



**Police Service**  
of Northern Ireland

# Chief Constable's Accountability Report

to Northern Ireland  
Policing Board

Report Date:

Covering Period of 8 December  
2022 to 2 February 2023

Presented at Policing Board  
Meeting:

2 February 2023



**we care  
we listen  
we act**

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Unless otherwise stated the statistics in this report are unvalidated management information sourced from administrative systems and are subject to change.

# Foreword



In writing my first accountability report of the year, I do so at a point when we now know the profound impact that the challenging budgetary position we face will have on the shape of policing in Northern Ireland.

I had previously notified the Policing Board of a funding shortfall of approximately £80 million in this year's budget and anticipate bigger shortfalls in the years to come. Last week Chief Operating Officer Pamela McCreedy and Deputy Chief Constable Mark Hamilton outlined to the Board Resources Committee the impact of that shortfall. At the same time I briefed leaders from across the organisation. The message was a difficult and bleak one.

The Police Service will shrink over the next three years. By March there will be 309 fewer police officers and 115 fewer police staff, a reduction of nearly 6%. Police officer numbers will fall to 6,699. This is 800 officers fewer than the commitment made in the New Decade New Approach Agreement and the lowest officer numbers since the

Police Service of Northern Ireland was formed.

This reduction comes at a time when our population is growing, when workloads are increasing, becoming more complex, and crime is rising. We are already making difficult choices every day to minimise the risk to the public and to reduce the harm these reductions pose. Inevitably with less police there will be less policing.

In sharp contrast, policing in England and Wales is growing by twenty thousand officers under the Home Office uplift programme in recognition of those challenges.

It should not be lost on policy makers that we are an armed service with a substantial terrorist threat to harm or attack our colleagues. We police the UK's only land border with the EU, and unlike GB colleagues, we cannot easily rely on surges of operational support from neighbouring police services when there are serious, and indeed terrorist, incidents. We are a unique Service with unique challenges and should be resourced to reflect that.

As far as possible we have minimised the impact on service delivery in 2022, but through 2023 these reductions will have real and noticeable impacts.

These will be felt in communities across Northern Ireland.

Our assessment is:

- Non-emergency calls to the Police Service may take longer to answer and at times the public may have to wait longer for officers to attend non-emergency incidents.
- Our capacity to investigate crime may be reduced and slowed. Fewer officers investigating a rising number of crimes may mean slower investigations, and in some cases, a less satisfactory service to victims.
- We will have to prioritise investigations. There will be knock on delays for the Criminal Justice System.
- Our Neighbourhood Policing function will shrink.
- There will be a reduced proactive presence on our roads despite rising road deaths.
- We will actively review access to, and closure of, police stations across Northern Ireland.
- Our ability to respond to sustained protest and public disorder may be reduced.
- The Public Sector in Northern Ireland is under huge pressure and in order to protect our core functions our ability to support other Public Sector colleagues may also reduce.

In spite of this as a Police Service our core work will not change. The public can continue to have confidence that we will still answer 999 calls quickly, we will continue to patrol our neighbourhoods, we

will continue to investigate high harm crime and bring offenders to justice. We will continue to serve the people of Northern Ireland with professionalism and remain committed to delivering a visible, impartial, human rights based policing service. We will continue to protect the public in Northern Ireland to the very best of our ability.

It is not my intention to cause alarm. However, we want to be clear with the public and our staff about the type of service they can expect to see in the coming years.

The horrific murders of Natalie McNally and Shane Whitla have left a community in shock. Our investigation into Natalie's murder is ongoing, and a person has been arrested and charged. In recent days we seen progress in apprehending Shane's killers and have charged three people in relation to his murder. I want to reassure the community that both of these investigations are a top priority for us.

During December, our officers and staff were engaged proactively in supporting communities to have a safe and peaceful festive period. Operation Season's Greetings saw an emphasis on highly visible reassurance policing on our roads and in our towns and villages. Running alongside this was a focus on protecting victims and targeting offenders who commit violence against women and girls. As a result we conducted nearly 9000 breath tests, arrested 200 suspects for retail theft, made 678 drug seizures and arrested 753 offenders for domestic abuse. All of which was supplemented by using a wide range of communications channels to provide reassurance messages to the public.

Last week was National Neighbourhood Policing Week and we took that opportunity to highlight to communities the commitment we have to providing visible, accessible and responsive local policing across Northern Ireland. Each policing District used this week of action to further promote their ongoing engagement with communities by posting activity across the week on social media using the hashtag #neighbourhoodpolicingweek alongside a range of specially developed videos featuring Neighbourhood Policing teams from across the country.

Finally, I was immensely proud to see colleagues honoured in the King's New Year Honours list. I want to pay tribute to their years of dedicated public service and their contribution to policing in Northern Ireland, which have been recognised in this significant and fitting way.



**Simon Byrne**  
**Chief Constable**  
**Police Service of Northern Ireland**

# Finance and Resource Update

In December, as a result of a final budget being set for the current financial year (2022-23), I was able to report to the Board an anticipated break even position for the full year. This assessment is welcome and remains on track. However, I also signalled a growing concern about the outlook for police for 2023-24.

In late December, the Department of Justice commissioned a high-level Budget Planning Exercise for 2023-24, with a completion deadline for early January. In short, this exercise set out a summary of our minimum Resource Requirement for 2023-24, which results in an initial funding gap of some £106m, if assessed against a flat budget. Even if this gap is off-set by the previously planned reductions of £56m detailed in our agreed Resource Plan (including reduced recruitment), this still leaves a residual gap of £50m to be addressed. It is worth noting that there is no indication that a flat budget will be the outcome – it may be more or less.

Of further note, the previously planned reductions referred to above would see police officer numbers fall to 6,433 and police staff numbers to 2,504 by March 2024. We are mindful that it will take three years to offset the reducing number of police officers given the bottleneck in recruiting processes.

This is a stark assessment and I am duty bound to be clear with the Board and public about the likely impact on communities,

with increasing demand and ever decreasing resources.

Both the Deputy Chief Constable and Chief Operating Officer briefed the Policing Board's Resources Committee last week on the impact of resource reductions for the current year. In addition to a declining workforce, these reductions include significant cuts in non-pay expenditure. For example, the Service has been forced to defer repairs to damaged or broken vehicles. This has had an impact on the size of the remaining operational fleet, with an increasing number of vehicles out of service awaiting maintenance.



*Examples of damaged Police Vehicles currently awaiting repair.*

If further reductions are required as a result of the budget settlement for 2023-24, the impact will be much more immediate and pronounced. The reality is that less resources will mean less police officers and staff, leading to less policing. This is not a welcome scenario, but represents a challenge for all of us in securing and delivering the best possible policing service.

An update on the 10 year Capital Plan was also required and we have complied with this request.

## Resources Update

The Resource Allocation Model (RAM) Board has reviewed proposals from all Departments on the reduction of police officers and staff posts for 2022-23. These have been evaluated against our commitment to shaping our business to deliver the outcomes set in the Policing Plan, building a modern policing service, and the need to deliver savings to achieve a balanced budget.

This process was conducted over two phases. The first was vacancy management which involved the removal of police officer posts. The second, which concluded in December 2022, saw Departments identify a further 183 police officer (resulting in 309 overall) and 115 police staff posts, in line with risk and impact assessments.

In making these decisions we have reviewed and critically challenged the service impact, and sought to protect our core emergency incident response and statutory functions, continue Neighbourhood Policing, protect

areas of significant risk, such as Public Protection (which incorporates domestic abuse, sexual crime and child abuse) and understand the impact on the welfare and wellbeing of our officers and staff.

## Pay Award

We have been working hard in partnership with the Department of Justice to progress the pay remit and pay approval processes to enable us to implement the 2022-23 pay award for police officers. Despite significant effort on all sides we're not in receipt of the approval needed for us to implement this in time for the January payroll.

For police staff, pay negotiations are part of a collective arrangement across the Northern Ireland Civil Service. We continue to stress the need for a timely outcome and communication concerning the pay award.

We understand and acknowledge the dissatisfaction and impact that the absence of these pay awards may be having on many of our officers and staff who are already coping with an unprecedented cost of living crisis. We will continue to work with the Department on these matters and keep our workforce informed of any developments as soon as they arise.

## Police Estate

Work has been commissioned to develop Strategic Asset Management Plans for each Policing District that will provide valuable information regarding current utilisation and potential future use across the estate. These plans will help inform future planning, including prioritisation of development and future investment, ensuring an efficient and fit for purpose infrastructure in line with available resources.

The Strategic Asset Management Plans will help inform future years' budget and allow for a pipeline of capital development projects. This is becoming critically important when trying to counter the continual pressures from inflationary cost increases on services, material and construction.

Despite our dire outlook, capital led investment to some programmes will unlock benefits for the public purse over time.

Work is also ongoing in researching the design for future stations to ensure sustainability and embrace modern technological features on any future station developments. The design work is considering how to improve people-centred facilities and increase the levels of accessibility to stations.

As part of the wider Sustainability Strategy, a Carbon Reduction Plan is also in development aligned with the Strategic Asset Management Plans to pivot the

Service to meet the government's Net Zero Target by 2050.

Finally, work to see the design and build of our new Museum remains on track using previously available funding streams.



# Our Performance

## Key Performance Information

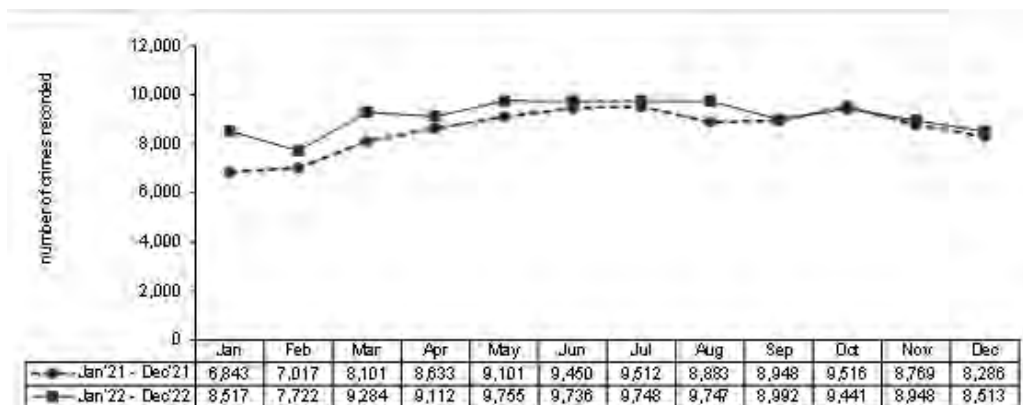
The information below on recorded crime and anti-social behaviour is extracted from our Official Statistics published reports. The full reports can all be accessed at <https://www.psnl.police.uk/about-us/our-publications-and-reports/official-statistics>. These are in-year provisional figures and may be subject to change.

## Recorded Crime

In the 12 months from 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2022:

- There were 109,515 crimes recorded in Northern Ireland, an increase of 6,456 (6.3 per cent) on the previous 12 months.
- There were 58 police recorded crimes per 1,000 population compared with 54 crimes in the previous 12 month period.

Police recorded crime January 2021 to December 2022



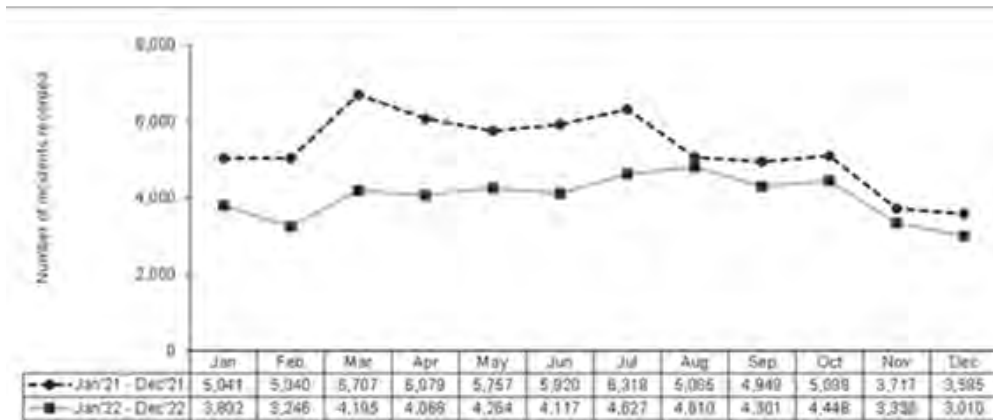
- Higher crime levels were seen in violence against the person, sexual offences, theft offences, robbery and possession of weapons offences.
- Lower crime levels were seen in burglary, criminal damage and public order offences.
- Using a five year average, crime is rising post-Covid.

## Anti-Social Behaviour

In the 12 months from 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2022:

- There were 48,226 anti-social behaviour incidents in Northern Ireland, a decrease of 15,051 (-23.8 per cent) on the previous 12 months. This is the lowest 12 month figure since the data series began in 2006/07.
- Since January 2022, each month has recorded lower levels of anti-social behaviour when compared with the same month in the previous year.
- Each month January 2022 through to December 2022 recorded the lowest levels of anti-social behaviour for those months since the start of the data series in April 2006, with the exception of August 2022 which recorded the second lowest August level in the data series.

### Anti-social behaviour incidents recorded by the police January 2022 to December 2022



## His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Service (HMICFRS) Inspection

The Police Service hosted HMICFRS on 23-27 January 2023 in the first of a two part inspection programme.

This inspection focused on the areas of Vetting and Misogyny, Vulnerability - including a specific emphasis on older people, and Strategic Planning.

Assessment will be made against the following core questions:

- How well does the Police Service of Northern Ireland prevent those unsuitable to serve the public from joining the Service?
- How well equipped is the Police Service of Northern Ireland to detect and deal with misogynistic, prejudicial and improper behaviour, and predatory behaviour?
- How well does the Police Service of Northern Ireland protect vulnerable people?
- How effective are the Police Service of Northern Ireland's strategic planning and performance management framework in making it tackles what is important locally and nationally?

Vulnerability is a joint inspection with the Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJINI) as part of a wider thematic inspection of the Criminal Justice System's approach to Vulnerable Older People in Northern Ireland.

A Crime Review inspection will be undertaken from Monday 13-17 February 2023.

We anticipate receiving a final report from HMICFRS with the key findings and any recommended areas for improvement before the Summer.

# Outcome 1

## We Have a Safe Community

### Operation Season's Greetings

Operation Season's Greetings, the public safety policing operation over the Christmas and New Year period, took place between 17 November 2022 and 2 January 2023. This high visibility policing operation, led by ACC Bobby Singleton and supported by Chief Superintendent David Beck, was supported by an extensive communication and engagement campaign.

Related activity incorporated the Violence Against Women and Girls 16 days of action, the launch of the 'Ask for Angela' scheme, the traditional December anti drink driving campaign, the period of the World Cup football, along with the usual Christmas demands with significant increased footfall across the retail and night time economy sectors.

Our work was supported by a range of partners including Translink NI, Retail NI and the Hospitality sector.

In addition to the operational focus, our Crime Prevention Officers undertook significant engagement and educational work to encourage safety and provide related advice to the wider community.

A snapshot of the operational outcomes include:



### Safer Shopping and Business

- 200 arrests for retail theft and associated offences.
- Community Resolution Notices/Penalty Notices for Disorder were issued for retail theft.



### Safer Streets and Socialising

- 675 seizures of Controlled Drugs with a street value of £588,580.
- 188 related arrests.
- 22 offensive weapons were seized.
- 69 related arrests.
- 338 arrests made for violence against the person offences.



## Safer Roads and Transport

- 8,969 Preliminary Breath Tests conducted.
- 308 people arrested for drink/drug driving related offences.
- The youngest person arrested was 16 years old, the oldest was 83 years old.
- The highest evidential breath test reading recorded over the campaign was 157 µg/100ml.
- There were 1,909 detections for other motoring offences within Operation Seasons 'Greetings.



## Safer Homes

- 3,604 calls in relation to domestic abuse incidents, including
  - 110 on Christmas Day.
  - 106 calls on New Year 's Eve.
- During the entire period:
  - 753 arrests for domestic abuse offences.
  - 340 of these resulted in a charge.
- 55 arrests for burglary.

## Winter Road Safety Campaigns

Since our last report to the Board, the Police Service has also taken part in a number of National Road Safety campaigns including, Operation Drive Insured which targeted uninsured drivers and Operation Limit which targeted drink and drug driving. Our operational activity included:

### OPERATION DRIVE INSURED

21-27 November 2022

46 vehicles seized

66 offences detected including AOABH and Fraud

10 arrests made

### OPERATION LIMIT

21 November – 02 January 2023

40,021 vehicles stopped

14,459 Preliminary Breath Test's conducted

241 arrests for drink driving

28 arrests for drug driving

# Outcome 2

## We Have Confidence in Policing

### Professional Standards

In September 2022 we formally launched our dedicated Tackling Violence against Women and Girls Action (VAWG) Plan, with a commitment to focus on building public trust and confidence, to relentlessly pursue perpetrators and create safer spaces. Just as we will pursue perpetrators of VAWG in our communities, we are as committed to rooting out those that may be in our own ranks.

- In 2022 we held 10 misconduct hearings that had some sexual misconduct element, in nine of those hearings the officer was dismissed.
- To date we have five hearings scheduled for 2023 that have a sexual and/or domestic element.
- We have continued to see an increase in reporting this type of crime and misconduct which has resulted in 32 officers who are currently suspended for alleged sexual misconduct and 74 officers under investigation for alleged sexual and/or domestic misconduct.

Op Roric, which was established to review sexual related misconduct investigations undertaken over the last ten years, has reviewed cases relating to 23 Officers and made 96 recommendations for investigative and process improvement. The majority of these recommendations have been completed and only 30 remain under consideration.

Misconduct procedures have also undergone a review over the past 12 months with an increased focus on reducing delay. This has resulted in a more robust approach with more officers attending Misconduct Hearings and being dismissed than in previous years. In 2022, there was a total of

28 Misconduct Hearings held. The Chief Constable chaired 12 of these as Special Case Hearings and one Regulation 13 hearing in relation to a Probationary Officer. All concluded hearings found misconduct proven and resulted in 22 officers being dismissed for the allegations presented.

### National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) - Hate Crime Audit

As a learning organisation we recently volunteered to be audited by the NPCC Advisor for Hate Crime and an Independent Advisory Group (IAG) as part of a national examination into Police response to Hate Crime. This took place during August and September 2022, with findings provided in January 2023.

The audit found that our performance was generally high, with only 1% of Contact Management records and 6% of initial responses, being assessed as poor.

The report noted that this is a high standard in comparison to other Police Services nationally. Auditors highlighted that our records were some of the richest seen, with few missed opportunities and displayed empathy to the victim.

In addition to the examination of Police records, the audit team engaged with victims to understand how they felt about the service they had received. Pleasingly the report outlines that the responses far outperform the national average (from the Crime Survey of England and Wales) with 75% of the victims spoken to saying the service they received from us was 'excellent or good'.

The audit team did provide some recommendations which we will study to inform our efforts in further improving the service we offer victims of hate crime.

# Outcome 3

## We Have Engaged and Supportive Communities

### Key events and campaigns



The 'Tis the Season' campaign included a social and traditional media strategy as well as a suite of creative imagery and marketing materials which were designed and printed in-house.

Our Graphic Designers created 75 different designs and illustrations for the 2022 campaign and in total, 48,905 posters and leaflets were printed by our Print Unit and distributed to Crime Prevention Officers.

In terms of social media, the overall reach of the campaign was a staggering 9,005,553 (*across Facebook & Instagram*) and included a range of posts, videos, carousel imagery and tips. The opportunity to see for traditional media was 1,070,000 and included coverage in key titles such as the Belfast Telegraph, Irish News, Belfast Live and Sunday Independent.

With the combined reach of social media and traditional media we can determine that our campaign messaging had the opportunity to be viewed at least 10,075,553 million times.

Social Media	Reach	Impressions	Engagements	Shares	Link Clicks	Video Views
District Posts	6,285,385	234,043	753,241	2,212	50	5,091
Corporate Posts	2,720,168	393,135	72,111	2,094	2,066	74,950
Totals	9,005,553	627,178	825,352	4,306	2,116	80,041
Social Media channel	Facebook Instagram	Twitter Nextdoor LinkedIn YouTube	Facebook Instagram Insta Stories Twitter	Facebook Instagram stories Twitter LinkedIn Nextdoor	Facebook Twitter Instagram Stories	You Tube Facebook Twitter



# NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING

WEEK OF ACTION

The National Neighbourhood Policing Week campaign took place on 23-29 January 2023. The campaign was developed to promote and celebrate the vital work of Neighbourhood Policing teams. It was also an opportunity to illustrate the Hallmarks of Neighbourhood Policing in action within everyday local policing.

The National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) themes for this week of action were:

- Early intervention
- Problem-solving policing
- Improving trust and confidence through Neighbourhood Policing
- Wellbeing

The objective of the campaign was to raise the public's awareness that Neighbourhood Policing is everyone's business, by asking them to consider what Neighbourhood Policing means to them. A key component was to showcase partner involvement and demonstrate the initiatives local policing are involved with.

Each Policing District used this week of action to further promote their ongoing engagement with communities by posting activity across the week on social media.

Activity included:

- Launch of press release and bespoke regional releases.
- An enhanced dedicated local policing web section, including five case studies featuring partners, as well as improved ways to contact local police officers digitally through the click to call function.
- Social Media Survey – To canvas feedback from our audience on the relevancy of the content that we publish.
- NPCC webinars – throughout the week the College of Policing hosted online webinars for officers and staff based on the themes for this week's action.



ACC Bobby Singleton and John Blair, Chair of the Partnership Committee,  
Northern Ireland Policing Board

# Our People, Your Service

## Cost of living

The Cost of Living Gold Group, chaired by Deputy Chief Constable Hamilton and Chief Operating Officer McCreedy, continues to meet on a monthly basis and recently included initial high level feedback from our Local Policing engagement, welfare and wellbeing survey, which had a 46% response rate. A number of key themes were identified which the Gold Group will use as a focus for the provision of support to police officers and staff.

Communication streams and signposting have already been developed to raise awareness of the mechanisms currently in place to provide financial assistance. This includes a detailed article on our dedicated cost of living 'POINT' intranet page, and a Podcast with Assistant Chief Constable Singleton and Assistant Chief Officers 'Clare Duffield and Mark McNaughten.

## Cultural Audit

Undertaking a Cultural Audit is about giving employees a voice and identifying a baseline to celebrate and build on workforce strengths, as well as highlighting areas for improvement. We are committed to assessing culture in order to create a great place to work. We are partnering with an independent company – Inspiring Change - to gain an insight into the beliefs and assumptions that determine behaviours that are lived on a day-to-day basis.

Having this insight into the current culture will allow us to better engage with our staff, build an exceptional employee experience and ultimately ensure that the Police Service of Northern Ireland is a great place to work.

This is our opportunity to develop an Employee Engagement Framework to ensure everyone can be their best. In the longer-term, we will use the outcome of the audit as evidence to develop a route map to achieve our ambition to have a highly engaged workforce.

## Economic Crime Unit donate over £100,000 to charity



*Kerry Anthony MBE, Inspire Group Chief Executive and Detective Inspector Joanne Harris from the Economic Crime Unit*

Detectives from the Police Service's Economic Crime Unit have presented local charity Inspire with a cheque for £108,125.60 with the majority (£96,000) raised through tackling illegal gambling.

To find out more about the work of Inspire please see [www.inspirewellbeing.org](http://www.inspirewellbeing.org)

**psni.police.uk**

