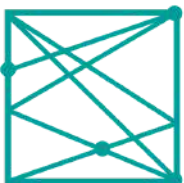


NORTHUMBRIA PCC CORONAVIRUS RESPONSE



NORTHUMBRIA
**POLICE & CRIME
COMMISSIONER**

violence
reduction
unit

Improving lives to prevent crime

CORONAVIRUS RESPONSE

The Coronavirus pandemic has created an unprecedented challenge to the way we live and work, and brought with it new expectations of our police force.

As your Police and Crime Commissioner I want to set out how my office has adapted and the changes put in place to ensure Northumbria Police are able to meet your priorities and the force is held to account on your behalf.

Crime is changing as a result of the outbreak, while at the same time our relationship with the police faces a new test in an era of Government-ordered lockdown. The public rightly want to be assured that the force is prepared for any changes as this crisis progresses through to recovery, and that those plans are flexible enough to deal with an increase in social restrictions should the recovery plan be set back by further outbreaks.

We are going to see continued social distancing rules even after the immediate lockdown phase ends, and, yes, that will mean changes to the crimes we see on our streets and a need for our police to respond alongside our communities.

This is my emergency plan to ensure the police have everything they need, that our neighbourhoods are supported and that you can have confidence in your force to serve you in difficult times.

**KIM MCGUINNESS,
NORTHUMBRIA PCC**

PCC RESPONSE

I continue to work with the Chief Constable to ensure your local priorities are delivered by your police force. In my office, working from home arrangements have been put in place and it remains business as usual in terms of the service you can expect.

The current Police and Crime Plan is still in place, and the Chief Constable will be held to account for performance against this, alongside additional measures in light of the pandemic, as set out below.

From the start of the outbreak it was clear many organisations would struggle to cope, especially charities and community groups that support victims of crime and work to prevent crime locally. To help lessen this impact, I brought forward my annual community fund to create a new Coronavirus Response Fund, providing more than £320,000 to help these organisations adapt.

As PCC I work daily with a range of organisations, from local authorities to voluntary and community groups, to deliver against my police and crime priorities. I work also with the criminal justice system, leading our Local Criminal Justice Board to ensure an efficient and effective criminal justice system.

At this challenging time, I will specifically focus on the projects and service areas listed below.

- Ensuring young people and others at risk of entering a life of crime are given an alternative by setting out and delivering on the plan for the second year of my successful Violence Reduction Unit.
- Supporting and engaging with partners working on front line response alongside the Local Resilience Forum to manage and recover from the effect of this emergency
- Holding regular virtual Local Criminal Justice Board meetings with Northumbria Police, Crown Prosecution Service, Her Majesty's Courts Service and others to understand and reduce the impact of the emergency and retain public confidence in the Criminal Justice System.
- Tackling issues specifically arising from the crisis such as support for Domestic Abuse and sexual violence services to make sure the right help is in place locally and that the Government is aware of local needs.

PCC RESPONSE

I understand through these difficult times that local residents may have questions for Northumbria Police or concerns that require further information from the police. My office works closely with Northumbria Police Complaints Team and the Professional Standards Department. We are keen to ensure that any issues continue to be addressed as quickly as possible.

Complaints about Northumbria Police sit under the remit of the Chief Constable, with some having the right to request a review of the outcome, previously known as an appeal, through my office. Normally these requests must be received within 28 days, but for the duration of the current crisis this has been extended to 42 days.

The lockdown presents long-term challenges, especially in how we reach out to young people and vulnerable people at risk of crime. My office has funded services which are making lifechanging differences here, and it is vitally important that their work is supported.

The force will be held to account for how it responds to the needs of these groups, for example in identifying and supporting victims of domestic abuse.

Responding to the changing nature of policing brings with it a new financial cost to police forces. Northumbria Police are recording spend on activity specifically related to this crisis, and we will where possible claim government funding to minimise the direct impact on Northumbria's council tax payers.

This is one aspect of my national lobbying. I have also worked with other PCCs nationally to lobby the Home Office for increased availability of Personal Protective Equipment for officers and staff, and for regular access to Coronavirus testing. Our police force has been on the front line of the outbreak, and they and their families need to know they are as safe as possible at work.

It also remains important that Northumbria Police has a workforce that matches our needs. That's why, as well as monitoring staffing changes during the outbreak, myself and the Chief Constable will progress the police recruitment plans. On your behalf, I will work with the police on preventing crime and fighting crime.

OVERSIGHT OF NORTHUMBRIA POLICE

The nature of policing and crime will inevitably shift and change in the response to and recovery from this national emergency, and so too must the public oversight of the force. Both the force's response to the outbreak and my scrutiny of the force must be proportionate and effective.

My role has been to ensure that the force has the resources it needs to respond, and to monitor use of new powers handed to the police.

One of the biggest impacts of the virus has been the Government order to stay at home, and the policing enforcement of this. In Northumbria, we are committed to the principle of policing by consent, and I am reassured that Northumbria Police's approach is one based on explaining the circumstances for the intervention and encouraging individuals to comply with the Government request. There are going to be times when enforcement is necessary, but I am confident the force is only turning to these when persuasion fails. After all, we all have the same interests in mind, to stay safe and prevent deaths from Covid-19.

At the start of the outbreak I moved to daily updates from the Chief Constable on the force response, so that I can remain in the best position possible to hold the police to account on your behalf and to identify any matters I believe should be subject to more formal scrutiny. The matters discussed include:

- The force's response to the pandemic, particularly around resourcing and public-confidence
- Enforcement activity associated with the 'stay-at-home' restrictions and assurance of standards relating to legitimacy
- Rates and response to anti-social behaviour concerns and assurance to communities
- Adapting to emerging crime trends
- Responding to the heightened risk to domestic abuse during lockdown
- The impact on custody suites and prisoner handling activities
- Abstraction/sickness amongst officers and staff and the associated resilience on staffing levels/capacity
- Updates on progress towards recruiting new and replacement police officers
- Plans for communicating with the public as this crisis progresses and we move into recovery.

OVERSIGHT OF NORTHUMBRIA POLICE

I also seek regular assurance on the concerns raised by communities through social media and my complaints process.

My decision-making and scrutiny meetings ensure 'business as usual' and I will publish records of key decisions ensuring transparency.

I will also support the Chief Constable to plan for recovery and how policing services will be affected by future changes in the lockdown situation. I will work with the force on plans to direct financial resources to areas that are needed most over the coming months.

We know that overall crime rates nationally, and locally, have fallen as a result of the stay at home orders. I am confident that despite these changes, Northumbria Police remain focused on targeting key areas. For example, it has been reassuring to see continued efforts to target the County Lines drugs gangs which seek to make inroads in our region. Now is not the time to lessen our commitment to tackling violent crime, and the public can be proud of their force's resolve in this.

But when these restrictions are relaxed or lifted it is reasonable to expect we will see an increase in some crime types and I will remain in dialogue with the Chief Constable for updates in relation to this post-lockdown planning. These concerns will also need to be raised and discussed with the Local Criminal Justice Board as the justice system itself prepares for both a new way of working in the medium term alongside any rise in crime as restrictions are eased.

Recovery plans must also reflect the need to get the police back to a normal footing as soon as possible, allowing our longer term aims of increasing public safety to progress. These plans will need to include recruitment and training of new and replacement officers.

I will also play a role in working with others, including local authority leaders, to oversee the economic and social recovery of the region, recognising the potential risk of unemployment and economic harm on increases in crime. For example, the community services which support those most impacted on by the economic downturn are likely to be affected by the virus for a long while and recovery will require us to adapt just as we have during the first wave of outbreak changes.

SUPPORTING VICTIMS OF CRIME

As the Police and Crime Commissioner I fund organisations which support victims and prevent crime, and my office is working hard to ensure local services have what they need to be able to function.

As well as supporting victims of crime, I have had a particular focus on the impact of the outbreak on two groups, young people and those at risk of domestic abuse.

My Violence Reduction Unit will fund and work with organisations dedicated to giving young people an alternative to crime, and with the Coronavirus changes likely to our lifestyles likely to go on for some time, it is important we do not abandon this focus.

The VRU is developing plans that allows for much needed community safety services to be delivered in new ways during these restrictions. We are all having to adapt to this new 'normal', but that is easier for some rather than others. Many of our communities rely on the support network around them, and we will ensure this is provided and extended to all who need it.

This covers everyone - from the young people who are being supported digitally by the Foundation of Light and Newcastle United Foundation, to the individuals having their meals delivered by Family Gateway. We are supporting everyone that we can to play their part in ensuring that longterm crime rates come down further and the support network which enables this to happen, is accessible to all.

I am working closely with partner agencies and my advisory groups to help shape national thinking on a range of issues, including the new Victims Code of Practice and how the government can best protect places of worship from hate crime and discrimination.

I have also accessed additional funding from the Home Office to support children who are affected by Domestic Abuse and will work with DA service providers to make sure this reaches the children who need support.

Domestic abuse is a crime that thrives on secrecy, and the stay at home restrictions make this a bigger threat than ever. I have provided emergency funding to support services, and hold regular discussion with support groups to feedback to the police.

SUPPORTING VICTIMS OF CRIME

I fund victim services in Northumbria including Victims First Northumbria that help victims of crime to cope with and recover from their experience and in some cases provide support through the criminal justice process. Victim services can no longer provide face to face counselling and support to conform to social distancing and also risk higher than usual levels of sickness meaning that they may need additional funding to manage this situation. I have provided an Emergency Response Fund and put the views of local organisations to the Ministry of Justice, making clear the needs of services in Northumbria.

Through weekly contact I receive the following information which helps me ensure that there is support for victims of crime at this time.

- An understanding of any change in the level or type of demand for victims services
- Information about victims services that need additional resilience at this time including staffing costs and IT equipment to enable counselling and support to be provided remotely
- How local service delivery is being affected and some of the great solutions that local providers have come up with to maintain contact with victims of crime and provide ongoing support which I can share with the policing minister and government departments about to inform the national response to victim's needs

All services are able to take referrals from victims of crime without reporting to the police and referrals from Northumbria Police to service providers are unaffected.

FOR MORE INFORMATION



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