

Northumbria Police

Data protection audit report

July 2024

Executive summary



Audit Methodology

The Information Commissioner is responsible for enforcing and promoting compliance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018) and other data protection legislation. Section 146 of the DPA 2018 provides the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) with the power to conduct compulsory audits through the issue of assessment notices. Section 129 of the DPA 2018 allows the ICO to carry out consensual audits.

The ICO is an independent, proportionate regulator and sees auditing as a constructive process with real benefits for controllers and so aims to establish a participative approach. High standards of personal data protection compliance help organisations innovate and deliver great services by building trust with the public. The ICO's expertise and consistent approach to regulation provides certainty enabling organisations to feel confident to use personal data responsibly, innovate and support economic growth.

Northumbria Police agreed to a consensual audit of its data protection practices.

The purpose of the audit is to provide the Information Commissioner and Northumbria Police with an independent assurance of the extent to which Northumbria Police, within the scope of this agreed audit, is complying with data protection legislation.

The scope areas covered by this audit are determined following a risk based analysis of Northumbria Police’s processing of personal data. The scope may take into account any data protection issues or risks which are specific to Northumbria Police, identified from ICO intelligence or Northumbria Police’s own concerns, or any data protection issues or risks which affect its specific sector or organisations more widely. The ICO has further tailored the controls covered in each scope area to take into account the organisational structure of Northumbria Police, the nature and extent of Northumbria Police’s processing of personal data, and to avoid duplication across scope areas. As such, the scope of this audit is unique to Northumbria Police.

It was agreed that the audit would focus on the following area(s):

Scope area	Description
Personal Data Breach Management and Reporting	The extent to which the organisation has measures in place to detect, assess and respond to security breaches involving personal data, to record them appropriately and notify the supervisory authority and individuals where appropriate.

Audits are conducted following the Information Commissioner’s data protection audit methodology. The key elements of this are a desk-based review of selected policies and procedures, remote interviews with selected staff, and a virtual review of evidential documentation.

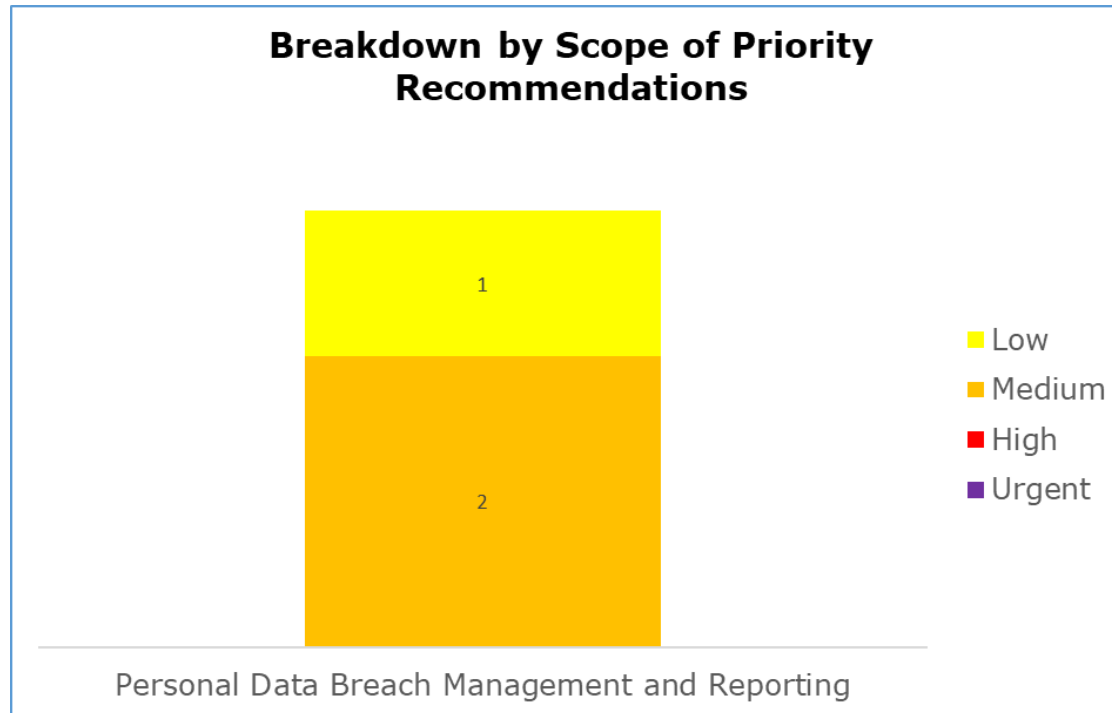
Where weaknesses were identified recommendations have been made, primarily around enhancing existing processes to facilitate compliance with data protection legislation. In order to assist Northumbria Police in implementing the recommendations each has been assigned a priority rating based upon the risks that they are intended to address. The ratings are assigned based upon the ICO’s assessment of the risks involved. Northumbria Police’s priorities and risk appetite may vary and, therefore, they should undertake their own assessments of the risks identified.

Audit Summary

Audit Scope area	Assurance Rating	Overall Opinion
Personal Data Breach Management and Reporting	High	There is a high level of assurance that processes and procedures are in place and are delivering data protection compliance. The audit has identified only limited scope for improvement in existing arrangements and as such it is not anticipated that significant further action is required to reduce the risk of non-compliance with data protection legislation.

*The assurance ratings above are reflective of the remote audit methodology deployed and the rating may not necessarily represent a comprehensive assessment of compliance.

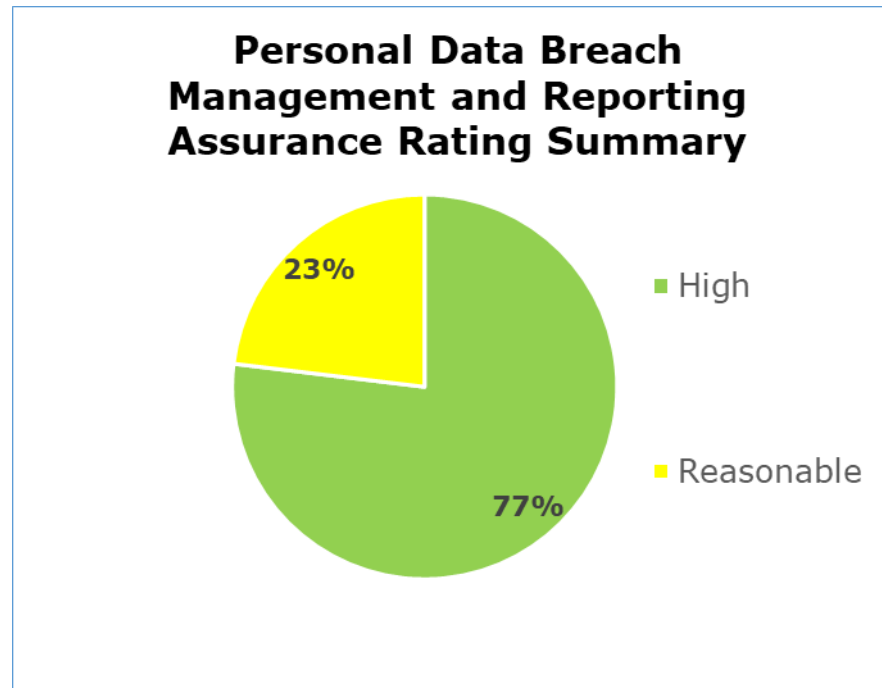
Priority Recommendations



The bar chart above shows a breakdown by scope area of the priorities assigned to our recommendations made:

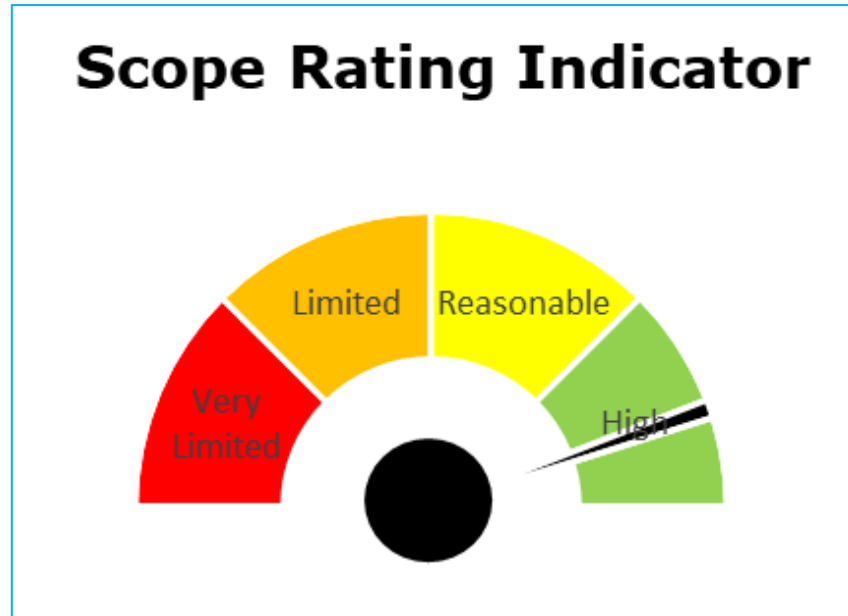
- Two medium and one low priority recommendations

Graphs and Charts



The pie chart above shows a summary of the assurance ratings awarded in the Personal Data Breach Management and Reporting scope. 77% high assurance, 23% reasonable assurance.

Scope Rating Indicator



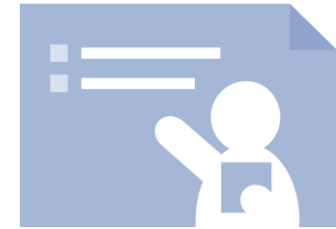
The speedometer chart above gives a gauge of where Northumbria Police sits on our assurance rating scale from high assurance to very limited assurance.

Best Practice

- A bespoke eLearning package was collaboratively developed by Learning Design Specialists within the People Department and the DPO. This package, which incorporates learnings from force-specific examples of breaches or near misses, draws on information security and data protection resource materials provided by the DPO. It consists of four 15-minute 'Bitesize' modules, each written in clear and easily absorbable manner. Each module includes a knowledge check that must be passed for completion. Feedback is provided on all responses to reinforce learning points, regardless of whether the answer was correct.

This custom eLearning package supplements in-person training that is provided to all staff. Individual modules can be revisited at any time without affecting an individual's annual compliance scores.

Appendices



Appendix One – Recommendation Priority Ratings Descriptions

Urgent Priority Recommendations

These recommendations are intended to address risks which represent clear and immediate risks to the data controller's ability to comply with the requirements of data protection legislation.

High Priority Recommendations

These recommendations address risks which should be tackled at the earliest opportunity to mitigate the chances of a breach of data protection legislation.

Medium Priority Recommendations

These recommendations address medium level risks which can be tackled over a longer timeframe or where some mitigating controls are already in place, but could be enhanced.

Low Priority Recommendations

These recommendations represent enhancements to existing controls to ensure low level risks are fully mitigated or where we are recommending that the data controller sees existing plans through to completion.

Disclaimer

The matters arising in this report are only those that came to our attention during the course of the audit and are not necessarily a comprehensive statement of all the areas requiring improvement.

The responsibility for ensuring that there are adequate risk management, governance, and internal control arrangements in place rest with the management of Northumbria Police.

We take all reasonable care to ensure that our audit report is fair and accurate but cannot accept any liability to any person or organisation, including any third party, for any loss or damage suffered or costs incurred by it arising out of, or in connection with, the use of this report, however such loss or damage is caused. We cannot accept liability for loss occasioned to any person or organisation, including any third party, acting, or refraining from acting as a result of any information contained in this report.

This report is an exception report and is solely for the use of Northumbria Police. The scope areas and controls covered by the audit have been tailored to Northumbria Police and, as a result, the audit report is not intended to be used in comparison with other ICO audit reports.