



# Police Service of Northern Ireland

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## Chief Constable's Accountability Report to the Northern Ireland Policing Board

October 2021

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## Foreword

The October 2021 Accountability Report provides an update to the Northern Ireland Policing Board on the following topics:

- Key Operations of Note
- Financial Outlook
- Recruitment
- Vulnerability
- Serious and Organised Crime
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Over the past month, considerable effort has been placed on providing necessary clarification and reassurance on the next steps for the South Armagh Policing Review. Our focus is now on progressing the implementation of agreed recommendations through a locally-led implementation plan, a copy of which will be shared with the Board. This work will be subject to continued strategic oversight via the Neighbourhood Policing Programme Board and the Board will continue to be updated at agreed intervals.

The recent High Court judgment relating to the Adam Street Bonfire in July 2021 is worthy of note. We welcome the objective emphasis on the need to finding agreed solutions based on community consensus and the acknowledgement by the judge that this left the Police Service in an ‘intolerable’ situation. We would reiterate our appeal for the advocacy of the Policing Board in finding meaningful solutions for complex and enduring issues of this nature, in a manner which is sensitive to the importance of protecting the independence of operational police decision making.

The recent announcement by the Justice Minister of plans to establish a Victims of Crime Commissioner Designate for Northern Ireland is welcomed. The Police Service would support this as an important development which has the potential to ensure that the needs and interests of victims are increasingly at the centre of the criminal justice system.

## Key Operations of Note

### Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour in the Holylands Area

Local policing in the Holylands area of South Belfast has presented challenges over the past month. This year, as in previous years, issues around anti-social behaviour have persisted. Dedicated policing operations have been put in place, supported by preventative measures, messaging and ongoing partnership work.

Issues have centred on large gatherings in the area involving up to a maximum of circa 1,200 people, occurring over prolonged time periods, requiring extended resourcing to support the policing operation and support residents who are suffering the scourge of anti-social behaviour.

It is assessed that indoor Covid-19 restrictions, frustrations at the inability to socialise last year and 'Fresher's week' have all been contributory factors in this unacceptable annual event.

Officers continue to be proactive with those who commit offences. Between 20 August 2021 and 29 September 2021, in response to 445 total calls for service, the following criminal justice outcomes have been progressed - 23 arrests, 94 speedy justice disposals and 10 reports to the Public Prosecution Service. In addition, almost 4,500 alcohol disposals have taken place – a staggering figure.

Police continue to support other statutory partners to deal with statutory nuisance, noise complaints, anti-social behaviour in registered houses of multiple occupation and enforcement of bespoke Council byelaws.

Policy issues of social housing and licensing, alongside limited policing powers are at the root of this long term problem which is negatively impacting on the lives of people living in the local community. Police enforcement and prevention should only be one part of finding a sustainable solution. There is a clearly a longer-term role for the PCSP here in coordinating a community safety-led response.

## Lyra McKee Murder Investigation

The recent arrest and charge of five people for offences relating to the murder of Lyra McKee is welcomed. This is testament to the tenacity and expertise of investigators and support functions, such as the forensic services team, who have continued to work on this case with a view to securing criminal justice outcomes for Lyra, her family and loved ones and the wider community.

## Legacy Investigations

The work of Operation KENOVA and Legacy Investigation Branch continues. There is no change to our previously stated position on impending Government proposals. We will of course assess the impact of any future legislation, as and when this is communicated. For now, investigations continue by both teams.

## Policing in a Covid-19 Environment

I have no doubt that the Board will join me in extending appreciation and recognition to officers and staff in their continued efforts to keep people safe during the Covid-19 pandemic. Our people have remained stoically resilient and focused on the public health effort. At this juncture, it is important that the overall personal wellbeing impact of sustaining this effort is acknowledged, along with the inevitable impact on core policing demands, which continue, and in key areas, have increased as we move away from many of the Health Protection Regulations.

## During August Your Police Service:



received  
**64,491**  
requests for service



processed  
**2,067**  
arrests through custody



prepared  
**3,018**  
case files for submission to  
the Public Prosecution Service



travelled  
**1,235,947**  
miles to respond to your calls  
and build safer communities

*These figures are provisional and subject to change*

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Practices inside the workplace continue to follow the aims of Government guidance. Attendance levels show we remain resilience impressive with overall officer availability currently 89.71% and overall staff availability at 91.36%. This equates to a total of 6,300 officers and 2,378 staff members.

## Financial Outlook

At the end of August, the year to date position continues to report small underspends in both resource and capital budgets. However, a full year pressure of £9.1m is projected in the resource budget which has increased from last month. The main elements contributing to this are a residual shortfall of £3.7m in funding for policing the consequences of EU Exit, a £4.1m pressure on the depreciation cost of capital assets and a £1.1m pressure on police overtime as a result of operating during the pandemic. These projected pressures are reflected in the October Monitoring bid which was submitted in August to the Department of Justice.

Looking forward to funding for next year and beyond, the Resources Committee were briefed on the challenges of budget scenarios and the likely impact on the services we provide to the public. We welcome continued support from the Board in working with us to highlight the need for adequate and sustainable funding, resource and capital for policing.

It is anticipated that we will brief the Board soon on our new Estate and Fleet Strategies; both of which complement our overall vision of delivering visible, accessible and responsive policing.

## Recruitment

Recruitment co-design and consultation engagement events have been ongoing this month, led jointly by our Human Resources and Community Safety Departments. Online and in person events have taken place with the Ethnic Minority Police Association, Black and Minority Ethnic community representatives, the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland and the Ulster Council of the Gaelic Athletic Association.

The 2021 recruitment campaign will launch on 2 November 2021, with advertising commencing three weeks prior on 12 October 2021. Specific targeting and outreach to under-represented communities will be integral to our new campaigns. Three examples of recruitment advertising is attached:





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Additionally, our external recruitment process for Administrative Support Officers and investigative support roles has been ongoing throughout September is to close at the beginning of October 2021.

We're recruiting for:  
**ADMINISTRATIVE  
SUPPORT  
OFFICERS**

Applications Close: 1st October 2021

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We're recruiting for:  
**ADMINISTRATIVE  
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We're recruiting for:

<b>TRAINEE CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATOR</b> Ref: HRTC3135/21	<b>IMAGING OFFICER SPECIALIST PHOTOGRAPHER</b> Ref: HRIOSP36/21	<b>ASSISTANT FINGERPRINT OFFICER</b> Ref: HRAF034/21
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Applications Close: 3pm on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> October 2021

The Police Service of Northern Ireland is committed to being representative of the community we serve and welcomes all applicants interested in a career in policing.

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## Vulnerability

Overarching comments by Sir Thomas Winsor in the Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) report on the, 'State of Policing – The Annual Assessment of Policing in England and Wales 2020' resonate with the policing experience in Northern Ireland.

*“In many respects, the pandemic intensified vulnerability for many people, and this is therefore a theme running throughout this report...Unless the health and social care system is fixed, and people can get the support they need from it, people will continue to be vulnerable, which may lead them avoidably and unnecessarily into the criminal justice system.”*

Complex social and public health issues, including drugs, mental health, suicide and other vulnerability related issues have obvious implications for policing.

In the wake of Covid-19 there is an increasing need for a collaborative whole system approach to generate preventative solutions which address root causes, repeat victimisation and reduce the requirement for police intervention and enforcement

Related issues were highlighted in our Accountability Report to the Policing Board in February 2020 regarding the policing approach to drugs and drug related deaths. That report sought to promote the value of exploring public health approaches to problem solving in areas such as drug abuse and mental health.

I remain keen to explore this further with the Policing Board, and wider stakeholders under the banner of improving community safety. Furthermore, given another highly critical report focusing on failings in Greater Manchester Police, we will review the latest HMICFRS report to benchmark lessons learned.

## Violence and Intimidation against Women and Girls

HMICFRS also published a final inspection report on the Police Response to Violence Against Women and Girls in September 2021. Development of our policing strategy on this important area of harm commenced in advance of this publication, led by A/Assistant Chief Constable Melanie Jones, supported by Detective Chief Superintendent Anthony McNally.

Community Safety Department's Public Protection Branch is leading on the development of the strategy. It is anticipated that this will broadly align to the themes within the recent strategy, published by National Police Chiefs' Council.

An implementation group has been established with representation from across all Police Departments. Stakeholder feedback is also being sought and research is ongoing. We aim to have progressed internal governance for our Violence and Intimidation of Women and Girls Strategy and associated delivery action plan by the end of 2021 for police recruitment, vetting, supervision and policy. Clearly, wider lessons that arise from the awful events surrounding the death of Sarah Everard will be an integral part of this work.

## Domestic Abuse – Continuous Professional Development

Over 3,800 officers and staff across the organisation have completed initial training modules relating to new offences under the Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceedings Act (NI) 2021 which will come into force in February 2022.

The early and enthusiastic uptake by our people is encouraging.

This important professional development supports officers and staff, enhancing knowledge and insight of the complex and varied forms of physical and non-physical domestic abuse, and also the strategies that we can use in our service that can improve outcomes for victims.

## Domestic and Sexual Abuse Advocacy Service

ASSIST NI is a new Northern Ireland wide advocacy service for victims of domestic and sexual abuse, launched in September 2021.

A partnership between Men's Advisory Project, Women's Aid and Foyle Family Justice Centre, which is funded by the Department of Justice and the Police Service, seeks to address gaps in current service provision and build on identified good practice, to increase community safety and prevent harm.

The service aims to ensure that victims of domestic and sexual abuse are safe, informed and supported throughout their involvement with the criminal justice system. Advocates will be people employed in external organisations and agencies who have specialised skills, knowledge and experience in dealing with domestic and sexual abuse crimes. They will be located within every Policing District, working seven days per week.

This service has the potential to become an intrinsic part of support arrangements that we can collaboratively provide to victims of domestic and sexual abuse and provides practical response to issues highlighted in previous CJINI inspections.

ASSIST NI will encourage feedback throughout the process and will be better able to identify and help address barriers that prevent victims from seeking support and engaging with the criminal justice system.

The focus on repeat victim and repeat offenders continues to evolve with new search functionality on our PULSE system to identify threat and risk. Current outcome rates for domestic violence with injury remain consistent with pre-Covid 5 year trends and patterns, at 32.5% this financial year to date.

## Drug Deaths: Naxalone Pilot

According to statistical information published by NISRA in January 2020, drugs deaths in Northern Ireland have doubled in the ten year period, 2009 – 2019. Since 2010, over half of drug-related deaths each year have involved an opioid. In 2019, 128 drug-related deaths had an opioid mentioned on the death certificate.

People living in the most socially deprived areas of Northern Ireland are statistically five times more likely to die from a drug related death than those living in the least deprived areas.

Naloxone is currently being trialled by a number of UK police services including Police Scotland, West Midlands and Cambridgeshire.

In September 2021, a six-month pilot initiative was launched for the use of Naxalone by neighbourhood officers working in Belfast City Centre in partnership with a number of agencies including Northern Ireland Ambulance Service, Public Health Authority and Extern. Seventeen officers from Belfast Central Neighbourhood Team have been trained to administer nasal naloxone to those suffering from an opioid overdose and save lives.

The introduction of Naxalone nasal spray is a relatively new approach with governmental authorisation having been granted in February 2019. Clinical governance for this pilot is being provided by Northern Ireland Ambulance Service.

The pilot will be reviewed at the six month period, to analyse outcomes and identify learning. The first deployment of Naxalone under the pilot took place on 22 September and was successful in saving a life. I look forward to updating the Board on progress in coming months, but welcome support via PCSPs to generate a more joined up approach to this difficult issue.

## Serious and Organised Crime

### Operation DEALBREAKER



Operation DEALBREAKER was established in July 2021, bringing all drug-related operational activity in the entire organisation under one umbrella.

Its scope includes everything from searches, seizures, arrests, charges along with prevention to reduce risk of people becoming drawn into drug use or drug offending.

A Drugs Operating Model (DOM) has been devised as a strategic route map to show how our organisation will tackle drugs. The DOM sets out our key organisational priorities coordinated through a Pursue, Prevent and Partnership workstream. The approach will be coordinated to prevent and address the harm from drug misuse and will be targeted under five key pillars:

1. Prevention and early intervention
2. Law enforcement and criminal justice outcomes
3. Harm Reduction
4. Multiagency working
5. Interdepartmental working

All information relating to drug criminality is now collated and included in a monthly Drug Report Card at Service and District locality level. This information has been used on social media channels, using the *#OpDealbreaker*. This provides a strong collective message about how we prioritise preventative and enforcement action against drug crime and the impact that it has on communities and their confidence in policing.

Drug Report Card Example Quarter 1, 2021



Some examples of work progressed since the date of the last Accountability meeting are included below.

In August, officers from Criminal Investigation Department arrested and later charged two men suspected of involvement in the cultivation of cannabis. This related to the discovery of approximately 800 cannabis plants in a commercial shed that had been converted into a cannabis factory in the Newry area.

During August, officers from the Paramilitary Crime Task Force conducted a search and arrest operation in the Belfast and Lisburn areas. Four properties were searched in connection with this investigation, resulting in the seizure of suspected cocaine, herbal cannabis, drugs paraphernalia and cash. Four men were arrested and subsequently charged to court.

During September, officers from Organised Crime Unit conducted a search in the West Belfast area, in connection with suspected drugs criminality. As a result, approximately £9,000 cash and a quantity of suspected Class A controlled drugs was

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seized. One man was subsequently arrested and later charged with being involved in the supply of Class A and Class B controlled drugs along with entering into an arrangement to acquire criminal property. He remains remanded in custody.

In September, officers from the Organised Crime Unit conducted a proactive policing operation in the area of South Belfast and apprehended two men and a woman. Upon searching a bag used by the suspects, police located 6.5kg of suspected cannabis with a further 5.5kg of cannabis being recovered from their vehicle. A subsequent house search led to the recovery of 25kg of cannabis. The drugs seized by police have a combined street value of approximately £444,000 and are believed to be linked to an organised crime group involved in the importation and distribution of controlled drugs. Following interview the men and woman were charged for various offences including drug and immigration related offences.

Also in September, following positive forensic identification, a man was arrested for offences linked to a substantial cannabis factory, which was located in 2019 in the Belfast area. This factory housed over 800 cannabis plants with an estimated street value of approximately £320,000. Following interview the man was charged to court for the offences of possession of a Class B controlled drug, possession of a Class B controlled drug with intent to supply and cultivating cannabis.



# People Strategy Update: Being Representative and Inclusive

The *Being Representative and Inclusive* Delivery Group is now established and is working to deliver on workstreams identified under the People Strategy Action Plan.

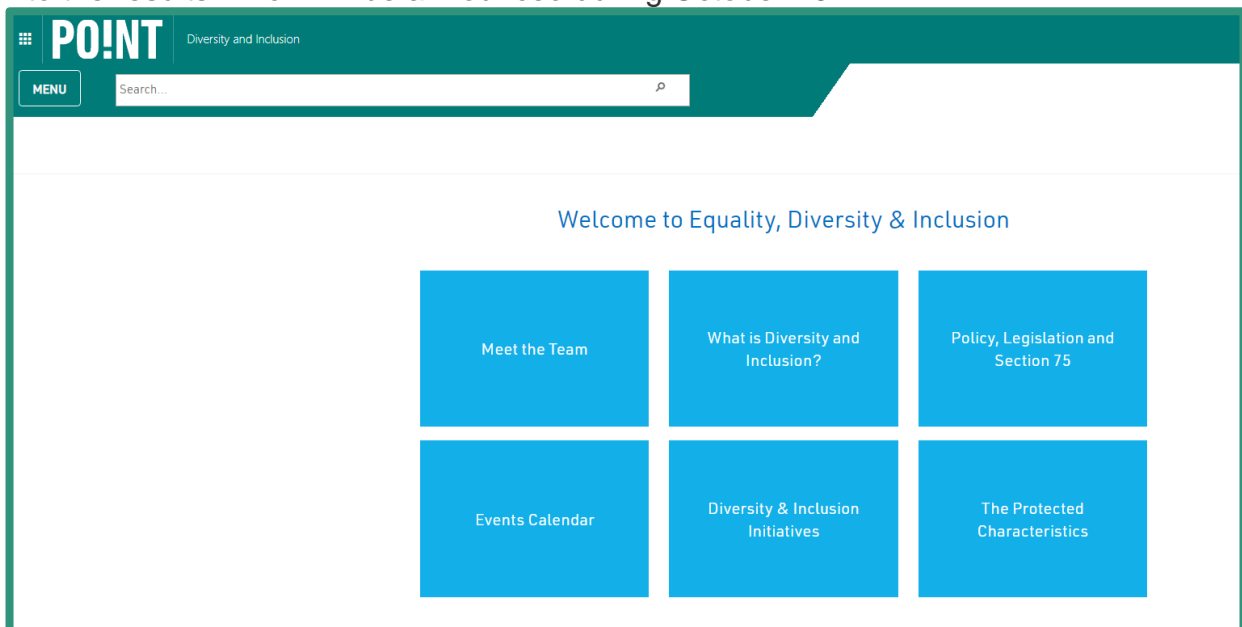
Our Human Resources (HR) team has recently been shortlisted for a Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD) Northern Ireland Award for *'Best Inclusion and Diversity initiative'*.



These prestigious awards for the HR profession in Northern Ireland celebrate the contribution of Human Resources and People Management in business, identifying organisations and practices that are championing better work and working lives.

The nomination relates to the launch of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion information pages on our internal digital communications platform, PO!NT in May of this year. This initiative was led by our dedicated Equality, Diversity and Inclusion team with all content co-designed with Police Service Staff Associations, and representatives from our minority and diversity support groups.

We are proud to be nominated for this Award which recognises employers who are genuinely dedicated to creating a diverse and inclusive workplace. We look forward to the results which will be announced during October 2021.



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