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The Board is an independent body made up of 19 Members to ensure for all the people of Northern Ireland the delivery of an effective, efficient, accountable and impartial police service which will secure the confidence of the whole community by reducing crime and the fear of crime. **Click here** to see the Board membership.

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Why human rights is important for the community and policing



Policing Board Chair Anne Connolly, Policing Board Human Rights Advisor Alyson Kilpatrick and Chief Constable George Hamilton take questions at the Human Rights event.

Victims, ethics, legacy and the policing of parades and protests: these are just some of the issues police deal with where human rights law plays a major role.

Each year, the Policing Board's Human Rights Advisor looks closely at how well the PSNI are complying with the Human Rights Act 1998 in service delivery and the findings are published in the Human Rights Annual Report. These findings and a series of recommendations were the basis of a recent discussion in Crumlin Road Gaol with key stakeholders and the wider community on why human rights is important for the community and policing.

Policing Board Chair Anne Connolly said the event provided a vital opportunity to focus on the importance of continuing to

keep a rights based approach in policing. She said:

Each year, the Board publishes a Report which brings forward recommendations on areas where improvements are needed. Issues such as training, ethics, children and young people and the handling of domestic abuse cases are reviewed so that the PSNI can continue to build on and improve the service they give across our community. We also get a clear picture of how well the PSNI have progressed recommendations from

FRONT COVER CAPTION

Policing Board Vice Chair Debbie Watters, Policing Board Chair Anne Connolly, Chief Constable George Hamilton and Policing Board Human Rights Advisor Alyson Kilpatrick at the Human Rights Annual Report launch.

previous years and how well ethos is embedded within the service.

This is important information for the Board to monitor the effectiveness and efficiency of the PSNI and it is helpful that we take time to discuss the impact of the service delivered and get feedback from the public about how well the police are delivering on their human rights responsibilities.

[click here](#) to read the Human Rights Annual Report 2015

[click here](#) for a look at the summary

Continued...



“ People often see ‘human rights’ as something bigger than their own rights; but the law applies equally to everyone and it is vital to ensure it is being applied across the service for the benefit of the community and for the benefit of police officers. ”

Anne Connolly
Policing Board Chair



“ With some perceiving the police as protectors of human rights and others as a potential threat to those rights, it is essential that the positive effect of police work on human rights is clearly enshrined in police and public consciousness. ”

Alyson Kilpatrick
Policing Board Human Rights Advisor



“ We take the issue of Human rights very seriously and understand that to get it right requires us to be accountable; transparent and open to learning. The scrutiny provided by the Human Rights Annual Report is unique. I believe that policing means protecting human rights; and human rights are an enabler of effective policing. ”

George Hamilton
Chief Constable

Some questions from the audience:

“ With the threats to the Human Rights Act and budget cuts, will we see a Human Rights Report next year? ”

Brian Gormally
CAJ

“ How can public services be more joined up in resources to support vulnerable children and young people? ”

Les Allamby
Human Rights Commissioner

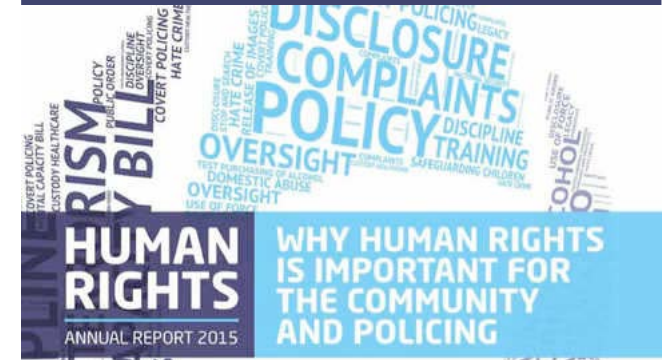
“ Do you consider Stop and Search to be an effective policing tool and how do you balance this against confidence from children and young people? ”

Sinead Mallon
NICCY

“ Why are the rights of police officers not explicitly referenced in the Human Rights Annual Report? ”

Anthony Arnold
PFNI

Watch our short film below on the views people have on the importance of human rights for the community and policing



To listen to the answers to all questions put to the panel

[click here](#) 

Making gun licencing accessible



Board Members discuss gun licensing with David Robinson and Tommy Maine of the Gun Trade Guild NI.

Members of the Board's Performance Committee recently met with the PSNI and representatives of the Gun Trade Guild NI to discuss the proposed changes to how people apply for gun licences. Just under 60,000 firearms certificates are issued by the police each year and people apply by completing forms which are then processed by the PSNI. The PSNI is proposing to switch solely to online applications, which is causing concern amongst some gun dealers.

Concerns were raised by the Gun Trade Guild NI about how the change in process will affect many older gun holders who do not use online services and who may have their licence revoked if they are then unable to apply.

Performance Committee Chair Nelson McCausland MLA said:

“Thousands of people apply for and renew their firearms licenses every year and it is important that there is a system in place which is accessible to all users. The new system commits all applicants to apply online and the Committee has raised concerns with the PSNI about the impact this could have on those who chose, for a variety of reasons, not to use online services.

We appreciate that the PSNI has been trying to provide the most streamlined service to gun users and has been linking with other bodies to accommodate those who do not currently have access to computers. However, it is important to ensure that licence holders are not adversely affected by the new system and we will continue to liaise with the PSNI.”

Board welcomes latest Custody Visiting figures

483 unannounced visits were made by volunteers from the community to police custody suites across Northern Ireland last year

These visits are carried out by the Independent Custody Visitors who check on the rights, health and wellbeing and conditions of detention of people being held in custody as part of the Custody Visiting Scheme, which is supported and administered by the Board.

97% of the visits made were deemed to be valid and 82% of those visits were found to be satisfactory.

Speaking about the work undertaken by Custody Visitors in the last year, Board Chair Anne Connolly said:

“While it is positive that 82% of visits were satisfactory, we need to address the 18% of visits that were unsatisfactory, which were a result of for example, faulty equipment, sanitation and safety / security hazards.



We have raised this with the PSNI and hope to see an increase in satisfactory visits in the next year.

We are very aware that this Scheme would not function were it not for the involvement, commitment and dedication of our volunteers. They provide an important contribution to the work of the Board by maintaining independent oversight on police custody arrangements and I would like to thank all the volunteer members of the Scheme.”

Board Meeting News

Impact of budget on resources

The September Board meeting in public was dominated by the issue of funding and the impact of 2017/18 budget proposals on policing.

Policing Board Chair Anne Connolly referred to the impact this has on resourcing of the service particularly with regard to the demands being placed on the police service, the pressures on officers and the support they are given.

She outlined that, with the publication of the HMIC report on efficiency and effectiveness, the Board is now reviewing resources in the context of the potential impact of the latest budget scenarios required.

The Chief Constable said that the budget could be cut by around £40m in 2017/18. He said that increasing demands cannot be met under the financial arrangements and will push sick and stress levels to unmanageable levels. Despite reducing budgets, he assured Members that the PSNI will not “walk away from vulnerable people”.



The September Board meeting in public

Board Members asked the Chief Constable to detail the budget process and opportunities for additional funding and explain how cuts will impact on bread and butter issues within communities. The Chief Constable outlined that the PSNI received additional funding from the Treasury, the Northern Ireland Executive and from the Fresh Start Agreement to tackle organised crime in addition to the existing budget. He said, however, that the real challenge is due to the “lack of financial

certainly and the short term nature of budget allocation which makes long term planning impossible”.

Board Members also questioned the Chief Constable on measures needed to support staff and alleviate pressures on those suffering from stress and PTSD. DCC Drew Harris outlined the range of services provided by the PSNI's Occupational Health and Welfare service which has spent £2.4m in year providing support services to officers.

Review of Police College

Board Chair Anne Connolly welcomed the independently led review of training arrangements to be initiated with the Chief Constable outlining the 5 key areas of focus. He said that a review will take place during September which will bring forward recommendations on the exam process, course content and culture within the College “in a way that restores confidence in the processes and policies of the Training College.” Student Officer intakes have been suspended pending the outcome of the review with the new recruitment campaign delayed until January 2017.

Board Meeting News continued

Questions to the Chief Constable

Questioned on the comments in the recent HMIC PEEL report on the need for further work around hidden and unrecognised demands from communities, the Chief Constable said the PSNI will continue to work collaboratively and share information to get a better idea of what the demand is, how to predict the demand and how to take preventative action.

In response to a question on the need for better more co-ordinated work to provide the appropriate service to vulnerable people and the need for a designated safe space for people with mental health/addiction issues, the Chief Constable said the PSNI are advocates of a general Place of Safety as police custody or A&E are not the best places for some people with mental health issues.

Members asked for assurance from the PSNI how Body Worn Video, once rolled out to all appropriate officers, will be effectively evaluated and reported back to the Board.

ACC Mark Hamilton explained that the exercise is due to be completed by 2018 and will then be subject to a post implementation review which he will work with the Board to agree.

Questions were also put to the Chief Constable on attacks on Orange Halls and the proposal to move the firearms licensing process solely online.



The Chief Constable George Hamilton and Deputy Chief Constable Drew Harris answer questions at the September Board meeting in public.

Dealing with vulnerability and harm

The Chief Constable told the Board that about 20% of the 500k calls the police received last year were actually related to crime. The majority, he says, are related to vulnerability and harm and that there is often an overlap between health problems, social problems and community safety issues. He said it "isn't sensible" for police officers to spend up to 12 or 16 hours

trying to look after a vulnerable person who should be in the care of properly trained health professionals adding:

“ We need to work closely with our partners to change this reality; and public service providers need the support of our political leaders to deliver the substantial changes required. ”

[click here](#)

to read the Chief Constable's monthly report

[click here](#)

to view the list of written questions put by Board Members

[click here](#)

to watch footage of the meeting

Board Visits and Events

The Policing Board engages with a range of people and groups to get their views on policing and to provide an overview of policing structures. Here is what the Board has been doing this month ...

Consulting on youth issues



Board Members met with the Board's Youth Advisory Group to discuss areas of work relevant to children and young people being progressed by the Board.

Board discusses future work with Human Rights Commissioner



The Board Chair Anne Connolly and Chief Executive Amanda Stewart recently met with the Human Rights Commissioner Les Allamby and the Commission's Chief Executive Virginia McVeigh to discuss the Board's human rights work and opportunities for progressing future partnership working.

Human Rights Advisor meets Police Federation



The Board's Human Rights Advisor Alyson Kilpatrick recently met with representatives from the Police Federation to discuss issues around human rights and policing.

Mingling at the Mela



The Policing Board was out and about at the Belfast Mela this year getting feedback on what the public think of the policing service they get.