



Community
Foundation

Northumberland's Vital Issues 2017

Safety

1 Safety

1.1 Overview

In general Northumberland enjoys lower than average levels of crime. However residents' experience will vary widely between the different communities and neighbourhoods that make up the county. There is a clear rural and urban split, with the latter most blighted by crime. In addition there are some areas of concern around a reversal of the downward trend of recent years; in relation to the level of sexual and violent crime, and possible growth of hate crime and prevalence of hidden crimes such as domestic violence.

1.2 Crime rates

In table 7 we list the rate of offences for the major areas of crime in Northumberland, which with the exception of vehicle crime are given per 1,000 people. Overall the picture remains an encouraging one, with the total crime rate below the national average. However the trend of a steady decrease in recorded crime has now been reversed. This could partly reflect a range of benign factors such as better recording, but increased offending is likely to be a factor. A further concern is that sexual crime and possession of weapons is close to the national average, with violent crime showing a steady increase in 2016-2017.ⁱ

Table 7: Offences per 1,000 population

	England and Wales	Northumberland
Burglary	3.37	1.7
Drugs	2.19	1.02
Robbery	.98	0.19
Sexual	1.9	1.88
Vehicle (per 1000 vehicles)	14.18	6.83
Violent	18.58	16.8
Weapons	.49	.38
Total	68.85	60.84
Long term change (2003/17)	-38.22	-22.51
Short term change (2016/17)	10.41	31.26

There are areas of Northumberland where crime is clearly a more serious issue than the county as a whole. We know from the Indices of Multiple Deprivation that 7 wards in the South East are worse than the national average: Hirst; Croft; Ashington Central; Newsham; College; Cowpen and Isabella. In addition there are a number of neighbourhoods elsewhere in the South East and in Berwick that LSOA data shows have above average crime rates.ⁱⁱ

Hate crime statistics are compiled by Northumbria Police in five categories - race, faith, sexual orientation, disability and transsexual - covering Northumberland and Tyne and Wear. They show an increase of 202% in recorded incidents from 2014 – 2016 that, whilst it may partly reflect the greater willingness of victims to come forward, is nonetheless disturbing. These figures pre-date Brexit which triggered a spike in hate crime in the Northumbria Police area. The voluntary sector is well placed to support the victims of hate crime, and indeed many are part of the localised safe reporting centre initiative.

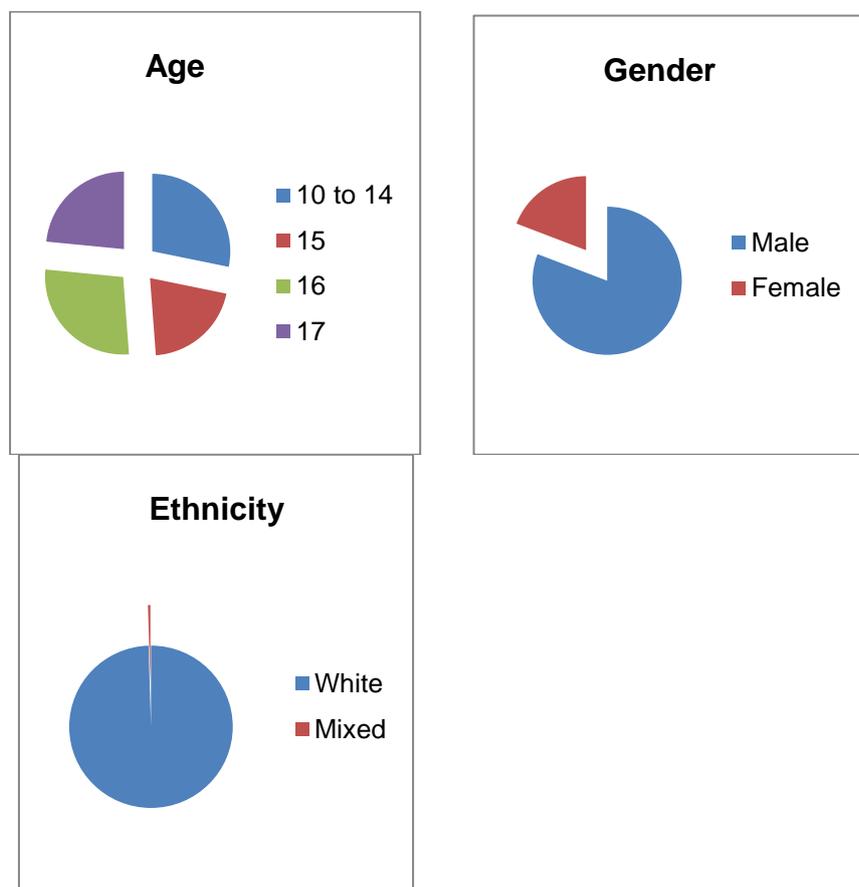
Domestic violence is a major area of “hidden crime”. A public information request to Northumbria Police led to the disclosure of over 7,000 such offences in Tyne & Wear and Northumberland in 2014. Support for victims in Northumberland’s rural areas is harder to access, and so there may be significant underreporting.

It should be noted that there is clearly a greater awareness of crime related to the sexual exploitation of young people as a result of Operation Sanctuary. However, the extent to which this is a problem in Northumberland remains unclear.

Around 12% of offenders in Northumberland are predicted to go on to offend again, compared to just under 10% nationally.ⁱⁱⁱ Civil society groups have a good history in supporting offenders after conviction. Perhaps this is an area that funding could target.

1.3 Young offenders

Statistics published by the Ministry of Justice/Youth Justice Board for England and Wales, and show the extent of the problem of youth offending in Northumberland^{iv}. These show that in the year ending March 2015 the number of young people aged 10-17 receiving a “substantive outcome” (which includes anything from reprimand and final warning to going directly to Court) was 209. The charts below show their ages, gender and ethnicity:



Compared to the national figures the age profile of offenders is somewhat younger: 17 year olds are 23% of the total, compared to 33% nationally. The gender division is about the same, and the ethnicity figure is broadly as one might expect given the small size of the non-white population.

A review has recently been published by the Prison Reform Trust^v lead by Lord Laming. The review found that children in care are 6 times more likely to be cautioned or convicted of a crime than other young people, and that half the children in youth custody came from foster or residential care despite only being 1% of the children in England. Lord Laming found that police were sometimes involved in situations that would normally be dealt with by parents. He said, for example, that the police had been called when a child “stole” food from the kitchen of his care home. This certainly suggests the need for care providers to develop better practice, but also underpins the case for advocacy and support for this type of ex-offender.

In July 2016 the published reoffending rate for Northumberland was 38.4%. This was slightly worse than the England and Wales average of 37.8%. However it does indicate that nearly 6/10 young people do not reoffend, which is a cause for optimism.^{vi}

1.4 Anti-social behaviour

This embraces a range of activities that may, or may not be criminal but which cause harassment, alarm or distress. In the 12 months to June 2017 there were a total of 11,098 incidents of anti-social behaviour (ASB) in Northumberland^{vii}. The prevalence of ASB is higher than in England as a whole, and concern about it is highest in South East Northumberland. The prevalence of ASB in neighbourhoods (LSOAs) varies massively from 1 to 455 per year, with urban areas across the county most affected^{viii}. Early in 2017, a consultation by police highlighted the diversity of issues this covered from youth behaviour in Alnwick, Berwick, Seghill and Prudhoe to “boy racing” in Ashington^{ix}.

1.5 Perceptions of crime and policing

In general concern about crime in Northumberland is around the same as for Tyne & Wear, but at its highest in the South East of Northumberland. Given the widely varying crime levels across the county, it is likely that there will be wide variations in how concerned people are about crime between neighbourhoods across the county.

The evidence suggests the Northumbria Police area enjoy a high degree of public approval. The Crime Survey for England and Wales (albeit that it dates from 2013) revealed that:

- 67 percent of adults surveyed think that the police do an excellent/good job, which is greater than the figure across England and Wales of 61 percent.
- 65 percent of adults surveyed agree that the police deal with local concerns, which is greater than the England and Wales proportion of 60 percent.

In addition the Victim Satisfaction Survey (2014) showed that 90.5 percent of victims were satisfied with their experience which is greater than the figure across England and Wales of 85.0 percent.

Potential roles for philanthropy

Northumbria Police enjoy public confidence. The community and voluntary sector, with philanthropic support, can add value to their work either through working in partnership or providing complementary services.

Priorities for philanthropic support could include:

- Targeted activity in those areas across the county where crime is relatively high.
- Supporting activities that divert young people from anti-social behaviour and offending.
- Extending support to those at risk from hate crime, and the victims of domestic violence in isolated communities.
- Assisting those with previous convictions to integrate back into the local community.

ⁱ <http://www.ukcrimestats.com>, accessed September 2017

ⁱⁱ **Grant Thornton Place Analytics (subscription service)** <http://gt-placeanalytics.com>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/local-adult-reoffending-january-2013-december-2013>

^{iv} <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/youth-justice-statistics-2015-to-2016>

^v www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk

^{vi} **HM Inspectorate of Probation, Report of Short Quality Screening (SQS) of youth offending work in Northumberland (July 2016)** <https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmiprobation/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2016/07/Northumberland-SQS.pdf>

^{vii} <http://www.ukcrimestats.com>

^{viii} **Safer Communities Survey (2015)**

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1bCxamoOF9ati09pvTiyB5yxyGm39C8dIDjfQQrOtKhl/edit#gid=284638824>

^{ix} <http://www.itv.com/news/tyne-tees/2017-03-27/police-tackle-anti-social-behaviour-following-communities-concerns/>