

An inspection of the police response to the public disorder in July and August 2024

Tranche 1: capacity and capability,
co-ordination and mobilisation, and
well-being

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Foreword

On Monday 29 July 2024, three young girls, Bebe King, Elsie Dot Stancombe and Alice Da Silva Aguiar, were killed in a knife attack in Southport. Following these tragic events, widespread unrest and violent disorder broke out in many towns and cities across the UK.

On 6 September 2024, the Home Secretary commissioned us to carry out a rapid review into the policing response to the disorder, to identify lessons for the future. The commission divided the work into two tranches (parts). The terms of reference for Tranche 1 required us to examine:

- the police service's [public order public safety \(POPS\)](#) capacity and capabilities;
- the police service's ability to mobilise [officers](#) across police force areas to respond to the disorder; and
- how the well-being and resilience of officers might be affected by repeated exposure to incidents of disorder.

This first report sets out our findings on these areas.

In our second report, which we will publish in 2025, we will set out our findings on:

- [intelligence](#) relating to violent disorder;
- social media misinformation and disinformation that inflamed, incited or brought about more widespread disorder; and
- investigations into offences.

In 2021, we published our report '[Getting the balance right? An inspection of how effectively the police deal with protests](#)'. We stated that protests are an important part of our vibrant and tolerant democracy. Under human rights law, we all have the right to gather and to express our views. But these rights aren't absolute.

In July and August 2024, many of the people who took to the UK's streets participated in unlawful and serious violence and disorder, not peaceful protests. They put communities in fear by damaging property, targeting religious buildings and attacking people's homes.

The violent disorder spread quickly across many towns and cities. This put the emergency services under significant pressure, including the police who offenders targeted deliberately. Officers displayed immense bravery in the face of extreme violence. It is to their enormous credit that they kept the public safe. Many police officers sustained injuries, and some were hospitalised. The violence officers suffered is shameful and unacceptable. They deserve the public's full support.

At first, forces deployed their own officers to deal with the disorder. But it became clear that some forces needed more [POPS trained](#) police officers to respond effectively, so many regions decided to implement their regional [POPS mobilisation](#) plans. After several days, because of the level, seriousness and escalating nature of the disorder, the [National Police Chiefs' Council \(NPCC\)](#) implemented a national plan, called Operation Navette. Each police region mobilised officers in support. Operation Navette was the largest mobilisation of POPS officers since the violent disorder of 2011.

We reviewed eight police forces in areas where violent disorder had taken place. We spoke with officers at all levels, many of whom had been present at these incidents. We reviewed the activities of a range of national and regional bodies with relevant responsibilities. And we examined reports and documents to gain further insight into the police service's response, planning and decision-making.

We have concluded that the national mobilisation of POPS resources, combined with the quick identification and prosecution of offenders, was instrumental in ending the disorder and restoring peace to our towns and cities. Once the police service mobilised resources, it did this well. The professionalism of those leading the response deserves credit. But the systems and processes they work under need to change.

We are conscious that hindsight provides an opportunity to view earlier events in a different light. And that police commanders faced many unpredictable seats of violent disorder that were fuelled by social media. But we have concluded that the NPCC should have activated its national mobilisation plan on Friday 2 August 2024. When it activated this plan, deploying officers in greater numbers deterred those planning to take part in violent disorder and helped police commanders to deal with the disorder more effectively.

Also, we are concerned that intelligence assessments didn't predict the rising tide of violent disorder well enough. These assessments influence the timeliness of national mobilisation decisions. Since 2022, the police have dealt with notable incidents of violent disorder in Kent, Leeds, Llanelli, London, Merseyside, Rochdale and Rotherham. Many cities in the UK have recently experienced protests and counter-protests, some of which have been violent and involved activists with more extreme beliefs.

The police service must be able to anticipate serious violence and disorder. And it needs to enhance its plans at force, regional and national levels, so it can mobilise resources to multiple seats of disorder quickly and efficiently.

The police service's decision-making model must be clear, unequivocal and supported by all chief constables. In my report '[State of policing: the annual assessment of policing in England and Wales 2022](#)', I highlighted the need for better national police decision-making and co-operation, especially when critical collective decisions are made. This particularly applies to policing decisions made during national emergencies. Chief constables shouldn't be able to derogate or deviate from these decisions.

Regrettably, this review highlights that the police service hasn't learned all the lessons it should have from previous incidents of disorder. Some forces have failed to fully implement the recommendations we made in our report '[The rules of engagement: a review of the August 2011 disorders](#)' and in our 2021 report on how the police deal with protests. It is clear that the police service has missed opportunities to prepare for times when it has to deal with widespread disorder.

We shouldn't have to repeat our recommendations. This is why, in 2022 and again in '[State of policing: the annual assessment of policing in England and Wales 2023](#)', I said we need more powers to influence change.

Forces need to make, sustain and build on improvements. We urge forces to act quickly on our findings and recommendations. There is every possibility that similar violence and disorder could reoccur across the UK. The police service needs to be ready to respond.



Andy Cooke QPM DL

His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary

Introduction

Background

On Monday 29 July 2024, three young girls, Bebe King, Elsie Dot Stancombe and Alice Da Silva Aguiar, were killed in a knife attack in Southport. Following these tragic events, widespread unrest and violent public disorder broke out in many towns and cities across the UK. The levels of violence, criminal damage and assaults on [police officers](#) were extreme. The police service didn't expect disorder to develop so rapidly.

At first, the police responded to incidents of disorder at local and regional levels. Forces collaborated quickly as the violence escalated. After several days of extensive violence, the police service decided it had to respond more widely to stop the disorder, especially in the north of England.

On Monday 5 August 2024, the [National Police Chiefs' Council \(NPCC\)](#) had decided to [mobilise public order public safety \(POPS\) trained officers](#) across the UK. The police called this Operation Navette. By Wednesday 7 August 2024, the [National Police Coordination Centre \(NPoCC\)](#) and the NPCC were actively managing the national mobilisation process.

National mobilisation continued until Sunday 18 August 2024. The NPCC reports that Operation Navette was the largest mobilisation of [POPS](#) officers since 2011. We learned that forces deployed 1,622 [police support units \(PSUs\)](#), amounting to about 40,000 days worked.

Other police officers, [police staff](#) and volunteers supported the response. This includes [personnel](#) working in call handling, [custody](#), investigation, local policing, operational planning and criminal justice departments.

On Saturday 10 August 2024, deployments of police officers were at their highest. This coincided with the start of the English Football League season. NPoCC's data shows that the police service deployed 6,675 POPS officers that day. Its national resourcing co-ordination cell managed the distribution of resources throughout the UK. The Metropolitan Police Service deployed officers to north-east and north-west England. Welsh forces supported south-west forces. And Police Scotland supported the Police Service of Northern Ireland.

Operation Navette drew on other support, including [regional organised crime units](#), [regional information and co-ordination centres \(RICCs\)](#), [Counter Terrorism Policing](#) and the [National Crime Agency](#).

By Monday 19 August 2024, the threat of violence had subsided, so the NPCC moved Operation Navette into a recovery phase. In each force, chief constables managed the return to normal policing operations.

On 6 September 2024, the Home Secretary commissioned us to carry out “a rapid review of the cross-policing response to the disorder to better prepare policing for the future”.

In this report, we set out our findings on the first part of our review. They cover the police service’s response to the incidents of disorder at a force, regional and national level. We include recommendations and lessons that the police service needs to learn quickly.

Terminology in this report

Our reports contain references to, among other things, ‘national’ definitions, priorities, policies, systems, responsibilities and processes.

In some instances, ‘national’ means applying to England and Wales. In others, it means applying to England, Wales and Scotland, or the whole of the United Kingdom.

A timeline of events



Bebe King, Elsie Dot Stancombe and Alice Da Silva Aguiar are killed in Southport, Merseyside.

Peaceful vigil takes place in Southport. Several hours later, disorder takes place near to scene. A police van is set alight; 71 police officers are injured.



Disorder occurs in Hartlepool, Aldershot, London and Manchester. Some hotels housing asylum seekers and mosques are attacked. In London, 100 people are arrested.

Prime Minister holds roundtable meeting with the police and partners to discuss the disorder. NPoCC contacts RICCs’ mobilisation leads, advising them of the potential for further disorder and requesting 10 percent of the POPS Strategic Policing Requirement.





Friday 2 August

Disorder occurs in Liverpool, Blackpool, Hull, Bristol, Stoke-on-Trent, Leeds, Belfast, Manchester, Blackburn, Preston, Nottingham, Plymouth and Newcastle.
The NPCC's POPS lead decides that NPoCC needs to prepare to activate the national mobilisation plan.

Disorder occurs in Liverpool and Sunderland. The chair of the NPCC writes to the Prime Minister summarising what was agreed at the roundtable meeting. The letter includes plans to "scale up our coordination and resources in the coming days" and requests "support for policing".



Saturday 3 August



Sunday 4 August

Disorder occurs in Belfast, Darlington, Birmingham and Plymouth; 107 police officers are injured.
The NPCC's gold commander approves NPoCC's national coordination framework.

Offenders attack hotels housing asylum seekers in Rotherham and Tamworth. Disorder occurs in Middlesbrough, Bolton and Weymouth.
The NPCC sets up a national command structure. NPoCC prepares a national coordination framework.



Monday 5 August



Wednesday 7 August

Operation Navette moves from response to recovery phase.
In total, 302 police officers were injured and 54 were hospitalised during the disorders.
No national police debrief takes place.

Thousands of people participate in protests across England.
The NPCC implements the POPS national mobilisation plan (Operation Navette). Gold command and meeting structures are established to support the response phase of national mobilisation.



Monday 19 August



Friday 6 September

The Home Secretary formally commissions HMICFRS to carry out "a rapid review of the cross-policing response to the disorder to better prepare policing for the future".

Policing violent disorder: history tends to repeat itself

In April 1981, in vastly different circumstances, there were riots in Brixton, London. Rioters used stones, bricks, iron bars and petrol bombs to attack the police. A later inquiry, led by Lord Scarman OBE PC, found the riots were a spontaneous outburst of built-up resentment. He stated there was mistrust in the police and their methods of policing. And he highlighted how “complex political, social and economic factors” created a “disposition towards violent protest”.

In August 2011, the death of Mark Duggan as a result of a police shooting in Tottenham, London led to major disorder in England. The disorder was widespread, fast-moving and involved opportunistic attacks on property. It was loosely organised using social media and sometimes involved alliances between rival gangs. Offenders attacked the police violently.

There are some similarities between the disorders of 2011 and 2024. They occurred after lengthy periods without widespread disorder. Significant incidents where race was a factor triggered them, and they took place in the summer. The spread and extreme nature of the disorder was unexpected. Both events presented exceptional challenges for the police service, which in recent years had focused its training and tactics on responding to organised peaceful protests.

In our 2011 report [‘The rules of engagement: a review of the August 2011 disorders’](#), we stated that:

“Other feasible, mobile, disruptive tactics may have to be considered to protect the public from looting, arson or violent attacks. A range of tactics to deal with more than one or two seats of dangerous disorder has to be available in reality – not just as theoretical options in manuals.”

In 2024, we make a similar finding. The police service should learn lessons and take prompt action now. It needs to be ready to respond.

A rising tide of disorder posed a threat to public safety

As part of our review, we were keen to understand whether the police could have anticipated the disorder.

The [‘National Risk Register 2023’](#) stated that public disorder was a “highly unpredictable risk”. And the police service’s autumn 2023 POPS strategic [risk assessment](#) (SRA) described the threat of violent disorder as “low”.

The POPS SRA described significant recorded activity linked to anti-immigration causes and hotels housing asylum seekers. It states:

“Social media platforms continue to be a frequently used tool to advertise events and share anti-immigration content, such as reports of crimes allegedly committed by asylum seekers, aimed at triggering emotive responses.”

The POPS SRA defined cultural nationalism as:

“Strategic protest that opposes any activity to be in opposition to traditional British national identity, values or cultural and historical beliefs. This can include anti-immigration themes along with anti-Islam, radicalisation and [child sexual exploitation](#) matters.”

The next POPS SRA, produced in spring 2024, identified an upturn in cultural nationalism. It identified that anti-immigration views, and issues of asylum, were triggers for protests and disorder. And it described a moderate increase in activity by “extreme right-wing groups”. But this assessment still graded the threat and risk of violent disorder as “low”.

In September 2024, the Guardian published an article entitled [‘UK police risk assessment before riots said far-right threat probably “minimal”](#)’ which reported that:

“Documents from December 2023 show that police instead prioritised the pro-Palestinian movement, environmental protests, football matches and animal rights activism as potentially threatening public order.

Police deny that their internal documents show them underestimating the threat from the far right before the worst riots in more than a decade this summer, but experts disagree.”

We have found that the series of incidents of violence and disorder across the UK during 2023 and 2024 should have influenced the police service’s assessments of threat and risk. Our assessment of these incidents suggests that the risks of disorder were greater than the police believed them to be. They involved extreme nationalist sentiment, [aggravated activism](#) or serious disorder. All of them took place before the Southport killings and subsequent outbreaks of widespread disorder across the UK.

Some of these incidents and related national media reports are included in figure 1.

Figure 1: Examples of media reports in 2023 and 2024 about violence and disorder

Date and location	Incident and related reports
February 2023 in Knowsley, Merseyside	Violent disorder linked to asylum seekers’ hotel. The police arrested 15 people. Offenders set a police vehicle on fire and caused major damage. The Crown Prosecution Service later issued a news article, ‘Violent and hostile protestors sentenced’ .
February 2023 in Rotherham	Disorder linked to asylum seekers’ hotel. The BBC reported ‘Rotherham: Arrests after anti-immigration protests’ . The same hotel had been affected by worse disorder in 2024.

Date and location	Incident and related reports
Between July and October 2023 in Llanelli	Multiple protests linked to asylum seekers' hotel. The BBC reported ' Stradey Park: Asylum hotel protests cost police £1m '.
May 2023 in Ely, Cardiff	Serious violent disorder. The Guardian reported ' Cardiff riot: how tension over fatal crash spiralled into violence '.
November 2023 in London	Violent disorder during Armistice Day remembrance parades that coincided with a counter-protest against the war in the Middle East. The BBC reported ' London protests: Met condemns "extreme violence" of far-right '. It said 300,000 people had marched in protest through central London, the police had made 145 arrests and 9 police officers had been injured.
April 2024 in London	Violence and disorder broke out at a St George's Day parade. The Independent reported ' St George's Day rally in London turns violent as police clash with men wearing England flags '.
June 2024 in London	Disorder at a demonstration publicised as a 'Patriot March' involving violent conflict with an anti-racism counter-protest group. The Independent reported ' Tommy Robinson marchers lead anti-Muslim chant in London demo '.
18 July 2024 in Harehills, Leeds	<p>Violent disorder. The police arrested 41 people. Offenders targeted officers with violence. The BBC reported 'Arrests made after "night of chaos" in Leeds'.</p> <p>The BBC also reported 'Cooper calls Leeds disorder "audacious criminality"'. It quoted the Home Secretary as saying that there had been "some issues around misinformation" on social media and that:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">"Many people will have seen on social media some of the really shocking scenes of audacious criminality and that's why it's really important that those individuals face the full force of the law and that's one of the issues police have been talking to me about this evening."</p> <p>Disorder in Harehills had previously occurred in 2001, 2011 and 2019.</p>

Date and location	Incident and related reports
23 July 2024 in Kent	A serving army officer was stabbed near a barracks. This led to comparisons with the murder of Lee Rigby in 2013. No violent disorder, but strong racist rhetoric and nationalist sentiments emerged. The BBC reported ' Knives seized after attack on Army officer in Kent '.
25 July 2024 in Rochdale	Protests and violent disorder outside the local police station. A high-profile incident at Manchester Airport was reported to have led to these events. Sky News reported ' Hundreds of protesters gather outside Rochdale Police Station after video shows officer stamping on man's head '.
27 July 2024 in London	100,000 people attended a rally publicised as a 'Uniting the Kingdom' march. The police deployed about 1,000 police officers and made 9 arrests. The BBC reported ' Thousands join Tommy Robinson march in London '.

Source: Research by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services

Different factors and motivations led to these incidents. Nationalist sentiment seemed to have fuelled some incidents. And some posts shared on social media involved disinformation or misinformation. Other posts shared on social media contained media and political opinions about allegedly biased policing approaches. In many of the incidents, the police became targets for the violence.

The series of incidents and the increasingly negative feelings of many members of the public are factors the police service should have considered more fully.

The police service's deployment decisions need to be based on better intelligence

On Thursday 1 August 2024, after two days of violence across England and three days after the tragedy that triggered it, the Prime Minister chaired a discussion about the disorder with senior police and other public service leaders. The next day the NPCC wrote to the Prime Minister, clarifying what was agreed. The letter described the police service's intentions to scale up its co-ordination of resources through NPoCC and its network of regional mobilisation leads.

We found that the police service was preparing to mobilise its resources nationally, but it didn't do so on Friday 2 August 2024 or over the following weekend. However, during the interim, widespread disorder took place across many towns and cities. It meant forces responded on a local or regional basis, in accordance with their plans.

It is clear that the police service knew there were gaps in its [intelligence](#) about violent disorder, and it sought specialist support from the Government. This is a complex area, and we intend to explore it in depth during the second part of this review.

With hindsight, the National Police Chiefs' Council's decision to implement the national mobilisation plan was made too late

We don't underestimate how difficult it is to make the decision to mobilise police officers across the UK. It has significant operational, financial and personal impacts. It is an exceptional measure.

Senior police leaders we spoke with openly and honestly reflected on the recent disorder and the decisions they made. Many officers we interviewed – including those responsible for making national-level decisions – accepted that, with hindsight, national mobilisation should have happened sooner. An earlier decision could have deterred people who were set on committing violence. And, with access to more resources, police commanders would have had more opportunities to prevent or stop violence using a wider range of tactical options.

But the intelligence picture and SRAs didn't promote fully informed national decision-making. We found that fragmented processes reduced the police service's ability to gather intelligence about public disorder.

Mobilising national police resources helped to end the violent disorder

On Wednesday 7 August 2024, the NPCC decided to mobilise a significant number of POPS officers to respond to the disorder across the UK. This helped to bring the disorder to an end.

This was the largest mobilisation of POPS officers since the violent disorder of 2011. During Operation Navette, the police deployed 1,622 PSUs in total, amounting to about 40,000 police officer days worked. It was the first time the police service activated its mobilisation plan to create a national strategic reserve of POPS officers. Saturday 10 August 2024 had the largest deployment of POPS officers (6,675) in a single day. To put this into context, it is the equivalent of mobilising more than all the officers in West Yorkshire Police, the fourth largest police force in England and Wales.

The police kept the public safe and communities supported them

Many members of the public were openly appreciative of the police. We heard of several instances where they offered help and support to the police at scenes of disorder. For example, people in Southport helped the police by moving barricades and by extinguishing fires as officers deployed swiftly, moving past burning vehicles and debris. And a local dentist helped an officer who needed treatment for a significant facial injury after being struck by a concrete block.

During and after the widespread disorder, communities came together and took to the streets to show their public support for the police. They included many people from ethnic minority communities and faith groups.

The police also made significant efforts to keep the public safe through its usual daily police activities. These included responding to emergency calls, investigating crime, neighbourhood policing and supporting [victims](#) of crime. Many police officers, police staff and volunteers supported the national effort to protect the public. Personnel in call handling, custody, investigation, local policing, operational planning and criminal justice departments all played their part.

About us

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) independently assesses the effectiveness and efficiency of police forces and fire and rescue services to make communities safer. In preparing our reports, we ask the questions that the public would ask, and publish the answers in accessible form. We use our expertise to interpret the evidence and make recommendations for improvement.

Our commission

On 6 September 2024, the Home Secretary commissioned us to carry out a rapid review into the policing response to the disorder that happened across the UK in July and August 2024. The Home Secretary asked us to work quickly "to understand the lessons that must collectively be learnt from these events".

The commission divided the work into two tranches (parts). This report relates to the first tranche of work. Its terms of reference are set out below.

Further terms of reference for the second tranche of our review will follow. We intend to publish our second report in spring 2025.

Terms of reference

Tranche 1

The Home Secretary established the terms of reference for this review in her commissioning letter. She stated that:

“The first tranche of this review should look at police preparedness, resilience, and response, which includes:

- Capacity and capability to respond to widespread simultaneous outbreaks of disorder, including (but not limited to) the training and experience of officers, the equipment available to them, and the use of public order tactics. This is principally in respect of capacity and capability in England and Wales but should also take into account the impact of England and Wales [mutual aid](#) mobilisation into Scotland and/or Northern Ireland.
- The ability to mobilise public order policing across police force areas, in particular mutual aid arrangements, including local, regional, and national mobilisation procedures, capacity and capability including data accuracy, and coordination.
- How the resilience and well-being of officers might be affected by repeated exposure to incidents of disorder.

In addition to the response of individual forces, I am also interested in findings that relate to the public order elements of the [strategic policing requirement](#), as well as the capacity and capabilities of the National Police Coordination Centre.”

Methodology

During this review, we gathered a wide range of views from the police. We selected eight forces in areas where violent disorder took place and interviewed officers in different roles within those forces. We interviewed POPS officers and examined documents which showed how the police service responded to the disorder. Many of the officers we spoke with were directly involved in policing the scenes of disorder.

We spoke with a range of national and regional bodies responsible for mobilisation, intelligence, investigations, training and officers’ well-being. These bodies include the NPCC, NPoCC, RICCs, regional organised crime units, the [College of Policing](#) and the [Crown Prosecution Service](#).

We were keen to understand how forces supported their officers during and after their involvement in disorder incidents. So we spoke with representatives of [The National Police Wellbeing Service](#), the [Chief Police Officers’ Staff Association](#), the [Police Superintendents’ Association](#) and the [Police Federation of England and Wales](#).

In total, we carried out over 140 interviews involving more than 200 people across the police service, including police leaders, police officers and representatives from relevant bodies. We are grateful for the support we have received and continue to receive.

We examined more than 500 documents and gathered and assessed over 3,000 pieces of evidence. We also reviewed over 300 media articles to inform our findings across the widest range of information and evidence.

We analysed data from police forces, the NPCC, NPoCC and other police and government agencies to assess the capacity and capability of the police service to respond to widespread disorder.

We still have more work to complete. This includes further interviews, document reviews, and the collection and analysis of data and other information. This means we could identify evidence that may cause us to adjust the findings we report here. If we do so, we will explain this in our second report.

The police service's capacity and capability to respond to widespread simultaneous outbreaks of disorder

The police service uses the term [public order public safety \(POPS\)](#) to describe policing incidents and operations where risk to public order and/or public safety is present or anticipated. This includes organised events such as protests, festivals and sporting occasions. It also covers spontaneous incidents of violence or disorder. The [College of Policing](#) publishes guidance for the police in its [authorised professional practice on public order public safety](#). The guidance includes advice on:

- commanding major events or incidents;
- strategic and tactical options available;
- training and role profiles of POPS officers; and
- the legislative framework in relation to POPS events and operations.

Each police force can tackle many of the threats within its own area. But a response to national threats will often involve bringing resources together from several forces. This requires co-ordination.

The [Strategic Policing Requirement \(SPR\)](#) was first issued in July 2012, in accordance with [section 77 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011](#).

The most recent SPR was updated in June 2023. In the foreword, the then Home Secretary stated that the SPR “plays a crucial role in allowing me to set the direction against the biggest threats to public safety and ensuring the police have the capabilities to deliver an appropriately robust, national response ensuring common sense policing prevails”.

The SPR describes national threats and the capabilities required to counter them. [Police and crime commissioners](#) and chief constables should follow the SPR's guidance unless there are good reasons not to do so. The current SPR describes seven national threats:

- violence against women and girls;
- terrorism;
- [serious and organised crime](#);
- national cyber event;

- [child sexual abuse](#);
- public disorder; and
- civil emergencies.

The elements of the Strategic Policing Requirement related to public order public safety need to be reviewed

The SPR states that chief constables should make sure they have a range of specific POPS capabilities – as a force or across a region – to meet local requirements and their agreed contribution to regional and national requirements.

The SPR defines the number of [police officers](#) who must be available to be mobilised across England and Wales over a 24-hour period. The most recent SPR is set at:

- 297 level 2 trained [police support units \(PSUs\)](#) for England and Wales, with an additional 75 PSUs for London;
- 234 level 3 public order trained [basic deployment units](#); and
- 18 [attenuating energy projectile \(AEP\)](#) teams (two per police region).

We understand that the Home Office is planning a review of the POPS-related elements of the SPR. We would support this review because:

- the way PSU capacity and capability requirements are calculated is no longer suitable (nobody we spoke with could explain the origin of the decision);
- PSU capacity numbers were previously based on a national mobilisation planning presumption that the police service would only have to respond to three separate seats of significant disorder at the same time for a period of seven days within the UK;
- specialist POPS and investigative capabilities aren't clearly defined or quantified, so it is unclear what [mutual aid](#) is really available;
- some POPS tactical capabilities appear imbalanced across regions, so some tactics can't be deployed quickly enough and only through mutual aid; and
- there isn't enough guidance on the role, responsibilities and functions of [regional information and co-ordination centres \(RICCs\)](#).

The [National Police Chiefs' Council \(NPCC\)](#) sets out plans and processes for mobilisation and mutual aid in its '[Mobilisation Operational Guidance](#)'. The latest version of the guidance was issued in May 2022. It explains that mobilisation is a key component of the police service's response to the SPR. It states that the police service should be capable of dealing with six threats that require a national policing response. Public disorder is one of those threats. The guidance also considers the POPS skills, training and equipment requirements.

The [National Police Coordination Centre \(NPoCC\)](#) is part of the NPCC. If disorder takes place, NPoCC will mobilise a range of public order resources within specified periods. To achieve this, NPoCC assesses the national capacity and each force's contribution to the SPR.

But the SPR doesn't define exactly what the police service needs to respond to a national critical incident involving public disorder. The SPR omits some specialist resources, such as investigators, [intelligence](#) officers, public order medics, evidence gatherers, police dog handlers and mounted officers.

Similarly, the investigative capacity and capability for POPS events doesn't form part of the SPR. As a result, arrangements for mobilising these resources are less well developed. Some commanders in national roles didn't fully appreciate that investigators could be mobilised through mutual aid. This means that investigative resources weren't used in an efficient and effective way to help those forces most affected.

The number of officers in public order public safety roles has declined, but the reasons for this aren't clear

Some forces told us that they struggle to recruit enough volunteers for POPS roles. They are considering options to increase the number of POPS officers, including mandatory training or bonus payment incentives. One force allocates an extra day's annual leave to level 2 POPS officers.

We examined the police service's most recent strategic [risk assessments](#) (SRAs). They suggest a decline in the number of officers in POPS roles. We reviewed NPoCC data on the number of POPS officers. It indicated that between 30 July 2022 and 30 July 2024, the number of officers with level 2 [POPS training](#) reduced from 20,234 to 18,351. In the same period, the number of level 3 officers reduced from 43,507 to 38,315. We wanted to understand why there had been such a significant reduction. But senior leaders we spoke with were unable to explain it. They offered various suggestions, including:

- correction of inaccurate data (sometimes referred to as "data cleansing");
- the voluntary nature of POPS roles;
- officers increasingly seeing POPS roles as unattractive;
- pay and reward structures that weren't attractive enough;
- sickness rates;
- the impact of the pandemic;
- the rate POPS officers were leaving the police service; and
- the rate new officers were being POPS trained.

None of the suggestions amounted to a persuasive explanation for the reduction. We have concluded that the reduction wasn't the result of a deliberate strategy or policy.

We don't yet know if the recent disorder will affect the number of officers volunteering for POPS duties. The NPCC is surveying officers who responded to the disorder to understand their experiences. We await the survey's results.

National training standards and command structures are well established

All the forces we reviewed had established appropriate and effective command structures for dealing with disorder. The strategies and tactical plans we examined described clear aims and objectives. They set the policing style and tone, considered legislation properly and prioritised public safety.

The College of Policing's [national police public order public safety training curriculum](#) defines the national standards and objectives for POPS training and assessment. Commanders and their advisers must complete an accreditation programme and competency assessment. And they must undergo annual scenario-based refresher training at one of nine training centres.

The information the College of Policing gave us on 4 November 2024 showed that there were 1,421 accredited POPS commanders, including:

- 257 gold commanders;
- 503 silver commanders;
- 661 bronze commanders; and
- 485 accredited advisers.

The College of Policing has [authorised professional practice guidance on POPS command structures and role profiles](#). It defines the roles of officers who have overall responsibility for the policing of events and operations at local, regional or national levels.

There are opportunities to improve public order public safety officer training

Based on extensive commentary from our interviewees, we concluded that POPS officer training should be improved. This should include:

- preparing officers to deal with violent disorder as well as peaceful protest;
- physical fitness requirements;
- building officers' confidence in carrying out the role;
- familiarity with a wider range of tactics; and
- the suitability of training facilities.

Training for violent disorder could be improved

POPS commanders told us that their training in recent years has focused on pre-planned peaceful protests, rather than spontaneous violent disorder. During this period, forces have faced public order situations involving non-violent disruptive protests, rather than widespread violent disorder. These types of protests tend to result in the deployment of officers in normal operational uniforms who focus on positive interactions with protesters.

But we learned that the core training for PSU commanders and level 2 officers retains a strong focus on dealing with disorder. This includes training in dealing with serious violence, along with tactics for petrol bombs and other projectiles.

Understandably, training for commanders reflects the types of POPS incidents that are most prevalent in the UK at a point in time. For this to work, the training syllabus must be based on accurate SRAs and be flexible enough to respond to new threats. The College of Policing told us that it is carrying out a review of POPS training, which will include tactics. But it said: “It should not be construed however, that there is a specific piece of work in progress to overhaul training and venues.”

Physical fitness requirements for public order public safety officers may be set too low

Physical fitness is an important part of POPS policing. The College of Policing sets a multi-stage fitness test. The recommended standard for PSU officers is set higher than that required for most other officers. But some commanders told us they are concerned that the fitness test for level 2 officers is set too low and fails to accurately assess their capability to carry out the role.

Better public order public safety tactical training could improve officers' confidence

We spoke with several POPS commanders, national lead officers and representatives from the College of Policing. There was a consensus that the current range of core POPS tactics is sufficient and effective in dealing with the types of protest and disorder typically experienced across the UK. Some commanders felt that officers are experienced and well trained in tactics and decision-making. But others disagreed and said they were frustrated by POPS officers' inexperience or lack of confidence in their own ability.

The frequency and quality of training officers undergo is likely to affect their confidence. We learned that some forces give their POPS officers more training, exceeding the annual mandatory requirement of two days. This training covers the use of complex tactics, such as those involving police dogs or horses. But some forces said that training scenarios don't prepare officers adequately for scenes of serious disorder.

Some public order public safety training facilities need to be improved

The quality of facilities in each force affects the nature of officer training. Some facilities are unsuitable to train officers in the full range of tactics. For example, one force we reviewed hasn't had a local training venue for five years. Another uses a partly closed site. This limits the training it can give.

Forces were unprepared for the scale of the disorder

The College of Policing publishes [authorised professional practice on intelligence management](#) and [information management](#). Forces should adopt this guidance when managing POPS events and incidents. Commanders should also follow [authorised professional practice on the national decision model](#) when planning POPS operations. The [national decision model](#) is a six-step model that draws on information and intelligence to support risk assessments and the use of tactical options that support the policing response.

Forces base their policing plans and assigning of resources on SRAs. POPS SRAs should include local, regional and national information and intelligence that may indicate the actual or potential threat of disorder. Twice a year, [NPoCC's strategic intelligence and briefing \(SIB\)](#) produces a national SRA. It published the most recent national SRAs in autumn 2023 and spring 2024.

POPS SRAs didn't anticipate the scale of the recent violent disorder. So we find it plausible that, based on these assessments, forces were surprised by the levels of violence that took place. This might have affected local police decisions about the numbers of officers that forces initially deployed to deal with the disorder. But by the first weekend in August, some forces still didn't have enough officers to respond effectively.

Limited resources restricted tactical options during the initial stages of the disorder

It is clear that several police forces could only use the full range of available tactics once mutual aid arrived.

In one example, police officers in Southport had to protect a local mosque. Offenders damaged street furniture and knocked down garden walls to get bricks they could throw at officers. They attacked police vehicles with petrol bombs – officers had to rescue a colleague from a vehicle that had been set on fire. Officers bravely remained at their cordons to protect the public and property. As a result, several officers sustained injuries. When more reinforcements arrived, officers used dispersal tactics successfully.

In another example, a large group of offenders targeted a hotel in Rotherham that housed asylum seekers. They attacked police officers with missiles and attempted to enter the premises. A line of officers with shields were protecting hotel residents and staff, who would be at severe risk if they withdrew. The officers had to endure

sustained attack while waiting to receive mutual aid. The limited number of officers in attendance amounted to a 'thin blue line' and meant dynamic dispersal tactics weren't immediately available to commanders.

In both incidents, insufficient POPS-trained officers meant that the police were unable to make early arrests. Using arrest teams and tactics reduces the number of officers on the frontline. Commanders told us they couldn't always consider the option to make arrests because they needed to keep as many officers as possible in position.

In our 2011 report '[The rules of engagement: a review of the August 2011 disorders](#)', we identified this issue saying:

“Although current guidance sets out a range of tactics for dealing with disorder, not all of these could be used in practice due to a lack of equipment and the number of officers deployed ... and police estimate they need to outnumber rioters by between three and five to one if they are to make arrests and disperse groups – this meant that arrest tactics were impossible in some circumstances.”

In some cases, commanders would have had more options to intervene if extra trained and equipped officers had been available sooner. This could have stopped disorder more rapidly.

Police commanders displayed resilience and resolve

In forces that had to respond to prolonged or repeated periods of disorder, commanders' resilience was severely tested. Senior officers and POPS commanders worked for long hours over consecutive days. Despite this, many of them displayed resilience and leadership by remaining present to deal with the disorder.

Specialist resources played an important role in restoring order and bringing offenders to justice

Police use of dogs and horses helped to restore order, but they weren't available to all forces

Most police forces in England and Wales have dog units that include specially trained POPS dogs. Some forces rely on regional support. NPCC data showed that, on 30 July 2024, there were 497 POPS trained dogs and handlers across the UK.

We learned that police dogs were effective when they were used as a dispersal tactic. But we found that there is no current service-wide standard on personal protective equipment (PPE) for police dogs. Police dogs rely on their handlers to look after them and withdraw them when necessary. Some dogs were injured during the disorder. We were told that PPE options for police dogs are being considered by a national working group.

Across the UK, 12 forces have mounted branches (police who patrol on horseback). Because of this distribution, three of the nine police regions don't contain a mounted capability. Some forces without a mounted branch secured support through mutual aid requests. The use of horses moved crowds back from police lines during some disorder incidents.

Mounted officers and horses are both issued with PPE. But the PPE given to mounted officers isn't specially designed and is the same as that worn by all POPS officers. We were told that standard-issue PPE doesn't take account of the seated nature of the rider. We learned that several mounted officers were injured during the disorder. The police service needs to review PPE provision for mounted officers.

Aircraft and drones helped the police gather evidence and make decisions

The [National Police Air Service](#) operates a fleet of regionally based helicopters and fixed-wing planes to support forces in England and Wales. These can be used to obtain images from the air that can be recorded and shared. Many forces also use drones for the same purpose. In its '[Annual report 2022/23](#)', the National Police Air Service stated that police forces deployed drones 18,794 times over that period.

During the disorder, aircraft and drones gave commanders access to valuable live images that helped their decision-making. Drones offered commanders precise visual information on the disorder, including access and exit routes. This helped police, fire and ambulance commanders to assess threats and make immediate deployment decisions.

The POPS authorised professional practice doesn't include the use of drones. Because of their clear value and increasingly common use, the police service should consider them formally as a tactic in public disorder situations.

The police didn't use more dynamic crowd dispersal options

[Attenuating energy projectiles \(AEPs\)](#), commonly known as baton rounds, are a tactical option for the police. The SPR states that each police region should have the ability to deploy two full AEP teams, providing a total of 18 AEP teams if required.

[College of Policing authorised professional practice on attenuating energy projectiles](#) states that AEPs may be deployed "by trained and authorised officers in situations of serious public disorder" and that:

- "Officers trained in the use of AEP may be deployed in situations of serious public disorder where its use is judged to be necessary to reduce a serious risk of either:
- loss of life or serious injury
 - substantial and serious damage to property where there is, or is judged to be, a sufficiently serious risk of loss of life or serious injury to justify its use.

In assessing the risk of loss of life or serious injury occurring in a public order situation, the risks to police officers, members of the emergency services, members of the public and others should be taken into account.”

As far as we could establish, the police have never fired AEP during disorder in Great Britain. During Operation Navette, it wasn't readily available to some commanders. We learned that some commanders considered AEP but discounted it because they deemed its use inappropriate under the circumstances, or the criteria for its use as set out in the [authorised professional practice](#) weren't met.

Several commanders spoke about the need for a dynamic dispersal tactic that isn't resource intensive. Some suggested that water cannon should be available to help with dispersal at serious disorder events.

On 15 July 2015, the then Home Secretary, The Rt Hon Theresa May MP, made an [oral statement to Parliament on the use of water cannon](#). She said she wouldn't authorise water cannon for operational use in England and Wales:

“The decision on whether to authorise water cannon is a serious one. Water cannon, without safeguards, have the capacity to cause harm. It is a police tactic that has not been used in Great Britain previously and there are those who argue that its introduction would change the face of British policing.

This country has a proud history of policing by consent and this is a decision which goes to its very heart. Since I became Home Secretary, I have been determined to give the police the powers and tools they need to cut crime and tackle disorder on our streets.

But where the medical and scientific evidence suggests that those powers could cause serious harm, where the operational case is not clear, and where the historic principle of policing by consent could be placed at risk, I will not give my agreement.”

We acknowledge that use of water cannon by police in Great Britain would be highly controversial. There is limited police or other academic evidence about the effectiveness of its use. Opinions remain divided, even among senior police officers. And it was beyond the scope of this review to evaluate water cannon as a potential tactical option.

Nearly ten years have passed since the then Home Secretary's statement. Inevitably, conditions within society change over time. For that reason alone, it may be timely to explore whether current and foreseeable circumstances might render the use of water cannon conceivable.

Personal protective equipment, uniform and communication equipment

Some decisions on uniform and equipment exposed officers to greater risks

The College of Policing's authorised professional practice guidance on POPS sets out what uniform and equipment officers should wear for POPS incidents. This is known as a [POPS dress code](#). We are concerned that the initial dress code set by some commanders could have left officers vulnerable to injury.

POPS codes of dress are:

- Code 1 – full PPE, fire-resistant overalls and [NATO helmets](#), with shields at the direction of the POPS commander.
- Code 2 – PPE and a police-issued hat, and high-visibility jackets over the PPE; NATO helmets and shields must be readily available.
- Code 3 – the standard operational uniform that the force supplies.

The POPS commander may review the decision on dress code when there is a change in their threat assessment or in the nature of the incident. The authorised professional practice states that commanders should consider:

“Setting the policing standards, style, tone and dress code. For example, Code 1 dress and shield deployment may be a justifiable level of protection for officers but may also send a message to the crowd that should be reserved for higher levels of threat. However, an effective and comprehensive threat and risk assessment by POPS commanders and POPSAs [POPS advisers] will provide a clear rationale for POPS officers' dress code.”

Two examples illustrate our concerns.

One POPS commander initially deployed officers in code 3 uniform without PPE. When offenders attacked those officers, they had to protect themselves using only shields. They couldn't change into full PPE until more resources arrived.

Another POPS commander deployed officers in code 2 uniform but instructed them to leave their NATO helmets inside their vehicles. This meant they wore less-protective traditional police headwear. This exposed them to greater risk of head injury when they came under attack.

Some officers expressed concern about these decisions.

In our 2011 report '[The rules of engagement: a review of the August 2011 disorders](#)', we said:

“Tactics are dependent on kit being available. The location of relevant kit and equipment must therefore be considered at a strategic level to maximise availability and responsiveness when needed.”

We conclude that commanders must make sure that officers have ready access to their NATO helmets during all code 2 deployments.

Most personal protective equipment worked well, but there may be better options

We learned that that officers' PPE mainly worked well. It helped them to withstand missiles, such as bricks, street furniture and petrol bombs. But some equipment broke after taking repeated hits, including protective shields and helmets.

POPS officers' PPE includes a fire-retardant overall. Some forces issue one-piece overalls and some issue two-piece (top and bottom). We heard that officers attending scenes of prolonged disorder who needed to take a toilet break found it difficult if they were wearing one-piece overalls. This particularly affected female officers.

PPE also includes strategically located protective pads for protection against blunt trauma injuries. Officers have to apply several protective pads and guards, which can be awkward and time-consuming, especially under high-pressure conditions.

The police service has developed POPS officers' equipment piece-by-piece, over time. The NPCC's [Tactics, Training and Equipment working group](#) intends to review the suitability of POPS officers' PPE. We think that this should be a priority.

Communication equipment didn't always work effectively

Police communications rely on the Airwave system. We understand that the network proved dependable. But some officers experienced problems with earpieces not working, or not being compatible with their NATO helmets. This reduced their ability to communicate.

Recommendation 1

With immediate effect, the [National Police Chiefs' Council](#) and chief constables, working with the [College of Policing](#) and the Home Office, should create a plan and begin work to improve the police service's capacity and capability to respond to widespread violent disorder. They should plan to:

- in consultation with the Home Office, review the [public order public safety \(POPS\)](#)-related elements of the [Strategic Policing Requirement](#) and add relevant specialist capabilities, beginning with investigators and [intelligence](#) resources;
- complete a full assessment of the suitability and availability of personal protective equipment for all POPS trained [officers](#), including mounted branches and dog units;
- make sure that every police force or region can rapidly deploy drones during POPS incidents;
- develop and provide guidance on the use of drones within the College of Policing's [POPS authorised professional practice](#);
- review the range of available tactical options, equipment and technology to make sure officers can quickly and safely disperse people who take part in disorder; and
- review [POPS training](#) at all levels, including an assessment of the adequacy of the current fitness test for level 2 officers.

The National Police Coordination Centre and the mobilisation of public order public safety resources during the disorder

The police service frequently manages complex operations and events. Normally, the organisers notify the police of a forthcoming event. But some incidents may happen spontaneously.

During the disorder, the speed with which violence escalated meant forces couldn't always respond effectively by only using local [officers](#). This was particularly the case during the early days of the disorder.

The police service can move officers and resources across force boundaries to meet operational needs. The police call this [mutual aid](#).

During the disorder, many forces requested [public order public safety \(POPS\)](#) resources through mutual aid, which increased officer numbers at some scenes. This gave commanders greater flexibility with the tactical options available to them to deal with the disorder.

National mobilisation of public order public safety resources through mutual aid

The police service's national mobilisation plan

The [College of Policing's authorised professional practice on mobilisation](#) gives guidance on the structures, roles and responsibilities for local, regional and national mobilisation. And the '[National Police Chiefs' Council \(NPCC\) Mobilisation Operational Guidance](#)' specifies the numbers and types of POPS resources that should be available to deploy. The capacity and contribution of each force and region varies. In 2012, chief constables in England and Wales agreed the [National Policing Requirement](#) – a plan to allow the police service to meet the current [Strategic Policing Requirement \(SPR\)](#).

The plan states that the police service needs 297 [police support units \(PSUs\)](#) to be available to meet the SPR. This was based on the police service having to respond to three simultaneous seats of significant disorder over a seven-day period.

There are nine police regions in England and Wales. Each region contributes resources to the mobilisation plan, based on a calculation that takes into account the size of each force.

The National Police Coordination Centre

In 2011, we published a report '[The rules of engagement: a review of the August 2011 disorders](#)'. We recommended that policing should set up an 'all source' hub that would incorporate a national mobilisation capability, and a "fully networked public order [intelligence](#) hub, using advanced software to analyse trends in community tension (including through social media monitoring)".

In response to our recommendation, in April 2013, the [NPCC](#) created a facility called the [National Police Coordination Centre \(NPoCC\)](#). It supports forces across the United Kingdom, Crown Dependencies and British Overseas Territories. It is comprised of a small number of officers and [staff](#) from police forces across the UK. An assistant chief constable, known as the national mobilisation co-ordinator (NMC), leads NPoCC. [Regional information and co-ordination centres \(RICCs\)](#) operate in each region and support NPoCC in handling requests for mutual aid from forces.

In April 2020, NPoCC introduced an intelligence gathering and sharing function called [strategic intelligence and briefing \(SIB\)](#). SIB circulates daily and weekly intelligence reports to forces and the Government about major events and incidents. SIB's responsibilities include collating and circulating intelligence about [aggravated activists](#) and protests that have the potential to cause disorder or significant disruption on a regional or national scale. But SIB doesn't have its own intelligence gathering or development capabilities, so its effectiveness depends on the quality of intelligence it receives from forces.

National mobilisation of public order public safety resources worked well

Police mobilisation is categorised into three tiers: local (tier 1), regional (tier 2) and national (tier 3). They reflect the scale of resources the police service needs to respond to incidents or events.

We found that, overall, NPoCC's national mobilisation and co-ordination of POPS resources at tier 3 worked well. Although simultaneous disorder took place in more than three places, enough officers were mobilised to respond to it. But officers sent on mutual aid often arrived later than would ideally have been the case. This meant that some forces managed several disorder incidents for extended periods without enough officers.

The National Police Chiefs' Council is responsible for activating the national mobilisation plan, but chief constables don't have to follow it

The NPCC is responsible and accountable for acting when national mobilisation is required. But neither the NPCC nor NPoCC has the authority to require forces to supply resources through mutual aid. The chief constable of each force area is operationally independent and has full control over their resources.

[Section 98\(4\) of the Police Act 1996](#) gives the Home Secretary the power to direct chief constables to supply resources if it is “expedient in the interests of public safety or order”. At the time of our review, this power had never been exercised.

In November 2016, each chief constable signed an agreement called the '[National Police Collaboration Agreement – in relation to the National Police Coordination Centre \(“NPoCC”\)'](#). They agreed to support NPoCC by providing it with the assistance it requires when carrying out its functions. The NMC should be able to deploy resources to meet national needs and forces should supply resources when asked, but this is discretionary.

A chief constable acts as the NPCC's lead for POPS policing. This officer can activate the national mobilisation plan when they consider it necessary to mobilise large numbers of resources. They act as the national co-ordinating gold commander. Activating the plan helps the police service to co-ordinate its response. When this happens, forces should adopt common priorities and strategic aims. And they should move resources to where they are most needed.

With hindsight, the National Police Chiefs' Council's decision to implement the national mobilisation plan was made too late

We set out to fully understand the chain of events and decisions about mobilisation over the period in question. We established that much of the decision-making took place in the context of phone calls between police leaders as events rapidly unfolded. We were supplied with very few written records of these conversations or decisions. Because of this, our understanding is largely based on explanations we heard from interviewees.

The NPCC didn't formally activate the national mobilisation plan until Wednesday 7 August 2024. This was over a week after the first disorder in Southport and after six days of serious widespread disorder around the country that followed it. We explored the sequence of events that led up to this decision.

The first reported disorder took place on Tuesday 30 July 2024 in Southport. That same day, [personnel](#) from the north-west RICC (covering Merseyside) and NPoCC assessed if they should place NPoCC's national co-ordination team on standby in case the disorder escalated. The NMC was involved in this discussion. They agreed that the NMC would monitor events. NPoCC offered regions help with information and advice.

On Wednesday 31 July 2024, disorder broke out in Aldershot, Manchester, Hartlepool and London.

On Thursday 1 August 2024, the NPCC's Chair, its POPS portfolio lead and chief constables from forces affected by the disorder held a discussion. They assessed that the disorder incidents were isolated and manageable within tier 1 or tier 2. They raised, but discounted, the option to deploy resources to display an "overwhelming show of force".

Despite this, the NMC emailed each regional mobilisation co-ordinator to warn them of the potential for disorder as the weekend of Saturday 3 and Sunday 4 August 2024 approached. The NMC asked forces to start mobilising their POPS resources for that weekend. This request was for 10 percent of their SPR commitment to be available for mutual aid on Friday, Saturday and Sunday evening.

Forces were also asked to:

- review their intelligence and plans for upcoming events;
- adopt a risk-averse approach;
- set up intelligence cells;
- make sure there was good contact with communities, [independent advisory groups](#) and partner organisations;
- set up a command structure; and
- make sure their forces could respond effectively to any disorder.

On the evening of Friday 2 August 2024, serious disorder occurred in several towns and cities.

On Saturday 3 August 2024, after a discussion with the NPCC's Chair, the NPCC's POPS lead asked NPoCC to co-ordinate a national response to the disorder. NPoCC mobilised resources in response to requests from forces made through each RICC. No one activated the national mobilisation plan, but the system operated as if it had been.

On the morning of Sunday 4 August 2024, the national gold command structure was set up. The NPCC's POPS portfolio lead acted as the national co-ordinating gold commander. Each force's gold commander retained control of their resources, but the national co-ordinating gold commander would oversee the national plan to address the disorder, and the deployment of resources.

NPoCC phoned gold commanders in each force to advise them of the implementation of the national co-ordinating gold commander's structure and the imminent activation of the national mobilisation plan. With forces' consent, the national co-ordinating gold commander started to take control of and deploy their resources. And the NMC prepared a draft document that described the purpose and aims of the national

co-ordination function, called 'Operation Navette: National coordination framework for the policing response to cultural nationalist demonstrations and disorder'.

Further serious disorder occurred on Sunday evening in various locations around the UK.

On Monday 5 August 2024, the national co-ordinating gold commander approved the NMC's coordination framework document. And he required forces to mobilise additional POPS resources. These extra PSUs were to be on duty and in possession of full personal protective equipment (PPE). Forces could use them for tasks relating to Operation Navette.

On Tuesday 6 August 2024, the NPCC national co-ordinating gold commander held an online meeting with chief constables about the disorder. He informed them of the decision to activate the national mobilisation plan. The police service was to display an overwhelming show of force. This would require the creation of a national strategic reserve of 30 percent (or 90 PSUs) above the existing mutual aid requirements.

In practical terms, from Thursday 1 August 2024, forces mobilised and deployed more POPS resources. But from Tuesday 6 August 2024, the police service was deploying these resources more efficiently due to national co-ordination. The gold commanders we spoke with supported this national mobilisation decision.

Senior police leaders we spoke with openly and honestly reflected on the recent disorder and the decisions they made. Many officers we interviewed – including those responsible for making national decisions – accepted that, with hindsight, national mobilisation should have happened sooner. They had believed, based on what they knew at the time, that the disorder was isolated and manageable within forces or regions.

Making an early decision on Thursday 1 August 2024 to mobilise POPS resources nationally would have enhanced co-ordination, planning and deployment of resources. And it would have helped the police service to create a strategic reserve.

Several police leaders felt that it would be helpful for the NMC to become actively involved when forces are still at the stage of providing mutual aid regionally. We think that the NMC and NPoCC should be involved at this stage. It would involve them earlier in decisions and help them to support forces' requests for mutual aid.

Regional information and co-ordination centres gave support, but some could operate more effectively

RICCs co-ordinate the regional mobilisation of POPS resources. There is one RICC for each of the nine policing regions in England and Wales. NPoCC asks each force to request mutual aid through their region's RICC. RICCs should notify NPoCC when regions mobilise their resources. This is so NPoCC can plan and prepare for escalation to tier 3. If this happens, RICCs supply information and updates to NPoCC.

Each RICC has a small permanent workforce, supplemented by other staff depending on the scale of the incident and degree of co-ordination required. Every force contributes to the costs of a RICC. Every RICC operates differently, which includes how they manage out-of-hours requests for support from forces. Most RICCs don't offer cover outside office hours. One RICC doesn't operate at weekends.

We found examples of RICCs working well and providing effective support and co-ordination during the disorder. Neighbouring forces deployed trained officers to the seats of disorder quickly. This allowed the police to increase and rotate their resources. And it supported the use of more dynamic tactics to disperse crowds.

But we received mixed responses about the effectiveness of some RICCs during the first week of the disorder, particularly outside office hours and at weekends. And the methods forces used to request support from their RICCs were inconsistent. Some commanders and [force incident managers](#) didn't know about their region's mobilisation processes. Because RICC support wasn't always available, some gold commanders resorted to liaising directly with one another to obtain more resources. This resulted in an unclear picture of deployments, making national co-ordination more difficult.

Many of the force incident managers we interviewed confirmed they had no or extremely limited access to their force's duties management systems or databases to help them understand the resources that were available. This problem is more acute at a regional level. Most force incident managers can't access the national POPS system called Mercury. Forces and regional co-ordinators cannot easily obtain information about POPS officers' skills, their availability or their deployments.

Some commanders gave examples of RICCs' host forces retaining their own resources and allocating officers from other forces for mutual aid. In one example, the host force allocated officers from another two forces in the same region but retained its own resources. Commanders felt this protected the interest of the host force. One senior officer described this as causing some forces to be "bent out of shape".

An uncertain intelligence picture may have contributed to some forces retaining officers on duty locally rather than releasing them for mutual aid. As a result, forces that needed support might not have received it quickly enough.

The spread of the disorder, its speed of escalation and the demand from forces for resources placed some RICCs under considerable pressure. Some regional co-ordinators felt overwhelmed. This is concerning.

RICCs need to operate more consistently and have enough trained staff, so they can support forces effectively when they mobilise resources on a regional and national basis.

Investigative resources should have been mobilised more effectively to help those forces under most pressure

Earlier in this report, we comment about the SPR and how it needs to feature a greater range of police resources to support a national response to widespread disorder. NPoCC stated that it is only responsible for the deployment of resources the SPR designates. Forces aren't obliged to share other resources, including investigators.

During the response to the disorder, forces made hundreds of arrests in a brief period. They needed to investigate offences promptly. Some asked for mutual aid and NPoCC attempted to deal with these requests. But it couldn't develop an accurate picture of available resources to help meet this demand.

Some forces that made their requests earliest were more likely to receive a positive response. Others' mutual aid requests for investigative staff were unsuccessful. And some didn't know what specialist resources were available to them. These capabilities need to be understood clearly, described accurately and deployable at times of urgent need. NPoCC and the national co-ordinating gold commander should be able to deploy specialist resources such as investigators.

The National Police Coordination Centre needs to have the authority to make and influence decisions at both regional and national levels

We have highlighted some of the problems forces faced when they needed to obtain mutual aid. We believe the police service needs to have a far stronger national co-ordination function in place. This isn't a new finding.

In autumn 2013, General Sir Nick Parker KCB CBE produced a report, '[Independent review of ACPO](#)' (ACPO, the Association of Chief Police Officers, preceded the NPCC), in which he commented on the lack of central control of national resources at times of crisis. In the report, published a matter of months after NPoCC was set up, he said:

“Somewhat strangely from a military perspective NPoCC does not have the authority to direct, a capability that may become essential in a crisis. This makes the leadership role even more important, it requires a senior and operationally experienced figure who can command the respect of individual Chief Constables.”

Many [chief officers](#) we interviewed also felt that the national co-ordinating gold commander must be able to direct the release of resources from forces and deploy them. One chief constable proposed a “group insurance” policy that every force must contribute to at times of need. This arrangement could reflect the co-ordination model that counter-terrorism policing uses.

We believe that when the police service activates the national mobilisation plan, the national co-ordinating gold commander should have the authority to determine where to send POPS resources mobilised at tier 3. But, under this arrangement,

chief constables would still command resources deployed at POPS incidents in their force area.

The police service needs to be able to track public order public safety resources accurately

NPoCC uses a system called Mercury to hold information about the skills and capabilities of POPS officers. The police service introduced it in preparation for the 2012 Olympic Games. But NPoCC and forces can't track the resources they deploy during incidents effectively. Some forces can track the location of vehicles using the Airwave radio system, but this data isn't available to NPoCC.

During the disorder, police forces deployed hundreds of vehicles. But NPoCC was unable to effectively monitor deployments. This means that the police service didn't always deploy its POPS resources efficiently, which caused delays. And we learned about some forces that had to 'meet and greet' officers on mutual aid to find out who they were, their capabilities and where they had come from.

NPoCC relies on the best endeavours of a small team. In our view, it is under-resourced and lacks the technology it needs to effectively co-ordinate the response to widespread disorder. NPoCC advised us that it has started to explore technical options that would help it to monitor the deployment of POPS resources. We think this is essential. The police service needs basic information in real time to support deployment decisions. As a minimum, this includes the:

- identity, number, location and nature of resources;
- skills available;
- length of deployments; and
- operational status of vehicles.

We encourage NPoCC to examine existing systems in other organisations. For example, Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service houses a national asset tracking capability that enables commanders to monitor the deployment of units at incidents. We also note that [Fire and Rescue National Resilience](#) may potentially support all three emergency services in co-ordinating their resources during significant national events.

National Police Coordination Centre strategic intelligence and briefing struggled to deal with the scale of requests for information

During the initial stages of the disorder, SIB handled requests for data and information from police forces and officials from the Home Office and other government departments. Each needed information to help them understand the developing situation. This diverted SIB staff from their core intelligence function. At times during Operation Navette, SIB produced intelligence assessments and briefings every two hours. This placed SIB staff under immense pressure.

The national co-ordinating gold commander set up a data cell to meet the additional demand. It included Home Office officials who supported the collection of information and assessed the data requests being made to the NPCC. This proved to be useful when SIB had to obtain information from different government departments. The NPCC has identified that each organisation should nominate single points of contact. This would be more efficient because it would help SIB to manage information requests.

The police service has been slow to learn lessons from recent disorder

We are concerned that the police service failed to carry out a timely structured debrief. Without it, there cannot be a broader understanding of the response to the disorder.

The [College of Policing's authorised professional practice on briefing and debriefing](#) states that debriefs should take place to identify good practice, [areas for improvement](#) and [organisational learning](#). It states that forces should establish debriefing arrangements at an early stage.

In early October 2020, NPoCC and the [College of Policing](#) introduced the [national post-event learning review form](#). Forces should complete forms within 48 hours of any events.

In 2021, in our report '[Getting the balance right? An inspection of how effectively the police deal with protests](#)', we said:

“Forces are not always sharing information from protest-related debriefs as effectively as they should. ... There are also weaknesses in the way that forces use less-urgent information from debriefs or share such information nationally.

The College of Policing and the NPoCC have set up what should be an effective process for submitting and sharing information from debrief forms. But forces often do not comply properly with this process.”

We recommended that:

“Chief constables should ensure that their forces have sufficiently robust governance arrangements in place to secure consistent, effective debrief processes for protest policing. Such arrangements should ensure that:

- forces give adequate consideration to debriefing all protest-related policing operations;
- the extent of any debrief is proportionate to the scale of the operation;
- a national post-event learning review form is prepared after every debrief;
- the form is signed off by a gold commander prior to submission to the National Police Coordination Centre; and

- the National Police Coordination Centre should revise the national post-event learning review form so that it contains a section to report on the policing operation’s impact on the community.”

Minutes from Operation Navette meetings show that the national co-ordinating gold commander asked the College of Policing to devise a national debriefing strategy. But the police service didn’t implement the national post-event learning review process. We learned that some forces carried out local debriefs while waiting for the College of Policing to circulate national forms. We noted that the College of Policing extended its deadline for forces to submit debrief forms to 11 October 2024.

Most forces we reviewed told us that they hadn’t held a formal debrief. Several forces said that this was because they were waiting for guidance on a service-wide structured debrief. Where forces held them, they used a range of methods depending on the scale and complexity of the event and the potential to learn lessons. Some carried out short debriefs of officers and staff immediately after incidents, while others held a structured debrief using trained facilitators.

On a more positive note, NPoCC representatives told us that they have learned from their experiences. They said that they had identified improvements in resource planning and how NPoCC records information about resources on the Mercury system. NPoCC distributed an online survey for frontline staff to complete to assist their learning and planning.

And in August 2024, during the national mobilisation period, the College of Policing held two knowledge-sharing events for POPS commanders. These sessions covered police tactics, working with communities and criminal justice issues. The College of Policing told us that over 400 POPS commanders attended these events.

NPoCC representatives said that they had also recognised the need to review RICCs’ capacity and capability, and had updated the national mobilisation plan. On 24 September 2024, NPoCC circulated this draft plan for consultation. NPoCC said that the revised plan begins to address the need for the national co-ordinating gold commander to have the explicit authority to decide on national mobilisation numbers and to set the strategic plan that forces should follow. The draft plan states that “This will likely be in response to a national emergency or similar national critical requirement”.

But the draft plan still allows chief constables to derogate from it. It is our firm view that at a time of national crisis they shouldn’t have this option. In such cases, the national co-ordinating gold commander should have the authority to make all mobilisation decisions relating to national POPS resources. This wouldn’t compromise the operational independence of chief constables.

Emergency services worked together during violent disorder

We learned how the emergency services worked together during the disorder. In one notable example, a fire and rescue service commander accompanied a police commander into a hotel where offenders had started fires at its exterior. The commanders judged that evacuation wasn't necessary. This decision helped to make sure hotel residents, hotel staff and officers were less exposed to harm from offenders at a critical moment.

The [joint emergency services interoperability principles \(JESIP\)](#) are intended to improve collaboration between the police, fire and rescue, and ambulance services during major or complex incidents. They are also intended to support the development of a multi-agency response involving, for example, [local resilience forums](#), community groups, licensing bodies, and local authorities and their [safety advisory groups](#). Few of the forces we reviewed had fully implemented the JESIP model. Some forces had set up command, control and briefing arrangements, but these mainly involved the three emergency services. We think that there are opportunities for the emergency services to include other agencies and organisations in support of responses to national emergencies and events such as widespread disorder.

The police service should test its mobilisation plans more robustly

We learned that forces test local and regional mobilisation procedures. But we found little evidence that they carry out testing through live officer and equipment-based exercises. Force mobilisation testing exercises are mostly paper based.

We recognise that forces need to balance the disruptive effects of live mobilisation testing with day-to-day operational demands. Mobilising POPS resources takes officers away from their normal duties, which affects forces' ability to supply policing services, particularly when the force covers a large geographical area.

NPoCC regularly tests the capacity of police forces to mobilise resources under the national mobilisation plan. Some NPoCC testing involves officers reporting to locations in their force; other tests are paper-based exercises.

In 2016, the Home Office commissioned an exercise to "determine the extent that the police service could mobilise to deal with disorder" and to find the point at which "existing capabilities would be exhausted". NPoCC responded by running Exercise Breaking Point. It increased the resourcing requirement until police resources reached 'breaking point'. The exercise identified that the police could only mobilise 273 of the 297 PSUs required under the SPR. It led to 21 recommendations for change. We were unable to establish whether the number of POPS officers across England and Wales is higher or lower than it was in 2016. Furthermore, we were left unconvinced that the police service had implemented all the recommendations. For example, recommendation 11 was for a review of the requirement for 297 PSUs. That review remains long overdue.

In recent years, NPoCC has carried out two mobilisation exercises. The first, in July 2023, was a theoretical exercise in which it asked forces in England and Wales to mobilise 40 percent of their SPR commitment within a target of four hours. In November 2023, NPoCC carried out a second tabletop mobilisation exercise that included police dogs and [attenuating energy projectile \(AEP\)](#) officers.

Many POPS commanders we spoke with felt that the police service should increase mobilisation testing. They felt testing should be more rigorous. Some said that exercises or mobilisation testing should involve live scenarios and should take place outside normal office hours. On balance, we agree. Mobilisation testing is undoubtedly disruptive and costly, so the time and resources applied to it should be proportionate. But the experiences of July and August 2024, preceded by unconvincing outcomes of Exercise Breaking Point, have persuaded us that the police service should increase its mobilisation testing regime and take decisive action on its results.

Recommendation 2

With immediate effect, the [National Police Chiefs' Council](#) and chief constables, working with the [College of Policing](#), should create a plan and begin work to improve how the police service mobilises [public order public safety \(POPS\)](#) resources. They should plan to:

- give the National Police Chiefs' Council POPS lead (national co-ordinating gold commander) explicit authority to set the national strategy for [POPS mobilisation](#), and full command and control of the deployment of tier 3 resources;
- improve the capacity and capability of all [regional information and co-ordination centres](#), including providing better guidance and a common operating framework;
- improve the technology available to the [National Police Coordination Centre](#), so that it can deploy and manage [mutual aid](#) more effectively and efficiently – the police service should be able to access information on the identity, number, location and nature of resources; skills available; length of deployments; and operational status of vehicles;
- prioritise a national structured debriefing process about the police response to disorder that supports rapid learning and improvement; and
- increase the police service's POPS mobilisation testing regime and take decisive action on its results.

The resilience and well-being of officers repeatedly exposed to incidents of disorder

[Public order public safety \(POPS\) officers'](#) welfare and well-being are important. Officers must respond to incidents of violence and disorder that place them at risk of harm. We examined how the recent violent disorder had affected their resilience and well-being. We also wanted to identify what support was available to them during and after the disorder.

A variety of programmes and structures support the well-being of police officers and [staff](#) throughout England and Wales. Most forces offer these services as part of their [occupational health provision](#). This isn't always sufficient to meet demand. Forces' budgets, staff associations and charitable provision complement the support available. But forces operate differently, which means access to support services can vary. Eligible officers can access one of three specialist treatment centres. These offer physical recuperation and psychological support, largely through self-funded schemes.

[The National Police Wellbeing Service \(NPWS\)](#), also known as Oscar Kilo, offers well-being guidance and support for forces and other organisations. The NPWS has created the '[Blue Light Wellbeing Framework](#)' to help forces audit and [benchmark](#) themselves against a set of standards. But compliance with this framework isn't mandatory and the extent to which well-being is prioritised differs from force to force.

We found that the psychological and physical rehabilitation support forces gave to officers during and after the disorder was inconsistent. Officers responded positively when forces provided systematic and well-planned well-being support. But when forces considered their well-being as an afterthought, they felt let down. This tended to be when a force hastily completed its plan to deal with the effects of responding to the disorder.

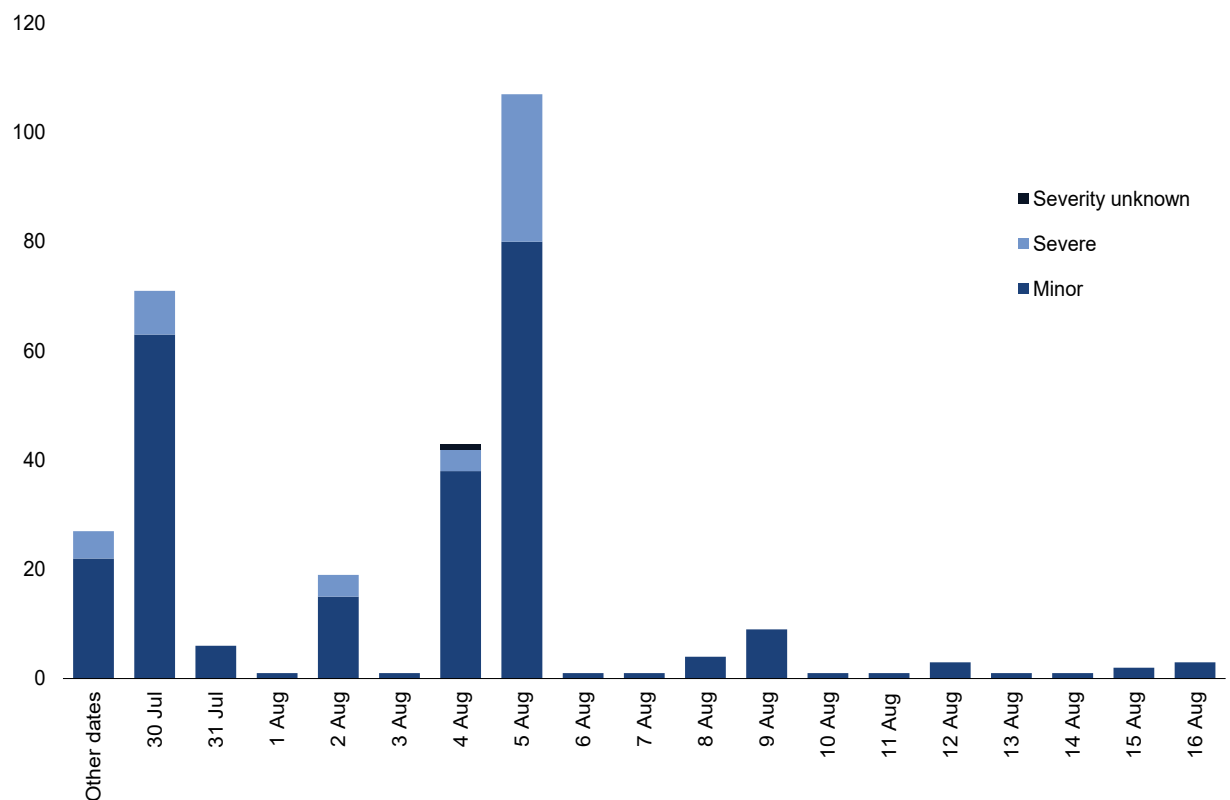
Adequate well-being support should be available for all police officers and staff, not just those on the frontline. Many [police personnel](#) worked exceptionally long hours and were under great pressure.

Officers acted bravely and many were injured during the violent disorder

In July and August 2024, offenders attacked police officers with missiles, including petrol bombs, during widespread disorder. They kicked and punched officers who were [protecting vulnerable people](#) and premises. Offenders damaged police vehicles and even set some of them on fire.

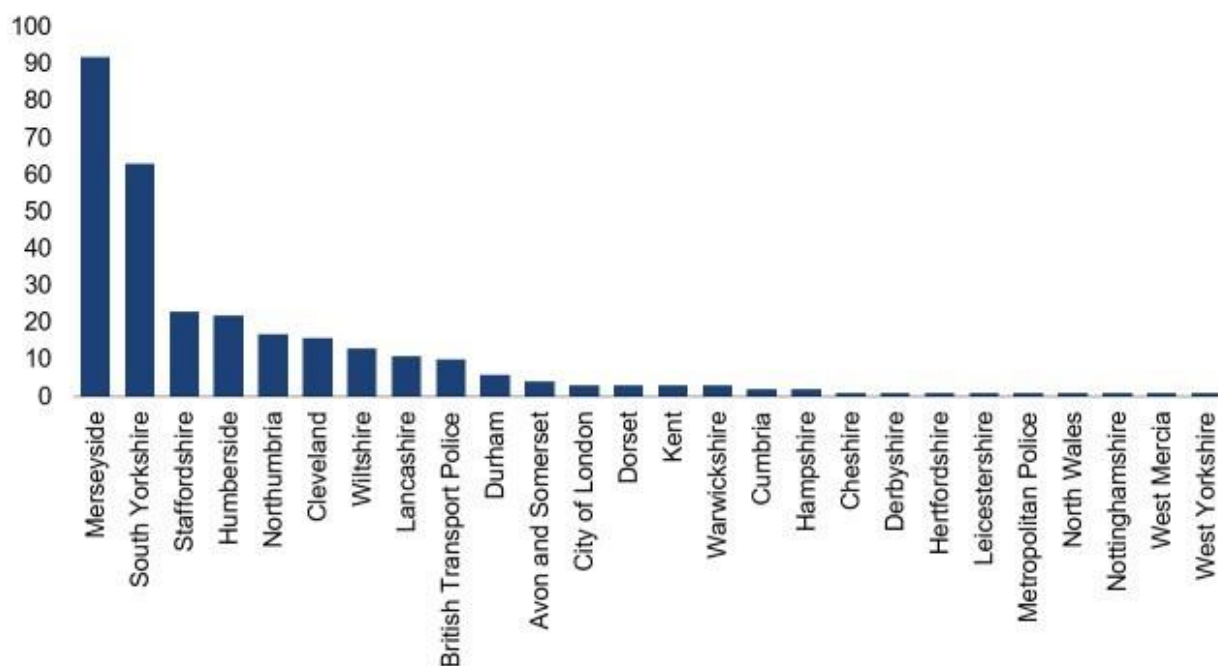
Police officers responded in an admirable way. According to [National Police Chiefs' Council \(NPCC\)](#) data, 302 officers sustained injuries during the incidents of disorder as they protected the public: 48 officers received serious injuries and 253 had injuries classed as minor injuries – the severity of one injury wasn't recorded. These injuries included concussion, severe facial injuries, broken bones, cuts and bruises. Sadly, 54 officers are known to have been hospitalised. Merseyside Police and South Yorkshire Police had the most officers injured during the disorder.

Figure 2: Number and severity of officer injuries across forces in England and Wales between 29 July and 16 August 2024, during Operation Navette



Source: Data collection from the National Police Chiefs' Council

Figure 3: Number of officer injuries across forces in England and Wales between 29 July and 16 August, during Operation Navette



Source: Data collection from the National Police Chiefs’ Council

Commanders and senior officers described exceptional levels of violence. One interviewee said:

“The violence was sustained and directed with extreme malice and with an intent to seriously injure police officers.”

Another stated that:

“What we saw this summer was simply not peaceful protest. It was concerted violent attacks on police officers who were doing their job protecting the public.”

In a witness statement compiled for court proceedings, one POPS commander reflected on what had happened, saying that:

“The vitriol and violence directed towards officers was extreme.”

We learned how some senior police leaders attended local hospitals to visit and support injured officers. Officers spoke highly of their personal support.

Some forces had particularly good plans in place to deal with injured officers. For example, one force transferred injured officers to a safe place where the ambulance service assessed their injuries.

But officers didn’t always get the help they needed. Some told us about how they had to make their own way to hospital, or how they waited for triage and treatment when still in uniform. This shouldn’t happen. Forces need to make sure they work with

ambulance services and hospital trusts to put in place effective protocols that support the treatment of injured officers.

Officers suffered from dehydration, hunger and exhaustion

Because of the arduous nature of policing scenes of violence and disorder, officers need easy access to drinking water. This is particularly the case during prolonged deployments. Some forces made sure officers remained hydrated. But in other cases, water supplies were too far away, or forces simply ran out of supplies altogether. This put officers' health at risk and reduced their resilience. We learned that some officers needed medical help due to dehydration.

The supply of food and nutrition is equally important. Some forces were better than others at making sure officers were fed. But some officers needed to source food themselves. Accessible toilet facilities also need consideration. Some officers told us that they restricted their water intake over significant periods of time because there were no toilet facilities. We learned that this particularly affected female officers, whose one-piece personal protective equipment overalls make accessing toilet facilities even more difficult. Female officers told us that forces need to make two-piece protective overalls available. We agree.

The [Police Federation](#)'s welfare vans supported officers and staff during the disorder. But it is unclear whose responsibility it is to deploy them. This means they weren't always used. It highlights the need for a more considered approach.

The NPWS, charities and other organisations supported officers by providing them with drinks and meals. We were impressed with the assistance given by the [Rapid Relief Team](#). It offered food, drinks and rest spaces for police officers away from the disorder, which they appreciated. But policing shouldn't have to rely on charitable provision.

Most forces planned to rotate their officers and give them rest breaks. But these plans didn't always consider the potential of the disorder lasting more than a few hours. The hot weather in late July and early August 2024 contributed to cases of exhaustion and dehydration. We accept that it can be difficult for forces to put effective measures in place during a critical or major incident. But forces need to have the capability to supply officers with adequate food and drinks during extended deployments, and planning and foresight are essential to making this happen.

Offenders targeted some officers disproportionately

Some commanders told us that offenders targeted officers disproportionately. This included supervisory officers (identifiable by insignia on their uniforms), female officers and those who could be identified as from ethnic minority backgrounds. Commanders were particularly concerned about deploying officers from ethnic minority backgrounds because of the level of animosity directed towards them.

The NPCC's ['Mobilisation Operational Guidance'](#) states that:

“Inclusivity and workforce representation considerations must be threaded through the core of any operation, from the planning stage through to delivery and debrief.”

Police operations need to consider the well-being of officers and should include inclusivity and representation at all stages. When officers are targeted disproportionately, it can have a profound effect on them, including their relationships within their communities.

A clear link exists between feelings of safety and well-being. Offenders may target certain officers at scenes of serious disorder and afterwards. Forces must consider these possibilities and take steps to mitigate it.

Public order public safety officers may need additional support

The [College of Policing](#), the NPCC and the NPWS don't categorise the role of a POPS officer as high risk. This means POPS officers don't have automatic access to psychological monitoring or the additional support that is available to officers in other high-risk roles, such as [child](#) abuse investigation.

We have previously made recommendations to forces about the well-being and support of police officers. In our 2023 report ['Police performance: getting a grip'](#), we recommended:

“Forces should review their proactive well-being support for officers and staff in high stress roles and situations. They should make sure that it includes targeted support that goes beyond mandatory annual psychological screening.”

Particularly in police forces that face frequent, extensive and severe disorder, there may be a case for reconsidering the status of POPS officers and including them in the definition of high-risk roles. And, on a case-by-case basis, officers deployed in hostile incidents may need to be considered for additional support, especially if their involvement was for a prolonged period.

The Police Covenant: police treatment and rehabilitation

The [Police Covenant](#) was introduced under the [Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022](#). The Covenant recognises the unique challenges of policing and acknowledges the sacrifices made by those who work or have previously worked in policing.

The '[Police Covenant Report 2024: Annual Report](#)' states that the legislation places a duty on the Home Office:

“to take steps to address detriment suffered by members of the police workforce, their families and those who have left policing relating to their health and wellbeing.

It is intended to ensure that officers, staff, volunteers and their families are not disadvantaged as a result of their service in the police and seeks to mitigate the impact that this may have on day-to-day life.”

The 2024 annual report outlines planned work on a review of the [Police Treatment Centres](#), to include “an assessment of the funding models which underpin the Police Treatment Centres (PTCs) to fully understand the sustainability risks moving forward”.

This is important because the police treatment and rehabilitation centres across the UK offer specialist physical therapy and mental health support. Two of the centres are governed by one organisation, known as the Police Treatment Centres. The other, [Flint House Police Rehabilitation](#), is a separate charity. All three provide treatment for police officers and others, but they operate differently.

The Police Treatment Centres receive no government funding. To be eligible for treatment at one of them, an officer must fund it themselves through monthly subscriptions. This contrasts with the services available to injured military service personnel.

Some forces contribute generously to these residential rehabilitation services, but others don't provide any funding at all. The Police Treatment Centres depend on officers' subscriptions for around 85 percent of their funding. They rely on forces' contributions and other income generation for the remainder. These centres carry out a vital role in supporting officers. Applications to their well-being programmes increased after the recent disorder.

It is difficult to understand why the Police Treatment Centres and Flint House aren't fully funded by contributions from every police force and the Home Office. Officers shouldn't have to pay for their own treatment or rehabilitation from physical or emotional injuries sustained while on duty. Chief constables and [police and crime commissioners](#) should play their part. We also hope that the Police Covenant's proposals to review the funding of the Police Treatment Centres makes a positive difference.

The police service could make better use of the support offered by the National Police Wellbeing Service

The NPWS, also known as Oscar Kilo, was introduced in 2019 to provide support and guidance for police forces across England and Wales on improving well-being. It operates from the College of Policing and works closely with the NPCC.

We found that the NPWS played an important role in supporting the police response to disorder. This was initially through the deployment of its well-being vans to Merseyside within 24 hours of the events in Southport. The NPWS fleet of ten vans can be used to provide officers with basic refreshments, rest areas and medical support. As the disorder spread, the NPWS sent its vans to several other forces. This offer of support was made directly to forces by the NPWS and not through any [gold group](#) structure.

A senior NPWS representative supported the NPCC and forces throughout Operation Navette. For example, the NPWS lead assembled 78 occupational health and welfare professionals at an early stage of the disorder. This helped the NPWS to offer the NPCC and forces useful advice about officers' well-being, resilience and support, especially if the disorder continued over a long period.

But the NPWS doesn't form part of the police command structure for major incidents. This means the support it gives takes place through less formal and unstructured processes. It is reviewing how it can have more effective links with [National Police Coordination Centre](#) and police command structures. The NPWS believes it could have made a greater contribution if it had been included in operational decision-making about well-being issues.

We feel that the police service needs to actively consider how it can use and support the NPWS when it responds to widespread disorder.

Forces should look for the effects of psychological injuries on public order public safety officers

Forces use different methods to collect information about injuries to officers. This means that national data on officers' injuries may be unreliable. This is especially the case in respect of psychological injuries, which are often not immediately recognisable.

The [NPWS introduced Operation Hampshire](#) to help the police service respond more effectively to assaults on officers. Forces can use an app to report details of assaults and injuries, including psychological injuries. The app has been recommended by the College of Policing.

But some forces appear reluctant to use the Operation Hampshire app and guidance. Their reluctance seems to be based on the additional administrative requirements involved. The NPWS states that using the Operation Hampshire approach would “provide a deeper understanding of the true levels of violence used against officers and staff and bring the data together to provide a national overview”.

We agree. If all forces consistently supported the NPWS in the use of Operation Hampshire, it would benefit the police service and injured officers and staff.

The NPWS also offers training in trauma support through the [emergency services trauma intervention programme](#). This programme aims to reflect best practice in early trauma interventions. Most forces have some form of post-trauma support that officers and staff affected by an incident can access. But forces don't always follow the best practice approaches of the programme. Some officers spoke positively about the support available to them after the disorder. But not all of them felt this way. Where best practice in post-incident trauma support exists, forces should adopt it and integrate it with other well-being services.

Recommendation 3

With immediate effect, the [National Police Chiefs' Council](#) and chief constables, working with the [College of Policing](#) and the Home Office should create a plan and begin work to improve the well-being support the police service gives to its [officers](#) and [staff](#). They should plan to:

- create formal protocols with ambulance services and hospital trusts for the treatment of police officers who are injured on duty;
- assess how [public order public safety](#) planning and [mobilisation](#), at force, regional and national levels, considers and prioritises the well-being of officers and staff, such as making sure they have access to food and drink, rest and rotation, personal protective equipment and toilet facilities;
- consider whether public order public safety roles should be defined as 'high risk', particularly in police forces that face frequent, extensive and severe disorder;
- review whether officers deployed in hostile incidents need additional support on a case-by-case basis; and
- examine the level of contribution that each police force, and the Home Office, makes to police treatment and well-being centres, so that all officers and staff who need treatment can access it.

Annex A – List of forces, other organisations and individuals involved in this review

Main forces

- Cleveland Police
- Devon and Cornwall Police
- Humberside Police
- Merseyside Police
- Metropolitan Police Service
- Northumbria Police
- South Yorkshire Police
- Staffordshire Police

Additional forces

- British Transport Police
- Police Scotland
- Police Service of Northern Ireland

Other organisations and individuals

- Chief Police Officers' Staff Association
- College of Policing
- Counter Terrorism Policing
- Counter Terrorism Policing North West
- Counter Terrorism Policing North East
- Crown Prosecution Service
- Eastern Regional Organised Crime Unit
- Fire and Rescue Service
- Home Office
- National Community Tensions Team

- National Crime Agency
- National Lead for Tackling Online Exploitation
- National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC)
- NPCC Chair
- NPCC Criminal Justice Coordination Committee Chair
- NPCC Community Tension Lead
- NPCC Dogs Lead
- NPCC Mounted Lead
- NPCC Protest Lead/Working Group
- NPCC Public Order Public Safety Working Group Lead
- NPCC Recovery Lead
- NPCC Sensitive Intelligence Network Lead
- NPCC Serious and Organised Crime Lead
- NPCC Tactics, Training and Equipment Working Group Chair
- NPCC and Operation Navette Intelligence Lead
- National Police Coordination Centre
- National Police Coordination Centre Strategic Intelligence and Briefing
- National Police Wellbeing Service (Oscar Kilo)
- North East Regional Organised Crime Unit
- North West Regional Organised Crime Unit
- North West Serious and Organised Crime Lead
- Operation Navette Intelligence Lead
- Operation Navette Investigation Lead
- Police Federation of England and Wales
- Police Superintendents' Association
- Regional information and co-ordination centres
- Scottish Police Information and Coordination Centre
- Sensitive Intelligence Network
- South East Regional Organised Crime Unit
- UNISON
- UK Football Policing Unit

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