



## **Cumbria Shared Internal Audit Service**

**Internal Audit report for**

**Cumbria Constabulary**

**Audit of Agile Workforce**

**Draft Report Issued: 23rd August 2021**

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## Audit Resources

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## Audit Report Distribution

For Action:	Jonathan Blackwell (T/Assistant Chief Constable)
For Information:	Mark Webster (Deputy Chief Constable) Stephen Kirkpatrick (Director of Corporate Support)
Audit Committee:	The Joint Audit Committee which is due to be held on 17th November 2021 will receive the report.

*Note: Audit reports should not be circulated wider than the above distribution without the consent of the Audit Manager.*

# Executive Summary

## Background

This report summarises the findings from the audit of **Agile Workforce**. This was a planned audit assignment which was undertaken in accordance with the 2021/22 Audit Plan.

Agile working is important to Cumbria Constabulary because it contributes to the efficient use of resources to support operational policing needs and the delivery of the objectives in the Police and Crime Plan for Cumbria 2016-20 and Vision 2025.

The Covid-19 pandemic changed the workplace, accelerating the move towards greater agile working and enforcing homeworking on a large scale. This presented many challenges that needed to be overcome but generated significant learning to inform plans for post-Covid working arrangements, including some partial and voluntary homeworking options. The benefits of agile working are well documented and include better work-life balance, reduced travel time, increased productivity, cost savings, greater employee satisfaction and better recruitment and retention.

A separate report has been prepared for the OPCC's arrangements.

## Audit Approach

### Audit Objectives and Methodology

Compliance with the mandatory Public Sector Internal Audit Standards requires that internal audit activity evaluates the exposures to risks relating to the organisation's governance, operations and information systems. A risk-based audit approach has been applied which aligns to the five key audit control objectives. Detailed findings and recommendations are set out within the Management Action Plan.

## Audit Scope and Limitations

The Audit Scope was agreed with management prior to the commencement of this audit review. The Client Sponsor for this review was Jonny Blackwell (T/ACC). The agreed scope of the audit was to provide assurance over management's arrangements for governance, risk management and internal control in the following areas: -

- Employee Wellbeing
- Kit Delivery

There were no instances whereby the audit work undertaken was impaired by the availability of information.

## Assurance Opinion

Each audit review is given an assurance opinion, and this provides Joint Audit Committee and Officers with an independent assessment of the overall level of control and potential impact of any identified system weaknesses. There are 4 levels of assurance opinion which may be applied. The definition for each level is explained in **Appendix A**.

From the areas examined and tested as part of this audit review, we consider the current controls operating around Agile Workforce provide **Reasonable Assurance**.

This opinion recognises the level of controls operating around agile working and the notable strengths, as set out below. The Covid-19 pandemic made it necessary for the Constabulary to progress agile working at an unprecedented pace, and scale, so that they could continue to provide effective policing services to the people of Cumbria. However, the situation meant that some controls operating around agile working were not as strong as would be expected under normal circumstances and this is recognised in our overall assurance.

The original governance structure for Recovery and Renewal (of which agile working is key) was established in May 2020 and a workstack document was prepared for Management Board in August 2020, that included a Covid-19 Renewal and Recovery Plan. The plan was not approved and launched at this time on a formal and cohesive basis because of further Covid-19 response phases, changes in senior leadership and more recently, a new constabulary governance structure. This was not unreasonable given the pandemic and we recognise that the Deputy Chief Constable has had oversight of what was happening. The plan has been progressed separately on a business as usual basis within departments.

During the pandemic staff were able to take equipment home from their offices such as keyboards, mice, monitors and chairs to enable them to continue working, and line managers were tasked with tracking these assets. Oversight of this arrangement has been limited and it is unclear at this stage if records have been maintained fully and up to date.

The current priority is for the Estates team to establish future working arrangements and a new office structure and the ICT requirement will flow from this. The recovery and renewal process can now proceed fully, building on the identified benefits from new ways of working arising from the pandemic.

As the Constabulary are fully aware of the issues highlighted above, some of which can't be addressed, and are working on some of the other areas, we have not included recommendations in this report.

The level of controls operating around agile working and notable strengths are set out below.

*Note: as audit work is restricted by the areas identified in the Audit Scope and is primarily sample based, full coverage of the system and complete assurance cannot be given to an audit area.*

## Summary of Audit Findings and Recommendations

### Controls were operating effectively in the following areas:

- An Agile Working Guidance document prepared in 2018, and approved by senior management at Workforce Board, has been updated in 2021 and made available to staff on the force intranet. The guidance covers employee wellbeing and the issue of standard kit. Supplementary guidance relating to a Home / Agile Worker Assessment Procedure has also been developed.
- Arrangements are in place for risks around agile working to be captured, managed, addressed and reported. A risk relating to agile working currently features on the strategic risk register.
- There was an Agile Working Guidance Launch in 2019 via a 'Need to Know' publication on the Constabulary's intranet and guidance continues to be available to staff on the site. Arrangements are in place for staff to receive any updates, including those from HR. During the pandemic particular use has been made of Assistant Chief Constable (ACC) Covid-19 Bulletins to share information and provide links to relevant pages on the intranet.
- Agile working guidance sets out staff and manager responsibilities and provides clarity around the need for managers to monitor performance and adherence to policies and procedures on a remote basis. This message has been reinforced via HR input into Sergeant

and Inspector Briefing days and an ACC Covid-19 Bulletin. The Digital Leadership Programme delivered to managers across Durham and Cumbria constabularies also covered remote tasking and briefing, wellbeing and performance.

- Covid secure arrangements were promptly put in place at the start of the pandemic for staff to attend HQ, on an appointment basis, to collect kit for home working. Clear instructions were issued to staff regarding safety arrangements as part of the appointment booking process. Kit issue was based on priorities identified by Operation Lectern.
- Managers are tasked with ensuring their staff complete online home / agile worker risk assessments for review by Occupational Health Unit DSE Assessors. The process ensures that any risks highlighted by the assessment are reasonably addressed through the provision of advice and in some cases additional / alternative equipment. Examples include the purchase of an adjustable flat footrest and guidance given regarding an adjustment to monitor height. Senior management maintain oversight of the completion of home / agile worker assessments through the receipt of regular Health and Safety Performance reports.
- Arrangements are in place through the Commercial Team to ensure that additional / specialist equipment is only purchased on the recommendation of the Force Ergonomic Physiotherapist. Recommendations are reasonable and proportionate to address the risks highlighted.
- There is a clear and demonstrable senior management commitment to staff health and wellbeing. There is an array of wellbeing information on the force intranet with links to additional material and sources of help and support. Examples include the National Police Wellbeing Service and Police Care UK. ACC Covid-19 Bulletins, HR Updates, Need to Know publications and emails are used to highlight updates and provide links to specific items e.g. Keeping in Touch Guidance.
- All mobile devices issued to staff for home / agile working are assured in terms of security through an NEP designed build and are encrypted end to end (NEP is the National Enabling Programme sponsored by the NPCC that provides additional security components).
- Managers are actively encouraged to communicate with their staff on a regular basis and monitor their health and wellbeing. A system of regular one to ones and strength-based conversations is in place to facilitate this. During the pandemic additional guidance was issued to managers in relation to remote working, via publications on the force intranet and Sergeant and Inspector Briefing Days.
- Staff feedback on agile working was sought in January 2021 to inform arrangements for agile working post pandemic. Following consultation with Unison, police staff terms and conditions of employment have already been updated to provide the opportunity to work flexibly between home and work on a rota basis up to 3 days per week.

There are no audit recommendations arising from this audit review.

## Deputy Chief Constable Comments

The emergence of the coronavirus pandemic created an urgent need to move to agile working to protect our employees, their families and the public. This was necessarily done at pace, but not from a standing start as much work had already been done in the force to enhance technology solutions and mobile working. This enabled us to make good progress towards wider agile working, but the ebb and flow of pandemic infection rates inevitably meant that resources continually had to be re-prioritised to deal with the most pressing risks. It is unsurprising in this context that some areas still need to be worked on to fully embed the strategic intent in our estates, fleet and deployment models, but it is welcome to see that the work the force has done here has been recognised and offers adequate assurance.

Mark Webster, Deputy Chief Constable

## Appendix A

### Audit Assurance Opinions

There are four levels of assurance used, these are defined as follows:

Assurance Level	Definition
<b>Substantial</b>	Sound frameworks of governance, risk management and internal control are in place and are operating effectively. Recommendations, if any, will typically be no greater than advisory.
<b>Reasonable</b>	Frameworks of governance, risk management and internal control are generally sound with some opportunities to further develop the frameworks or compliance with them. Recommendations will typically be no greater than medium priority.
<b>Partial</b>	Weaknesses in the frameworks of governance, risk management and/or internal control have been identified or there are areas of non-compliance with the established control framework which place the achievement of system / service objectives at risk. Recommendations will typically include high and medium priority issues.
<b>Limited</b>	There are significant gaps in the governance, risk management and/or internal control frameworks or there are major lapses in compliance with the control framework that place the achievement of system / service objectives at significant risk. Recommendations will include high priority issues.