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**violence  
reduction  
unit**

## ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20

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# Introduction

Since taking office as your Police and Crime Commissioner, there have been many successes and lots of challenges thrown in too. The best part of this job though, the real honour, is meeting people, listening to them and coming away inspired to bring about change and get things done. I really am grateful to be in a position where this is possible. I'm also grateful to everyone who is on board and has been working incredibly hard in support of my long-term goal of improving lives to prevent crime. Everything we have achieved together so far is detailed in this report but a few highlights are:

We've set up Northumbria's Violence Reduction Unit and are seeing first-hand the impact of projects like bringing the Knife Angel to the region, which has left a lasting impression on thousands of young people. This year up to March 2020, with a real focus on the issue, we've seen a reduction in knife crime by 18 per cent which shows things are moving in the right direction.

We've put a plan into action to get hundreds more police officers out on our streets by the end of 2020, in fact hundreds of officers have already joined our force this year.

Nobody expected Covid 19. But my office has been doing everything in our power to support people. I set up a Coronavirus Response Fund to get more than £300,000 in crucial funding out to some of our wonderful charity organisations who were struggling to keep up their work supporting victims and communities in light of the Covid-19 pandemic.

So, despite recent challenges, there really has been so much good work happening and there's lots to build on. It's going to be another busy year ahead, so bring it on. I hope it's a safe, healthy and productive one for everyone, and thank you for your continued support.



**Kim McGuinness**

Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner

# The year at a glance

The last 12 months have seen impressive work from Northumbria Police towards the priorities you set them. Yes, there are challenges and there are areas where improvement is needed, and I will continue to hold the Chief Constable to account for this. But overall our region remains a safe and welcoming one.

## The 12 months to March 2020

- A new neighbourhood policing model was launched which involves a change in shift patterns for officers and staff. Neighbourhoods will continue to be safer with a dedicated neighbourhood policing team for all areas in rural and urban communities.
- Fewer people have suffered as a result of anti-social behaviour with a reduction of 2,648 incidents compared to the previous 12 months. But we know there is more to do. 22% of people surveyed said that anti-social behaviour is a very or fairly big problem in their neighbourhood. I'm working with the Chief Constable on bringing this down.
- Fewer victims of crime. Overall reported crime fell to 147,491 incidents compared to 158,084 for the previous 12 months.
- The majority of crime has reduced by 4% (6,932 fewer crimes), serious crime by 6% (459 fewer crimes) and major crime by 14% (57 fewer crimes), with knife crime offences reducing by 18%. (166 fewer crimes).
- Crime was also down for burglary by 12% (1,060 fewer crimes) and theft and handling by 10% (3,324 fewer crimes).
- Domestic abuse and sexual violence remains a priority for my office and Northumbria Police and the percentage of domestic abuse victims who are confident to report further abuse to the police is at 93%.
- Communities in the region remain confident in Northumbria Police. The force remains first for all public confidence measures that are surveyed nationally, which includes; public confidence, reliability, respect, fair treatment and community understanding.
- The risk of being a victim of crime in Northumbria is the lowest in the country (5.4%). And the risk of household crime in Northumbria is the 5th lowest in the country (6.2%).



# Preventing crime

## Violence Reduction Unit

Ours is a safe region, but if we're going to keep it that way we need to target our resources and make preventing crime as big a priority as fighting crime.

That's why I set up a Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) based on the belief that if we improve lives we can prevent crime. Yes, a big part of crime reduction involves supporting our police to arrest criminals.

But it's no surprise that after ten years of austerity and the closure of youth centres and community services, crime went up. I've used two instalments of VRU funding totalling £3.2m to ensure we reverse that trend.

I worked with others to create a response strategy which will guide us in making changes in four key areas - youth diversion to give young people an alternative, reducing offending by targeting known repeat offenders, working with families and connecting communities. We've also matched that investment with another £2m in surge funding for the police to respond to violent crime and the results have been impressive.



## Over the last 12 months

There has been an 18% reduction in knife-enabled serious violence across the Northumbria force area, from 964 offences to 794.

The number of young victims of knife-enabled serious violence, under the age of 25, has reduced by 23%, from 254 to 195.

The police have removed 6,498 knives from Northumbria streets.

The Violence Reduction Unit is backed by a five year plan which, if the Government continues to fund it, would support our police force to make real long term change in violent crime levels. If Government matches our crime prevention ambitions we will be able to:

- Provide more opportunities for young people to access activities and services that steer them away from crime.
- Reduce the risk of vulnerable individuals being drawn into violence and addiction and make it harder for others to take advantage.
- Prevent offenders reoffending.

**“It’s just because...they drink a lot.”**

If you’re worried, don’t make excuses, act.

## **Domestic abuse is everyone’s business**

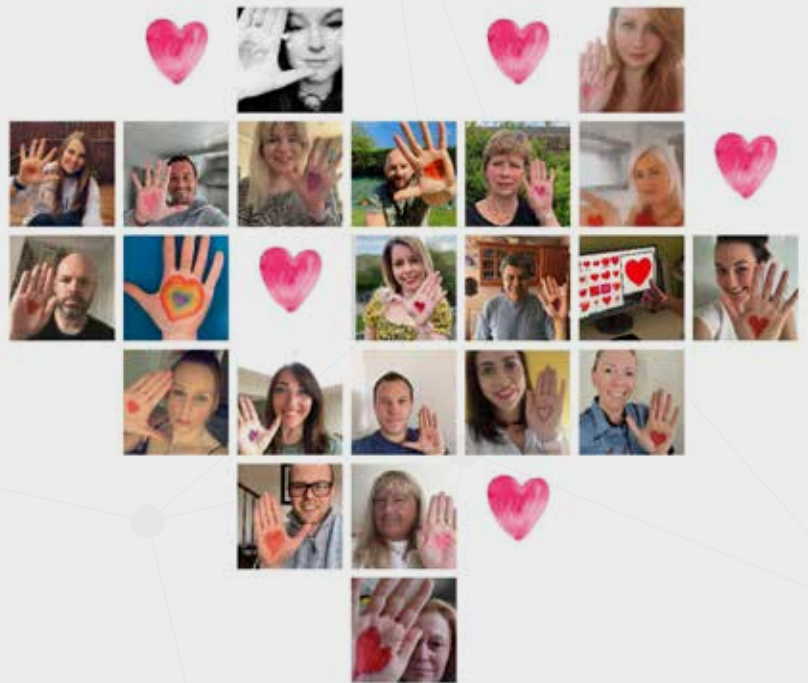
You might think it’s none of your business, or worry you’ll say the wrong thing, but now more than ever, we need to keep each other safe.

If you’re worried about someone:

- **Be safe:** remember - social media, phone and emails might be monitored. Don’t confront the abuser.
- **Be kind:** listen, make suggestions, not demands.
- **Be there:** be understanding and available.

- **Get help:** contact organisations overleaf for support and information.
- **Call 101** if you are concerned about a friend or loved one, or that someone’s behaviour is abusive.
- **Call 999** if you think there’s an immediate danger.

**If you or someone you know is experiencing domestic abuse, then these organisations overleaf can help.**



### **Domestic abuse and sexual violence**

Domestic abuse continues to be a key priority and I’m pleased that we have seen a 3% increase in victims reporting domestic abuse, reassuring us that people feel more confident in reporting this crime. The commitment to training frontline officers to respond to domestic abuse has also seen the successful conviction of domestic abuse perpetrators rise to 73%.

This year we’ve backed the ‘Domestic Abuse: Whole System Approach next steps’ project to look at better ways to effectively reach domestic abuse victims. Our findings have been shared nationally and we have had an amazing response from police forces across England who have praised our work and implemented our best practice recommendations.

And working with the NHS we located Domestic Abuse Health Advocates in hospitals and GP surgeries across Northumbria. The success of this role has been described as invaluable and is now a permanent feature within these settings. More than 1000 staff have been trained by the advocates and over 500 champions have been recruited.

As well as awarding funding to local services supporting survivors of sexual violence in 2019/20, my office also took a lead on issues affecting victims nationally – excessive mobile phone and personal data usage in criminal trials, the accessibility of counselling pre-trial, and the need for independent legal representation for sexual violence survivors. In addition, the first pilot of independent legal representation in our jurisdiction was completed in Northumbria in March 2020.

There’s been great progress in tackling domestic abuse and sexual violence, but we know there is still much more to be done. My office will continue this hard work and develop this priority further in the next Police and Crime Plan.

# Fighting crime

## Recruitment

Recruiting new police officers is key to tackling crime. While the Government set strict allocations for Northumbria as part of the first wave of its national recruitment drive, it is clear these did not go far enough to offset the more than 1,100 officers lost to the force since 2010. These Government targets also do not account for the natural turnover in officers departing or retiring from the force.

That's why I approved a force budget that goes beyond the Government targets and makes sure we are replacing as well as recruiting new officers. Our recruitment campaign has been a phenomenal success. Since March some 218 new officers are in uniform and dedicating their career to keeping us safe. The Chief Constable and I both agree that keeping our neighbourhoods safe is the first priority when it comes to allocating these new recruits.



## Anti-social behaviour

Over the last year, we've welcomed a fall in anti-social behaviour throughout the region. We've seen many successful crackdown operations, which have been well received by residents, businesses and partners.

There were **46,813** recorded anti-social behaviour incidents; a reduction of **2,648** incidents compared to the previous 12 months.

The percentage of ASB victims who would be confident to report further incidents has increased to **82%**.

There are, however, some neighbourhoods where there are still concerns and we need to continue focusing our efforts on why this is the case, how we can put a stop to unwanted behaviours and crucially, how we can prevent them from happening again.

Right now we have to keep a watchful eye on our anti-social behaviour data so that we can fully understand the impact the Coronavirus pandemic has had and how things are taking shape in the months that lie ahead. The changes in people's movements and activities will have undoubtedly impacted the opportunities available for potential offenders to commit some types of anti-social behaviour. The breaching of imposed restrictions and increased time in the home will have led to other figures like nuisance noise growing.

Neighbourhood police officers in the east end of Newcastle, for example, have been working closely with the Byker Community Trust, as part of a Thriving Byker Strategy designed to steer young people away from crime and disorder. The initiative has resulted in anti-social behaviour plummeting by nearly 80 per cent.

I also secured funding to transform unused space at Wallsend Customer First Centre, to provide a new base for police and youth workers in North Tyneside. This new facility is about supporting the community, helping to improve life chances for young people in the area and tackling anti-social behaviour.



## Rural crime

In Northumberland and rural parts of the region we have seen some really successful operations cracking down on theft, illegal poaching and wildlife crime. We've also benefited from the support of our excellent rural policing volunteers, who have helped make a real difference.

With things being tough during the Coronavirus pandemic, rural communities were a great concern of mine – they can feel isolated and out of help's reach at the best of times. With this in mind, we actively reached out to struggling rural charities and encouraged them to bid to our Coronavirus Response Fund. We recognised the importance of keeping some of these community lifelines up and running and I was pleased to be able to help. Those benefiting included domestic abuse support services and youth services, important provisions which must not be forgotten about in our rural communities.

Our rural communities need the support of a well-funded dedicated police force, and that's what I will be campaigning for in the year ahead.



## Cyber-Crime

Cyber-crime is a big part of police work and it's growing. It's not the 'behind-the-scenes' anymore, it's very much at the forefront of investigations. An ever-increasing amount of police time and resource is investigating crimes that are happening online – grooming, organised crime, fraud, hacking and so on.

We've set up a dedicated cyber unit to tackle these crimes and earlier this year I set out a multi-million investment plan to make Northumbria Police 'fit for the future'. New equipment, bigger cybercrime teams and more digital investigators are central to this long-term plan, and work is well under-way to bring this to life.

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# Improving Lives



**Strong communities help police prevent and fight crime, and I'm proud to have continued to support good causes with the Community Fund.**

In 2019/20, £100,000 was made available with the focus being tackling hate crime, reducing anti-social behaviour and increasing community confidence. Projects I have backed include:

- Sunderland Bangladesh International Centre offering information, advice and guidance to individuals on issues of crime/reporting alongside community events designed to improve relations with the police.
- Killingworth Community Consortium opened a youth café that allows young people a safe place where they can socialise and enjoy structured activities. Within the youth café young people are made aware of the impact and effects of anti-social behaviour on the community.
- Whitley Bay and Jesmond Street Pastors were each awarded £1600 to assist them in their work to help and support vulnerable people in the night time economy with increased recruitment of volunteers and extra patrols during key times such as events and bank holidays.

My Supporting Victims Fund continues to strengthen the overall offer of support to victims in Northumbria and improve the scope of specialist services available to our most vulnerable and priority victims.

To ensure that our region's victims access a smooth, efficient and appropriate service, I have continued to commission Victims First Northumbria as the primary victim support service, working closely with Northumbria Police. They are able to identify the needs of victims and refer them into one of the specialist commissioned services to provide the required support.

Overall funding has allowed the commissioning of 35 specialist services to support 17,438 victims here in Northumbria.

Alongside this work, a new neighbourhood policing model has been launched, which changed shift patterns and increased capacity for Neighbourhood Policing Teams. This has allowed officers to be more proactive in how they look after victims and target offenders. It's also led to improved satisfaction, a reduction in incidents and an overall safer feeling within the community.

## Hate Crime

In line with the national picture, we've seen hate crime rise over the last year. Our fight against hate certainly continues and I feel more impassioned than ever to bring about positive change. Building on the over-arching theme of prevention, Northumbria Police has done some good work through the Hate Crime Tension Monitoring group, where local issues are identified and we try to step in with early intervention work to reduce further offending.

Our engagement teams have had a real focus on building their relationships with LGBTQ+, disabled, Eastern European and emerging communities. It's especially important to try and reach out to those who are perhaps uncomfortable contacting the police. This is also where our nationally acclaimed Hate Crime Champions scheme comes in. The scheme, a direct response to concerns about under-reporting, is about raising awareness of how unacceptable hate is and how, together, we can help put a stop to it. Champions are there to make getting help easier and I have ambitions to ensure we have them everywhere. Wherever you were born, whoever you worship, whoever you love - we all belong in Northumbria. I will continue to bang the drum for equality.



## Supporting Victims

Victims of crime need a criminal justice system that works for them, and that's my aim when chairing the Local Criminal Justice Board.

The criminal justice system is complex and involves a number of agencies, none of whom have sole responsibility for the whole system, end to end. Partnership working is therefore key to making a difference and it is the job of the board to bring together key agencies who can work together to improve the whole system.

We don't underestimate the scale of this challenge. All partner agencies continue to operate in a climate of reduced resources but increased demand and during the latter part of this year everyone had to respond to developing COVID-19 pandemic which has had a significant impact on all areas of our lives including the criminal justice system. Partnership working is therefore key to delivering our vision and as a partnership, we fully recognise the need to work collaboratively to achieve the aims of the criminal justice system as a whole.

## Funding your police force

For 2019/20 the force received £280.659 million to fund crime fighting and public safety. The table below sets out spending based on 2019/20 budget.

Last year I agreed a funding plan - a medium term financial strategy that will ensure the force is fit for the future. I backed the Chief Constable with a raft of investment measures that will see more police on the streets, new equipment for officers and the expansion of cyber-crime teams.

POLICING SERVICES ALLOCATION	RESOURCE
Local Policing	48.1%
Public Protection	9.3%
Investigations	10.4%
Dealing with the Public	9.3%
Criminal Justice Arrangements	6.0%
Intelligence	6.8%
Operational Support	5.0%
Roads Policing	2.3%
Investigative Support	0.5%
Police and Crime Commissioner (includes public insurances etc)	0.5%

## How your money will be spent in the coming years.

Around £4.7m has been allocated to hire additional officers to take the force above the national recruitment targets, ensuring a faster replacement of the 1,100 officers lost to the force as a result of ten years of austerity. This is on top of the £5m earmarked by Government for new Northumbria Police officers.

Additional crime fighting investment will mean the force has additional resources to prevent violent crime, take on organised crime and tackle 'County line' drugs gangs, while making sure anti-social behaviour is tackled head-on in communities.

Alongside the frontline increase comes a major new IT system update. The new technology is seen as essential if the force is to remain up-to-date and able to respond fast to emerging incidents. Around £3m will be used for more skills training and specialists staff alongside the complete overhaul of the force's outdated IT system.

The latest force budget also includes a £600,000 increase in the cyber-crime and fraud section.

This additional investment package comes on top of the day-to-day budget funds available to meet policing requirements

I have also agreed a £16m investment package in vehicles and equipment, including body armour, body-worn video and Tasers.

# Contact details

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## Northumbria Violence Reduction Unit

I now have a dedicated Facebook page on the work of my Northumbria Violence Reduction Unit - you can like it here - [@NorthumbriaVRU](https://www.facebook.com/NorthumbriaVRU)