

Keeping People Safe



**Police Service of Northern Ireland**

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

**Financial Year 2020 – 2021**

**01 April 2021**

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## Foreword: *Our Ambitions*

This month's report is intended as an end of financial year assessment for 2020 – 2021. The report provides a strategic overview of policing achievements over the past 12 months; alongside the challenges and learning we have derived from what has been an unprecedented year across the entire public sector and wider community.

As we look forward to the twenty year anniversary of the Police Service in November 2021, it is prudent that we reflect on policing progress and reimagine shared expectations for future policing delivery. It is important that we strike an appropriate balance between remaining culturally aware about events of the past, whilst remaining professionally focused on the priorities of today and opportunities of tomorrow.

As a people-based organisation, it is vital that we take a workforce-centred approach to future proofing policing. We look forward to a time when policing is viewed as a legitimate service and a career of choice for all people of Northern Ireland. To be capable of meeting the challenges of the next twenty years, police officers and police staff will require strong cultural literacy, to facilitate sustainable partnerships across a diverse range of communities. Our organisational approach to diversity and inclusion, wellbeing, leadership and partnership will be central to achieving this aspiration.

I started this year by documenting my *Ambitions* for making the Police Service a better place to work. To realise our commitment to become a police service that truly *cares, listens* and *acts*, whether in support of the community, our partners or our colleagues, there is an identified need to modernise how we work and evolve our culture. Modernisation has been a key focus in 2020 with the development of a wide range of strategies which will inform culture and practice next year and beyond.



## Police Service of Northern Ireland



# Chief Constable's Ambitions

## I will:

- Review, design and issue new operational uniform
- Review access to protective equipment such as spit and bite guards, new body armour and conducted energy devices such as Tasers™
- Streamline and simplify the promotion and selection processes for police officers and staff
- Introduce new ceremonies to mark promotion and retirement for police officers and staff
- Review police staff terms and conditions to make our police service an employer of choice
- Exploit technology such as ANPR to tackle crime
- Improve access to handheld technology as part of our digital reform
- Make our fleet more visible
- Reduce checking, second guessing and bureaucracy
- Review the OHW remit and speed up access to advice and care
- Introduce a more modern corporate image

we care | we listen | we act

## Policing Environment 2021

Society has evolved since 2001, along with public expectations on the role of police within that society. The wider environment in which policing operates has experienced wide-ranging political, economic, social, technical, ethical, legal and environmental changes. Policing continues to operate in challenging circumstances which increase the volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (VUCA) of the environment. Financial pressures, demographics and community tensions, the Covid-19 Public Health Pandemic and changing service demands are notable factors which we continue to wrestle with.

### Financial Pressures

The short term impacts of budgetary shortfalls were highlighted in last month's report to the Board, including police headcount, operational capability and the delivery of outcomes under the Policing Plan 2020–25.

The financial pressures of today will, however, drive and define the character and culture of the police workforce in the longer term. Reduced recruitment will have a 10–20 year impact on representation and reduced headcount will exacerbate wellbeing pressures on individuals and teams.

By way of contrast, policing in England and Wales has received an uplift commitment of 20,000 officers over a three year period, to increase violent crime-related enforcement activity and enhance crime prevention approaches. More than 6,000 additional officers have been recruited to date.

The New Decade New Approach Deal in January 2020 committed to increasing police numbers to 7,500 and to develop a new Programme for Government with a shared strategic vision of improving lives across Northern Ireland. Policing was identified as a priority action under New Decade New Approach, identifying the need to provide, *“a renewed focus on strengthening approaches and supporting mechanisms for policing in the community. This will be complemented with an*

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*increase in resources, both human and financial, for the neighbourhood policing teams.” This aligns with, and emphasises the continued importance of, our core policing principle over the past 20 years under Section 31A Police (NI) Act 2000, “police officers shall carry out their functions with the aim of securing the support of the local community and acting in cooperation with the local community.”*

We welcome the understanding of policing as a function which contributes to wider social outcomes, shared with other public services. However, the consequent expansion of the policing function, beyond a traditional crime focus remit must be acknowledged and provided for.

Flexible and sustainable funding is essential to achieving our *Ambitions* and required levels of modernisation.

### Demographics and Community Tensions

EU Exit and the implementation of the Northern Ireland Protocol has increased political instability, with indications of a re-emergence of identity politics and polarisation of communities on this issue, fundamental to the Good Friday Agreement of 1998.

Perceptions of policing are challenging in this space with allegations of two-tiered policing from across the political spectrum, in the face of a purposefully impartial/neutral organisational position.

The Census 2021 will provide useful information to enable us to better understand and adapt to meet the various needs of local communities. The policing approach to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) must be progressive and meaningful, internally and externally, to reflect and represent an increasingly diverse community.

## Covid-19 Public Health Pandemic

Policing has been at the forefront of the immediate response to the pandemic, taking an active and visible role in providing reassurance and engaging to explain and encourage compliance during the public health crisis.

Whilst Covid-19 is fundamentally a health crisis, in reality the impacts will be far reaching across the wider public, private and third sectors for some time to come. Consequences for deprivation and the health and wellbeing of the general public will have inevitable imports for policing in a post-pandemic environment and will foreseeably increase demand for reactive policing services.

Throughout 2020, we have sought to strike an appropriate balance between enforcement of new, untested Regulations enacted at pace and our responsibility to work cooperatively with communities and to build public confidence in policing. The associated complexities for policing nationally, are highlighted in the HMICFRS inspection report, published in March 2021 (Getting the Balance Right? An inspection of how effectively the police deal with protests). Despite our best intentions, retrospective assessment may find that we have not always got this balance right, in all the circumstances. This is regrettable and, as a learning organisation, we seek to move forward and adapt in line with such insights and perspectives.

It is also regrettable that police officers and police staff have, at times, been brought into conflict with the communities we have sought to keep safe. Policing has not always enjoyed the public support and value that other public service organisations have during the pandemic and this, it itself, has had impacts on the morale and wellbeing of our officers and staff who, to their credit, have remained committed to public service throughout the pandemic.

## Changing Demands

Increasingly over the past two decades, there has been a growth of complex non-crime related demand with harm and vulnerability associated issues. As a prolonged period of austerity has taken its toll on health and social care providers and the third sector, the police has increasingly been relied upon as 'a service of first resort'. [HMICFRS, 2017]

Emerging areas of digital and cybercrime require innovative and collaborative partnership intervention, focused on technology solutions, safeguarding, early intervention and prevention.

## Overview of Achievements 2020/21

### Our Activity



## Our Structure

In November 2020, the Police Service was reconfigured under a new Area structure, recognising the requirement for dedicated command structures in Derry City and Strabane area. Policing is now geographically managed across four areas, each under the leadership of a Chief Superintendent. Policing Areas of Belfast, Derry City and Strabane, North and South are depicted in the below map, along with Policing Districts within each Area. The new boundaries better facilitate localised management of demand, risk and community priority.



## Our Success

### *Serious and Organised Crime*

The threat presented by terrorism in Northern Ireland remains severe. We remain committed to tackling serious organised crime and ending the harm that these activities inflict on local people in our communities.

**Operation ARBACIA** is a joint investigation focused on disrupting the activities of the New IRA. In August 2020, we arrested nine people in Northern Ireland and one person in England, working in partnership with our colleagues in An Garda Síochána. At its height, the search and arrest operation involved almost 700 police officers, making it one of the largest of its type in our twenty year history. All ten suspects have subsequently been charged with offences under the Terrorism Act 2000, including directing terrorism, preparation of terrorist acts and conspiracy to possess explosives, firearms and ammunition. All ten individuals remain in custody.

This highly challenging and complex investigation continues with a number of further arrests taking place during 2021. This operation has had a significant disruptive effect on terrorists and our officers have worked very hard, motivated by their desire to prevent harm to the public.

In March 2021, a search and arrest operation in Derry City and Strabane Policing District resulted in the arrest and charge of a man with serious terrorist offences. Although a small minority of people engaged in public disorder during this operation, it is important to highlight the significant support we received from the public. The exploitation of vulnerable young people is of concern to police, partners and the local community.

**Operation VENETIC** is an international joint operation between the Police Service and the National Crime Agency, which commenced in April 2020. By the summer of 2020, we had charged 29 people, remanded 11 others into custody and reported another to the Public Prosecution Service in relation to serious criminal activity across Europe using encrypted telephone platforms.

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Since this time, we have continued to pursue those involved, in order to enhance community safety. A further 84 search operations and 32 arrests have taken place in relation to a total of 212 criminal offences, including conspiracy to murder, firearms and drugs related offences. In terms of criminal justice outcomes, 31 people have been charged and eight have been remanded into custody. Associated search and arrest operations have resulted in the seizure of:

- ✓ 86 kg of Class A controlled drugs
- ✓ 6.4kg of Class B controlled Drugs
- ✓ 30kg of mixing agent
- ✓ £417,500 in cash
- ✓ 14 *EncroChat* devices
- ✓ 29 vehicles
- ✓ Weapons, including three crossbows, one imitation firearm and 828 rounds of ammunition
- ✓ A large quantity of high value goods, including jewellery and handbags
- ✓ Assets to the value of £2.5m have also been restrained

At the beginning of March 2021, a further suspect was arrested under this operation resulting in the seizure of 14 vehicles, provisionally valued between £500,000 and £750,000. This work continues.

The **Paramilitary Crime Taskforce** continues to work in partnership with the National Crime Agency. Some examples of work during 2020/21 include:

- ✓ In November 2020, over 1kg of Class A controlled drugs was recovered during a search operation in the Greenisland area.
- ✓ In March 2021, three men were arrested and charged with offences of conspiracy to rob and possession of a firearm with intent to endanger life, in relation a proactive investigation into Cash-in Transit delivery robberies. All three people were remanded into custody.
- ✓ On 23 March 2021, five men were arrested in the Carrickfergus area. Four were subsequently charged and one reported with drugs offences as part of

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ongoing investigation into the organised criminal activity of South East Antrim UDA.

The Paramilitary Crime Taskforce has also been centrally involved in **Operation PIVOT**, which was established in response to paramilitary activity in the area of Pitt Park during February 2021, linked to East Belfast UVF.

The operation employed a community-focused, collaborative approach between neighbourhood and local policing resources and Crime Department.

In total, 22 arrests have been made under the Terrorism Act 2000 and 22 searches have been conducted in at properties connected with those arrested. Of the 22 arrests, three men were charged with unlawful assembly and affray and the remaining 19 were released pending report to the Public Prosecution Service. This operation demonstrates our commitment to tackling harm associated with paramilitary activity and providing necessary reassurance in local communities.

Learning and identified good practice from the Operation PIVOT approach will influence our future operating model for critical incidents of this nature.

**Operation FUSION** was established in December 2020, with a targeted focus on EU Exit-related organised crime and groups seeking to exploit the Common Travel Area for criminal purposes. The primary operational focus is directed towards criminal hauliers involved in the importation of drugs, people smuggling and the importation of other illicit items such as alcohol, tobacco, fuel, firearms and counterfeit goods. Prioritised investigations target groups according to the level of threat, harm and risk presented to community safety.

Since January 2021, a series of proactive operations have been delivered in partnership with colleagues in An Garda Síochána, the National Crime Agency, UK Border Force, HMRC, Harbour Police, the Home Office and Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency. This has led to the seizure of:

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- ✓ 20kg Class A and over 34kg of Class B controlled drugs
- ✓ 7,500 litres of laundered fuel and dismantling of a fuel laundering site which is estimated to have represented a potential £20m loss of revenue, and
- ✓ Recovery of £6k cash and associated vehicles

This collaborative approach places the Police Service in an excellent position to respond to emerging organised crime threats post-EU Exit.

Our **Cyber Crime** team continues to work with national partners to resolve and prevent incidents which impact upon local communities. **Cyber Crime** work is aligned with the national strategy to *Protect, Prevent* and *Pursue*.

During 2020/21 *Cyber Prevent* had 64 direct engagements, including 13 early interventions with young people at risk of engaging in cyber offending. An online school cyber education package was jointly developed with the Cyber Security Centre, Education Authority and C2K (school ICT infrastructure/support service) as a virtual resource for teaching staff. In the longer term, it is planned that this preventative material will be made available to youth organisations and other similar groups.

Meanwhile, *Cyber Protect* had 127 direct engagements with local victims of cybercrime. Engagement with victims sought to prevent the risk of future cybercrime and minimise harm to businesses and individuals. Local business safeguarding work under the NPCC Police Cyber Alarm Project has also progressed with the roll out of a free monitoring and vulnerability tool.

*Cyber Pursue* provided critical support to a number of serious and organised crime operations and has investigated cyber-attacks perpetrated on local residents and businesses. By way of example, as part of an international operation we arrested a man in connection with an online criminal marketplace which hosted 12 billion stolen credentials from over 10,000 data breaches.

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**Operation TURNSTONE** – The National Crime Agency has indicated that the ongoing investigation into abuse of vulnerable people at Muckamore Abbey Hospital is the UK's largest safeguarding investigation. Owing to its scale and complexity, the investigation is managed under a Gold Command structure with a dedicated investigation team. During 2020/21:

- ✓ Over 1,100 offences have been identified which have the potential to constitute physical abuse, neglect or ill-treatment, false imprisonment and falsifying patient records
- ✓ 300,000 hours of CCTV footage has been seized
- ✓ Fifteen suspects have been interviewed and two separate investigation files have been submitted to the Public Prosecution Service. The total number of people to be interviewed may exceed 200 individuals.

It is anticipated that interviews will continue throughout 2021 and into 2022 with periodic reporting to Public Prosecution Service.

In the area of **modern slavery and human trafficking**, a number of proactive investigations have progressed during 2020/21, focused on trafficking of women for sexual exploitation, to include:

- ✓ Crown Court sentencing of a man for offences associated with human trafficking for sexual exploitation. This is the second time we have had a successful outcome in a so-called 'victimless' prosecution and it was our fourth conviction under new Human Trafficking legislation.
- ✓ Arrest of a man and women in December 2020, for offences of human trafficking, controlling prostitution and money laundering as well as drugs and assault offences. This investigation remains ongoing.

Our **Murder Investigation Team** has had a number of positive court outcomes during the 2020/21 financial year, involving 10 people who have been found guilty and sentenced for murder, manslaughter and wounding with intent offences.

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### *Digital Developments*

Throughout 2020, we have worked purposefully to improve our operational effectiveness in the digital space. Just some of the targeted development includes:

- ✓ **Agile working capability** – Back in February 2020, we were at the early stages of uplifting our virtual infrastructure to enable remote working. Our response to the Covid-19 pandemic prompted a significant acceleration of this uplift. 4,500 remote working laptops have since been deployed to support our people to work more flexibly, to increase our organisational resilience, maintain essential services and protect health and wellbeing.



- ✓ **Video conferencing capability** has been introduced to include 'Skype for Business' and 'Cisco WebEx' platforms on all Common Terminals and remote laptops, enhancing our internal and external connectivity. Our systems now also enable remote court hearings and interviews from within police custody facilities.



- ✓ **Analogue to digital upgrading** of joint interoperability radio networks and CCTV systems has created benefits for collaborative working, public safety and crime prevention.

A full replacement of Digital Interview Recorders has been rolled out across police interview facilities.

Digital enhancements for Evidence Gathering Teams (EGT) have progressed with completion of full upgrades on track within the next financial year. A solution for remote sharing of EGT images is also anticipated in 2021/22.

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- ✓ **'Rugged' laptops** are designed for frontline operational use, reducing the requirement for officers to return to police stations to complete administration or research. At the beginning of 2021, operational officers in Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Policing District took part in a 'rugged' laptop trial. Feedback has been extremely positive, with laptops providing officers with increased access to information and supervisory support, whilst maximising the time that they spend in direct contact with communities, rather than behind station walls. This is an exciting development for visible policing and, as such, work to expand the pilot to all areas of the Police Service is underway to support frontline service delivery.



A complete refresh of **Body Worn Video** camera equipment was undertaken in July 2020, for enhanced reliability and quality on this technology due to its criticality for frontline accountability and reassurance.



A number of important **data applications** have been developed including, our new Performance Portal, 'PULSE' which provides real-time accessible performance information and analysis to officers and staff, in every role and at every level.



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Mobile applications have also been developed in relation to Covid-19 enforcement and sudden death reporting. Most recently, in March 2021 a Covid-19 'track and trace' desktop application has been launched in the interests of workforce resilience and wellbeing.

External file sharing capability 'Box' was launched service-wide in March 2021 to facilitate efficient information sharing and collaboration with partner agencies.

To improve the efficiency of our online incident reporting system, robotic process automation was introduced in January 2021. Additionally, online reporting, specifically relating to the Child Protection Disclosure Scheme commenced in May 2020.

- ✓ The **ANPR Intercept Team** was formed in September 2020, with the principle aim of preventing criminal activity using the road network.



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Since this time, the Team has added real value by arresting 44 people for 70 offences, working jointly with internal and external partners. In addition, it has carried out 95 searches, issued 90 Fixed Penalty Notices, and seized 37 vehicles and £6,400 under Proceeds of Crime powers. Using nationally accredited specialist pre-emptive tactics they have successfully prevented a police pursuit on 31 occasions, thereby reducing road safety risks to the public, offenders and officers. Based on demonstrated results in offence areas of theft, burglary, robbery and fraud, plans to increase the size of the team and increase coverage across Northern Ireland will progress in the coming year.

Investment in technology is, and will continue to be, a strategic priority because it provides the opportunity to enhance our visibility, accessibility, responsiveness and productivity in the interests of community safety.

I want officers and staff to have access to digital tools which support them to investigate crime, prevent harm and engage more effectively at the point of delivery.

I want to exploit the opportunities that technology offers to reduce bureaucracy and increase modern and flexible ways of working.

I want the public to be able to make easy contact with us in a range of ways, to suit their individual needs and preferences

I want technology to facilitate collaboration and information sharing with partners.

These aspirations for the future will be formalised under our refreshed Digital Strategy – ‘2021 and Beyond,’ which will be presented to the Policing Board in the coming year.



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### *Contact Management*

Staff in our Contact Management Centre have worked hard this year to maintain performance which compares extremely well nationally. In fact, 94.4% of all 999 emergency calls were answered within the nationally recommended standard of 10 seconds, with an average answer time of 6 seconds. Our average answer time for non-emergency 101 calls was 33 seconds, with 77% of all 101 non-emergency calls answered within 30 seconds.

We have listened to feedback from the Local Policing Review in 2018 and have focused on increasing our accessibility at the first point of contact. Online reporting has, therefore, been an important development.

During 2020/21 there has been a more than a four-fold increase in the number of people reporting incidents using our online reporting mechanisms, rising from 7,017 reports in the first 11 months of 2019/20 to 31,913 in the same period in 2020/21.

In addition, online reporting automation has been introduced to increase effectiveness and responsiveness. People making an online report now receive a follow up email confirming key information, to include the incident number, investigating officer details, contact telephone and email for attending officers and a victim summary leaflet. This is further supported by relevant information on crime prevention and how to make contact with the local Neighbourhood Policing Team.

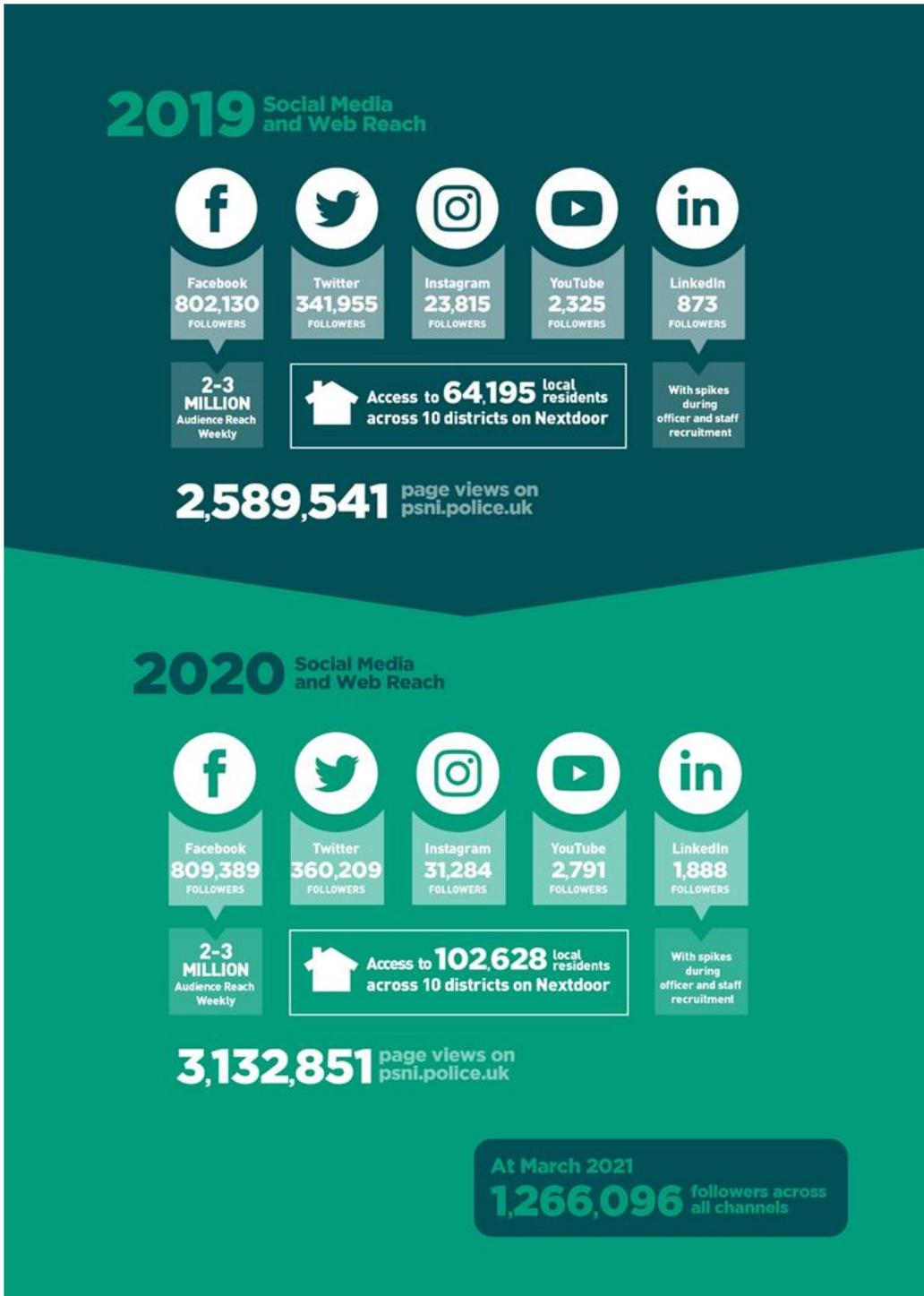
Survey responses indicate 75% of users rated the online crime and incident reporting system as being 'good' or 'very good'.

A new performance management framework for contact management has been in place since the beginning of 2021, applying performance standards set out in the NPCC Principles of Contact Management. This provides a more transparent analysis of Contact Management Centre performance and aligns more closely to the public experience, focusing on the average speed of answer.

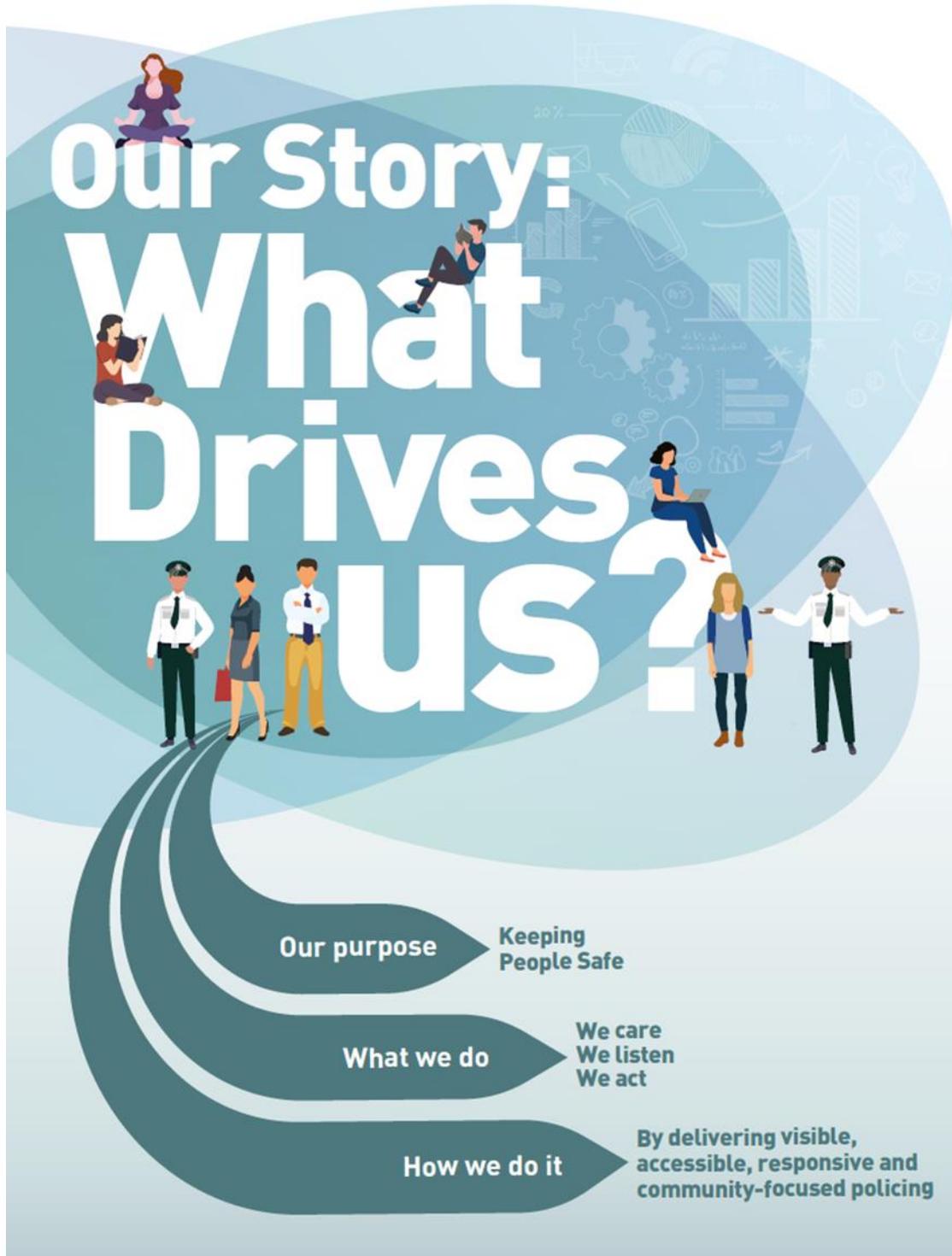
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Social Media Reach

In 2020 we implemented a new social media approach, to ensure that the public is provided with information on issues that may be impacting on their community in real-time. This involved reducing our channels but enhancing content and modernising our corporate image. The results in the below graphic show that already, at this early stage, we have increased our reach and impact.

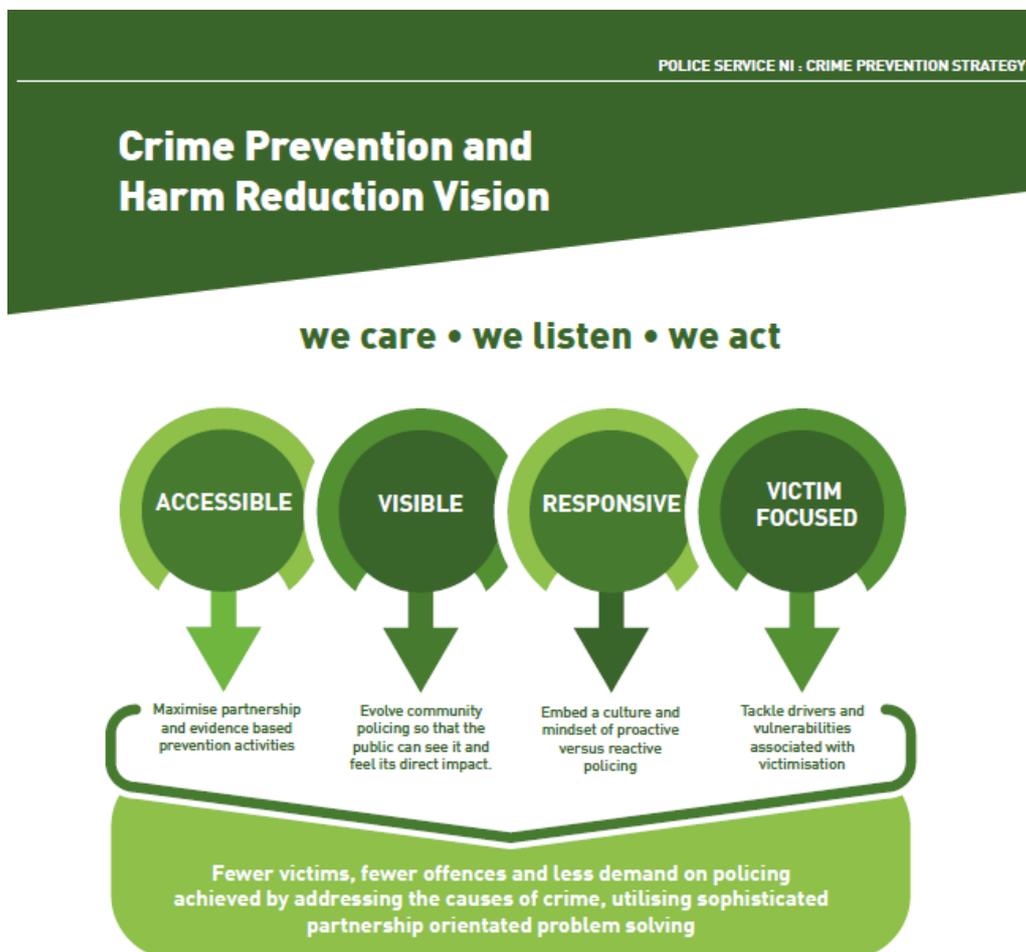


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## Prevention First

On 15 March 2021 we launched our new Crime Prevention Strategy 2025, 'Prevention First.' This strategy is focused on ensuring that prevention of crime is at the very heart of our service delivery and mind-set.



Demand for policing tends to be rooted in complex social need. A cross-sector, early intervention focus which addresses the causes and drivers of crime will result in safer communities, prevent harm for vulnerable people and reduce demand for policing in the longer-term.

In February 2021, the Equality Commission acknowledged the work of the Policing and Community Support Hubs and the Multi-Agency Triage Team in a letter regarding our Section 75 Annual Progress Report.

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We welcome the emphasis in the draft Programme for Government on collective public sector responsibility for improving wellbeing for all people. This outcome-based approach increases the potential to preventatively address underlying causes of policing issues which cause harm to individuals and communities.

There is growing evidence, for example, about the relationship between Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and deprived community environments. This is not only a public health issue, but also very much a policing issue, with causal links between trauma suffered as a child and negative harmful outcomes as an adult, including crime. The increasing importance of trauma informed policing practice is clear, particularly as the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic increases poverty and deprivation in communities in the short to medium term.

It is on this basis that we advocate the benefits of a coordinated cross-sector community safety strategy for Northern Ireland. Such a development would create impetus for collaboration, innovation and focus on the prevention of harm in local communities.

### *Community Relations Taskforce*

The Police Service experienced a number of challenging events during 2020 which created the impetus for reflection on our approach to engagement and dialogue with diverse communities across Northern Ireland.

A new Community Relations Taskforce was established in December 2020 to lead the way on informing our future approach to engagement at a strategic and operation level. The aim is to increase our understanding of, and develop stronger networks with, diverse communities and community groups and to use these relationships to inform our policing style and approach. The concept is founded on the concept of co-design and participation with community representatives, critical friends and academic partners.

Recognising the importance of a community voice and influence in the development of the Taskforce, we have been working inclusively to secure membership from across communities.

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Initial focus has centred on developing relationships with black, Asian and minority ethnic community leaders and others. We have sought facilitation support by *Mutual Gain*, a group which seeks to empower organisations and communities to reconnect, with the aim of promoting greater participation and active citizenship for the mutual benefit of all. This early work is intended to serve as a pathfinder to inform the strategic direction of the Taskforce, supported by independent experts practiced in community engagement, community development and capacity building.

T/ACC Singleton will report to the Board's Partnership Committee in April 2021, regarding the formal way forward for the Taskforce, following the analysis of consultation workshops which took place in February 2021. The Community Relations Taskforce will continue to be a central area of focus in the coming year and I look forward to updating the Board on progress on a regular basis throughout 2021.

### *Independent Advisory Group*

During 2020, we developed a corporate Independent Advisory Group. This Group currently comprises community representatives at grassroots and leadership levels from across Northern Ireland with representation across all Section 75 protected groups and other key interest groups. This input has been invaluable and we intend to increasingly seek the diverse perspectives of this group to inform strategic decision making moving forward. A range of themes have been consulted on to date, including the policing response to Health Protection Regulations, policing of sensitive events during the Coronavirus pandemic, EU Exit, Spit and Bite Guard training, uniform, corporate identity and, most recently, safety of women and girls.

## *Youth Engagement*

Community Safety Department has led on development of a Youth Engagement Strategy and Youth Independent Advisory Group in partnership with the Education Authority. This aims to develop opportunities for young people to meet with police to discuss what is important to them in the community, thereby encouraging participation in local policing. It also provides an opportunity for police to account directly to young people on what they are doing and why. This two-way dialogue provides the opportunity for us to understand the needs, perspective and expectations of young people. It is an opportunity to help promote the positive contribution that children and young people make to their local communities.



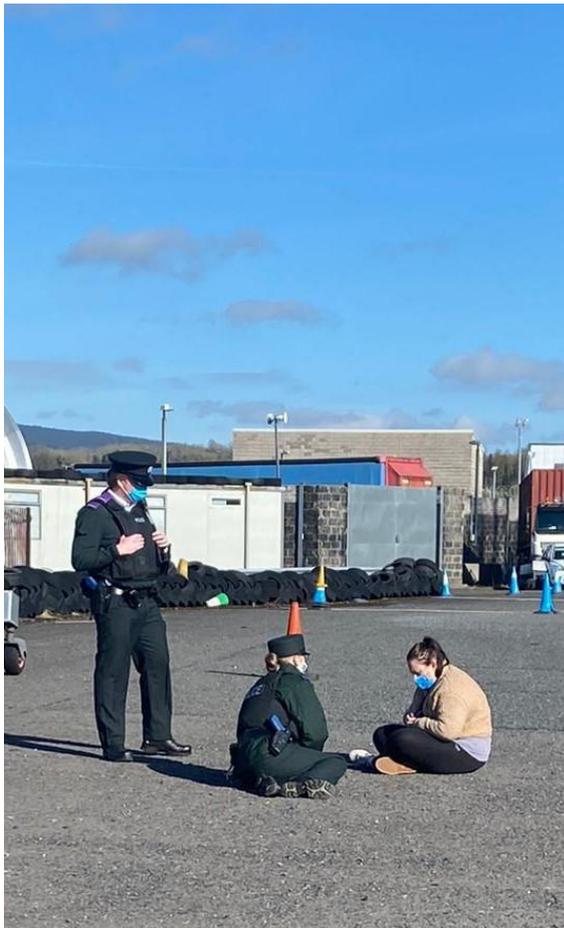
The Group was advertised during February 2021 and it is intended that induction will take place in each Council area in coming months to encourage young people to join. Membership is open to all 16-24 year olds and the intention is to seek representation of two young people from each council area, with the exception of Belfast which will provide four representatives. Four regional meetings will be held each year with local and senior police officers. Young people will benefit from training on participative structures, peer education and action research. Participants will deliver workshops with 9-15 year olds in their own local council areas to gain perspective and opinions on community issues.

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### *Learning and Development*

444 student officers attested as probationary Constables in during 2020/21 with the benefit of a Level 5 Advanced Diploma, accredited by Ulster University. This vocationally focused academic qualification develops and inspires student officers to become resourceful and flexible police officers who:

- Consistently demonstrate policing with the community behaviours
- Are accountable, keep people safe by preventing harm, protecting the vulnerable and detecting offenders; whilst upholding human rights and treating all with fairness, courtesy and respect
- Are collaborative, dynamic and responsive to meet the changing needs of communities in Northern Ireland



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It is intended that, in future, the current Level 5 Diploma qualification will be upgraded to a Level 6 Degree programme. Significant planning and validation has taken place to prepare for this change, however, the start date for the enhanced academic programme is dependent on recruitment levels, as 2018 recruitment lists must first be exhausted. The benefit of this enhanced qualification will be felt directly in communities in terms of frontline service delivery.

Collaboration with the Open University's Centre for Police Research and Learning has continued throughout 2020 with the launch of two new educational resources on the online *OpenLearn* platform. This builds on an original module on 'Collaborative Problem Solving for Community Safety' which was launched in January 2017 and which has received over 15,000 visits from police and members of the public since this time. As such, Open University report that it has one of the highest completion rates for any course on the *OpenLearn* platform. New modules are focused on the use of rapport in engaging with the public, "Sure I know how to talk to people" and a leadership in communities module, entitled, "Step up to Leadership". In the last 12 months, a further four modules have been developed.

<b>1. Empowering communities through justice and fairness</b>
This course considers the concepts of justice and fairness from various perspectives. It covers two specific approaches to justice and fairness – restorative justice and mediation – to consider how empowerment, engagement and better outcomes can be achieved.
<b>2. Empowering communities to find better solutions</b>
The course looks at community empowerment and how to overcome barriers to achieving empowerment. The particular challenge of crime and criminality is a focus of the material.
<b>3. Engaging with youth and young people</b>
This course looks at how police engage with youth and young people and how this might be done differently. The material is ambitious and includes input from education officials in NI, young people who are involved in engagement programmes and PSNI.
<b>4. Thinking differently, doing differently (Evidence-based practice)</b>
This is designed as an introductory course in evidence-based practice (EBP), starting with an understanding of the evidence-based approaches to decision-making. It reflects on ways EBP influences communities.

[Source: OU Centre for Police Research and Learning Annual Report 2020]

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These evidence-based programmes increase the accessibility of professional development by being engaging, interactive and flexible, thereby facilitating completion alongside the demand of full-time work and family.

## Neighbourhood Policing Commitment

Our commitment to neighbourhood policing remains strong and is the foundation for our policing style and ethos. This is centrally influenced by our core policing principle under Section 31A Police (NI) Act 2000, “*police officers shall carry out their functions with the aim of securing the support of the local community and acting in cooperation with the local community.*”

Neighbourhood policing reduces fear of crime, improves trust and build legitimacy in communities, supported by academic research.



**400**  
**New Neighbourhood  
Officers Serving the  
Community**

we care • we listen • we act  
#KeepingPeopleSafe

Keeping People Safe

 [www.psni.police.uk](https://www.psni.police.uk)

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The Neighbourhood Policing Delivery Board is responsible for implementing changes arising from the Local Policing Review and ensuring that these align with other ongoing developments, such as the Service Operating Model and partnership initiatives like the Support Hubs.

During 2020, the Neighbourhood Policing Delivery Board managed the uplift of an additional 400 officers into Neighbourhood Teams across all policing areas. The neighbourhood policing role profile has also been reviewed and training has been delivered in line with national policing guidelines.

Current work is focused on providing daily 16 hour neighbourhood policing coverage across all Districts and developing a draft interim performance framework for Neighbourhood Policing. Progress on this work will continue to be shared on a regular basis with the Partnership Committee for necessary oversight and feedback.



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### Visible, Accessible, Responsive Service

During 2020 and 2021, we have taken steps to develop a more modern corporate image for the Police Service. The standards of our uniform and imagery are directly connected to our visibility and accessibility to our community, partners and colleagues.

**Fleet modernisation** is underway. This is important for our visibility, but also our accessibility in communities. During the last year, over 100 new liveried vehicles were made available across policing Districts. Electric bikes have also been rolled out for the first time to our Neighbourhood Policing Teams.



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In July 2019, I commissioned a wholesale review of the **operational uniform** as part of a focus on officer health and wellbeing and to ensure consistency with the contemporary ‘look and feel’ of other Police Services. Following an operational trial, which included internal and external consultation, a uniform has been selected which has been assessed from a functionality, durability, community impact and value for money perspective.



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The Policing Board's Partnership Committee has been involved in the development of the new uniform and has received reassurance that the new uniform will better match efficiency with effectiveness.

When compared to the current contract, new uniform tops will be an average of circa 6% and trousers 39% lower in cost per item than the current supply. Value for money has been a central consideration, in line with the requirement to deliver significant non-pay cost savings to achieve a balanced budget in 2021/22.



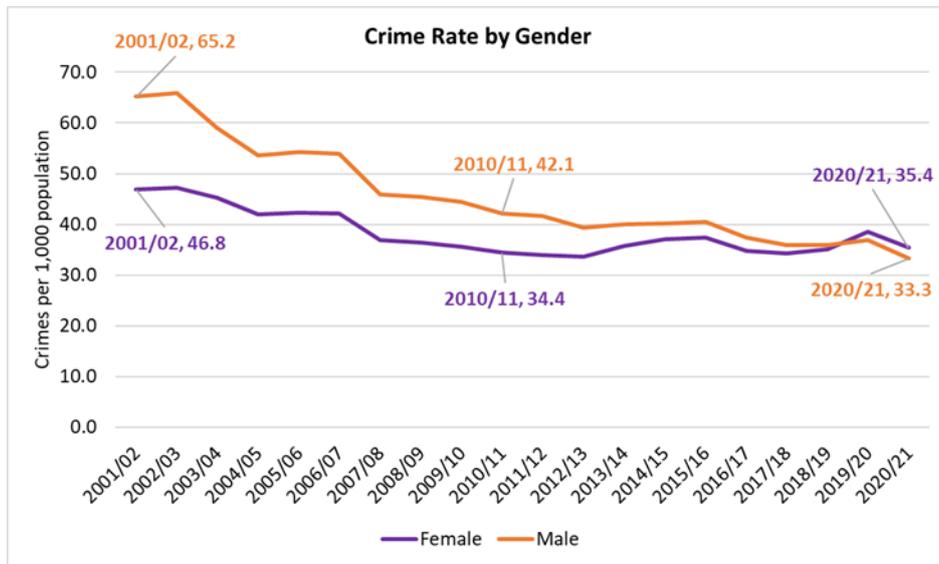
**Body armour replacement** has been an important investment to reduce the health and safety impacts of wearing heavy protective work equipment and prevent harm to our officers.



## Gender-based Violence

The issue of gendered-violence has strongly emerged as an area of public importance, in recent weeks. We are committed to preventing harm to women and girls, wherever and however it is experienced.

Whilst overall crime is decreasing, women are more likely to be victims of crime than men. Women are also more likely to be repeat victims of crime, with more than two fifths of crime against women committed against repeat victims.



This financial year to date, the percentage of offences against women that have resulted in a ‘charge/summons’ outcome is around 14%, circa 5 percentage points higher than the outcome rate for crimes against men. However, recorded incidents of crime, where women are victims, have higher levels of victim withdrawal or lack of support for police investigations.

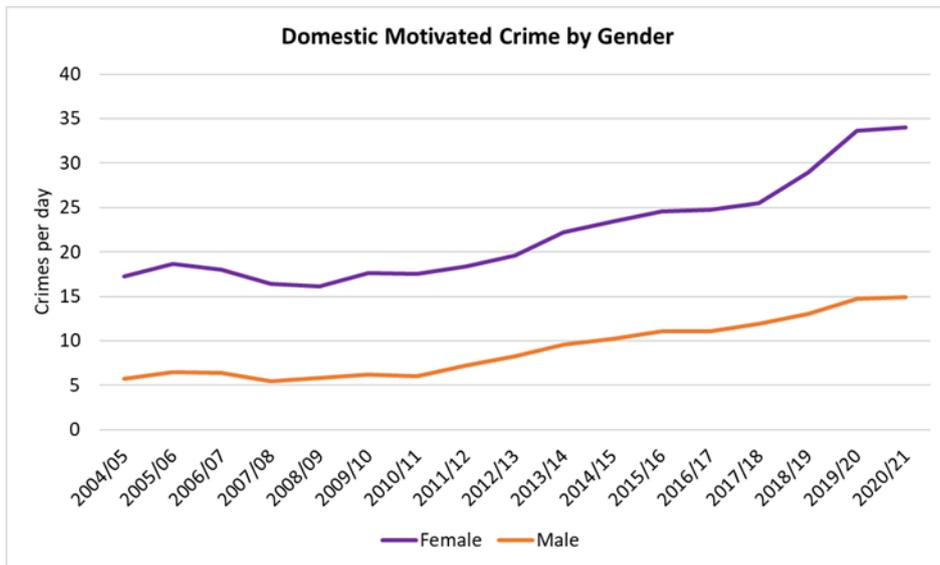
Our strategic assumption is that there is likely to be a significant amount of crime against women that still goes unreported, supported by latest figures from the Northern Ireland Crime Survey. Increased reporting allows us to better understand the true scale of the problem, investigate offences, manage offenders and work with partners to provide victims the support they need.

Whilst the Police Service has a central role to play, and we are committed to standing shoulder to shoulder with women on this issue, this is a problem which cannot be solved by policing alone. Organisationally, we would fully support the

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introduction of a Gender Based Violence and Abuse Strategy, as has been advocated for by the Justice Minister and others. From a policing perspective, this would provide the framework, collective responsibility and resources to make meaningful and tangible improvement.

Domestic abuse is a strategic priority and accounts for almost 20% of overall crime in Northern Ireland. We will continue to work with advocacy groups to ensure that the voice of victims is heard, understood and influences police practice.



Domestic abuse crimes have been above the five-year average every month since November 2020. Crime figures this financial year to date indicate that around 36.6% of crimes against women were domestically motivated, compared with 33.1% the previous financial year to date.

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Our Domestic Abuse Control Strategy focuses on four pillars:

- ✓ **Legislation and Guidance** – we are working alongside key statutory and voluntary partners to deliver on new legislation to support victims who are experiencing non-physical forms of abuse including coercive and controlling behaviour. Work is ongoing to produce a strategy to tackle repeat perpetrators of domestic abuse.

Domestic abuse policy leads in the Police Service and Public Prosecution Service are working to create internal guidance which will support officers and staff to understand and effectively respond to the introduction of new offences. A Domestic Abuse Manual is being produced to consolidate and streamline internal policy and guidance.

We will also be working with the Department of Justice, Public Prosecution Service and relevant agencies to support the introduction of Stalking and Harassment legislation during 2021/22.

Domestic Homicide Reviews were introduced in December 2020 and will be instigated in any investigation of this type that is committed after this date.

- ✓ **Training** – dedicated training modules are being developed to support the introduction of the new the Domestic Abuse Bill. The first module on *coercive controlling behaviour* has been released and is available for completion by all frontline officers. Remaining modules including *legislation, impact* and *pathways to support* will be completed before July 2021, in partnership with the Police College and Public Protection Branch, the Public Prosecution Service and voluntary sector organisations (Women's Aid, Rainbow and Men's Advisory Project).

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- ✓ **Investigative Standards** – The overall crime outcome rate for domestic abuse related offences, so far, in 2020/21 is 1.9% higher than the previous financial year to date, at 28.1% (01/03/20 – 28/02/21). We have a number of ongoing pieces of work which seek to increase criminal justice outcomes, including increased body worn video usage and 999 recording dip samples. A monthly domestic abuse performance meeting provides oversight and grip of this important area of harm. Weekly dip samples are used to quality assure police investigative actions, identify trends and emerging risks and monitor body worn video compliance.

Public Protection Notices were launched in November 2020, aiming to enhance risk assessment completed by attending officers at domestic abuse incidents. An initial review in March 2021 indicates that these have produced a significant improvement in risk assessment practices. Further work is ongoing to support and develop the front line operational response to risk assessment.

- ✓ **Victim Focus** – Since March 2020, our Domestic Abuse Call Back Team has followed up with over 13,000 victims of domestic abuse within 24 hours of original report. As a direct result, an additional 471 support service referrals have been made and 32 new crime reports have been investigated. Importantly, an additional 839 investigative follow up actions have been identified.

Since March 2020, in response to increased domestic abuse risks emerging from the Covid-19 context, regular partnership meetings have been held to promote the multi-agency response. This has provided the opportunity to share good practice, information and emerging areas of concern to better support victims of domestic abuse.

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The number of domestic motivated rape offences recorded this financial year to date is significantly above the five year average, with an increase in domestic motivated rape offences (27.9%) alongside a decrease in non-domestic rape (-17.6%).

There is an overarching control strategy and action plan in place for the investigation of sexual offences. Our current outcome rate for rape offences is just over 9%, representing a 0.3% improvement on the previous financial year to date and circa 3% points higher than most forces in England and Wales. We continuously strive to improve our service and deliver better outcomes for victims of sexual offences. In March 2021, we launched a Rape Crime Unit Questionnaire which will run over a 12 month period with the aim of better understanding the experience of victims. This will provide an evidence base for development to ensure victims feel supported and engaged with the investigative and criminal justice process.

To continue to improve the support that it provided to victims of sexual offending during interview and evidence gathering processes, we are in the process of evaluating a pilot of specialist 'Achieving Best Evidence' (ABE) interviewers. We have also approved additional funding for the Sexual Assault Referral Centre to enhance victim support measures during forensic examination.

In partnership with the Department of Justice, we plan to introduce a Domestic and Sexual Abuse Advocacy Service by Autumn 2021. This will seek to increase consistency of service provided to victims of domestic and sexual abuse with 20 advocates embedded within police stations and the Sexual Assault Referral Centre.

## Sustainability

As a Service, we are committed to protecting the environment, as well as delivering continuous environmental improvement, now and in the future. We recognise our operations have an environmental impact and are committed to both minimising any negative impacts and developing positive impacts. The most significant environmental aspects for policing include the consumption of fuels and energy, product and raw materials, water and the management of a variety of waste streams. We monitor the principles and responsibilities of sustainable development and environmental management, aiming to incorporate these into day to day business activities.

We have an Environmental Management Policy and have conducted an Initial Environmental Review (IER), with a draft Environmental Management System to measure progress. However, the world is changing rapidly, bringing into focus the environmental and societal challenges we collectively face. With these challenges also come opportunities; new technologies, greater collective awareness of the issues and an opportunity to broaden our approach to sustainability and support the wider national and global agendas.

The development of a draft Corporate Sustainability Strategy is underway, following the appointment of a new Sustainability Manager. This new strategy will set out our intent to minimise the impact we are having on our environment by reducing emissions and water consumption, reducing waste and moving waste up the waste hierarchy wherever possible, and making smarter procurement choices that take into account finite resources and impact on our natural world. For the first time, we will fully integrate the social impacts of our organisation into our sustainability planning.

## People Strategy

Our new People Strategy is our commitment to grow the capability of the Police Service today and create even greater capacity for tomorrow. It is focused on creating a culture which supports an, 'Our People, Your Service' ethos.



The People Strategy is framed on five People Principles which we believe will have the biggest positive impact on the development of *Your Service*. These principles will form the basis of an ambitious People Action Plan.

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**Principle 1 - Being Representative and Inclusive** is where the communities we serve can be seen across the organisation and where everyone is confident to bring their 'whole selves' to work.

**Principle 2 - Resourcing for the Future** is our approach to evolving and continually adapting our resourcing model and unlocking the capacity and capability of our most precious resource, our people.

**Principle 3 - By Leading Together** each one of us is empowered to take personal and collective responsibility to step forward and lead in pursuit of a common aim, demonstrating how *We Care, We Listen and We Act*.

**Principle 4 - By Serving with Professionalism** we take pride in demonstrating the highest levels of conduct and performance.

**Principle 5 – We Value Health and Wellbeing**, care about colleagues and listen to their needs and concerns so that, together, we can take action to create a safe and supportive environment.

The People Strategy embeds three basic questions into everyday practice to ensure that people remain at the heart of policing:

- 1. What is in the best interest of the Community?**
- 2. What is in the best interest of the Organisation?**
- 3. What is in the best interest of the Individual?**

The People Strategy provides the basis for gaining a better understanding our culture/s and the development of a cultural plan. This is an important area of future focus and one which, I am aware, is of particular interest to Board members and the Service Executive Team.

## Wellbeing

The topic of wellbeing has been brought to the forefront of the policing agenda in recent years, supported by academic research. Policing is a rewarding career, however, by its very nature, it can frequently expose officers and staff to a range of operational stressors, including frequent exposure to distressing and traumatic incidents. The impacts can be exacerbated by increasing workloads, constrained resources, and long and unpredictable working hours. Sickness absence, associated with mental and physical health and wellbeing, presents significant challenges for police leaders right across the UK and Ireland.

The national absence average for police officers and police staff is 5.1%.<sup>i</sup> The Police Service of Northern Ireland absence average currently stands at 4.6%, with total absence occurrences having dropped by 27.2% and long term absences<sup>ii</sup> reduced by 33% this financial year.<sup>iii</sup> The average number of people absent through sickness each day has dropped from 492 in 2019/20 to 441 people in 2020/21. Duty adjustments have also reduced from 1036 to 996, year on year. This has resulted in a £1.53 reduction in the projected annual cost of sickness.

Aligned to the People Principle, *Valuing Health and Wellbeing*, we are committed to creating a culture of wellbeing. Health and wellbeing must be at the forefront of everything we do, if the workforce is to be sustainable. Feeling well empowers people to be at their best, to proudly meet public expectations of policing and increase legitimacy within the communities we serve. To this end, we will continue to invest in health and wellbeing services and follow evidence based practice.

This work will be driven under the governance of a *Valuing Health and Wellbeing* Delivery Group, led by the Executive Director of People and Organisational Development, supported by our dedicated Wellbeing Coordinator. This governance structure was established at the end of March 2021 and participants are enthusiastic about its potential impact and reach. Notable areas of planned work includes:

- ✓ A review of shift patterns
- ✓ Embedding an effective Health and Safety culture through planned on-line learning events
- ✓ Implementing a Workforce Survey, incorporating a measurement of wellbeing

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- ✓ Publishing a proactive Mental Health Strategy
- ✓ Development of health-related policies and guidance, particularly addressing the top three causal factors of absence, namely respiratory, musculoskeletal and psychological ill-health.
- ✓ Development of Individual Wellness and Resilience Action Plans (WRPA), embedding a lifetime career approach to individual wellbeing
- ✓ Full roll out of the Wellbeing Volunteers Programme<sup>iv</sup>
- ✓ Development of a two year evidence-based preventative programme to address the top three causal factors of absence.

In future, we will look further than simply to officers and staff who are absent but also those who are present whilst sick. 'Presenteeism' can increase risk and impact on decision making. Leadership and prevention focus is important to ensure optimal working conditions. This highlights the need for adequate resourcing, investment in our equipment, uniform, facilities and estate and a continued focus on leadership development. Not only because this is the right thing to do but also because of the dividends for productivity and morale.

This focus for the future aims to compliment and build upon the tangible progress we have made in our approach to health and wellbeing, including:

- ✓ Advice and support services on the online Wellbeing Support Hub
- ✓ Confidential telephone and face-to-face counselling services
- ✓ Psychological screening for specialist roles
- ✓ Therapeutic mental health service intervention
- ✓ Post Incident Peer Support Team
- ✓ Accessible physiotherapy service
- ✓ Engagement in the National Police Wellbeing Service, 'Oscar Kilo'

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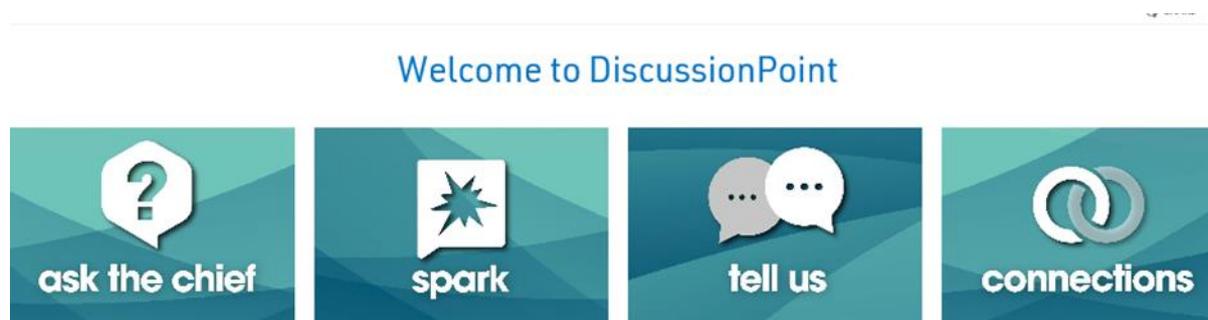
The health and wellbeing impacts of routine assaults on police in the course of public service delivery are of considerable concern. As an organisation, we are committed to preventing routine assaults and to addressing a culture where assault on police is considered acceptable. There is a need for robust and effective response and for confidence in the wider criminal justice system, particularly in terms of charging and judicial sentencing policies. This confidence will impact on the morale of police personnel and the value of policing in the eyes of the public.

There is an evidenced need for investment the police estate, to modernise the internal facilities in our stations. The day to day working environment and conditions have an impact on both the wellbeing of our people and our workplace culture. “Good policing starts inside the walls of police stations” (Nix and Wolfe, 2016: 178). A refreshed Estates Strategy is under development which will provide necessary clarity on, and impetus for, priority investment in the interests of facilitating a modern and progressive police service, which is both accessible to the community and conducive to a high performing and healthy workplace.

## Voice

We have invested in online communications platforms to promote participation and meaningful two-way communications between ranks and grades and connect across the organisation.

A range of engagement platforms have helped to connect people to share ideas and diverse perspectives and develop improve a culture of openness and leadership accountability.



**Ask the Chief** – provides a quarterly opportunity for officers and staff to directly engage with me and to ask questions on a range of themes, which I respond to personally, in live-time. I value this opportunity to connect with people across the organisation and to share perspectives.



**Spark** – enables anyone in the organisation to submit innovative ideas and engage in discussion on interactive forums. This seeks to improve how we do things by drawing on our different backgrounds, perspectives and experiences to design and create a police service which allows each of us to be at our best. Contributions are welcomed regardless of grade, rank or role.

**Tell Us** – provides a forum to submit questions, comments or feedback on what matters to individuals in the workplace and to raise concerns or issues in a non-controversial and 'safe' way.

**Connections** – aims to build professional networks across the organisation, provide easy access to skills and experience and help the organisation to map these.

## Diversity and Inclusion

A future focused workplace is one where equality, diversity and inclusion is truly embedded in our systems and culture. Moving forward, our workforce increasingly needs to reflect and speak for (and with) the communities we represent. Representative recruitment is an important part of this, however, work does not stop there. Our aspirations for diversity extend to progression and culture, as we move purposefully towards an inclusive and representative workplace.

This focus is aligned to the People Principle of *Being Representative and Inclusive* and will be driven through the *Being Representative and Inclusive* Delivery Group under the People Strategy.

Under the associated Action Plan for 2020-21, which was updated this month to reflect feedback from the Resources Committee, specific work will progress this year on:

- ✓ Producing a 'Barriers to Recruitment' Strategy
- ✓ Commissioning the *Police Service Now* and *Volunteer* schemes
- ✓ Expanding the current student placement scheme to a full employment model
- ✓ Reviewing and refreshing the *Dignity at Work* policy suite
- ✓ Addressing the causal factors that give rise to Bullying, Harassment and Grievances
- ✓ Delivering a programme of cultural audits and 'pulse' surveys across the organisation

In 2020 we agreed a *Professional and Inclusive* workplace standard and we look forward to embedding this across the organisation.

It is positive to note that the Policing Board's Independent Community Observer Scheme Report on our 2020 recruitment campaign observed high standards in the delivery of assessment centres throughout the challenging period of Covid-19.

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In other good news, feedback from the Equality Commission on our statutory Equality and Good Relations Annual Progress Report and Disability Action Plan 2019/20 was positive.<sup>v</sup> *“Overall the Commission was of the view that implementation of S75 within the PSNI is progressing well. In particular, the number and content of screening documents has improved in this period.”<sup>vi</sup>* We look forward to continuing to work with the Equality Commission on the continued implementation of the Police Service Equality Scheme and to proactively address areas of identified development.

Our key focus, going forward, will be to focus on recruitment and to seek support and broad base advocacy for policing and presenting policing as a valuable and rewarding career. We will also seek to optimise representation across grades, ranks and in specialist roles. To assist with this, we intend to explore the feasibility of direct secondments from the women’s network in policing as a way of bringing in diverse talent. We will also continue to participate in positive action programmes, such as the Insights Programme, aimed at senior female leaders, in partnership with Police Scotland.

## Code of Ethics Refresh

Aligned to the People Principle, *Serving with Professionalism*, a review of the 2008 Code of Ethics progressed during 2020.

We have approached this as an opportunity to reframe style, content and purpose. We aspire for the Code to positively encourage ethical behaviour rather than being framed in the negative, to prescriptively spell out unethical behaviours. In this way, it becomes increasingly relevant to the wider organisation rather than just the few and becomes more meaningful.

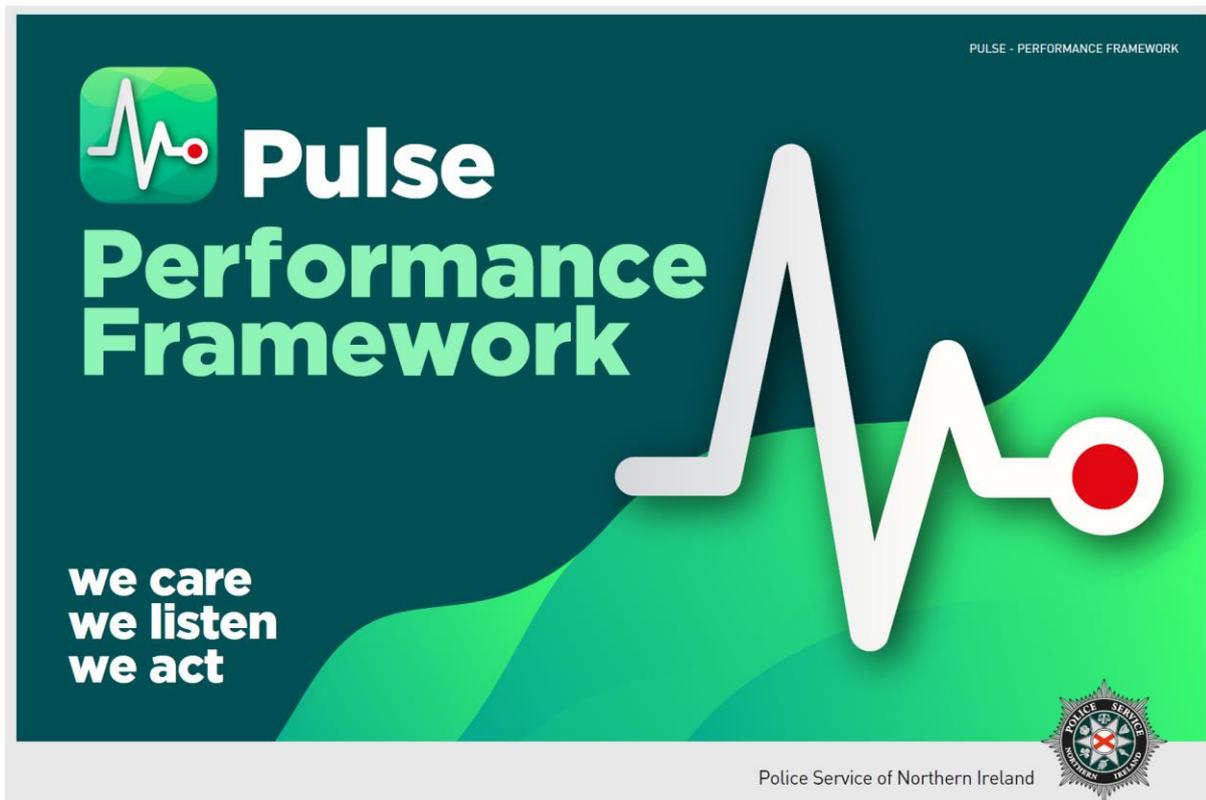
The Code of Ethics is of the utmost importance for policing due to its impact on internal culture and behaviour and on external perceptions of, and responses to, the organisation. We aspire for the Code to symbolise our lasting values and purpose, now and in future. The revised Code of Ethics will explicitly set standards for the quality of relationships within the organisation and between the organisation and those with whom it works and engages, including the public and partners. Research would show, that if codes are to be effective, it is crucial that content can be readily recognised, recalled and practiced. The revised style and format is intended to encourage autonomous compliance with the Code.

I am pleased that the revised draft style and intent for the Code of Ethics 2021 received preliminary approval from the Partnership Committee in February 2021 with helpful feedback received from members and the Policing Board's Human Rights Advisor. The draft Code will now go to internal consultation before being submitted to the Performance Committee in June 2021. If agreed, this will allow formal public consultation to commence on the new draft of the Police Code of Ethics in 2021.

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### PULSE Performance Framework

Also aligned to the People Principle, *Serving with Professionalism*, we have introduced 'PULSE' as our new Performance Management Framework. The Pulse Performance Management Framework will enable us to evaluate how well our services have been provided and to inform choices to improve future service provision. The framework is designed to blend a retrospective evaluation of practice with a prospective consideration of risk and resilience. The Pulse Framework is supported by a Performance Portal that was launched in November 2020 and an associated Learning and Development Programme is in development.



<sup>i</sup> March 2021

<sup>ii</sup> Long term absence is categorised as involving 183 days or more consecutive absence

<sup>iii</sup> Figures effective as of 28 February 2021

<sup>iv</sup> The Wellbeing Volunteer Programme is a voluntary, non-clinical support programme that is based on peer support and was inspired by international best practice. Volunteer officers and staff have received training in peer support, mental health, therapeutic skills, suicide prevention and psychological first aid. Volunteers provide short-term practical, social and emotional support to colleagues who may be socially isolated, experiencing particularly stressful work events, struggling with interpersonal dynamics, coping with disability-related work issues or struggling with personal issues which are impacting on job performance. The programme operates in parallel to our Post Incident Peer Support Programme.

<sup>v</sup> Formally submitted to Equality Commission for Northern Ireland in December 2020

<sup>vi</sup> Communicated by letter, dated 5 February 2021

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