



**Police Service**  
of Northern Ireland

# Chief Constable's Accountability Report

to Northern Ireland  
Policing Board

Report Date:

Covering Period of 23<sup>rd</sup> October  
2024 to 28<sup>th</sup> November 2024

Presented at Policing Board  
Meeting:

5<sup>th</sup> December 2024



**we care  
we listen  
we act**

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# Foreword

I begin my final report of 2024 with the welcome news that the Justice Minister has allocated £36.7m of additional funding to PSNI. This provides overdue financial certainty and will enable us to close the remaining funding gap for this year. I am particularly pleased that this announcement will enable progress to be made on this year's outstanding pay awards. I thank the Minister for her decision to prioritise support for policing during this Monitoring Round.

In a similar vein, I was heartened by the Minister's support during the NI Assembly and her statement of shared ambition to recover police officer and staff numbers. I very much welcome her backing of the case to be made to the Department of Finance to secure additional funding. We have formally submitted our Workforce Recovery Plan to recover officer and staff numbers to 7,000 and 2,572 respectively over the next three years to the Department of Justice. I look forward to working with the Minister to implement and quickly realise the benefits of this plan.

It is with some professional envy that I observe the burgeoning funding of An Garda Síochána, uplifted by 27% since 2020, and their planned recruitment of up to 1,000 Gardaí and 150 Garda staff, along with their increasing ability to invest in their workforce, technology and infrastructure. It is noteworthy that in the run up to Ireland's general election, each of the main political parties made explicit, and impressive, commitments to increase investment in policing and recruitment of Gardaí. This security of sufficient, sustainable funding and widespread support for policing, is something that I long to see replicated for PSNI. As welcome as the additional in-year funding has been, the recent three year budget planning exercise has highlighted we are facing further fiscal

pressures of over £100m in 2025/26. Receiving an opening budget that accounts for these identified pressures will provide the necessary financial stabilisation going forward and end the cycle of uncertainty that comes with having to rely on in-year funding.

We continue with our programme of recruitment and during November welcomed another 34 Student Officers into the Police College, alongside police staff appointments for Call Handlers, Custody Detention Officers and ICT Apprentices. I have laid out my commitment to stabilising the organisation through increasing police officer and police staff numbers. As such, I am pleased to advise that we are preparing to launch our new Student Officer Recruitment campaign in January 2025. We will be undertaking a range of outreach and engagement activities in the coming weeks to encourage people from all communities, particularly those currently under-represented within the Service, to apply for a career in policing. We also plan to launch our next Call Handler competition in January 2025.

2024 has been a challenging year in many ways. The challenges and pressures faced by PSNI as an organisation are directly, and acutely, felt by officers and staff on the frontline. As I have said many times, and make no apologies for repeating again here, the response of the PSNI workforce has been nothing short of remarkable. Day in and day out officers and staff step forward on behalf of the people of Northern Ireland. Sadly, we have witnessed 14 murders take place this year, however, the dedicated efforts of detectives has ensured that each has resulted in persons being charged to Court or reported to the Public Prosecution Service.

Arrests have been made and persons charged in connection with Terrorism related offences. Explosives and firearms have been recovered and over £10m worth of controlled drugs removed from our communities, with supply networks targeted and disrupted. We have relaunched our first Tackling Violence against Women and Girls Action Plan and continue to work hard to ensure that women and girls can live their life free from fear, intimidation and harassment. The disgraceful hate related disorder of the summer saw the best of the Police Service as we stood firm in support of our ethnic minority communities. Behind this sits all of the excellent work involved in maximising the efficient use of the Police Estate and IT and collaborative efforts with partners, stakeholders and communities to ensure the delivery of an efficient and effective, value for money Police Service. Work of this scope and scale can only be carried out by dedicated, professional people of the highest calibre. My report this month provides a snapshot of the fantastic work that has taken place this year.

November saw the launch of a number of important campaigns to underpin public safety. As part of Road Safety Week, we focused on the impact of serious collisions on victims, their families, first responders and investigating officers. Utilising a wide range of social media messaging and supported by the delivery of our hard-hitting Road Safety Road Show, we continued with our appeal for road users to remember the 'Fatal Five' - Don't drink or take drugs and drive; slow down; don't be careless; always wear your seat belt and never use your mobile phone whilst driving - outlining the devastating consequences failing to follow these rules can have.

Once again this year we have supported the international campaign '16 Days of Action' against Gender-based Violence. Further information on our approach to tackling Violence Against Women and Girls can be

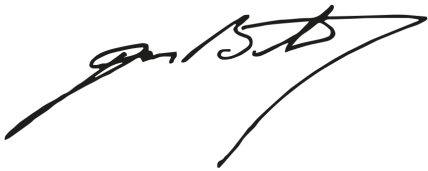
found on our website: [Tackling Violence Against Women And Girls | PSNI](#)

With Christmas just around the corner, we have launched our annual policing operation "Seasons Greetings". Focusing on public safety across a range of priorities, including roads, shopping destinations, nightlife and public spaces, public transport and Violence Against Women and Girls, the public will see a heightened visible police presence at key locations across Northern Ireland. My overarching message to the public is that we are here for you. If you are out and about speak and engage with my officers, especially if you feel unsafe or need help, these wonderful people will support and take care of you.

Finally, I want to congratulate Bobby Singleton on his appointment as the next Deputy Chief Constable of the PSNI and welcome him to his new role. Bobby is dedicated to policing in Northern Ireland and he brings a wealth of knowledge, skill, leadership and experience to the job. He is already a key member of our leadership team and like myself, understands the importance and responsibility that comes with the role and what a privilege it is to be a part of this organisation. I also want to take the opportunity to pay tribute to former Deputy Chief Constable Mark Hamilton, who retires from policing later this year. Mark has spent 30 years of his life working to make the people of Northern Ireland safe. I wish him well for his retirement. Additionally, I want to thank Chris Todd for undertaking the role as my Temporary Deputy Chief Constable for the past 12 months. Chris's support has been invaluable to me and the entire team. His leadership through a number of key challenges, especially the data breach, in the past year has been exceptional. It is great news for the PSNI and for Northern Ireland that Chris will remain a key member of the

Service Executive Team working with Bobby and I, and the rest of the team. We are fortunate to have such outstanding people throughout this organisation

As 2024 draws to a close, I am sure the Board will agree that the PSNI has demonstrated astounding levels of resilience in the face of unprecedented financial challenges this year. I would like to place on record my thanks to the Board for their support throughout. I value the strong and transparent relationship that exists and look forward to building on this in the year ahead.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jon Boutcher', with a stylized flourish extending from the end.

Jon Boutcher QPM

Chief Constable

Police Service of Northern Ireland

# Finance and Resource Update

## Service Operating Model

In the face of significant financial challenges, and following two years of rigorous vacancy control measures, the 'As-Is' operating model for PSNI is no longer sustainable.

Where it has been affordable and possible, efforts have been made to implement some evidence based digital and service transformation changes to deliver longer term modernisation, but the stark reality of our budget deficit has resulted in pressure expressed across all areas of the organisation.

While the Chief Constable and Service Executive Team are committed to securing the necessary budget and resources to support colleagues in the future, there is a need for a critical review of our current operating model and to make necessary changes to stabilise our service.

This Service Operating Model program has been established to provide the Chief Constable with assurance that we are making the best use of all the resources we currently have, as well as to identify areas for change

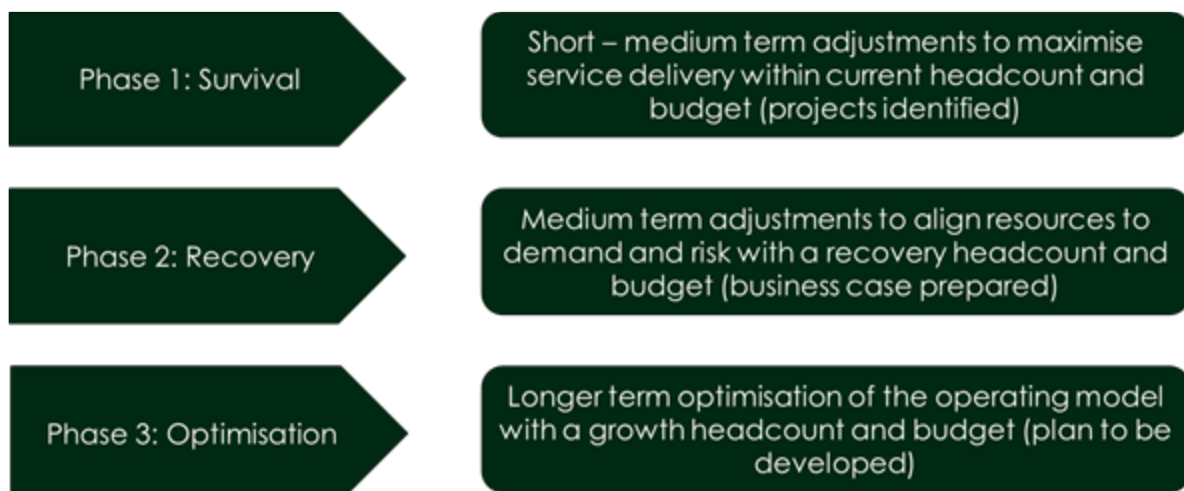
and where investment will have greatest impact. Our collective focus is on identifying opportunities for continuous improvement, specifically targeting elements which aim to increase productivity, optimise resource alignment, reduce demand, improve efficiency and effectiveness and reduce costs.

To develop the program, a detailed exercise has been progressed to identify where our resources are, what tasks they are performing, how that activity aligns with our corporate priorities and what pressures and risks the current model is experiencing.

This has helped to identify a range of opportunities which can be used to improve the current model. These opportunities have now been approved, and work has commenced to develop the program to deliver the changes.

With depleted resources, the Service's capacity to drive largescale change is constrained. As a consequence the SOM program will be prioritised and delivered on a phased basis, with oversight by the Service Transformation Board.

**The project will be progressed in three broad phases namely:**



# Our Performance

*The information in this section is extracted from our Official Statistics published reports. The full reports can all be accessed from the following link.*

<https://www.psni.police.uk/about-us/our-publications-and-reports/official-statistics>.

*These are in-year provisional figures and may be subject to change.*

## Recorded Crime

In the 12 months from 1<sup>st</sup> November 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2024:

- There were 97,346 crimes recorded, a decrease of 11,694 (-10.7%) on the previous 12 months.
- There were 51 police recorded crimes per 1,000 population<sup>1</sup> in the 12 months November 2023 to October 2024 compared with 57 in the previous 12 months.
- All policing districts experienced a lower level of crime and when compared with the previous year, crime levels have been lower in all of the months since November 2023.

## Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

In the 12 months from 1<sup>st</sup> November 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2024:

- There were 43,852 ASB incidents, a decrease of 2,301 (-5.0%) on the previous 12 months.
- All policing districts, with the exception of Belfast City, experienced lower levels of anti-social behaviour.

- The latest month (October 2024) was 42 incidents higher than September 2024. October levels have been higher than those for September in each year since the data series began in 2006/07, with the exception of October 2014.

## Domestic Abuse

In the 12 months from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2023 to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2024:

- There were 31,043 domestic abuse **incidents** recorded, showing a decrease of 2,160 (-6.5%) on the previous 12 months.
- The number of domestic abuse **crimes** recorded fell to 18,754, a decrease of 2,507 (-11.8%) on the previous 12 months.
- There were 16 domestic abuse incidents and 10 domestic abuse crimes per 1,000 population<sup>2</sup>, compared with 17 domestic abuse incidents and 11 domestic abuse crimes recorded during the previous 12 months.
- Levels fell across all major offence classifications.
- The largest volume decrease in domestic abuse crimes was seen within Violence against the person which showed a fall of 2,070 (-12%). Violence with injury fell by 345 (-6.9%) and Violence without injury fell by 959 (-13%). While Violence without injury showed the largest volume decrease, Stalking and harassment showed the largest percentage decrease of -17.2% (-766 crimes).

<sup>1</sup> Crime per 1,000 population based on mid-year population estimate of 1,920,382 for 2023, the latest mid-year estimate available at time of compilation. Mid-year population estimates are available from the NISRA website (opens in a new window).

<sup>2</sup> Crime per 1,000 population based on mid-year population estimate of 1,920,382 for 2023, the latest mid-year estimate available at time of compilation. Mid-year population estimates are available from the NISRA website (opens in a new window).



- Changes in recording practice have had an impact on levels, particularly in respect of malicious communications offences, with fewer such offences required to be recorded. In the 12 months ending 30<sup>th</sup> September 2024 there were 374 Malicious Communications offences, compared with 888 in the previous 12 months.
- Ten of the eleven policing districts showed a decrease in the number of domestic abuse incidents and all eleven policing districts showed a decrease in the number of domestic abuse crimes.

### **Domestic abuse homicide**

In the 12 months from 1<sup>st</sup> November 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2024 there were six homicides with a recorded domestic abuse motivation compared with five homicides in the previous 12 months<sup>1</sup>. Five of the victims were female and one was male, compared with three female and two male victims during the previous 12 months.

### **Hate Motivation**

In the 12 months from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2023 to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2024:

- The number of incidents recorded fell across four of the six hate motivations (sexual orientation, sectarian, disability and transgender identity) when compared with the previous 12 months.
- The number of incidents with a race motivation reached the highest 12 month level since the recording of these motivations began in 2004/05.
- The number of crimes recorded decreased across four of the six motivations (sexual orientation, sectarian, disability and transgender identity) when compared with the previous 12 months.
- The number of crimes with a race motivation reached the highest 12 month level since the recording of these motivations began in 2004/05.
- Incidents and crimes with a faith/religion motivation showed the largest percentage increases (131% more faith/religion incidents and 134% more faith/religion crimes).
- Incidents and crimes with a sectarian motivation showed the largest decrease, with 176 fewer incidents and 207 fewer crimes.

### **Security Situation**

In 12 months from 1<sup>st</sup> November 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2024:

- There was one security related death, compared to none during the previous 12 months.
- There were fewer shootings, bombings and paramilitary style attacks than during the previous 12 months.
- There were 5 bombing incidents, compared to 8 during the previous 12 months and 16 shooting incidents, compared to 36.
- There were 22 casualties of paramilitary style assaults, compared to 29 during the previous 12 months. The greatest number of assaults occurred in Belfast (6). Of the 22 casualties, one was under 18 years old.
- There were five casualties of paramilitary style shootings, compared to 19 during the previous 12 months. Ards and North Down

<sup>1</sup> Homicide consists of the offences of murder, manslaughter, infanticide and corporate manslaughter.



and Causeway Coast and Glens each experienced two such attacks while Derry City and Strabane experienced one. All 5 casualties were aged 18 years or older.

- There were 71 security related arrests under Section 41 of the Terrorism Act 2000, compared to 123 during the previous 12 months.
- Nine persons were subsequently charged, compared to 27 during the previous 12 months.
- **Finds of Firearms, Explosives and Ammunition;** *these refer to the seizure or recovery of all illegal firearms, ammunition, explosives, rocket/mortar launchers, detonators and bomb making material/equipment. Replica/blank firing firearms, petrol bombs and petrol bomb making materials, grenades and munitions from World War 1 or World War 2 found on the beach or in attics etc. are not recorded as finds.*

### Firearms Finds

There were 11 firearms found during the past 12 months, compared to 25 during the previous 12 months.

### Explosive Finds

There were 0.83kg of explosives found during the past 12 months compared to 3.08kg during the previous 12 months. There were 2.29kg of explosives found in September 2023, the most found in a month since June 2020.

### Ammunition Finds

There were 439 rounds of ammunition found during the past 12 months compared to 877 rounds found in the previous 12 months.

## Stop and Search

During the 12 months between 1<sup>st</sup> October 2023 and 30<sup>th</sup> September 2024:

- 20,796 persons were stopped and searched/questioned, 20% fewer than the previous 12 months.
- 71% of stops were conducted under the Misuse of Drugs Act\* and 13% of stops were conducted under the Police and Criminal Evidence Order\*.
- 12% of stops were conducted under the Justice and Security Act Section 24\* and 2% under the Justice and Security Act Section 21\*.
- There was a decrease in the use of all powers, except the Terrorism Act, compared to the previous 12 months. In particular, the use of the Justice and Security Act\* decreased by 44% (from 5,354 to 2,990) and the use of Misuse of Drugs Act\* by 17% (from 17,878 to 14,784). Use of the Police and Criminal Evidence Order, the Firearms Order and other less frequently used powers also decreased, albeit by smaller amounts. Conversely, the use of the Terrorism Act\* increased by 84% (from 299 to 551).
- 23% of stops resulted in some form of outcome. The arrest rate was 8%, compared to 6% in the previous 12 months.
- All 11 police districts carried out fewer stops than the previous 12 months.
- 8% (1,763) of those stopped were aged 17 and under. Of these, approximately 2 out of every 3 (64%) were stopped and searched under the Misuse of Drugs Act\*.
- 84% of those stopped were male, while 37% were aged 18 to 25.
- There were 11 persons stopped for every 1,000 people in Northern Ireland.

\* alone or in combination with other powers.



## Motoring Offences

In the 12 months from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2023 to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2024:

- There were 35,761 detections for motoring offences in Northern Ireland, of which 97% were dealt with by means of a fixed penalty notice or referral for prosecution.
- The remaining 3% (1,127) resulted in the completion of a speed awareness or safer driver course.
- Total detections decreased by 16% on the 42,417 detections recorded in the previous 12 months, with a notable reduction of 1,257 (17%) in insurance offences, as well as speeding which was down by 931 (15%).
- Only one of the 19 offence groups showed an increase in detections over the year.
- The largest offence group was insurance offences with 6,231 which along with speeding (5,140) accounted almost one-third of the total detections.
- The highest speed detected by PSNI officers in the latest 12 months was 149mph, on the M2 Foreshore, Belfast.

*This report provides statistics on the number of motoring offences detected by police in Northern Ireland from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2023 – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2024. It does not include any detections by the NI Road Safety Partnership (NI RSP). It presents the most recent motoring offence statistics based on figures extracted on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2024.*



# Outcome 1: Victim Focused

## Crime Department

### Organised Crime Branch

#### Investigation

- On 29<sup>th</sup> October 2024, detectives conducted a search of a house in the Ballykinlar area and recovered suspected cocaine with an estimated street value of £100,000, suspected cannabis with a street value of approximately £15,000 and £45,000 in cash. A man has been arrested on suspicion of a number of drug related offences and possession of criminal property.

#### Court Outcome

- On 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2024, a man was sentenced to two years and three months for drug related offences and two years for Immigration offences – half to be served in custody and half on licence.

This was the outcome of an investigation in 2018 that led to the recovery of cannabis with a value of over £2m.

- On Friday 25<sup>th</sup> October 2024, two Belfast men and a man from England received custodial sentences of 45 months, six years and three years respectively, for drug related offences. This followed the recovery of 32kg of herbal cannabis, 7kg of cocaine and 5kg of ketamine at Larne Port in December 2021.

### Modern Slavery Human Trafficking

On 1<sup>st</sup> November 2024, two men and a woman were arrested on suspicion of offences including brothel keeping and controlling prostitution, following the search at a property in the Annadale Embankment area of South

Belfast. Two women believed to have been victims of human trafficking were located and are receiving the appropriate support. A sum of cash was also seized. During a follow up search of a property in the Newtownards Road area, three suspected firearms were recovered. Enquiries are continuing.

### Cyber Crime

On 18<sup>th</sup> October 2024, a 25-year-old man was sentenced to a period of 16 months in prison suspended for four years, and subjected to a Serious Crime Prevention Order (SCPO) for three years, having previously pleaded guilty to six counts under the Computer Misuse Act and one count under the Fraud Act.

This referred to a large-scale credential stuffing attack against a multi-international sports brand company during April 2020 that resulted in the compromise of 277,000 user accounts.

### Public Protection Branch

Public Protection Branch have led on the delivery of the 'As One Programme', facilitated by Graham Goulden, a leadership and violence prevention educator. During November almost 500 leaders within the Service have attended an online webinar aimed at starting conversations on how we further tackle Violence Against Women and Girls. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive with everyone expressing how they feel this will improve their own roles, better equipping them to have those difficult conversations and step in where behaviour is not what it should be.

The next step is the 'train the trainer' sessions which commence in December and will see



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30 of our trainers across Local Policing and Crime Departments upskilled to deliver the 'As One Programme'.

### **Court Outcome**

The trial of the parents of a young child who received significant life changing injuries in November 2019, took place during September and October. The father was convicted for Grievous Bodily Harm with intent and two counts of child cruelty, with the mother convicted for cruelty to children and causing or allowing a child or vulnerable adult to suffer serious physical harm.

Sentencing will take place in December.

Post-trial, the Public Prosecution Service commented positively on the professionalism, commitment and resilience of the investigating officer.

### **Voice to Text Technology**

An in-house 'Voice To Text' transcription service has been developed and is currently being used for Achieving Best Evidence (ABE) interviews with victims and witnesses and with assisting officers in preparing court interview summaries. Feedback from the 'soft launch' is extremely positive with significant time savings being made. As a Service we will seek to exploit the full benefits of this technology and continue to streamline our transcription services.

# Outcome 2: Community Focused

## Season's Greetings

Our annual policing operation “Season’s Greetings” has now been launched. It’s primary aim is to align police resources to key locations across Northern Ireland in order to provide a visible, accessible and responsive presence. The objective of this resource alignment is to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour, as well as providing visible reassurance to members of the public and businesses across the traditionally busier Christmas and New Year period. This year the operation will be launched in partnership with Translink and Retail NI.

During this operation officers and staff from across the Service will prioritise patrols in main shopping areas in town and city centres, lively night-life hospitality hotspots and major car parking and transport facilities in order to increase visibility, as well as focusing engagement across the following three themes:

### Safe Shopping



This theme will include visible patrols of key retail locations across Northern Ireland and engagement with key partners to keep people safe as they shop. Alongside this visible reassurance approach, we will be using social media to promote crime prevention measures regarding personal, property and home safety.

## Safe Roads



The primary aim of this theme is keeping people safe on our roads, with specific focus on preventing and detecting motorists who create significant risk by driving while under the influence of drink or drugs. We will make use of Authorised Checkpoint Breath Testing legislation that enables police officers to breath test motorists who are stopped at a road safety checkpoint. As well as the focus on individuals driving under the influence, officers will continue to detect other motoring offences in order to keep our roads safer. This year we have expanded this theme to include those using public transport on our roads. Building on the work on the Safer Transport Teams, other police resources will be tasked to conduct patrols at our key transport hubs across the country.

### Safe Socialising

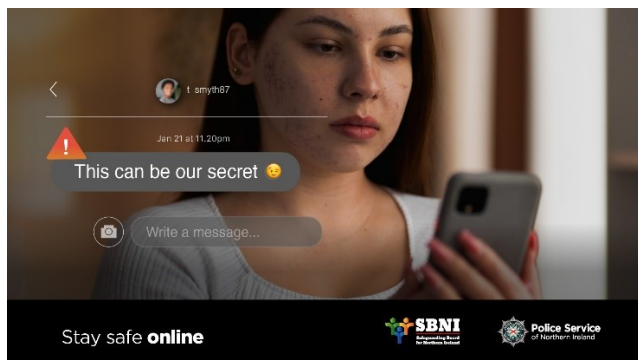
The aim of this theme is to provide a visible presence around night-economy areas across peak times and throughout this traditionally busy period. Not only will this visible presence provide reassurance to the community and deter anti-social behaviour or criminal activity, it will also be aligned to our Violence Against Women and Girls Action Plan, with specific patrols being conducted to identify and intervene on predatory behaviour.

This operation will run until Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2025.



## Online Safety Social Media Campaign

During November and throughout December, we will deliver both organic and paid social media messaging to raise awareness of online safety. Organic content will be shared across District and corporate social media channels, supported by targeted paid advertising to maximise reach and engagement.



Our key messaging will focus on:

- Sextortion
- Online grooming
- Risks associated with young people sharing nudes online



The online space continues to provide significant opportunities for criminals to exploit vulnerabilities. To help the public stay safe online, we encourage everyone to explore the extensive online safety resources available on our website: <https://www.psni.police.uk/staysafeonline>

## 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence

The Global 16 Days Campaign is an international campaign to challenge violence against women and girls and runs every year from 25<sup>th</sup> November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, to 10<sup>th</sup> December.

We will be supporting the campaign with a series of key messages across our social media platforms.

# Outcome 3: Workforce Focused

## Operational Support Department Recognition Ceremony



T/Assistant Chief Constable Melanie Jones

During November, Operational Support Department (OSD) held its first recognition ceremony in the wonderful setting of the Belfast Harbour Commissioners Office.

OSD is a very diverse department that encompasses specialist policing resources such as Tactical Support Group, Road Policing, Armed Response, Close Protection, Police Dogs, Scientific Support Branch, investigation of fatal road traffic accidents, firearms licensing, corporate information and data protection.

The event was an opportunity to recognise the hard work and dedication the OSD workforce show each and every day. Ninety officers and staff attended and received both Chief Constable's and Departmental recognition certificates. Examples of the excellent work recognised included incidents confronting violent armed offenders, preventing suicides, assisting vulnerable members of the public, dealing with fatal road traffic collisions, recovery of human remains, planning and organising successful high profile events, including the US Presidential and Royal visits in 2023, supporting victims of crime and involvement in policing operations tackling organised crime.

We would like to thank our partners at the Harbour Commissioner's and Translink for supporting this important event.

## Dog Training Unit

On 13<sup>th</sup> November 2024, Lady Bathurst, the Chair of the National Foundation of Retired Service Animals visited the new dog training facility at Steeple. During her visit she was provided with a demonstration on the capacity and capability of this valuable resource. In commenting on her visit she said, "I was deeply impressed by the respect and support you all show each other, from senior officers, to the handlers, and the staff, you all work together - it's a precious and rare thing, and to have so many of you, officers and staff, give us so much of your time meant more to me than I can ever describe. It was an absolute privilege to spend the day with you all."

This was followed by an exclusive with the Belfast Telegraph, highlighting the work of our dogs, handlers and training team. It was a source of pride to promote this incredible resource and broaden the public's understanding. Hopefully this has promoted community confidence on the breadth of our dog capability here in Northern Ireland.

## Promotion Processes

We are thrilled with the level interest across our various promotion and selection processes for police officer and police staff, with over 3,000 applications received. This is a tribute to those individuals pursuing promotion and selection within the PSNI. It also demonstrates the enormous effort put in by our HR Internal Resourcing Team and Police College to deliver these processes.

We have recently completed our Chief Inspector process. Our Sergeant and Inspector processes are presently underway, with results expected in Spring 2025. The successful outcomes will assist in providing career progression for police officers and help reduce our reliance on temporary promotions.

As we review this impressive volume of applications, we are delighted with the standard and calibre of the candidates, and we are mindful that we are in the process of selecting first and middle line managers and leaders of the future.

## Student Officer Recruitment



### Campaign Planning

We are preparing to launch the next Student Officer Recruitment campaign on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2025. It is also intended that we will launch our next Call Handler campaign at the same time, to maximise the benefits of our outreach activity and increase traffic to our recruitment website.

Advertising material used within the 2021 Student Officer recruitment campaign has been refreshed in line with research completed with under-represented groups, and will highlight key benefits such as salary, career development opportunities and access to qualifications and training.

Warm-up advertising will start in early January 2025, predominantly via social media, followed by the main advertising campaign across a range of mediums. Online information events in liaison with Minority

Support Associations is planned for January 2025.

Outreach is ongoing and being monitored via our Strategic Communications and Engagement Group. An initial recruitment briefing was completed at the Local Policing Forum in October 2024. Gold structure is in place to focus on organisational and local outreach planning and activity, until the close of the application phase. Recruitment themed REaL events are taking place in November/December 2024 with ethnic minority, LGBTQIA+, Catholic/Republican/Nationalist and Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist communities.



A Review of information on our recruitment website ([www.joinpsni.co.uk](http://www.joinpsni.co.uk)) is currently ongoing, to provide additional detail on the recruitment process to those who are not familiar with policing, particularly with regard to what a career in policing can offer and to include imagery of visible ethnic minority and female role models.

We are currently designing an Initial Selection Test and Assessment Centre phases to reflect current policing priorities and associated skills required, particularly emphasising the need for high standards of integrity.

Anticipated Timelines for 2025 Student Officer Campaign*	
22 <sup>nd</sup> Jan - 12 <sup>th</sup> Feb	Applications Open
19 <sup>th</sup> Feb - 5 <sup>th</sup> Mar	Initial Selection Stage Open
18 <sup>th</sup> Mar - 15 <sup>th</sup> Apr	Evidence Uploader and Shortlisting
29 <sup>th</sup> Apr - mid Jul	Assessment Centres (dependent on number progressing from IST)
Early Aug	Final Merit List to PSNI

(\*timelines will be adjusted according to the final number of applications received)

## Appointments

We have appointed 200 Student Officers in 2024/25 to date. We have also completed 34 offers of appointment for the December 2024 course. We are currently progressing further candidates through the pre-employment stages (Vetting, PCA, Health Assessment, Substance Misuse Test and Online Learning) in order to fill a further three courses in January, February and March 2025 (102 Student Officers).

Overall, it is anticipated that we will appoint 336 Student Officers within 2024/25. Based on forecasted leavers, police officer numbers will be circa 6,343 FTE by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025.

Due to the budgetary position, there have been significant delays in progressing appointments from our 2021 Student Officer Recruitment campaign. In addition, there continues to be a high level of employment within Northern Ireland and therefore an extremely competitive external recruitment market. As a consequence, we have experienced a higher level of withdrawals from this campaign, presently sitting at approximately 30% of those successful within the merit pool and there are currently only 286 candidates remaining within the merit pool. Based on current withdrawal/out of process levels, the numbers remaining will not be sufficient to continue with the current pace of 34 appointments to the Police College every five weeks.

It is anticipated that the final merit list will be completed in August 2025 (dependent on applicant numbers and total progressing to assessment centre phase).

Due to the urgent need to maintain the candidate pipeline, particularly if the Business Case to increase police officer numbers is approved, arrangements have been put in place with our recruitment provider to provide interim merit lists of the top-performing candidates from the assessment centre phase in order to get them through the pre-employment stages promptly.

It is planned to continue with course sizes of 34 for January, February and March 2025 and keep the appointable pool under continuous review. If current withdrawal/out of process trends continue, it may become necessary to reduce course sizes to 25 and potentially skip planned courses in July and August 2025.

# Looking back on 2024

## Performance

In the 12 months from 1<sup>st</sup> November 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2024:

- There were 97,346 crimes recorded, a decrease of 11,694 (-10.7%) when compared with the previous 12 months.
- The level recorded in the latest 12 months is the lowest since lockdown restrictions were in place during 2020 and 2021.
- Each month November 2023 to October 2024 recorded lower levels than the same months in the previous year, with August showing the largest decrease (-15 per cent).
- All policing districts experienced a lower level of crime.

## How Northern Ireland compares to England and Wales

Northern Ireland (NI) has the lowest crime rate when compared with England and Wales (E&W). *(The most recently published comparable figures are for the period July 2023 - June 2024.)*

- **52.5 crimes for every 1,000 people in Northern Ireland.**
- **89.1 crimes for every 1,000 people in England and Wales.**

Crime rates in NI are significantly lower than in E&W\*. This means that people and businesses here are less likely to be a victim of crime.

Figures used are for Financial Year April 2024 - June 2024. They are indicative but not directly comparable.

Sources:

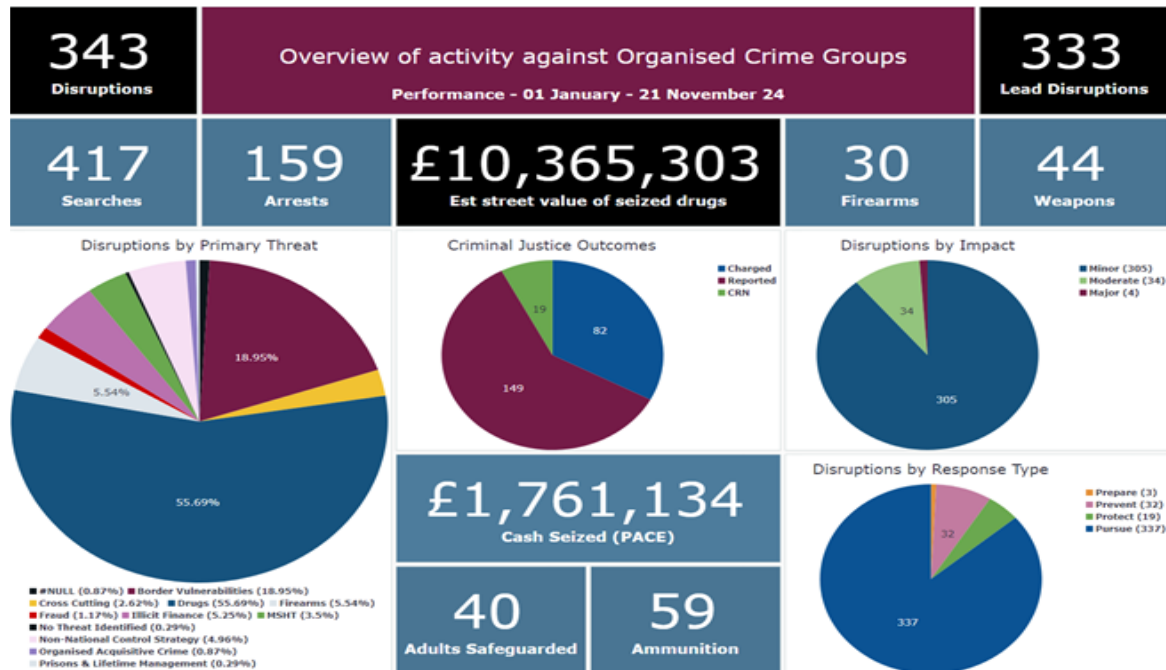
\* NI rate sourced from Recorded Crime Bulletin Period Ending 30<sup>th</sup> June 2024. E&W rate sourced from the Office for National Statistics.



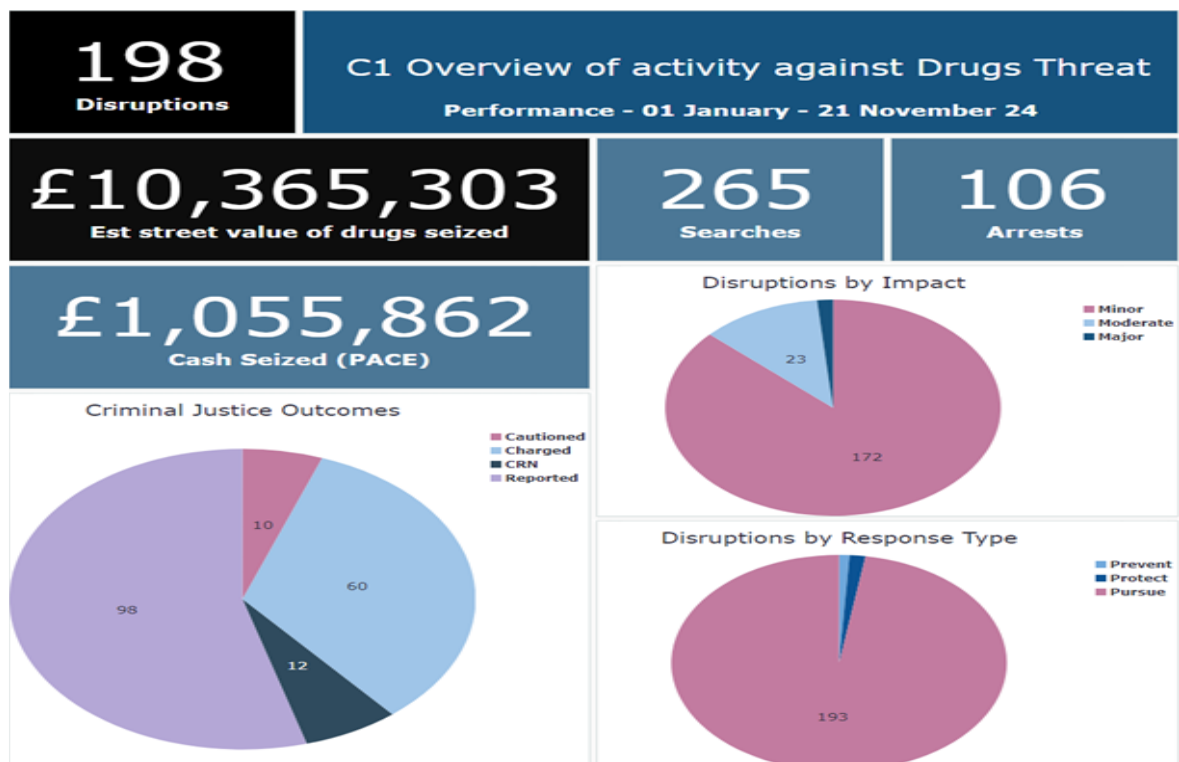
## Crime Department

### Organised Crime Branch

#### Overall Branch Activity



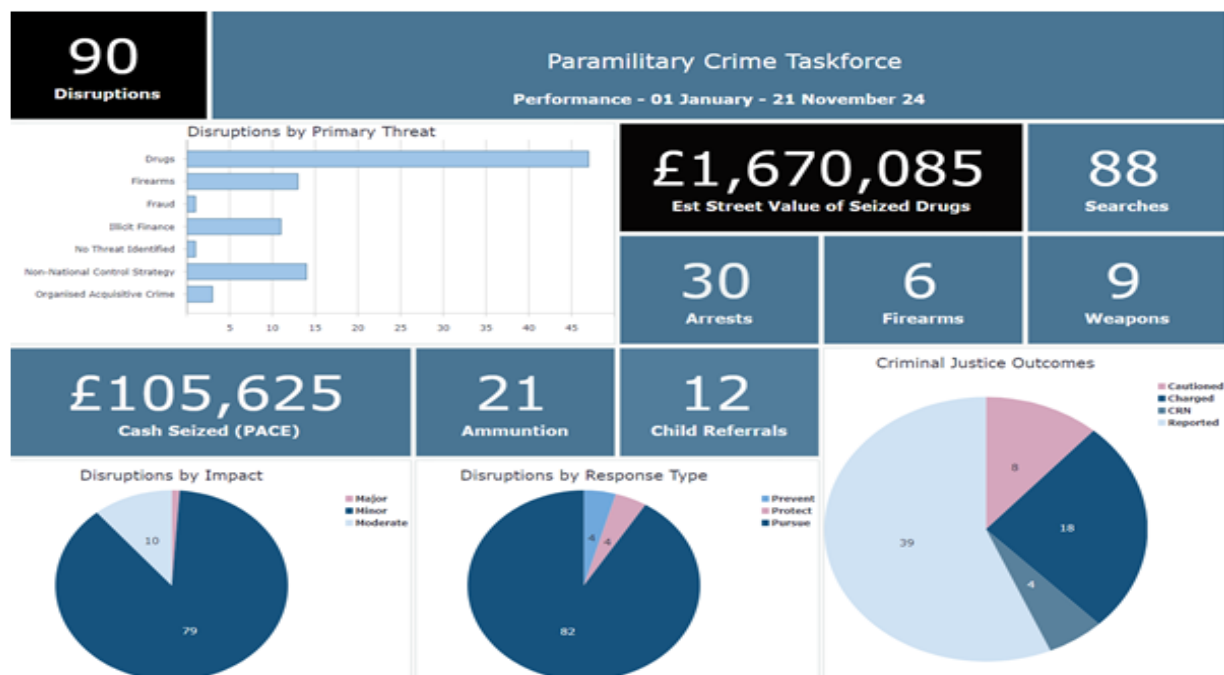
#### Drugs Threat



In the first 10 months of 2024, officers from Organised Crime Branch have seized controlled drugs with an estimated street value of over £10m. These include the significant recovery of cannabis with an estimated street value of £2.1m following searches of properties in the Cookstown and Coalisland in May; £1.5m of cannabis following the identification of a cannabis factory in Belfast and £1.9m of Class A and B controlled drugs in Castledawson also during May.

## Paramilitary Crime Task Force

Our Paramilitary Crime Task Force (PCTF), along with partner organisations, continue to robustly and proactively pursue those who are intent on damaging our communities.



## Significant Operational Highlights include:

- The seizure of an estimated £225,000 of Class A and Class B controlled drugs in Ballymena during February in an investigation into criminality associated with the UDA.
- The recovery in April of an estimated £1.25m worth of cannabis at Belfast Port as part of an investigation into criminality linked to the North West INLA.
- Collaborative working with partners in An Garda Síochána that led to the recovery in September of €30,000, quantities of Class A and B controlled drugs, rifles, handguns, sub machine guns and extensive amounts of ammunition. Linked to the investigation into criminality associated with the INLA in Derry City/Strabane/Donegal this will have provided a significant blow to their capability.

## **Modern Slavery Human Trafficking (MSHTU)**

In August, detectives from MSHTU, supported by Tactical Support Group officers, carried out four searches in an operation focused on the activities of an Organised Crime Group suspected of trafficking Romanian women for the purpose of sexual exploitation. As a result, two female victims were located by officers and safeguarding practices commenced. Three men and a woman were arrested on suspicion of human trafficking for sexual exploitation, controlling prostitution for gain, brothel keeping and money laundering. All four were charged and remanded into custody.

## **Economic Crime Unit**

In March, detectives from Economic Crime Unit supported Paramilitary Crime Task Force investigators by using an Account Freezing Order to freeze four bank accounts containing £41,428 belonging to an individual suspected of being involved in illegal money lending on behalf of West Belfast UDA.

In June, our Assets Confiscation Enforcement Team secured a confiscation order to the value of £72,092 at Londonderry Crown Court. This followed the conviction of a man for the offences of concealing and converting criminal property and entering into an arrangement to acquire criminal property

In September, detectives from the Economic Crime Unit assisted investigators from the Paramilitary Crime Task Force with obtaining an Account Freezing Order to freeze a bank account containing a total of £14,553.71. This was linked to an investigation into criminality associated with the West Belfast UDA.

## **Serious Crime Branch**

### **Major Investigation Team (MIT)**

Sadly, 14 murders have taken place this year. However, through the diligence and professionalism of detectives persons have either been charged to Court or Reported to the Public Prosecution Service in connection with each of these murders.

### **Terrorism Investigation Unit (TIU)**

Detectives have charged two men with a number of offences including preparation of terrorist acts, possessing explosives with intent to endanger life or cause serious damage to property and possessing explosives under suspicious circumstances following searches in conjunction with colleagues in An Garda Síochána in Enniskillen area in July. This relates to the recovery of an explosive device in Co Louth, Ireland.

### **Criminal Investigation Department (CID)**

The serious public disorder that took place during the summer following the tragic murders of Bebe King, Elsie Dot Stancombe and Alice da Silva Aguiar in Southport required a sophisticated and painstaking investigative response. In addition to traditional investigative methods, the investigation team have been innovative in their approach, for example, utilising the Home Office Large & Major Enquiry System (HOLMES) typically used in homicide investigations, to assist with managing the investigation.

Detectives from CID working alongside officers from District Policing continue to progress this investigation, maximising evidential opportunities to ensure that offenders are held to account. To date, 48 people have been arrested and 38 charged



with a range of offences in connection with the disorder.

The following provides a flavour of the range of excellent work carried out by CID throughout the year:

- A man and woman were charged with possession of firearms and ammunition in suspicious circumstances and attempting to make explosives under suspicious circumstances. This followed a search of their home and the recovery of three shotguns, handguns, ammunition, and other items which can be used for making explosives, knives, machetes, crossbows and 25 mobile phones.
- Following a protracted and complex investigation in connection with a series of burglaries across Mid & East Antrim and Newtownabbey & Antrim policing districts, two men have been charged with 54 offences (including burglary, theft and drugs).
- Two Ukrainian nationals have been charged with a number of offences linked to a romance scam involving a vulnerable man (69) who lost approximately £90,000. Further offences have been identified across the UK and abroad and detectives are working with the National Crime Agency and City of London Police to progress these investigations.

## Local Policing

Every day officers from our Local Policing and Neighbourhood Policing Teams go above and beyond as they strive to support communities and keep people safe. Some examples of this include, the magnificent work of officers in Newry, Mourne and Down District in February of this year as they located and saved the life of a suicidal male who had attempted to take his own life; also in February officers in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon District conducting a routine, high visibility and community engagement patrol in the Craigavon area stopped and searched a male who had been acting suspiciously, recovering a handgun and 16 rounds of ammunition. In August, officers received a report from a farmer in the Armagh area who was suffering from the effects of slurry. In responding, officers were able to provide a clear briefing, have machinery turned off and remove the now unconscious farmer to safety. Officers cleared an area for Fire and Ambulance Services and provided initial first aid until specialist medical treatment arrived.

During the period of race related disorder this summer, our Strategic Community Engagement Team (SCET) intensified their engagement with ethnic minority communities from across Northern Ireland building upon relationships that have been forged over recent years. They were able to provide feedback on the policing operation and community tensions. The approach was welcomed by the public at large and significantly, within the Northern Ireland Muslim community, who subsequently expressed their deep gratitude for the actions of Police in keeping their communities and places of worship safe.

One example of the unseen work that took place involved officers and staff from our

Strategic Partnerships and Prevention Branch working with mothers in the local Muslim community to establish a three day summer scheme at Newforge Country Club. This followed comment at a Reference, Engagement and Listening event (REaL) with representatives from the ethnic minority community that the community were afraid to go outside and had been forced to cancel summer schemes for their children. The following is post summer scheme feedback from one of the mothers:

*"I can't express in words how grateful I am for all your efforts. These days have had a huge impact on the children and their families. Over the course of three days, you brought joy and happiness to the hearts of 85 children. The staff was amazing, smiling and cheerful all the time, working with love and dedication. The place was beautiful. Everything helped make this event a success, even the weather, which was amazing and special, unlike usual."*

*I am ready to help you in anything you need and I hope that we will cooperate in everything that helps the Muslim community, especially the children, to help them integrate into society and make them interactive in schools and activities which provide them with a safe and effective environment."*

## Justice Department

Justice Department have worked with partners across the Criminal Justice System to enhance the service to victims and reduce the burden on front-line officers. Over the last year, a number of initiatives have been launched. These include the 'No File Decision' pilot which has removed the need to submit the vast majority of 'no-prosecution' files to the Public Prosecution System (PPS) in cases where a 'no-prosecution' recommendation is made. This has already removed 2,000 files from the wider system, freeing up capacity and enabling officers and

PPS partners to focus on those cases most likely to go to court.

Alongside this, the remit and criteria for Community Resolution Notice disposals has broadened to enable a speedy-justice outcome for a wider range of offences. This is a more proportionate way to deal with lower level offending, delivering swift justice to defendants and concluding the case in a more timely fashion, meeting the needs of victims.

Our digital transformation agenda has continued at pace. We have developed the capability to remotely record statements and use digital statements, freeing up officer time and speeding-up the investigative process in a way that meets the needs of victims. We now possess the capability to remotely attend High Court Bail hearings, saving officer time travelling. In November, a new digital transcription service was launched that uses AI technology to transcribe suspect and Achieving Best Evidence interviews. This service enables the full transcription of these interviews, without the need for an officer or staff member to transcribe. Time savings for investigators are considerable, additional capacity is created and the overall process sped up.

In addition to online reporting, which has resulted in tens of thousands of reports from victims and members of the public thereby increasing our accessibility, Justice Department are launching the 'Online Victim Portal' later this year. This will enable victims of crime to log-on and receive updates on the status of their case and interact and communicate directly with the officer in charge of their case. This is a significant step providing victims the freedom to obtain this information at a date and time of their choosing, as well as reducing the demand

going into contact centres, where it is estimated that 20% of total calls relate to victims seeking updates.

## Operational Support Department

### Road Policing Interceptors

In April 2023 Operational Support Department restructured its Road Policing Unit. This led to the creation of the Road Policing Interceptor (RPI) Teams based in Sprucefield, Enniskillen/Omagh and Maydown.

Since their inception the RPI teams have been involved in numerous successful operations that have led to the detection and arrest of a large number of offenders and the recovery of stolen goods, drugs, cash and vehicles. Via the use of specialist pre-emptive tactics they have provided the ability to stop vehicles in a safe manner that may otherwise have led to a pursuit, thus minimising the risk to the subject, other road users and PSNI officers.

In October 2024 alone, the RPI teams have been involved in the following excellent work;

- The recovery of five stolen vehicles worth over a total of £100,000.
- Stopping several vehicles used by Mobile Organised Crime Gangs (MOCG) involved in offences such as burglary and removing them from use.
- A joint operation with Crime Department led to the seizure of £150,000 of Class B drugs and the arrest of a number of suspects.
- A joint operation with HM Revenue and Customs led to the seizure of £50,000 of cigarettes and the arrest of a number of suspects
- 12 arrests in total for offences such as drugs, aggravated vehicle taking, handling stolen goods, theft, disqualified driving and other motoring offences.

- Eight uses of pre-emptive tactics to stop vehicles, with one pursuit.
- Contributing to road safety targets and “The Fatal Five” with proactive patrols and the issuing of fixed penalty notices.

The above incidents provide an insight into the ongoing excellent work that is being undertaken by the RPI teams and highlight their contribution to road safety, tackling crime and keeping people safe.

## Strategic Planning & Transformation Department

This year our Estates Services Team, working with partners in Sodexo, won the Business category at our annual problem solving awards ceremony. This award recognised their collaboration in leading by example, improving utilisation and reducing costs associated with our estate.



(l-r) James Hudson Head of Major Works; Damian Foley, Head of Estate Services; ACO Aldrina Magwood

We achieved a Silver Grading in the Northern Ireland Environmental Benchmarking Survey for second year in a row. This Survey benchmarks organisations against sector peers and leading Northern Ireland organisations, based on environmental management and performance in key areas as well as the extent to which environmental business practices are embedded within

corporate strategies. This is a significant achievement for the PSNI Estates Team and our Partners as we strive to deliver a more energy efficient estate. Strategic Investment Board funding of £1.97m was secured for a second year running for energy projects and assists capital funding on delivery of sustainable initiatives across our estate.

## **Pulse**

Our Pulse Performance Portal was designed, and is continually being developed, to support the delivery of the Service Performance Management Framework, including the Policing Plan. It draws together data from a variety of IT systems. The aim is for Pulse to serve as the single self-service source of performance monitoring and management information. The purpose is to make data and information easier to access and visible to everyone in the organisation allowing for more informed decision making.

Celebrating its third birthday this year, it continues to go from strength to strength with 40 active dashboards providing a wide range of information on business areas such as: Recorded Crime & Anti-Social Behaviour, Domestic Abuse, Violence Against Women and Girls, Victim Satisfaction, Calls for Service, Custody, Criminal Justice, Corporate Services and Mandatory Training.

## **People and Organisational Development**

### **Revised Environmental Allowance**

After extensive engagement with the Department of Justice and Trade Union colleagues, the Police Service received approval to increase the rate of Revised Environmental Allowance (REA) for police staff from its current level of £580 per annum to £1,365 per annum with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025. Discussions continue as we work to

collectively develop and implement an annual review mechanism for the REA.

## **Long Service Awards**

Acknowledging the importance of suitably recognising our officers and staff for their contributions to public service we have now hosted nine Long Service Award ceremonies with almost 1,300 officers, staff and guests invited to the events.

## **Strategic Communications and Engagement Department**

2024 has proven to be another busy year for the Strategic Communications and Engagement Department as they work to support colleagues right across our organisation. Our News and Media Desk provided communications support to the Service and have received over 10,000 calls from media. Staff from the Department also worked closely with Crime Department colleagues on the BBC Three documentary 'Teen Predator Online Killer' which shows how detectives brought this offender to justice.

Internally, the Department has supported the organisation by providing information to our staff through our intranet site, CallSign magazine, and by delivering a number of internal events including Team PSNI. The department has also been co-ordinating our social media accounts, supporting the delivery of improved online access services including online reporting and developing and delivering a number of important public awareness campaigns.

This year also saw two campaigns recognised nationally. Our 'Online Safety' campaign won the Best Public Sector Campaign in the Northern Ireland Social Media Award, with the 'Fatal Five' campaign taking the prize in the Public Sector Category at this year's Northern Ireland Road Safety Awards.



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