

Police and Crime Panel

6 April 2023

Police Recruitment and Vetting Processes

Report of the Police and Crime Commissioner



1. Purpose

- 1.1. To inform members of the Police and Crime Panel of the current police recruitment and vetting processes.

2. Vetting

- 2.1. Vetting is a fundamental aspect of the pre-employment process within Durham Constabulary. Vetting is regarded as the 'first line of defence' with recruitment and posting dependent on the information obtained. All employees (officers and staff) are subject to vetting prior to the commencement of employment. Contractors and volunteers are also subject to the vetting regime.
- 2.2. Vetting status must be retained during an individual's employment or service with Durham Constabulary. All individuals are subject to routine checks and renewed vetting during their employment.
- 2.3. Vetting standards are determined by the College of Policing's Authorised Professional Practice (APP). The APP sets out the standards and process to be followed. This defines the standard to be met, the work to be done and the relevant expiry or renewal triggers.
- 2.4. Durham Constabulary's vetting team is part of the Counter Corruption and Vetting Unit within the Professional Standards Department (PSD). This has been the long term structure and close links between the two have been cited by the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) as good practice.
- 2.5. This structure was responsible for Durham Constabulary being one of the first forces nationally to implement full new vetting on all transferees in January 2018. APP allowed for acceptance of vetting status between forces but counter corruption working groups identified risk in this category, so Durham moved outside of guidance to undertake this additionality. This has now been adopted nationally and incorporated in new APP.

- 2.6. The unit is overseen by the Head of PSD (DCI), who reports to the Superintendent Head of People Services. PSD (vetting) is part of People Services within Durham Constabulary. People Services comprises PSD, Human Resources, and Learning and Development. A Monthly meeting is held between the Head of PSD and the Deputy Chief Constable with vetting being a standing item. Scrutiny is also provided through the Strategic People Board, where vetting data including ethnicity data is supplied. Ethnicity data is part of the examination of disproportionality to ensure legitimate decision making.
- 2.7. This holistic approach to 'people' with the opportunity to share information has been identified as good practice in the recent HMICFRS report into vetting, dated 2nd November 2022. Quality of; recruitment standards, training, and monitoring work all align with vetting which delivers a more cohesive and vigorous approach to vetting.
- 2.8. Durham Constabulary were subject to a Vetting HMICFRS PEEL inspection in June 2021.¹ I have summarised below some of the key findings:
- *Vetting was seen as very good with no concerns found during the vetting dip sampling.*
 - *The force uses Core-Vet to good effect.*
 - *Vetting is fully compliant with the APP.*
 - *Robust Data Management is in place.*
 - *Positive steps have been taken regarding the monitoring of disproportionality although record keeping could be improved.*
 - *The designated posts ratio (for enhanced vetting levels) was previously seen to be low at 17% but since then the force has reviewed this and now stands at 24% which is in line with the national average.*
 - *The force clearly understands vetting data and has a firm grip with no backlogs.*
 - *Generally, there were good vibes in this team.*
- 2.9. There has been an additional focused national HMICFRS inspection (November 2022)² which made 43 recommendations with 5 areas for improvement. 28 of the recommendations related specifically to individual forces with the remaining matters sitting with NPCC, College of Policing or Home Office.
- 2.10. Durham Constabulary have undertaken a review in line with the recommendations and areas for improvement. This internal review with evidence to support Durham Constabulary's assumptions has been returned to the NPCC. Durham is also ensuring compliance with all the mandated reports and data requests emanating from central bodies including a 'historical data wash' of all employees through the Police National Database (PND).

¹ [Durham - His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services \(HMICFRS\) – Home \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/)

² [An inspection of vetting, misconduct, and misogyny in the police service - His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services \(HMICFRS\) – Home \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/)

- 2.11. The Vetting unit has faced pressure as a result of the national Police Uplift Programme. Durham Constabulary have recruited an additional 226 police officers, which has created additional demand for the vetting unit. Staff recruitment into PCSO roles and the Force Control Room has also been significant over the last two years, and as stated above no commencement of employment occurs without vetting.
- 2.12. Further pressure has resulted from the APP timescales relating to vetting checks at certain points within employment and expiry of regular vetting (RV) after 10 years and management vetting after 7 years. The 2012 London Olympics saw a significant number of new vetting applications undertaken; the RV expiry date being 2022. Durham Constabulary, through the Deputy Chief Constable, moved extra qualified resources into this area of 're-vet' to cover a spike. Performance figures are positive, and the vetting team and its leadership has a medium term plan to return to re-vetting at a point 90 days in advance of expiry which it is currently working towards.
- 2.13. Durham Constabulary recognise that APP provides the guidance in the area of social media checks, this field is proving more extensive and time consuming than was initially expected. Given the need to ensure APP compliance, additional staff have been placed within the vetting unit. It is expected that APP will be further enhanced with a greater requirement around social media. As such, Durham Constabulary has increased its staffing capacity within the vetting unit, an approach which remains flexible to ensure operational effectiveness.
- 2.14. The PCC has recently held an Executive Board in which force vetting performance and delivery was an agenda item.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. The Police and Crime Panel consider the report for any potential discussion.
- 3.2. The Panel note that the accountability structures within the OPCC are a continually maturing process in line with Association of Police and Crime Chief Executives (APACE) and Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) best practice.
- 3.3. A vetting processes update is listed for annual consideration on the Police and Crime Panel Work Programme.

Joy Allen
Police and Crime Commissioner