



Police and Crime Plan 2015 – 17

Consultation Findings and Response

March 2015

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Introduction

As Police and Crime Commissioner for County Durham and Darlington, I published a draft version of my *Police and Crime Plan 2015-17*. This was an amended and expanded version of the 2014-17 Plan.

A consultation on the draft plan ran from 22nd December 2014 to 15th February 2015, seeking the views of the public on my amendments and additions to my plan. The key areas of consideration were:

- Keeping the following six local priorities:
 - To tackle the harm caused to individuals and communities by alcohol and drugs,
 - To tackle anti-social behaviour,
 - To improve engagement with communities across the Constabulary area,
 - To reduce the impact of hate crime,
 - To improve road safety by tackling careless and dangerous driving, speeding and other related road safety issues,
 - To make our policing service visible and accessible at all times;
- Amending my local priority of ‘to reduce the impact of domestic abuse, particularly violence against women and girls’ to ‘to reduce the incidence and impact of domestic abuse in all its forms’;
- The addition of the following three new priorities:
 - To improve public confidence in local policing,
 - To work with partners to improve the service provided to those with poor mental health (victims and offenders),
 - To reduce reoffending;
- And any additional comments or priorities respondents feel should be in place for County Durham and Darlington.

I would like to express my gratitude to all those respondents who took their time to read my draft plan and complete my survey. I am enormously appreciative of the array of detailed, honest and helpful comments people have gone to the effort of providing. All responses have been carefully read and considered and I am happy to report an overwhelming support in favour of all my proposals.



Summary

Details of the consultation on the refreshed Police and Crime Plan were circulated across partnership organisations, boards, panel members and through social media. I held forums for the Town and Parish Councils and the Voluntary and Community Sector, to speak to them about the Plan. I spoke at a number of arranged events, including Area Action Partnership meetings, allowing for individual questions and comments but gauging the overall opinion of the room rather than collecting individual survey responses. I also conducted walkabouts in Durham and Darlington shopping centres to talk to, and carry out surveys with, members of the public.

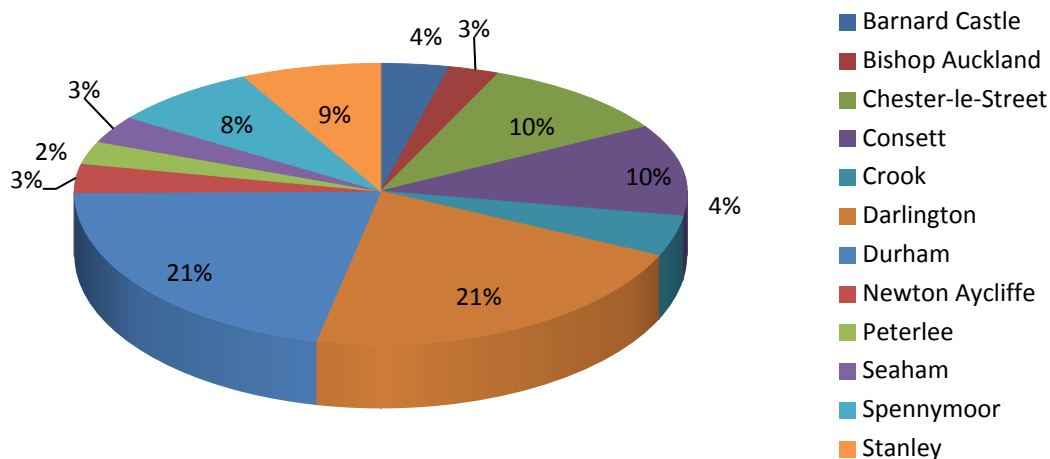
The responses were overwhelmingly in favour of my priorities, including keeping the existing ones, the amended priority, and the three additional ones. The online survey allowed for free text comments as well as the multiple choice survey questions. This, along with the points raised at the face-to-face meetings, was where the main feedback and areas of improvement were drawn from. An in depth breakdown of these comments and my responses are set out in the key findings section of this document.

Respondents

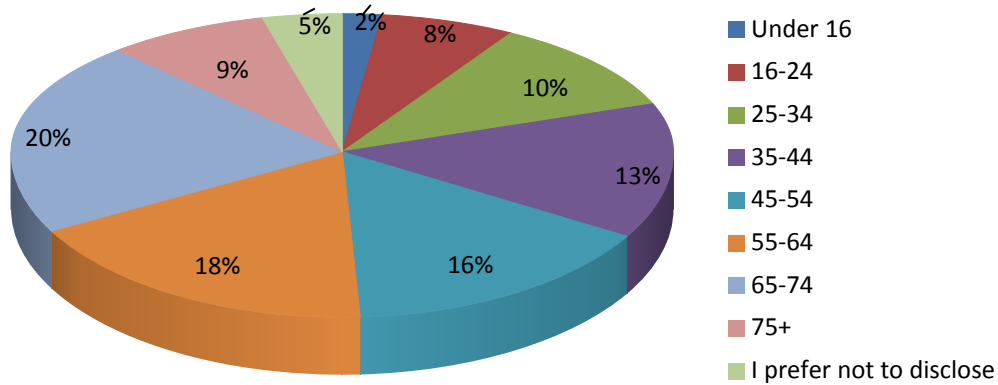
I reached approximately 550 people through the events I attended and held, plus those interacted with during the public walkabouts. I made efforts to ensure the consultation reached people across the whole of the force area and people of all age groups and genders. A total of 158 surveys were completed, including those online and in person. The demographic profile of respondents is set out below:

Question 7: Which area do you live in or live closest to?

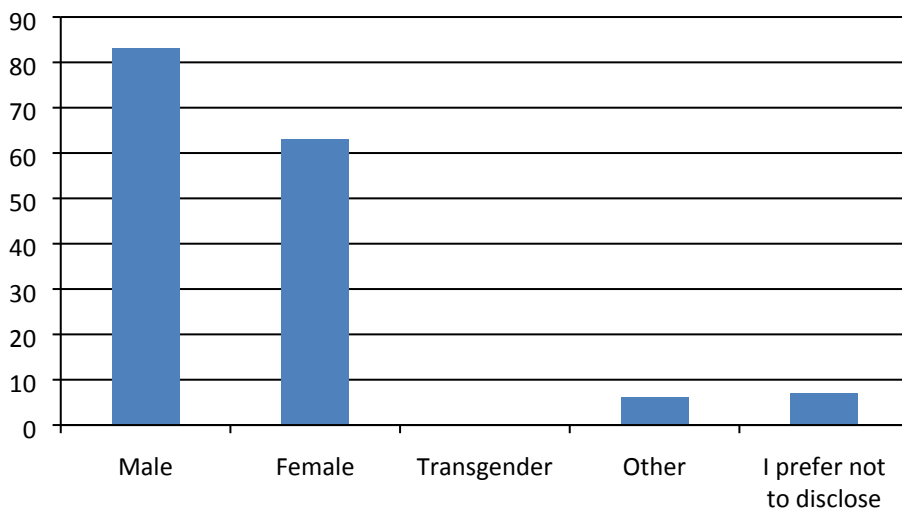
The twelve options given were Durham Constabulary's twelve neighbourhood policing sectors. A map was provided alongside this question to ensure respondents could see which area they are part of if they do not live in one of the named towns. The largest proportions of responses are from Durham and Darlington, which was expected as they are our only city and largest town. The rest of the responses are well spread across the other sectors.



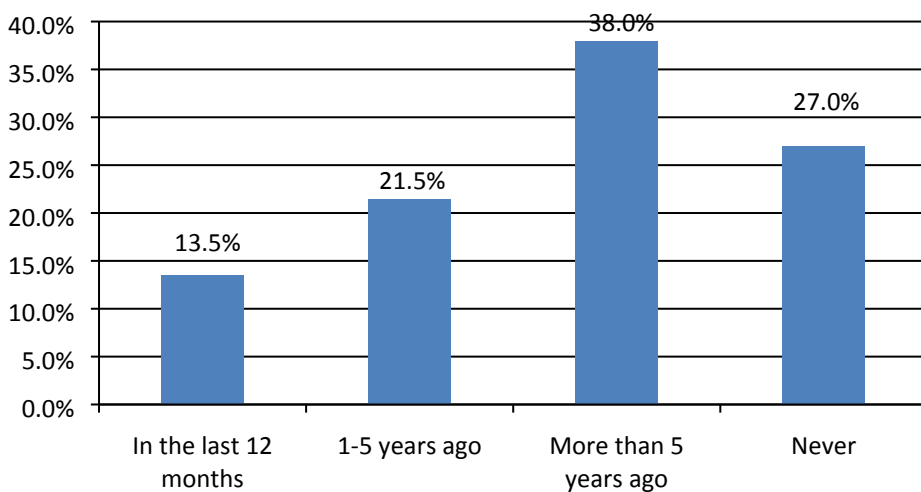
Question 8: Age group (years)



Question 9: Do you identify yourself as - ?



Question 10: Have you been a victim of crime?



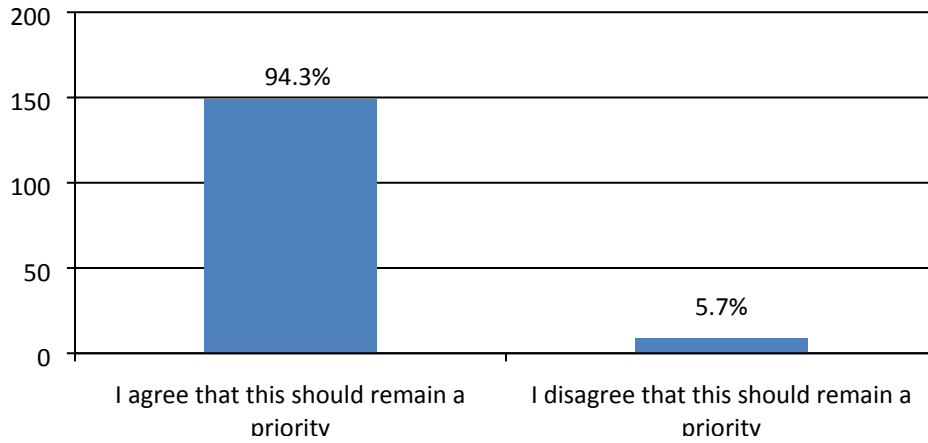
Nearly three quarters of respondents said they have been a victim of crime at some point; nearly half of whom had been a victim in the last five years.



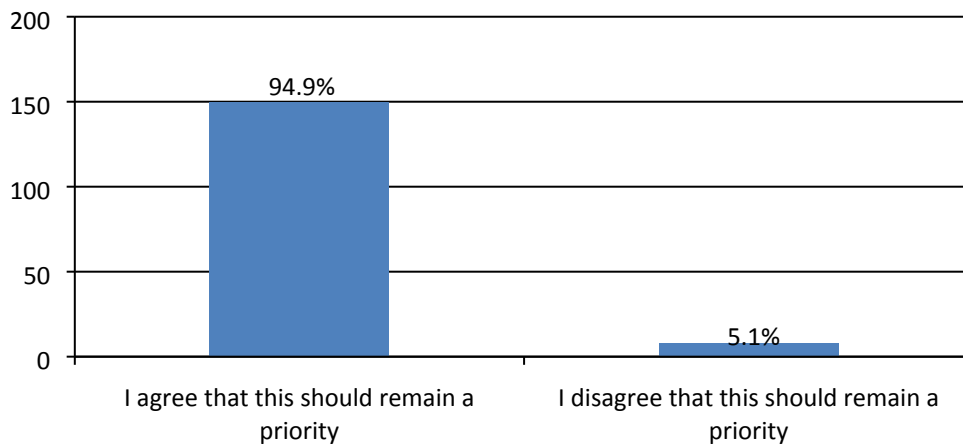
Survey Responses

Question 1 – Existing Priorities:

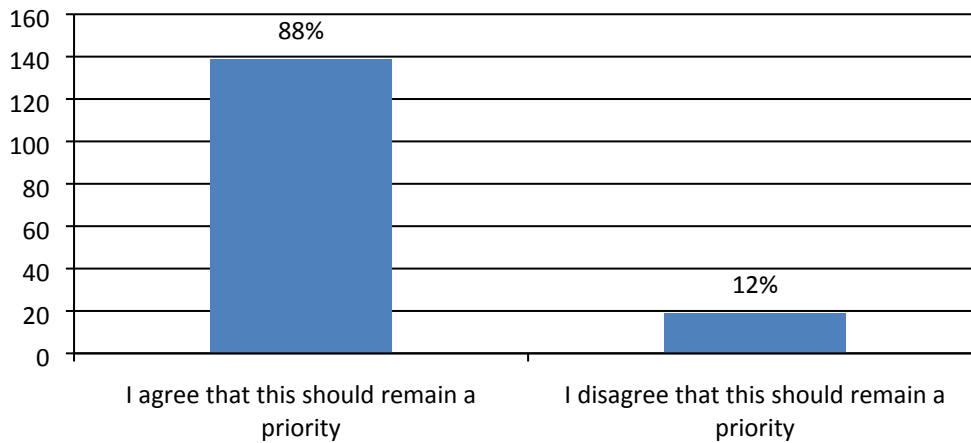
Alcohol and Drugs



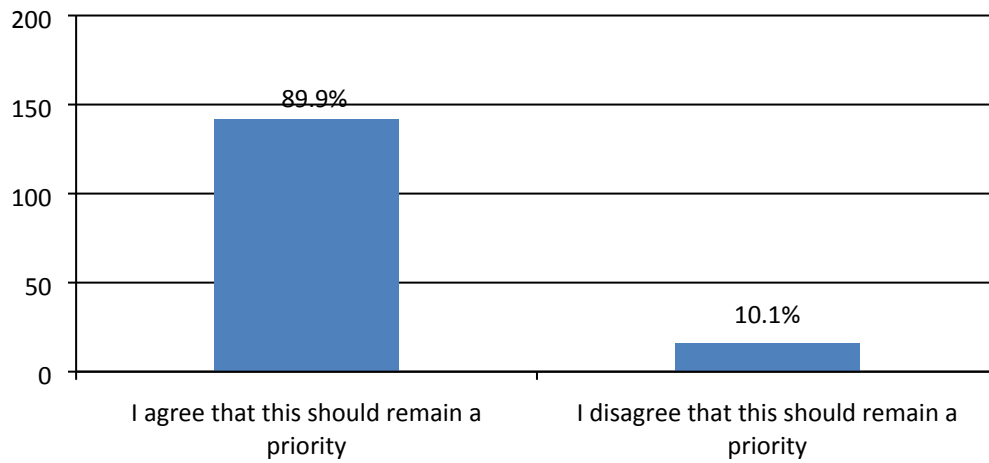
Anti-Social Behaviour



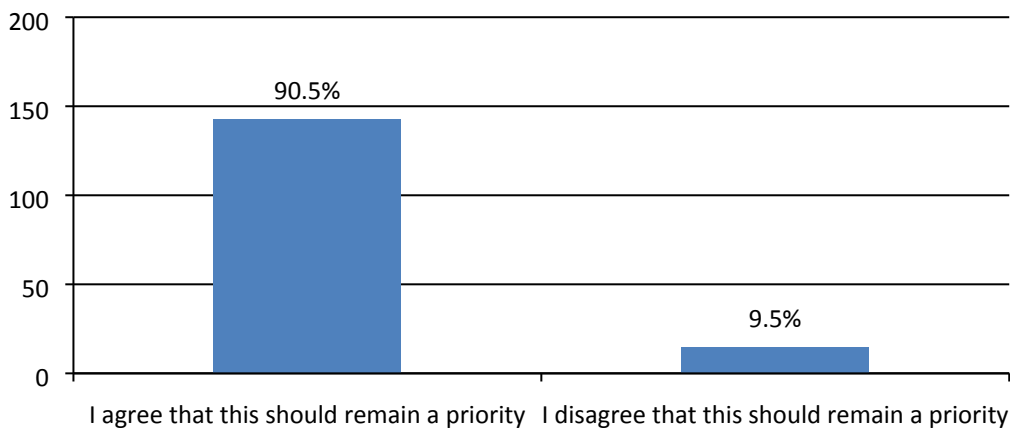
Engagement



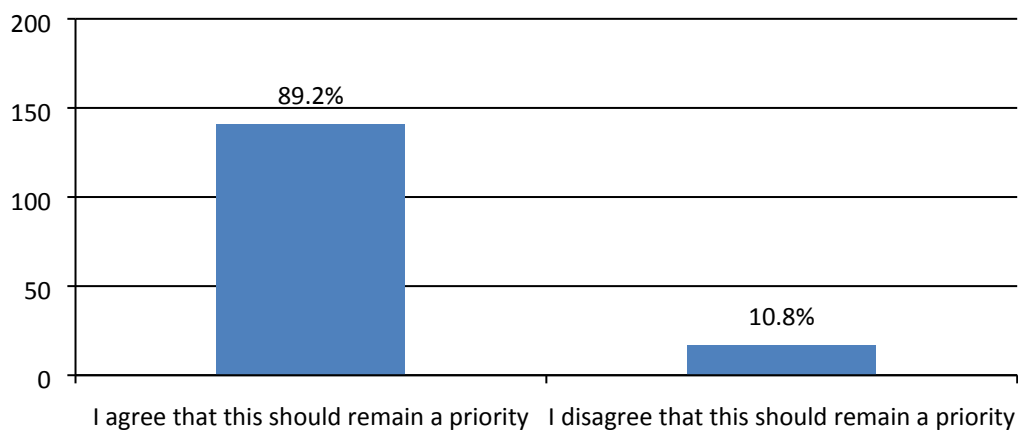
Hate Crime



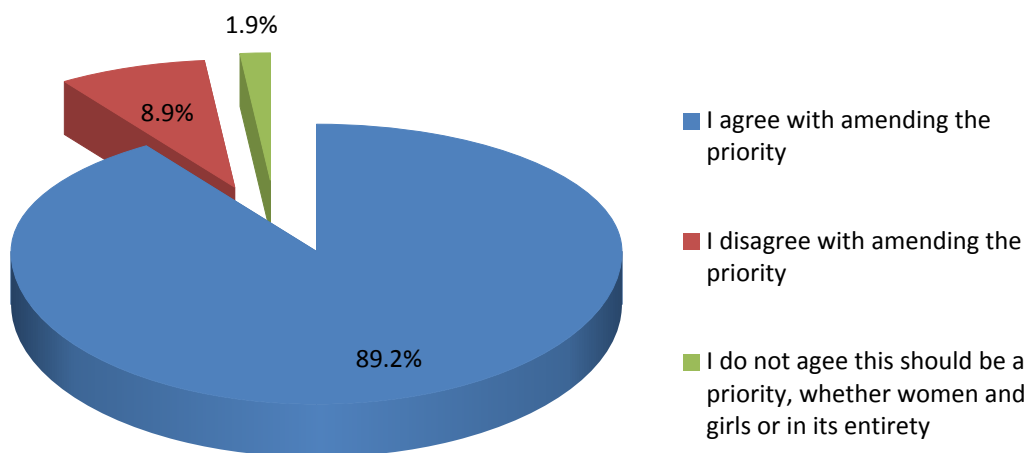
Road Safety



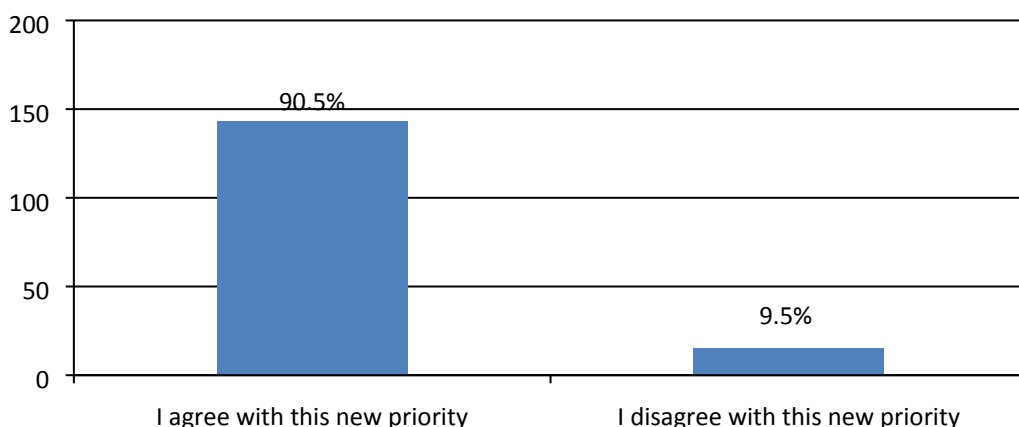
Visible and Accessible



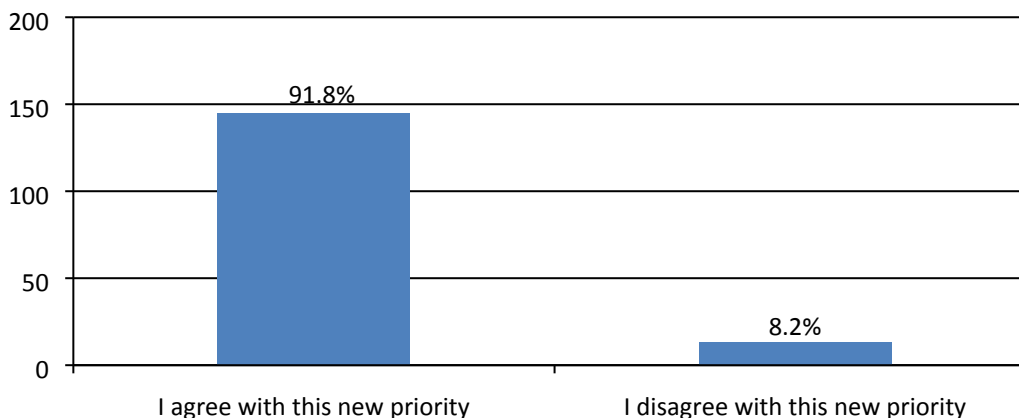
Question 2 – Amended Priority: Domestic Abuse



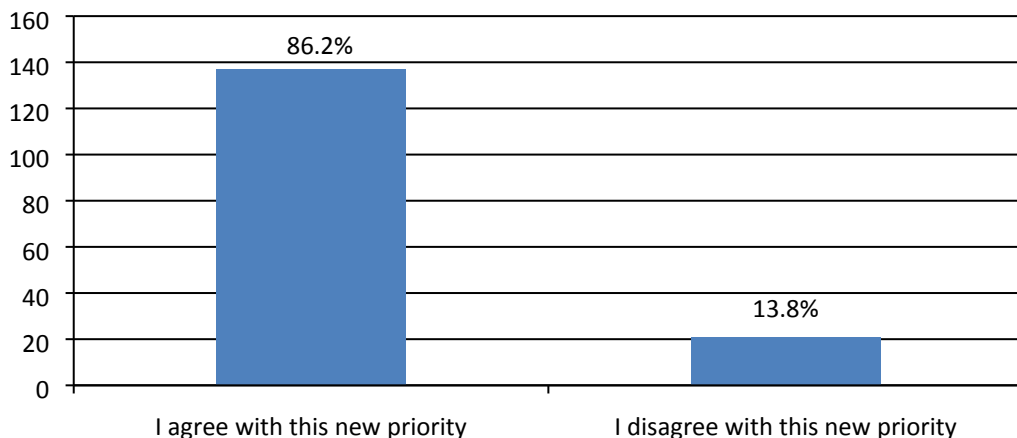
Question 3 – New Priority: Confidence



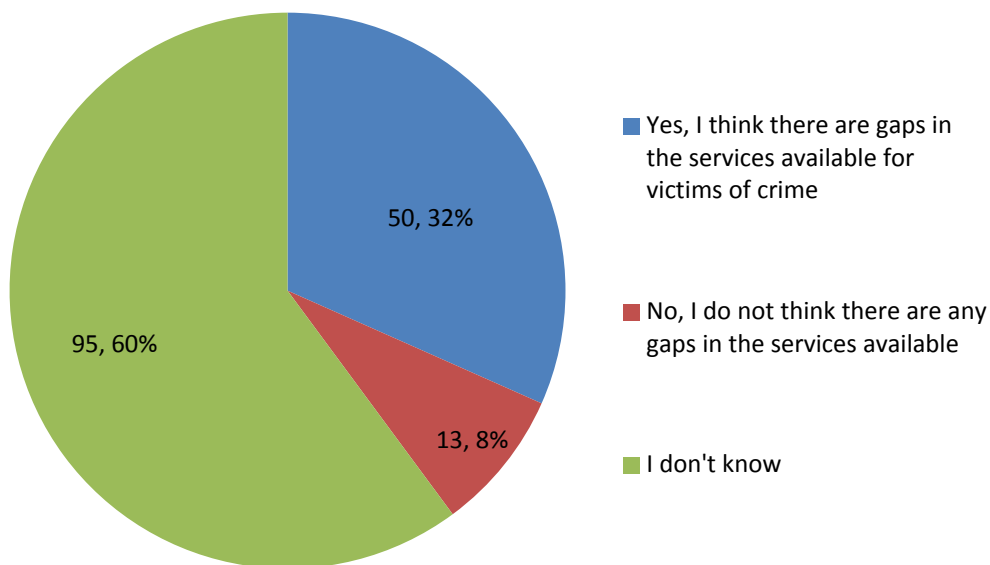
Question 4 – New Priority: Mental Health



Question 5 – New Priority: Reducing Reoffending



Question 6: Gaps in Victims Services



This indicates that I should raise awareness of what services are available for victims of crime.



Points Raised in Meetings/Forums

The overall feedback was positive but there were some queries and suggestions for improvement. A number of different topics were discussed and many different views were aired; an overview of which is as follows:

- The inclusion of the table setting out my priorities alongside those of the Safe Durham Partnership and the Darlington Community Safety Partnership has been well received;
- It was viewed by some that if there are too many priorities it runs the risk of them becoming diluted;
- Cybercrime, shoplifting, organised crime groups, rural crime and child sexual exploitation were all areas that were suggested could receive a greater emphasis;
- Road safety is an issue that featured highly, ranging from inconsiderate parking, to speeding, to cyclist safety;
- There were concerns aired over the National 101 non-emergency telephone system;
- Restorative Justice was suggested to be an area the public need to be more accurately informed of;
- Feedback suggested there could be similarities and repetition across the priorities of engagement, confidence and visibility.

More detail is provided in the next section; along with my responses and actions I have taken.



Key Findings and the Police and Crime Commissioner's Response

Overall, there was at least an 86% agreement for all of my proposed priorities; therefore they all remain of prominence in my plan. However, based on the feedback from my consultation, I have made some alterations.

*All of the sentences marked with an asterisk are direct quotations taken from the free written comments provided through the online survey, from different anonymised respondents.

Question 1 – Existing Priorities:

'Police need to be visible and available'... 'Greater visibility of police on the streets'**

Tackling anti-social behaviour, tackling the harms caused by alcohol and drugs, improving road safety and having a more visible police service are all very important issues to you across the force area. This is evident in the survey responses shown in the above graphs, free written comments provided online, and the events I have attended. The importance to local people to have police officers out visibly patrolling streets and being available at Police and Community Together (PACT) meetings for residents to voice concerns is clear. Road safety was also a reoccurring topic for discussion. Therefore, they all remain key areas I am asking the Chief Constable to focus on, through my Plan.

90% of respondents agreed that reducing the impact of hate crime should remain a priority for the police, which, although less than some other issues, still shows strong support. My hypothesis is that this priority received slightly less support because it is less well understood. Therefore, part of my current work with partners in this area is around increasing understanding and knowledge.

*'If police are catching criminals and are involved in crime prevention I do not see a great value in visiting schools and fayres...'**

Improving my own engagement with communities across the Constabulary area is important as it is part of my role to be the voice of the community and ensure your views are heard. 88% of respondents agree with maintaining this priority. However, this is the lowest percentage of the existing priorities and some feedback I have received suggests a degree of misunderstanding. Although it is important the force build relationships with the community through engagement, this priority refers to ensuring I am out interacting with people in the community to seek their opinions, not increasing the amount of time officers spend proactively attending engagement events. In response I have amended some of the wording slightly for clarity. I have also amended the overall structure of my plan, which I will discuss in more detail further on in this document, and this emphasises the difference between those actions related to me and to the Constabulary.



Question 2 – Amended Priority:

‘On domestic abuse, I agree with the sentiment but believe it is right to prioritise violence against women’

89% of respondents agree with amending the priority from ‘to reduce the impact of domestic abuse, particularly violence against women and girls’ to ‘to reduce the incidence and impact of domestic abuse in all its forms’. However, there were some worries expressed that this implies I do not think that domestic abuse is a gendered crime. I understand that it affects more women than men but I want to ensure that male victims and those within same sex relationships have the confidence to come forward, therefore I am going to proceed with amending the priority to cover all victims.

Violence against women and girls is a much larger area than domestic abuse alone, and I have worked with my counterparts in Northumbria and Cleveland to develop the first ever regional Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy. To ensure it does not appear that my dedication towards tackling this issue has diminished, I have added the delivery of this strategy to be an additional key area of focus. This new addition is explained in more detail further on in this document.

Question 3 – New Priorities:

*‘If you increase engagement and make policing visible and accessible surely that improves confidence’**

Despite a clear agreement from respondents that confidence in the police is vital to ensuring people feel safe and report crime, some feedback I have received was that confidence in the police should be an outcome of other work rather than a separate conscious focus. Therefore, I have made ‘inspiring confidence’ one of my overarching objectives that will be realised through focusing on various other areas. This new inclusion of objectives is explained further below.

With 92% of respondents in support of my proposal to add improving the services to those with poor mental health to my priorities, I have decided to go ahead with this.

*‘The prime consideration should be the victim not the offender’**

My inclusion of reducing reoffending as a priority has received more varying responses. As well as those who have given their support, there have also been some concerns around:

- Whether certain initiatives will be a waste on some offenders,
- If it takes the emphasis away from the victim’s needs,
- And whether this is important but not the police’s responsibility.



In response, I have removed this from being a separate priority area and instead I have broken it down to become a cross-cutting area spanning over a number of already established priorities. I have done this to show it does not stand detached from the victim-centred work and instead is to work alongside it. For example, the use of Restorative Justice is the victim's choice and is not a soft option for the offender. It has emerged from this consultation that awareness and understanding around some restorative approaches may need increasing.

Additional Comments:

*'Having priorities is another way of saying that you're disregarding parts'**

There were concerns raised that using the word "priority" suggests that other areas may be ignored by the police. This is absolutely not the case, and I want to stress that no crime or victim is considered unimportant. I want to ensure that the Police and Crime Plan strikes the right balance between identifying key areas of focus and covering the full gamut of work the police must undertake. Therefore, I have restructured the content around my vision and four overarching objectives.

My vision for the area, which has been amended, is **to inspire confidence in policing by ensuring efficient and effective services are delivered to support victims and keep all our communities safe.**

This leads into four objectives, which spell out the overall aims for the Force. They are:

- Inspire confidence
- Support victims
- Keep all our communities safe
- Deliver an efficient policing service

They are overarching as the breadth of the police's role is very wide spreading and I do not want to imply that any part of their role is less important than another or that any crime is taken less seriously. As well as inspiring confidence, supporting victims has become a specific objective to ensure that mine and the Chief Constable's victim centred approach is clear.

Within the objectives there are then key areas of focus which will help to achieve my vision. These key areas of focus are those issues which were consulted on and were previously named as priorities. There are also some additions based on the consultation feedback. Each objective, with the key areas of focus that will contribute towards achieving them, is set out below:

- Inspire confidence:
 - Improve my engagement with the communities across County Durham and Darlington
 - Make our policing service more visible and accessible at all times
- Support Victims:
 - Commission effective, appropriate and efficient service for victims
 - Deliver the regional Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy



- Reduce the incidence and impact of domestic abuse in all its forms
- Reduce the impact of hate crime
- Keep all our communities safe:
 - Deliver the strategic policing requirement and understand and tackle emerging threats
 - Tackle the harm caused to individuals and communities by alcohol and drugs
 - Tackle anti-social behaviour
 - Improve road safety by tackling careless and dangerous driving, speeding and other related road safety issues
 - Work with partners to improve the service provided to those with poor mental health (victims and offenders)
- Deliver an efficient policing service:
 - Value for money
 - Robust accountability and performance management

Additional Key Areas of Focus

As you can see above, as well as those areas that were consulted on, I have also added some further key areas of focus to achieve my objectives. These additions are based not only on the feedback I have received through my consultation, but also in response to the Constabulary's 2014 Strategic Assessment of potential risks in our area. This is a document which was produced whilst my refreshed Plan has been out for consultation.

I have added 'commission effective, appropriate and efficient services for victims' to my key areas of focus. I am now responsible for commissioning services for victims in our area using money allocated by the Government. This came into effect in October 2014 and so it is a new addition to my role but one which is vital to achieving my objective of supporting victims.

As aforementioned, I have also decided to add delivering the regional Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy to my key areas of focus. Violence against women and girls extends beyond solely domestic abuse to areas such as rape not within a relationship, sex work and human trafficking. This strategy was mentioned in the consultation version of my plan, but due to those responses demonstrating concern that it had lost prominence due to the amendment to the domestic violence area of focus, I have decided to make this work a key area of focus in itself. It is an all-encompassing strategy aimed at tackling all areas of violence against women and girls.

The Strategic Policing Requirement and tackling other emerging threats was mentioned in the version of my Plan that went out to consultation but was not titled as one of my priorities. I think this has caused it to appear as though the importance has been overlooked. Organised crime, cybercrime and child sexual exploitation are all areas which are covered in the section, but were mentioned by some in the process of the consultation as not being prominent enough. Not only have I moved this section to be a key area of focus, but emerging threats also covers anything that has not been specifically mentioned in the Plan but may be revealed to be a significant area of concern post publication.



Finally, ensuring value for money, monitoring the Constabulary's performance and holding the Chief Constable to account are pivotal to my role. To highlight their importance, and in response to some comments from the precept consultation wanting to ensure the extra money accrued is used effectively, I have amended the way in which this information is presented to you by making the delivery of an efficient policing service one of my four objectives. To achieve this objective, the 'Accountability and Performance Management' section of the consultation version of my Plan has become a key area of focus. Also that which was previously 'Use of Resources' has been amended slightly to become another key area of focus around achieving value for money in our services.

Structure and Design

Overall feedback was complimentary of the content and structure of the Plan. It was praised as being easy to read but comprehensive. There were some comments suggesting the document was too lengthy, therefore although the overall content remains the same, I have amended the layout of the document slightly:

- As the main purpose of the Police and Crime Plan is to set the strategic direction for the Chief Constable, I have removed the information about what we have achieved so far from the Plan as this will be included in the Annual Report.
- Information about our area and my varying roles and responsibilities has been condensed, with the full information provided in an annex for those who want to read more.
- The content has been streamlined whilst keeping its integrity by the use of tables and bullet points.
- A table has been used for each of the key areas of focus to split all actions into those relating directly to me, those for the Constabulary, and those with partner organisations. It spells out clearly who is responsible for what. I have kept the table showing where my objectives and areas of focus overlap with those by the Safe Durham Partnership and the Darlington Community Safety Partnership as this received positive feedback. The addition of the tables with a column dedicated to our partner organisations further strengthens their role in this Plan.
- As well as reinforcing the importance of partnership working, the tables also highlight those directions to the Chief Constable. This makes the strategic direction given more transparent and makes it easier to hold him to account for the completion of these actions.
- The Plan will be published in an interactive format, so readers will be able to click on certain aspects to be directed straight to that section. This means they can read only the content that is of interest to them rather than the full length of the document.



Next Steps

Following the closure of the consultation and the consolidation of results, I have amended my refreshed Police and Crime Plan in line with those responses described above. I have endeavoured to take into account as many views and as much feedback as possible.

The amended Police and Crime Plan 2015 – 17 was presented to the Police and Crime Panel at a meeting held on 3rd March 2015, **to which their approval was granted**. The plan will be published online by the end of March 2015 and hard copies will also be distributed and available on request.

The views which were provided on any gaps in the services available for victims will be passed to my commissioning team who are currently assessing the existing services to ensure any funding is spent on those areas that require it most.

I will continue to ensure there is an efficient and effective police force across County Durham and Darlington. Through holding the Chief Constable to account for the delivery of my plan, I will strive to achieve my objectives and the key areas of focus. As well as providing attention to those areas set out in my plan, I will continue to react to and be actively involved in any matters of concern that arise locally or nationally.

