

National Police Chiefs' Council

Mental Health & Policing Strategy

2025 - 2028



Responding to Mental Health



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Mental Health & Policing Strategy 2025 - 2028

Foreword by Rachel Bacon
Chief Constable Durham Constabulary
NPCC Lead on Mental Health

It gives me great pleasure to introduce the NPCC National Strategy on Policing & Mental Health (2025-2028). This strategy sets out the portfolio's core principles, strategic objectives and key deliverables in policing & mental health over the next three years.

I have had the privilege of being the NPCC Mental Health portfolio lead since 2021. Within this timeframe I have overseen a programme of national work which has given me a significant insight into the challenges faced by frontline officers and staff in responding to incidents involving mental health. Post pandemic, a third of adults and young people have reported a deterioration in their mental health (Mind, 2025). This naturally increases the contact the police have with people experiencing mental ill health and inevitably has an impact on policing; creating increased demand on resources and additional complexity in how the police respond to incidents. It is important to highlight people with mental illness are more likely to be victims of crimes rather than perpetrators.

2023 saw the implementation of Right Care Right Person, which continues to deliver national transformational change, ensuring the needs of the public are the key focus, and best met by the right agency with the right skills and training. The principles embedded within RCRP are now being adopted internationally, clearly demonstrating the value of what has been achieved. RCRP remains a key objective of this strategy, alongside the focus on the wider portfolio workstreams.

Legislative changes will require policing to make further progress in how we work with partners to operate in a dynamic and demanding environment, and we will work to support forces to prepare, adapt and respond to the challenges this may bring. In conjunction with the College of Policing we will continue to promote and share good practice and support forces as they deliver their strategic responses to an evolving landscape of policing and mental health.

This updated strategy has been developed in support of the wider NPCC Strategic Plan, and provides focus on the local, regional and national levels. We continue to work together across portfolios and with our partners to integrate community engagement, creating a comprehensive and culturally responsive mental health approach that benefits all of the public we serve. This strategy sets out to build on the principles of diversity, equality and inclusion and seeks to support those who have been historically underserved or underprotected and work with partners in addressing issues of disproportionality that persist within mental health and policing.

Rachel Bacon



The Role of the NPCC



The National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) helps the police cut crime and keeps the public safe by joining up the operational response to the most serious and strategic threats and developing national guidance.

The NPCC works closely with the College of Policing, which is the professional body for everyone working across policing. The College sets out the national policing curriculum as well as holding the Authorised Professional Practice for policing, which focuses on what works and evidence based knowledge. The College provides a national coordination role for Policing and mental health and works in partnership with the NPCC to identify and set good practice. The College are collaborating on the delivery plan in support of the implementation of the objectives set out within this strategy.

Defining Mental Health incidents

Policing requires a definition that is capable of encompassing the broad spectrum of situations where policing intersects with mental health. As such we have retained the existing NPCC definition of a mental health related police incident:

“ Any police incident thought to relate to someone’s mental health where their vulnerability is at the centre of the incident or where the police have had to do something additionally or differently because of it.”

NPCC, 2018



Core Principles

The NPCC Mental Health & Policing portfolio aligns with the NPCC National Strategic Plan through a set of aligned core principles:

- **Approach** - which details the overarching strategic governance covering mental health
- **Partnerships** - which recognises the importance of multi-agency working
- **Response** - which shapes operational delivery

Approach

Ensuring the views of the service are represented consistently throughout decision making and governance structures, shaping future commissioning decisions, service delivery and performance monitoring.

Partnerships

Development of partnerships, to provide an effective response to mental health related incidents. Delivering improved service & interventions.

Response

Providing coordination, delivery and identifying emerging risks on behalf of the service to achieve the right response, delivered at the right time, by trained staff in an appropriate setting.



Mental Health & Policing Portfolio Strategic Objectives

Approach

Objective 1

Strategic Oversight

Assisting forces to develop their strategic approach to mental health

Partnerships

Objective 2

Data & Information Management

Enable police forces to access, interpret and baseline mental health data, to understand demand and ensure service delivery

Objective 3

Right Care Right Person

Working in partnership to ensure vulnerable people get the right support from the right service, delivering an improved response to service users

Response

Objective 4

Identify & Share Good Practice

Identify and share good practice to drive high standards and support professional development in delivering improved services to the public

Objective 5

Criminal Justice & Diversion

Provide justice for victims by ensuring early identification of mental health needs, enabling effective case management decision making





Assisting forces to develop their strategic approach to mental health

Strategic Objective 1: Strategic Oversight

Overarching Strategic Approach

We will continue to support forces in developing their mental health strategies to drive consistency with the Right Care Right Person (RCRP) principles at a strategic level. This is to ensure the police are involved in mental health related incidents only when necessary and work with agencies to support service delivery.

The focus of policing being a primary responder to mental health related incidents has significantly changed since the introduction of RCRP. This sets out the thresholds for the police in responding to mental health incidents to protect people when there is a real and immediate risk to the life of a person, or risk of serious harm, as well as crime related incidents. A model in which health professionals with the appropriate skills and training are leading responses to people with mental health needs, as set out under RCRP must remain the key strategic focus. This also ensures improved working practices with partner agencies at a local, regional and national level.

Disproportionality

Disproportionality in mental health is a particular concern as highlighted by research in this field. We will work alongside national diversity leads to ensure the challenges are better understood and be able to identify where a particular group is overrepresented or underrepresented in a system or outcome relative to their proportion in the overall population. The College of Policing is supporting this work to address racial disparity under the Police Race Action Plan. We will listen to those with lived experience, so we can better understand the challenges being faced and work together to improve our response.

Protection of the Public

The strategic approach developed by forces will enable police led strategies, policies, and resources that protect the public, mitigate against disparities and support mental health needs where appropriate. A commitment to lived experience and community involvement in decision-making will support this core principle.



Escalation

The NPCC will continue to work to develop and support the embedding of an effective escalation policy across policing in collaboration with partners. The development and enhancement of regional reporting structures will continue to support governance and ensure that identified problems and emerging issues can be effectively responded to. Continuing to support escalation processes at local, regional and national levels is key to ensuring that services are delivered effectively and provides opportunity to gather data to support performance monitoring.

Mental Health Act Amendments

The government has made a commitment to remove the use of police custody as a place of safety following the review of the Mental Health Act. The NPCC is working closely with the Home Office and Department for Health and Social Care to fully understand the impact of the proposed amendments. This work will support the implementation of legislative change by ensuring that forces are well equipped to understand the potential impact and identify the services that will need to be in place. The changes will be managed through the national governance structure.

Standards & Guidance

We will continue to work closely with the College of Policing to set high standards and provide guidance to forces, based on Authorised Professional Practice (APP) in developing and implementing their mental health response policies and protocols. This ensures that service users are responded to consistently in line with established good practice, and supports front line staff to ensure a professional response to incidents involving people with mental ill health.

***“We
will listen
to those with lived
experience to better
understand the challenges
being faced and work
together to improve
our response.”***



Enable police forces to access, interpret & baseline mental health data to understand demand and ensure service delivery

Strategic Objective 2: Data & Information Management

Data Protection & Information Sharing

We will work with forces to overcome challenges that have been identified in relation to data protection regulations and information sharing where mental health is concerned. This includes further understanding of where information sharing should be encouraged to allow a more efficient and effective service, whilst maintaining a person's right to privacy and confidentiality. The benefits and scope of multi-agency data linkage with statutory partners is an area of focus to better understand the needs of our communities and shape commissioning of local and national services.

Data Capture

We will focus on improving our ability to present mental health data for policing on a local, regional and national level. Creating a strong evidence base by identifying core issues will ensure partnership discussions at strategic level are strengthened. The NPCC will support the development of a comprehensive mental health dataset that will be shared with health and local partners to support further improvements in mental health response. We will encourage innovation in data collation to ensure efficiency and effectiveness and reduce the burden on policing resources. We will continue to work at a governmental level to ensure the data captured through such processes as the Annual Data Requirement (ADR 125) is relevant and work with forces to ensure consistency in data capture.

“We will work to increase understanding of where information sharing should be encouraged to allow a more efficient and effective service provision, whilst maintaining a person's right to privacy and confidentiality”

Demand Monitoring

Data collection processes embedded within the portfolio have been beneficial in understanding mental health demand across policing. Building on this work is important as the data allows for informed discussion and consultation with partners. The benefits of having access to relevant data is clear at force, regional and national level, as has been identified within the implementation of Right Care Right Person. Supporting forces to understand their own demand as well as monitor changes in demand is crucial to understand and evaluate effectiveness and risks within mental health related incidents.

Digital innovation in capturing and recording systems data will ensure that both qualitative and quantitative data can be collected and analysed effectively to inform better analysis of reported incidents. This also provides opportunities to use the data to undertake more effective risk assessments of mental health related incidents.

Identifying hidden demand and transferred demand is crucial in understanding the holistic picture on police involvement in incidents involving mental health. Integrating innovative data capture systems will also assist in identification of where we can improve in the areas of disproportionality, adverse outcomes and experiences of service users.




"We will build an evidence base developed from integrated data capture and recording systems to inform strategic oversight and understand the impact across the multiple service delivery within policing, including public contact in control rooms, front line community engagement, and investigations."

Support the continued **coordination and implementation of RCRP** to reduce inappropriate police involvement in responding to mental health incidents

Right Care Right Person

Right Care Right Person (RCRP) is a national initiative that aims to ensure that vulnerable people get the right support from the right services. It applies to calls for service about:

- concern for the welfare of a person
- people who have walked out of a healthcare setting
- people who are absent without leave (AWOL) from mental health services
- medical incidents



**Strategic Objective 3:
Right Care
Right Person**

RCRP has been developed under the National Partnership Agreement (NPA) which sets out the support of all key agencies including the NPCC, Home Office, Department for Health & Social Care, NHS England, Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) and the College of Policing.

“Right Care Right Person is an approach designed to ensure that people of all ages, who have health and/or social care needs, are responded to by the right person, with the right skills, training, and experience to best meet their needs. (NPA 2023)”

Strong Partnerships

We will continue to support forces to embed RCRP and work with partners to ensure the public are receiving the most appropriate care from the right agency. RCRP provides a framework for assisting police with decision making about when to attend an incident involving people with mental health needs and helps to reduce inappropriate police involvement in mental health care pathways. The police will always have a role in situations involving serious risk to the public. When someone is experiencing a mental health crisis whether they are at risk to themselves or others they are often best supported by trained health professionals who can provide the care and understanding they need. This is delivered through developing strong partnerships across all local agencies to ensure successful collaboration.

College of Policing & RCRP

The NPCC will work closely with the College of Policing as the RCRP portfolio migrates into the scope of the Centre for Policing Productivity. This will bring significant insights and benefits into understanding good practice, benefits realisation and being responsive to the needs of policing as RCRP becomes further developed into the policing landscape.



RIGHT CARE RIGHT PERSON



Identify & Share Good Practice to drive high standards and support professional development in delivering improved services to the public

**Strategic
Objective 4:**
Identify & Share
Good
Practice

Risk Management

Mental health related incidents can often be complex as well as high risk. It is therefore important that learning opportunities are embedded in our future approaches. We will work with the IOPC to deliver against recommendations made and identify learning from safeguarding practice reviews and prevention of future death reports to ensure we inform and share lessons learnt.

What works

A key to understanding what works arises from undertaking evaluation. The NPCC will support police forces in assessing their responses to incidents involving mental health, based on identified good practice, use of innovative systems and problem-solving approaches. The NPCC will provide support to forces in accessing a range of tools to assess what works, including use of the RCRP implementation toolkit developed with the College of Policing, alongside the self assessment criteria which has been developed for forces.

Understanding what works based on good practice provides confidence and reassurance to police forces in developing their strategic and operational responses to incidents involving mental health. The NPCC will support the College of Policing with innovation and good practice forums with a view to identifying and sharing best practice and supporting professional development. This includes developing standards at local, regional and national level, focusing on the transferability of identified good practice schemes.

Dedicated Mental Health Vehicles

Mental Health Response Vehicles (MHRVs) have demonstrated significant potential to improve patient care and outcomes and reduce pressure on health and police services. These health-led services, which often include mental health triage, create opportunities for collaboration between health, policing, and other system partners. The NPCC will continue to work alongside health partners to support the effective use of these vehicles in line with established good practice.

“A key to understanding what works, arises from effective evaluation. The NPCC will support police forces in consistently evaluating their responses to mental health.”



"The NPCC will support the College of Policing with innovation and good practice forums with a view to identifying & sharing best practice and supporting professional development. This includes developing standards at local, regional and national level, focusing on the transferability of identified good practice schemes."

IDENTIFY & SHARE GOOD PRACTICE

Provide **justice for victims** by ensuring early identification of mental health needs, enabling effective case management decision making

Strategic Objective 5:
Criminal Justice
& Diversion

Partnership Response

The NPCC supports the findings of 'A joint thematic inspection of the criminal justice journey for individuals with mental health needs and disorders (2021)'.

The associated action plan provides a basis for achieving the right partnership approach to ensure the needs of people are appropriately identified and supported throughout the criminal justice system. The NPCC will liaise with forces in respect of the delivery of the work agreed within the plan.

Criminal Justice & Diversion

The NPCC and Crown Prosecution Service are jointly focused on developing systems for ensuring appropriate information is gathered to improve case management decisions.

Achieving justice for victims remains a priority therefore it is important for people under investigation who have mental health conditions to be able to fairly participate in the criminal justice process. Improved early identification of mental health support needs of victims of crime and those under investigation ensures the most appropriate support is provided at the right time, which enables better and more timely decision making.

The embedding of the 'Liaison and Diversion' services across all police forces is key to successfully breaking the cycle of offending. These services are also key in identifying vulnerability relating to mental health in police custody. The NPCC will continue to support the commissioned service as an effective means of identifying mental health and the provision of guidance within the investigatory process. The NPCC will work to support forces in developing the availability of dedicated out of court disposal options for mental health, where those involved in minor criminality linked to their mental health can be referred to for appropriate interventions.

"There is a need for people under investigation who have mental health conditions to be able to fairly participate in the criminal justice process."



CRIMINAL JUSTICE & DIVERSION

Delivery Plan - Enabling Change

Key deliverables for 2025-2028:

APPROACH

Strategic Oversight

- Assist forces to develop and implement local policies, protocols and partnership structures relating to their response to mental health related incidents
- Develop and enhance the NPCC Escalation Protocol to support resolutions through local, regional and national governance, and ensure consistency with the portfolio strategic objectives, including RCRP
- Ensure portfolio workstreams are aligned with the Police Race Action Plan and encourage forces to collaborate with partners and people with lived experience to build trust and confidence
- Assist forces, in collaboration with partners, to develop policies and protocols in readiness for the removal of custody as a place of safety

PARTNERSHIPS

Data & Information Management

- Support forces in developing their understanding of demand relating to incidents involving mental ill health through improved police and partner data capture, management, and analysis
- Drive consistency in data capture including the national reporting of mental health data (ADR 125)
- Encourage the use of digital innovations to enable effective recording of systems data to improve risk assessment and benefits realisation

Right Care Right Person

- Support the College of Policing and partners in the national co-ordination of the continued roll out of RCRP
- Maintain forces' awareness of national portfolio data requests, track progress updates and encourage use of the self-assessment tool
- Work with the Centre for Policing Productivity (CfPP) and make effective use of RCRP related data and identified good practice, to inform national policy and decision making

RESPONSE

Identify & Share Good Practice

- Deliver innovation and good practice forums to identify and share what works and support forces to promote professional development
- Provide advice and support to forces in responding to recommendations made by HMICFRS, HM Coroners and IOPC
- Work with the College of Policing to identify and share models of good practice to support forces in responding to mental health related demand

Criminal Justice & Diversion

- Support forces to improve justice for victims by enabling a fair and effective criminal justice process through improved early identification of mental ill health
- Promote local and regional discussions with the Crown Prosecution Service to improve case management decision making
- Encourage the consistent use of disposal outcomes for cases involving mental health to ensure a victim centred approach





 **NPCC**
National Police Chiefs' Council