



Dan Price
Cheshire
Police & Crime
Commissioner

PUBLIC SCRUTINY BOARD

Notes of the Public Scrutiny Board held on 25th November 2025 in Chester Town Hall.

PRESENT: D Price, Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC)
M Roberts, Chief Constable (CC)

Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner
G Southern, Deputy Police & Crime Commissioner
D Taylor, Chief Executive
C Gilbody, Head of Scrutiny & Planning
J Hare, Head of Communications and Engagement
A Murphy, Governance Officer

Cheshire Constabulary
M Evans, Deputy Chief Constable
P Woods, Head of Performance & Planning

*Members of the public observed the meeting online via
Microsoft Teams*

1. Introduction

At the Public Scrutiny Meeting held on 25th November 2025, the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) engaged the Chief Constable (CC) in a dialogue around the force's performance. This document captures the Commissioner's questions and the Constabulary's detailed responses, offering transparency and accountability on key issues such as complaints against the police, stop and search, use of force, . The exchange reflects a shared commitment to continuous improvement, ensuring public confidence in the police, and the development of innovative practices that address both urban and rural challenges in tackling VAWG.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the Scrutiny Board held on 22nd July 2025 were agreed. There were no outstanding actions to review.

3. Thematic Session – Violence Against Women and Girls

The Commissioner asked the Chief Constable to provide an update about an incident which occurred the day prior in Crewe which had caused concern to the local community. The Chief Constable advised that although a live investigation, he was able to confirm that the suspect in the case was promptly identified and in custody, with an investigation ongoing and due process being followed.

The Commissioner invited the Chief Constable to present his opening summary for the thematic session [see slide presentation in report pack].

The Chief Constable stated upon appointment in Cheshire he would prioritise child protection and domestic abuse (DA). He explained how the Constabulary has established dedicated Protecting Vulnerable People teams in each area, doubled the resource in Online Child Abuse Teams (OCAIT) and the Sexual Offence Management Unit (SOMU), and set up Exploitation Teams via a large re-organisation of resources.

The Chief Constable advised that His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) PEEL report assesses Cheshire to be one of the top performing forces in the country, in particular:

- Only force in the country to get 'Outstanding' for managing offenders and suspects.
- One of only two forces in the country to get 'Outstanding' for Protecting Vulnerable People.

HMICFRS recognised innovative practice which included internal and external vulnerability and Buddi Tags to monitor stalking perpetrators.

The Chief Constable advised the Commissioner that the Force has a clear strategy, performance framework and governance arrangements around vulnerability leading to some of the highest charge rates in the country for domestic abuse, sexual offences, and stalking and harassment.

He explained that there has been an increase in the use of Domestic Violence Protection Notices (DVPN), Sexual Harm Prevention Orders (SHPO), and Sexual Risk Orders (SRO), as well as the use of the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS).

The Chief Constable set out the Constabulary's strong operational focus on safer streets and the night-time economy. He explained that the Force has wide-ranging training and development plans for officers and staff and uses innovative techniques and approaches to modernise the response to VAWG.

4. Commissioner's Questions

The Commissioner scrutinised the data presented by the Constabulary and asked the Chief Constable to respond to a series of questions.

Slide 5 – Recorded Domestic Abuse

Question:

Could you please explain the trends in domestic abuse and why there is a drop in February?

Answer:

The Chief Constable stated that they have worked hard to encourage reporting, and low numbers would be a concern. Recorded crime levels do fluctuate and can be impacted by a range of factors such as February being a slightly shorter month. The Constabulary uses a statistical process to understand whether crime levels are 'exceptional' compared to the normal range – February is not considered exceptional.

The Commissioner thanked the Chief Constable and added that public engagement around the issue of Violence Against Women and Girls had highlighted the gap in the general public's knowledge about the scale of the problem.

Slide 6 – Domestic Abuse (outcomes brought to justice)

Question:

Can you explain what Outcome 15 and Outcome 16 mean in general terms, and why they're so important?

Answer:

The Chief Constable stated that outcomes which can be applied to crimes are governed by the Home Office Counting Rules - there are currently 26 different outcomes which can be applied to a crime. Outcome 15 is 'Evidential difficulties but a named suspect is identified'. In these cases, the victim is supportive of police action and there is a named suspect but there are other evidential difficulties for a realistic prospect of conviction.

Outcome 16 is 'Evidential difficulties victim based – named suspect identified – the victim does not support police action'. This is relevant in domestic abuse cases as sometimes there is a named suspect, but the victim does not support or has withdrawn support for police action. The police can still seek a criminal justice outcome if it is the right thing to do to protect the victim where the evidence exists.

Question:

What is the Constabulary doing to reduce the high proportion of cases ending in Outcome 15 and 16, how do these rates compare nationally?

Answer:

The Chief Constable explained that national information is not available for VAWG offences. For the year 2024/25 for all crime Cheshire had an outcome 15 rate of 19.5% compared to national rate of just over 15%, and an outcome 16 rate of 27.5% compared to a national rate of 26.9%. The Chief Constable set out several initiatives to reassure people to feel confident to come forward and report, including:

- Daily scrutiny of crime investigations and outcomes
- Weekly domestic abuse governance on each area (Superintendent chaired)
- Bi-weekly Gold groups chaired by Chief Superintendent
- Encourage evidence led prosecutions
- Working groups with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to reduce action plans and increase use of early investigative advice
- Face to face meetings with CPS at the start of a case
- Use of Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVA) to support people
- Domestic abuse campaigns through corporate communications

Question:

Building on that, what are we doing to ensure women and girls feel safe and supported enough to engage with the justice process?

Answer:

The Chief Constable stated that the force is proactive in reassuring people who come forward and report. He explained the Constabulary has groups that work with abuse survivors, and work with charities to try and attack this type of offending

from all angles and to give that support. He added that from feedback from HMICFRS and nationally, Cheshire is performing well in this area, and this demonstrates the Force's commitment to tackling domestic abuse to get the best outcome for the victim.

The Commissioner agreed that he could see that the Constabulary has a culture of continuous improvement in this area.

Question:

How many suspects linked to violence against women and girls remain outstanding, and what reassurance can you give that they are being actively pursued?

Answer:

The Chief Constable stated that the Force always aims to take positive action in relation to domestic abuse. He said that this is reflected in a significant increase in arrest rates since his appointment. He advised that there are currently 449 individual suspects outstanding in relation to VAWG offences. This is a 38% reduction on 723 in November 2022.

The HMICFRS report stated that the Constabulary has 'robust governance arrangements for managing suspects and wanted offenders.' The Chief Constable highlighted the daily, weekly, and bi-weekly scrutiny as well as the deployment of the Serious Organised Crime Unit (SOCU) to find offenders wherever they are in the country.

Slide 7 – Recorded Arrests

Question:

How confident are you that internal culture within the force supports a zero tolerance of violence against women and girls?

Answer:

The Chief Constable stated that he had a high degree of reassurance that the message has got through in this area. He said that his team always stress the 'why,' and one of the key messages is that taking positive action on domestic abuse aids homicide prevention.

There has been a significant investment in training for officers in respect of tackling VAWG and it is addressed as a force priority every day:

- Proactive stance in responding to part one the Angiolini Inquiry
- Rape and Serious Sexual Assault (RASSO) first responder training has been rolled out to front line officers
- Linguistics and Domestic Abuse input from Dr Patricia Canning – highlighting the impact of nuances with language choice.
- Domestic Abuse Evidence-Led Prosecutions training
- Internal Domestic Abuse Policy for officers and staff
- Leadership and example setting from the top

The Commissioner said that he was reassured that the Constabulary see this work as homicide prevention with an understanding of where this violence can lead.

Question:

How are you evidencing the internal culture - between staff surveys, and misconduct data, and HMICFRS findings – how are those tools used as well?

Answer:

The Chief Constable stated that HMICFRS commented specifically about the positive attitude within the Force, and the fact that this is taken seriously. He said that they engage with lots of focus groups within the Force, take feedback from stakeholders including the third sector and the Police Federation. He said that from national statistics Cheshire's high arrest rate for domestic abuse correlates with a very low homicide rate.

Question:

How is the Constabulary supporting the referral process into the Commissioner's behaviour change programmes to maximise uptake?

Answer:

The Chief Constable stated that the referrals would come from the police and other agencies such as third sector, health professionals, and local authorities. He explained that a dedicated Sergeant has now been recruited into the Halton Pilot which will increase the focus and drive perpetrators engagement with behaviour change programmes.

The Chief Constable stated that the Integrated Offender Management (IOM) Team has been re-structured to better target Domestic Abuse and nominals who pose a danger. He said that this team will work with the Halton staff to maximise use of the DRIVE programme.

The Commissioner said that he was hugely reassured that the Constabulary recognises the multi-agency approach to dealing with domestic abuse, and that the Constabulary does see itself as an important part of that wider collaboration that is needed to have the impact required.

Slide 10 – Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme

Question:

The number of 'right to ask' and 'right to know' appears to be increasing year on year. What are you doing to ensure awareness of these rights and is there anything more my office could do to help?

Answer:

The Chief Constable stated that clearly more people are aware and confident in engaging with the scheme because the numbers have almost doubled in 12 months. To ensure consistency and focus they are triaged by the Vulnerability Hub and are sent out daily across the county to ensure compliance with the 28-day timescale. Presently, the Constabulary complies with this in over 95% of disclosures.

The Chief Constable stated that Governance is through bi-weekly Domestic Abuse Gold groups to maintain focus, and where awareness is raised with local partners.

Question:

Could this be an area that would benefit from automation to help speed it up any further?

Answer:

The Chief Constable said an experienced human eye will always be needed for decision-making but any tools that make pulling the information together more efficient would be welcomed.

Slide 12 – Recorded Sexual Offences

Question:

The data says that Cheshire has the 12th highest rate of sexual offences nationally. Does the evidence suggest that this is a particular problem in Cheshire, or is this down to victims feeling more confident in reporting such crimes?

Answer:

The Chief Constable stated he would not want the public to think that sexual offences are a bigger issue in Cheshire than anywhere else. He added that the Constabulary has been stringent in recording crimes and is keen to understand the data. For example, following the Consent Campaign in schools, on the return to schools after the holiday there was an increase in reporting by high school children.

The Commissioner said that the charge rates in the county must give the public confidence compared to other areas of the country where charge rates are much lower.

Slide 14 – Sexual Offences – Prevention Orders

Question:

The use has significantly increased from 12 to 76 in a year. What intelligence or operational shift triggered this, and how are you ensuring these orders are being used effectively, not just as a blunt tool to manage risk?

Answer:

The Chief Constable advised that there is a stringent process for using these orders which includes robust scrutiny through the Legal Team in every case. They are part of a range of measures that are used in a bespoke fashion based on each circumstance. This is a specific order that must be justified in each case, and difficult to secure, but they are used to get positive outcomes for victims.

Question:

Do you expect the orders to increase year on year?

Answer:

The Chief Constable stated that it was difficult to say as it is dependent on the type and rate of offending.

Slide 15 – Stalking and Harassment

Question:

What is the Constabulary doing to proactively tackle street harassment of women and girls, and how are you ensuring that victims feel confident reporting incidents that are often under-recognised and under-recorded?

Answer:

The Chief Constable said that the Harm Reduction Unit works on stalking and harassment and has received national accolades. There are only four stalking and harassment units in the country including Cheshire. Other initiatives highlighted by the Chief Constable included:

- Policing predatory behaviour in the night time economy
- Safer Streets 4 – Education input to schools
- Sexual Misconduct Liaison Officer role - bystander intervention training for teachers in schools
- Bystander training for business and volunteers in the night time economy
- Safe Space champions - a network of active guardians in the night time economy.
- Community first responder training delivered to employees in the beauty and leisure industry
- Hollie Guard app

The Commissioner stated that too few forces have a Harm Reduction Unit for stalking and harassment and that Cheshire is a national blueprint. He said that he was reassured that officers are out in the town centres addressing predatory behaviour and impressed by the leadership provided by ACC Ross in this area.

The Chief Constable said that the policing team reflected personally, and he set out his own concerns as a father about his own family members.

General Questions

Question:

What is the Constabulary doing to modernise its approach to violence against women and girls using AI and technology, particularly in relation to the recent successful STAR funding bid?

Answer:

The Chief Constable referred to a range of tools used for efficiency:

- STAR fund grant has been secured for the only national stalking AI tool being created which is being led on by Cheshire Constabulary's Harm Reduction Unit
- GoodSAM
- Digital detection dogs and seminal detection dogs
- Innovative educational and awareness campaigns for both Consent and Spiking
- Buddi Tags for Stalking Protection Orders which gives victims greater confidence as to the fact that the perpetrator is not near them as they have their own alert system.
- PowerBI apps to analyse data and identify patterns.
- Under the Safer Streets programme, Neighbourhood crime hotspot patrolling, resource deployment is prioritised and directed through DyTask

Question:

What proportion of frontline staff have completed violence against women and girls related training, and how is its effectiveness being evaluated?

The Chief Constable confirmed that 1,929 officers have attended Domestic Abuse Matters training, and it is delivered to all student officers. A further fifty-two officers and staff have attended Domestic Abuse Champions Training.

In addition, between April and August all Area Investigation Team and Response Officers received the College of Policing Rape and Serious Sexual Assaults

(RASSO) training. This includes best practice from Op Soteria about victim support. VAWG is also embedded into programmes where delegates review the national VAWG report and receive input from key Subject Matter Experts.

Question:

Violence against women and girls is often incorrectly viewed as a more urban crime, when in fact it also affects rural communities which are often more isolated and therefore challenging for those who are victims/survivors to access services. As such, what percentage of officers in the Rural Crime Unit have completed specialist training?

Answer:

The Chief Constable stated there is no one size fits all to this type of crime – it affects everyone. Beat Officers and Response Officers who respond to incidents and undertake local community engagement and problem solving are included in the training numbers referred to above. He said that Rural Crime officers are police officers first, with rural crime as a specialty, so are trained and know how to signpost to the right team.

Question:

Are there any examples of best practice in tackling this issue which you feel it would be important to highlight?

Answer:

The Chief Constable took the opportunity to talk about the work with the CPS to streamline the bureaucratic burden on officers and lawyers to get an early charging decision. He said that more embedding of IDVAs would also be undertaken.

5. Any Other Business

Nothing to report.

