

# NCVPP

National Centre for  
Violence Against  
Women & Girls and  
Public Protection

## Executive Summary: Governance of Vulnerability in Policing

July 2025



College of  
Policing

 **NPCC**  
National Police Chiefs' Council

In recent years, governance practices within policing, particularly in relation to vulnerability, have gained significant attention amidst rising public concerns over police conduct, accountability, and integrity. These concerns have been amplified by media scrutiny, policy failures, and high-profile cases, which have contributed to a decline in public trust and confidence in policing. The call for enhanced governance was reflected in the National Vulnerability Action Plan and the National Vulnerability and Public Protection Strategy, both of which emphasize the importance of effective governance frameworks within police forces.

The challenge facing police governance is balancing accountability with a fear of making mistakes within a blame culture, particularly in relation to vulnerability. Policing in England and Wales has established mechanisms such as the Police Efficiency, Effectiveness, and Legitimacy (PEEL) inspections which assess police performance. Although governance is not a specific inspection theme, its impact on overall police effectiveness is consistently highlighted in HMICFRS reports. The connection between perceived governance quality and inspection outcomes underscores the need for stronger governance in police services.

The Governance of Vulnerability project aimed to review and improve governance practices related to vulnerability within police forces across England and Wales. Commissioned by the Violence Public Protection Board (VPP) and respective National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) Portfolio Leads, the project involved research through surveys, document reviews, and interviews. The aim was to assess current governance practices, identify improvement opportunities, and support the Vulnerability and Public Protection Strategy. The findings resulted in nine recommendations for national, regional, and local improvements in governance, with a focus on clear definitions, leadership training, strategic planning, and regular reviews to enhance police accountability and effectiveness.



# Key Recommendations:

## National Level

1. Agree on a clear definition within policing public protection to clarify scope and terminology.
2. Report authors to debrief this review with the VPP Board to help align national agendas and inform future practices.
3. The College of Policing and VKPP to publish a national definition and principles, aligned with CIPFA and informed by this review.
4. Integrate governance principles into Public Protection Senior Leadership Programme and other relevant training to help prepare and support leaders for effective governance.

## Regional Level

5. Bring public protection into sync with other high threat areas, by developing a regional approach and / or structure to ensure consistent and effective responses across all policing regions.

## Local Level

6. Forces should be encouraged to adopt the principles within the National Vulnerability and Public Protection Strategy, and to ensure executive ownership of local vulnerability strategies, facilitating a whole-force approach to public protection, and access to enabling capabilities such as analysis.
7. The Police Executive Leadership Programme (PELP) provides an opportunity for leaders to reflect on the principles of effective governance. The learning from leadership programmes should support Forces to systematically implement governance principles, and develop structures that embed governance principles into organisational culture.

Original Recommendation 7 - The Police Executive Leadership Programme (PELP) provides an opportunity for executive leaders to consider the principles of effective governance. By systematically taking steps to implement principles into practice Forces can ensure their governance principles are effectively operationalised, and that governance structures create the conditions for creating an environment where governance principles are naturally adopted, practiced and embedded into the organisational culture.

8. Within forces, project management frameworks should be considered for implementing national vulnerability agendas, recognising the need for capabilities such as analysis, change management, workforce development, IT, and communications to enable forces to effectively and efficiently implement new approaches.
9. Forces should conduct strategic preparedness exercise to support their implementation of the Vulnerability Strategy. Forces should be encouraged to review public protection governance structures annually, ideally as part of their Annual Governance Statement (AGS) and Force Management Statement (FMS) processes.

The goal of these recommendations is to foster an adaptable, transparent, and sustainable governance system in public protection that improves police service delivery, builds trust, and enhances public safety. These recommendations align with work already in train such as the development of the National Centre for VAWG and Public Protection and the Professionalising Public Protection project within the College of Policing and will help police forces become more accountable and effective.



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## About the National Centre for Violence Against Women and Girls and Public Protection

We're a collaboration between the  
College of Policing and the National  
Police Chiefs' Council.

We work across law enforcement,  
the third sector and government to  
professionalise public protection and  
strive for a whole systems approach to  
prevent harm, give confidence to victims,  
survivors and witnesses to come forward  
and bring more offenders to justice.

[college.police.uk](https://college.police.uk)

[npcc.police.uk](https://npcc.police.uk)



**Vulnerability Knowledge  
& Practice Programme**



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