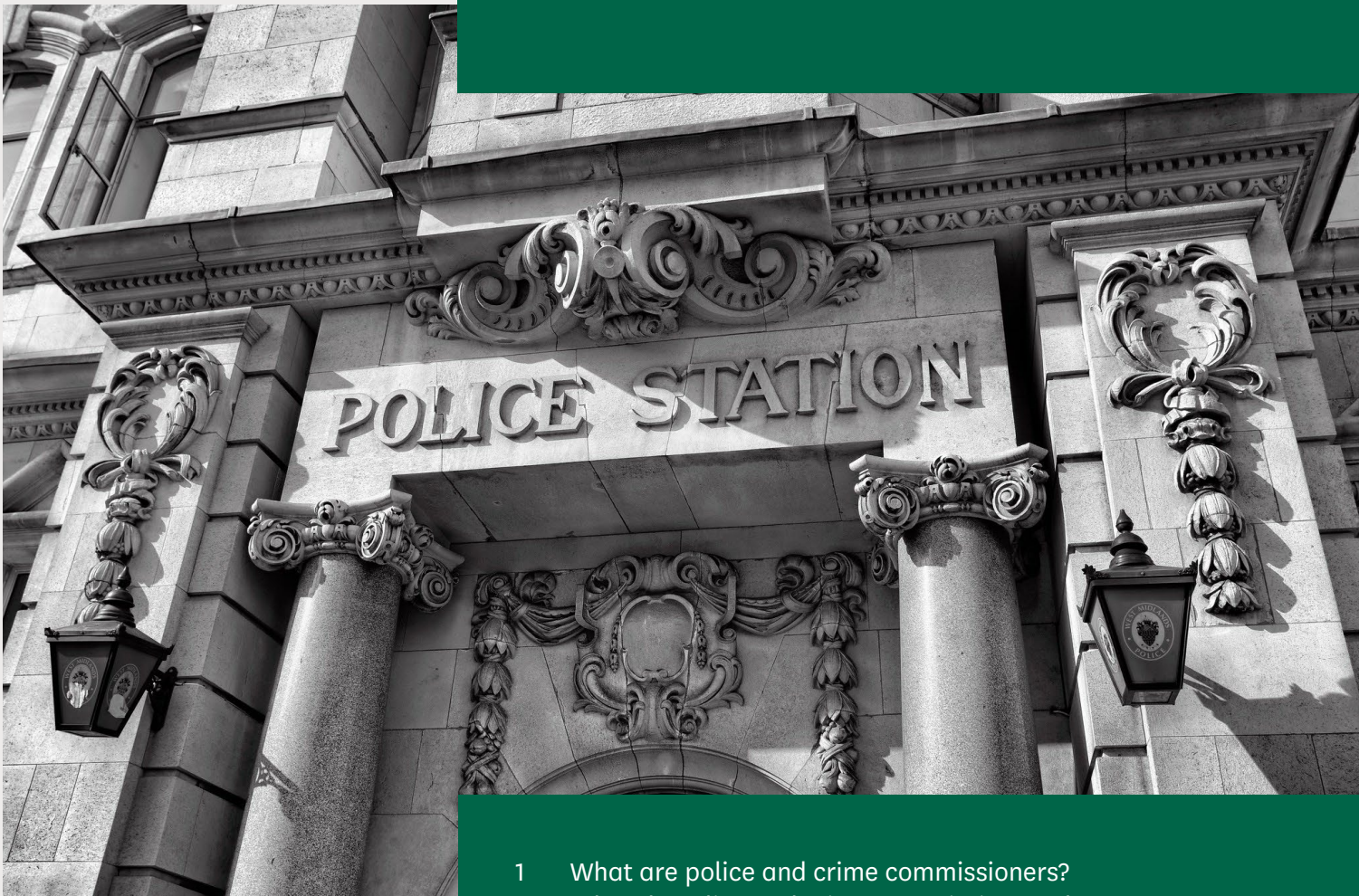


Research Briefing

16 December 2025

By William Downs

Police and crime commissioners



- 1 What are police and crime commissioners?
- 2 What do police and crime commissioners do?
- 3 How are police and crime commissioners held to account?

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Summary

What are police and crime commissioners?

Under the [Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011](#), all police forces in England and Wales must have a directly elected politician with responsibility for overseeing policing in their area.

In most areas, this is the police and crime commissioner (PCC). However, in some areas, the mayor of the combined authority delivers these responsibilities. The [Association of Police and Crime Commissioners \(APCC\) provides an up-to-date list of PCCs \(and mayors delivering PCC functions\) in each area.](#)

What do PCCs do?

The main responsibilities of PCCs are:

- setting an annual budget for the police force,
- appointing a chief officer,
- setting a five-year police and crime plan and scrutinising the force's performance against the delivery of the plan, and
- commissioning victims' services.

Mayors delivering PCC functions have the same responsibilities.

They can also choose to oversee the local fire and rescue service and handle complaints made against the police, though only a handful have chosen to do so.

All operational matters such as investigating crimes and deploying officers remain the responsibility of chief officers of each police force. Chief officers must make operational decisions free from political interference.

How are PCCs being reformed?

In November 2025, [the government announced it would scrap PCCs at the end of their current terms in May 2028](#). At that point, elected mayors of a combined authority (or combined county authority) will become the policing body for their force. If there are no relevant mayoral authorities for that police force area, new police and crime boards made up of local government leaders will deliver this role.

There will be bespoke arrangements for Wales, where there are no combined authority mayors.

[In an oral statement to Parliament](#) the Policing Minister, Sarah Jones MP, said the PCC model had “weakened local police accountability”, “had perverse impacts on the recruitment of chief constables” and “failed to inspire confidence in local people”. Emily Spurrell, Chair of the APCC, said [the decision risked “creating a dangerous accountability vacuum”](#).

The announcement aligns with the government’s wider plans for English devolution, specifically to align public service boundaries with mayoral combined authorities. Earlier in 2025, the government introduced the [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill](#), which would, amongst other things, make it easier for the Home Secretary to transfer policing oversight functions from PCCs to combined authority mayors. If the bill becomes law, it should facilitate more transfers of functions from PCCs to combined authority mayors before the abolition of PCCs in 2028.

The decision to abolish PCCs requires legislation that has not been tabled yet. More information on these plans should be published in a police reform white paper, which the [government has said will propose wider changes to policing in England and Wales](#).

1 What are police and crime commissioners?

Under the [Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011](#), all police forces in England and Wales must have a directly elected politician with responsibility for overseeing policing in their area, called the elected local policing body.¹ These can be either a directly elected police and crime commissioner (PCC) or a directly elected mayor of a combined authority.

There are 43 territorial police forces in England and Wales.² Of these, 37 are overseen by PCCs and five are overseen by mayors (the City of London Police has separate arrangements).³

In November 2025, [the government announced it would scrap PCCs at the end of their current terms in May 2028](#). At that point, elected mayors of a combined authority would become the policing body for their force. If there are no relevant mayoral authorities for that police force area, new police and crime boards made up of local government leaders will deliver this role.

1.1 Police and crime commissioners

PCCs provide political leadership for policing in their area but they are not responsible for leading their force. Police chiefs retain operational independence for their force and make independent decisions about operational matters.

Details of their responsibilities and functions, and how these relate to those of chief officers, are outlined in section two of this briefing.

¹ [Section 1](#), Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011. Policing is (generally) a devolved matter and there are separate oversight structures for policing in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

² ‘Territorial police forces’ refers to the police forces in England and Wales covering specific geographic areas. The British Transport Police, Civil Nuclear Constabulary and the Ministry of Defence Police do not have PCCs and have separate oversight structures.

³ These are the respective Mayors of London, Greater Manchester, West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire and York and North Yorkshire

Office of the PCC

Each PCC employs staff to support with the delivery of their functions, often referred to as the office of the PCC.

PCCs are required by law to employ a chief executive to act as the PCC's head of staff and employ a finance officer responsible for the office's financial affairs.⁴ These staff are not political appointees and therefore may stay in post if the PCC changes.

Beyond this, PCCs are free to staff their offices as they see fit. Other staff might include communications professionals, statisticians, and personal assistants. Most PCCs employ between 15 and 45 staff.⁵ There may be several factors determining a PCC's decision to employ more or fewer staff, for example the size of the police force and whether they also handle complaints or oversee fire and rescue services.

Deputy PCCs

PCCs can delegate any of their accountability and service delivery functions to members of their staff, including a deputy PCC. However, they cannot delegate some core functions, such as publishing a police and crime plan; appointing a chief officer; and setting the council tax precept.⁶

Deputy PCCs are political appointees that can also act as an interim PCC in the event of their PCC resigning or being suspended.⁷ PCCs are required to seek the views of their local police and crime panel (see section three of this briefing) before appointing a deputy.⁸

Association of Police and Crime Commissioners

The [Association of Police and Crime Commissions \(APCC\)](#) is a membership organisation that represents policing bodies in England and Wales. The APCC is a limited company which generates its income through membership fees paid by local policing bodies, through its annual summit and other revenue streams. The APCC represents the collective voice of local policing bodies in conversations with other stakeholders. It also provides its members with services to help them fulfil their statutory duties.⁹

⁴ [Paragraph 6](#), schedule 1, Police and Social Responsibility Act 2011

⁵ Estimates from desk-based research conducted by Commons Library staff.

⁶ [Section 18\(7\)](#), Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011.

⁷ [Schedule 1, paragraph 8](#), Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011

⁸ [Schedule 1, paragraph 10](#), Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011

⁹ APCC, [About the APCC](#), [last accessed 4 December 2025]

1 Common Council of the City of London

The Common Council of the City of London performs PCC-like functions for the City of London Police (CoLP).¹⁰ In practice these functions are executed by the [City of London Police Authority Board](#). The Common Council's PCC-like functions are legislated for separately because the CoLP has separate governance arrangements to other territorial police forces in England and Wales.¹¹

1.2

Mayors delivering PCC functions: current arrangements

Combined authority mayors

Outside of London, there are four areas in England where the elected mayor of the combined authority is the elected local policing body:

- Greater Manchester Combined Authority (since 2017)
- West Yorkshire Combined Authority (since 2021)
- York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority (since 2024)
- South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (since 2024)

Their responsibilities and functions are the same as for PCCs (detailed above). In practice, mayors usually delegate their functions to a deputy mayor for policing and crime.

Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime

In London, the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) delivers PCC-like functions. The Mayor of London is the legal occupant of MOPAC and is therefore responsible for the PCC functions related to Greater London and the Metropolitan Police Service (the Met).

¹⁰ [HCWS84: Concluding Part One of the Police and Crime Commissioner Review](#), 16 March 2021

¹¹ City of London, [City of London Police Authority Board](#), [last accessed 4 December 2025]

MOPAC was established at the same time as PCCs, through the [Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011](#).¹² MOPAC has most of the same functions as a PCC, including publishing a police and crime plan, setting the Met's budget, and commissioning victims services in London.¹³ However it is legislated for separately within the act, owing to some differences in functions.

For example, unlike other PCCs, MOPAC does not appoint the chief officer of the Met (the Met Commissioner). Instead, the Met Commissioner is appointed by the monarch on the recommendation of the Home Secretary, in consultation with the mayor.¹⁴ The mayor has no veto power over the appointment and has no formal power to dismiss the commissioner. This arrangement reflects the seniority of the Met Commissioner and the unique national functions of the Met.¹⁵

In practice, the mayor delegates most PCC functions to a deputy mayor for policing and crime. The London Assembly, an elected chamber within the Greater London Authority, must conduct a confirmation hearing for the deputy mayor and make a recommendation as to whether the candidate should be appointed.¹⁶

As of June 2024, MOPAC employed over 230 full-time staff.¹⁷ This is significantly more staff than other PCC offices, though the Met is also significantly larger than any other territorial police force in England and Wales.

1.3

Mayors delivering PCC functions: reforms

Existing powers to transfer functions

The Home Secretary can transfer powers from a PCC to a mayor of a combined authority (or combined county authority) by introducing secondary legislation, on the condition that:

- they secure the consent of the mayor,
- a public consultation has been held, and

¹² [Part 1, chapter 2](#), Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011

¹³ [Section 3](#), Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011

¹⁴ [Section 42](#), Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011

¹⁵ House of Commons Library, [The Greater London Authority](#), 22 July 2024 pp.24-25

¹⁶ Section 60A and Schedule 4A, [Greater London Authority Act 1999](#) (as amended)

¹⁷ London Assembly, [Mayor's Question 2024/1806](#), 5 July 2024

- they are of the view that the proposed changes are likely to improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of some or all of the people who live or work in the area.¹⁸

This is only currently possible if the boundary of the police force aligns exactly with the combined authority.

Previously, the consent of the combined authority itself was also required to initiate the transfer of powers. However, this requirement was removed by the [Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023](#).¹⁹

This was a contentious change. During the passage of the 2023 bill (now act), parliamentarians suggested the legislation would force through the transfer of functions in the West Midlands, after the West Midlands Combined Authority had blocked a previous attempt to do so (see box 2).²⁰

2 West Midlands PCC

[In 2019, the West Midlands Combined Authority blocked an attempt by the government to transfer powers](#) from the West Midlands PCC to the Mayor of the West Midlands. This was part of the government's broader policy intention for combined authority mayors to take on PCC functions.

In 2023, the government again tried to transfer PCC powers to the mayor aided by a change in the law (as detailed above) which meant the government did not require the consent of the combined authority for a transfer to proceed. The [transfer was opposed by the incumbent West Midlands PCC, Simon Foster](#) (Lab).

In February 2024, the government [introduced a statutory instrument to implement the transfer of powers](#). However, the transfer of powers was prevented following a judicial review launched by Simon Foster. [The High Court ruled](#) that the consultation conducted as part of the transfer of powers did not meet statutory requirements.²¹

As a result, the legislation made to transfer powers was quashed. The PCC election went ahead as planned on 2 May 2024, and Simon Foster was re-elected.

¹⁸ Sections 107F and 113, [Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009](#) (as amended). Secondary legislation introduced under these powers is [subject to the affirmative procedure](#), requiring approval from both houses before it can become law.

¹⁹ Section 62. The Library briefing [Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill 2022-23](#) provides further background on these provisions.

²⁰ See for example, debates on [23 November 2022](#) (c346) and [13 July 2023](#) (c1914).

²¹ *R (Police and Crime Commissioner for the West Midlands) -v- Secretary of State for the Home Department [2024] EWHC 604 (Admin)*

Further transfers

The government has introduced measures in the [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill 2024-25](#) (English Devolution Bill) that would help facilitate further transfers of functions from PCCs to elected mayors in the coming years.

The bill would establish a simpler route for the Home Secretary to transfer PCC functions to a mayor, without needing local consent. In effect, this would create the assumption that the elected mayor of a combined authority will exercise PCC functions where boundaries align. Should this become law, it is very likely that the mayors of Cambridgeshire & Peterborough and the West Midlands would take on PCC functions in their areas in due course.

Additionally, the bill would allow the government to more easily amend police force boundaries to create alignment with combined authorities. This would overcome the challenge posed in some areas where the boundaries of the respective authority and the police force do not exactly align (such as Liverpool City Region; North-East; Tees Valley; Hull and East Yorkshire; Greater Lincolnshire; and West of England).

Finally, the bill would allow a single mayor to become the PCC for more than one police force area (though all mayors will be required to appoint deputy mayors for each of the police force areas they oversee). This could apply to the mayor of the East Midlands, which covers the areas of the Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire PCCs in their entirety.

These proposals stem from the government's wider plans (as part of its English devolution agenda) "to align public service boundaries, including job centres, police, probation, fire, health services and Strategic and Local Authorities".²² The government first set out this strategic vision in its [English Devolution White Paper](#) (December 2024).²³

Abolishing PCCs

In addition to the measures in the English Devolution Bill, [the government announced on 13 November 2025 that PCCs will be abolished completely](#) when their current terms end in May 2028.²⁴

At that point, where PCC functions have not already transferred to an elected mayor (under either existing processes or those proposed in the bill) they will automatically do so.

If there is no relevant mayoral authority for that area, the functions will be transferred to a new police and crime board to oversee policing in that area. Sarah Jones, Policing Minister, said these boards would be in place "until

²² MHCLG, [English Devolution White Paper](#), 16 December 2024

²³ MHCLG, [English Devolution White Paper](#), 16 December 2024

²⁴ Home Office, [Police and crime commissioners to be scrapped](#), 13 November 2025; Written statement, [Police Reform](#), 13 November 2025; Oral statement, [Police Reform](#), 13 November 2025.

such time as mayors are in place in England” and would consist of local authority upper-tier leaders, co-opted members with appropriate skills and experience, and mayors (if they are in the force area).²⁵

The Policing Minister also said the boards would be “supported by a policing and crime lead, akin to a deputy mayor for policing and crime, to carry out day to day activities on their behalf”.²⁶

Separate arrangements (yet to be announced) would be developed in Wales, where there are no combined authority mayors.

[In an oral statement to Parliament](#) explaining the decision to abolish PCCs, the Policing Minister said the PCC model had “weakened local police accountability”, “had perverse impacts on the recruitment of chief constables” and “failed to inspire confidence in local people”.²⁷

Emily Spurrell, Chair of the APCC, said [the decision risked “creating a dangerous accountability vacuum”](#).²⁸ Cassia Rowland, Senior Researcher at the Institute for Government, questioned the timing of the announcement and [suggested PCCs should have been kept in place until devolution arrangements are agreed](#).²⁹

Abolishing PCCs and implementing these reforms requires primary legislation, though this has not been introduced yet. The government has committed to publish a police reform white paper in due course.³⁰ This is expected to include various proposals on changes to police structures, procurement and workforce and will probably provide more detailed information on the abolition of PCCs.³¹

²⁵ Oral statement, [Police Reform](#), 13 November 2025, c335

²⁶ Oral statement, [Police Reform](#), 13 November 2025, c335

²⁷ Oral statement, [Police Reform](#), 13 November 2025

²⁸ APCC,

²⁹ IfG, [Abolishing police and crime commissioners now is putting the cart before the horse](#), 18 November 2025

³⁰ Oral statement, [Police Reform](#), 13 November 2025, c338

³¹ [The white paper was first announced in November 2024](#), by the then Home Secretary Yvette Cooper.

2 What do police and crime commissioners do?

PCCs (and mayors delivering PCC functions) have several statutory responsibilities related to policing in their area, including allocating police budgets, setting policing priorities, commissioning victims' services and providing oversight of the police force.³² Some also take on optional responsibilities, such as providing oversight of the local fire and rescue service.

However, PCCs should not be involved in police operational decisions. These remain the responsibility of chief officers, who are expected to operate free from political influence.

2.1 Police and crime plans

PCCs must publish a police and crime plan for their force.³³ PCCs typically publish their police and crime plan in the year following their election and they tend to cover their entire term. The police and crime plan must detail the following:³⁴

- the police and crime objectives for the force
- the policing they expect the force to provide
- the financial resources they will make available to the force
- how they will share information with the chief officer
- how they will measure the performance of the force
- the criminal justice services they will provide

PCCs must arrange for the public and victims of crime to give their view on their police and crime plan.³⁵ Most PCCs do this by running public consultations to inform their plan.

³² Most responsibilities are set out [in chapter 3 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011](#)

³³ [Section 7](#), Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011

³⁴ [Section 7](#), Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011

³⁵ [Section 96](#), Police Act 1996

Chief officers are responsible for the day-to-day running of their force, and for all operational decisions, including those that relate to priorities set out in the police and crime plan.

2.2 Police force budget

PCCs are responsible for allocating the police force's budget. They decide how to allocate funding between the chief officer (for the running of the police force) and other responsibilities (for example, maintaining their own office and commissioning certain criminal justice services).

The day-to-day financial management of a force remains the responsibility of the chief officer, who must decide how to use funds allocated to them by their PCC, including decisions on how to resource specific operations.³⁶ Chief officers must have regard to the local police and crime plan and the national policing priorities when making such spending decisions.³⁷

Funding from PCCs comes from two main sources:

- The Home Office provides annual grants for the day-to-day running of the police force. This represents the main source of funding for most police forces. The Ministry of Justice also provides an annual grant to commission certain victims services.³⁸
- Funding is received locally through the council tax precept. PCCs set the level of the precept for their police force area. If they wish to set it above a limit set by the Home Office, they must secure a mandate from their electorate via a referendum. Around a third of total police funding is raised through council tax precepts but the proportion of police funding raised by council tax locally varies.³⁹

Police grant

The Home Office provides annual police grants to PCCs for the day-to-day running of their force and criminal justice services.

The annual police grant report details the funding available to PCCs to allocate to their respective forces. [The report is presented to parliament early in each calendar year.](#)⁴⁰

The proportion of funding awarded to each PCC is calculated using the police allocation formula. The formula is based on various data sources, such as population density, crime rates and costs of wages. The formula is widely

³⁶ [Paragraph 23\(m\)](#) and [paragraph 33\(c\)](#), The Policing Protocol Order 2011

³⁷ [Sections 8](#) and [77](#), Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011

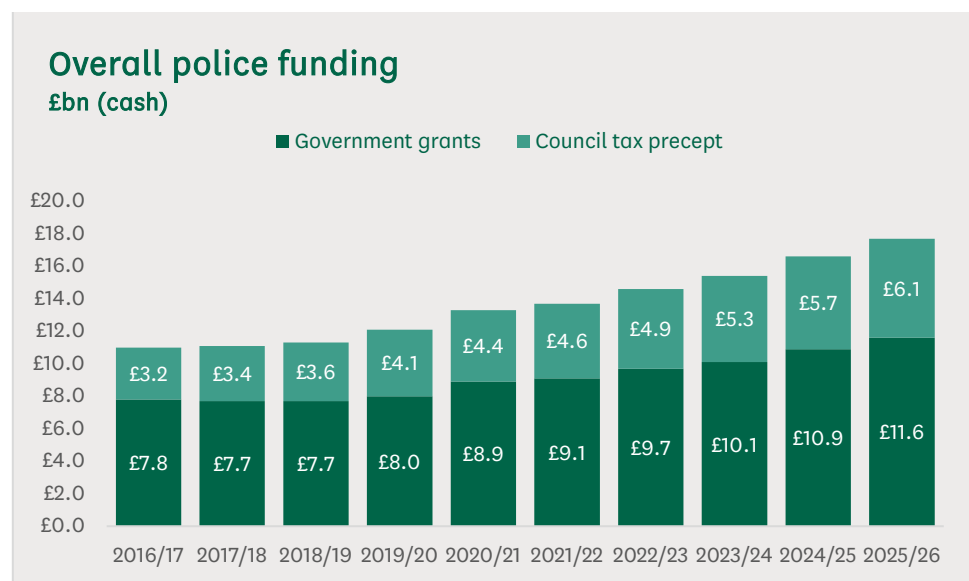
³⁸ Home Office, [Police funding for England and Wales 2015 to 2026](#)

³⁹ Home Office, [Police funding for England and Wales 2015 to 2026](#)

⁴⁰ House of Commons Library, [Police Grant Reports 2025/26](#), 4 February 2025

considered to be based on outdated data, meaning that allocations to individual forces do not reflect the social and demographic changes that have taken place within their areas.⁴¹ Several PCCs have said this has resulted in underfunding of their respective police forces.⁴² During the debate for the police grant report 2025/26, several MPs also raised concerns that the formula resulted in an unfair settlement for the police force for the police force in their constituency.⁴³

The government has accepted since 2012 that the police allocation formula is outdated and requires reform.⁴⁴ It has tried several times to revise the formula (including an attempt in 2015 that was abandoned after a statistical error in the process).⁴⁵ Its latest review started in February 2022, but at the time of writing had not been completed.⁴⁶



Source: Home Office, [Police funding for England and Wales 2015 to 2026](#)

⁴¹ HMICFRS, [State of Policing: The Annual Assessment of Policing in England and Wales 2023](#), 19 July 2024

⁴² See, for example: Lincolnshire PCC, [Marc Jones launches legal action to force the Home Office to introduce a new funding formula](#), 31 May 2024; BBC, [PCC election focused on police funding formula](#), 22 April 2024; West Midlands PCC, [PCC tells government to stop 'messaging around' and fund West Midlands Police properly](#), 11 January 2024; Dyfed-Powys Police Federation, [Fed chair calls for fairer funding formula](#), 17 November 2023

⁴³ Hansard, [Police grant report](#), 5 February 2025

⁴⁴ Home Affairs Select Committee, [Written evidence submitted by the Home Office](#), 28 October 2015

⁴⁵ PQ 5230 [on [Police: Finance](#)], 6 July 2015

⁴⁶ PQ 119888 [on [Emergency Services: Finance](#)], 7 February 2022

Council tax policing precept

PCCs set the amount that is added to council tax bills to pay for policing, known as the council tax policing precept. They must set the level of the precept within the following restraints:

- PCCs must consult the public and victims of crime on the level of the council tax policing precept.
- PCCs must present their policing precept plans to their police and crime panel before setting the level.⁴⁷ If the panel vetoes the plans, they must revise them (police and crime panels cannot further veto the revised plan).⁴⁸
- The Home Office sets a limit above which PCCs in England must secure a referendum mandate to set the precept. In 2025/26 the referendum limit was set at an increase of £14 a year for an average (Band D) household.⁴⁹ PCCs that wish to hold a referendum must fund it out of their budget.⁵⁰ There is no limit set in Wales, so PCCs can propose any increase to the precept, without requiring a referendum.

In practice most PCCs in England set their council tax policing precept at the Home Office referendum limit.⁵¹ In doing so, they maximise the funding available to them.

However, the proportion of police funding raised through council tax precepts varies between forces (from 19% in Northumbria to 55% in Surrey in 2024/25).⁵² This is because property values, the measure used to set council tax rates, and the grants calculated by the police allocation formula vary greatly across England and Wales.

Only one PCC has so far triggered a council tax referendum. In 2015, the then PCC for Bedfordshire proposed a 15.8% increase in the council tax precept. The trigger for a referendum was set at 2% and the PCC stated that the increase would be used to fund 100 additional police constables.⁵³ Residents voted to reject the proposed precept rise.⁵⁴

The council tax precept represents an increasing proportion of overall police funding in recent years. It accounted for 28% of all funding to PCCs in the year ending 31 March 2016, but accounted for 34% of all funding to PCCs in the

⁴⁷ See section 3.2 of this briefing for more information on police and crime panels.

⁴⁸ [Schedule 5](#), Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011; Home Office, [Police and Crime Panels- Scrutiny of Precepts](#) (PDF), 2012

⁴⁹ Hansard, [Police grant report](#), 5 February 2025

⁵⁰ See: House of Commons Library, [Council tax: local referendums](#), 4 January 2023, p9

⁵¹ Home Office, [Police Funding for England & Wales 2015-2021](#) (PDF), July 2020, p6

⁵² Written statement HCWS229 [on [Police Funding Settlement 2024-25](#)], 31 January 2024; Home Office, [Police Funding for England and Wales 2015-2021](#) (PDF), July 2020

⁵³ Local Government Chronicle, [‘No’ vote in first council tax referendum](#), 11 May 2015 [last accessed 16 August 2024]

⁵⁴ See: House of Commons Library, [Council tax: local referendums](#), January 2021, p9

year ending 31 March 2026.⁵⁵ As most PCCs set their policing precepts at the referendum limit, this trend can be attributed to central government decisions regarding the police grant and the council tax precept referendum limit.

2.3

Scrutiny and performance monitoring

Monitoring performance

PCCs must monitor their force’s performance against the local priorities they set in their police and crime plans.⁵⁶ They are also expected to scrutinise how their force uses its powers and carries out its duties.⁵⁷ Exactly how the PCC does this is largely up to them, but PCCs must meet the following four legal requirements associated with this oversight function:

- publish an annual report which assesses the force’s performance in meeting their police and crime plan priorities,
- engage in the work of HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS),
- facilitate members of the public and victims of crime to conduct scrutiny of the police force, and
- play a role delivering the local police complaints system.

Since 2021, PCCs have also been required to publish information on progress their force has made against the government’s national priorities for policing, HMICFRS performance reports on the force, and complaint handling. The government stated that this “additional information will further improve the transparency and public accountability of PCCs.”⁵⁸

Relationship with HMICFRS

HMICFRS conducts regular inspections of police forces in England and Wales, reporting and monitoring on the efficiency and effectiveness of each force. PCCs must respond to HMICFRS inspection reports about their force. They must publish their and their chief officers’ “comments” on inspections of their force within 56 days of its publication.⁵⁹ There are no statutory rules about what the “comments” must detail.

⁵⁵ Home Office, [Police funding for England and Wales 2015 to 2026](#), 28 July 2023

⁵⁶ [Section 7\(1\)\(e\)](#), Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011

⁵⁷ [Section 1\(8\)](#), Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011; [Schedule 1, paragraph 17](#), Policing Protocol Order 2017

⁵⁸ [The Elected Local Policing Bodies \(Specified Information\) \(Amendment\) Order 2021](#)

⁵⁹ [Section 55](#), Police Act 1996

PCCs also have powers to commission inspections of their force related to particular areas of concern.⁶⁰ Examples of PCC-commissioned inspections include: Norfolk Constabulary’s handling of 999 calls from vulnerable people (May 2024); Thames Valley Police’s handling of information related to an officer later charged with sexual offences (October 2023); and the Met’s response to the Sarah Everard vigil (March 2021).⁶¹

Additional external scrutiny

Many PCCs choose to facilitate external scrutiny by setting up formal community scrutiny panels, which invite volunteer members of the public to examine force performance on specific issues chosen by the PCC. Scrutiny panels should be independent from the PCC and police force.

Scrutiny panels may choose to focus on specific areas of policing, such as the use of stop and search powers, use of force and interactions in custody. Several PCCs publish information about the membership of their scrutiny panels and routinely publish minutes of meetings.⁶² In August 2023, [the government published draft national guidance for how scrutiny panels should operate](#).⁶³ At the time of writing, the government had not published its final version of the guidance.

PCCs also facilitate scrutiny of their police force through funding the Independent Custody Visitors Association (ICVA). The ICVA arranges for local volunteers to make unannounced visits to police custody suites to check that the rights, entitlements and welfare of detainees is being met.⁶⁴ The ICVA also receives funding from the Home Office.

2.4

Working with chief officers

PCCs provide political leadership for policing in their area but they are not responsible for leading their force. Police chiefs retain operational independence for their force and are expected to make operational decisions free from political interference. There is no definitive list of “operational matters” nor is there an expectation that operational decisions should be free from political scrutiny.

⁶⁰ [Section 54\(2BA\)](#), Police Act 1996

⁶¹ See: HMICFRS, [Publications: Police and Crime Commissioners](#) [last accessed 4 December 2025]

⁶² See, for example: Hertfordshire PCC, [Use of force scrutiny panel](#) [last accessed 4 December 2025]; Lancashire PCC, [The Stop and Search and use of force Scrutiny Panel](#) [last accessed 4 December 2025]

⁶³ Home Office, [Draft Community Scrutiny Framework: National Guidance for Community Scrutiny Panels](#), 31 August 2023

⁶⁴ ICVA, [Who are we](#), [last accessed 4 December 2025]

[The policing protocol \(updated in 2023\)](#) provides a legal framework for PCCs and police chiefs to manage their relationship.⁶⁵ It states that it is “expected that the principles of goodwill, professionalism, openness and trust will underpin the relationship” between all agencies. The protocol sets out:

- the respective legal powers and duties of PCCs and police chiefs,
- the duties on both parties to uphold and safeguard the principal of operational independence,
- examples of operational matters that are at the discretion of police chiefs, and
- the role and powers of police and crime panels.

The High Court previously described the protocol as an “unusual” piece of legislation but that it was “critical” to the proper functioning of police governance.⁶⁶

Appointing chief officers

PCCs must appoint a chief constable to lead their force. PCCs may only appoint someone who is a police officer in the UK or an approved overseas police force (currently only Australian, Canadian or New Zealand police forces, or selected police forces in the United States).⁶⁷

Before a chief officer can be appointed, the PCC must first notify the police and crime panel of their proposed appointment.⁶⁸ The panel must review the appointment, hold a confirmation hearing and make a recommendation to the PCC on whether the individuals should be appointed. The panel has the power to veto the first choice of chief officer but does not have the power to veto the PCCs second choice.⁶⁹

Unlike other PCCs, the Mayor of London does not appoint the chief officer of the Met (the Met Commissioner). Instead, the commissioner is appointed by the monarch on the recommendation of the Home Secretary, following consultation with the Mayor.⁷⁰ This arrangement reflects the seniority of the

⁶⁵ Under [section 79](#) of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011, the Home Secretary must publish a policing protocol to set out how PCCs, chief officers and police and crime panels must work together in the delivery of their respective functions. The policing protocol is issued as a statutory instrument: [Policing Protocol Order 2023 \(SI 2023/649\)](#). The 2023 protocol superseded the previous policing protocol issued under the Policing Protocol Order 2011.

⁶⁶ [Crompton, R \(on the application of\) v Police and Crime Commissioner for South Yorkshire](#), [2017] EWHC 1349 (Admin), paragraph 71

⁶⁷ [Schedule 8, Part 1, para 2\(1\)](#), Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011; [The Appointment of Chief Officers of Police \(Overseas Police Forces\) Regulations 2014](#)

⁶⁸ Police and crime panels are bodies consisting of locally elected politicians who provide scrutiny of PCCs between elections. Their functions are explained in more detail in part 3 of this briefing.

⁶⁹ [Schedule 8](#), Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011; and [The Police and Crime Panels \(Precepts and Chief Constable Appointments\) Regulations 2012](#)

⁷⁰ [Section 42](#), Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011

role of the Met Commissioner, which includes responsibility for some national operations, such as counter-terrorism policing.

There have been longstanding concerns that the process for appointing chief officers needs improving. In 2019, [HMICFRS published an inspection of the police selection and development of chief officers](#). It concluded that the process for selecting chief officers was “haphazard” and that there was shortage of chief officer candidates. It suggested that uncertainty in the PCC electoral cycle was a factor that inhibited movement of chief officers as “people wanted to know who they would be working for”.⁷¹

Following a two-part Home Office review into PCCs in 2021, the government stated that it was committed to addressing HMICFRS’ recommendations by working with the College of Policing (the body responsible for professional standards in policing) to improve the assessment and selection process for chief officers.⁷² In October 2025, the government commissioned the College of Policing to [deliver a review into police leadership at all levels](#), to report by May 2026.⁷³

Suspending and removing chief officers

PCCs can suspend their chief officer or call on them to retire at any time.⁷⁴

To suspend a chief officer, the PCC must notify their police and crime panel of their decision.⁷⁵ There are no statutory rules on what grounds a PCC can suspend their chief officer. PCCs are however obligated to work with their police chief with “goodwill, professionalism, openness and trust” under the policing protocol, and therefore would not be expected to use their power to suspend their chief officer without good reason.⁷⁶

To force their chief officer to retire or resign, the PCC must first:

- give the chief constable a written explanation of the reasons why they are proposing to call for the retirement or resignation,
- give the police and crime panel written notification of their intention to call upon the chief constable to retire or resign and the reasons given,
- give the chief constable the opportunity to make written representations about the proposal to call for the chief constable’s resignation or retirement, and

⁷¹ HMICFRS, [Leading Lights: An inspection of the police service’s arrangements for the selection and development of chief officers](#), August 2019, p12

⁷² Written statement HCWS849 [on [Concluding Part One of the Police and Crime Commissioner Review](#)], 16 March 2021

⁷³ College of Policing, [Police leadership commission](#) [last accessed 4 December 2025]

⁷⁴ [Section 38\(4\)](#), Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011

⁷⁵ [Schedule 8, paragraph 11](#), Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011

⁷⁶ [Crompton, R \(on the application of\) v Police and Crime Commissioner for South Yorkshire](#), [2017] EWHC 1349 (Admin), paragraph 71

- consider any written representations made by the chief constable.⁷⁷

In addition to this process, the police and crime panel must consider the PCCs intention to call on the chief officer to resign and make a recommendation as to whether it agrees or disagrees with the PCCs intention. The PCC can reject the panel’s recommendation.⁷⁸ Police chiefs must retire or resign if their PCC formally calls upon them to do so following the conclusion of this process.⁷⁹

In 2021, the government committed to changes to make the dismissal process “more rigorous and transparent” but these were not implemented.⁸⁰

In focus: the resignation of Dame Cressida Dick

The Mayor of London has similar powers to call on the Met commissioner to retire or resign, though the statutory process differs, as they must first secure the approval of the Home Secretary.⁸¹

The process for requiring the Met Commissioner to retire or resign received significant scrutiny in the context of the departure of Dame Cressida Dick as Met Commissioner, on 10 February 2022. Dame Cressida Dick had held discussions with the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan in which he suggested that he had lost trust and confidence in her and that he intended to commence the statutory removal process. However, she resigned before the statutory process was initiated.

Following her resignation, the then Home Secretary commissioned Sir Tom Winsor to conduct an independent review into the circumstances surrounding her departure. [The review reported in August 2022, and criticised the Mayor’s actions](#), finding that he had not acted “in accordance with the legislative scheme, still less its spirit.”⁸² The review criticised the statutory removal process, suggesting there were insufficient safeguards against a Mayor bypassing the statutory removal process. He put forward several suggestions for how the process could be improved, including additional involvement for the Home Secretary and the London Assembly Police and Crime Committee.⁸³

[In response, the Mayor said that Sir Tom Winsor’s review “is clearly biased and ignores the facts”](#). He defended his actions, stating “what happened was

⁷⁷ [Section 38](#) and [schedule 8](#), Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011

⁷⁸ [Section 16, schedule 8](#), Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011

⁷⁹ [Section 38\(2\)](#), Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011. The only formal attempt by a PCC to call on their chief officer to resign occurred in 2016 in South Yorkshire, which was successfully challenged through judicial review, see: [Crompton, R \(on the application of\) v Police and Crime Commissioner for South Yorkshire](#), [2017] EWHC 1349 (Admin).

⁸⁰ Written statement HCWS849 [on [Concluding Part One of the Police and Crime Commissioner Review](#)], 16 March 2021

⁸¹ [Section 48](#), Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011

⁸² Home Office, [Special commission on the resignation of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis](#), 24 August 2022, Annex 1

⁸³ Home Office, [Special commission on the resignation of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis](#), 24 August 2022

simple – I lost confidence in the former Commissioner’s ability to make the changes needed and she then chose to stand aside.”⁸⁴

2.5 Commissioning criminal justice services

PCCs are responsible for arranging crime reduction and victim support services.⁸⁵ PCCs do this by commissioning a range of public and third sector organisations to deliver services in their area.

Victim support

PCCs receive funding from the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) to commission victim support services for their area. PCCs fund a wide range of services including domestic abuse support services, victim advice lines and restorative justice programmes.⁸⁶ In 2023/24, funding allocated directly to PCCs for victim services was worth £71.5m nationally.⁸⁷

Some MoJ grant money provided to PCCs is ring-fenced for specific services (like those which support victims of specific crimes). Some PCCs choose to supplement their funding for victims’ services with money from other sources.

The government published its victim funding strategy in October 2022.⁸⁸ This created an additional responsibility for PCCs to offer multi-year funding to local services where appropriate, to support investment in longer-term interventions.

The strategy also committed to creating a duty for PCCs to collaborate with local authorities and integrated care boards when commissioning victims’ services. This was later passed into legislation under [section 13 of the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024](#) (at the time of writing, the duty was not yet in force).⁸⁹

Community safety partnerships

Locally, PCCs work with community safety partnerships to reduce crime. Community safety partnerships fulfil a statutory duty for local authorities, police forces, probation services, fire and rescue authorities and local health services to work collaboratively together to reduce crime.⁹⁰ These bodies also have a separate duty to work together to prevent serious violence in their area.⁹¹

⁸⁴ Mayor of London, [Statement from the Mayor on Sir Tom Winsor review](#), 2 September 2022

⁸⁵ [Section 143](#), Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014

⁸⁶ APCC, [PCCs making a difference: Putting victims first in focus](#), 2019

⁸⁷ Essex PFCC, [Letter from Ministry of Justice to Essex PCC](#), 8 June 2023

⁸⁸ Ministry of Justice, [Victims funding strategy](#), 19 October 2022

⁸⁹ [Section 13](#), Victims and Prisoners Act 2024

⁹⁰ [Section 5](#), Crime and Disorder Act 1998

⁹¹ [Part 2, chapter 1](#), Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022

Community safety partnerships must conduct an annual ‘strategic assessment’ of crime and disorder in their area, which must include a consideration of how to reduce serious violence. They must use their assessment to formulate and implement a strategy to address local crime and disorder.⁹² Partnerships in England must work with their local PCC by sharing their strategies with them and meeting them when requested.⁹³ Many community safety partnerships rely on grant funding from their PCCs to carry out their strategies.⁹⁴

Violence reduction units

Some PCCs deliver violence reduction units (VRUs), which bring together local agencies to adopt a public health approach to prevent serious violence.⁹⁵ There are no statutory requirements for how VRUs must operate, but [Home Office guidance encourages those designing VRU interventions to:](#)

- agree a local definition of “serious violence” and “public health approach” with the relevant partners
- coordinate the sharing of relevant information between local partners
- conduct research about the nature and scale of serious violence in the local area and what factors are driving it
- commission partner and third sector organisations to carry out local early intervention projects and evaluate the progress of these projects⁹⁶

VRUs also play a role in delivering the statutory duty for specified local agencies to prevent serious violence in their area.⁹⁷

The first VRU was established by the Mayor of London in 2018 and is hosted within MOPAC. There are now 20 VRUs across England and Wales.⁹⁸ The Home Office provided funding for the creation of VRUs, with an initial investment of £69.5 million in grants up to March 2021, and a further £35.5 million to March 2022.⁹⁹ The Home Office publishes annual evaluations on VRUs.¹⁰⁰

⁹² [Regulations 5-7 and 10-11](#), the Crime and Disorder (Formulation and Implementation of Strategy) Regulations 2007

⁹³ Home Office, [Police and Crime Commissioners and Community Safety Partnerships](#) (PDF), undated

⁹⁴ Local Government Association, [LGA review of the future of community safety services](#) (PDF), May 2018, p6 and p9

⁹⁵ Home Office, [Violence Reduction Unit Interim Guidance](#), March 2020,

⁹⁶ Home Office, [Violence Reduction Unit interim guidance](#) (PDF), March 2020, p34-37; Home Office, [Process evaluation of the Violence Reduction Units \(PDF\)](#), August 2020, p38-43

⁹⁷ Home Office, [Serious Violence Duty statutory guidance](#) (PDF), December 2022

⁹⁸ Home Office, [Process evaluation of the Violence Reduction Units \(PDF\)](#), August 2020, p23

⁹⁹ Home Office, [Funding for Violence Reduction Units announced](#), 12 August 2019; Home Office, [Additional £35 million for Violence Reduction Units](#), 29 December 2019; Home Office, [£35.5m to support young people at risk of involvement in serious violence](#), 8 February 2021

¹⁰⁰ Home Office, [Violence Reduction Units 2023 to 2024](#), 19 June 2025

2.6

Police complaints

In the main, chief officers are responsible for managing a police complaints system for their force. This is usually delivered through a professional standards department, which will handle most complaints made about a serving or former officer. The Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) only becomes involved in the most serious complaints.

The role of most PCCs in the police complaints system is limited to three main responsibilities:

- holding their chief constable to account for the performance of the local complaints and disciplinary processes (exactly how they do this is up to them but the IOPC has set some expectations in its [statutory guidance on the police complaints system](#)),¹⁰¹
- handling complaints which concern the conduct of their chief constable,¹⁰² and
- handling certain complaint reviews for their local force.¹⁰³

These are the core functions that all PCCs must deliver.

In addition to these, PCCs can also choose to take on two additional functions that are usually the responsibility of the chief officer: to determine how complaints should be handled and whether they should be officially recorded (model two); and to manage all correspondence with complainants throughout the complaints process (model three).¹⁰⁴

At the time of writing, five PCCs had extended their responsibilities for police complaints. The PCCs for Hertfordshire, Wiltshire and the PFCC for Northamptonshire have all adopted model two. The PCC for Cleveland and the Mayor for York and North Yorkshire had adopted model three.¹⁰⁵ In March 2024, the Home Affairs Committee found that resourcing challenges had prevented more PCCs from taking on additional responsibilities in relation to complaints.¹⁰⁶

PCCs cannot delegate their responsibility for holding the chief officer accountable for the performance of the local complaints system. However, they can delegate other responsibilities for police complaints.¹⁰⁷ They can

¹⁰¹ IOPC, [Statutory guidance – 2020](#), 1 February 2020

¹⁰² Section 29, Police Reform Act 2002; IOPC, [Handling allegations about the chief officer](#), 1 October 2022

¹⁰³ Complainants have a right to have the way their complaint was dealt with ‘reviewed’ if they were unhappy with how the force dealt with it. Certain complaint reviews are carried out by the PCC

¹⁰⁴ [Section 13A](#), Police Reform Act 2002

¹⁰⁵ Information provided to the Library via personal communication with the IOPC

¹⁰⁶ Home Affairs Committee, [Letter to Home Secretary – inquiry on PCCs](#) (PDF), 14 March 2024

¹⁰⁷ [Regulation 50](#), The Police (Complaints and Misconduct) Regulations 2020

choose to delegate to someone within their office or outside their office who is not a serving police officer, another PCC, or someone who cannot work impartially.¹⁰⁸

2.7

Fire and rescue services

PCCs can submit a proposal to the Home Office to assume responsibility for oversight of their local fire and rescue services.¹⁰⁹ At present four PCCs (Cumbria, Essex, Northamptonshire and Staffordshire) have responsibility for their local fire and rescue service. These PCCs are technically known as Police, Fire and Crime Commissioners (PFCCs).

In addition, the Mayors of Greater Manchester and York and North Yorkshire are responsible for their respective fire and rescue services. In London, there is a London Fire Commissioner, accountable to the Mayor.

Functions of a fire and rescue authorities

The statutory responsibilities of a PCC in relation to policing are mainly related to governance and oversight of their respective police force. The police force itself is constituted as a separate legal entity and is operationally independent.

However, PFCCs (or mayoral equivalents) are the fire and rescue authority for that area.¹¹⁰ This means that they are responsible for the delivery of statutory fire and rescue services, including:

- promoting fire safety,
- extinguishing fires and protecting life and property from fires,
- rescuing and protecting people in road traffic collisions, and
- rescuing and protecting people in other emergencies.¹¹¹

The PFCC must appoint a chief fire officer, chief finance officer and a monitoring officer. In practice, a PFCC will delegate responsibilities for the day-to-day running of the fire and rescue service to these officers.

The PFCC is also responsible for putting in place effective governance arrangements for the service. There are no statutory requirements for what governance must involve. Governance typically involves setting the strategic policy agenda, setting the budget and providing oversight and scrutiny of the

¹⁰⁸ [Regulation 50](#), The Police (Complaints and Misconduct) Regulations 2020

¹⁰⁹ [Schedule 1](#), Police and Crime Act 2017

¹¹⁰ In areas where there is no PFCC, the fire and rescue authority is the local authority, combined authority, or elected Mayor (in London and Greater Manchester).

¹¹¹ [Part 2](#), Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004

service. The Local Government Association has [issued guidance to support fire and rescue authorities to deliver effective governance](#).¹¹²

The government has published a [fire and rescue national framework for England](#) (2018), which all fire and rescue authorities must have regard to.¹¹³

3 Should chief fire officers be operationally independent?

In policing, chief constables are not employed directly by the PCC and are operationally independent. However, in fire and rescue services, chief fire officers are direct employees of their fire and rescue authorities.

[In January 2020, HMICFRS called for chief fire officers to have operational independence](#). It cited concerns that some fire and rescue authorities had interfered with operational decisions and prevented chief fire officers from making “changes to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of their services.”¹¹⁴

The government’s white paper on fire and rescue service reform (May 2022) proposed to grant chief fire officers operational independence. [In its response \(December 2023\) the government committed](#) to “legislate, at the earliest opportunity, to give chief officers operational independence” and to take action to make the responsibilities of the fire and rescue authority and the chief officer clearer.¹¹⁵ At the time of writing these changes had not been implemented.

Reforms: mayors as the default fire and rescue authority

The Conservative government supported more mayors and PCCs becoming the fire and rescue authority in their areas.¹¹⁶ [In 2022 it published a fire reform white paper](#) which, amongst other things, proposed changes to simplify the structures governing fire and rescue services.

¹¹² LGA, [Governance checklist for fire and rescue authorities](#), undated [Accessed: 19 August 2024]

¹¹³ Home Office, [Fire and rescue national framework for England](#), 8 May 2018

¹¹⁴ HMICFRS, [State of Fire and Rescue: The Annual Assessment of Fire and Rescue Services in England 2019](#), January 2020, p.29

¹¹⁵ Home Office, [Response the fire reform white paper](#), 12 December 2023

¹¹⁶ Written statement HCWS84 [on: [Concluding Part One of the Police and Crime Commissioner Review](#)], 16 March 2021

The white paper proposed mandating that PCCs and mayors should become the fire and rescue authority by default where boundaries aligned.¹¹⁷ It decided not to proceed with this mandatory transfer. Instead, the government said that it would work with PCCs and the APCC to “explore ways to simplify processes and incentivise voluntary transfers.”

This decision was informed by the response to the consultation on the white paper, to which:

- 50% of respondents opposed the government transferring responsibility for fire and rescue services to a single elected individual in each area (30% supported this, 20% were neutral)
- 45% of respondents opposed fire and rescue functions being transferred to existing mayoral combined authorities (24% supported this, 33% were neutral)
- 58% of respondents opposed the transfer of responsibility for fire and rescue services to PCCs (26% supported this, 16% were neutral)¹¹⁸

In its [English Devolution White Paper](#) (December 2024), the Labour government set out its support for more mayors of combined authorities to become the fire and rescue authority for their area. This is in line with its broader intentions for public service alignment: “Our long-term aim is for public service boundaries – including those of police, probation, fire and health services – and those of Strategic Authorities, to align”.¹¹⁹

The white paper set out its preference for mayors of combined authorities to be the fire and rescue authority “by default”.

The [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill](#) would establish a new route for the Secretary of State to determine that a mayoral combined authority will take on the functions of the fire and rescue authority for their area. More information on these provisions is provided in the Library briefings produced for [second reading](#) and [report stage debates](#) of the bill in the Commons.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ Home Office, [Response to the fire reform white paper](#), 12 December 2023

¹¹⁸ Home Office, [Response to the fire reform white paper](#), 12 December 2023

¹¹⁹ MHCLG, [English Devolution White Paper](#), 16 December 2024

¹²⁰ House of Commons Library, [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill 2024-25, 20 August 2025](#); and [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill 2024-26: progress of the bill](#), 20 November 2025

3 How are police and crime commissioners held to account?

3.1 Elections

PCCs are held to account via the ballot box, with elections taking place every four years.¹²¹ Those registered to vote in local government elections are eligible to vote for the PCC in that area.

The first elections took place in 2012, and the most recent elections took place in May 2024. At this election, 19 of the 37 successful candidates were Conservatives, 17 were Labour, and one was Plaid Cymru. Labour gained 10 PCCs, while the Conservatives lost 10. All five directly elected mayors with PCC-like functions represent Labour.¹²²

Turnout for PCC elections averaged 23.2% at the 2024 elections, representing the lowest turnout of any PCC election since PCCs were established, and a significant reduction on turnout from 2021 (33.2%).¹²³ Turnout may be impacted by whether other elections are taking place at the same time. For example, in the May 2024 elections, turnout was on average lower in Wales (17%), where no other elections took place. In many areas of England, the elections coincided with elections for local councillors or mayors, which may have improved turnout.

Turnout may also reflect a wider lack of awareness of PCCs and their roles. For example, the Office of National Statistics estimates that 42% of people over 16 are not aware of PCCs.¹²⁴

The 2024 elections will be the last election, following [the government's commitment to abolish the role of PCCs](#) at the end of their current term in 2028.

¹²¹ [Section 50](#), Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011. Note that elections scheduled for May 2020 were delayed 12 months, to May 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

¹²² [The Library briefing PCC elections 2024](#) provides further information on the outcome of the election.

¹²³ Turnout figures were collated by Library staff from each PCC individually, where this information was not publicly available. Two PCCs did not respond to requests for data and have been excluded.

¹²⁴ Office for National Statistics, [Crime in England and Wales: Annual supplementary tables – March 2023, table S23](#)

By-elections

A by-election is triggered when a PCC resigns, or the office is declared vacant by the High Court (following the suspension of a PCC). A by-election must take place within 35 days of the vacancy unless a regularly scheduled election is due to take place within six months.¹²⁵ Police and crime panels (see below) must appoint an acting PCC from amongst the office of the PCC whilst the role is vacant. Police and crime panels also have the power to appoint an acting PCC if the sitting PCC is incapacitated or suspended.¹²⁶

4 Should voters be able to recall PCCs?

In 2014, following the resignation of the former PCC for South Yorkshire, the government suggested they would introduce a process for voters to recall their PCC between elections if they are unhappy with their performance (similar to the mechanism for MPs under the [Recall of MPs Act 2015](#)).¹²⁷

In its two-part review of PCCs, the government explored the merits of introducing recall for very serious breaches of behaviour.¹²⁸ It concluded in March 2022 that recall was not needed, given the “stringent disqualification rules in place for PCCs”, though it said it would keep the issue under review.¹²⁹

In March 2024, the Home Affairs Committee wrote to the Home Secretary requesting that the government considers a recall process for PCCs, as there was no mechanism to suspend or remove a PCC for behaviour which falls short of criminal.¹³⁰ The government stated that it had no plans to introduce a recall mechanism for PCCs.¹³¹

¹²⁵ [Section 51](#), Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011

¹²⁶ [Section 62](#), Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011

¹²⁷ Home Office, [Government response to the sixteenth report from the Home Affairs Select Committee Session 2013-14 HC 757: Police and Crime Commissioners: progress to date](#) (PDF), December 2014, p2

¹²⁸ Home Office, [Terms of reference: Police and Crime Commissioner Review Part 2](#), 27 July 2021

¹²⁹ Hansard, [Police and Crime Commissioner Review: Part 2](#), 7 March 2022

¹³⁰ UK Parliament, [Home Affairs Committee Chair writes to Home Secretary on Police and Crime Commissioners](#), 14 March 2024

¹³¹ Home Office, [Letter to Home Affairs Committee – inquiry on PCCs](#) (PDF), 10 April 2024

3.2

Police and crime panels

Police and crime panels are bodies consisting of locally elected politicians who provide scrutiny of PCCs between elections. They were established at the same time as PCCs, under the [Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011](#).

The government has said it will also abolish police and crime panels when it abolishes PCCs.¹³²

Scrutiny of PCCs

Police and crime panels have a statutory obligation to hold four public meetings a year. The government has said that [on average, they meet between four and six times a year](#), although some may meet more often depending on their work programmes.

Panels have powers to:

- review and veto the PCCs appointment of a chief officer
- review and veto the council tax policing present plan
- take evidence from their PCC, their staff and others
- submit reports to the PCC on relevant issues, which the PCC must respond to

Police and crime panels must also review senior appointments proposed by the PCC (chief executive, chief finance officer or deputy PCC) and hold a confirmation hearing. A panel can recommend a proposed appointee is not appointed, but the PCC does not have to follow the panel's recommendation.¹³³

Police and crime panels must also handle public complaints about the PCC.¹³⁴ Complaints are normally dealt with by one of two ways: either by informal resolution or a formal investigation. Panels can choose to delegate the initial handling of complaints to the PCC's chief executive (or another body). Panels can only suspend their PCC if they have been charged with an imprisonable offence.¹³⁵

[The government publishes guidance for police and crime panels](#), which was last updated in June 2023.¹³⁶ The foreword to the guidance states that it is intended to provide practical information for panel chairs, members and

¹³² Oral statement, [Police Reform](#), 13 November 2025, c336

¹³³ [Section 10, schedule 1](#), Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011

¹³⁴ [The Elected Local Policing Bodies \(Complaints and Misconduct\) Regulations 2012](#)

¹³⁵ [Section 30](#), Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011

¹³⁶ Home Office, [Police, fire and crime panels guidance](#), 16 June 2023

supporting officers about their statutory roles and responsibilities, and effective scrutiny. Other documents on good practice and member recruitment and [bitesize videos on key scrutiny areas](#) are also published alongside the guidance.¹³⁷

Some panels have an extended remit that covers fire and rescue as well as policing and crime, where PCCs have opted to take on these additional responsibilities.

Membership

Each panel is made up of at least twelve members:

- at least two ‘co-opted members’ from no specific local authority
- at least ten elected representatives drawn from the relevant local authorities in the police force area

If a police force area has more than ten local authorities, the panel includes at least one member from each constituent local authority. It is up to relevant local authorities how they choose the councillors who sit on the panel. If an agreement about the composition of a panel cannot be met the Home Secretary has powers to nominate individuals to be members.¹³⁸ It is for members of the panel to decide how the panel is chaired.

Funding

[Government guidance](#) explains that an annual total of £53,300 is provided for support and running costs per panel, with Welsh panels being given an additional £5,715 for translation costs. In addition, £920 per panel member per year is added to each panel’s total grant. The total funding available therefore depends on the size and location of the panel. The grant is typically used to cover:

- costs of employing a supporting officer,
- training and development for members,
- expenses, and
- procurement of relevant services such as website support or online broadcasting of public panel meetings.

[The House of Commons Home Affairs Committee questioned in 2014 whether panels were adequately funded](#) (PDF). It noted that the Home Office provided funding of £53,000 to each panel in 2013/14, on the assumption that panels would require a single full-time scrutiny officer and would meet four times a year. The committee argued that this funding did “not reflect the workload of

¹³⁷ Home Office, [Guidance: Police and crime panels](#), 19 May 2022

¹³⁸ [Schedule 6](#), Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011

panels” and that if panels were to play a stronger role in proactively scrutinising commissioners, they needed to be “resourced accordingly”. In response, the government argued that police and crime panels received funding “commensurate with the non-executive scrutiny role required of them by legislation”.¹³⁹

[The Local Government Association \(LGA\) reported in 2020 that many councils were subsidising the work of their local panel.](#) The LGA called for more funding for panels claiming the full amount of their grant to ensure there was enough money to run the panel and support and train its members without using funding from other parts of the local authorities’ budgets.¹⁴⁰

5 Scrutiny of MOPAC

In London, [scrutiny of MOPAC is carried out by the London Assembly Police and Crime Committee.](#) The London Assembly decides the membership and the terms of the committee. In July 2024, the committee consisted only of directly elected London Assembly Members, though it can appoint independent members if it wishes. The committee must:

- review the Mayor’s draft police and crime plan and make a report on any recommendations,
- “keep under review the exercise of the functions” of MOPAC, and
- hold a confirmation hearing for the deputy mayor for policing and make a recommendation on whether they should be appointed.¹⁴¹

The committee can also compel the deputy mayor for policing and crime and any member of MOPAC to attend a public meeting of the committee. It can also conduct investigations on any actions or decisions in relation to MOPAC, or any other matters related to crime reduction in Greater London more widely.¹⁴²

¹³⁹ UK Government, [Response to Police and Crime Commissioners: progress to date \(PDF\)](#), December 2014, p.16

¹⁴⁰ LGA, [Review into the role of Police and Crime Commissioners \(part one\): LGA response September 2020](#) [last accessed 4 December 2025]

¹⁴¹ See: [section 33](#), Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011; and [section 60A](#) and [schedule 4a](#), Greater London Authority Act 1999

¹⁴² See: [section 33](#), Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011; and [section 60A](#) and [schedule 4a](#), Greater London Authority Act 1999

3.3

Home Secretary powers

The Home Secretary can intervene to issue “directions” to a PCC, if they believe that the PCC is failing to discharge any of their functions in an effective manner.¹⁴³ Under these directions, the Home Secretary can force the PCC to:

- take specific action to address the failings identified, and
- submit an action plan to the Home Secretary with details of the measures they will take to address the concerns.

Before issuing a direction, the Home Secretary must notify HMICFRS and give it the opportunity to comment on the grounds for the direction. A PCC must comply with a direction, unless it can suggest “remedial measures” that would sufficiently address the issues identified by the Home Secretary.¹⁴⁴

The Home Secretary has a similar power to issue PCCs with directions to resolve ineffectiveness in their police force.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ [Section 40A](#), Police Act 1996

¹⁴⁴ [Section 40A](#), Police Act 1996

¹⁴⁵ [Sections 40 and 40A](#), Police Act 1996

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