

AVON AND SOMERSET POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

COMMISSIONER'S UPDATE REPORT

23 JUNE 2020

The following briefing provides an update for Panel Members on key activities since the last Panel meeting on 11 March 2020 and builds on the update letter sent to Panel Members on 21st May 2020.

Following the protest of 7th June in Bristol here is the timetable of events, the Commissioner published the statement that follows:

The time table of events on Sunday 7th June may be summarised:

13:00	A crowd estimated to be 10,000 congregate on College Green Bristol to listen to a number of speeches to be followed by a march along an agreed route with event organisers to Castle Park in Bristol.
14:00	March commences
14:20	A large group splinters off from the route and heads in the direction of the M32 and St Pauls
14:29	A group climb onto the Colston Statue and put ropes around it, within just over a minute it is pulled to the ground and then rolled 500 yards into the river

I want to address the events at the weekend during the Black Lives Matter protest in Bristol. First and foremost I am pleased to say the conduct of majority of those who attended the protest was peaceful, although with emotions running high. As a result the event passed with no violent disorder, no injuries to the public or our officers and no arrests.

I have had many people contact me and my office over the last 24 hours expressing a range of views about the toppling of the statue of Edward Colston and the subsequent police response.

Some have stated their support for a proportionate, considered police response that prioritised public safety over damage to property.

Others have expressed disgust at the actions of a small minority of people, in an otherwise peaceful protest, and their displeasure at what they perceive as a lack of real time action from the police.

While I understand both perspectives, I want to be clear I am in full support of the approach of Avon and Somerset Police and how the officers on duty handled the matter.

Superintendent Andy Bennett, and the command team in charge of policing the protest on the day, carefully considered all the implications of sending in officers at that moment to make arrests, probably requiring them to use force, and the escalation of tensions that could be caused as a result.

I am confident that, after the police assessed the circumstances, they not only made the right decision but they also did the right thing to prevent any escalation of tension into violence, injury or worse.

The legacy of Edward Colston in the city has been a controversial one that has divided opinion among the people of Bristol for many years.

While, of course, I do not support unlawful acts of criminal damage and I am disappointed that people have committed them during a peaceful protest, I fully understand why it has happened.

Many people will know I have publicly supported campaigns, for example the re-naming of the Colston Hall music and entertainment venue, aimed at re-examining and re-evaluating our position on how that legacy is reflected in the city.

I understand why people might think that the police officers should have intervened and challenged. However, considering the operational circumstances the police officers faced, I believe Chief Constable Andy Marsh's team made the right choice.

I am assured that the matter is being thoroughly investigated and every effort will be made to prosecute those responsible and bring them to justice.

Finance outlook

Looking towards the next budget and the MTFP, the financial risk landscape has changed for the worse:

Council Tax precept

We are concerned that a severe COVID recession in the UK will adversely impact many households, reduce council tax base, reduce council tax collections and put great financial pressure on many of our residents. This means we expect to budget for a collection fund deficit in the next few years which will immediately impact 2021/22 planning and also the MTFP income assumptions. We expect a lower than forecast tax base and lower than currently forecast collection rate than previous MTFP assumptions in the next 3-4 years.

Government finance and next CSR

In addition, the unprecedented level of national government borrowing is an emerging national risk and we fear some inevitable future restrictions on public sector funding as a consequence. This will be announced in future budgets and the CSR in 2022. 2021/22 will be the third year when the CSR has been delayed and we will have a further one year settlement. Whilst the commitment to the uplift in officer numbers appears unchanged we do expect the pressure on central government budgets to be reflected in future settlements.

Lower ASC "other income" streams

There is a loss of income currently from reduced Airport services, fewer events and reduced roads usage. These will improve slowly as a "new normal" emerges but are likely to adversely affect this and the next fiscal.

In anticipation of these financial pressures, we will now build new contingency into our MTFP plans. Despite this, we still need to continue our investment in technology, data management and our people. As a consequence, new conversations about future savings have commenced with the Chief Constable.

Oversight of the Constabulary Response to COVID19

COVID19 contingency and recovery planning has been the recent primary focus of our oversight and scrutiny of the Constabulary and in holding the Chief Constable to account.

The agenda of Police and Crime Board meetings in April and May was changed to enable robust scrutiny of COVID19 issues.

Changing Demand

Recorded crime in the 30 days since lockdown saw a 28% reduction on the same period last year, approximately 3,200 fewer crimes in a month. However crime has returned to close to near normal expected figures and significant changes in demand are apparent across a number of areas. The numbers of COVID19 breaches are set out below. Close oversight is ongoing to understand and manage changing demand arising from COVID19 restrictions. In some areas reduced demand has enabled significant improvements in response, such as calls for service for ASB which over the weekend of 2nd-3rd May were less than 24 hours old. However in other areas the impact of COVID19 restrictions has presented significant challenges both through increased demand particularly in relation to vulnerability, and the backlog created by court closures that in Avon and Somerset currently lies at well over 2000 Magistrate Court and over 850 Crown Court cases and these figures continue to grow. Managing victim expectations is a key focus of the Lighthouse Safeguarding Unit as adjournments and uncertainty as to when cases will be relisted have left victims in a state of limbo and understandably anxious. Significant work is underway to address these challenges through the Commissioner's national criminal justice roles and role in chairing the Local Criminal Justice Board.

Members will recall that a joint police / CPS Criminal Justice Taskforce was established in the new year to take forward work to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the criminal justice system. The taskforce is focusing on efforts to establish shared data to understand how the 'pipeline' is performing and to drive up file quality to assist in understanding the local position and reduce the burden on CPS decision makers at a time of reduced capacity. All three custody suites are operational with the Independent Custody Visiting Scheme continuing on a 'virtual' basis to ensure the wellbeing of detainees. Consideration is being given at a national level to the wider application of Out of Court Disposals (OoCDs) to mitigate delays in the criminal justice system. Use of OoCDs in Avon and Somerset are at comparatively stable levels, with the ASCEND programme and interventions continuing to be delivered online or via telephone.

New Police Powers

The Constabulary has adopted and reinforced the *Engage, Explain and Encourage* message, with an emphasis on community effort and compliance, with enforcement as a last resort. Neighbourhood Policing Teams have taken a proactive approach to achieve compliance through high visibility patrols, outreach work, social media engagement to enhance trust and confidence with communities. Statistical recording of complaints relating to COVID19 began on 10 March 2020 to enable close oversight of the manner in which powers are being used and inform learning. The OPCC Scrutiny of use of Police Powers and the Independent Residents Panels have continued, utilising remote working tools, in order to ensure that new powers are being used in an appropriate and proportionate manner for the purpose of transparency and public confidence. In addition, the PCC has held regular Facebook Live sessions to hold the Chief Constable to account and answer questions submitted by local communities to help to bring clarity and understanding to the changing rules and the

approach to police enforcement. The Constabulary reports a noticeable decline in compliance, both in general terms and in relation to specific protests that have occurred and are now seeing a steady increase in the number of 'business as usual' crime related calls

COVID19 Fines and enforcement (as of 8am Weds June 3rd)

- 356 fixed penalty notices have been given across our force area
- Bristol: 129
- Somerset: 133
- North Somerset: 20
- South Glos: 54
- BaNES: 8
- Out of force: 1
- A total of 26,155 breaches reported via website/phones/officers.
- Of the total number of breach incidents 9,010 were reported via online form which records incidents which have already happened and are in the past. This information will be used to inform police patrol plans and identify incident hotspots.
- Of the ones which generated a call card on our 999/101 system, police have attended approx 40 per cent.

Vulnerability

A key area in which changing demand has been seen is vulnerability. The National Police Chief's Council identified six areas of vulnerability considered increased risk at this time. The Constabulary has responded by putting in place a temporary lead at Superintendent level to coordinate the response. A new daily COVID 19 situation report covering all six strands feeds into daily tasking and the national picture. The current position is set out below:

- County Lines – tactical meeting continues providing oversight of investigations, the top five lines, force bids for support and vulnerable children to ensure safeguarding is in place. Lockdown has increased visibility of Neighbourhood Policing teams, and Operation Remedy capability has remained strong enabling a proactive approach to disruption activity. A separate report on Operation Remedy is attached.
- Interfamilial Child Sexual Abuse – comprehensive stakeholder meeting structure are in place to enable joint working to respond dynamically to new safeguarding concerns. The Constabulary is anticipating and preparing for an increase in referrals when lockdown is released and children are able to make disclosures to trusted adults and teachers.
- Domestic Abuse – weekly communications meeting and fortnightly COVID 19 partnership meetings have been established, with the OPCC as a key stakeholder. Activity has focused on strong communications to encourage reporting, and dealing with outstanding offenders.
- Online Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation – demand has been erratic with a peak in referrals at the start of lockdown, which has now fallen back to usual levels of 1-3

referrals per day. Specialist resources in Operation Topaz continue to engage with children at risk of sexual exploitation, subject to risk assessment for COVID 19.

- Mental health related incidents – locally incidents tagged as ‘mental health related’ show a sharp drop from mid-March, now slowly increasing. Incidents during lockdown have involved mental issues with a marked increase in severity and work is ongoing to understand the likely impact of current restrictions on individuals and in changes to access to mental health provision, especially face to face.
- Missing people – numbers of missing person cases have reduced by almost half (-44%) in line with the national picture. The highest number of missing person reports is in the 14-17 years age group, highlighting the need for strong partnership working including schools, to support and safeguard the most vulnerable.

Health and Wellbeing / Provision of PPE

The Constabulary are complying with national police guidelines on the provision and use of PPE. There have been no issues with the availability of PPE in the last few weeks. The weekly Constabulary Gold and Silver meetings look at welfare of staff. The recent pulse staff survey results have been encouraging.

PPE and safety advice has been issued to reduce the risk in face to face contact.

Home visits have continued in management of high risk offenders. Social distancing has led to lower risk offenders being contacted by phone or social media. Whilst this has resulted in increased contact, there is no substitute for face to face contact and social distancing has reduced capacity to be truly intrusive and effective in managing the risk.

MoJ COVID-19 Extraordinary funding

The Ministry of Justice (MOJ) has made £20m of COVID-19 Extraordinary funding available for organisations that support victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence and is distributing this funding via PCCs. The MOJ has set out detailed guidance for PCCs in relation to the distribution of the funding, including the requirement to undertake an assessment of need for COVID-19 related extraordinary funding in relation to both domestic abuse and sexual violence support services in the local area. The maximum indicative allocation of funding that is available in Avon and Somerset is £578,000, split between the following three ring-fenced pots:

- Domestic abuse services that are already commissioned by PCCs - £289,000
- Sexual violence services that are already commissioned by PCCs and those that are not currently funded by PCCs - £144,500
- Domestic abuse services that are not currently commissioned by PCCs - £144,500

The funding is only available to cover COVID related costs incurred between 24th March 2020 and the end of October 2020. The MOJ have imposed very tight timescales for organisations to bid for this funding and for PCCs to undertake due diligence and an assessment of bids. The provisional timetable announced by the MOJ should also see funding quickly being released once it is approved by the MOJ.

Criminal Justice

I continue to chair fortnightly meetings of the Local Criminal Justice Board and the Criminal Justice Taskforce (led by the Constabulary, working closely with the CPS) is making some good progress in relation to file quality and the utilisation of data in order to build a clear understanding of the demand within the criminal justice system. However the backlog of cases continues to grow and there is no significant movement nationally to address this. Demand coming into the police is increasing to more normal levels and whilst the court capacity continues to be very limited the backlog of cases is likely to continue to grow exponentially. Through my national roles I continue to highlight the challenges, risks and issues facing the criminal justice system and continue to advocate for more radical approaches to ensure justice is delivered in a timely manner.

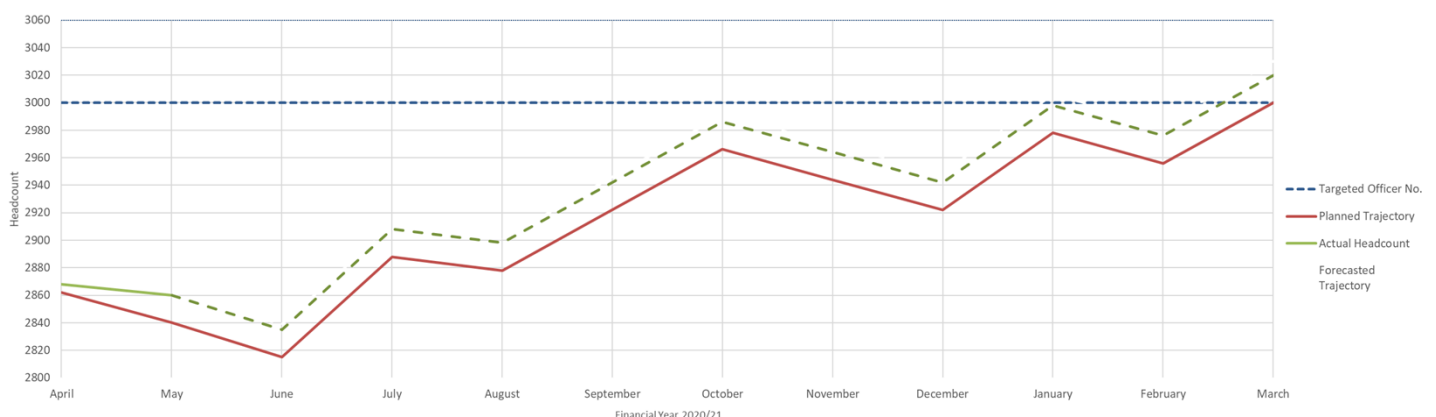
Looking forward, recovery planning is seeking to seize the opportunity to harness the imperative created by the current circumstances to embrace and accelerate use of technology, innovative ways of working, and systems change, and to realise our vision for criminal justice transformation – there is no desire to return to the status quo.

Uplift – 2019/20 update

Finally, I am pleased to be able to update Panel Members on progress in recruitment over 2019/20 enabled by Uplift funding. The Constabulary was successful in exceeding its target headcount, with the breakdown as follows:

	Officer HC Actual
As at 1st April 2019	2,765
+ PCDA officers joining A&S	+279
+ Other new officers joining A&S	+69
+ Officers returning from secondment	+11
- Officers leaving A&S	-229
- Officers leaving on secondment	-11
As at 31st March 2020	2,884

This is a significant achievement, and I am enormously grateful to Constabulary colleagues for the energy and effort that has gone into achieving this milestone. The Constabulary have also provided a graph to show how they plan to recruit to the target headcount of 3000 officers by March 2021.



Governance and Scrutiny

Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner Update

The Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner was appointed on 24 April 2020. The PCC has asked the DPCC to lead on a number of areas including Community Engagement, Serious Violence and Violence Reduction Units and Reducing Reoffending. The DPCC will also support the PCC on the very important Criminal Justice work and lead on the Lammy Review work. Finally, the DPCC will also work with the Constabulary and other partners on the work related to the delivery of police and crime services as the lock down is eased and in the new normal that emerges.

Community Engagement

The DPCC has carried out a series of introductory meetings with key stakeholders and community members across the area. In addition, the DPCC has attended a series of community and scrutiny meetings including the South Gloucestershire Race Equalities Network online community engagement event, Safer Somerset, the Scrutiny of Police Powers meeting, Bristol City Leaders Meetings and West of England Leaders and PCC meetings. The DPCC has also attended a number of meetings across the area looking at potential models for community engagement in those areas with partners.

The DPCC has attended a number of meetings in response to recent events including visiting Trinity Road police station and patrolling with local officers following community leaders raising concerns about compliance with Covid Regulations in the area and attending a series of community meetings in Bristol to review police activity in response to an incident at the end of May. The DPCC is working with the OPCC on a planned programme of engagement events across the Avon and Somerset area meeting local community groups and partners. If members of the panel have suggestions for community meetings or wish to be involved please contact the office.

VRU

The Violence Reduction Units (VRUs) continue to deliver their core function of tackling serious violence and the vulnerabilities attached during this period. Changes in resources have been seen in some areas, with a Sergeant in Somerset and Schools Officers in Bristol returning to core duties to support Local Policing Teams. However PCSOs in Bristol continue to work with the VRU and activity to monitor individuals and risk continues. School closures have led to school-based interventions being postponed but where mentoring has been utilised, this has continued using different virtual and creative methods. Some individuals will be seen face to face where it is needed, exercise has proven to be a great opportunity to do this with young people. Although some individuals will feel isolated at this time, it has been reported that actually in some cases where exploitation was present externally, they now feel safe being at home, as that pressure has now been removed.

VRUs will look to build on this and maintain positive engagement once restrictions ease. Domestic Abuse and the night time economy are areas that may lead to increased demand in the up and coming months, VRUs are working with police and partners to monitor this and consider how they can support in these areas.

The Home Office finally confirmed 2020/21 funding on 4 June – over 2 months into the relevant period with the usual requirement for all monies to be spent within year – the DPCC is writing to the Home Office to point out the issues and impact on delivery of this approach. VRUs have not let this stop planning, especially around the re-opening of schools. The Constabulary await a formal response to the Serious Violence Surge bid that was also submitted to the Home Office. If successful, this will be circa £1,123,520 (amount not finalised) to support operational responses to serious violence. There is going to be a much closer alliance between the VRU and Serious Violence Surge fund this year. One critical piece of work to enable this, will be an independent evaluation of the VRUs and their impact thus far, this will also include links to Surge related activity, enhancing the overall picture of tackling serious violence in Avon and Somerset.

The Strategic VRU group met on 08/06/20 chaired by the DPCC. The group reviewed current strategic priorities including; data sharing between partners, Education and performance governance. Key areas which will be progressed include data sharing with health and more consistent engagement with schools including the work of local PCSOs.

Reducing Reoffending

The Resolve board met virtually in May, chaired by the PCC's CEO and attended by the DPCC, engaging a variety of local reducing reoffending partners. All provided helpful updates regarding the COVID-19 impact on their business and ability to deliver reoffending work, identifying particular challenges and highlighting opportunities for innovation. Many agencies agreed that as a result of the crisis they have experienced improvement in partnership work and inter agency effectiveness. The 'wicked' problem of accommodation provision for offenders has seen a short term improvement thanks to COVID19 funding to LAs and information sharing around release and risk has improved as a consequence of the government's early release scheme. Despite inevitable systemic delays caused by COVID19 the Board is progressing projects including a review of IOM within Avon and Somerset; 'Ready for Release' a multi-agency release hub within HMP Bristol; "Court Up" an innovation to better support and work with women as they attend Bristol Magistrates Court; "Free Hand" piloting an end to end mentoring scheme for women within the Criminal Justice System in Somerset and exploring a new option for DV perpetrators which has been trialled in South Wales and has reported significant results. In addition applications have been made to the board for reoffending opportunities within HMP Eastwood Park, the SHE project in Bristol and continuing and developing the Start to Finish scheme in North Somerset. The impact of COVID19 (on funding for third sector providers) is being felt within the realm of reoffending and solutions are being developed to ensure critical work being done by organisations, such as Julian House in housing offenders upon release, is not lost in the aftermath of the crisis.

The DPCC has had a number of meetings with local partners to discuss the impact of the virus and to discuss co-commissioning opportunities especially in relation to accommodation. The DPCC has been asked to chair a group developing a modular housing project involving offenders in the construction process working with various Government Departments, the South West Regional Reducing Reoffending board, the West of England Combined Authority, other local authorities and the voluntary sector.

Criminal Justice Lammy Review

The PCC has asked the DPCC to support her work on Criminal Justice including chairing the Local Criminal Justice Board if she is unavailable and leading for the PCC on the Lammy Review work. There has been a short hiatus in the Lammy review looking at disproportionality in the Criminal Justice System in Avon and Somerset during the lock down period. The OPCC and Constabulary have made available additional project management resource to support this important work. The following have been agreed as priorities for the work for the next year:

- Stop and Search
- Youth Justice
- Out of Court Disposals and Deferred Prosecutions
- Judiciary
- Prisons

In addition, we have asked Desmond to look at disproportionality in enforcement of COVID19 regulations as part of this work.

PCC Election and Police and Crime Plan Refresh

As a consequence of the worldwide COVID19 pandemic, the May 2020 PCC elections were cancelled and moved to May 2021. The PCC's elected in 2021 will serve a three year term until May 2024.

As a consequence the existing PCC has extended her term of office for one further year. The Police and Crime Plan (2019- 2021) will continue in existence for the extended term of office and will then be reviewed by the new PCC in 2021.

An underpinning joint performance framework is in place which informs internal reporting and management as well as being the basis on which performance is reported to the Panel on a quarterly basis. This performance framework continues to develop and over the next year will need to adapt to include measures being defined at a national level. Members also have the opportunity to engage with thematic assurance during the year through link member meetings.

HMICFRS

Over the last year the OPCC has published responses to the following reports:

- Peel Spotlight Report: A System Under Pressure (25/10/19)
- Peel Spotlight Report: A Workforce Under Pressure (25/10/19)
- Tact Custody Suites In England And Wales (26/10/19)
- Peel Spotlight Report Shining A Light On Betrayal (03/12/19)
- The Poor Relation: The Police And Cps Response To Crimes Against Older People (18/12/19)
- Leading Lights: An Inspection Of The Police Service's Arrangements For The Selection And Development Of Chief Officers (19/12/19)
- Cyber: Keep The Light On (20/02/20)
- Police Effectiveness, Efficiency And Legitimacy 2018/19: An Inspection Of Avon And Somerset Constabulary (03/04/20)

- Joint Inspection – Evidence Led Domestic Abuse Prosecutions (23/04/20)
- National Child Protection Inspections 2019 Thematic Report (28/04/20)
- A Joint Thematic Inspection Of Integrated Offender Management (01/05/20)
- Counter-Terrorism Policing – An Inspection Of The Police's Contribution To The Government's Prevent Programme (01/05/20)

Police and Crime Board

Agendas and minutes of the Police and Crime Board are published at the following link:

<https://www.avonandsomerset-pcc.gov.uk/Openness/Reports-and-meetings/Police-and-Crime-Board.aspx>

Key Decisions

The following decisions have been made since the last meeting:

- Treasury Management Strategy 2020/21 was adopted (May 2020)
- MFSS settlement was agreed (see recent letter)
- ICT, Data Management and Transformation & Improvement business cases were all approved with uplift in annual revenue costs of some £800k per annum to be funded from savings

Decision notices and accompanying documents are published at the following link:

<https://www.avonandsomerset-pcc.gov.uk/Openness/Decisions.aspx>

Independent Residents' Panel

The Independent Residents' Panel (IRP) scrutinise completed cases of complaints made by members of the public against Avon and Somerset Police. The panel is chaired and run by volunteers and they meet on a quarterly basis. The last meeting was 5th March 2020. This session focused on the 'Use of Force' in policing and also provided a continuous development session for the panel members with a training session provided by Sergeant Duke Hazzard. The panel then spent time dip sampling public complaints related to use of force such a use of handcuffs and the use of PAVA (CS spray). They also looked at a small number of Stop and Search related complaints as part of scrutiny actions requested by the Avon and Somerset Internal Stop and Search Scrutiny Panel.

As a standing item, the Panel also review complaints that have been informally resolved by the 'Early Intervention' process. Avon and Somerset Police were early adopters of this process in anticipation of the Police Integrity Reforms which saw significant change in the police conduct regulations from the 1st February 2020. During May 2020 the total number of successfully completed informally resolved (logged, early intervention) complaints was 68 (compared to 81 in April 2020). There were 125 formally recorded complaints (compared to 179 in April 2020 and 60 in April 2019). The number of complaints has increased since the new legislation went live as the definition of a complaint changed to 'any expression of dissatisfaction'.

The impact of COVID-19 is also a factor as police were responsible for enforcing the government lockdown restrictions and legislation which saw a rise in complaints during this period. The total number of complaints recorded from 1 May 2019 to 31 May 2020 is 1199. This compares to 883 during the same time period the previous financial year. The panel's findings are shared with Professional Standards for comment and published as a public

report. In September 2019, the report was revised to make it more readable and encourage increased footfall through social media.

The Panel's reports are published on the PCC's website at:

<http://www.avonandsomerset-pcc.gov.uk/Openness/Scrutiny/Independent-Residents-Panel.aspx> .

Scrutiny of the Use of Police Powers Panel

The 13th quarterly Scrutiny of Police Powers Panel meeting took place on 27 May 2020, for the first time as an online meeting. Over the previous two weeks Panel members had individually reviewed Body Worn Video (BWV) camera footage (using a secure database) of pre-selected Taser deployment incidents and Stop and Search incidents within the selected themes of under 16 year olds and Black, Asian and minority ethnicity (BME). Also a new topic since March 2020 has been Panel members' BWV review of COVID19 breaches and the serving of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs), members seeking assurances about Officer guidance in using the '4 Es' with members of the public, i.e. engagement, explanation and encouragement to comply with COVID19 Regulations, the very last resort being Enforcement. The online meeting included group discussion on specifically highlighted cases, with the Constabulary Lead Officer providing background information from Police databases (STORM logs and Niche) as well as viewing BWV of specific cases of particular interest. Panel members reviewed 61 cases and produced 181 feedback forms. Police Officers were commended when members viewed exemplary Officer behaviour and good practice, such as de-escalation skills; courtesy, fairness, calmness, control and respect; good communication of Stop & Search grounds; drug advice given; and good Police Officer engagement with members of the public. Also, members' concerns and recommendations were fed back and included: the late switching on of the BWV camera; some elements of a Stop and Search not stated; and searches being in too public a place.

Members have been briefed on the policing service regarding COVID19 and standard daily policing business, including drug dealing, County Lines, Stop Search, good multi-agency working and the Police monitoring of trends, such as hate crime and domestic violence, with under-reporting concerns. The Panel will continue to focus on Disproportionality as a theme.

Panel reports are published on the PCC's website at:

<http://www.avonandsomerset-pcc.gov.uk/Openness/Scrutiny/Scrutiny-of-the-use-of-Police-Powers.aspx>

Independent Custody Visiting Scheme – Annual Report

Assurance and oversight has taken place throughout the year within the Independent Custody Visiting Scheme where currently 40 volunteer Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) have sought to ensure detainees in custody are held in safe and appropriate conditions for their best welfare and in accordance with their rights and entitlements. The 2019-2020 financial year's agreement for ICVs was to visit each of the 3 Custody Units once every 4 days This has resulted in 254 visits (with 16 unannounced visits delayed more than 10 minutes, due to staffing resources and being busy). ICVs visited 1202 detainees with an

additional 456 detainees being unavailable during the visits, such as due to being interviewed. However others in this category have been asleep and observed via the door hatch. The ICVs also speak to the Health Care Practitioners located within custody as well as the Advice and Support in Custody and Courts (ASCC) Referral Service staff who assess vulnerable detainees, with a wider remit than mental ill-health. This is of particular interest to ICVs to ensure the welfare of vulnerable detainees, including those with drug and alcohol substance dependencies and mental ill health. There have been no issues reported by the ICVs that relate to unfair or disrespectful treatment of detainees by Custody Officers or Staff.

ICVs reports of positive findings included: Good menstrual care for female detainees, now included as a booking-in question to offer items and the option to speak to a female officer, which is recorded on the detention log (Custody Report); ICVs using the translation sheets and picture cards to communicate to non-English speaking detainees; Health Care Practitioners being onsite and available to talk with ICVs, Assessors and referral services working with Custody staff; Timely responses to detainee requests for medication, including by detainees with mental ill health; Religious material (faith box) kept tidily and respectfully. Advice given to just ask via the cell intercom for assistance; Nicotine tablets available for smokers prohibited from smoking in custody; and most ICV visits report general comments giving compliments to the Detention Officer escorting them and the respect towards detainees and de-escalation actions.

ICV findings of concern include: lack of local Authority accommodation for children in custody, post charge; and the varying audio quality of cell intercoms.

OPCC Team and COVID19 impacts and new Interim CFO

The effects of the COVID19 crisis and the resultant lockdown policies continue to be felt by the OPCC team. The Avon & Somerset OPCC team is small by national standards and the COVID19 pandemic has further reduced the OPCC team capacity. Impact on the team includes sickness and significant reduced capacity due to home schooling and dependent care. On a more positive note, all OPCC team members have worked successfully from home supported by technology solutions which have met the demand.

A selection process has resulted in a preferred candidate for the interim CFO role and the Panel has been asked to hold a confirmation Hearing for this appointment.

Commissioning and Partnership Working

Commissioned Victims' services

The OPCC has kept in regular contact with all commissioned services throughout the lockdown period. All services have adapted incredibly well to in order to operate effectively during the crisis, rapidly reconfiguring some of the most core elements of service delivery to ensure that both victim and staff welfare remains paramount. Beyond this the creative approaches and ingenuity that I have observed from our victims' services to adapt to remote forms of support, finding new ways to ensure the vulnerable are protected from harm, has been nothing short of a triumph. There are numerous examples of creative

approaches and dedication. These include the launch of *Victim Support's* "My Support Space" an online platform for victims with interactive guides, tips and videos with a focus on how to manage difficult emotions, coping strategies, trauma, and pragmatic support for well-being. Another was observed in SARSAS' speedy response to support an increased need from victims of rape and sexual abuse for more in-depth and more regular support by extending their helpline hours. SARSAS also extended their offering to support other services should their helplines become under strain. And others – such as Safe-Link – ensured Live Chat advisors could respond quickly to victims in the moment they needed someone to listen. Southmead Project also took the opportunity to upskill staff through the Open University to equip themselves for transitioning expertise to online counselling support.

Effective contingency planning has meant no significant decline in referrals into victim services during this period, with the majority reporting referral rates similar to pre-lockdown levels. Not only this, but services have continued to deliver timely and tailored support to victims upon receipt of referrals. Thus far, services have maintained regular contact with victims, and triaging has meant high-risk victims have received necessary interventions when they are most needed. Whenever possible and safe to do so, face to face meetings have been accommodated with the correct practice. A consistently high standard of victim support has remained despite the threat posed to us all in this unprecedented time.

I have ensured greater oversight of the regional response to domestic abuse in light of widespread national concern regarding the potential for increased risk to victims in lockdown conditions. A fortnightly Domestic Abuse Strategic Working Group chaired by Avon and Somerset Constabulary and including local authority representatives, as well as domestic abuse charities, has been attended by the OPCC. This has enabled a greater understanding of such things as capacity of safe-houses across the region, discrepancies between police and service provider experience of domestic abuse levels, assessment of the practices of MARACS, and current court processes. Attendance at this group call has also led to the creation of a cross-regional communications working group chaired by the OPCC communications team. This group aims to co-ordinate consistent and effective messaging to support victims and those around them to come forward to report crime.

Since the lockdown restrictions came into force I have maintained weekly contact with Victims Commissioner – Dame Vera Baird – on a conference call. This call aims to achieve the following intelligence from PCC offices across the country: any emerging trends of the impact of the Covid-19 outbreak on demand for victim services including increases in demand for specific services, any discernible crime trends associated with the outbreak, availability of resource and staffing and any areas where the VC's intervention with MoJ on behalf of the victims' sector would be useful in terms of either additional resources or public messaging. Involvement in this call has meant I have been able to communicate any challenges being faced by Avon and Somerset on a weekly basis maintaining my commitment to advocate for the needs of victims in our community at a national level.

Control Room Triage

Control Room Triage has continued to operate at 9am – 10pm 7 days a week throughout the COVID crisis and clinicians delivering the service have not been redeployed into other services. Significant work continues to ensure rigorous research is undertaken on a quantitative and qualitative basis to offer an in-depth evaluation into the impact Control Room Triage is having. Avon and Somerset Constabulary also has a dedicated Mental Health Co-ordinator who is working alongside the OPCC and our clinical partners to improve information flow between partnership agencies in terms of quality, quantity and timeliness to do whatever we can to ensure the most effective management of threat, harm and risk.

Standing Updates:

Contacts/Complaints/Reviews

The OPCC Contacts Team receive a weekly average of 296 contacts (email and telephone calls) internally and externally per week. These contacts vary from members of the public seeking to invite the PCC to events, enquiries about funding and more complex matters such as complaints or community issues. Of these contacts, between 45-50 result in case work which require a member of the team to work with the PCC to manage the contact, seeking further information or action to assist and resolve the contact. The OPCC acknowledge all contacts immediately and whilst the PCC aims to respond to all contacts within 20 working days, with the support of the team, the OPCC turnaround the majority of contacts in an average of 2.5 days. Contacts are monitored closely to identify trends, volumes and themes. They are a pivotal part of the public voice and are reported on monthly to the CEO and wider SLT via the OPCC Management Board by the Head of Contacts and Conduct.

COVID-19 has seen a significant increase in the amount of contacts received relating to the role of the PCC in the community during the pandemic and the policing of the new restrictions. Since lockdown was implemented on the 23rd March 2020, there have been 494 contact cases created and 236 of these cases related to COVID-19 (47.7%).

Data also includes monitoring of complaints which is a statutory function for the PCC. Since Sept 2019 (when records started), the PCC has monitored 113 complaints at the request of the public to ensure transparency, fairness and compliance with statutory guidance.

Since the 1st February 2020, the PCC has also taken on the responsibility for conducting reviews of police complaints which replaced the appeals function for low level service complaints under the previous complaints regime. Supported by the Review Manager, the PCC reviews complaint cases to ensure that they have been dealt with reasonably and proportionately. Where there are failings or issues, the PCC can request further action from the police in order to assist service recovery and resolve conflict. There have been 21 reviews submitted to the OPCC since the new legislation went live.

Estates: An update report is attached.

Contact Officer – Mark Simmonds, Interim Chief Executive