



Police Service of Northern Ireland

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

March 2022

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Foreword

We welcome new appointments to the Service Executive Team this month. Each person brings with them fresh talent, perspective and experience that will support our plans for service modernisation and help us to deliver on the ambitions within our Policing Plan.

I particularly welcome the appointment of Aldrina Magwood and Chris Todd into the organisation as Assistant Chief Officer for Strategic Planning and Transformation and Assistant Chief Constable for Operational Support Department respectively.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Mark McNaughten and Bobby Singleton in their transition from temporary to permanent roles, within the service. Mark McNaughten will continue his role as Assistant Chief Officer responsible for Corporate Services and Assistant Chief Constable Bobby Singleton will take responsibility for the District Policing portfolio.

Assistant Chief Constable Alan Todd will, in turn, transition to lead Community Safety Department, while Assistant Chief Constable Mark McEwan will remain responsible for Crime Department.

I would like to place on record my thanks to Temporary Assistant Chief Constable Jonathan Roberts for his leadership and contribution to Operational Support Department over the last 18 months.

As the team begins work in March, new configurations of portfolios will be developed to better reflect our strategic and operational priorities, with updates provided to Board members in due course.

I would also formally note the retirement of Mark Lindsay MBE after 34 years of policing service. On behalf of the Service Executive Team, I would like to thank him for his support, advice and advocacy in his seven years as Chair of the Police Federation.

We have continued to work with focus on the issue of male violence and intimidation against women and girls. Our dedicated Male Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy is on track to be launched at the end of this month.

Planning for the development and roll out of our Cultural Audit is progressing well through our internal governance structures. We look forward to presenting a developed Terms of Reference at Board Committee level in the coming weeks. Whilst wider consultation will drive the design and final content of the Audit, it is clear that a number of priority elements have been identified, notably issues associated with misogyny and sexually inappropriate behaviour in the workplace.

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In the interim, an organisational Statement of Action has been issued to everyone in the service reinforcing required standards of behaviour and explicitly outlining that there is no tolerance for sexual misconduct, domestic abuse, harassment, bullying and discriminatory behaviour in the Police Service.

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

- Financial Outlook
- Covid-19 Update
- Monthly Overview – January and February 2022
- Advice on safe and lawful protest
- Our new *Stronger Together* Collaboration
- Campaigns during February 2022

Financial Outlook

As we approach the end of this financial year, our focus is very much on next year's budget. In my last report, I included an overview of our initial assessment of the Draft Budget 2022-25.

In summary, the proposed financial settlement presents severe financial challenges for the wider justice system and for policing, creating a shortfall of some £226m (£59m/£75m/£92m) on the Police budget over the next three years, simply to stand still. If unchanged, the impact on policing will be stark. Real consequences will be felt in service delivery, prioritisation of demand and risk, resilience and modernisation together with levels of public confidence and victim satisfaction.

Throughout the last month, we have continued to engage with key stakeholders to explain the implications of the Draft Budget 2022-25 and make the case for further funding. On 10 February, I and the Chief Operating Officer, welcomed the opportunity to brief the Committee for Justice on the scale of financial challenges and hope that this has contributed to a better understanding of the impact of the Draft Budget on the Department of Justice in future years.

Following confirmation from the Finance Minister on 15 February that it is not possible to deliver an agreed Budget in the absence of an Executive, we are now faced with even greater uncertainty. It seems likely that a single year Budget will be allocated for 2022-23, based on the current year baseline i.e. 2021-22. Importantly, our current Budget baseline does not take into account the significant in-year funding allocations which are critical to supporting our current headcount. In 2021-22, this additional funding came to £40m or 5% of our total budget. This structural deficit in the budget baseline, therefore, remains the key funding issue and continues to be the focus of our attention.

The lack of an agreed Budget also increases the likelihood of a delay in notified Budget limits and a more short term view. These circumstances will only hinder decision making and constrain the options available.

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Against this backdrop, we have, however, continued to plan as best possible and have presented a Draft Resource Plan to the Resources Committee for consideration. The Plan is 'draft' but sets out how we might collectively address the £59m budget shortfall next year by a combination of savings and assumptions. I welcome the opportunity to discuss this further and agree a way forward with the Board.

Owing to the precarious nature of our opening position in April 2022, it seems inevitable that, by mid-summer, we will be compelled to make some difficult decisions which will have tangible impacts on both service delivery and confidence in policing.

The ongoing support of the Board is valued in securing additional funding and addressing the shortfall before any Final Budget is agreed.

Covid-19 Update

The recent transition from restrictions under Public Health Regulations towards guidance, whilst relevant to policing in terms of our 4E's approach, will not result in immediate change to our established organisational working practices adopted in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Strategic, tactical and operational coordination structures continue to oversee and continuously review our approach, with decision making centred on public health advice and guidance.

Our existing measures have been successful in minimising workplace infection to maintain operational resilience and service delivery in local communities whilst mitigating the risk to both colleagues and the public.

At this time, it is anticipated that workplace safeguarding mitigations will remain in place until spring 2022, to include the use of face coverings, hand hygiene measures, social distancing and reduced workplace contact, where possible. We have recently issued a short survey, with the aim of ascertaining officer and staff experiences during the pandemic and to inform the working environment for the future. This work will take account of approaches within the wider public sector, including the Northern Ireland Civil Service.

We anticipate that community infections will ease as we head towards the spring and we look forward to any local guidance, such as the, 'Living with Covid' strategies that have been issued in other places to inform our approach going forward.

In line with our planning assumptions in December 2021, we were in a position to transition away from the emergency 12 hour shift pattern in local and neighbourhood policing roles at the end of February 2022. This shift pattern had been implemented as a necessary proactive step to protect resourcing, ensure service continuity and secure safe staffing levels in the context of high community transmission rates and increasing absence rates during December 2021. It was successful in its aims.

Acknowledging the wellbeing and financial impacts, it is positive that we have remained on track with planning parameters and have been successful in keeping emergency working arrangements to a minimum and also reduced any impact on neighbourhood policing delivery.

Monthly Overview

During January Your Police Service:



received
57,638
requests for service



processed
1,912
arrests through custody



prepared
3,164
case files for submission to
the Public Prosecution Service



travelled
1,124,627
miles to respond to your calls
and build safer communities

These figures are provisional and subject to change

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we listen
we act



Police Service
of Northern Ireland

During February, detectives from Crime Department, working with other agencies from the Organised Crime Task Force and in partnership with HM Revenue and Customs and Belfast Harbour Police recovered a large quantity of drugs from a lorry stopped in the Belfast Harbour area. Class A and B drugs with an estimated street value of approximately £3m were recovered.

This is just one example of a positive outcome from collaborative multi-agency partnership, bringing the total street value of drugs seizures over a 14 month period to almost £20m.

Domestic Abuse Legislation

The introduction of new domestic abuse legislation within the Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceedings Act (Northern Ireland) 2021 is a defining moment for our criminal justice system.

We welcome this important development, which both formally recognises that domestic abuse is not just physical and also empowers us to address what has been invisible, in plain sight, for so long.

Domestic abuse currently represents approximately 20% of the overall crime reported to the Police Service, with an average of one report every 17 minutes.

This legislation will support victims and will provide police with a clear definition on what constitutes domestic abuse, with access to further tools to arrest and prosecute offenders and prevent harm.

Our message is clear – we are here to help victims of domestic abuse and bring offenders to justice.

Domestic abuse is not just physical.

Over 5,000 officers and staff are now trained in recognising coercive control and bringing offenders to justice.

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Advice for Safe and Lawful Protests

We have recently issued guidance, which is available on our website, for the information of those who are organising or participating in a protest. This seeks to provide clarity on the expectations on those attending or organising events, with the aim that all people involved, '*Stay Safe, Stay Peaceful and Stay Lawful*'

The information also clarifies what the public can expect from their Police Service during a protest, to include the role of police in balancing competing rights and our approach to investigation of any suspected offending.



Stronger Together

A *Stronger Together* Community of Practice has recently been formed, led by the T/Assistant Chief Officer for People and Organisational Development.

Stronger Together currently brings together representatives from our Staff Associations, Trade Unions and Support Networks to work collectively with the organisation, sharing learning and promoting best practice across the Police Service. Initial focus will be on developing Communities of Practice around the following thematic areas:

- Learning and Development
- Communications
- Recruitment
- Policy and Practice
- Wellbeing

Stronger Together is open to all individuals, working in all roles. Those involved will act as ambassadors for collective leadership and inclusion, working within the organisation and communicating key messages, as and when required.

The ethos is one of mutual support, inclusion, working together to share learning and recognising diverse perspectives to generate ideas and innovative approaches for the benefit of organisational development and policing delivery.



International Day of Women and Girls in Science



On Friday 11 February 2022, International Day of Women and Girls in Science, we took the opportunity to highlight the work of female colleagues within scientific policing roles.

Both online platforms and internal communications were used to highlight the varied work of women in different fields of science across the service with the work of four staff members showcased to demonstrate the scope and value of the important role they play in wider service delivery. This supported and sought to reinforce messaging by the Women in Policing Association.

We look forward to supporting International Women's Day on Tuesday 8 March in partnership with our Women in Policing Association. This year's theme, **#BreaktheBias**, aligns to themes of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion which will continue to be areas of focus for us in the coming year.

LGBT + History Month

Our LGBT+ Network held a series of interactive webinars during February as part of a programme of activities for national LGBT+History Month.

Webinars sought to increase organisational awareness and understanding of the history of LGBT+ representation in policing, locally and nationally. Inputs from current and former police officers provided an informative perspective on personal experiences and historical policing issues which continue to have relevance to policing today.

Events like this make an important contribution to our principles within our People Strategy 2025 and have a positive impact on community perceptions of policing, increasing our accessibility and responsiveness to people who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Transgender.



Preventing Harm: Our Visible, Accessible and Responsive Presence

During February, a number of important public awareness and crime prevention campaigns have been launched with a view to:

- a) Enhancing community safety
- b) Encouraging supportive and engaged communities, and
- c) Promoting local confidence in the Police Service

As a number of these campaigns relate to the area of Cyber Crime it was particularly fitting that the Justice Minister visited staff at the Cyber Crime Centre during February to mark the launch of the Annual Report of the Organised Crime Taskforce.



Justice Minister Naomi Long at the launch of the Organised Crime Taskforce Annual Report 2020/21, pictured along with Assistant Chief Constable Mark McEwan, Detective Chief Superintendent John McVea and Detective Chief Inspector Paul Woods at the Police Cyber Crime Centre on Wednesday 9 February 2022.

Crime NI



Six episodes of the monthly BBC One television broadcast, Crime NI have been aired to date. This provides a unique reach to a large local audience, increasing the accessibility of the Police Service on matters of community concern.

A range of public appeals have featured including, murder, attempted murder, theft, burglaries and missing or wanted people. The programme has also provided the opportunity to showcase the work of a number of teams within the Police Service.

The most recent episode in February, provided public information on the issue of 'Sextortion', coinciding with our ongoing awareness campaign on the same topic.

To date, three arrests have been made in relation to three separate incidents featured on the show and another suspect has been identified for a fourth incident. Crime NI has demonstrated the value of appealing to the public, in partnership with Crimestoppers, for their support in tackling crime. The contribution of our officers and staff has been vital, in stepping forward to make personal appeals to the public to prevent harm in local communities.



Emma Meredith, the Police Service Wildlife Liaison Officer filming with local officers for the January Crime NI programme, to raise awareness of wildlife and animal welfare issues and the policing response.

Hate Crime Awareness Week: #NoPlaceforHate

There is no place for hate crime in Northern Ireland. Such incidents can have a long lasting, damaging impact on victims and their wider community.

During Regional Hate Crime Awareness Week, 7 – 13 February, proactive messages were shared across our social media channels to increase public recognition of hate crime and incidents and demonstrate the impact that hate crime has on individuals, families and local communities. Using the slogan #NoPlaceForHate, the campaign sought to highlight our collective opportunity to challenge and prevent hate crimes and incidents.



The Police Service welcomes increased reporting of this often underreported issue. The most recent statistics published by the Service (September 2021) show that the number of incidents recorded rose across five of the six hate motivations (racist, homophobic, sectarian, disability, and faith/religion) when compared with the previous 12 months. Incidents and crimes with a racist motivation showed the largest overall increase (353 incidents and 276 crimes).

Our dedicated Service Instruction outlines the key priorities for police response and investigative standards, ensuring that the needs of the victim are treated as paramount and are rooted in partnership working to collaboratively address hate crime.

Zero Tolerance of Female Genital Mutilation

Female Genital Mutilation is a form of child abuse and violence against women and girls that can have serious short and long-term health and well-being implications. It is illegal in Northern Ireland as stipulated under the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 and the Serious Crime Act 2015.

Officers from our Public Protection Branch work closely with partners in Health and Social Care Trusts and local charities to help identify cases and bring those responsible to justice.

An International Day of Zero Tolerance of Female Genital Mutilation was held on Sunday 6 February, as part of a United Nations' sponsored annual awareness campaign to eradicate female genital mutilation.

The Police Service conducted a joint awareness raising initiative with UK Border Force partners at Belfast International Airport.

Officers responding to reports of female genital mutilation are supported by a dedicated service instruction, to inform their response aligned to the national partnership approach under Operation Limelight.



Officers from UK Border Force and Police Public Protection Branch pictured at Belfast International Airport

Sexual Abuse and Sexual Violence: #ItsNotOK



During Sexual Abuse and Sexual Violence Awareness Week, which began on Monday 7 February, we promoted the support that is available to victims and to challenge some common misconceptions that may prevent people from reporting sexual abuse and violence.

The national theme was, '*the silence surrounding abuse must be broken.*' As a Police Service we could not agree more with this statement. Even more people in Northern Ireland than ever before are taking that incredibly brave step to come forward and report. Reporting has been steadily increasing over the past five years, with 3,864 incidents reported in 2021, an increase of 16% from the previous year. Whilst of concern, this does indicate increased victim confidence in us; that we care about victims, will listen and will take victims seriously.

We also took the opportunity to promote The Rowan Centre, a specialist regional facility jointly funded by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and the Police Service. It provides a range of services for anyone who has experienced sexual assault or rape 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Last year, The Rowan supported 620 people, 60% of whom were referred by police. An advocate service, ASSIST NI, has recently been introduced, jointly funded by the Department of Justice and the Police Service to provide guidance and support to victims throughout the criminal justice process.

Preventing Sextortion

We launched a public awareness campaign on the issue of ‘sexortion’ on St Valentine’s Day, Monday 14 February. The victim-focused campaign, which will continue to run until the end of April 2022, aims to raise awareness of sextortion and encourage reporting.

Sextortion is a cyber-enabled crime during which victims are lured into sharing intimate images or performing sexual acts in front of a webcam. Unbeknown to victims, their actions are recorded by criminals who then use the video footage in an attempt to blackmail individuals.

In 2021, approximately 30 to 40 reports of sextortion were received each month with men in the 18-29 year old age bracket identified as most likely to be targeted.

Campaign content will provide information on how this type of crime typically occurs and encourages victims to come forward to police to access help and support.

A range of mediums will be used, to include animation and incorporating social media promotion across Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Nextdoor, TikTok and Snapchat platforms. This will be complemented by Pulse Hub advertisements in Belfast City Centre and a reconstruction and interview with Chief Inspector David McBurney on the Crime NI television programme on BBC One Northern Ireland.

A bespoke webpage containing information about this type of crime as well as prevention advice and signposting to support is also available on the Police Service website.



Safer Internet Day

On Tuesday 22 February 2022, the Police Service promoted Safer Internet Day by taking part in a global day of action to promote the safe, responsible and positive use of digital technology for children and young people.

There was a particular focus on online gaming and how parents can encourage children and young people to interact with others positively online. The campaign provided advice to parents about how to support their children and keep them safe while gaming/interacting with others online. The themes of the campaign included keeping safe online when connecting with others, wellbeing such as in game bullying on online grooming, parental advice and security measures to keep hackers out.

The communication plan included video featuring, tips graphics, a statistic graphic and a 'how to report' graphic. A variety of social media platforms were used to promote this campaign including Twitter, Facebook, Next Door App, Linked-in and Instagram platforms to ensure maximum coverage.



This campaign reached closed to 75,000 people across social media platforms, with almost 57,000 people directly engaging with our messaging on this subject.

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