Some of the crimes missed were crimes of a serious nature, such as controlling and coercive behaviour. When the crime wasn't recorded, there was sometimes no investigation or safeguarding of the victim. Failure to record these crimes can result in perpetrators not being identified or brought to justice.

Police powers and treating the public fairly and respectfully

Good

Suffolk Constabulary is good at using police powers and treating people fairly and respectfully.

Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to police powers and treating people fairly and respectfully.

Officers understand the importance of appropriate behaviours and generally communicate effectively

There is an inclusive culture and officers understand the importance and impact of [procedural justice](#) – being fair, transparent and accountable to the public. The constabulary covers comprehensive tactical communication skills during personal safety training, which include managing internal conflict, conflict management models and rapport building. It provides mandatory unconscious bias training and cultural awareness training; the latter is provided to new recruits and as part of leadership courses. The constabulary invites officers and members of external scrutiny groups to use their lived experience to support this learning, to better understand and work with its communities. For example, due to language barriers, it brought in a Romanian officer to help communicate with the Romanian community.

The constabulary uses stop and search powers fairly and respectfully

During our inspection, we reviewed a sample of 210 stop and search records from 1 January to 31 December 2022. On the basis of this sample, we estimate that 95.2 percent (with a confidence interval of +/- 2.8 percent) of all stop and searches by the constabulary during this period had reasonable grounds recorded. This is a significant improvement compared with the findings from our previous review in 2021, when we found 83.3 percent (with a confidence interval of +/- 4.8 percent) of stop and searches had reasonable grounds recorded. Of the records we reviewed for stop and searches on people from ethnic minorities, all 27 had reasonable grounds recorded.

In the year ending 31 March 2022, Suffolk Constabulary conducted 4,217 stop and searches. This represents 5.5 stops per 1,000 population. This was a 19.7 percent decrease from the 5,250 in the previous year and is reflective of the picture across England and Wales. During this period, based on population data from the 2021 census, Black people were 6.1 times as likely to be stopped and searched by Suffolk Constabulary as White people.

The constabulary is committed to making sure officers are sufficiently trained in stop and search and is now providing officers with annual refresher training. It understands and improves the way it uses stop and search powers through analysis and monitoring at a force-level governance meeting. Supervisory oversight means that effective remedial action and improvements of stop and search take place.

There is strong external, independent stop and search scrutiny and challenge

The constabulary acts upon the scrutiny and challenge it receives from an external independent forum to improve officers' use of stop and search powers. This forum has an independent chair, and the diverse membership has been provided with training. Members are invited to observe personal safety training sessions to review, offer opinion and gain further knowledge.

The constabulary also works in partnership with Ipswich and Suffolk Council for Racial Equality (ISCRE) through the stop and search reference group, which reviews large numbers of stop and search forms. This provides an external review of the quality of the reasonable grounds recorded. Feedback from the forum is provided to officers. Representatives from the learning and development department also make sure learning is included in future training.

The constabulary continues to seek to develop its external scrutiny of use of force but needs to do more

The constabulary has made efforts to further develop the scrutiny panel. We have noted that there are plans, as an interim measure, to widen the terms of reference of the stop and search reference group to also scrutinise the use of force. The constabulary needs to continue to develop focused and effective external scrutiny arrangements for the use of force or it will miss opportunities to further involve local communities and improve its use of this power.

The constabulary understands and improves the way it uses force

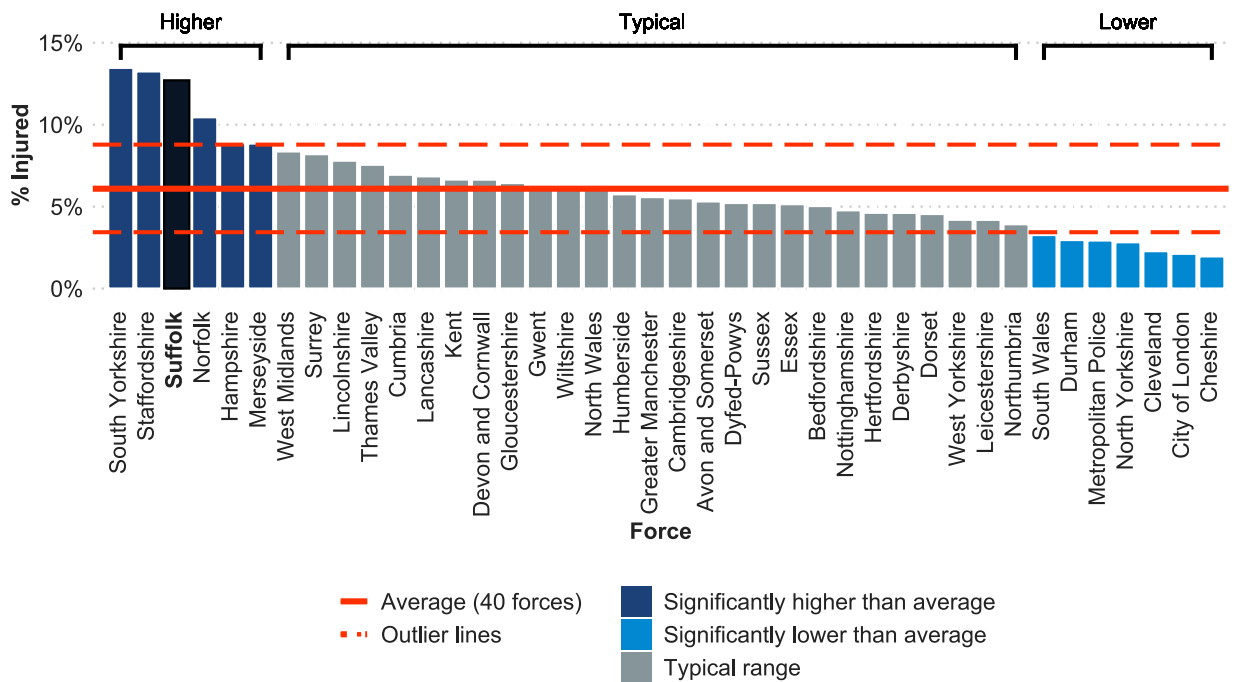
The constabulary understands and improves the way it uses force by analysis and monitoring through a joint use of police powers board with Norfolk. Use of force compliance rates are monitored at these meetings.

In the year ending 31 March 2022, Suffolk recorded 4,769 use of force incidents. This was a 24 percent increase compared with the previous year. However, this was still 8,907 fewer than we estimate should have been recorded. This may mean that the constabulary is still not recording all of its use of force incidents.

It may also be a factor in why the proportion of Suffolk’s recorded use of force incidents resulting in the subject being injured was higher than expected compared with other forces. Those incidents not recorded are likely to be for cases where no one was injured. Data shows that in the year ending 31 March 2022, Suffolk was an outlier in this, with 12.7 percent (606) use of force incidents in Suffolk resulting in the subject being injured, the third highest in England and Wales.

Since the constabulary was made aware of this, it has made improvements to use of force training in compliance with College of Policing recommendations. Officers have been briefed to make sure preferred tactics are being adhered to. There is now supervisor and senior officer oversight of use of force. The number of subjects injured during use of force incidents is also now being monitored by the joint use of police powers board. It is too early, however, for us to evaluate whether these actions have made a difference to the number of use of force incidents resulting in the subject being injured.

Figure 1: Proportion of recorded use of force incidents where the subject was injured across England and Wales, in the year ending 31 March 2022



Preventing and deterring crime and antisocial behaviour, and reducing vulnerability

Good

Suffolk Constabulary is good at prevention and deterrence.

Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to prevention and deterrence.

The constabulary has a positive approach to engaging and involving communities, including seldom-heard communities

The constabulary provides regular opportunities for community involvement through community shows, 'street meets', and town and village drop-in events. It also publishes a newsletter, *Constable's County*, which provides information on different ways to contact the constabulary, offers opportunities to meet to discuss local issues and contains a list of local priorities. The constabulary also uses various media platforms to reach communities.

There are also opportunities for seldom-heard communities' involvement. This includes the work of the [positive action](#) officer, who works with ISCRE to educate people in communities about police powers, and offers support to ethnic minorities in the community. The community engagement officers recently conducted a race relations survey specifically for people from ethnic minority groups, and in particular Black people, to understand their thoughts on the police. A follow-up meeting was held for those who wanted to further support the police in their understanding and learning.

The county currently has two hotels contracted to the Government to house asylum seekers. The local police inspector is part of a multi-agency group including the council and a charity advocating the views of the residents. Through this group the constabulary is able to better understand tensions and provide the required service to the residents.

The constabulary is part of the local [Rural Coffee Caravan](#), providing support and guidance to those living in rural communities who may feel isolated. It also has a weekly slot on a local radio programme, highlighting different topics as required, such as crime prevention advice and opportunities to volunteer with the constabulary.

The constabulary works with the community to gather information to set and address local priorities

We were impressed with the way the constabulary has started to use police mobile devices and QR codes to design and complete public surveys. These are individually designed by local officers to draw out information and identify local issues. Findings are evaluated and monitored by neighbourhood inspectors to assist priority-setting in local areas. The survey findings have also been used to help inform community and partnership meetings and develop patrol plans to make sure police resources are used in the most effective way possible.

The constabulary's commitment to problem-solving has continued to improve

The constabulary has continued to develop its problem-solving culture. The problem-solving tactical advisers continue to play a vital role in providing ongoing support and advice throughout the different stages of problem-solving plans. During our inspection we could see that problem-solving plans followed a recognised structure and were thoroughly detailed at each stage of the process. The constabulary is working to make sure that problem-solving is integrated across the organisation. All frontline officers receive problem-oriented policing training as part of their initial training, at continued professional development days and as part of leadership training courses.

As a consequence, we saw some problem-solving plans now used outside neighbourhood policing teams. The problem-solving template has been amended, is comprehensive and now includes a section for self-reflection. This will assist future learning. We saw evidence of good practice and learning from other forces taken into consideration. The constabulary publishes a problem-solving bulletin to share good practice and learning across its workforce.

One example of problem-solving having a positive impact was Operation Southampton. It was set up to deal with antisocial behaviour incidents on a specific estate. The team worked with local schools, the council, businesses and the youth offending team to put interventions in place. They were successful in reducing reports of antisocial behaviour and consequently relieving pressure on response officers.

The constabulary makes good use of data to understand serious acquisitive crime

The constabulary makes good use of data to understand serious acquisitive crime. This includes burglary, personal robbery, theft from a person, and theft of and from a motor vehicle. In the year ending 31 December 2022, Suffolk Constabulary recorded 3,808 serious acquisitive crimes. This is similar to the number recorded the previous year (3,718).

The constabulary considers crime and outcome rates at its monthly performance meeting, chaired by the deputy chief constable. It compares itself to other forces, within the region and nationally, and comments on its trajectory. The chair will also ask for specific pieces of work to be carried out, for example, the focus of one meeting was burglary detection rates. Following that meeting the chair requested that a literature review be prepared on good practice, and for victim satisfaction data for burglary victims to be presented at future meetings.

The constabulary continues to improve its understanding and recording of antisocial behaviour

The Suffolk county antisocial behaviour steering group was set up to make sure appropriate learning was incorporated following the [Stella Maris Inquiry](#) (where antisocial behaviour failings were highlighted in connection with an individual in supported living in the county). The steering group consists of Suffolk Constabulary, Suffolk County Council, district councils, social landlords and NHS Mental Health, with plans to further expand membership.

Operation Facilitate is a force-wide operation set up to combat antisocial behaviour associated with the nighttime economy. As part of the operation, every safer neighbourhood team has developed a local nighttime economy plan relevant to their area.

According to the Office for National Statistics [Crime Survey for England and Wales](#), in the year ending 31 December 2022, an estimated 32.7 percent of adults aged 16 and over in Suffolk experienced or witnessed antisocial behaviour in their local area. This was similar to the estimate for England and Wales of 34.7 percent.

Suffolk Constabulary's use of antisocial behaviour orders increased in 2022. In the 12 months ending 30 September 2022, Suffolk issued 111 orders, compared with 75 in the year ending 30 September 2021. The most used power was community protection notices at 67, followed by 39 dispersal powers, 24 case reviews and 5 criminal behaviour orders.

Despite this, the constabulary needs to improve its recording of antisocial behaviour personal incidents (when a victim reports they have been targeted by antisocial behaviour). In a sample of antisocial behaviour personal incidents that we reviewed, we found several crimes that should have been recorded but weren't. As a result of this, vulnerable victims, whose lives may be seriously affected by high levels of abuse, might not receive the support they should from the constabulary. There is further reference to this under the section in the report about providing a service to victims of crime.

Neighbourhood officers are diverted away from their main duties due to demand on response teams

Time spent by neighbourhood officers doing non-neighbourhood work is known as abstraction. Some neighbourhood officers in Suffolk Constabulary are abstracted to meet demand on response teams. This is in line with the constabulary's recently amended business continuity plan. Despite the abstractions, we found evidence that the constabulary continues to provide its neighbourhood policing function well. However, in the long term this may affect the ability of neighbourhood teams to perform their core functions effectively.

There is a new operating model in development to strengthen neighbourhood policing, increase the constabulary's focus on prevention and enhance standards of investigations into neighbourhood crime. We were also told that an abstraction policy will be introduced at the same time as the new model. It is imperative that the new operating model provides improvements and we will seek evidence of this during our next inspection.

Responding to the public

Inadequate

Suffolk Constabulary is inadequate at responding to the public.

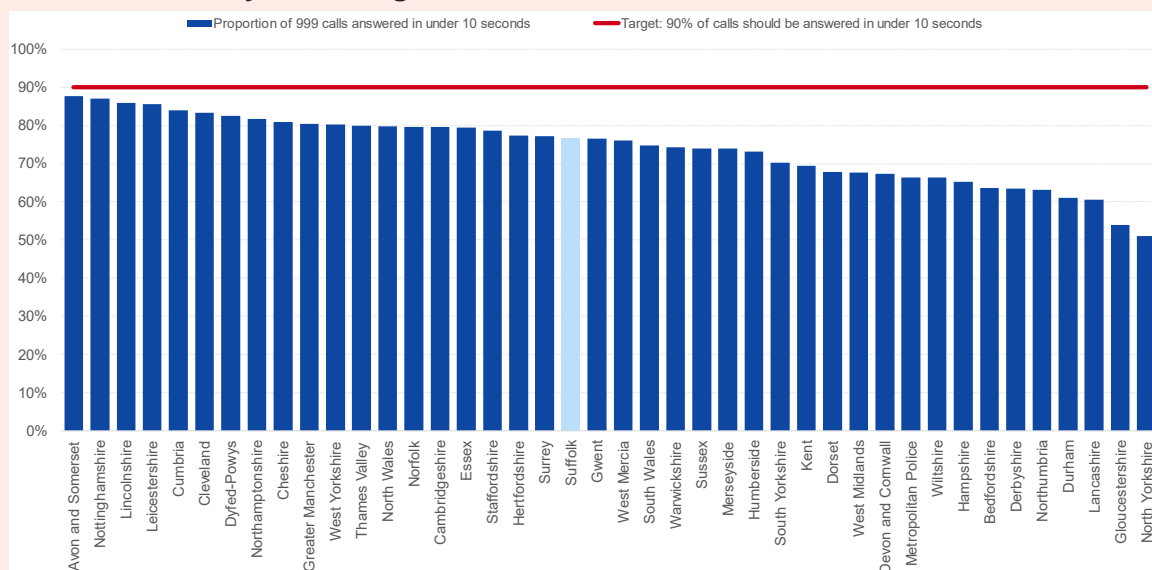
Cause of concern

The constabulary needs to improve the time it takes to answer emergency and non-emergency calls

There are capacity and capability issues within the CCR while new staff are trained. The constabulary has experienced recruitment difficulties but is hopeful that all vacancies will be filled and new staff trained by the autumn. However, should it meet its recruitment target, the current CCR isn't big enough to accommodate all staff. The constabulary should have been aware of and considered the capacity of the room when plans were first made to recruit more staff. It has been slow to look for alternative arrangements to resolve this issue.

The constabulary needs to improve the time it takes to answer emergency calls for service. In the year ending 31 March 2023, Suffolk Constabulary answered 76.6 percent of its 999 calls within 10 seconds. This was lower than the standard expected of forces in England and Wales of answering 90 percent of 999 calls within 10 seconds. Failing to answer calls quickly enough can mean losing both public confidence and investigative opportunities.

Figure 2: Proportion of 999 calls answered within 10 seconds by forces in England and Wales in the year ending 31 March 2023



The constabulary non-emergency abandonment rate is high. This was an area for improvement when the constabulary was last inspected. At that time, chief officers had devised a plan to help reduce the high number of people abandoning calls. Through raising the [precept](#), the [police and crime commissioner](#) provided funding to improve performance in the CCR. Despite this, during our recent inspection we found that performance had declined. In the year ending 31 March 2023, the constabulary told us that 36.9 percent of calls to its non-emergency 101 facility were abandoned. This abandonment rate is higher than the standard of 5 percent for forces with a switchboard. Last time we reported, the rate was 32 percent. Higher abandonment rates were reported for calls made overnight. This means that the public still isn't able to easily contact the constabulary, which may leave people at risk. The constabulary continues to fail to provide the public with a good enough service. It should have acted with more urgency to reduce its abandonment rate.

In the year ending 31 March 2023, Suffolk received 152 emergency 999 calls per 1,000 population. This was comparable to other forces in England and Wales.

In the year ending 30 September 2022, Suffolk received 317 non-emergency 101 calls per 1,000 population. This is slightly higher than other forces in England and Wales.

We note that the constabulary has recently done some work to try to understand its 101 abandonment rate. It has collated data to find whether those who report online have previously called 101. It also thinks that higher-risk areas may have lower abandonment rates. Further analytical work is required to make sure that the constabulary fully understands its data and to make sure risk is being managed effectively.

The constabulary is aware that it needs to make improvements in the CCR and has a CCR transformation programme in place. It has recognised areas of most concern and embarked on a programme of improvement. Audit processes in the CCR have improved, and the constabulary now completes monthly audits. But unfortunately this hasn't yet led to improvements in performance.

Recommendations

Within three months, Suffolk Constabulary should:

- improve the ability of the constabulary to answer phone calls from the public and have sufficient staff with the appropriate skills and experience working within the command and control room (CCR).

Within six months, Suffolk Constabulary should:

- make sure it can answer a greater proportion of emergency calls more quickly to provide a better service for the public; and
- make sure it can answer a greater proportion of non-emergency 101 calls so that caller abandonment levels are reduced and kept as low as possible.

Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to how well the force responds to the public.

The constabulary should make sure that repeat callers are routinely identified

Call handlers don't always complete checks to find out if callers are repeat victims. In our victim service assessment, there was evidence of a check for a repeat victim in 51 of 65 cases we reviewed. This means that the constabulary doesn't always identify repeat victims, meaning that it isn't always fully aware of the victim's circumstances when considering what response it should give.

The constabulary needs to attend calls for service in line with its published attendance times

The constabulary doesn't always attend calls for service in line with its published attendance times. We found in 52 of the 66 cases we reviewed, where the police responded, that attendance was within the required attendance time (whether downgraded or not). The caller/victim was updated regarding delays in 6 of 13 cases examined. This delayed response can lead to the constabulary missing opportunities to safeguard victims or collect evidence.

The constabulary has improved the way it identifies vulnerability at first point of contact

We found that call handlers acted politely, appropriately and ethically, and used clear, unambiguous language without apparent bias.

Call handlers carry out a structured initial triage and risk assessment. This was an area for improvement for the constabulary when last inspected. The constabulary has made a number of changes to improve the way it identifies vulnerability at first point of contact. There have been process improvements in the way the CCR applies, records and revisits [THRIVE](#). The workforce has been given updated training. A quality assurance function has been led by supervisors and the audit lead within the CCR. In our victim service assessment, we found that 53 of the 55 cases we reviewed had evidence that the call handler used a structured triage approach to assess risk and consider the needs of the victim/caller. This structured triage record was an accurate and meaningful reflection of the circumstances in 52 of 53 cases. The initial prioritisation grading of the call was appropriate in 93 of 98 cases. This is an improvement since the constabulary was last inspected. The constabulary should assure itself that, when appropriate, call handlers have recorded the reassessment of THRIVE in all cases.

Call handlers give appropriate advice on preservation of evidence and crime prevention

This was an area for improvement for the constabulary when last inspected. Call handlers have since received training in preservation of evidence by crime scene investigators and guidance sheets to make sure advice to callers is consistent. Call handlers direct victims to the constabulary's recently developed, comprehensive crime prevention advice page on its website when appropriate. In our victim service assessment, call handlers gave appropriate advice on preservation of evidence in 16 of 18 cases, and on crime prevention in 27 of 29 cases. This is an improvement since the constabulary was last inspected.

The workforce has access to mental health experts

There are two mental health nurses based in the CCR, and they have access to health and police systems. They advise on as well as assist with decision-making, referrals and disposal options. Officers are also aware of and use the professional helpline called 'first response', providing guidance and advice in relation to urgent mental health support. There is also a mental health co-ordinator, responsible for identifying organisational themes and trends from a strategic perspective. The constabulary is invested in the [Right Care, Right Person](#) programme, to make sure that the agency best positioned to respond in a crisis is able to do so. It is working with local authority partners and NHS providers and is hopeful it will see benefits of the programme following its introduction in the autumn.

Investigating crime

Adequate

Suffolk Constabulary is adequate at investigating crime.

Areas for improvement

Suffolk Constabulary doesn't consistently achieve appropriate outcomes for victims

The constabulary isn't always achieving acceptable outcomes for victims of crime. It has low numbers of crimes that are solved following investigations. It needs to understand the issue and work to achieve better outcomes for victims.

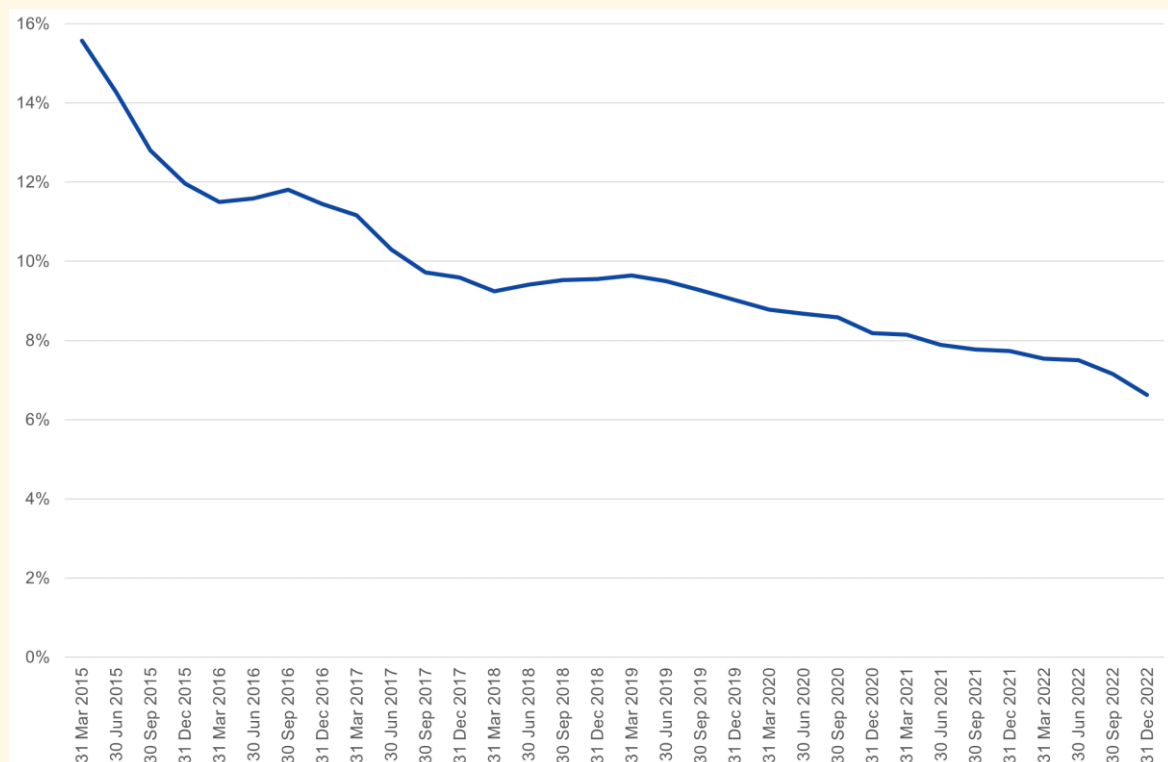
Table 1: Proportion of victim-based crimes assigned specified crime outcomes by Suffolk Constabulary compared with forces in England and Wales in the year ending 31 December 2022

Outcome types	Suffolk rate	England and Wales rate
1: 'Charged / summonsed'	6.6%	4.6%
2 and 3: ' Caution – youths' and 'Caution – adults'	1.0%	0.7%
8: ' Community resolutions '	1.6%	1.4%
9: 'Not in the public interest (Crown Prosecution Service)'	0.0%	0.0%
10 and 21: 'Prosecution not in the public interest (police decision)'	0.7%	0.8%
14: 'Evidential difficulties (suspect not identified; victim doesn't support further action)'	4.4%	5.6%
15: 'Evidential difficulties (suspect identified; victim supports action)'	16.3%	11.7%
16: 'Evidential difficulties (suspect identified; victim doesn't support further action)'	23.1%	21.9%
17: 'Prosecution time limit expired'	0.8%	0.3%
18: 'Investigation complete – no suspect identified'	30.4%	40.9%
20: 'Action taken by another body'	6.5%	1.4%
22: 'Diversionary, educational or intervention activity'	0.5%	0.4%

Note: England and Wales excludes City of London data

The constabulary's charge rate for victim-based crime has declined and is far too low. In the year ending 31 December 2022, 6.6 percent of victim-based crimes were assigned a 'charged/summonsed' (outcome 1) by Suffolk Constabulary. This was a decrease from 15.6 percent in the year ending 31 March 2015.

Figure 3: Proportion of victim-based crimes assigned a 'charged/summonsed' (outcome 1) by Suffolk Constabulary between the year ending 31 March 2015 and the year ending 31 December 2022



In the year ending 31 December 2022, Suffolk Constabulary recorded 43,522 victim-based crimes. Of these recorded offences, 10.4 percent were assigned an 'offences brought to justice' outcome. This was within the normal range compared to other forces in England and Wales. More specifically, 6.6 percent were assigned a 'charge/summonsed' outcome.

In the year ending 31 December 2022, the proportion of victim-based crimes assigned [outcome 15](#): 'Evidential difficulties: suspect identified; victim supports further action' by Suffolk Constabulary, was 16.3 percent. This is a decrease from the previous year, when it was 19.7 percent, but is higher than expected compared with other forces in England and Wales.

We found the constabulary carried out audits and scrutinised disposal outcomes. However, more needs to be done to make sure that leaders can be confident they understand what drives some outcomes, whether the outcomes are appropriate and what improvements might be needed to give victims the justice they deserve.

The constabulary should make sure that a victim contract is completed where appropriate

We found that 40 of 50 victim contracts were completed in the cases reviewed by us. This means that some victims weren't provided with timely information about the investigation and prosecution. Police officers and staff should positively involve victims at key decision points in the investigation, update the victim about the decisions and where applicable, explain them to them.

Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to how well the force investigates crime.

The constabulary has introduced a management structure that provides governance and oversight of investigations

Since our last inspection, the constabulary has introduced the investigation standards board, which meets bi-monthly and is chaired by a senior leader. The meeting examines crime outcomes and audit findings, such as compliance with the victims' code for policing, which gives details of minimum standards that must be provided to victims. The board has several subgroups to focus on strands of work such as well-being and people.

The constabulary has a national crime and policing measures overview dashboard to allow it to make effective use of data to assess and monitor performance. This provides information about elements such as neighbourhoods, domestic abuse, and serious sexual offences. The performance frameworks and data dashboards provide managers with comprehensive information to understand crime trends by area and crime type.

The constabulary has improved the way it carries out investigations

Our audit judged that 93 of 100 investigations were effective. It found that appropriate investigative opportunities were taken from the outset and throughout the investigation in 88 of 95 cases.

We found evidence that there were appropriate investigation plans in line with the College of Policing authorised professional practice guidance in 68 of 69 cases. Police officers and staff made effective use of 8-point plans to identify and make the most of all available evidential opportunities at the start of an investigation.

The constabulary has introduced a new programme of dedicated [continuing professional development](#) for investigators. Senior leaders consulted with police officers and staff to make sure that training is relevant and meets their needs.

The constabulary intranet was redesigned to make sure that advice and guidance is easy to access.

The constabulary supervises and reviews investigations effectively

The constabulary has made improvements to the way it supervises and reviews investigations, clearly defining responsibilities and expected standards.

The constabulary has developed and introduced a course called 'stripes' for first-line supervisors. Police officers and staff told us it provided valuable training, including:

- how to identify evidential opportunities using [golden hour principles](#);
- how to conduct effective reviews and identify key lines of enquiry;
- how to make sure that investigations have a clear closing rationale at outcome; and
- how they and their colleagues can access [trauma risk management](#) support.

Our inspection found evidence of effective supervision reviews, workload monitoring and supportive supervisors. Our audit found evidence of effective supervision in 71 of 79 cases.

The constabulary achieves good results for victims by pursuing evidence-led prosecutions

In our audit, we found that the constabulary considered evidence-led prosecutions where appropriate in nine out of ten cases.

During our inspection, investigators spoke positively about their experience of evidence-led prosecutions, portraying a strong positive culture within the constabulary. The constabulary has developed an 8-point plan, which encourages both investigators and supervisors to explore whether the constabulary can pursue prosecution if victims don't support police action.

Protecting vulnerable people

Requires
improvement

Suffolk Constabulary requires improvement at protecting vulnerable people.

Areas for improvement

The constabulary should make sure that there are processes in place to monitor protective orders and make sure that breaches are prioritised to safeguard the victim

The constabulary has focused on making sure officers have a good understanding of protective orders. It has brought in subject matter experts to provide training. As a result, it has seen improvements in the use of protective orders. However, the constabulary doesn't monitor breaches of protective orders. This may reduce the impact of orders or fail to prevent reoffending.

The constabulary needs to make sure that it has secondary review processes for all appropriate domestic abuse incidents. It should develop a performance framework that shows risk levels, and that harm reduction activity is in place for all cases

Previously the [domestic abuse](#) team, located within the [multi-agency safeguarding hub](#), carried out the secondary risk assessments to make sure the correct grading of domestic abuse cases: high, medium or standard, was given. This process was to make sure victims were referred to the right partners, such as social services, and safeguarding actions were in line with the risk levels identified. In October 2022, the constabulary introduced a new process. This removed secondary specialist risk assessment from the domestic abuse team. The constabulary introduced a new domestic abuse research document for attending officers and a secondary risk process by sergeants for medium and high-risk cases. There is currently no secondary risk assessment in place for standard risk.

Both frontline officers and supervisors have been given training in relation to the new process, including the use of domestic abuse risk assessment and completion and review of the new research document. During our inspection we identified that officer compliance with this process was inconsistent. This can lead to delays in vulnerable adults and children being signposted or referred to the relevant partners at the first opportunity. The new process lacked audit and scrutiny processes to make sure the risk to vulnerable people and children was being managed appropriately.

Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to how well the force protects vulnerable people.

The constabulary has an effective strategy, performance framework and governance structure in relation to vulnerability

The constabulary's vulnerability strategy has a chief officer lead. The strategy is realised through a range of strategic partnership and operational groups, such as the vulnerability board and child protection delivery board. There is multi-agency representation at these boards that feeds into the strategic vulnerability board, and the chair is responsible for making sure partners are kept informed about progress of the strategy and its plan. The constabulary has a performance framework aligned to its governance structure and strategy to provide scrutiny and assurance of the implementation of the College of Policing 13 strands of vulnerability. The constabulary has a multi-agency violence against women and girls strategy and action plan that is monitored and realised through a partnership steering group.

The understanding of vulnerability across the workforce is varied

The College of Policing [vulnerability training](#) has been provided to all frontline officers, and CCR staff. Despite this, the understanding of vulnerability across the workforce is varied. The promotion of the [voice of the child](#), with learning from the Arthur Labinjo-Hughes case, was highlighted as innovative practice in the [Suffolk national child protection inspection \(NCPI\)](#) report. Suffolk Constabulary introduced the mnemonic ARTHUR, which has been used to train officers to assess incidents and promote the voice of the child. However, we didn't find strong evidence of it being used across the constabulary. A common theme included within the NCPI report was that officers were inconsistently recording the voice of the child. As a result, the constabulary has an action plan in place to address the recommendations.

The constabulary gathers victim feedback in various forms

An external provider carries out victim callbacks on behalf of the constabulary, with data produced on a quarterly basis for the confidence and satisfaction board. The board discusses how feedback can be used to improve services and performance. The constabulary also seeks feedback from domestic abuse victims, through external groups and [independent domestic violence adviser](#) contracts, the violence against women and girls steering group and the serious violence group. Feedback from cases using the new rapid video response, funded by [precept](#), is helping develop a better understanding of its use. There is a supporting victim subgroup, attended by the office of the police and crime commissioner and other agencies, including Norfolk and Suffolk victim care, which serves as a direct way for agencies to provide victim feedback. There was also clear victim voice included in the [multi-agency risk assessment conference \(MARAC\)](#) observed by us.

The constabulary is working with other organisations to improve how it keeps people safe

[Multi-agency safeguarding hubs \(MASHs\)](#) allow organisations with responsibility for the safety of vulnerable people to work together. There are a range of organisations working closely as part of a single MASH in Suffolk, with effective information sharing covering both adults and children. This is enhanced by the co-location of some service providers. A shared IT system is used, making joint work more effective. There are governance arrangements in place through a wide range of multi-agency forums such as the MASH strategic board and MASH managers' meetings.

We were told that some constabulary processes in the MASH had recently been amended, and further training provided, to address findings highlighted following the NCPI inspection.

During our inspection, both officers and supervisors raised concerns with us in relation to the new domestic abuse research document and process, due to the considerable amount of time required to complete and review. The domestic abuse co-ordinators (police staff based in the MASH) told us that they wouldn't process referrals until the domestic abuse risk assessment and research document were completed and submitted by the first responder. This could mean that vulnerable adults and children aren't signposted or referred to the relevant partners, such as social services, or referral agencies at the first opportunity, and that safeguarding processes to reduce or mitigate the risk of harm aren't considered. In some cases, the domestic abuse co-ordinators would complete the research documents themselves. This means there are inconsistencies in the new process.

We understand that completion of the research document has been monitored through the domestic abuse co-ordinators. This monitoring has highlighted that officers aren't routinely completing the domestic abuse research documents and sending them to the MASH with the domestic abuse risk assessment. As a consequence, a review was underway, due to be reported to the local policing board soon after our inspection. We are concerned about the inconsistent application of the process, whether it is effective and timely, and the subsequent management of risk. We will review progress in this area.

The MARAC is currently being reviewed

The [MARAC](#) is a locally held meeting where statutory and voluntary agency representatives share information about people at high risk of domestic abuse.

There is an information-sharing arrangement in place to help the MARAC to work effectively. The constabulary benefits from a MARAC co-ordinator, whose role is to undertake administration for the MARAC process and assess whether referrals meet criteria for discussion at the meeting. Referrals to the MARAC were received from various agencies. In the year ending 31 March 2023, the number of cases discussed was consistent with the [SafeLives](#) recommendation of 40 cases per 10,000 women. As part of our inspection, we found that there were no substantial backlogs in the MARAC casework.

The constabulary is aware that not all partners attend the MARAC regularly; for example, no representatives from mental health or probation were present during the meeting we observed. However, the constabulary continues to try to influence partners to make sure there is more effective and consistent involvement. The MARAC is chaired by a pool of trained individuals from different agencies. The constabulary should push to make sure chairs are of sufficient seniority and have the broad knowledge required to chair a meeting effectively.

In the 13 MARAC cases observed by us there was little discussion about management of perpetrators. There was no consideration of protective orders. The domestic abuse perpetrator unit works effectively to safeguard vulnerable people. However, the MARAC didn't make any reference to it. There was also no consideration of referral to [multi-agency public protection arrangements](#) where perpetrators had a history of serious violent crime. This is a missed opportunity to further reduce domestic abuse offending behaviour and safeguard more vulnerable people.

The NCPI found that MARAC meetings weren't always effective, and recommendations were identified. As a result, the constabulary was reviewing MARAC processes and terms of reference at the time of our inspection, to make sure there are effective strategies and clear decisions, which would reduce risks for the children included in these meetings.

The constabulary uses protection orders and schemes to safeguard vulnerable people

Suffolk has increased the number of [Domestic Violence Protection Orders \(DVPOs\)](#) granted at court. In the year ending September 2022, the constabulary more than doubled the number of DVPOs granted at court compared with the previous 12 months. However, the number of DVPO applications as a percentage of domestic abuse crimes still remains low in comparison with other forces.

We have seen positive use of [Stalking Protection Orders \(SPOs\)](#). In the year ending September 2022, 12 SPOs were granted at court. Only one was granted for the same period the previous year.

In our audit, we found that ancillary orders, such as [Domestic Violence Protection Notices](#), DVPOs and SPOs were considered where appropriate in 8 of 13 cases. We understand that the constabulary carries out audits to assure itself that officers are considering orders. It should also make sure that this is recorded in an auditable way.

The [Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme](#) (also known as Clare's Law) 'right to know' gives any member of the public the right to ask the police if their partner may pose a risk to them. Our data from September 2022 shows that the constabulary had the sixth-highest number of right to know applications per 1,000 population compared to other forces. In the quarter ending 30 September 2022, the constabulary received 113 right to know applications and made 41 disclosures. Applications and disclosures are dealt with effectively and promptly through the MASH. Disclosure under right to know was considered in all MARAC cases observed by us.

Managing offenders and suspects

Requires
improvement

Suffolk Constabulary requires improvement at managing offenders and suspects.

Areas for improvement

The constabulary should prioritise the use of warrants and arrest as enforcement methods that provide greater opportunities for victim safeguarding and the prevention of further offending

We found the constabulary used consent searches and voluntary attendance when warrants and arrest powers would have been more appropriate in the internet child abuse investigation team. We found cases where suspects were invited for voluntary interview when children were present in the house and safeguarding should have been considered. When officers proactively use arrest and bail, this allows the constabulary to impose police bail conditions as safeguarding measures to protect the public. Relying on consent to search and voluntary attendance can result in evidential opportunities or safeguarding opportunities being missed. The constabulary needs to assure itself that it is securing the relevant devices and capturing all the evidence of an offence.

The constabulary told us that one reason for the use of voluntary attendance/searches is the delay in obtaining a warrant by the court. Senior officers told us that they were unaware of difficulties obtaining warrants, therefore no discussions had been held on a strategic level locally with the courts to try to resolve this.

The internet child abuse investigation team should make sure that any backlog of work is subject to an intelligence refresh process. This should be conducted at a frequency that is sufficient to determine if there has been any change in risk level during the intervening period prior to enforcement action

As part of our case file review, we didn't find any evidence that confirmed that intelligence checks had been refreshed by the internet child abuse investigation team when there was a delay in enforcement activity. This is required in order to establish whether there is an increase or decrease in risk to the suspect, victim or any other person at risk. It will also highlight the need for more timely enforcement action.

The constabulary should develop a consistent performance framework that helps it to understand the context of its backlogs in active risk management system (ARMS) risk assessments, risk management plans and supervisory reviews. This means understanding a breakdown of risk and how far outside nationally set timescales the work is

The constabulary's performance reporting and data collection within its [management of sexual offenders and violent offenders](#) department needs improvement. The constabulary is unable to easily identify or supply details of backlogs of work in management of sexual offenders and violent offenders. As each individual officer self-regulates their work, a manager who needs information about the backlogs has to search manually through systems. We found evidence of managers doing this in only one of three teams.

Monthly meetings are held with senior leaders to discuss general overview of performance, and data is provided at bi-monthly performance meetings. Despite this, there has been no attempt to tackle the overdue work, particularly the high-risk cases.

The constabulary told us that in January 2023 there were 70 overdue visits to registered sex offenders. The oldest high-risk case was five months overdue. During this five-month period, the constabulary didn't carry out any other checks to make sure the registered sex offender was complying with their conditions. This could be rectified by adopting a better process to monitor these areas.

Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to how well the force manages offenders and suspects.

The constabulary understands the safeguarding purpose of bail but needs to make sure that breach of bail is monitored and recorded

During our inspection officers clearly demonstrated to us that they understood the requirements of the new [bail](#) legislation, under the [Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022](#). They understood the importance of the safeguarding aspect of bail. Bail and [released under investigation](#) data are discussed at the monthly performance meeting. However, during our inspection the constabulary was experiencing problems with its bail app. This has been highlighted on the joint Suffolk/Norfolk risk register. As a consequence, the current quality of the data is compromised as it doesn't have the scope and level of detail it should. Breach of bail isn't currently monitored or recorded by the constabulary.

We were also told that officers were sometimes failing to attend to deal with individuals returning for bail. Once it was highlighted, the constabulary addressed this matter and introduced a process to resolve it quickly. It was also introducing a new dashboard to track bail returns. The number of bail returns is now raised at daily management meetings to provide better oversight. There are plans for greater emphasis on police personnel within the custody command monitoring bail return dates and lapsed bail. It is too early to say whether these changes will have an effect in the long term.

The constabulary effectively monitors and reduces the number of outstanding suspects and wanted persons to prioritise those who pose the most risk

The constabulary prioritises and monitors outstanding suspects. It has a detailed and extensive policy concerning the circulation and management of wanted persons. This contains detailed guidance concerning the process and what is required from officers and supervisors. This process is generally well understood by the workforce.

Priority suspects (known as red vipers) are discussed at daily management meetings, where individuals are given the task of locating outstanding suspects. Local inspectors are held to account where suspects haven't been located.

There is a dashboard, which allows managers to monitor and review any outstanding and wanted suspects. This contains information such as how many days suspects have been outstanding and a harm score.

The constabulary monitors wanted persons. It is aware of how many [police national computer](#) wanted persons it has, and they are risk assessed. A monthly email is sent to inspectors in relation to the monitoring and audit of police national computer wanted persons, to make sure these things are fully understood and directing them on the necessary steps to take.

The constabulary effectively manages the risk posed to the public by registered sex offenders

We found evidence of the constabulary enforcing orders. In the year ending 31 March 2022, there were 120 [sexual harm prevention orders](#) issued in Suffolk, with 36 breaches recorded. But as stated earlier it could use prevention orders more, such as domestic violence protection notices and orders.

The constabulary has dedicated digital support officers who are able to interrogate electronic devices to prevent and detect crime. This includes their conducting device examinations during home visits. They are used well and provide specialist advice at the scene. This allows the constabulary early identification of breaches, new offending, and safeguarding concerns.

The constabulary makes sure timely and appropriate safeguarding is in place for potential victims

If early checks indicate a suspect has immediate access to children, a safeguarding referral is completed and information from partners such as social services is obtained. Processes have been improved within the MASH to make sure health services also provide information that may assist with determining whether children are identified as having contact with a suspect.

As stated earlier, the constabulary should prioritise the use of warrant and arrest powers in the internet child abuse investigation team. However, since the changes to bail legislation, the majority of those who are arrested by the internet child abuse investigation team are bailed with sexual harm prevention order-style conditions, usually until sufficient safeguarding is in place with children's services. This secures added protective factors.

We inspected Suffolk Constabulary during one of our recent NCPIs. In that inspection, we considered how the constabulary approaches online child abuse investigations and how it manages registered sex offenders. You can read our [NCPI report for Suffolk Constabulary on our website](#). During this PEEL inspection we found progress had been made against some of the recommendations; details are given within relevant sections of the report. A reinspection took place in July 2023. The findings will be published in the forthcoming NCPI post-inspection review report.

Disrupting serious organised crime

We now inspect [serious and organised crime \(SOC\)](#) on a regional basis, rather than inspecting each force individually in this area. This is so we can be more effective and efficient in how we inspect the whole SOC system, as set out in HM Government's SOC strategy.

Each force works with [regional organised crime units \(ROCU\)](#)s to tackle SOC. These units lead the regional response to SOC by providing access to specialist resources and assets to disrupt [organised crime groups](#) that pose the highest harm.

Through our SOC inspections, we seek to understand how well forces and ROCUs work in partnership. As a result, we now inspect ROCUs and their forces together and report on regional performance. Forces and ROCUs are now graded and reported on in regional SOC reports.

In August 2022, we inspected Suffolk Constabulary for how well it manages SOC and gave it a grade of 'good'. You can read the findings in the [PEEL 2021/22 inspection report](#).

Building, supporting and protecting the workforce

Adequate

Suffolk Constabulary is adequate at building and developing its workforce.

Areas for improvement

The constabulary could do more to demonstrate that it is using the data and learning available to inform action, producing clear, focused and evidence-based strategies and action plans and making sure progress is frequently monitored

We found that there was generally effective governance and data sharing in relation to areas such as well-being, for example, the people board and the comprehensive data pack submitted to their meeting. However, the constabulary hasn't demonstrated how it is using the information to identify patterns and trends and to make decisions to create improvements in these areas. The constabulary could do more to demonstrate that it is using the information to learn and to inform actions. It would benefit from more focused strategies and action plans in this area. These could be in relation to the progression of underrepresented groups, and both an inclusivity and a retention plan for new recruits. Action plans should be clear, focused and evidence-based. Progress on actions should be frequently reviewed and updated.

The constabulary should quickly implement the findings of its review of occupational health unit services, in order that the benefits offered both to the workforce and the organisation can be accelerated

There is some support available to those in specialist roles. For example, the multi-agency safeguarding hubs team receives clinical supervision. The safeguarding investigation unit receives psychological screening surveys, which are mandated and assessed by [occupational health services](#). And there is mandatory counselling for those working in the internet child abuse investigation team and management of sexual offenders and violent offenders. However, there needs to be consistent support for all those working in roles that pose a high risk to their well-being. The constabulary has identified all those in specialist roles and is developing a specialist roles policy in order to provide additional support to those people. Its prompt implementation will make sure the benefits to both the workforce and the organisation are obtained quickly.

The constabulary is currently carrying out a review of its occupational health service. It is a joint service between Suffolk and Norfolk. Officers told us that they have experienced delays in access to the service, but force data is showing that timeliness has improved. The constabulary told us that for January to March 2023, there was a wait of approximately 12 days between referral and appointment. We were made aware of recruitment and retention issues in relation to professional and clinical staff. The prompt adoption of the findings of the review that is underway is expected to provide the needed improvements, to benefit both the workforce and the organisation.

Innovative practice

The constabulary continues to support the families of new recruits to help them understand the issues of living with a police officer

The constabulary continues to support the families of new recruits to help them understand the issues of living with a police officer. It has built on the good practice highlighted in our last inspection report, where we found that families were invited to online evening sessions where issues of living with police officers were discussed. The constabulary has since extended this service to make sure families of new recruits feel well supported.

It has created a family well-being support pack for new starters, containing information on topics such as sleep and nutrition, how to support mental health, and top tips for living with a shift worker. This pack is given to all new police officers and staff. The constabulary has also produced a fun cartoon booklet, *Red Robber Raid*, to involve the young children of student officers and help them understand the work of the police.

The national police well-being service has acquired the permissions for the book to be part of their families workstream offering for all forces. The breadth of work carried out by the constabulary has also influenced the development of the national support tools available for forces around family support.

Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to how well the force builds and develops its workforce.

The constabulary provides a good range of preventative and supporting measures to its workforce, to improve physical and mental well-being

The workforce is aware of, and able to access, a good range of preventative and supportive measures to improve physical and mental well-being. The majority of staff and officers we spoke to felt well supported. The constabulary has well-being champions, who are trained to give mental health support. They also promote information on various topics including menopause, mental health, alcohol and drugs. The well-being champions provide valuable feedback to the constabulary on well-being matters.

The employee assistance programme is well regarded by the workforce. The service offers 24-hour access to telephone counselling, information services and short-term face-to-face counselling with a professional counsellor. It also provides access to solicitors, financial specialists and a range of health and well-being professionals.

The constabulary effectively develops and supports its first-line leaders to meet leadership standards

The constabulary has developed and introduced a sergeant course called stripes. It is available to all substantive, acting and temporary sergeants, but not mandatory. The course has also recently been opened up to all tutors and detectives. Due to the unprecedented number of new police officers joining, the constabulary has recently faced challenges finding sufficient experienced tutors. It is hoped that the course will provide the tutors with valuable learning and skills.

Stripes is focused on operational policing and is in line with the College of Policing first-line leaders' development programme. Subject matter experts are brought in to provide training in different areas. The course is varied and includes complaint handling, investigation standards, [critical incidents](#), managing risk and case building. The constabulary thinks it has led to better levels of first-line supervision, and that it has been a key component in securing improvements in investigation standards across the constabulary. Following its success, the constabulary has developed a 'pips' course to provide specific training for inspectors and to further enhance the development of supervisors. This is due to start later this year.

There are very clear pathways available in the constabulary, with other management courses, in addition to stripes, for newly promoted sergeants. There is a three-day refresher course for sergeants as part of their continuing professional development, which provides them with timely updates, advice and guidance concerning the investigation of crimes. 'Leading with CARE' is a continuum programme for leaders, unique to Suffolk. CARE stands for connectivity, accountability, risk assessment and energy. It is available to all police officers and staff and provides a blended range of packages across different levels of leadership. It includes online courses, workshops, masterclasses and peer support.

The workforce told us that supervisors are supportive and create environments of trust and confidence. Of respondents to the HMICFRS Suffolk PEEL workforce survey 2023, 88.4 percent agreed that their line manager models high standards of behaviour, while 92.9 percent agreed that their line manager creates an ethical working environment.

The Leading with CARE programme also provides supervisors with well-being training. The package includes information about understanding well-being – both physical and mental – and how to manage absence fairly and supportively. It also shows ways to spot early indicators of mental health conditions. As a result, supervisors told us they felt well equipped to manage their teams' well-being.

The constabulary effectively supports new recruits under the policing education qualifications framework, but this isn't replicated for all new recruits

The constabulary was a late adopter of the policing education qualifications framework (PEQF) and acknowledges that it has been able to learn from other forces. The constabulary decided that officers on PEQF wouldn't be included in team strength for over a year to make sure their training and studies weren't compromised. It needs to carefully consider the impact of decisions like this on operational establishment levels in future planning.

Supervisors within the constabulary and university lecturers work in partnership to make sure new recruits are well supported. New recruits are provided with a daily briefing and also have tripartite meetings with supervisors and lecturers to share information on individual progress. Any issues are raised and action taken if needed.

There are welfare officers who assist new recruits to settle into the role and to resolve any issues they may experience, and learning support officers for PEQF new recruits. There is also an induction evening for recruits prior to starting the course, which highlights welfare and work-life balance, and is also regarded as a reality check to better understand the clear demands of the role. The constabulary has a PEQF board, jointly run with Norfolk Constabulary, which focuses on thematic issues, such as training, protected learning time and abstractions. The personal welfare of students is also considered by this board.

However, this offer isn't replicated for all new recruits. In contrast to the PEQF students, some direct entry officers told us that the constabulary doesn't understand the demands and challenges they experience; for example, balancing workload demands while completing the mandatory portfolio. In our Suffolk PEEL workforce survey 2023, 84.2 percent of new recruits at Suffolk Constabulary agreed that their line manager nurtures an environment of trust and confidence. Although they feel well supported by their supervisors and peers, we were told that they don't feel well supported by the organisation.

The constabulary makes efforts to understand why new recruits may leave

The constabulary carries out surveys to understand the demands, challenges and retention of student officers. They are carried out at scheduled intervals, to understand their experiences at different times. A survey at the end of the probationary period gathers whether new recruits have started to consider their future prospects and where they'd like to progress in the future. All the surveys are analysed, and any influential factors and effects are explored as required. Trends are also reported to and reviewed by the equality, diversity and inclusion board. The constabulary says that, through the work of the positive action officer and inclusion hub, it makes sure development opportunities are afforded to underrepresented groups. The chief constable's new delivery plan 2023–2028 also aims to attract and nurture recruits in order to retain a professional and diverse workforce.

The constabulary offers some support for police officers and staff from underrepresented groups to develop and progress

The constabulary does offer some support for police officers and staff from underrepresented groups to develop and progress. To date this has mainly focused on female officers, because the constabulary hasn't been successful in attracting as many female officers at this level as it would have liked. The number of female officers at senior levels has increased. Through the Suffolk Association of Women in Policing, the constabulary offers interaction and mentoring to all female officers who are eligible to apply for sergeant or inspector promotion. This helps the constabulary to understand the barriers or reasons preventing female officers from applying for promotion. It is also an opportunity for the constabulary to provide consistent messages on career progression.

We were told about a programme of shadowing opportunities at chief officer level for inspectors. Four officers (three of them female) have taken part so far, with the objective of making sure more underrepresented groups take part in future. The constabulary has a positive action officer, whose role is in part to support candidates from underrepresented groups through the promotion process. All candidates from underrepresented groups who are eligible to apply for promotion are now contacted. If they wish, they can be allocated a mentor to support them through the process. The constabulary would benefit from carrying out a self-assessment to better understand the barriers to progression for under-represented groups, and thereafter to produce an action plan to make sure progress is monitored.

The constabulary needs to make sure that the professional development reviews/appraisals process is effective and valued by its officers and staff

All police officers and staff should be having PDRs involving a series of conversations where, together, individuals and their line managers plan and subsequently review their professional development over a 12-month period. These should be seen as effective and valued by the workforce.

The constabulary has made improvements in this area since the last inspection by introducing a new electronic PDR system. There is good governance and monitoring of the process. Although the constabulary has promoted the new process to the workforce, our Suffolk PEEL workforce survey 2023 found that of those who have had a PDR in the last 12 months, only 54 percent (208 of 385 respondents) agreed that these were an effective tool in their development, while 63.4 percent (244 of 385 respondents) agreed that they value the process of these reviews. Inspectors were told that the PDR process is mostly valued by individuals who wish to be developed and are interested in moving and/or progression. While the open rates for the ePDRs showed positive uptake, the completion rates were disappointing. We hope to see improvements once the new process is fully developed.

Vetting and counter-corruption

We now inspect how forces deal with vetting and counter-corruption differently. This is so we can be more effective and efficient in how we inspect this high-risk area of police business.

Corruption in forces is tackled by specialist units, designed to proactively target corruption threats. Police corruption is corrosive and poses a significant risk to public trust and confidence. There is a national expectation of standards and how they should use specialist resources and assets to target and arrest those that pose the highest threat.

Through our new inspections, we seek to understand how well forces apply these standards. As a result, we now inspect forces and report on national risks and performance in this area. We now grade and report on forces' performance separately.

Suffolk Constabulary's vetting and counter-corruption inspection hasn't yet been completed. We will update our website with our findings and the separate report once the inspection is complete.

Leadership and force management

Adequate

Suffolk Constabulary's leadership and management is adequate.

Areas for improvement

The constabulary should assure itself that it has effective governance of its strategic plans. This will make sure that all force plans have clear ownership and it is aware of how its plans are progressing

The constabulary needs to make sure that it has sufficient oversight of force plans so it can monitor their progress to make sure they are realised. This would also provide the constabulary with an awareness and clear understanding of any issues that arise so that appropriate action can be taken.

For example, during our 2020/21 inspection, we found the constabulary hadn't created a central database to record workforce skills and capabilities but was intending to develop its own bespoke skills database. Unfortunately, during our most recent inspection, we found that despite having a plan to create this database, the constabulary had made little progress and still doesn't fully understand the capability and capacity of its workforce.

Until recently the constabulary didn't have an ICT strategy and there was no governance structure in place to oversee its ICT requirement. Given the importance of digital, data and technology in providing an effective and efficient police service, a robust strategic governance structure would have identified and addressed this gap much earlier.

The constabulary has made some investments in information technology that have provided new digital processes to help reduce sources of internal demand. But there are a number of processes across the constabulary that remain inefficient

The constabulary isn't currently making the most of the technology it has available to help it increase productivity, and this is restricting progress. We were encouraged to see some use of digital solutions, such as Power BI, which can replace manual and time-consuming processes with a fully automated way to present data and management information. However, currently the constabulary lacks the capacity needed to fully develop this technology and benefit from the efficiencies it offers.

The constabulary should also seek other opportunities to automate existing manual processes. For example, robotics can replace some manual tasks that are repetitive and can be completed more efficiently using technology. This will help the constabulary increase productivity and workforce capacity and meet the demand challenges it faces.

Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to leadership and management.

The constabulary has an effective strategic planning framework, making sure it tackles what is important locally and nationally

The constabulary has developed a new strategic delivery plan 2023–28, which considers Suffolk PCC's [Police and Crime Plan 2022–25](#) and provides the constabulary with a focus on shared priorities. This was introduced during our inspection, so not all force plans and performance frameworks were clearly aligned, but the constabulary is planning to undertake this work where appropriate.

Overall, the constabulary has an effective evidence-based performance framework that uses a range of key performance indicators to measure performance, and this provides governance boards with the information they need to support decision-making and the provision of effective policing services. We saw evidence of the constabulary and PCC working together and interacting with the public in a number of ways. An example is force performance meetings that members of the public can submit questions to and attend to hear the answers and updates on how the constabulary is performing.

There is a good level of investment in leadership

The constabulary is investing in its leaders and has developed a range of training programmes to provide them with the skills they need to be effective. It has already introduced the stripes course for sergeants and is developing a similar course for inspectors. This is supported by the Leading with CARE framework, which sets expectations, plus there is a well-supported mentoring and coaching programme in place across the constabulary. We were encouraged to see this included 'reverse mentoring', where senior leaders are mentored by those working at more junior levels to secure a good understanding of constabulary operations at a tactical level. This supports more informed strategic decision-making.

The new constabulary strategic delivery plan is clearly focused on behavioural priorities and is designed to help create a positive workplace culture. The constabulary has recognised that people can work effectively from any location and has sought to be an attractive employer by developing its modern workforce programme in partnership with Norfolk. This includes a clear framework for hybrid working practices that clearly defines mutual expectations. It provides leaders with a clear structure and guidance to support them in leading teams who are working remotely.

The constabulary has also recognised the need to recruit external talent and has attracted a number of officers and staff into senior roles, who have brought valuable experience and new thinking. This will help to make the constabulary more innovative.

The constabulary understands future demand and is planning to make sure it has the resources to meet future needs

The constabulary has an effective [force management statement](#) that makes good use of data and information to understand current demand and to help it prepare for future demand and resourcing. The constabulary has also been trialling the use of predictive software called Poliscop. This helps it to forecast future changes and model the effect of allocating additional resources to predict the effect on demand.

However, the constabulary needs to develop its understanding of where internal demand is generated by inefficient working practices and take action to address this, which will allow it to be more productive. For example, four years ago, the constabulary spent £25,000 on the Evidence Based Investigative Tool, software that helps to review volume crimes by identifying crimes for investigation based on solvability, but only recently made use of it as part of a pilot.

The constabulary collaborates to improve services and has a strong focus on continually evaluating the benefits

The constabulary has a good track record of collaborations. As a smaller force, it recognises that it can provide some services more cost-effectively by working with others. It works particularly well with Norfolk Constabulary and shares several services, including strategic, business and operational services, which produces various performance reports. Suffolk and Norfolk collaborate on estates, vehicle fleet, and finance, providing a more resilient joint service and improving value for money. The constabulary also works with other forces as part of the regional seven force change network on joint procurement services. It has a rigorous approach to monitoring outcomes and reviewing the ongoing benefits of its joint working arrangements.

The constabulary's financial plans, including its investment programme, are affordable and will support it to continue to meet future demands

The constabulary shows effective financial management. It makes the best use of the finance it has available, and its financial plans are both ambitious and sustainable.

In the year ending 31 March 2023, Suffolk Constabulary received a total of £149.6m in funding. Suffolk Constabulary received 43.6 percent of its total funding through council tax precept, representing £65m. The PCC increased precept for the year 2023/24 by £14.94 per band D property. This extra funding was allocated to the CCR transformation programme and introducing a rapid video response to victims of domestic abuse.

The constabulary shows effective financial management of the funds it has available to provide efficient police services. It applies an annual outcome-based budgeting process to make sure that resources are used appropriately and to best effect. There is a clear link to force plans and priorities, which is reflected in the PCC's plans. The constabulary is investing in its services to bring about improvements in performance and outcomes. Planned capital expenditure for 2023/24 amounts to £4.6m, including planned investment in ICT in support of the constabulary's longer-term ambition to be more efficient.

The financial forecasts within the mid-term financial plan are based on realistic assumptions about future funding and expenditure. The constabulary needs to make savings and has identified the areas where £2.5m will be made during 2023/24. It is confident that the required savings are achievable. The constabulary holds general reserves close to 3 percent of its net revenue budget, which is considered prudent.

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