



# Police Service of Northern Ireland

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

February 2022

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## Foreword

My first Accountability Report in 2022 provides information on operational highlights and areas of focus since the time of my last Accountability Report in December 2021, acknowledging the hard work of officers and staff that has continued over the Christmas and New Year period.

I am pleased to extend my congratulations to those officers and staff who were recognised in the New Year's Honours list.

We have achieved some important progress this month in technology and connectivity, with the roll out of rugged laptops to frontline officers and a refreshed fit for purpose operational uniform for frontline officers.

Content within the report seeks to create a shared understanding of the severe financial pressures facing the wider justice system and specifically outlines the high level impacts of the Draft Budget 2022-25 on policing.

The proposed budgetary settlement for policing projects an operating shortfall of £226m over the next three years, with year on year non-recurrent officer funding exacerbating the deficit. At 67% of the total Justice Budget, the £14.8m allocation for Police Service staffing is nowhere near sufficient to maintain officer numbers, particularly in the context of a £14.6m (or 2%) cut. Whilst opportunities for saving are being explored in non-pay areas, due to the non-recurrent funding of officer posts, pressures will crystallise in our headcount. The Service Executive Team is deeply concerned at the potential scenario of a potential reduction in resourcing of 1,000 officers by 2025.

The impacts on policing will be stark. Real consequences will be felt in service delivery, resilience and modernisation, with stark choices as to how to prioritise demand and manage risk in the coming years. Longer-term impacts include recruitment and representation, the policing response to non-urgent incidents and the investigation of crime. Public confidence and victim satisfaction will inevitably be affected.

## Contents

The February 2022 Accountability Report provides an update to the Northern Ireland Policing Board on the following topics:

- Financial Outlook
- Impact of the Covid-19 Omicron variant
- Service Modernisation
- Operational focus and outcomes during December 2021
- Domestic Abuse
- Road Safety
- Response to issues in the Fixed Penalty Processing Centre
- Neighbourhood Policing Week

# Financial Outlook

## Current Challenge

We continue to face financial pressures in the current year, with a Full Year pressure on our Resource budget of £13.2m at the end of December 2021. These pressures were reflected in the January Monitoring bid to the Department of Justice and it has now been confirmed that the Police Service has been allocated £14m, which will enable the pressures to be offset.

Although this is good news, it provides further evidence that the baseline budget is insufficient and unsustainable.

## Future Challenge

The Northern Ireland Executive published the draft budget for 2022-2025 for consultation on 13 December 2021. The Police Service's draft budget allocation for 2022-2025 stands at £760m. This figure is based on the opening baseline allocation less a 2% reduction, in the context of a specific ring-fenced allocation for staffing that is flat across all three years. Whilst specific allocations were included for staffing at £14.6m, this does not result in any additionality, as it is countered by the 2% cut of £14.8m.

The proposed baseline of £760m is less than the equivalent budget for the current year which was £772m, now supplemented by the January Monitoring allocation. In total, draft budget proposals create pressures of some £226m across the three year period, just to stand still.

Simply to maintain headcount at the current level, of 7,100 officers and 2,580 staff, introduces significant financial pay pressures going forward, i.e. £37m in 2022/23, £50m in 2023/24 and £66m in 2024/25. This is due to historical underfunding of the baseline together with future pay inflation.

The estimated non-pay pressures are also substantial, at £22m in Year 1, £25m in Year 2 and £26m in Year 3, and although there is room to either absorb or defer some of these pressures, they only add to the overall burden.

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To illustrate the scale of the gap resulting from the proposed budget allocation, the following table outlines pressures in both pay and non-pay budgets over the three year period, 2022-2025.

<b>Financials</b>	<b>22-23 £m</b>	<b>23-24 £m</b>	<b>24-25 £m</b>
Opening baseline	719	719	719
less 2% reduction	(14)	(14)	(14)
plus PSNI Staffing ring fenced funding	14	14	14
EU Exit funding	10	10	10
Security funding	31	31	31
<b>Proposed draft baseline</b>	<b>760</b>	<b>760</b>	<b>760</b>
<i>Pay pressures – to maintain headcount</i>	<i>37</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>66</i>
<i>Non-Pay pressures</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>26</i>
<b>Total pressures</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>92</b>

The maximum savings that can be generated from pay, including the option of an immediate freeze on all recruitment from March 2022, do not fully offset future payroll pressures.

A freeze on recruitment would result in headcount falling to 6,027 officers and 2,227 staff in a three year period. This represents a reduction of over 1,000 police officers and 350 members of police staff, as outlined in the table below.

<b>Headcount (with no recruitment)</b>	<b>22-23 FTE</b>	<b>23-24 FTE</b>	<b>24-25 FTE</b>
Officers	6,688	6,359	6,027
Staff	2,484	2,358	2,227
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,536</b>	<b>8,717</b>	<b>8,254</b>

As an immediate step to mitigate further financial pressure in 2022/23 we have taken the decision to defer the planned student officer recruitment intake for March 2022. Whilst the planned intake of 85 student officers in March would have achieved a headcount of 7,100 officers, it would equate committed additional costs of circa £4-5m in the 2022/23 financial year. Until such times as we receive certainty on the agreed budget settlement for policing, it is considered prudent, as a precautionary measure, not to incur an unsustainable recurring financial commitment of that order.

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It is, however, important to reinforce that, in the event of easement or remedy under the final budget settlement, measures are in place to ensure we are in a position to accelerate recruitment intakes to maintain operational capability.

We are also currently working through scenarios on the potential reduction of headcount for the periods 2022–2025, as an outworking of the pay pressures within the budget. This includes options of freezing or reducing recruitment. It is, however, currently our preference to retain a level of recruitment, to manage key operational risks and increase diversity and representativeness.

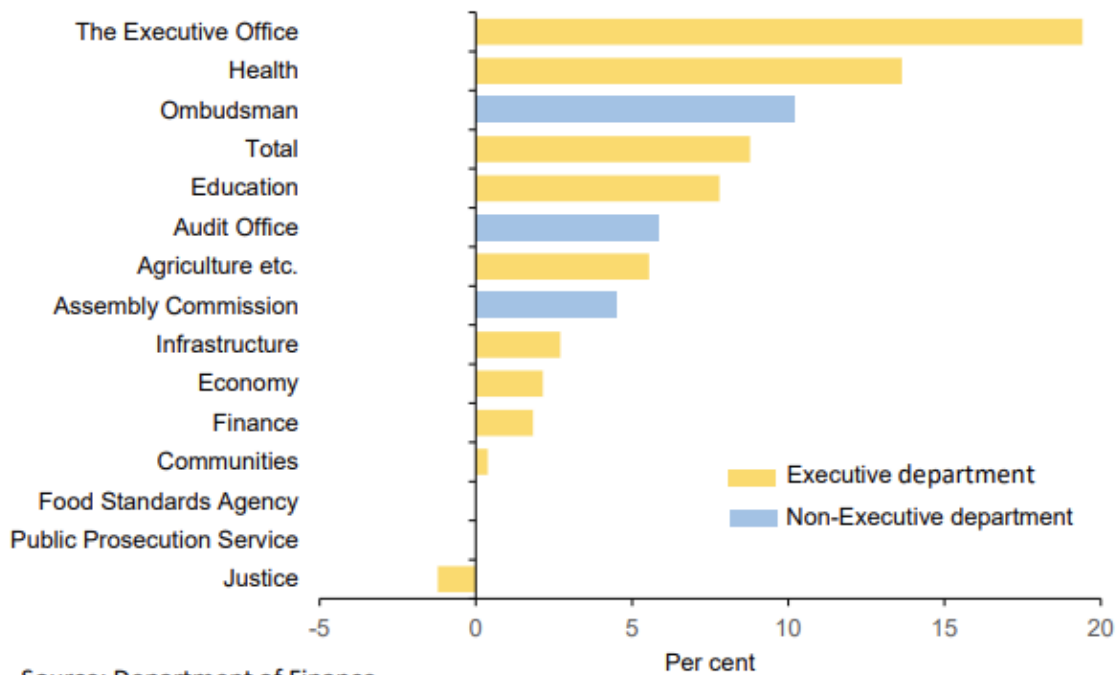
On the basis that payroll savings will be insufficient to address the funding gap, the impact will undoubtedly be felt on much needed infrastructure and support services affecting investment in IT systems, fleet, estates and training.

The Police Service is acutely aware of political and public consensus on the requirement to prioritise health in public spending. It is in this context that we have been engaging stakeholders on a realistic and pragmatic budget settlement for policing which maintains existing capacity at 7,100 officers, with a longer term strategic intention to grow police officer numbers to 7,500 as outlined under the New Decade, New Approach Agreement.

Whilst respecting that the allocation of public finances is a matter for elected representatives through the democratic process, to protect local communities and maintain confidence in policing, it is a matter of public duty that we are transparent and honest in our assessment of the impact of budgetary decision-making to prepare the Board and the public for inevitable reductions in policing service provision.

The Northern Ireland Fiscal Council's report, *The NI Executive's 2022-25 Draft Budget: an assessment*, January 2022 provides useful clarification on the average impact of the 2% baseline cuts as a percentage of the baseline for each department. This is particularly relevant in explaining the particular pressures that are faced in the context of a Justice budget where policing accounts for three quarters of the total budget allocation.

Chart 1.3 – Change in funding from 2% cut and general allocations



**Extract:** *The NI Executive’s 2022-25 Draft Budget: an assessment, Northern Ireland Fiscal Council, January 2022, Executive Summary Page 9*

Work is well under way to assess the options and potential impact of delivering within the draft allocations but the support of the Board will be critical in securing a settlement which is more sustainable and delivers for communities.

The stark reality is that the proposed draft budget allocation falls significantly short of the funding necessary simply to maintain current numbers or service levels. Year 1 effects will be gradual but whilst we will need to innovatively explore how to improve officer and staff productivity by 2023, policing will look and feel different. If the proposed budget remains unchanged, it will lead to a smaller Police Service, providing more limited services and less able to keep people safe. It will not be possible to find adequate savings without significant reductions in staffing, with up to 1,000 fewer police officers in communities by 2025 and attendant reduction in police staff.

A number of difficult decisions will be required to achieve a balanced budget.



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Our assessment of high level impacts can be summarised as follows:

- A smaller and unrecognisable Police Service by 2025;
- The Police Service will, by necessity, be less visible, less accessible and less responsive, affecting confidence in and support for policing and overall levels of community safety;
- Key services to communities will be impacted, with difficult decisions to be made on the prioritisation of demand in line with available resource and risk assessment. Likely areas of impact include historic offending, response to non-crime incidents, serious crime investigations and proactive operations.
- Over the same period, it is anticipated that there will be a growth in crime impacting the most vulnerable, e.g. child sexual exploitation, cybercrime and domestic offending.
- Our ability to keep pace with the evolving scale and complexity of both cybercrime investigations and digital forensic obligations will be severely impacted. Current service delivery models could not be sustained.
- Policing currently supplements core health and mental health services. Our ability to sustain this support will inevitably be affected.
- An immediate impact on organisational resilience and our plans for much needed modernisation

At this time, the capital budget allocation for policing remains undetermined for future years.

## Covid 'Omicron' Impact

The Covid-19 pandemic continues to create pressures across the wider public sector. The spread of the new Omicron variant throughout December and January has presented challenges for policing. High community transmission rates, increasing demands on the Health Service and rising Covid-19 related deaths made for a challenging winter season.

In December 2021, on the basis of emerging trends and planning assumptions informed by health advice, the decision was taken to implement an emergency 12 hour shift pattern in local and neighbourhood policing roles for a six week period. This was considered a necessary proactive step to protect resourcing, ensure service continuity and secure safe staffing levels in the context of increasing absence rates across a predictably busy operational period.

Faced with our highest absence levels since the beginning of the pandemic, this decision was prudent and has been successful in maintaining normal standards of service delivery. Importantly, Neighbourhood Policing, whilst experiencing some alteration of core hours, was protected. The willingness of our officers, yet again, to adapt to changes at such short notice must be acknowledged, with personal impacts to family life over the Christmas period being an unavoidable consequence. To mitigate the continued impact on individuals, teams and to minimise associated financial costs, an early exit plan from this emergency shift pattern is in place, with our current planning assumption that normal working arrangements will resume by the end February 2022, at the latest.

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## Service Modernisation

### Working in Smarter more Intelligent Ways

2022 will see us working in smarter and more intelligent ways, to cut bureaucracy, speed up what we do and improve our service to the public.

As part of our Digital Strategy, and following a successful pilot of Panasonic 'Rugged Toughbook' Laptops, the rollout of approximately 4,000 Rugged Laptops to Constables and Sergeants in frontline operational roles began in January and will be complete by the end of the financial year. Officers in local policing, neighbourhood policing, tactical support, district support and road policing roles will now have access to operational systems and real-time information 'on the go'.



The design of the Toughbook is robust, compact and versatile, making it ideal for use in challenging operational environments. Officer feedback to date has been excellent, allowing them to stay connected wherever they are.

This investment in mobile technology is a key enabler of our commitment to more visible, accessible and responsive policing, embedded in local communities.



We want to embrace technology to improve how officers can access information to make better, smarter real-time decisions. We want to speed up how we collect and capture evidence and improve our service to victims and witnesses of crime and incidents. Digitalised policing and further investment in technology will make it easier for the public to make contact with the police wherever they are in the country and enable us to make better use of digital intelligence and evidence.

## During the initial pilot of 500 rugged laptops across our organisation last year:

**63%**

of officers participating in the pilot said they did not need to return to the station when previously they would have

Many officers were able to patrol up to

**1 Hour**

Extra per shift

**82%**

of shifts, officers felt that the laptop increased their connection to the resources required to do their job

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### Our New Operational Uniform

In October 2020, a three month trial was undertaken involving 150 officers in a range of operational roles and locations across the Police Service. Community input was sought by conducting polls on our social media platforms. Internally, officers were consulted and feedback was obtained from key stakeholders, including the Police Federation, the Policing Board and Policing and Community Safety Partnerships. These perspectives informed the development of the new uniform, which will better meet the needs of officers and create a refreshed, more contemporary impression of the Police Service in local communities. This is the first change to our operational 'look' since the formation of the Police Service of Northern Ireland, 20 years ago.

The new uniform defined one of my published 'Chief Constable's Ambitions' addressing concerns from the workforce about their operational equipment. The new uniform is more consistent with work wear in other parts of the UK. More traditional uniform will be retained for ceremonial occasions.

The new uniform will be worn by operational officers and will be visible in communities from Monday 31 January 2022 onwards.



## Operational Focus and Outcomes: December 2021

### During December Your Police Service:



received  
**58,045**  
requests for service



processed  
**1911**  
arrests through custody



prepared  
**2587**  
case files for submission to  
the Public Prosecution Service



travelled  
**1,152,821**  
miles to respond to your calls  
and build safer communities

These figures are provisional and subject to change

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### Operation Season's Greetings

Operation Season's Greetings, the public safety policing operation over the Christmas and New Year period, took place between Friday 26 November 2021 and Sunday 2 January 2022. This high visibility policing operation which was supported by an extensive communication and engagement campaign, focusing on the core themes of:

- Safer streets for shopping and socialising
- Safer roads and public transport
- Safer homes for those at risk of domestic abuse
- Safer businesses
- Violence against women and children

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During Operation Season's Greetings, a focus on male violence against women and girls, saw us increase our presence in nightlife areas and work closely with the hospitality industry. A total of 19,121 safety patrols were conducted around retail premises and night time economy areas and 9,626 patrols at transport hubs, on the public transport network and at park and ride facilities. In addition, 1,046 checks of licensed premises were carried out.

Operation Dealbreaker, the Service operation to tackle the harm caused by illegal drugs and illicit prescription medication, continued throughout Operation Season's Greetings and resulted in 2,253 searches, 260 arrests and 726 drugs seizures. Drugs with an estimated value of £5.8m were removed from our streets.

### During Operation Season's Greetings 2021, your Police Service:

**Conducted 28,747  
safety patrols**

**Made 1046 checks  
of licensed premises**

**Arrested 260 people for drugs offences**

**OP DEALBREAKER**

**Removed drugs with an estimated  
value of £5.8 million from our streets**



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## Domestic Abuse

Domestic Abuse is an ongoing, long-term issue which accounts for a significant and increasing proportion of overall crime across the whole of Northern Ireland. It is a key policing priority for us in line with the objectives of the Policing Plan 2020-25.

As a central aspect of Operation Season's Greetings, we launched a Domestic Abuse campaign on 15 December 2021, to increase awareness and actively encourage reporting over the festive period.

**Not everyone will be in a safe home this Christmas.**

**Last year on Christmas Day, we received 111 reports of domestic abuse.**

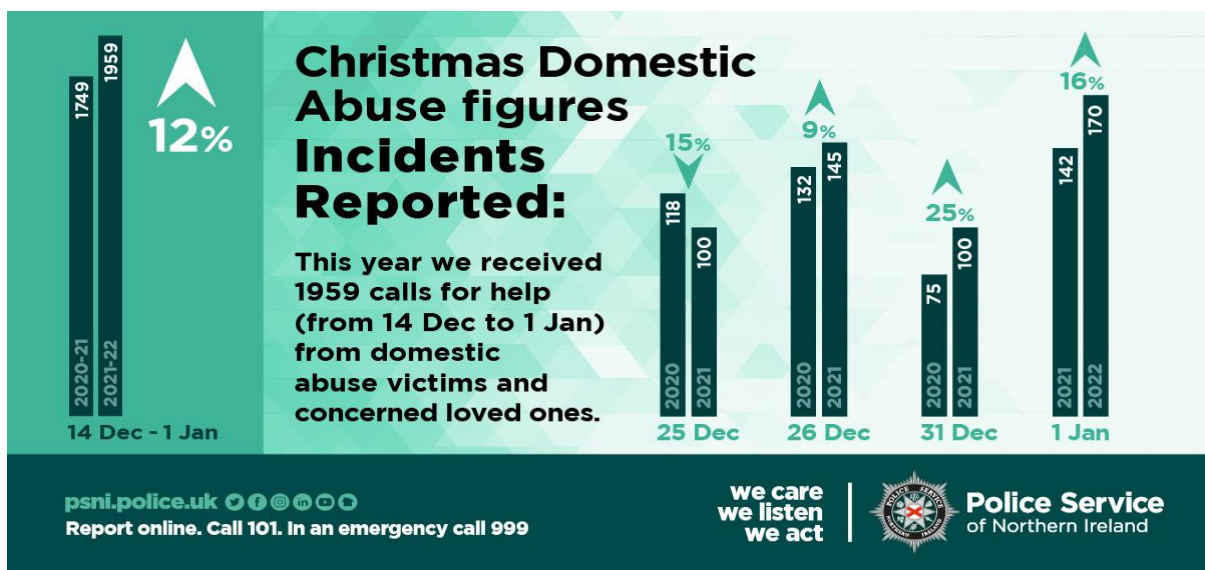
If you or someone you know is suffering, please contact police on the non-emergency 101 number or 999 in an emergency.

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The poster features a stylized illustration of a person's head with a tangled mess of lines representing thoughts or stress, and hands reaching towards the head, symbolizing support and intervention.

From 14 December 2021 to 1 January 2022, we received 1,959 calls for help, an increase of 12 percent compared to the same period the year before.





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The focus of the Domestic Abuse campaign was on visible and accessible communication of this messaging across various channels including local media and online.

New social media messaging and graphics were also created to raise awareness of this priority issue, with a reach on Twitter accessing 108,540 people and on Facebook of 47,957 people.



## The Domestic Abuse & Civil Proceedings Act 2021

The Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceedings Act (NI) 2021 is due to go live on 21 February 2022. The Act itself will create a new domestic abuse offence for Northern Ireland, which will criminalise abusive behaviour. The Police Service is on track to be operationally ready for this having designed and delivered up to date training across the service and updating systems to record crimes and incidents of this nature.

The four training modules provided for officers and staff align to the new legislation and enhance our service response.

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Training will support officers and staff on the prevention, investigation and prosecution of domestic abuse crimes. The four modules will build on existing knowledge of the various forms of physical and non-physical domestic abuse and also the strategies that are available within the service to improve outcomes for victims



*Officers from the Police College and Public Protection Branch, who were involved in the design and delivery of training.*

Initial training focus has been on first responders in local and neighbourhood policing roles. To date, over 4,646 officers and staff have been trained in the first module, which focuses on coercive control. Over 2,184 officers and staff have now also been trained in the second phase of training, which covers the remaining modules. Encouragingly, proactive completion of training has also been noted in Crime and Operational Support Departments with 194 officers/staff in Road Policing and Tactical Support roles and 616 people performing roles in Crime Department completing training.

Whilst the value of such legislative development is undisputed, it is important to acknowledge the associated financial impact of this and other impending legislative changes. The cost of initial and refresher training for the Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceedings Act alone, will amount to £1m over a three year period. Alongside an additional £1m accrual, to date, on IT and costs associated with salary, the result is a £2m total cost over a three year period.

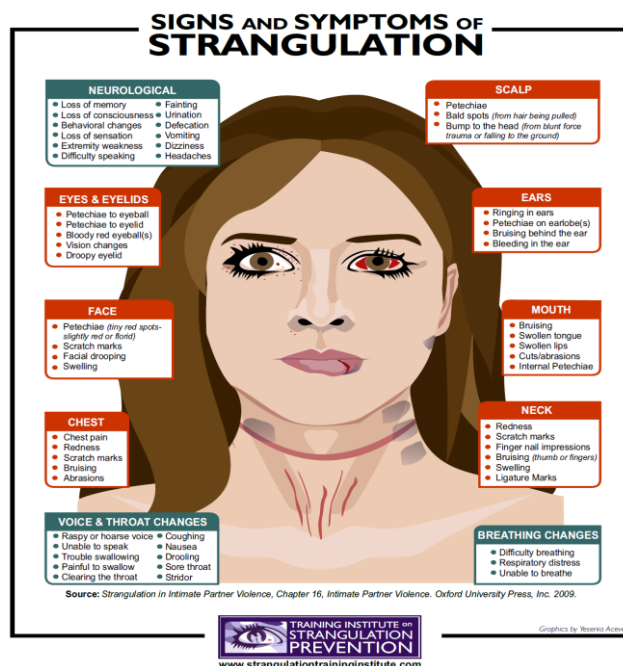
## Strangulation Offences

As part of a number of new legislative changes to support victims of domestic abuse in 2022, anticipated changes to strangulation offences will remove the requirement to show conditional intention to commit another indictable offence. The Police Service is working alongside Department of Justice and other partner agencies in anticipation of the implementation of a new offence of non-fatal strangulation.

This is an important development. Research shows that a victim of strangulation is seven times more likely to become a victim of homicide at the hands of the same partner.

Our Police Service lead has commenced a programme of training with Alliance for Hope International and the Training Institute for Strangulation Prevention which has highlighted the substantial short and long term medical and psychological implications of strangulation on victims. Work is ongoing with colleagues from Health and Social Care Trusts and the Ambulance Service to develop a Joint Protocol for dealing with reports of strangulation.

Initial learning has been proactively shared with the wider organisation to recognise that there are a high number of cases where there has been a positive response from victims when they are asked about strangulation/choking incidents within risk assessment processes even in cases where there are no visible injuries present. Learning shared also highlighted how to capture best evidence from the initial call, with body worn video, the statement and the scene.



## Domestic and Sexual Abuse Advocates

The development of a new advocacy service for victims of domestic and sexual abuse was launched in September 2021, as outlined in the Accountability Report to the Board in October 2021.

This partnership service aims to ensure that victims of domestic and sexual abuse are safe, informed and supported throughout their involvement with the criminal justice system.

Single point of contacts within Public Protection Branch, Local Policing, Custody and Contact Management roles were appointed in December 2021, ensuring 24/7 support and advice is available to those dealings with incidents of this nature.

Domestic Abuse Champions training sessions for Detective Sergeants and Detective Inspectors in Public Protection Branch roles also started in December 2021. Training will continue throughout January and February 2022.

To date, 240 officers have been trained and are in role to support this service.

## Road Safety

Over the year, we have invested in new fleet and technology to help improve road safety enforcement. Road Policing vehicles are now all equipped with ANPR, camera recording and speed detection capability as standard features, improving radically on the position a few years ago.

Tragically, nine people lost their lives on our roads during the month of December 2021. The total number of recorded road deaths in 2021 was 50. While this figure is down six from the previous year, it is an area of key importance to us and a policing priority as we continue to work proactively to reduce the number of incidents of serious injury or deaths on our roads through our Road Safety Strategy and meaningful engagement through our designated Strategy.

We look forward to the development of the outcomes-based Road Safety Strategy which opened for public consultation in November 2021. A whole system approach to safe road use is proposed and will shape the development of our service response.



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### Road Safety Week

During Road Safety Week, from 15 to 21 November 2021, the Police Service with road safety partners from the Department of Infrastructure, the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service and the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service worked to raise awareness of our personal responsibility to behave appropriately, every day, on every journey.



*Temporary Assistant Chief Constable Sam Donaldson, pictured with Infrastructure Minister Nichola Mallon and partners Rosie Byrne, Director of Operations Northern Ireland Ambulance Service and Paddy Gallagher, Assistant Chief Officer Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Services during the launch of Road Safety Week*

During Road Safety Week, there was a focus on careless driving, due to the fact that 40% of all motoring offences in Northern Ireland relate to careless driving. The aim was to reduce road deaths and injury by increasing driver awareness of the impact and potential consequences of careless driving.

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### Safer Roads

Proactive and preventative policing activity during Operation Season's Greetings over the Christmas and New Year period focused on the 'fatal four' areas that could impact on someone's driving.



Driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs is one of the main causes of people being killed or seriously injured on our roads. As part of our commitment to safer roads, in the month of December 2021 alone, officers carried out a total of almost 7,000 preliminary breath tests. This resulted in 295 people being arrested for drink/drug driving offences, representing a 5.4% increase from the same period last year.

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### Safer Transport Team

In line with the vision of the Policing Plan 2025, is the need to ensure joint partnership working to solve local policing issues. The Safer Transport team which was launched in late 2020 was busy over the festive period working in collaboration with Translink and local neighbourhood teams to provide a visible presence to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour at public transport hubs and on-board trains and buses and to ensure people felt safe and were able to socialise safely. Officers travelled on trains and buses, listening to concerns, responding to any suspicious activity and provided support to vulnerable people, helping to maintain a safe public transport network.



Following a successful pilot of the Safe Transport Team, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed by both Translink and the Police Service in January 2022. This has formalised the funding arrangements by Translink for a team of one Sergeant and six Constables.



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### Recognition Awards

We are proud to highlight the long-term dedication and success of colleagues working within the area of Road Policing in Operational Support Department.

In November 2021, at the Northern Ireland Road Safety Awards 2021 Constable Trevor Kirk (Road Policing, Enniskillen) and Inspector Rosie Leech (Road Policing Unit) were formally acknowledged for their contribution to road safety. Constable Kirk won the Emergency Services Award for his work on the Bike-Safe initiative and Inspector Rosie Leech won the Lifetime Achievement Award.



*Inspector Rosie Leech being presented with a Lifetime Achievement Award by Caroline Hobson from the Department for Infrastructure at the Road Safety Awards 2021.*

## Fixed Penalty Processing Centre

The Police Service processes speeding detections which arise from road safety vans and police officer patrolling through the Fixed Penalty Processing Centre. Every road traffic detection will result in a range of potential criminal justice outcomes, to include a fixed penalty notice, attendance at a speed awareness course or prosecution file.

An issue relating to backlogs in the Fixed Penalty Processing Centre has recently been escalated to the Service Executive Team. In the 2021 calendar year, 46,000 speed enforcement detections were processed through the Centre. It has now been confirmed that 799 detections made by road safety vans, around 1.7% of the total detections in 2021, have been cancelled as they were unable to be processed within the required six month timeframe.

The Centre is resourced almost entirely under managed service contract, currently provided by G4S, under Police Service management. This arrangement has been in place since November 2012 and is kept under regular review. Oversight of the function is provided via the Northern Ireland Road Safety Partnership, a body which is chaired by the Assistant Chief Constable for Operational Support Department and includes representatives from the Department of Justice, the Department for Infrastructure and the Court Service.

A collaborative plan has been developed by the Police Service and the managed service contractor, G4S, to ensure that immediate mitigation is in place to address backlogs. This has resulted in increased resources being allocated to the Centre, a review of existing processes to maximise efficiency and, importantly, improved performance. This will include due accountability of the third party provider. A Gold Coordinating Group has been established to take this work forward as a matter of priority under the leadership of Chief Superintendent Sam Donaldson.

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## Neighbourhood Policing Week

Neighbourhood policing is at the heart of the service we deliver in every community and we are proud to have increased our neighbourhood teams and to embed a neighbourhood policing ethos which results in a visible, accessible and responsive service in communities.

During January, National Neighbourhood Policing Week provided an opportunity to recognise and celebrate the vital contribution that neighbourhood policing makes to building safe and engaged communities.



Local Neighbourhood Teams are successful in removing drugs from our streets and bringing those responsible before the courts, tackling organised crime, reducing anti-social behaviour and making our roads safer. They also provide much needed support to some of the more vulnerable members of our society including victims of domestic abuse and those who are targeted by scammers. Their work, alongside colleagues in other roles and specialisms is helping to build safe and thriving communities that have confidence in their police service.

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A dedicated social media campaign was used to thank our neighbourhood officers for the work they undertake on a daily basis to prevent and detect crime in their communities, to build strong and productive relationships and to create a culture of visible, accessible and responsive policing.

Neighbourhood Policing Teams across Northern Ireland took the opportunity to proudly showcase their work and partnerships. Facebook posts by Neighbourhood Teams across Policing Districts reached an impressive total of 2,629,852 people across communities, with 109,435 direct engagements on this locally focused content, posted directly by locally embedded officers.

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