

2025

Community Scrutiny Panel

Annual Report



Cumbria Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner
1-2 Carleton Hall, Penrith, Cumbria, CA10 2AU
commissioner@cumbria-pcc.gov.uk | Tel: 01768 217734

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Foreword from the Panel Chair

Welcome to the Community Scrutiny Panel Annual Report for 2025.

This joint Panel promotes and influences high standards of ethical performance across the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, Cumbria Constabulary and Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service. Being entirely independent it provides robust assurance to the residents of Cumbria by investigating, dip sampling, constructively challenging and reviewing a broad range of aspects of policy, process, and performance, through the lens of ethics and integrity. The panel is entirely made up of people who live in Cumbria, we come from all walks of life and all corners of our large and beautiful county.

I have had the pleasure of being Chair of the Community Scrutiny Panel since the beginning of 2024, having been a member of the Panel since 2022 and prior to that volunteering as an independent custody visitor.

Over the last 12 months we have continued to see challenge and change for the people of Cumbria. This can be attributed to many reasons, not least us still dealing with legacy issues from the pandemic; the increasing challenges of the cost-of-living crisis, and of course societal issues and political instability that affect us all in both the UK and abroad. The Panel have been hugely impressed by each organisations' resilience, commitment, focus and determination to serve our county; constantly striving to offer both the fire and rescue and the policing services that the public expect. This is of great credit to the organisations and their officers and staff.

While 2025 has been an incredibly challenging year, we have enhanced our work programme and adapted to look at a number of thematic areas. The information in this, and our other quarterly reports, helps to promote a wider understanding and awareness of performance and ethical approach of both the Fire and Rescue Service and the Constabulary.

We hope that you find the report useful and informative and on a personal level I would like to thank all colleagues I have worked with over the last few years in developing, evolving and growing the role of the panel, and our work.



Jane Scattergood
Community Scrutiny Panel Chair

The Community Scrutiny Panel plays a vital role in providing constructive and effective challenge.

Its work helps my office, the police, and the fire and rescue service take a step back, reflect, learn and make changes where needed to improve the service we provide for the people of Cumbria. I am extremely grateful for the commitment, professionalism and practical, independent approach the Panel brings to its work.

The Panel continues to strengthen its role, carrying out in depth scrutiny in key areas. This brings both me and our communities added confidence and reassurance. By acting as a genuine critical friend, the Community Scrutiny Panel makes an important contribution to improvement and accountability across our services.

Whilst we are fortunate to have dedicated and professional police officers, staff, firefighters and fire service staff, it is essential that performance is regularly reviewed and high standards are maintained—particularly when services are working in such challenging and demanding circumstances.

I look forward to continuing to work with the Panel in 2026.

David Allen
Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Cumbria





Chief Constable, Darren Martland

Cumbria Constabulary was originally created, as Cumberland and Westmorland Constabulary, in 1856. Now in our 170th year, we have a reputation for providing an excellent service to the communities that we serve. Whilst lots have changed over the past 170 years, many things have stayed the same. The principle of 'people providing a service for people' is just as relevant today, as it was in 1856.

I am pleased to report that crime and anti-social behaviour continue to fall, and we are ahead of most other police forces in the time taken to answer calls, respond to incidents and bringing offenders to justice. Whilst 'metrics and measures' are important, they only tell part of the story. The most important measure is whether we have the trust and confidence of the communities that we serve. I am proud to report that, in the recently published Crime Survey of England and Wales (CSEW), Cumbria Constabulary reported the highest level of public confidence in local policing of each of the 43 police forces in England and Wales.

We will adapt and change to ensure, through our Neighbourhood Policing model, that we deal with issues that affect communities, whilst dealing with the challenges of exploitation, violence against women and girls, and cybercrime.

If we are to maintain the trust and confidence of our communities, every member of the Constabulary must display the highest standards of professionalism. The Community Scrutiny Panel provides an independent assessment of whether we are maintaining professional standards, and I cannot overstate the important role played by the Committee in ensuring that we continue to earn the trust and confidence of the communities that we serve.



Chief Fire Officer, Paul Hancock

The vision for Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service is to be a community-focused, professional, and trusted Fire and Rescue Service that makes Cumbria a safer place for all. This ambition remains unchanged from previous years and represents an enduring vision for the service.

Over the last twelve months, the service has continued to embed the new governance arrangements following its transition to the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner. This has been a significant programme of change, and we have worked hard to strengthen our governance frameworks and improve the way we report progress to the Commissioner.

During this period the service has also been subject to an inspection by HMICFRS. We are pleased with the findings in relation to our operational response and the service we provide our communities. However, the inspection highlighted areas where further improvement is required, particularly in relation to our approach to workforce development, equality and evaluation. Work is already underway to address these areas, while maintaining the positive culture we have in the service which was described by the inspectorate as the 'Cumbria Vibe'.

We were also pleased with our end of year performance, which provides a strong foundation on which to build. Alongside this, we continue to explore opportunities for closer collaboration with our police colleagues, supported by the Commissioner's ambition, and have begun planning for the transition to the new mayoral governance arrangements for police and fire, which are due to come into effect in May 2027.

We remain grateful for the panel's independent scrutiny of our plans and the issues we face. Their input and feedback on the work we are undertaking to keep our communities safe is both invaluable and welcomed. It is instrumental in supporting us in our improvement journey and in recognising the challenges we face.

About the Community Scrutiny Panel

The Community Scrutiny Panel challenges, encourages, supports and promotes the influence of high standards of professional work, integrity and ethics within Cumbria Constabulary, Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service and the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (OPFCC); ensuring that these are effective in all organisations. This report provides an overview of the work that the Panel has carried out during 2025.

The Panel meets privately on a quarterly basis to enable open and frank discussions. The agenda and reports are published on the Commissioner’s website following each meeting, with only sensitive or confidential information being excluded. Notes from the meetings are provided by the Panel to the Commissioner to provide information about the Constabulary, Fire Service and OPFCC’s performance in areas that relate to ethics and integrity. The purpose of this is to promote openness, transparency and public confidence.

A programme of work is developed and agreed on an annual basis enabling the Panel to fulfill its terms of reference and scrutiny role. Where necessary the Panel will also provide scrutiny for areas identified during HMICFRS inspections to enable the implementation of recommendations to be monitored. In addition, they have critical and important thematic issues referred to them by both Cumbria Constabulary, Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service and the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner. This enabled the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner and the Chief Officers to be provided with independent reassurance.

Further information regarding the Panel, its membership, and the work it carries out can be found on the Commissioner’s website: [Community Scrutiny Panel](#)

Membership of the Panel in 2025:

Jane Scattergood	Alison Ramsey	Shaun Thomson	Penny Walker
Andrew Dodd	Megan Masters	Eloise Abbott	Ben Phillips

Work of the Panel in 2025

Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct



The Panel's role is to ensure that both the Constabulary, Fire Service and the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner have embedded within their organisations their respective **Code of Ethics** and **Code of Conduct**.

The Panel have been provided with assurance whilst carrying out their role that all organisations take the ethos of the Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct seriously and this has been evident in the reviews and dip samples they have undertaken in other areas of business. During their various dip sample sessions, the Panel saw first-hand that policies and procedures within the Constabulary and Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service had the ethos of the Code of Ethics embedded within them.

Similarly, the Commissioner upon election in May 2024 swore an oath to act with integrity and signed a Code of Conduct and Ethics. It sets out how the Commissioner has agreed to abide by the seven standards of conduct recognised as the Nolan Principles. This Ethical Framework allows transparency in all areas of the work of the Police and Crime Commissioner. These principles encompass the Commissioner's work locally and whilst representing Cumbria in regional and national forums.

Equally importantly, all the OPFCC members of staff adhere to a Staff Code of Conduct which is based upon the model Code of Conduct for Local Government Employees and incorporates the principles arising from the Nolan Report, providing a framework for all employees in terms of official conduct. During 2025 the Panel did not identify any complaints received from either members of staff or the Commissioner regarding conduct or integrity.

Public Complaints



At their quarterly meetings the Panel received performance data from the Constabulary on the number of complaints received, how these have been managed and whether they were within the required timescales. From these reports there were areas which had again seen an increase in complaints being received, these being 'Police Action following Contact', 'Police Powers (Policies and Procedures) and Use of Force. The Panel undertook to specifically review some of these complaints to see if there were any trends or concerns during their two dip sample session in 2025. During these sessions within the Constabulary's Professional Standards Department (PSD) they reviewed a total of 76 files directly via the Centurion system enable members to view all information, actions and outcomes on the live system. Panel members spoke directly with case workers regarding any issues or concerns.

Quality of Service Issues



The Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner received 1153 letters, emails and telephone calls from members of the public who wished to raise issues or dissatisfaction with the Commissioner, highlighting issues that were concerning local communities. Many of these related to operational policing and the OPFCC liaised with the Chief Constable's Staff office to provide information or a solution for the individual. The types of issues are varied and detailed below are some of the categories:

- Police Service Dissatisfaction regarding the standard of service provided or received
- Anti-Social Behaviour
- Crime
- Anti-Social Driving
- Drug dealing, rural crime, knife crime and ongoing 'in progress' issues.

Many of the solutions were provided by the Constabulary in conjunction with local policing teams, local focus hubs and partner agencies, including local educational establishments, to see to identify the underlying causes of crime or behaviours and seek to support and deter individuals from going on to make further adverse life choices. The information gathered is used to look at how assistance or changes can be provided not only locally but throughout Cumbria. The Commissioner also uses the information to implement local initiatives to make a difference to local communities. Some of these included Safety of Women at Night (SWAN), Safer Streets Projects in Whitehaven and Workington, and funding for local projects through the 'Property Fund'

The Commissioner also has responsibility for Fire governance and the OPFCC received 42 contacts from the public which related to:

- Fire Resources (buildings and fire fighters)
- Miscellaneous/general issues
- Workforce complaints

The OPFCC also received a number of compliments thanking the Commissioner, Constabulary or Fire & Rescue for the service they provide.

Complaint Reviews



From 1 February 2020 the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (OPFCC) has carried out Public Complaint Review outcomes of when requested by the complainant. During 2025 the OPFCC received 44 review requests, 7 of those carried out were upheld and recommendations made. The Constabulary had carried out further work providing the complainant and OPFCC with their findings and outcome. Identified learning from the upheld reviews was collated and disseminated within local teams and more widely across the force. The Commissioner is sighted on this information and monitors force progress and learning at his Executive Board meetings with the Chief Constable and other senior officers.

Misconduct - Police Officer & Police Staff



The Panel received information on a quarterly basis relating to Police Officer and Police Staff Misconduct from the Constabulary's Professional Standards Department. This enables the Panel to monitor performance in relation to these areas of business and consider any patterns or trends across the whole organisation. During 2025 there were 67 conduct allegations made and the outcomes have ranged from dismissal, written warnings and reflective practice. As part of their work programme the Panel have reviewed 20 misconduct files during two dip sample sessions in 2025. During the session the Panel reviewed all completed files, providing views and recommendations for any improvement in the way information was provided, how cases were handled or the public perception of the handling of such cases.

Misconduct - Fire Employees



The Panel carried out a dip sample session of Fire Employee Misconduct cases in October, reviewing 18 cases which had been dealt with during previous 12 months. The cases had been dealt with well, in a timely and professional manner.

Grievances



On a six-monthly basis the Panel have reviewed Police Grievances being processed by the Constabulary. Although the Constabulary's HR Department dealt with all grievances, they link in with the Anti-Corruption Unit to ensure matters were cross referenced. In May and October 2025, the Panel reviewed a total of 16 finalised cases and discussed each one in turn with the HR Manager. Generally, the grievances were regarding policies and procedures or action taken against an individual. For any officer or member of staff leaving the organisation the Panel were keen that detailed conversations were held with individuals to help understand the issues and make improvements to officer and staff employment. The Panel also reviewed three Fire Workplace Complaints (Grievances) members found that the outcomes were appropriate and recommended that further training for managers be provided to assist them when dealing with such matters.

Civil Claims



On behalf of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner the Panel also monitor Civil Claims being processed by the Constabulary and the Fire and Rescue Service. They received information about the types of claims being made, the stage the proceedings had reached and about the claims that had been resolved. As part of this oversight the Panel seek assurance that any trends are being identified and how the organisation has learnt from particular cases; disseminating such information throughout the organisation to avoid future risks and claims. Any identified learning was subsequently disseminated across the relevant organisation.

Police Officer & Staff Wellbeing



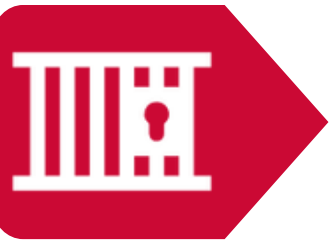
During 2025 the Panel monitored Officer and Staff Wellbeing and Sickness. In October 2025 the total headcount for Police Officers was 1401; Police Staff 612 and 50.8 PCSOs. The Constabulary continues to recruit to the target headcount which was exceeded at the end of September. Overall absence has increased slightly since May but remains much lower than the start of 2025. Officer retention remains a key priority for the Constabulary and measures have been introduced to assist with reducing turnover of Officers and Staff. As part of the 2025 work programme the Panel would be dip sampling Constabulary employee absence and exit interviews. The panel dip sampled 13 employee absence cases and 17 exit interviews. The members recognised that due to changes within the force many officers were being moved into different roles and that for some officers this caused problems for their wellbeing and work/life balance. This had resulted in some making the decision to leave the organisation. The panel were advised that the Constabulary were working closely with all personnel who were being re-deployed or considering leaving the organisation.

CFRS Employee Absences



The Fire and Rescue Service had taken the decision to combine the operational and corporate sickness procedures into one. This will benefit the service and staff by ensuring that there is a clear and consistent approach for all staff. The new Firewatch system will enable CFRS to capture data and trend information to feed into national statistics collections and report internally. The Panel dip sampled 32 cases and it was pleasing to see that suggestions made by the Panel had been taken on board and were being implemented. Overall, the procedures were followed well, appropriately and timely. Following the feedback provided to CFRS, the HR team will provide absence support to managers who would benefit from it.

Police Custody Detention



During 2025 the Panel undertook quarterly reviews of Custody Detention Scrutiny where they reviewed 16 cases and provided feedback. They found that overall cell insertions were controlled and well managed; and communication from officers was generally clear, calm, and controlled.

Stop & Search and Use of Force



During 2025 the Panel undertook quarterly reviews of Stop and Search and Use of Force, enabling the implementation of HMICFRS recommendations to be monitored. The Panel carried out reviews of incidents via body worn video and completed forms, reviewing 73 separate incidents, some of which included incidents where the use of TASER had also been a factor. The Constabulary were using Stop and Search as a key tool by the proactive policing teams to help prevent and detect crimes. Officers were generally respectful, and individuals searched were dealt with calmly and the communication from officers was generally good. Some individual feedback has been provided to officers and/or their supervisor where there is potential learning. There was also incidents viewed where officers provided outstanding service to members of the public and this information has been shared with their supervisors.

Property Store



In 2022 the Panel had raised concerns about the number of civil claims being received in relation to lost or damaged property which had been held by the police. A review of all property stores had been carried out with a number of new storage and working practices being implemented. A significant step forward of inventory management had been realised with bar coding of all property locations to enable accurate accounting and auditing of property. The Panel will continue to monitor this work through receiving reports and monitoring any reduction in civil claims being made.

Police Officer/Police Staff Vetting



During 2025 the Panel once again sought assurance from the Constabulary that they were carrying out rigorous vetting of new and existing officers and staff. Vetting dip sample sessions took place during February and July 2025, where the Panel reviewed a total of 11 cases. The Panel had found that robust checks had been carried out and where necessary applicants had not been progressed where they did not meet the strict criteria.

Body-Worn Video



The use of Body Worn Video continued to feature within the monitoring work of the Panel through the dip sampling of Stop and Search, Use of Force and Custody Detention Scrutiny.



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commissioner@cumbria-pcc.gov.uk

01768 217734