



Police Service
of Northern Ireland

Chief Constable's Accountability Report

to Northern Ireland
Policing Board

Report Date:

Covering Period of 28 November 2024
to 28 January 2025

Presented at Policing Board Meeting:

6 February 2025



**we care
we listen
we act**

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Foreword

In my first report to the Board of 2025, I lead by signposting what I believe is a watershed moment for the PSNI. Police officer numbers were allowed to decline to an unprecedented and dangerous level of 6,300. This was, and continues to be, unacceptable. Recruitment recommenced last April but was limited to preventing officer levels falling any further. We have not been provided with the funding to recover numbers.

The reality of what has been allowed to happen is that we now have the lowest numbers of officers within Local Policing in our history and, similarly, unprecedentedly fewer numbers in the investigative parts of the organisation that tackle high harm offending such as Violence Against Women and Girls. As Chief Constable that is a huge statement to make, but put simply, the PSNI has been reduced to historically low numbers, has insufficient neighbourhood officers to keep communities safe, insufficient detectives to investigate and manage dangerous offenders, and is generally not resourced to keep society safe. Despite the unbelievably heroic efforts of officers and staff across the organisation, people will come to harm who should not because we have been reduced to a skeleton police service

This month, in addition to highlighting some of the fantastic work being carried out each and every day, my report shines a light on the mounting burden being faced, not least in the area of health and mental health. We receive on average 30 calls a day from partners in the Ambulance Service, and wait times at Emergency Departments of almost 14 hours for officers 'babysitting' people.

Our policing response during 'Operation Season's Greetings' in December and January was nothing short of sensational

given the current resourcing challenges, with officers and staff responding to over 52,000 calls for service in addition to proactively supporting the operation itself. 90 hotspot areas were regularly patrolled, 175 vehicle checkpoints took place, detecting over 480 incidents of drink driving, 800 shoplifting arrests were made, 1,728 stop and search procedures took place and officers dealt with 2,115 reports relating to Violence Against Women and Girls. As impressive as this is, the reality is that compared to previous years, our ability to police this operation in a proactive fashion was significantly reduced. The number of detections for drink driving was down 20% on last year. Similarly, there was a reduction of 27% in the number of stop and search procedures carried out and 60% less motoring fixed penalty notices issued. A preventative approach has given way to one that is increasingly reactive. It is therefore unimaginable for officer numbers to fall further, as ultimately, less police means less policing.

Last month, Chief Operating Officer Pamela McCreedy gave evidence to the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee (NIAC) in Westminster. Pamela was able to spell out for Committee Members the significant concerns and challenges we face as an organisation, especially the sheer scale of the mental health-related calls we respond to and their drain on PSNI resources. She also outlined our plan to recover officer and staff numbers to 7,000 and 2,572 respectively over the next three years. PSNI's detailed written submission to NIAC can be accessed in full here: [NIAC Written Submission](#).



I have repeatedly aired my concerns to the Board and wider public at the lack of financial support for policing and the impact reduced officer and staff levels is having on victims of crime, local communities and our own workforce. I cannot be any clearer. The public of Northern Ireland find themselves as outliers when investment in their safety is compared to that of neighbouring police services across the United Kingdom and Ireland. Either the PSNI continues to be underfunded, with all the associated repercussions that come with this, and these will worsen, or a sufficient and more sustainable funding settlement is provided. As the Board is aware we have submitted a recovery plan to the Department of Justice that is supported by the Minister and we await approval. That recovery plan is the very minimum of what is required in the short term.

On a hugely positive note, on the 22nd January 2025, we launched a new Student Officer Recruitment campaign, the first in four years, which provides exciting opportunities for so many people who have been waiting to apply to this fabulous organisation. Alongside the current Call Handling Recruitment campaign, it can act as a launchpad for our plan to recover officer and staff numbers to closer to where they need to be if we are to deliver the effective, modern policing service that the public expect and deserve. I want the PSNI to be an employer of choice and these campaigns provide us with an opportunity to attract the very best people and talent from all walks of life across our diverse communities. My ambition is that PSNI is reflective of the communities we serve. Our communities, and we as a Service, will be all the richer for it. We are accepting applications for Student Officers until 12th February 2025 and Call Handling Staff until the 17th February. I encourage anyone interested in joining to view the [PSNI Website](#) for further information.

I want to briefly address our determination to tackle violence against women and girls. Between January 2019 and December 2024, 32 women and girls across Northern Ireland were tragically killed by men. Across the similar period of December 2018 and November 2024, 92 attempted murder offences were also recorded where the victim was female. Many more faced other forms of violence, abuse and intimidation, both within their own homes and in the wider community.

Reporting last year described Northern Ireland as being on a par with Romania as one of the most dangerous places for women to live in Europe, citing the rate of murders committed by a partner as 0.43 per 100,000 inhabitants. This assertion is incorrect, and was based on inaccurate data made available on the Eurostat Website. Now amended, the correct rate is 0.21 per 100,000, placing Northern Ireland between France (0.18) and Germany (0.23). Full clarification is provided on the statistical pages of the [PSNI Website](#). In correcting these figures, I in no way wish to detract from the real and current unacceptable attitudes and behaviours towards many women and girls. The shameful reality for us all as a society is that the sense of safety that many women and girls now feel is at an all-time low.

In my report to the Board in October 2024, I welcomed the publication of the Northern Ireland Executive Office's 'Ending Violence against Women and Girls Strategy' (VAWG) and the Department of Justice and Health's 'Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy'. I also outlined in detail the significant progress PSNI has made against our own VAWG Action Plan, completing 33 of the 41 actions set. Despite the successes we have had, I am not complacent. There is much more work to be done, not just by the Police Service, but also by society as a whole. In this regard, I was absolutely delighted to



accompany the First Minister Michelle O' Neill, Junior Minister Pam Cameron and Justice Minister Naomi Long to the launch of the joint PSNI, Department of Justice and the Executive Office 'Power To Change' Campaign during January. This campaign will begin the important societal journey of changing attitudes, behaviours and beliefs towards woman and girls. It will begin to 're-programme the norm' and develop a culture comfortable with setting boundaries in our behaviours and calling out misogyny. My report this month provides detail on campaign activity and further information can be found on the dedicated [Power to Change Website](#). I encourage everyone to look up the campaign and recommend it to others.

In June 2024, I appointed Angus McCullough KC to conduct an independent review into concerns regarding PSNI conduct in relation to covert surveillance of journalists and lawyers. This review is so very important in maintaining trust and confidence and I reaffirm here my commitment to absolute openness and transparency in the process. On 28th January 2025, a progress report was published on [The McCullough Review](#) website. In it, Angus recognises the transparency, access and support that he and his team have received, and outlines the action taken to date and plans going forward. Again, I encourage those with an interest to read the update and I thank Angus and his team for their professionalism and diligence as they progress this significant review.

Last month, Storm Eowyn posed unique operational challenges for policing and our partner agencies. It also provided another example of the outstanding performance and leadership of this organisation when called upon at a time of crisis. The unprecedented storm, with wind speeds of nearly 100mph recorded at its height, caused widespread damage across Northern Ireland. Once again, police officers and staff stood up to the

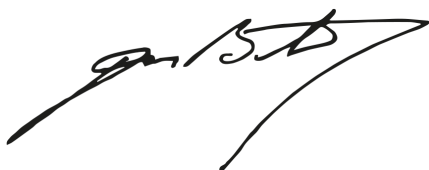
challenge, reporting for duty early and staying on late through the height of the storm to ensure communities across Northern Ireland were safe. I have heard many accounts of incidents where officers and staff have gone above and beyond to help members of the public. One simple, yet powerful example, involved officers identifying an older person living alone in a rural area with no electricity and no way of contacting anyone. They took her phone to Ardmore Station and charged it before returning with flasks of hot water. With her phone charged she was able to contact a neighbour who provided her with further support. I have nothing but pride and admiration for how we responded as an organisation under the leadership of the Gold Commander, Assistant Chief Constable Davy Beck, and I take this opportunity to publically recognise and convey my thanks to Davy and all officers and staff who were on duty and assisted in the response to the storm.

In January, I was delighted to learn that five colleagues had been honoured in the King's New Year Honours list, with two MBEs (Member of the British Empire) and three King's Police Medals awarded. This was a richly deserved recognition for each of the recipients and acknowledged their years of dedicated public service and contribution to policing in Northern Ireland.

Finally, last week saw the commencement of the Omagh Bombing Inquiry. I wish to take this opportunity to pay tribute to all the victims and families, to their strength, resilience and dedication to finding out what happened. I restate my unequivocal support for Lord Turnbull, his inquiry and all those impacted. What happened that day on 15th August 1998 changed so many lives in an unimaginable way. It was the deadliest attack of the Troubles in Northern Ireland. I would ask that we all take a moment to remember those murdered, injured and impacted that day and



the remarkable families who continue to conduct themselves with dignity and grace as they seek answers.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jon Boutcher'.

Jon Boutcher QPM
Chief Constable
Police Service of Northern Ireland

Finance and Resource Update

In December, I welcomed the fact that policing had been given a priority in the October Monitoring Round. This resulted in a further £37m of additional funding being allocated in year and is recognition that our key messages are being heard. This year to date, PSNI has received an additional £120m over the opening baseline or 15% of total costs. Although this additional funding is much needed and now enables a projected break even position for the full year, it is stark evidence that the baseline funding is simply inadequate. This repeated cycle needs to stop and I want to gain your support to help ensure that the necessary funding is included in the opening baseline budget next year, to provide the necessary financial stability moving forward.

The outcome of October Monitoring meant that the outstanding pay award for police officers was paid in December 2024. However, a pay settlement for police staff remains overdue and I am particularly keen that this is resolved without further delay. The recent announcement of a pay offer by the Finance Minister is encouraging.

Looking again to the future, I have now submitted an Outline Business Case for Workforce Recovery to the Department of Justice. This business case sets out my plans to recover headcount to 7,000 police officers and 2,572 police staff over the next three years. There appears to be some acceptance that this is an essential first step and I am encouraged by this growing support. The assistance of the Board will be critical to ensuring that funding can be secured to deliver these plans.

As outlined in our three year budget planning exercise, we will again be facing pressures of over £100m next year i.e. 2025-26. It is vital

that policing is allocated a fair share of resources, given the pivotal role we play in society here.

Since my last report, the Executive agreed and issued the Draft Budget for 2025/26 on 19 December for consultation. However, as yet, the draft allocations are at Departmental level only and I am not yet in a position to consider and communicate how policing will be impacted. It is disappointing that the budget is for one year only but encouraging that the allocation to the Department of Justice has been increased.

Following the confirmation of a draft budget allocation from the Department, further detail will be provided on any potential impact on policing.



Our Performance

McCullough Review

In June 2024, the Chief Constable appointed Angus McCullough KC to conduct an independent review into concerns regarding PSNI conduct in relation to covert surveillance of journalists and lawyers.

A progress report on the 'McCullough Review' was published in January 2025 and is available on [the McCullough Review](#) website.

The update emphasises the commitment to transparency throughout the review process. It details the establishment of Terms of Reference (ToR), which outline the scope of the investigation covering the period from 1 January 2011 to 1 November 2024. These terms allow for an examination of any surveillance conducted by PSNI on journalists, lawyers, NGOs, and bodies overseeing policing in Northern Ireland, with a particular focus on those deemed to have "special status."

A group of eight experts and stakeholders have been assisting Mr McCullough KC, providing valuable insights and advice.

The progress report outlines that the review team has received approximately 50 responses to its Call for Evidence, primarily from journalists and lawyers, indicating a strong interest in the proceedings.

The review team has been granted unrestricted access to PSNI systems, allowing them to independently evaluate documents and data related to covert

surveillance authorisations. This access is crucial for ensuring a thorough investigation into policing practices.

The report also highlights ongoing IPT proceedings that may impact the review but expresses confidence in reaching reliable conclusions based on the available evidence.

Looking ahead, Mr McCullough KC intends to provide the Chief Constable with a timetable for future reports.

Statistical Update

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 January 2024 to 31 December 2024:

- There were 97,102 crimes recorded a decrease of 10,187 (-9.5%) on 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.
- There were 51 recorded crimes per 1,000 population¹ in the 12 months January 2024 to December 2024 compared with 56 in the previous 12 months.
- All policing districts experienced a lower level of crime.

¹ 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 \(opens in a new window\).](#)



Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

In the 12 months from 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024:

- There were 44,020 ASB incidents in Northern Ireland, a decrease of 1,887 (-4.1%) on the previous 12 months.
- All policing districts, with the exception of Belfast City, experienced lower levels of anti-social behaviour.
- Each month January through to December 2024 recorded the lowest levels of anti-social behaviour for those months since the start of the data series in April 2006, with the exception of March, May, September and November 2024, which recorded their second lowest levels in the data series, and December 2024 which recorded its third lowest level.

Police Recorded Drug Seizures and Arrests

Drug Seizures

In the 12 months from 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024:

- There were 7,024 drug seizure incidents, a decrease of 1,587 (-18.4%) on the previous 12 months.
- There was a fall in the number of all classes of seizure incidents.
- Cannabis (Class B) was the most commonly seized drug, followed by cocaine (Class A), pregabalin (Class C) and benzodiazepines (Class C).

Drug related Arrests

In the 12 months from 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024:

- There were 3,294 drug-related arrests, a decrease of 192 (-5.5%) on the previous 12 months.

- Generally speaking the trend in drug-related arrests is fairly similar to that seen for the number of drug seizure incidents and drug offences recorded by police over the same time period. However, over the last twelve months the trend in drug arrests has declined only slightly when compared with the falling trends for drug offences and drug seizure incidents.

Security Situation

In 12 months from 1 January 2024 to 31 December 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 6 bombing incidents, compared to 8 during the previous 12 months and 17 shooting incidents, compared to 33.
- There were 23 casualties of paramilitary style assaults, compared to 31 during the previous 12 months. The greatest number of assaults occurred in Belfast (7). Of the 23 casualties, one was under 18 years old.
- There were 5 casualties of paramilitary style shootings, approximately a quarter of the number that occurred during the previous 12 months (19). All 5 casualties were aged 18 years or older.
- There were 67 security related arrests under Section 41 of the Terrorism Act 2000, compared to 104 during the previous 12 months.
- 9 persons were subsequently charged, compared to 21 during the previous 12 months.



Finds of Firearms, Explosives and Ammunition;

Firearms Finds

There were 11 firearms found during the past 12 months, compared to 20 during the previous 12 months.

Explosive Finds

There were 0.52kg of explosives found during the past 12 months compared to 3.22kg 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 191 rounds of ammunition found during the past 12 months compared to 1,013 rounds found in the previous 12 months.

Motoring Offences

In the 12 months from 1 December 2023 to 30 November 2024:

- There were 34,758 detections for motoring offences in Northern Ireland, of which 97% were dealt with by fixed penalty notice or referral for prosecution.
- The remaining 3% (1,098) resulted in the completion of a speed awareness or safer driver course.
- Total detections decreased by 17% on the 41,767 detections recorded in the previous 12 months, with notable reductions across a number of offence groups including insurance, speeding and driving licence offences.
- Only one of the 19 offence showed an increase in detections over the year – breach of signs and signals, which rose (16) to 192 detections.

- The largest offence group was insurance offences with 5,875, which along with speeding (4,840) accounted for almost one-third of the total detections.

Police Recorded Injury Road Traffic Collisions and Casualties

Between 1 January 2024 and 31 October 2024:

- There were 3,774 Road Traffic Collisions recorded compared with 4,144 between January and October 2023 - a decrease of 370 collisions (8.9%).
- There were 53 fatalities, 738 people seriously injured and a further 5,188 people slightly injured. While the total casualties were down by 598 year on year, there were 31 additional killed or seriously injured (KSI) casualties.
- Three road user groups showed an increase in KSIs (between January to October 2023 and January to October 2024, most notably drivers which increased by 30.
- Single vehicle collisions resulted in 19 fatalities or 35.8% of all fatalities during January to October 2024. In the equivalent period of 2023, there were 11 single vehicle collision fatalities or 21.2% of all fatalities.
- The most common principal causation factors for KSI casualties during the reporting period were 'inattention or attention diverted' (118 KSI casualties), 'wrong course/position' (68) and 'excessive speed having regard to conditions' (61).



Outcome 1: Victim Focused

Crime Department

Organised Crime Branch

Investigations

- During a four-week policing operation in November and December 2024, drugs with a potential street value of approximately £645,000 were seized by officers and four people charged with drug importation and supply offences. The operation, conducted at Belfast International Airport, was led by detectives from Organised Crime Branch and showcased the collaboration that exists with UK Border Force and other law enforcement partners involved in the Organised Crime Task Force.
- On 22 November 2024, detectives supported by Belfast Harbour Police, arrested a man after stopping a vehicle in the Belfast Harbour area. A well-concealed stash of suspected herbal cannabis valued at up to £165,000 was recovered from his vehicle. He has been charged to Court with a number of drug related offences.
- On 3 December 2024, officers uncovered a sophisticated cannabis factory in Ballygawley, leading to the arrest of a man and the seizure of cannabis worth an estimated street value of £200,000. He has been charged to Court with a number of drug related offences
- On 12 December 2024, detectives from Organised Crime Branch, supported by officers from Local Policing and Tactical Support Group (TSG), carried out searches in South Armagh and England as part of the investigation into firearms recovered in the Crossmaglen area in October 2023.

Two men arrested in the South Armagh area, were charged with a number of offences, including, possession of ammunition in suspicious circumstances and possession of firearms with intent to danger life. A third man, arrested in Grantham, Lincolnshire, was released on police bail to allow for further enquiries.

- During December 2024, detectives investigating the largescale importation of cocaine into Northern Ireland from Ireland, carried out ten searches across Belfast and Newtownabbey. Suspected Class A and B controlled drugs, a sum of cash, mobile phones, five high-value vehicles, three high end watches were recovered, along with artwork and designer clothing, during the two day policing operation.

Five arrests were made and three men and a woman have been charged with a number of offences, including being concerned in the supply of Class A controlled drugs.



Cars and other items seized by officers

- On 9 January 2025, detectives supported by TSG colleagues, carried out five searches in the Cookstown area, during which they recovered quantities of cash, suspected controlled drugs and drug-related paraphernalia. A man and woman have been arrested for drug related and possession of criminal property offences. Enquiries are continuing.
- On 13 January 2025, and with the assistance of colleagues from the Roads Policing Unit, detectives stopped and searched a vehicle in the Newry area. Approximately £75,000 in cash was recovered. Two men have been arrested on suspicion of possessing criminal property. Enquiries are continuing.

Court Outcomes

- On Thursday 28 November 2024, man from West Yorkshire was sentenced to four and a half years imprisonment at Antrim Crown Court for possession of Class A controlled drugs with intent to supply.

This was the result of the investigation into the recovery of suspected cocaine with an estimated value of £600,000 during the search of a vehicle in the Larne Harbour Area in August 2023.

- On 25 November 2024, a man received a three-year prison sentence at Craigavon Crown Court, having previously pleaded guilty to cultivating cannabis, using criminal property and converting criminal property.

This followed the discovery of a sophisticated cannabis farm in the Annahilt area in February 2023 that bore the hallmarks of organised criminality and had the capability of generating millions of pounds over a number of harvests.

- On 26 November 2024, two Malaysian men were sentenced to 40 and 44 months respectively at Craigavon Crown Court having previously pleaded guilty to offences relating to the possession, importation and conspiring to import and supply cannabis. Both will face deportation upon their release from custody. Two further men await sentencing for their part in this criminal venture.

Modern Slavery Human Trafficking

- On Monday 16 December 2024, a man was sentenced at Belfast Crown Court for the offences of human trafficking and paying for sexual services. The offences were carried out in 2020 in the Belfast area. He was sentenced to two years; one year to be served in prison and one year on licence.

This follows his conviction and sentencing in October 2024 for offences of a similar nature.

All of his four victims were vulnerable young women from the Belfast area.

Paramilitary Crime Task Force (PCTF)

Investigation

- On 21 November 2024, detectives from the PCTF investigating suspected criminal activity linked to the North West INLA recovered suspected cocaine with an estimated street value of £1.8m following a search of a van in the Doogary Road area of Omagh. One man was arrested and has been charged to appear before Dungannon Magistrates Court for drug related offences.
- On 13 December 2024, PCTF officers carried out a search of a property in the Galliagh area of Derry/Londonderry. This



was part of an ongoing investigation into suspected criminality linked to the INLA. A number of items were seized, including a suspected imitation firearm, paramilitary related paraphernalia, a quantity of suspected Class A and Class B controlled drugs and a number of mobile devices. These have been taken away for examination.

Court Outcomes

- On Friday 22 November 2024, a man was sentenced to 5 years and 8 months at Belfast Crown Court for possession of a firearm with criminal intent and possession of a prohibited firearm.

This followed an investigation into the North Antrim UDA and the recovery of a firearm, ammunition and UDA paraphernalia during the search of a property in the Coleraine area in April 2022.

- On 27 November 2024, a man received a 21 month custodial sentence at Antrim Crown Court for the offences of possession of 15kg of herbal cannabis with intent to supply, cultivating cannabis, possession of a Class A controlled drug and postal operator interfering with mail.

This was the result of a PCTF investigation into drugs criminality linked to North Antrim UDA.

- Two separate Proceeds of Crime Act cases were concluded on 28 November 2024, at Londonderry Magistrates' Court. This resulted in the forfeiture of £44,005, seized during a 2023 investigation into drugs criminality linked to the North West INLA.

Serious Crime Branch

Investigation

Major Investigation Team

- Detectives have charged two men in connection with the murder of Karen Cummings in Banbridge on 14 December 2024. One is also charged with firearms-related offences and handling stolen goods.
- A woman and man have been charged in connection with the murder of Mark Dorrian in Newtownards on 26 December 2024.
- Detectives continue to assist Spanish Police with their enquiries into the murder of John George following the discovery of his body in Spain. A Major Incident Police Portal (MIPP) has been opened to allow people to share any relevant information they may have.

Criminal Investigation Department

- Detectives have charged a man with a number of offences including attempted murder, false imprisonment and possession of a firearm with intent to endanger life following a shooting incident in Newtownabbey on 6 January 2025.
- A man has been charged with a number of offences, including sexual communication with a child, possession of indecent images of a child, inciting a child under 16 to engage in sexual activity and blackmail, following a report of "sextortion" to police by the parent of one of the victims.

Terrorism Investigation Unit

- Detectives have charged a man with possessing explosives under suspicious circumstances, possessing explosives with



intent to endanger life or cause serious injury to property and a number of drugs offences, following a security alert in Maghera on 10 December 2024.

Court Outcomes

- A man was sentenced to six years, (half in custody/half on licence) for manslaughter by way of diminished responsibility. He had previously pleaded guilty to killing Margaret Una Noone in Cookstown in June 2022.
- Three men have been found guilty of the murder of Ian Ogle in Belfast on 27 January 2019. They have each been given a life sentence with the minimum tariff to be set in February 2025.
- A man has been found guilty and sentenced to four and a half years imprisonment for possession of a firearm with intent to cause fear of violence, possession of an offensive weapon with intent to commit an indictable offence and common assault following an aggravated burglary in Bangor on 6 October 2022.
- A man pleaded guilty and has been sentenced to three years imprisonment (suspended for three years) for possession of a firearm or ammunition in suspicious circumstances, attempting to possess a firearm, possession of a Class B controlled drug, possession of prohibited weapon, possession of a Class A & B controlled drug with intent to supply, following a report of a postal intercept and subsequent premises search in Newtownards area in January 2024.
- A man pleaded guilty to common assault and attempted child abduction following an incident in Kinawley on 22 April 2024. He has already served his time on remand, however, a deportation order is in place and he is not allowed to enter Northern Ireland.

Public Protection Branch

Non Recent Child Abuse Team

A man has plead guilty to five charges of indecent assault, gross indecency, indecent exposure and indecent assault on another male. Detectives have recognised the bravery of one of the victims who initiated the complaint to police but is now sadly deceased. Her bravery in speaking up helped fellow family members seek justice. Sentencing is pending.



Power to Change



You have it. They have it. We all have it. The Power to Change.

The 'Power To Change' campaign launched on 29 January 2025 at Cineworld, Queen's Quay, Belfast, and saw the Chief Constable, First Minister Michelle O' Neill, Junior Minister Pam Cameron and Justice Minister Naomi Long amongst others, in attendance.

The campaign aims to create a societal shift in attitudes, behaviours and beliefs towards women, and is a culmination of almost two years of collaborative working between the PSNI, the Department of Justice and The Executive Office. Everyone in Northern Ireland will be invited to challenge their own thoughts and actions, and guidance will be offered on what to do in situations where they spot inappropriate or misogynist conduct.

Campaign activity comprises of Above The Line advertising, including adshels, washroom advertising, 48 sheets, super side of buses, behind the driver on buses and digital adshels. A series of impactful videos have been produced to highlight scenarios in which women may feel uncomfortable and what action bystanders can consider taking in a non-confrontational way. Video 'shorts' have been made for TikTok and YouTube to reach as wide an audience as possible and an organic social plan will run on PSNI's own Facebook and Instagram channels.

A bespoke website has also been created, which offers guidance and advice to people who want to find out more and become educated on what is and is not an acceptable form of behaviour – [Power to Change Website](#)



Right Care Right Person and Emergency Department Waiting Times

In the last 12 months, the PSNI have received in the region of 37,000 concern for safety calls, about 101 per day. This category captures most of the incidents passed by health partners or the public relating to what would be described as wellbeing or safeguarding concerns. Only 3% of these calls related to crime.

Requests for police resources come from a wide range of health care settings, including, Emergency Departments, Wards, GP's, Social Services, Mental Health Teams, as well as from the public.

We estimate that we receive approximately 11,000 calls per year from ambulance service control, or around 30 per day.

Whilst we have some health related data, it should be noted that PSNI IT systems are designed to capture crime data. Information on health data is therefore conservative, but provides a helpful indication of the levels of demand.

In order to help collectively with baselining, we undertook a data collection survey during the 28 day period from 10 June to 7 July 2024. During this period, officers completed a questionnaire capturing details of their deployment to a range of vulnerability and health related incidents:

- Walk out from health settings
- Absence Without Leave
- Concern for Safety
- Mental Health Detention
- Transportation and
- Voluntary Mental Health Patients.

We have taken and extrapolated this data to obtain a sense of what it would look like over a 12 month period.

- Over the period, there were at least 8,142 Officer Hours spent responding to calls for service of this nature.
- This amounts to over 100,000 hours per annum.
- And equates to opportunity costs of over £4m in police officer time.

Time spent waiting in hospitals is significant.

1. Concern for Safety calls (CSAF) represented the highest Right Care Right Person demand at 72%, the average *Deployment Time* was 2 hours 23 minutes.
2. Mental Health Detention and Voluntary Mental Health calls represented 10.3% of total incidents, but the *Deployment Time* associated with these incidents were 9 hours and 22 minutes and 4 hours 36 minutes respectively. This represents approximately four times longer *Deployment Time* associated with mental health calls than CSAF.

Combining the deployment times for Mental Health Detentions and Voluntary Mental Health patients and upscaling for the year equates to:

- 33,054 hours per year, or
- Over £1m in police officer time.

This figure is conservative. It does not include the additional officers who initially respond to the incident, or the time spent by call handlers in contact centres taking the call, undertaking background checks and risk assessment activities prior to the crews' arrival. Only the total times (Assignment to Arrival to Departure) for officers who remained with service users throughout the incidents is recorded.



Operational example:

On Wednesday 1 January 2025 at 21:15, police received a call from an out of hours doctor regarding a person who had attended a Health Centre seeking help with their mental health. The person disclosed they had razor blades and intended to harm themselves. The doctor had attempted to obtain an Approved Social Worker (ASW), required for any detention under the Mental Health Order, however, as the Centre was due to close and considering the time required to prepare, the ASW declined to attend. The vulnerable person then left the Centre. Staff did not prevent this and called police.

Officers attended and the person was accompanied back to the Centre. One officer remained outside with the person whilst the other entered to speak with

staff. Following a conversation with the doctor, it was confirmed there was no way to detain the individual without an ASW and that they would not be attending. As there was nothing further out of hours staff could do officers conveyed the person to hospital for a mental health assessment. At 02:30 on the 2 January, the person was detained under the Mental Health Order.

Difficulties in obtaining an ASW saw the matter referred from hospital to local ASW to regional out of hours and back to the hospital. PSNI escalated with relevant partners, however, an assessment was not completed and police officer involvement terminated 48 hours after detention had begun (officers had remained with the vulnerable person throughout).

In total, nine separate police crews spent 54 hours dealing with this incident.



Police vehicles queued outside a Hospital Emergency Department during the Christmas/New Year period.

Outcome 2: Community Focused

Operation Season's Greetings

This year's Operation Season's Greetings, aimed at maximising visibility and reassurance to communities across the Christmas and New Year period, ran from 25 November 2024 to 2 January 2025.

Across this period, officers and staff dealt with over 52,000 calls for service as well as proactively supporting the Season's Greetings operation.

Safe Shopping



Throughout the course of the operation, officers conducted high visibility patrols across local towns, villages and retail areas, engaging with local businesses and members of the public to provide reassurance and crime prevention advice. To support this work 90 hotspot areas were identified and specific patrolling schedules were put in place. This ensured visible policing at locations where crime or anti-social behaviour (ASB) were most likely to occur.

Officers responded to almost 800 reports of shoplifting, a similar figure to last years policing operation. To date, offenders have been held accountable in 30% of theft offences. This outcome rate is expected to increase as investigations progress.

Another important concept this year was the use of Project Servator patrols across the country. These operations include a blend of uniformed and plain-clothes officers operating together to reduce crime and detect potential offenders in areas susceptible to crime or ASB. This activity enabled a proactive approach to reduce harm and criminal offending.

Safe Roads



Local Policing and Neighbourhood Policing Teams conducted 141 approved Vehicle Checkpoint Operations throughout the Op Seasons Greetings period, which was supported by 34 further operations organised and conducted by officers from Operational Support Department. Each operation identified one or more locations across Northern Ireland where officers had additional powers to conduct breath tests on motorists. We await confirmation of the total number of breath tests conducted over this period, however, operational figures show there were 486 driving whilst unfit related incidents detected. This is a reduction from the 608 seen last year.

Safe Socialising



Throughout the period officers conducted proactive patrols in areas with an established night-time economy in an effort to reduce incidents of crime or ASB and promote safe socialising. Teams paid particular attention to bars and restaurants and used the opportunity to conduct licensed premises checks to ensure compliance with licencing laws.

1,728 stop and search procedures took place aimed at reducing the harm drugs cause across communities. This level of proactivity was down on the 2,376 searches recorded last year.

Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) was a key operational focus with officers using visible patrolling to remind premises of the “Ask Angela” initiative, in addition to providing a proactive approach and dealing with VAWG reported incidents. Project Servator patrols were utilised specifically aimed at VAWG. Officers dealt with 2,115 VAWG related reports, a reduction from 2,354 last year (although this year’s operational figure may alter as the recording process continues).

Resourcing Challenges

Throughout the duration of this year’s policing operation, officers and staff not only dealt with reactive demand, which is traditionally higher during this period, but also provided a visible and proactive service to deter offending and provide reassurance. This proactivity was delivered despite the significant resourcing pressures faced across policing and the nature of demand faced being more complex

and time consuming for frontline officers and staff than ever before, for example, extensive waits at hospital or serious multifaceted offences being investigated.

The difficult reality is that less police officers means less policing, and this is undoubtedly reflected in the proactivity linked to this year’s operation, with all areas seeing a reduction from last year; examples include, stop and search down 27% and motoring fixed penalty notices down 60%. Importantly, police officers and staff continued to deal with calls for assistance from members of the community, including attending one domestic abuse incident on average every 16 minutes, supporting colleagues in Northern Ireland Ambulance Service on average once every hour (41% increase) and dealing with an average of 13 missing person reports every single day.

Police officer and staff numbers mean that prioritisation has to be aligned to reactive calls for service from the community and partners. The consequence is that Proactivity is impacted. Proactivity is fundamental in preventing crime, solving problems and providing visible reassurance cannot see the same level of resourcing alignment, ultimately hindering the ability to prevent crime before it happens and truly supporting communities in line with their expectations.

Despite the significant effort from officers and staff across this operation, the figures depict that proactivity had to give way to reactivity.

Hate Crime

The period between May 2024 and September 2024 showed sustained higher levels of racially motivated hate incidents recorded by PSNI, with five of the seven highest monthly levels since the data series began in April 2004.

A period of unrest contributed to the 350 racially motivated hate incidents recorded in August 2024, the highest monthly level in the data series. As a result, the Police Service requested that the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) conduct a focused audit on our response to reports of racially motivated hate crime. This followed a previous audit conducted by the NPCC of the Police Service's end-to-end response to hate crimes in 2022.

Over the course of the 12 and 13 December 2024, the National Hate Crime Lead, Paul Giannasi, and a number of representatives from the NPCC Hate Crime Independent Advisory Group (IAG), reviewed a dip sample of racially motivated hate crimes with our Service Hate Crime Leads.

We await receipt of the official report, with findings expected in the coming weeks, however, initial accounts were positive, albeit the strain on resources since the previous audit was apparent.

Kinnegar

The Police Service are currently engaged as preferred bidder for the future purchase of the 54 acre site, subject to funding and requisite approvals.

The acquisition presents a unique opportunity to deliver a new Police College through phased development on one combined site that is modern and fit for purpose and signals to the public our commitment to the continued improvement of policing services. It is an investment in the security of all the people of Northern Ireland and an enabler for us in responding to the needs of victims and the changing nature of crime and public safety.

In addition to the primary objective of facilitating a future College, the location of the site, its size and proximity to Greater Belfast creates wider strategic benefits, operational service efficiencies and additional significant estate rationalisation opportunities.

Outcome 3: Workforce Focused

Problem Solving Awards

The Police Services' 'Problem Solving in Partnership Awards' will be held in February, with the Harbours Commissioners Office in Belfast kindly providing use of their magnificent premises.

The event will celebrate the outstanding efforts of our teams and partners in tackling crime and improving community safety. The award categories cover a wide range of achievements:

- Delivering for Communities
- Serious Crime & Investigations
- Partners
- Enhancing Service Delivery
- Policing and Community Safety Partnerships

The winners from each category will be recognised for their innovative solutions, with the overall winner advancing to the prestigious National Problem Solving Tilley Awards.

Their collective efforts continue to make our communities safer and we look forward to celebrating these successes together.

We would like to acknowledge and thank our sponsorship partners, the Northern Ireland Policing Board, Sodexo, Selectamark DNA, Fujitsu and Police CPI.

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