



National Audit Office



# The Police Uplift Programme

Home Office

---

**REPORT**

**by the Comptroller  
and Auditor General**

---

**SESSION 2021-22  
25 MARCH 2022  
HC 1147**



We are the UK's independent public spending watchdog.

We support Parliament in holding government to account and we help improve public services through our high-quality audits.

The National Audit Office (NAO) scrutinises public spending for Parliament and is independent of government and the civil service. We help Parliament hold government to account and we use our insights to help people who manage and govern public bodies improve public services.

The Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG), Gareth Davies, is an Officer of the House of Commons and leads the NAO. We audit the financial accounts of departments and other public bodies. We also examine and report on the value for money of how public money has been spent.

In 2020, the NAO's work led to a positive financial impact through reduced costs, improved service delivery, or other benefits to citizens, of £926 million.



National Audit Office

# The Police Uplift Programme

Home Office

---

## Report by the Comptroller and Auditor General

Ordered by the House of Commons  
to be printed on 23 March 2022

This report has been prepared under Section 6 of the  
National Audit Act 1983 for presentation to the House of  
Commons in accordance with Section 9 of the Act

---

**Gareth Davies**  
**Comptroller and Auditor General**  
**National Audit Office**

**18 March 2022**

## Value for money reports

**Our value for money reports examine government expenditure in order to form a judgement on whether value for money has been achieved. We also make recommendations to public bodies on how to improve public services.**

The material featured in this document is subject to National Audit Office (NAO) copyright. The material may be copied or reproduced for non-commercial purposes only, namely reproduction for research, private study or for limited internal circulation within an organisation for the purpose of review.

Copying for non-commercial purposes is subject to the material being accompanied by a sufficient acknowledgement, reproduced accurately, and not being used in a misleading context. To reproduce NAO copyright material for any other use, you must contact [copyright@nao.org.uk](mailto:copyright@nao.org.uk). Please tell us who you are, the organisation you represent (if any) and how and why you wish to use our material. Please include your full contact details: name, address, telephone number and email.

Please note that the material featured in this document may not be reproduced for commercial gain without the NAO's express and direct permission and that the NAO reserves its right to pursue copyright infringement proceedings against individuals or companies who reproduce material for commercial gain without our permission.

Links to external websites were valid at the time of publication of this report. The National Audit Office is not responsible for the future validity of the links.



# Contents

**Key facts** 4

**Summary** 5

## **Part One**

The aims of the Police  
Uplift Programme 12

## **Part Two**

The management of the Programme  
and progress against its objectives 22

## **Part Three**

Maximising the impact of  
the Programme 35

## **Appendix One**

Our audit approach 47

## **Appendix Two**

Our evidence base 49

This report can be found on the National Audit Office website at [www.nao.org.uk](http://www.nao.org.uk)


If you need a version of this report in an alternative format for accessibility reasons, or any of the figures in a different format, contact the NAO at [enquiries@nao.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@nao.org.uk)


The National Audit Office study team consisted of:


Rob Cooper, Greg Hannah and Caroline Harper, under the direction of Oliver Lodge, with the assistance of Conor Dennehy and Zainab Naveed.

For further information about the National Audit Office please contact:

National Audit Office  
Press Office  
157-197 Buckingham Palace Road  
Victoria  
London  
SW1W 9SP

 020 7798 7400

 [www.nao.org.uk](http://www.nao.org.uk)

 @NAOorguk

## Key facts

---

**128,434**

the adjusted baseline, by headcount, of police officers in England and Wales against which progress in recruiting the 20,000 additional police officers will be measured

---

**11,048**

the number of additional officers recruited between October 2019 and the end of December 2021

---

**148,434**

the number, by headcount, of police officers in England and Wales the Home Office expects to have in place by March 2023

---

**£3.6 billion** expected spend on the Police Uplift Programme to March 2023, to cover recruitment, training and support

**£18.5 billion** estimated total cost of the Programme over ten years, including officers' and additional police staffs' salaries and associated costs, equipment, the programme team, and downstream costs to the criminal justice system

**505,050** the Home Office's estimate of the number of crimes the new officers will help to prevent per year from 2024-25

**42%** proportion of new police officer recruits who are female. In total 34% of police officers are female as of December 2021

**11.8%** proportion of new police officers recruited from an ethnic minority background. In total 8% of police officers are from an ethnic minority background as of December 2021

# Summary

**1** The Home Office (the Department) has overall responsibility for policing in England and Wales. It allocates central government funding and decides how this is divided between the 43 territorial forces. A chief constable heads each force, with authority over all operational policing decisions and staff. Chief constables report to locally elected police and crime commissioners or mayoral authorities, which set strategic objectives, allocate funds and hold forces to account on behalf of the public.

**2** Funding for police forces fell substantially after 2009-10, in line with government objectives to reduce the deficit. Between then and 2017-18, police officer numbers reduced by more than 21,000 to 122,405 full-time equivalent officers. Responding to this pressure on funding, and the changing nature of demands on policing, *Policing Vision 2025* set out how future local policing would be tailored to society's complex and diverse needs built on evidence-based demand analysis, with more specialist capabilities and an agile and professional workforce.

**3** In July 2019, the government announced plans to recruit an additional 20,000 police officers in England and Wales by the end of March 2023. This represents a planned net increase, and to meet the target, while compensating for resignations and retirements, forces will have to recruit approximately 50,000 officers over the three years. The Department established the Police Uplift Programme (the Programme) to help forces to achieve this. It committed to putting the new officers on the streets to reduce crime, protect communities and respond to changing demands on policing. The scope of the Programme includes:

- supporting forces to recruit 20,000 additional police officers by March 2023;
- identifying and improving workforce processes to attract, recruit and retain officers to ensure forces recruit the additional officers; and
- supporting forces to use the uplift as an opportunity to become more representative of the communities they serve.

**4** The Department expects to spend £3.6 billion on the Programme up to March 2023 on recruitment, training and equipment for the officers, and the programme team. It expects the Programme to cost £18.5 billion in total over the next 10 years.

**5** This report examines whether the Department is well placed to deliver value for money from the Programme. It covers the:

- aims of the Programme (Part One);
- management of the Programme and progress against its objectives (Part Two); and
- challenges in maximising the impact from the Programme (Part Three).

**6** It is too early to assess whether the additional officers are delivering the wider aims of government to improve public safety and help to reduce crime, as they will need time to become fully effective in their roles. Furthermore, improvements in wider criminal justice outcomes depend on many more factors than the number of police officers. We have focused our report on progress to date in recruitment, and how the Department plans to demonstrate the impact of the additional officers in the future.

## **Key findings**

### Managing the Police Uplift Programme

**7 The Department has managed the Programme well.** To date, the Programme is a positive example of engagement between the Department and policing. The Department placed a senior police officer in the role of programme director to ensure decision-making was informed by a strong operational perspective. The central programme team has remained broadly stable from the outset, which has helped maintain continuity and supported relationships between stakeholders. It has put in place appropriate controls to monitor recruitment and release funding to forces and acts quickly where it finds forces need support. Our survey of chief constables was positive about the support offered by the programme team. The tightly scoped objectives have helped to maintain a focus on delivery, and the Programme also benefits from strong support from police forces for recruiting 20,000 additional police officers (paragraphs 1.7 to 1.10, 2.2 to 2.9 and Figures 4 and 5).

**8 The Department adjusted the Programme to stay on course and respond to new challenges.** It responded swiftly at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic so it could maintain momentum during lockdown. The Department, the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) and the College of Policing quickly set up a national online assessment process and moved initial training online to allow recruitment to continue. The Department also plans to increase capacity within regional organised crime units (units with specialist policing capabilities equipped to deal with more complex crimes, including fraud). The details for such moves (originally envisaged to involve 1,150 experienced officers moving to these units by March 2023) were worked through after the start of the Programme. Following engagement with policing, the Department now expects 725 officers to move into these units by March 2023, with the remainder moving after the end of the Programme (paragraphs 2.9 and 2.14).



**9 The Programme is currently on track to recruit 20,000 additional officers**

**by March 2023.** By the end of December 2021 forces had recruited 11,048 of the 20,000 additional officers, against the March 2022 target of 12,000. The Department expects the remaining officers will be recruited in the final year of the Programme, although it accepts this will be more challenging. The net increase to date has been boosted by fewer officers retiring or resigning since the COVID-19 pandemic began than in previous years. Additionally, the Department estimates that approximately one quarter of those recruited during the first year of the Programme had previously worked in policing as police community support officers (PCSOs), special constables or civilian staff. While these moves supported forces to reach their first-year targets comfortably, the increased officer numbers might not translate to an equivalent increased visible police presence in communities, unless forces backfill the vacant PCSO or special constable positions (paragraphs 2.12 to 2.15 and Figures 6 to 8).

**10 Diversity in policing is slowly improving.** The Department has an objective to support forces to become more representative of the communities they serve, although it has not put recruitment targets in place, and recognises that this will not be sufficient in itself to change the culture in policing. Before the Programme began, 32% (39,800) of police officers were female and 7% (8,400) of those who reported their ethnicity came from ethnic minority backgrounds compared with 51% and 14% of the population in the 2011 census. By December 2021, 42% of newly recruited police officers were female, increasing the proportion of female officers in England and Wales to 34%. Almost 12% of new recruits report they are from an ethnic minority background, contributing to an overall proportion of 8% of all officers in December 2021, although this hides considerable variation within different ethnicities. Representatives of some forces told us that building trust in ethnic minority communities will take years and cannot be addressed within the timeframe of the programme (paragraphs 1.8 to 1.9, 2.4, 2.16 to 2.19 and Figures 9 and 10).

**11 The Programme has helped standardise some recruitment practices and data collection and has improved the Department's understanding of the police workforce.**

Before the Programme, there was no standard approach to collecting and analysing workforce data across the 43 police forces in England and Wales. The programme team has worked with forces to standardise some processes (such as a single application form and online assessment) and has created a system to capture data about recruitment and the police workforce in a consistent format. This has helped identify trends across the 43 forces and enabled earlier intervention where forces are at risk of failing to meet recruitment targets (paragraph 3.2 to 3.3 and Figure 11).

## Challenges in maximising the impact of the additional police

**12 Recruiting so many new officers in a short timeframe creates challenges.** It is unprecedented to recruit so many new officers in such a short time, and it will take time for the positive impacts of the uplift to be realised. The Department, which oversees the policing system, has an important role to work with police forces, the College of Policing and the NPCC on processes and support to help forces maximise the benefits. In doing so the Department will need to recognise challenges including:

- **the distribution of officers, which may not reflect current and future policing needs.** The Department allocated officers to forces using the existing Police Allocation funding formula, despite acknowledging as far back as 2015 that the formula was “more and more detached from the real demands on policing”. The Department has committed to reviewing the funding formula before the next general election, and this may affect forces’ abilities to maintain officer numbers if their funding allocation changes. The Department will have a role in understanding what these impacts may be and helping forces to manage them (paragraphs 1.12 and 3.7);
- **a reduction in forces’ organisational flexibility.** Since 2010, many police forces have made increased use of civilian staff in some operational roles which do not require a warranted police officer, or that demand specialist skills. However, many chief constables told us they are concerned that the focus on increasing and maintaining officer numbers means they will have less flexibility in how they can use resources in the future, potentially undermining previous efforts to modernise their workforce. In our survey of chief constables, 39 of the 40 respondents anticipated that they would need to find further efficiencies to maintain their target officer numbers after 2023. The Department has tried to address this concern by confirming additional funding until 2024-25 (paragraph 3.8);
- **the operational burden on more experienced officers to train all the new recruits.** Historically a key part of a new police officer’s development is a period of coaching by a ‘tutor constable’ to help them develop their skills and experience as an officer. Half (20) of the chief constables we surveyed told us this can take up to about 50% of an experienced officer’s time, reducing their operational capacity while they are supporting new recruits (paragraphs 3.5 and 3.6); and
- **an increasing reliance on an inexperienced frontline workforce.** Almost all the new officers will be deployed within their force’s local policing function. The new 20,000 officers, coupled with normal workforce turnover, means that by 2023-24, 38% of police officers nationally will have fewer than five years’ experience (compared with 12% in 2014-15). This will be exacerbated by the need for most new recruits to spend substantial amounts of time in college or otherwise learning (more than 50% of their time in the first year and approximately 30% in their second year). Additionally, some experienced officers will move into regional and national functions such as organised crime units (paragraphs 3.4, 3.13 and Figure 12).

**13 The Department has not yet set out how it will evaluate the Programme's impact on crime.** The Department intends that the additional officers will support forces to deliver the government's priorities to reduce crime, protect communities and respond to changing demands on policing, but it has not set out how it will measure the extent to which this is achieved. Decisions on how to deploy the additional officers are a matter for chief constables and the relationship between the number of police officers and crime outcomes (for example, charges, summons or out of court settlements) is complex. In its business case the Department estimated the additional officers will provide net positive benefits of £4.7 billion over the next 10 years through additional charges, reduced reoffending and deterrents, and will reduce the number of crimes by around half a million a year by 2024-25. However, it acknowledges its evidence base is weak and highly sensitive to what appear to be optimistic assumptions based on limited evidence. The COVID-19 pandemic has also changed the nature of crime, making it even more challenging to demonstrate a causal link between changes in crime and police numbers (paragraphs 1.7, 1.10, 3.10 to 3.13 and Figures 15 and 16).

**14 The increase in police officers will exacerbate demand pressures on a criminal justice system that is already under strain and struggling to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.** The Department is working with criminal justice system partners to support their demand planning. But at this stage its understanding of the likely impact of an additional 20,000 officers is still developing. It recognises that an increase in officers will put pressures on courts, the Crown Prosecution Service and prison places, but admits it has more to do to understand the downstream impacts of the additional officers. It expects to complete this work in early 2023 (paragraphs 3.14 and 3.15).

### **Conclusion on value for money**

**15** The Police Uplift Programme has benefited from tightly defined objectives, strong support for its aims and effective joint working between the Department, National Police Chiefs' Council, College of Policing and police forces. The Department is on track against its recruitment target and, through standardising processes and data collection, it has a richer understanding of the police workforce that should help support decision making in the future, both locally and nationally. In the narrow terms set for it – to provide forces with an additional 20,000 police officers – the Police Uplift Programme is on course to achieve value for money.

**16** Ultimately, the benefits the additional officers are intended to bring will only be seen in the longer term. The Programme's success will be judged on the impact it has on strengthening the ability of police forces to reduce crime, improve public safety and adapt to the changing demands they face. These outcomes may take several years to materialise and will depend on a complex range of factors, in addition to the skills and experience of the police workforce. To maximise the impact of the Programme and secure a positive legacy from its investment in additional officers, the Department will need to work closely with policing and the wider criminal justice system to manage the implications of rapidly recruiting such a large number of police officers. This will include providing clarity over future funding arrangements, so that forces are able to plan effectively and develop the capabilities necessary for 21st century policing.

## **Recommendations**

- 17** To maximise the impact of the Police Uplift Programme the Department will need to work closely with policing to:
- a** **learn from and build on successes.** The Department should identify and share what has worked well from this positive example of collaboration with policing so it can apply these lessons to future programmes;
  - b** **build on the benefits already delivered.** The Department, College of Policing and NPCC should review the benefits of standardising processes across policing and consider with forces if there are opportunities for further standardisation;
  - c** **support development of workforce plans.** As forces move beyond the focus on recruiting officers, the Department should build on its understanding of the workforce to help forces create evidence-based, up to date and actionable workforce plans built on capabilities needed to address current and future demand;
  - d** **complete the funding formula review** and ensure it is informed by a wider understanding of capabilities, and local needs and circumstances. As it implements any changes to the formula the Department should ensure that the impacts on forces are understood and managed;

- e develop detailed benefits realisation plans.** The success of the Programme will ultimately be judged on the impact the additional officers have in supporting police forces to reduce crime and protect communities. The Department should put in place the means to demonstrate what impact the additional officers have had in strengthening the capability of policing; and
- f support cross-system demand planning.** If the 20,000 additional officers are successful in increasing crime outcomes, this will increase demand in courts, prisons and probations services. The Department should work with its criminal justice partners to ensure that there is a shared, up to date and realistic understanding of the future demand facing the criminal justice system.

# Part One

## The aims of the Police Uplift Programme

### Introduction

**1.1** The criminal justice system operates to: reduce crime and reoffending; punish offenders; protect the public; provide victims and witnesses with reparation; increase public confidence, including among victims and witnesses; and ensure the system is fair and just. It includes police forces, the Crown Prosecution Service and other bodies who can bring prosecutions, HM Courts & Tribunals Service, victims and witness services, prisons, probation services, the judiciary and lawyers. Police forces play an important role in the criminal justice system (**Figure 1** on page 14 and 15), investigating crime and charging suspects, who enter the system as defendants.

**1.2** The Home Office (the Department) is responsible for policing in England and Wales. It allocates central government funding and decides how this is divided between the 43 territorial forces. A chief constable heads each force, with authority over all operational policing decisions and staff. Chief constables report to locally elected police and crime commissioners or mayoral authorities, which set strategic objectives, allocate funds and hold forces to account on behalf of the public. Police and Crime Panels, composed of representative members from local authorities, hold police and crime commissioners to account on behalf of local citizens.

**1.3** Front-line policing encompasses a wide range of activities and roles, which are undertaken by both uniformed and non-uniformed staff who hold a range of different powers. These include:

- **police officers** (also referred to as 'warranted officers'), who hold the office of constable, having taken an oath of allegiance to the Crown. Regardless of rank, all UK police officers are constables, with powers of arrest. An officer has discretion in their decision-making and personal liability for their actions. Police officers have access to most statutory employment rights, but it is a criminal offence for police officers to take industrial action;
- **special constables**, who are volunteers working with their local police for a number of hours per month. Special constables wear police uniform, hold the same legal powers of arrest as a constable and undertake front-line policing roles alongside their salaried colleagues;

- **police community support officers (PCSOs)**, who are uniformed police staff working alongside police officers and who, while they share some powers (which can vary between police forces), they cannot make arrests. PCSOs provide an additional uniformed public presence in their local communities; and
- **civilian staff**, who support officers and PCSOs by undertaking a wide range of functions including call-handling, administration, forensic investigation, custody management and intelligence analysis.

### Changing demands on policing

**1.4** Between the 2009-10 and 2017-18 financial years, police officer numbers in England and Wales fell by more than 21,000 to 122,405 full-time officers (**Figure 2** on page 16).<sup>1</sup> This was the lowest level since the 1980s. The Department reduced funding for police forces after 2009-10 in line with government objectives to reduce the deficit.<sup>2</sup>

**1.5** At the same time, characteristics of crime changed, with police dealing with more complex crimes (such as rape and sexual assault) and an increasing need to deal with online crime and digital evidence. In response to the changing pressures on policing, in October 2016, the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) published *Policing Vision 2025*.<sup>3</sup> It set out how future local policing would be tailored to society's complex and diverse needs built on evidence-based demand analysis, with more specialist capabilities and an agile and professional workforce (**Figure 3** on pages 18 and 19).

**1.6** In 2019, the Department concluded that the combination of increases in recorded crime and a reduced police workforce meant that territorial policing was "seriously stretched". It found there were insufficient officers available to attend and investigate crimes effectively and response officers were "overwhelmed" by high numbers of incidents.

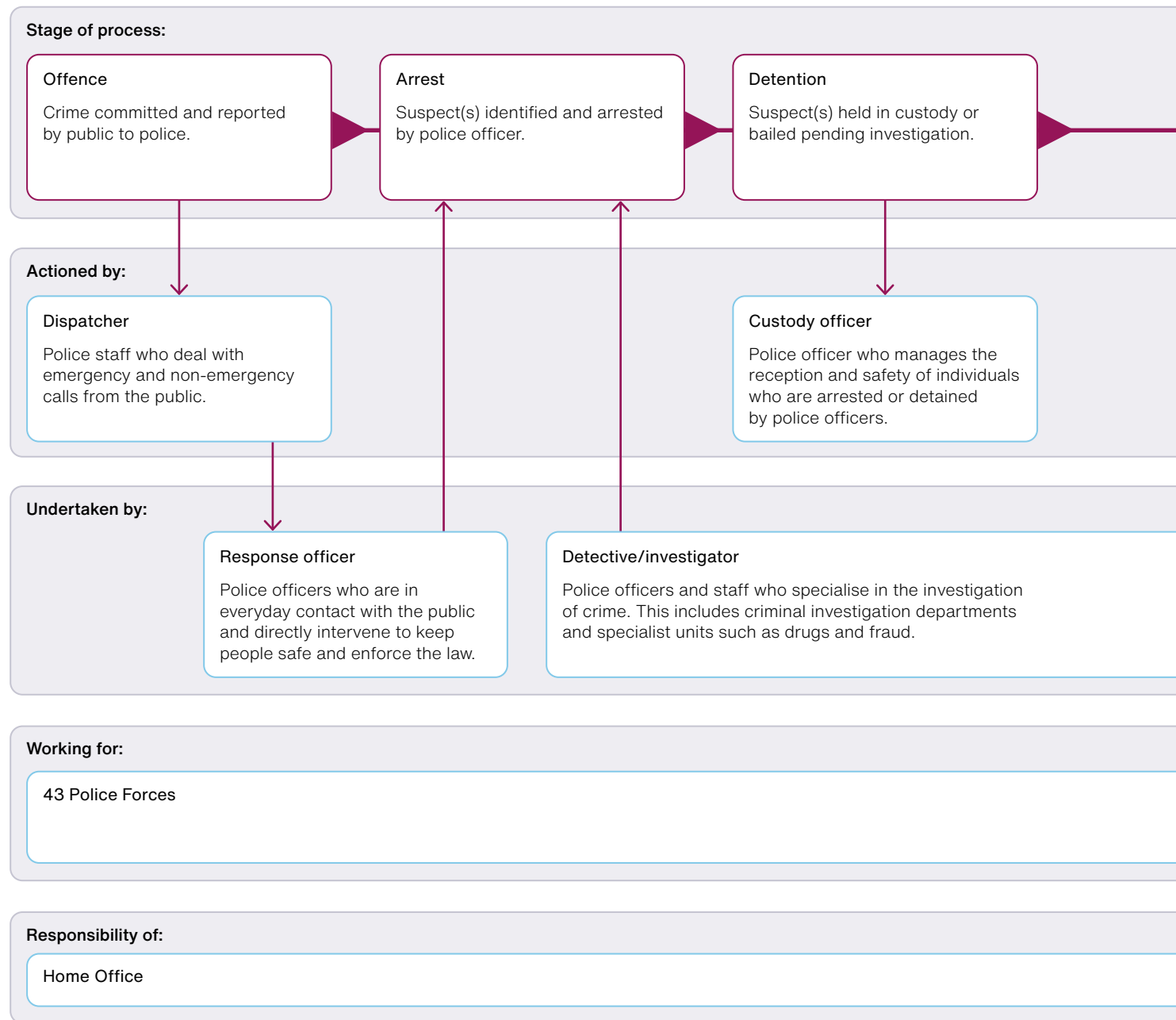
1 The 122,405 total for full-time officers uses the police's full-time equivalent figure. The Police Uplift Programme measures its progress using headcount. Through the remainder of this report we will refer to headcount figures unless stated otherwise.

2 Comptroller and Auditor General, *Financial sustainability of police forces in England and Wales*, Session 2015-16, HC 78, National Audit Office, June 2015; Comptroller and Auditor General, *Financial sustainability of police forces in England and Wales 2018*, Session 2017-2019, HC 1501, National Audit Office, September 2018.

3 Association of Police and Crime Commissioners and National Police Chiefs' Council, *Policing Vision 2025*, October 2016.

**Figure 1**  
Territorial policing's role in the wider criminal justice system

The criminal justice system relies on close working between police forces, the Crown Prosecution Service, courts and prison and probation services

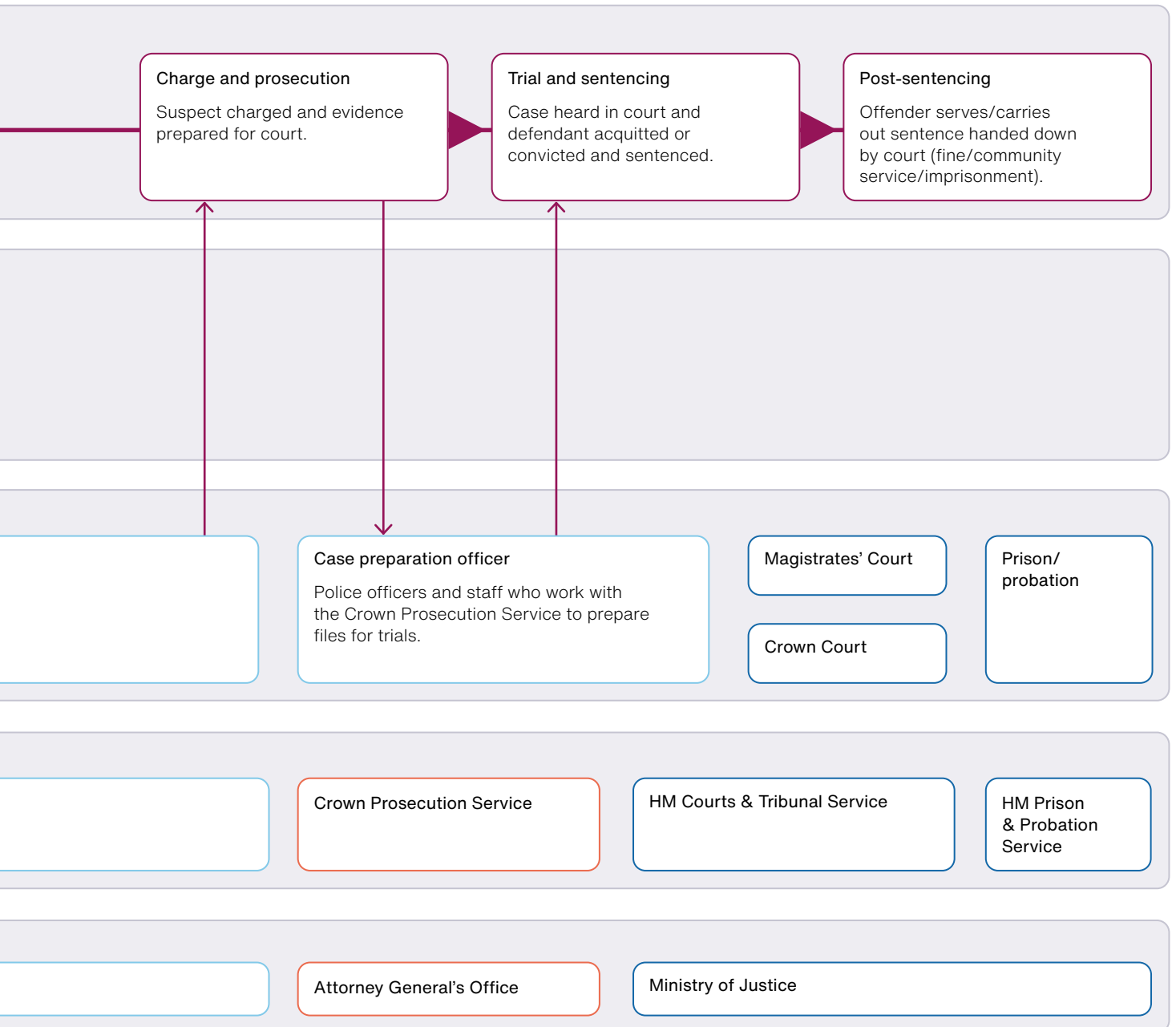


- Stage of process
- Home Office
- Ministry of Justice
- Attorney General's Office

**Note**

1 Policing also plays a wider role within the criminal justice system where offences may be resolved through cautions, on the spot fines or with no further action being taken.



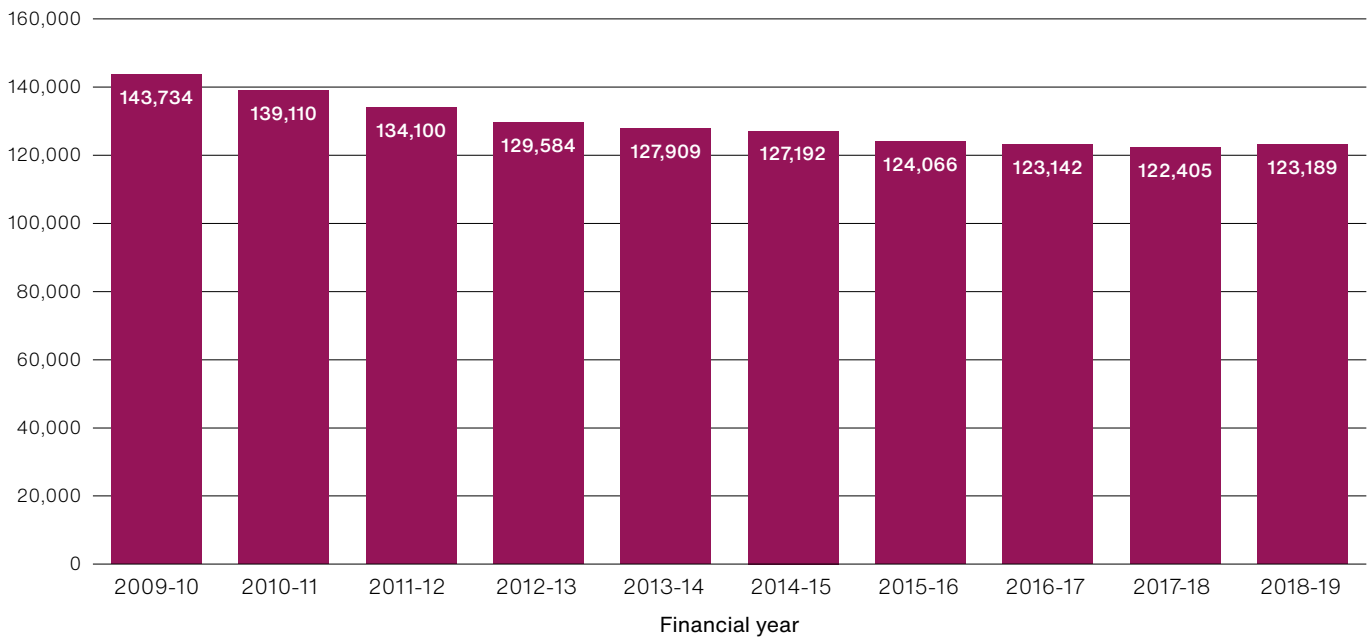


**Figure 2**

## Police officers in England and Wales, 2009-10 to 2018-19

The number of police officers (full-time equivalent (FTE)) in England and Wales fell each year between 2009-10 and 2017-18, leading to an overall reduction of 21,329 FTE officers during this period. The number of officers increased by 784 in 2018-19

Number of police officers (FTE)

**Notes**

- 1 All figures as at end of financial year, 31 March.
- 2 The reduction in police officer numbers for workforce reporting uses FTE figures. However, the Police Uplift Programme bases its recruitment figures on headcount.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of The Home Office's police workforce data

**The Police Uplift Programme**

**1.7** In July 2019, the government announced plans to recruit an extra 20,000 police officers in England and Wales by the end of March 2023. It established the Police Uplift Programme (the Programme) to achieve this. The Department intends the additional officers will “strengthen the police’s ability to meet current and future crime reduction ambitions and increase levels of public confidence in policing in general”.

**1.8** The scope of the Programme includes:

- supporting forces to recruit 20,000 additional police officers by March 2023;
- identifying and improving workforce processes to attract, recruit and retain officers to ensure forces recruit the additional officers; and
- supporting forces to use the Programme as an opportunity to become more representative of the communities they serve.

**1.9** The Department set the Programme a focused goal – to support forces to recruit the additional 20,000 officers and to improve their diversity. It will consider the Programme a success if it achieves the target of 20,000 additional officers before the end of March 2023. The Department has not set a measurable target for increasing gender and ethnic diversity within police forces.

**1.10** The Programme’s narrow focus excluded achieving the wider outcomes that would be expected for an investment of this scale.<sup>4</sup> As police forces are operationally independent, it is their responsibility to ensure that they deploy their resources to deliver these outcomes and ensure value for money. In October 2020, the Infrastructure and Projects Authority noted that such a narrow focus risked “undermining the coherence of this programme” and that “crime reduction is in fact the critical success factor for the programme”.

### Allocating additional officers to forces

**1.11** The Department set a target of recruiting 20,000 additional officers following a brief consultation with forces which suggested they would need at least 18,000 additional officers to meet the demands they were facing. If the target is met, it will result in a record number of officers in England and Wales. To meet the target, while allowing for natural turnover through resignations and retirements, forces need to recruit approximately 50,000 officers over the three years.

**1.12** The Department’s approach to allocating officers allowed it to move quickly but was not based on an understanding of the demands faced by forces. It allocated the planned additional police officers across police forces using the existing Police Allocation funding formula (the formula). In 2015, the Department had acknowledged the formula was “more and more detached from the real demands on policing”.<sup>5</sup> In 2018 we recommended it review the formula and adopt an approach which took greater account of forces’ local circumstances. In March 2022, the final report of the Strategic Policing Review of England and Wales concluded that the “mechanistic application of the formula” in funding the additional police officers perpetuated the gap between the best and least well-funded forces.<sup>6</sup> The Department has abandoned two previous attempts to revise the formula since 2015, delaying a 2019 review due to the general election and then the COVID-19 pandemic. In October 2021 it began work to reform the formula prior to the next general election, which is expected to be in 2024.

4 National Audit Office, *Framework to review programmes update April 2021*, Key audit question 5: Does the business case demonstrate value for money over the lifetime of the programme?, sub-question 1: Have the intended benefits and outcomes been clearly defined? Available at: [www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Framework-to-review-programmes-update-April-2021.pdf](http://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Framework-to-review-programmes-update-April-2021.pdf)

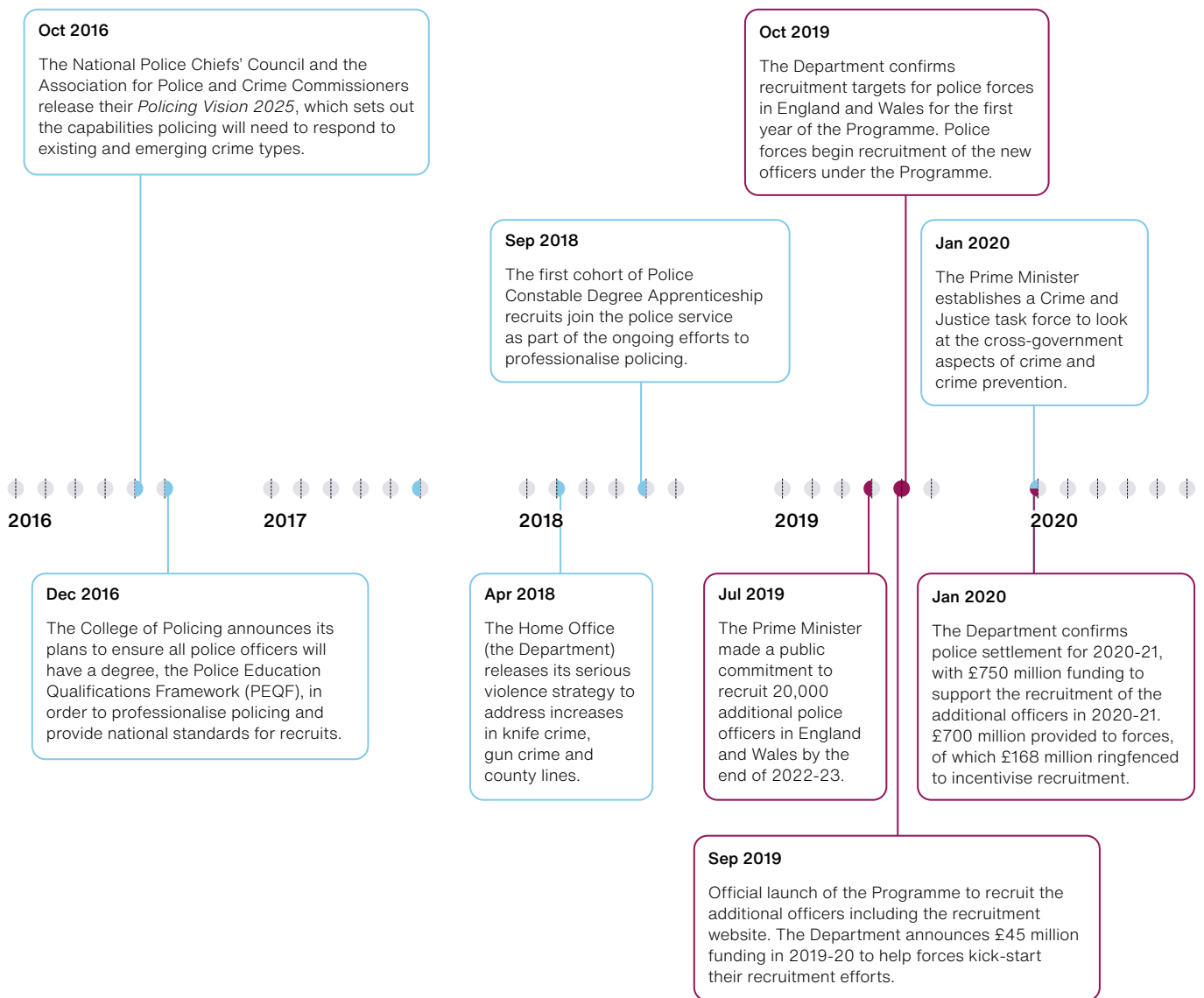
5 HC Committee of Public Accounts, *Financial sustainability of police forces in England and Wales*, First Report of Session 2015-16, HC 288, September 2015.

6 The Police Foundation, *A New Mode of Protection: Redesigning policing and public safety for the 21st century*, Final Report of the Strategic Review of Policing in England and Wales, March 2022, p165.

**Figure 3**

Timeline of policing announcements leading up to and since the launch of the Police Uplift Programme, 2016 to 2026

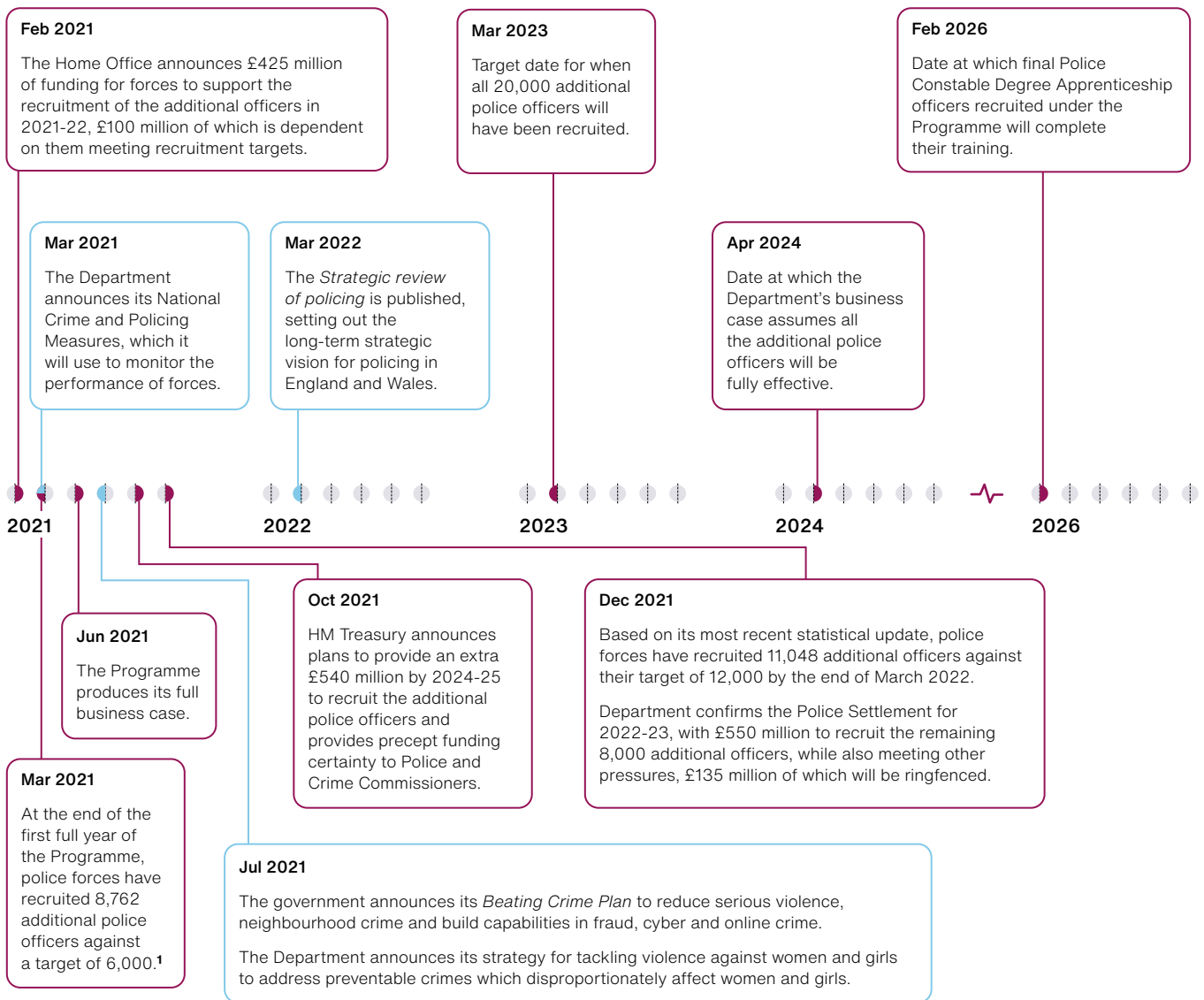
The announcement of the Police Uplift programme (the Programme) occurred during a significant change in policing as forces were introducing the Police Education Qualifications Framework (PEQF) and implementing the strategy outlined in *Policing Vision 2025*. The time between the announcement of the Programme and the start of recruitment was short, leaving little time for consultation or consideration of how these policing priorities could be integrated



- Police uplift dates
- Wider policing initiatives

**Note**

1 When initially released, the Police officer uplift statistics showed recruitment by March 2021 as 8,771. This was adjusted to 8,762 by the December 2021 statistics. We have used the revised figure here.



**1.13** As part of the Programme, the Department also plans to increase capacity to fight serious and organised crime. It will do this through increasing the size of regional organised crime units (regional units that deal with more complex crimes and fraud). The details for such moves were worked through after the start of the Programme. Initially the Department envisaged a total increase of 1,150 officers in regional organised crime units by the end of March 2023. However, following engagement with policing, the Department expects 725 officers to move to these units by March 2023, with the remainder moving after the end of the Programme. Originally, it also intended to allocate another 300 officers to national counter-terrorism functions using the same approach but decided in late 2021 not to do so. The Department is working with forces and the NPCC to ensure officers are released into counter-terrorism roles by the end of the current Spending Review period in 2024-25.

### The Department's business case for the Programme

**1.14** To help assess value for money and support good decision-making, HM Treasury requires that all spending proposals are supported by a business case. The process of producing this should be proportionate to the costs, benefits and risks involved in the proposals. Under HM Treasury's guidance, departments must consider alternative ways to deliver the policy objectives and go through a three-stage approval process, preparing: a strategic outline case; an outline business case; and a full business case.<sup>7</sup> The Department did not complete all three stages for the Programme and did not consider alternative options to recruiting 20,000 officers. It considered this was a proportionate approach because the additional officers were a key manifesto commitment, with the Programme being given political priority. The Department completed the strategic outline business case in July 2020 and produced the full business case for the Programme in June 2021, 19 months after recruitment began.

**1.15** The Department estimated the additional officers would cost £18.5 billion over 10 years. To date, it has agreed funding of £3.6 billion for the first three years of the programme. Most of the funding for the first three years is to support police forces recruit and train the new officers, and for extra civilian staff and infrastructure, including estates, digital equipment, uniforms and vehicles. Over the 10 years of the business case the Department expects forces to spend £11 billion on salaries, national insurance contributions and pensions for the additional officers. The business case also estimates there will be £7.5 billion of costs to the wider criminal justice system in processing the additional crimes expected from the investment in policing. This estimate is based on the crimes which have historically involved territorial policing but does not include increasing areas of high-volume, low-harm crimes, such as fraud.

<sup>7</sup> HM Treasury, *Treasury approvals process for programmes and projects*, November 2016. Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/567908/Treasury\\_approvals\\_process\\_guidance\\_final.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/567908/Treasury_approvals_process_guidance_final.pdf)

**1.16** The business case outlines the ambition to use the additional officers to support and strengthen the police's ability to meet current and future crime reduction ambitions and to increase levels of public confidence in policing. It estimates that the additional officers will deliver benefits of £23 billion over the 10 years to 2029-30. We discuss the benefits case for the Programme in Part Three.

**1.17** The Department incorporated three-quarters of the funding into the core police grant, which it provides annually, and which forces can decide how to spend, subject to maintaining officer numbers.<sup>8</sup> It uses the remaining one-quarter (£168 million in year one, £100 million in year two and £135 million in year three) to incentivise forces. The Department has ring-fenced this funding and releases it to forces quarterly if they meet recruitment targets.<sup>9</sup>

8 The Department provides funding to police and crime commissioners or mayoral authorities in each area. The police and crime commissioner or mayoral authority sets the overall budget for territorial policing and the police force's share of local council tax. The chief constable at each force decides how to use those resources.

9 For the first year (2020-21) of the Programme the Department released ring-fenced funding on a monthly basis but changed this to a quarterly basis from 2021-22.

## Part Two

### The management of the Programme and progress against its objectives

**2.1** In this part we set out:

- how the Police Uplift Programme (the Programme) is organised; and
- the Home Office's (the Department's) progress in delivering the objectives of the Programme.

**2.2** The Programme is run collaboratively by the Department, The National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) and the College of Policing.<sup>10</sup> These bodies created a central programme team (the team) to oversee the Programme. The team was assembled by seconding staff from all three organisations, including placing a senior police officer into the Programme director role to give a strong operational perspective. The team has also established leads, from senior policing backgrounds, in each region to provide a link between the Programme and forces (**Figure 4**).

**2.3** The government's decision to recruit the additional officers over a relatively short period meant that recruitment had to begin almost immediately. The delivery partners set up the central team quickly, with only six weeks elapsing between announcing the Programme (24 July 2019) and starting national recruitment activity (5 September 2019).<sup>11</sup> The team worked rapidly to design how to structure, implement and oversee the Programme.

**2.4** The central team carries out several roles, including:

- providing a national overview of progress, and removing obstacles where possible;
- controlling the ring-fenced funding (see paragraph 1.17) and releasing this when forces meet recruitment targets; and
- providing support to police forces for recruitment activities, including diversity and outreach, learning and development, and retention.

<sup>10</sup> The National Police Chiefs' Council is made up of representatives from all police forces across the UK, coordinating operations and national policy on areas such as counter-terrorism, organised crime and ensuring value for money. The College of Policing is the independent professional body for policing in England and Wales. It is a company limited by guarantee and an arm's-length body of the Home Office. Its remit is to share knowledge and good practice, set standards for key aspects of policing, and support professional development across the police workforce.

<sup>11</sup> The first advertising campaign for the recruitment of additional officers was launched on 5 September 2019.





**2.5** The Department's spending on the Programme is currently within budget. It has allocated £51 million to running the Programme (**Figure 5**) to March 2023.<sup>12</sup> More than 40% of this budget (£22.2 million) is to run the national communications campaign, on which it has spent £12.6 million to the end of January 2022.

**2.6** The Programme is a positive example of effective collaboration between the Department and police. We have previously reported on national policing programmes where this degree of collaboration was not present, with negative effects for their timely implementation.<sup>13</sup> In October 2020, the Infrastructure and Projects Authority praised the programme team's "excellence [in] programme management" and its "exemplary collaboration with stakeholders". During our fieldwork, police forces told us that the programme team had worked well with them. In our survey of chief constables 90% agreed that the team had been responsive to their force's needs during the Programme.

**2.7** The Department put in place a senior policing lead within each region, to support forces on recruitment and to act as the link between the programme team and forces. The leads work with forces and the Department to provide assurance on forces' recruitment data before the Department releases the quarterly ring-fenced funding. The leads also monitor progress at each force in delivering the core objectives, help to share good practice within and between forces, and intervene if there are signs forces may struggle to achieve their recruitment targets.

**2.8** The Programme has benefited from very little staff turnover since it began and a high degree of engagement from ministers and senior stakeholders across the Department and in police forces. This has helped the Programme team to retain knowledge and learn from experience of what does and does not work. There is also a clear shared understanding of the Programme's objectives and the benefits provided by the Programme to all organisations.

**2.9** The Department has adapted the Programme to address specific needs as it progressed. For example, at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department responded swiftly so it could maintain momentum during lockdown. The Department, NPCC and College of Policing quickly set up a national online assessment process and moved initial training online. This allowed recruitment to continue without delay, while also providing a more standardised process. As part of its ongoing development of the programme, in December 2021 the Department finalised its plans for forces to transfer experienced officers to regional organised crime units.<sup>14</sup> Police forces are currently working through the arrangements of how they will deploy officers into these roles.

<sup>12</sup> This excludes wider improvement costs of £66 million, which include elements such as College of Policing costs, digital knowledge and associated IT costs and contributions for the Forensic Capability Network and Emergency Services Network. These costs sit outside the Programme.

<sup>13</sup> Comptroller and Auditor General, *The National Law Enforcement Data Programme*, Session 2021-22, HC 663, National Audit Office, September 2021; and Comptroller and Auditor General, *Upgrading emergency service communications: the Emergency Services Network*, Session 2016-17, HC 627, National Audit Office, September 2016.

<sup>14</sup> The Department planned for 300 officers to move to serious and organised crime through regional and organised crime units in 2021-22 and a further 850 to move in 2022-23. It has since amended its plans to move 725 officers by March 2023 and the remainder to move at forces' discretion in the following year. As of 31 December 2021, 191 additional officers had been deployed to regional and organised crime units.

**Figure 5**

## Budget and outturn of the Police Uplift Programme, 2019-20 to 2023-24

The Home Office's (the Department's) spending on the Police Uplift Programme (the Programme) is within its budget

Cost type	2019-20		2020-21		2021-22		2022-23	2023-24
	Budget <sup>1</sup>	Outturn	Budget	Outturn	Budget	Outturn (to 31 Jan 2022) <sup>2</sup>	Budget	Budget <sup>3</sup>
	(£m)	(£m)	(£m)	(£m)	(£m)	(£m)	(£m)	(£m)
Programme pay (Department and police)	4.00	2.47	5.20	3.38	4.25	2.64	4.25	4.00
Programme non-pay <sup>4</sup>		0.38	0.79	0.06	0.74	0.23	0.74	0.50
Programme process improvements		0.11	4.50	3.92	2.50	0.17	2.00	0.50
National communications campaign	4.20	3.89	6.00	5.55	7.00	3.18	5.00	0
<i>Programme costs total</i>	<i>8.20</i>	<i>6.84</i>	<i>16.49</i>	<i>12.92</i>	<i>14.49</i>	<i>6.22</i>	<i>12.00</i>	<i>5.00</i>
Wider improvements costs <sup>5</sup>	8.10	8.10	33.5	31.3	24.70	20.73		
<b>Total</b>	<b>16.30</b>	<b>14.95</b>	<b>50.00</b>	<b>44.22</b>	<b>39.20</b>	<b>26.95</b>	<b>12.00</b>	<b>5.00</b>

**Notes**

- 1 In 2019-20 (described as 'year 0') the Department allocated £4 million to programme costs and £4.2 million to the national communications campaign.
- 2 Figures for 2021-22 are for in-year spending to 31 January 2022 and have not been audited.
- 3 Figures for 2023-24 are planning assumptions and the Department has not yet committed funding.
- 4 Programme non-pay includes venue hire, analytical non-staff costs and other expenses incurred by the Programme. In 2020-21 outturn was much lower than expected due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 5 Wider improvement costs include College of Policing costs, digital knowledge and associated IT costs and contributions to the Forensic Capability Network and Emergency Services Network. These costs sit outside the Programme.
- 6 Figures may not sum due to rounding.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Home Office financial information

## Progress made by the Programme

**2.10** As the Department's target was for a net increase of 20,000 officers it needed to establish a robust baseline. The Department chose to measure progress of the Programme against headcount rather than full-time equivalent because it was unable to estimate the working patterns of new recruits.<sup>15</sup> To establish the baseline, the Department took the police workforce headcount in March 2019 of 125,811, and adjusted this to account for locally funded recruitment activity that forces were already planning for 2019-20. Some forces and the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners questioned whether headcount was an appropriate measure, as it includes officers who are on secondment or long-term absence, leaving them in a worse financial position. However, the Department assured forces that the use of headcount as a measure would not disadvantage them and that future funding would remain on a full-time equivalent basis.

**2.11** The Department established a baseline of 128,434 police officers as the starting position against which the Programme would be measured (**Figure 6**). This gave forces a target to reach a total police officer headcount of 148,434 by 31 March 2023. The Department decided to recruit the 20,000 additional officers in three tranches of 6,000, 8,000 and 6,000 in 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23 respectively. It later changed these targets to 6,000 in each of the first two years and 8,000 in the third year. It also decided to allow police forces to begin recruiting against the year one target in mid-2019-20, so that first 'year' of the Programme lasted for 18 months.

**2.12** By December 2021, the Programme had recruited 11,048 additional officers (**Figure 7** on page 28) from nearly 180,000 applications and was on track to meet its year-two target of 12,000 additional officers. However, as total numbers fluctuate from month to month (because of police officers leaving the service through retirement, dismissal or resignation, including some recruits who do not complete their training) it will not be clear that this target has been met until after 31 March 2022.

**2.13** The net increase of 8,762 officers by March 2021 (against a target of 6,000) was boosted by a longer period over which to recruit – 18 months instead of 12 – and fewer officers retiring or resigning since the COVID-19 pandemic began than in any year since 2013-14. In December 2021, the programme team was providing support to 14 police forces to help them meet their targets.<sup>16</sup>

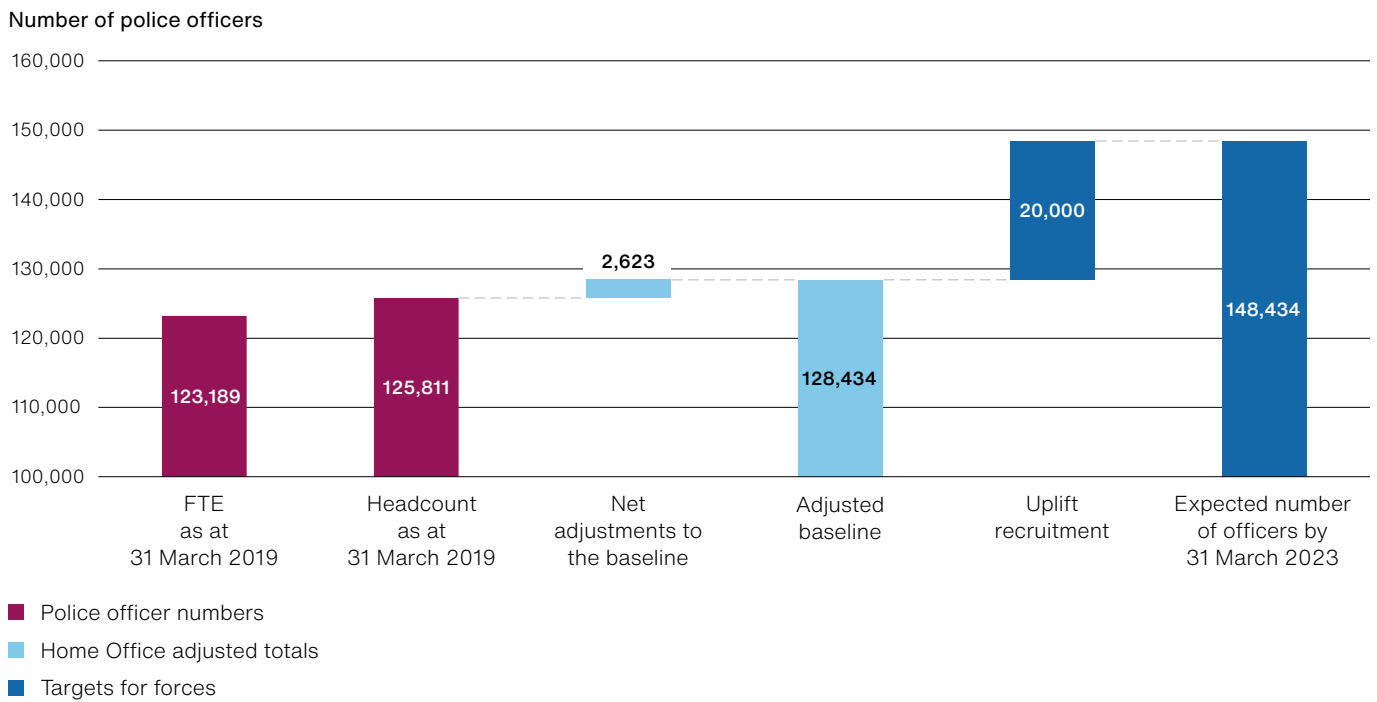
<sup>15</sup> Headcount includes officers employed by a police force, including those working part time, on a career break or on secondment, whereas full-time equivalent includes only officers available to the force for deployment.

<sup>16</sup> There are three different levels of support provided to forces. Stage one includes meetings with recruitment and Human Resources, an action plan and offer of subject matter experts. Stage two adds a peer review of areas of concern and the offer of mentoring support from another force. Stage three escalates concerns to the force chief officer lead and requires a written response from the force to the Programme director to agree future action and support.

**Figure 6**

The Home Office’s assessment of the baseline position of the number of police officers at the start of the Police Uplift Programme

The Home Office (the Department) took headcount information as of March 2019 as the baseline measure. To get the baseline position against which to assess progress it adjusted this based on previously agreed recruitment via council tax payments and for any recruitment undertaken between April 2019 and September 2019

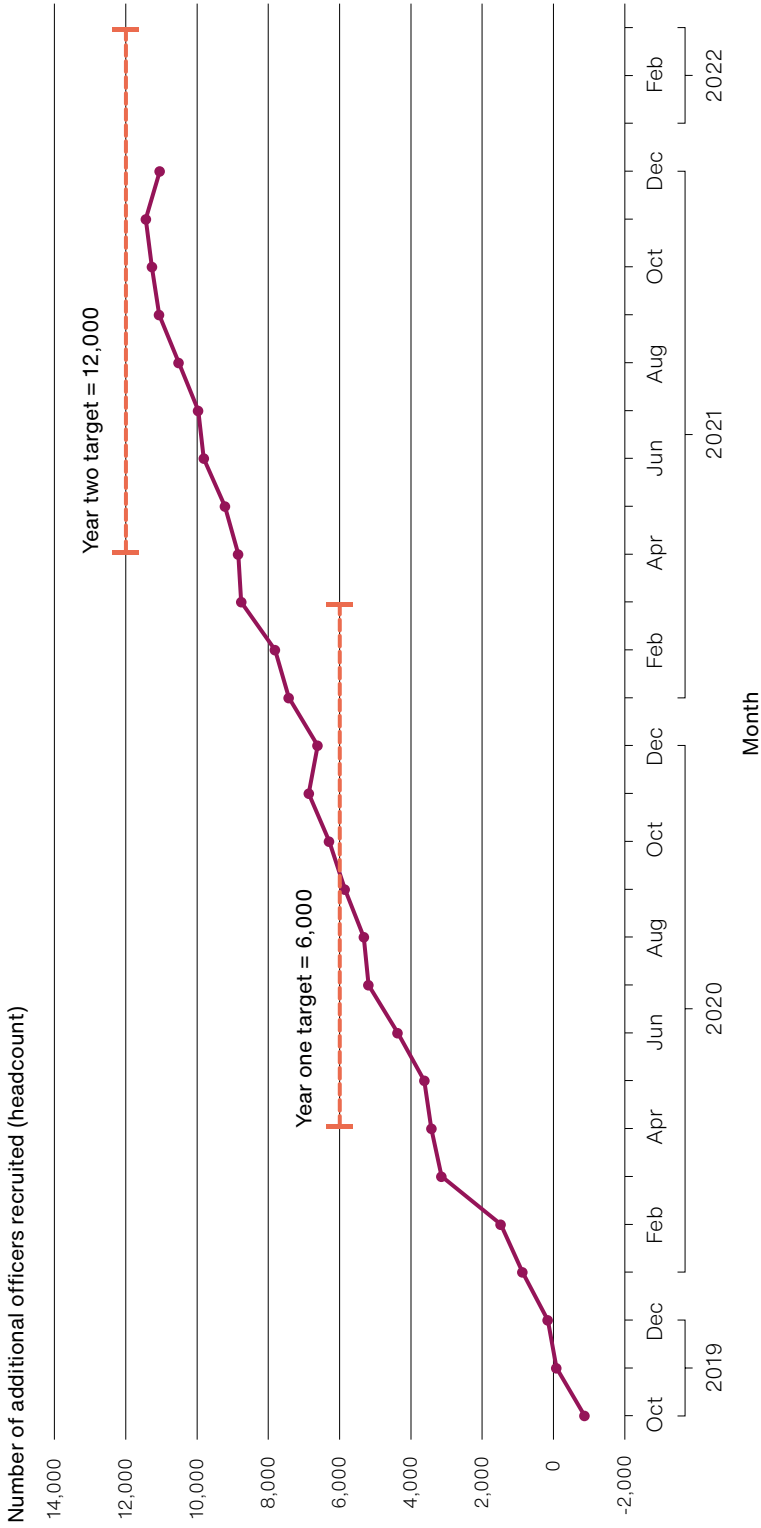


**Note**

1 FTE refers to full-time equivalent officer numbers, but the Department uses a headcount measure against which to assess progress with the Police Uplift Programme (the Programme).

Source: National Audit Office analysis of the Home Office’s police workforce data and documentation on the Programme

**Figure 7**  
 Additional police officers recruited in England and Wales during the Police Uplift Programme, October 2019 to December 2021  
 Recruitment of additional police officers is on track. The Home Office aims to have recruited 12,000 additional officers by March 2022



● England and Wales

**Notes**

- 1 The negative values at the beginning of the chart relate to the adjusted baseline through agreed recruitment before the launch of the Programme.
- 2 An additional 457 officers have been recruited through other means, for example council-tax funding. These officers are not included in the figure.
- 3 By 31 December 2021, 191 officers had been deployed to regional and organised crime units.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of official statistics on the Police officer uplift, England and Wales, quarterly update, available at [www.gov.uk/government/collections/police-officer-uplift-statistics](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/police-officer-uplift-statistics)

**2.14** The Department faces a greater challenge in meeting its year-three target of 8,000 recruits. Forces face additional pressures in the final year because the target is higher and they are expected to release some experienced officers to join regional organised crime units. Originally, the Department planned that 1,150 officers from the 20,000 extra would move to these units and 300 to counter-terrorism policing by the end of the Programme in March 2023.<sup>17</sup> However, the Department has recognised that the desire to achieve recruitment targets under the Programme disincentivises forces from supporting recruitment to these regional or counter-terrorism units. By December 2021, the Department had revised its plans for these moves. The Programme now expects 725 additional officers to be deployed to regional organised crime roles by March 2023, with a further 425 to move to the units at forces' discretion in 2023-24. The Department will also be working with forces and the NPPC to ensure officers are released into counter-terrorism roles by the end of the current Spending Review period in 2024-25.

**2.15** The Department estimates that around a quarter of the additional officers recruited in 2020 were previously employed by or volunteered with their police force as civilian staff, police community support officers (PCSO) or special constables.<sup>18</sup> It is not clear to what extent the roles left vacant by this shift will be filled by further recruitment or whether warranted police officers could be deployed into civilian roles. Further, the increased officer numbers might not translate to an equivalent increase in visible police presence in communities, unless forces backfill the vacant PCSO or special constable positions. On 30 September 2021, there were approximately 223,000 full-time equivalent employees working in the 43 territorial police forces in England and Wales.<sup>19</sup> This included 137,600 full-time warranted officers (those who have powers of arrest) and 76,000 civilian staff (**Figure 8** overleaf).

### Improving diversity in policing

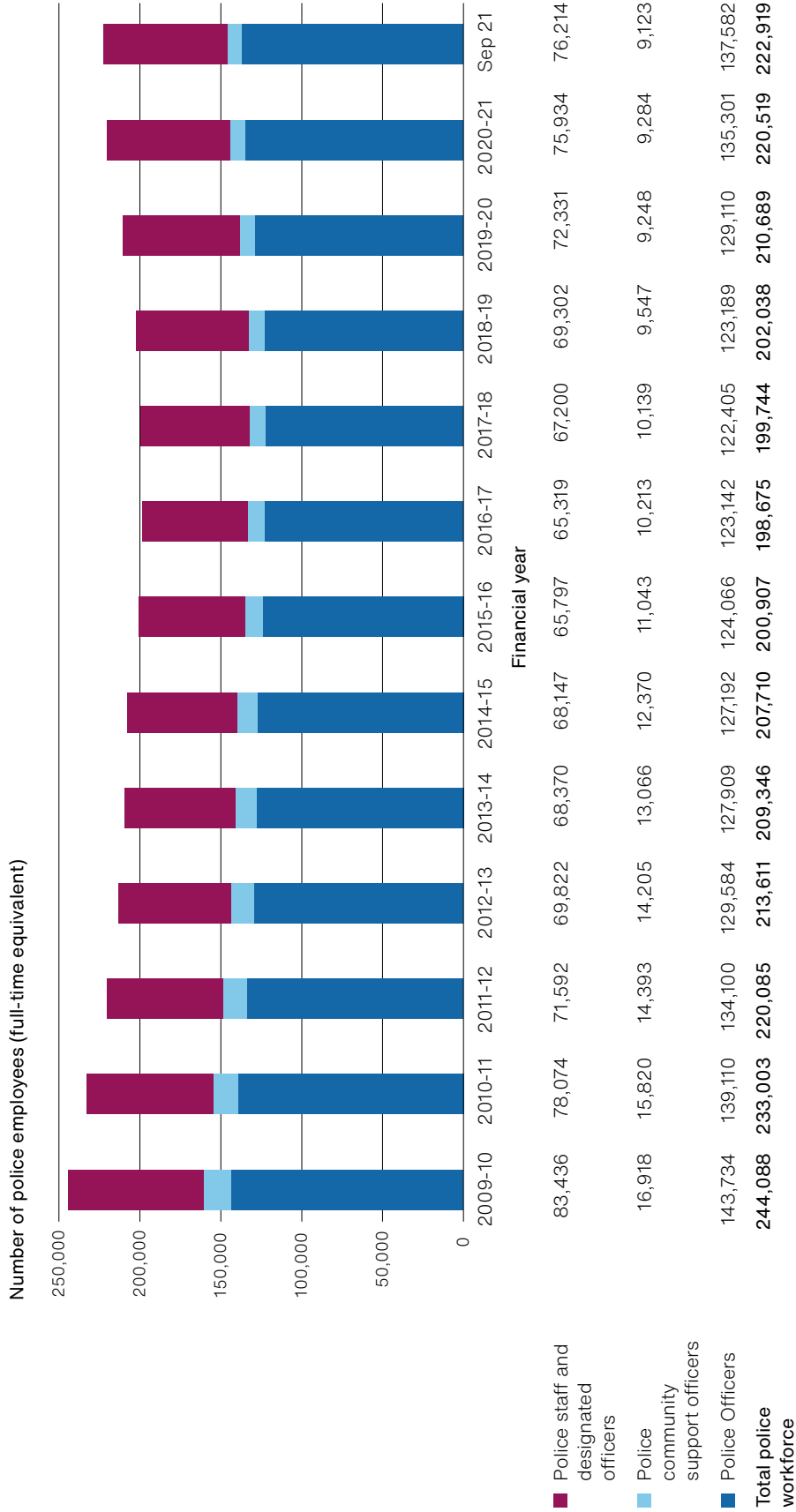
**2.16** The Programme also provides an opportunity to change the culture in police forces by bringing in new perspectives. The Department set the Programme an objective to support police forces to become more representative of the communities they serve. It did not put specific recruitment targets in place or define what being more representative means in practice. Before the Programme began, almost 32% (39,800) of police officers were female and 7% (8,400) came from ethnic minority backgrounds compared with 51% and 14% respectively of the population in the 2011 census.

<sup>17</sup> The Department also expects 30 officers to join the City of London Police specifically to tackle fraud.

<sup>18</sup> This includes individuals who have worked in police forces in the past and those who have transferred from different roles to an officer role within the same or different force.

<sup>19</sup> Home Office, *Police workforce, England and Wales: 30 September 2021*, available at: [www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-workforce-england-and-wales-30-september-2021/police-workforce-england-and-wales-30-september-2021](http://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-workforce-england-and-wales-30-september-2021/police-workforce-england-and-wales-30-september-2021). This figure excludes approximately 8,900 special constables, who undertake voluntary policing roles.

**Figure 8**  
Overall police workforce in England and Wales, 2010 to 2021  
The total police workforce has risen since 2019 but remains below historical levels



**Notes**

- 1 All figures are based on police workforce data on 31 March, using full-time equivalents (FTE), except for the September 2021 figures, which shows workforce on 30 September 2021.
- 2 The figures exclude special constables, who are volunteer police officers and therefore do not officially count towards the workforce count. They have the same police powers, uniforms and equipment as regular police officers but undertake the role on a voluntary basis. In September 2021 there were approximately 8,900 special constables, compared with 10,600 at the start of the Police Uplift Programme.
- 3 The figures exclude traffic wardens. There were 409 FTE traffic wardens in 2009-10 but this reduced to 0 by 31 March 2020.



**2.17** Police forces have made some progress in recruiting a higher proportion of female officers. By December 2021, 42% of newly recruited police officers were female. This has continued a trend of increasing the proportion of female officers in the police over the past 15 years. Almost 12% of newly recruited police officers who reported their ethnicity said they were from an ethnic minority background, resulting in an overall proportion of 8% of all officers in England and Wales, with considerable variation within different ethnicities. For example, by December 2021, 1.3% of all police officers reported being Black, and 4.2% from an Asian or other ethnic minority background (**Figure 9** on pages 32 and 33).<sup>20</sup>

**2.18** The Department recognises that forces becoming fully representative of the communities they serve is a long-term challenge. At the launch of the Programme some forces prioritised recruiting new officers as soon as possible. They drew on the pool of applicants already within their recruitment pipeline and applicants already affiliated with the force. This initially precluded forces from taking specific measures, such as more targeted advertising and community outreach, which might have increased the proportion of applicants from more diverse backgrounds. During our fieldwork, police forces told us that increasing ethnic diversity is challenging and that overcoming long-standing barriers in this area will take years of outreach and confidence-building with specific communities and cannot be achieved within the timeframe of the Programme. In March 2022, the Strategic Review of Policing noted that it appeared the Programme was “having a negligible impact on workforce diversity”.<sup>21</sup>

**2.19** The recruitment process can also adversely affect the number of recruits from non-white backgrounds. As part of its role in supporting recruitment activity, the programme team has identified a disproportionate impact on ethnic minority applicants during vetting, with applicants of Asian and Black heritage having lower pass rates than those of White heritage and being more likely to succeed in an appeal (**Figure 10** on page 34). The team is undertaking activity at both national and force level to help forces to understand the extent of and address these imbalances. These activities aim to improve monitoring of recruit numbers and progression through the recruitment process and to identify where the process might disproportionality affect a recruit from an ethnic minority from successfully passing vetting to become a police officer.

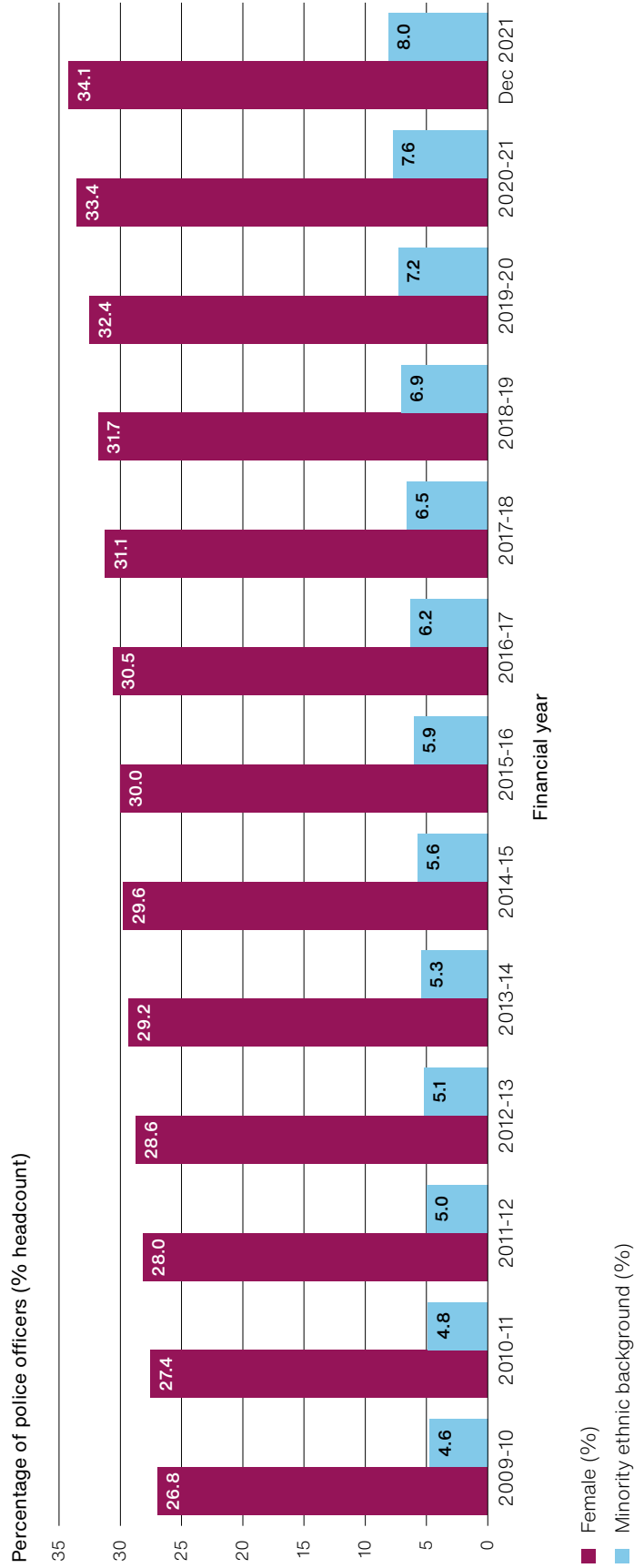
20 Until 2021 people of Chinese heritage were classified in police statistics as ‘Chinese or other’ ethnicity. This changed in 2021 to combine Chinese with Asian or Asian British classification. We have therefore combined the Asian / Asian British and other classifications in our analysis to provide comparable data across time points.

21 The Police Foundation, *A New Mode of Protection: Redesigning policing and public safety for the 21st century*, Final Report of the Strategic Review of Policing in England and Wales, March 2022, p99.

**Figure 9**

Change in sex and ethnicity in police forces in England and Wales since 2009-10

Police forces have increased the number of officers they employ who are female or from ethnic minority backgrounds, but these improvements are in line with historic trends and remain far from representative of the diversity of their populations in the 2011 census



**Figure 9** *continued*

Change in sex and ethnicity in police forces in England and Wales since 2009-10

Characteristic	Before the programme (March 2019)	Percentage of recruits April 2020– December 2021 <sup>2</sup>	Current status (latest statistics in December 2021)	Proportion in population (taken from the 2011 census)
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
<b>Sex<sup>1</sup></b>				
Female	31.7	42.4	34.1	50.9
Male	68.3	57.5	65.9	49.1
<b>Ethnicity<sup>3</sup></b>				
Total non-White heritage, of which	6.9	11.8	8.0	14.0
Black/Black British	1.2	1.7	1.3	3.3
Asian/Asian British/ Chinese/Other <sup>4</sup>	3.6	6.4	4.2	8.7
Mixed	2.0	3.7	2.4	1.0
White	93.1	88.2	92.0	86.0

**Notes**

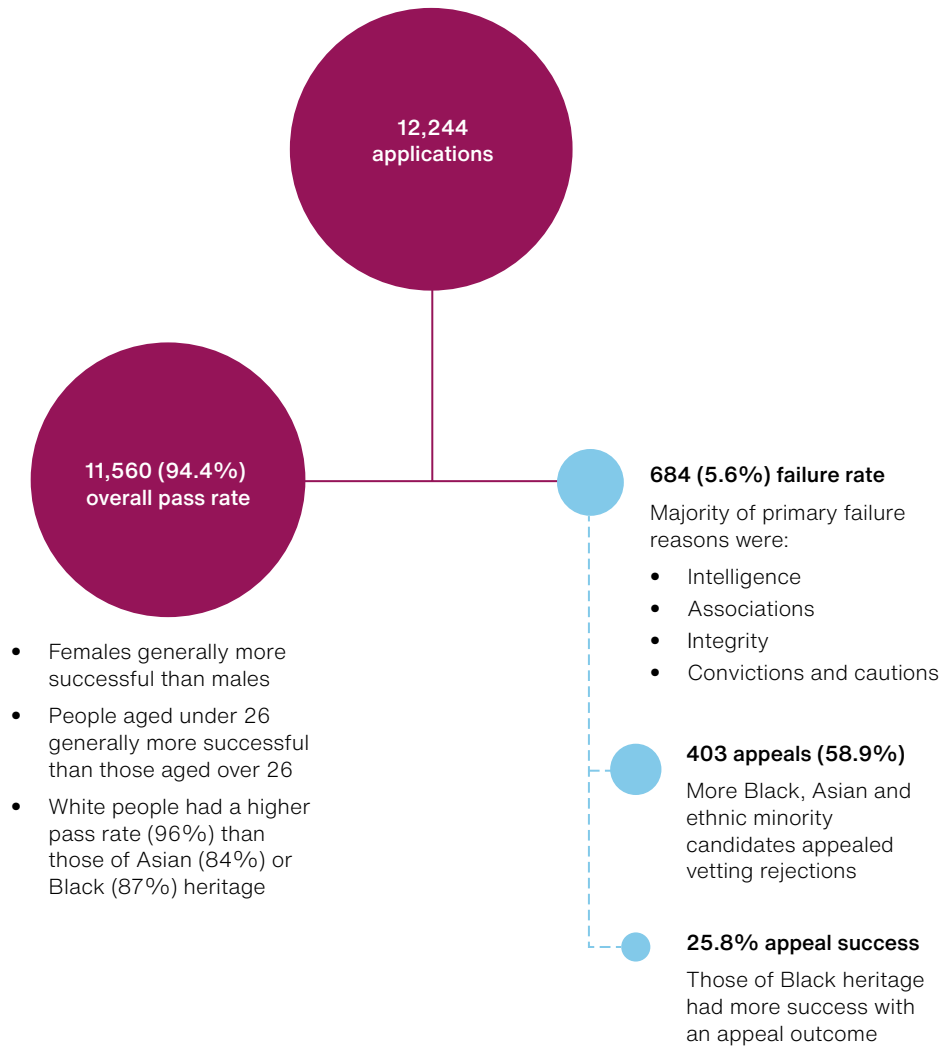
- 1 The Home Office (the Department) reports new recruits by sex, not gender. We have used sex here to use comparable data to workforce statistics.
- 2 The Department does not separate out uplift and other recruits in its analysis, so the figures presented here refer to all recruits during the Programme, not just those who count towards the Programme target.
- 3 Ethnic characteristic of recruits between April 2020 and December 2021 is for all police recruitment in this period.
- 4 Until 2021 people of Chinese heritage were classified as 'Chinese or other' ethnicity. This changed in 2021 to combine Chinese with Asian or Asian British classification. We have therefore combined these classifications to provide comparable data.
- 5 Data are compared to the 2011 census populations as this is the latest official data available at the time of publication.
- 6 Data at 31 March end of financial year unless stated otherwise.
- 7 Figures may not sum due to rounding.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Home Office police workforce statistics, Police officer uplift statistics and population data

**Figure 10**

The Police Uplift Programme’s analysis of the disproportionality of vetting

The Police Uplift Programme (the Programme) team and College of Policing’s analysis in August 2021 of a sample of applications has demonstrated that there is a disproportionate effect on Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority applicants during the vetting process



**Note**

1 Data collected through a data request to all force vetting teams, covering the period April 2019 to May 2021. The response covers 21 forces.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Police Uplift Programme’s review of vetting processes on a sample of applications

## Part Three

### Maximising the impact of the Programme

**3.1** This part considers some of the implications of the Police Uplift Programme (the Programme) that the Home Office (the Department) will need to be conscious of in maximising its impact. It covers the:

- opportunities to identify and apply learning from the Programme;
- operational consequences of a rapid change to the composition of the workforce; and
- efforts to understand and demonstrate the impacts on crime and the criminal justice system.

#### Identifying and applying learning

**3.2** The Department's implementation of the Programme to date is a good example of effective collaboration between the Department, national and local policing. In setting up the Programme, the Department seconded staff from the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC), the College of Policing and territorial police forces to ensure operational perspectives were properly reflected. As the secondees return to their former organisations when the Programme ends, there is a risk that any learning is lost to the Department. In February 2022, the Department told us it was developing a plan to capture the good practice from the Programme to address this risk.

**3.3** The Programme has benefited from a joined-up approach to delivery. In our survey of chief constables, 83% agreed that the programme team had helped their force to increase its recruitment performance. Before the start of the Programme, police forces used their own approaches, but the College of Policing has worked with forces to introduce more standardised processes. For example, it introduced a standardised national recruitment form and increased use of a common data set on police workforce (**Figure 11** overleaf). This has simplified reporting and enabled the programme team to focus its efforts where they are most needed. Through collecting data from across police forces, the Programme has also created the first national overview of how police forces in England and Wales are performing in their recruitment activity and overall workforce capability.

**Figure 11**

## Changes stemming from the Police Uplift Programme

**The Police Uplift Programme (the Programme) has delivered several benefits to policing through standardising some recruitment and data gathering processes**

Area	Previous process	Revised process	Benefits of the change
Application forms	Individual forces used bespoke application forms which collected different types and forms of data.	The Programme has encouraged forces to use a standardised form since January 2021.	National policing bodies and the Home Office (the Department) are now able to draw upon data from each of the 43 forces which helps to assess the volume and characteristics of applicants nationally.
Engagement with forces	Forces engaged with the Department via the National Police Chiefs' Council or the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners.	The Programme nominated individuals who would liaise and work with forces on issues including data collection and recruitment issues.	Police forces have a better understanding of the Department's expectations and needs in terms of data. Forces also have access to good practice and advice through their regional leads.
Police workforce data	Individual forces collected, managed and analysed data on their application pipeline at a local level.	Forces using common systems now use a standard data set, for example 23 forces now use a single online platform, which means they are collecting the same data on applicants.	National policing bodies and the Department can identify issues in police recruitment and workforce planning at a national level with greater confidence.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Home Office and police force documentation

**Operational consequences**

**3.4** Police forces have welcomed the additional 20,000 officers, but some are concerned by the significant dilution of experience, particularly in response units (**Figure 12**). While recruiting many new officers provides an opportunity to help to reset culture, it could result in a reduction of the experience and confidence to know how best to respond to the situation at hand. New officers are expected to be able to patrol independently after their first year but require an additional one or two years of training and development before they are equipped to meet the demands of policing. The arrival of 20,000 additional officers, coupled with normal turnover in the workforce, means that by 2023-24, 38% of police officers nationally will have fewer than five years' experience (compared with 12% in 2014-15). The NPCC estimates that it will take until 2029 for the percentage of the officer workforce with fewer than five years' experience to return to pre-uplift levels.

**Figure 12**

Changes in police officers' experience levels in England and Wales during the Police Uplift Programme, 2018-19 to 2020-21

In the short- to medium-term, the 20,000 additional officers will dilute experience in forces, placing greater demands on more experienced officers

Number of officers (headcount)

**Notes**

- 1 Figures show police headcount.
- 2 Data to March 2021, which are the latest data to cover length of service.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of the Home Office's police workforce statistics

**3.5** An important part of a new police officer's training is time spent being mentored by an experienced 'tutor constable', to develop their ability to patrol independently. Typically, this takes the form of tutoring over a defined period. The need to tutor an additional 20,000 officers over three years places pressure on the cohort of experienced officers who undertake this role. Training teams and tutor constables shared concerns with us about the extra effort required, and our survey of chief constables also highlighted tutor constable 'burn-out' as an issue. To manage this, some forces told us they had adapted their approach to tutoring by placing multiple students with a single tutor, introducing dedicated tutor units, concentrating new officers in specific stations, or using less experienced officers as tutors. The College of Policing has provided additional training for new and existing tutors.

**3.6** Our previous work has shown that change programmes can often lead to an initial fall in performance. It takes at least two years for a new officer to complete their studies and training, and it will take time for these new officers to become fully effective in their roles.<sup>22</sup> The Department has acknowledged that new recruits will not be fully effective until at least their third year and has adjusted the benefits it expects from the Programme to account for this. However, it has not factored in the time it takes for tutor constables to mentor new recruits, which will also affect forces in the short term. In our survey of chief constables, half of those responding stated that tutor constables were 50% or less operationally effective when supporting new recruits, and none believed that tutor constables were able to undertake 100% of their routine activities while supporting new recruits.

**3.7** Flexibility to adapt their workforce is critical to forces' ability to meet the challenges posed by the changing nature of crime. The Department recognised this and provided additional funding to enable the recruitment of civilian staff to complement the new officers. However, by using the outdated funding formula (see paragraph 1.12) as the basis for allocating officers to forces, it is likely that the distribution of officers does not align with current or future demands on policing. Forces have expressed concerns about their ability to maintain a balanced workforce within likely future funding settlements. The Department's new review of the Police Allocation funding formula (the formula) may suggest that the 20,000 additional officers were not allocated to forces in the optimal way, and it will need to consider how it will cushion the impact of any variance in future funding settlements.

<sup>22</sup> It takes two years for officers joining through the Degree Holder Entry Programme to complete their diploma in professional policing. Those entering via the new Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship undertake study and training for three years.



**3.8** Since 2010, in response to financial pressure, some police forces modernised their workforce by making greater use of civilian staff in some roles such as call handling, investigations and custody management. These, and other specialist functions, do not necessarily require a warranted police officer. Some chief constables believe their force's skills shortages would be better addressed by the recruitment of civilian staff with specialist skills rather than officers. Such civilian staff are typically cheaper to employ than a police officer and have more flexible contract terms.<sup>23</sup> Forces told us that if they must maintain officer numbers beyond March 2023, they may lose flexibility in how they can use their resources, which may prove less efficient in the longer term. They believe they would need to reduce civilian staff numbers and replace them with police officers, moving these officers away from front-line roles. In our survey of chief constables, 39 of 40 chiefs anticipated needing to make efficiencies to maintain officer numbers in the future. In March 2022, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services echoed this concern in its annual review of policing.<sup>24</sup> The Department has tried to address this by confirming additional funding until 2024-25.

**3.9** The implementation of the Programme has delayed the completion of a fundamental reform of police recruitment. In 2016, the College of Policing acknowledged that the existing training in the Initial Police Learning and Development programme (IPLDP) did not provide all the knowledge and skills that new officers needed, including in critical areas such as integrity, ethics and dealing with vulnerability. It introduced the Policing Education Qualifications Framework (PEQF) to address this (**Figure 13** overleaf).<sup>25</sup> The College of Policing intended the new approach to be in place by December 2019, but due in part to complications arising from the Programme, it has permitted forces to continue recruiting using the IPLDP route until March 2023 in exceptional circumstances. The Department collected information on entry routes retrospectively and estimates that between November 2019 and December 2021 40% (almost 10,200) of the 25,700 police officers recruited (both additional officers and those replacing those leaving the service) have been recruited via the IPLDP route (**Figure 14** on page 41). The Department and its partners have not assessed the full impact of recruiting these officers through this route. The College of Policing told us that it has mitigated risks from the extension of the IPLDP by providing forces with additional training materials.

23 Police officers are officers under the Crown and therefore are not legally employees of their police force. As a result, police officers cannot be made redundant. However they can resign, retire or be dismissed on the grounds of conduct or capability.

24 Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services, *State of Policing – The Annual Assessment of Policing in England and Wales 2021*, HMICFRS, March 2022, p105.

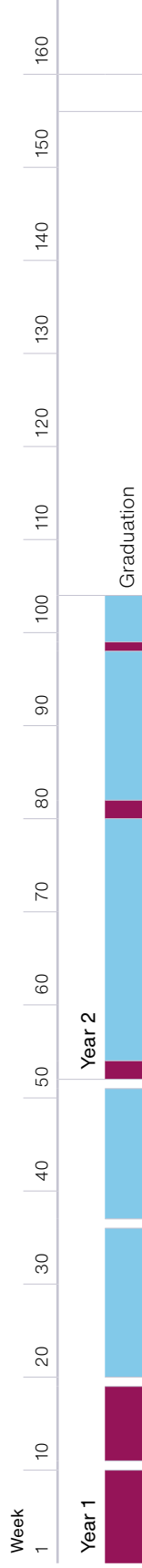
25 The PEQF's aims include standardising entry requirements, aligning the provision of learning across police forces and enhancing a police officer's ability to adapt to change throughout their service. In doing so it requires all new officers to hold a degree-level qualification, either through obtaining a degree prior to joining the force, or through working towards the qualification through an apprenticeship.

**Figure 13** Illustrative example of the College of Policing's training routes for the Police Education Qualification Framework

The new College of Policing's training routes for the Police Education Qualification Framework takes two years to complete for degree holders and three years for police constable degree apprentices. This requires a mix of learning and college time and experience of patrol and operations, which will reduce their availability for front-line policing until their training period is complete

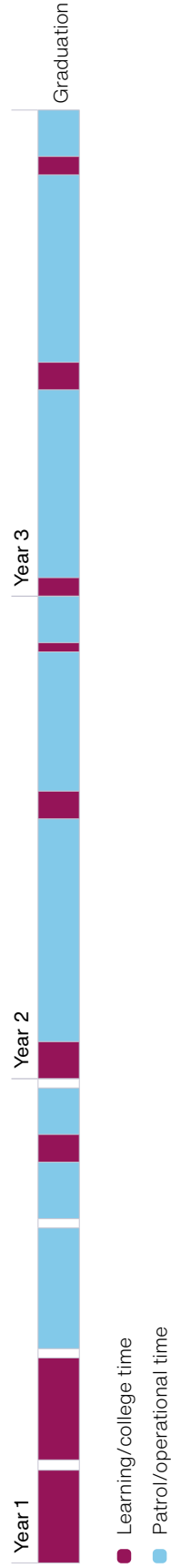
**Degree holder entry programme**

A graduate diploma in policing practice for people who already hold a degree.



**Police constable degree apprenticeship**

Degree-level programme delivered through the force and higher education partners in cycles of classroom and patrol learning.



**Note**

1 In year one of both programmes, annual leave is taken during fixed weeks in the Programme. These are shown by white bars.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of forces' publicly available training schedules

**Figure 14**

Police officers recruited via different entry routes, November 2019 to December 2021

Forty per cent of police officers recruited during this period did so through the Initial Police Learning and Development Programme, which the College of Policing acknowledged does not provide all the knowledge and skills that new officers need, including in critical areas such as integrity, ethics and dealing with vulnerability

Recruitment route	Number of officers (headcount)	Percentage of total officers (%)
Initial Police Learning and Development programme (IPLDP)	10,191	40
Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship	8,359	33
Degree Holder Entry Programme (DHEP)	6,019	23
Police Now	1,013	4
Prejoin	127	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>25,709</b>	<b>-</b>

**Notes**

- 1 The figure of 25,709 comprises all police officers recruited in England and Wales between November 2019 and December 2021. These include those officers recruited to maintain existing police force numbers and the additional officers which count towards the Police Uplift Programme.
- 2 Degree holder entry schemes include both uniformed and detective constables.
- 3 Police Now delivers College of Policing approved training via the National Detective Programme (NDP) and National Graduate Leadership Programme (NGLP). The NDP provides training for officers to be detectives, whilst the NGLP provides training for officers to be potential future leaders in neighbourhood policing.
- 4 'Prejoin' refers to recruits who have already completed a degree equivalent qualification in policing.
- 5 The College of Policing has provided police forces with additional training materials for recruits joining through the IPLDP route.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Home Office data

## Understanding and demonstrating impact

**3.10** To demonstrate value for money in the longer term, the Department must show that the investment in additional officers has better enabled police forces to reduce crime and increase public confidence in policing. Estimating the impact of increased officer numbers on reductions in crime is highly complex because crime rates are linked to wider socio-economic factors including deprivation, health and education, and individual experiences. The COVID-19 pandemic has also changed the nature of crime. For example, in 2020-21, through shop closures and working at home directives, incidences of burglaries and thefts reduced whereas incidences of fraud (particularly online fraud) increased. This makes it even more challenging to demonstrate a causal link between changes in crime and police numbers. The government's recent *Beating crime plan* outlines the complex nature of this area.<sup>26</sup>

**3.11** To date, the Department's management of the Programme has largely focused on inputs (funding, officers recruited) and activity (supporting recruitment, officer training). The Department has limited influence over the achievement of outcomes because chief constables have autonomy in deciding how and where to deploy the additional officers. While additional officers will enhance police capacity, a range of other inputs will be required to make best use of them, for example effective training and development, specialist police staff, and IT and communications systems. It may take several years for these various elements to be combined effectively to realise the desired outcomes of reducing crime and increasing public safety.

**3.12** The Department has made some ambitious assumptions in its business case for the Programme. For example, it has specified the number of additional 'crime outcomes', such as charges or summons, that will be achieved because of the new officers, but set this above the current level of crime outcomes, which has been reducing since the measure was introduced in 2016-17. The Department believes it is reasonable to assume that, over the 10 years of the business case, crime outcomes might improve again. The Department also assumes the new officers will reduce reoffending and create a deterrent effect, partly due to a more visible police presence. In total the Department estimates that half a million crimes will be avoided per year by 2024-25, producing a net present value of £4.7 billion for the Programme (**Figure 15**). The Department recognises that the economic benefits are very sensitive to its assumptions and has rated most as 'amber' or 'red' for quality and impact on outcomes (**Figure 16** on pages 44 and 45).

<sup>26</sup> UK Government, *Beating Crime Plan*, July 2021, available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1015382/Crime-plan-v10.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1015382/Crime-plan-v10.pdf)

**Figure 15**  
Economic costs and benefits outlined in the full business case for the Police Uplift Programme, as at June 2021  
The Home Office (the Department) estimates that the Police Uplift Programme (the Programme) will cost £18.5 billion and provide benefits of £23.2 billion

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	Total
Benefits											
Fully effective officers	3,000	8,400	15,400	19,200	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000
Total crimes saved	59,940	167,832	307,692	383,616	505,050	505,050	505,050	543,900	543,900	543,900	4,065,930
<b>Total benefits (£m)</b>	<b>412.4</b>	<b>1,115.8</b>	<b>1,976.4</b>	<b>2,380.8</b>	<b>3,028.5</b>	<b>2,926.1</b>	<b>2,827.1</b>	<b>2,941.6</b>	<b>2,842.1</b>	<b>2,746.0</b>	<b>23,196.9</b>
Costs											
Programme costs	16.5	14.0	11.2	4.5							46.2
Pay and non-pay costs (£m)	384.9	715.2	1,132.5	1,192.1	1,204.4	1,201.2	1,225.2	1,239.0	1,310.2	1,314.7	10,919.4
Costs to criminal justice system (£m)	168.1	437.5	739.4	869.5	933.7	902.1	871.6	897.8	867.5	838.1	7,525.4
<b>Total costs (£m)</b>	<b>569.5</b>	<b>1,166.7</b>	<b>1,883.1</b>	<b>2,066.1</b>	<b>2,138.1</b>	<b>2,103.4</b>	<b>2,096.8</b>	<b>2,136.8</b>	<b>2,177.7</b>	<b>2,152.9</b>	<b>18,491.0</b>
Net benefit (£m)	-157.0	-50.9	93.3	314.8	890.4	822.7	730.3	804.8	664.4	593.2	4,706.0
Cumulative net benefit (£m)	-157.0	-207.9	-114.6	200.1	1,090.5	1,913.2	2,643.5	3,448.4	4,112.8	4,706.0	

**Notes**

- 1 All figures at 2020-21 prices.
- 2 Costs are economic costs modelled for the Home Office's Programme business case and do not align to agreed funding.
- 3 Figures may not sum due to rounding.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of the Home Office's Police Uplift Programme business case and its economic model

**Figure 16**

## Uncertainty in the Home Office's cost-benefit model for its Police Uplift Programme

The Home Office's (the Department's) cost-benefit model for the Police Uplift Programme (the Programme) is highly sensitive to assumptions based on limited evidence

Variable	Department's assumption	Department's rating of quality and impact of its assumption	Department's evidence	National Audit Office analysis
Police officer effectiveness	50% in year one. 90% in year two. 100% in year three.	Quality Impact	No data available on effectiveness, although Department could use training time as a proxy across the first four years.	In our survey of chief constables 30 of 40 chiefs felt the Department's estimates were too high. Those joining the police apprenticeship, a third of entrants to date, will undertake training and coursework in year three, equating to around 15% of their time.  Furthermore the business case does not take account of a reduction in productivity of experienced staff required to train the new officers.  The business case model does not allow an analysis if full effectiveness does not occur until year four.
Crime outcomes per officer <sup>1</sup>	Six outcomes in years one to four.  This rises to 6.5 in years five to seven, and 7 in years eight to 10.	Quality Impact	This assumes that officers will deliver more outcomes as they gain experience, and crime outcomes will return to historic levels.	The current recording of crime outcomes began in 2016-17, when officers delivered on average 6.3 outcomes per officer. However, crime outcomes have been reducing annually since 2016-17. Before the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019-20, officers achieved an average of 4.9 crime outcomes a year.  If this level of performance is used in the business case model it reduces the expected net present value by £4.1 billion (an 87% reduction).  To break even (so that the costs match the economic benefits) there needs to be approximately 4.7 outcomes per officer across the ten years of the business case.
Crimes saved per crime outcome	Three crimes saved in years one to four.  This rises to 3.5 crimes saved in years five to 10.	Quality Impact	The Department believes its estimate is conservative based on available data, and only takes into account reoffending in a single year. The Department also believes reoffending will reduce over time.	The benefits case of the Programme relies heavily on the assumption of saving at least three crimes per outcome. In the strategic outline business case the Department estimated that each crime outcome would save an extra two crimes. Using this figure in the model gives a net loss of £4.7 billion (a 200% reduction).  Statistics from the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) published in 2020 suggests that there were, on average, 1.15 known re-offences per offender <sup>4</sup> over a one year follow-up period, but the Department told us that its estimate of 3-3.5 offences is modest, because natural reoffending rates will be higher, and the MOJ data do not include all outcomes, such as community resolutions. While there is also evidence that some offenders may have committed several offences, this cannot be directly linked to reoffending rates.

**Figure 16** *continued*

## Uncertainty in the Home Office's cost-benefit model for its Police Uplift Programme

Variable	Department's assumption	Department's rating of quality and impact of its assumption	Department's evidence	National Audit Office analysis
Criminal justice system (CJS) costs	£14,500 cost per charge.	<div style="background-color: #FFD700; padding: 2px; text-align: center;">Quality</div> <div style="background-color: #DC143C; padding: 2px; text-align: center;">Impact</div>	The Department has applied a reduction of 35% to CJS costs, to adjust the baseline average cost of a charge to around £14,500. This produces an overall cost to the CJS of £7.5 billion.	With no reduction applied to CJS costs based on available data, the total costs to the criminal justice system of the additional officers would be £11.6 billion.

**Notes**

- 1 The Department defines a 'crime outcome' as a charge, summons or out of court settlement.
- 2 The Department's assessments for quality are:
  - Green – high quality – Reliable assumption, well understood and/or documented; anything up to a validated and recent set of actual data.
  - Amber – medium quality – Some evidence to support the assumption; may vary from a source with poor methodology to a good source that is a few years old.
  - Red – low quality – Little evidence to support the assumption; may vary from an opinion to a limited data source with poor methodology.
- 3 The Department's assessments for impact are:
  - Green – limited impact – Marginal assumptions; their changes have no or limited impact on the outputs.
  - Amber – medium impact – Assumptions with a relevant, even if not critical, impact on the outputs.
  - Red – critical impact – Core assumptions of the analysis; the output would be drastically affected by their change.
- 4 Other assumptions considered in the model include salary and pay increases, the impact of police presence, types of crime, relationships between police recorded crimes and those reported in the crime survey of England and Wales and efficiency savings.
- 5 Ministry of Justice, *Proven reoffending statistics quarterly bulletin, England and Wales, January 2018 to March 2018*, January 2020. Available at [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/872390/bulletin\\_Jan\\_to\\_Mar\\_2018.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/872390/bulletin_Jan_to_Mar_2018.pdf)

Source: National Audit Office analysis of the Home Office's business case and economic model for the Police Uplift Programme

**3.13** The Department accepts that the evidence base for the Programme's business case is limited. For example, it has made assumptions on officer effectiveness but acknowledges there are no data that can be used to validate these. We consider the estimates on effectiveness are optimistic. The business case estimates that in their first year recruits will be 50% effective and fully effective by the start of their third year. However, it does not consider that they are studying for more than half of their first year, as well as learning how to be police officers. A third of the new recruits (see Figures 13 and 14 on pages 38 and 39 respectively) undertake three-year courses for their police constable degree apprenticeship and need time away for study and project work in their final year, so cannot be fully deployed until year four. In our survey of chief constables, 30 out of 40 responses indicated they thought the Department's assumptions around recruits' effectiveness were too optimistic.

**3.14** The recruitment of 20,000 additional officers will increase demand on a criminal justice system already under significant strain. In late 2019, before the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the backlog of cases in the criminal courts was already growing. This situation worsened during the pandemic and by September 2021, there were 59,928 cases awaiting completion. We concluded in October 2021 that the courts backlog was likely to be a pervasive issue beyond 2024.<sup>27</sup>

**3.15** If the Department is correct in its assumptions on the number of additional crime outcomes and subsequent charges, an additional 729,000 cases could enter the criminal justice system over the 10 years covered by the Programme's business case, resulting in more than 300,000 convictions. Such an increase would increase pressure on all parts of the criminal justice system. The Department is working with criminal justice system partners to support their demand planning. It has told us that it is developing its understanding of the likely impacts of the Programme on the wider criminal justice system but acknowledges it needs to do more. It is currently working with criminal justice partners to ensure a clearer picture of demand and expects to complete this work in early 2023.

<sup>27</sup> Comptroller and Auditor General, *Reducing the backlog in criminal courts*, Session 2021-22, HC732, National Audit Office, October 2021.



# Appendix One

## Our audit approach

**1** This report examines whether the Home Office (the Department) is well placed to deliver value for money from the Police Uplift Programme (the Programme).

It covers the:

- aims of the Programme (Part One);
- management of the Programme and progress against its objectives (Part Two); and
- challenges in maximising the impact from the Programme (Part Three).

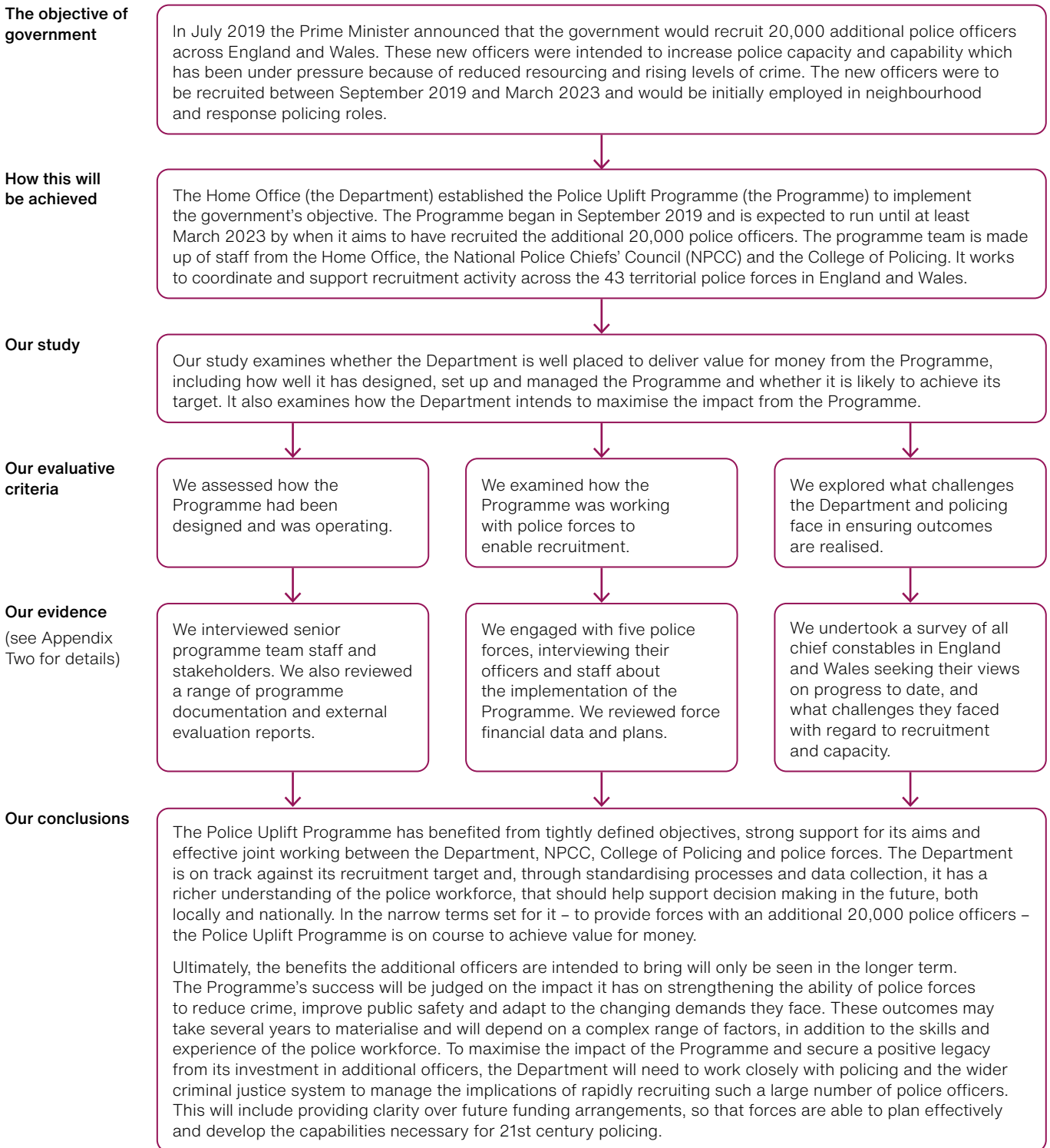
**2** It is too early to assess whether the additional officers are delivering the wider aims of government to improve public safety and help to reduce crime, as the new officers will need time to become fully effective in their new roles. Furthermore, improvement in wider criminal justice outcomes depends on many more factors than the number of police officers. Consequently, we have focused our report on progress to date in recruitment and how well the Department is establishing itself to demonstrate the impact of the additional officers in the future. We have examined the organisation of the programme team and the processes in place to support forces throughout the Programme. We have focused on recruitment activities for ensuring forces reach the net increase of 20,000 officers.

**3** We have not examined in detail plans to move more experienced staff to regional organised crime units to investigate serious and organised crime or fraud, as most of these moves will occur between April 2022 and March 2025.

**4** We have not examined in detail police vetting processes, as these are undertaken at a local level. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services is conducting an inspection of police capability to vet and monitor officers and staff. We have also not examined how the Programme can address current concerns regarding police culture in some forces.

**5** Our audit approach is summarised in **Figure 17** overleaf. Our evidence base is described in Appendix Two.

**Figure 17**  
Our audit approach



# Appendix Two

## Our evidence base

**1** Our independent conclusions on the Home Office's (the Department's) Police Uplift Programme (the Programme) were reached following our analysis of evidence collected between September and December 2021. We applied an analytical framework with evaluative criteria, which assessed how the Programme had been designed, its progress to date and the challenges the Department and its partners face in realising the desired outcomes.

**2** To understand the rationale for the Programme we:

- reviewed the Programme business cases, submissions for the 2019 and 2021 Spending Review and departmental submissions to ministers and senior staff;
- examined the Programme's benefits case and the underlying analytical model used to underpin the costs and benefits of the Programme;
- reviewed the Programme's cost model; and
- interviewed relevant officials and policing stakeholders.

**3** To evaluate what the Programme had achieved to date, we:

- interviewed senior members of the programme team, including the head of unit, the Programme director and the Programme manager;
- reviewed the quarterly police officer uplift statistics and six-monthly workforce statistics, and the process by which the programme team assured these statistics prior to releasing funds to police forces. For each analysis we have used data from the latest statistics available at the time of reporting; and
- reviewed board minutes and other documentation the team uses to support its understanding of the Programme.

- 4** To understand what effect the Programme is having on police forces we:
- engaged in-depth with five police forces (chosen on the basis of force size, geographic area covered, population and whether predominantly urban or rural) and conducted interviews with senior police staff (including the chief or deputy chief constable or a delegated person) and staff involved in recruitment, training, finance and workforce planning;
  - drew on external reviews of the Programme by the Infrastructure and Projects Authority and the Government Internal Audit Agency; and
  - surveyed all 43 chief constables in England and Wales. The survey was distributed on 22 November 2021 and we closed the survey to entries on 17 December 2021, having received 40 responses. Therefore, the Spending Review 2021 announcements about future police funding took place before our survey, but the provisional detailed police settlement for 2022-23 was announced after the closure of the survey.
- 5** To understand what challenges the Department faces in ensuring that the desired outcomes are achieved we drew on a range of evidence sources. Our engagement with five police forces provided insights into the demands they face and what will be needed to turn the additional 20,000 officers from new recruits to fully effective police officers. We also used our survey to gather information about the challenges that forces are managing in recruiting and training the new officers. We carried out a consultation of police stakeholder associations and received responses from: the Police Federation of England and Wales; the Police Superintendents' Association; the National Black Police Association; UNISON; the Christian Police Association; the Pagan Police Association; the Disabled Police Association; and the National Police Autism Association. Additionally, we spoke to representatives of the Police Federation and the Police Superintendents' Association. We also reviewed police force documentation, including Force Management Statements.

This report has been printed on Pro Digital Silk and contains material sourced from responsibly managed and sustainable forests certified in accordance with the FSC (Forest Stewardship Council).

The wood pulp is totally recyclable and acid-free. Our printers also have full ISO 14001 environmental accreditation, which ensures that they have effective procedures in place to manage waste and practices that may affect the environment.



National Audit Office

Design and Production by NAO Communications Team  
DP Ref: 010819-001

£10.00

ISBN 978-1-78604-421-1



9 781786 044211