

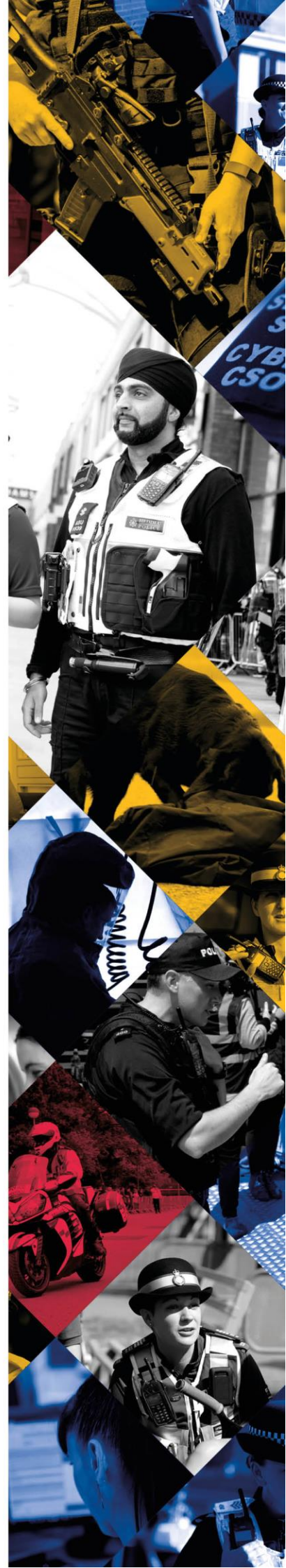


Office of Police and Crime Commissioner  
Office of Chief Constable

Strategy and Performance Board

# Chief Constable's Update Report

7<sup>th</sup> June 2021



## 1. PURPOSE AND RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 To update members of the Strategy and Performance Board (SPB) of significant events and work that has recently taken place.
- 1.2 There are no recommendations made requiring a decision.

## 2. OPERATIONAL UPDATES:

### 2.1 Covid-19

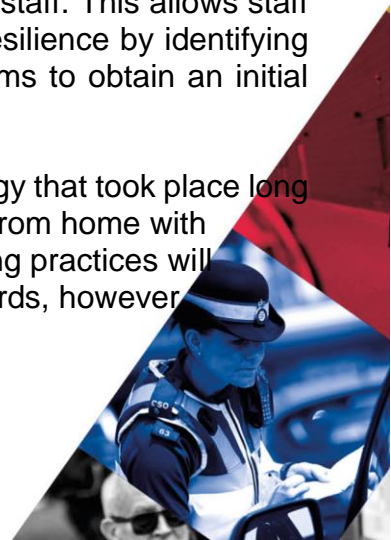
Our response to the pandemic remains a significant commitment and the force has worked incredibly hard to keep our staff and communities safe. It is of course well over a year since the beginning of lockdown and strong links continue with partners, local leaders and government in order to ensure that our policing style and tone is appropriate, inclusive and fair. These strong partnership links are crucial as restrictions ease which will undoubtedly bring an increase in demand and challenges for policing. The force continues to designate a Chief Inspector with responsibility for COVID recovery, whilst dedicated patrol resources continue to be deployed to deal with breaches of the regulations.

The force has maintained low sickness levels throughout the pandemic, with resourcing implications managed by Gwent Police's extremely effective 'COVID Hub' established to manage all COVID related sickness, contact tracing and preventative advice. This has resulted in consistent guidance being issued, accurate data on absences and deployment options being recorded (for example, self-isolating but still able to work from home) and has reduced demand on frontline supervisors during this very busy and challenging time.

I have been publicly clear on my views around the need for police officers to be vaccinated not before the vulnerable or those who need it most within our communities, but with due regard to the risks our officers face every day when dealing with members of the public; often in volatile and challenging circumstances. I am reassured that where possible, spare vaccines will be offered to staff and our COVID Hub continue to manage our overall levels of vaccinations as staff begin to also receive these in their communities.

Furthermore, lateral flow testing has now become available to all staff. This allows staff to regularly conduct a rapid test at home; protecting workforce resilience by identifying asymptomatic cases and allowing those presenting with symptoms to obtain an initial test result quickly.

We continue to see the return of our investment in digital technology that took place long before the pandemic which has allowed staff to continue to work from home with greater ease. Like most industries, this enforced change of working practices will undoubtedly play a part in shaping our organisation moving forwards, however,



it is worth noting that Gwent Police committed to become an agile organisation before the pandemic; again assisting the organisation in this change of practice. The adaptation to home and agile working has been embraced by many, however we must remain cognisant that we are an emergency service and this ability is not available to all staff. This in turn has led to a need for different supervision and support for those working within our estate and those working from other locations.

As in previous updates, I would like to take this opportunity to thank once again all our staff and partners who have worked tirelessly during the pandemic. I would also like to reiterate my continued gratitude to the communities of Gwent in supporting the national effort to reduce the spread of the virus and keep people safe.

The threat and challenges of COVID are of course not over. Though the encouraging epidemiological picture and unrelenting national vaccination programme is an extremely positive scenario in comparison with my update this time last year; the lifting of restrictions, improving weather and other national and international issues bring with them significant challenges for policing. The potential for protests (of which Gwent has had over 80 during the pandemic), raves, outdoor drinking and gatherings will undoubtedly place demands on policing not only in Gwent, but nationally. It is important to note that while crime reduced during the pandemic, calls for service did not – with vacant crime demand quickly being overtaken by COVID related calls, operational planning for protests and supporting partners.

## 2.2 **First Point of Contact (Force Control Room)**

Our Force Control Room is a critical, busy and often challenging environment. The team have adapted well to the splitting of the department across three sites during the pandemic to protect the workforce and ensure resilience. Several physical measures have since been installed in our primary control room (for example screens), with some re-integrating of the three sites now able to take place.

Despite the challenges of the pandemic the team have continued to drive forwards departmental change and improvements including:

- Implementation of text messages sent from our command and control system to share incident reference details and information to victims of crime.
- Changes to our Crime Management Unit workflows that have enabled completed investigations to be processed faster, leading to more accurate data on crime and investigation outcomes.
- Recruitment is currently underway for Control Room Operators and Call Handlers, both English and Welsh speaking – with our recent English language session attracting 48 people.

The team often have the very first interaction with some of the most vulnerable members of our communities and I am extremely proud of the empathy, care and professionalism demonstrated by all our staff. The following are just some examples of excellent work by the team, often above and beyond their core role:



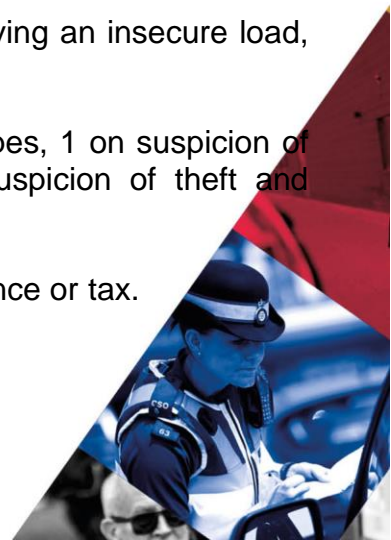
- Three operators came across a distressed female on the wrong side of a bridge during their break and through their calm and compassionate approach secured her safety prior to the arrival of police officers.
- A police constable operator was praised for her professionalism in supporting a vulnerable female caller when administering CPR to her critically unwell husband.
- Three members of the team rushed on foot from the control room to a location nearby to assist a male in distress, almost certainly saving his life.

### 2.3 Operational Support and Force Planning

Our Operational Support team have not only worked tirelessly to support the partnership response to the pandemic but have been instrumental in planning our policing response to the many challenges which policing has faced during the COVID crisis. As noted, the force has seen over 80 protests during the pandemic, the overwhelming majority of which have been peaceful, and their policing style and tone praised. Our Force Planning Unit have been instrumental in delivering these results, as have our specialist resources, for example, Protest Liaison Officers.

Our Area Support Units (ASUs) have worked tirelessly to deny criminals the use of our roads with some examples of good work as follows:

- Proactive stop searches conducted including on one occasion the seizure of £182,000 cash from an individual.
- The recovery of 4 stolen lorries and the arrest of 3 suspects following a 75-mile pursuit from the Gwent area.
- The locating of a suspicious vehicle, the driver of which it transpired was responsible for creeper burglaries who was later sentenced to 4 years in prison.
- The recovery of 1.2 kilos of cocaine with a value over £100,000 following the proactive interception of a vehicle.
- Operation Utah – a proactive operation focussing on driving offences in the Newport area. This multi-agency operation was designed to identify and tackle road users putting other motorists at risk, either by driving illegally or by driving unsafe vehicles. The latest event took place on the 9th of April and saw:
  - 88 vehicles stopped.
  - 41 drivers reported for a variety of offences (including having an insecure load, vehicle in dangerous condition and document offences).
  - 5 people were arrested – 3 after failing roadside drug wipes, 1 on suspicion of driving whilst unfit through drink or drugs and 2 on suspicion of theft and possession of an offensive weapon.
  - 6 vehicles were seized for driving without a licence, insurance or tax.



Our dog section come under our Operational Support unit and continue to provide an invaluable service to colleagues and our communities through the locating of high-risk missing people, significant quantities of drugs and cash and the apprehension of countless suspects who have sought to flee from officers.

## 2.4 Custody

I am very proud of the work that our custody staff undertake to ensure that our communities are safeguarded, whilst affording individuals within detention appropriate care and support. Due to the robust measures implemented during the pandemic, we have kept both our custody units open throughout the period. Despite regular contact with members of the public in an enclosed environment, our sickness levels for custody staff have remained very low. The team have continued to drive forwards change including during the period also, including:

- The development of a mobile application that will allow Custody Detention Officers to use a smartphone to record cell checks contemporaneously.
- The appointment of a bail Sergeant and facilitation of Bail and Released Under Investigation working groups to ensure scrutiny over these important areas.
- Continued discussions around collaborative opportunities to ensure that value for money and efficient service delivery is at the heart of our plans.

## 2.5 Criminal Justice

The implementation of 'NICE Investigate' is a significant piece of work in partnership with South Wales Police to implement a central digital evidence management system. This will bring about benefits relating to the capturing, reviewing and sharing of digital evidence speedily and securely. The implementation has been welcomed by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) and the defence community. Since the beginning of 2021 all digital evidence has been shared with CPS via NICE, including for urgent / in custody charging decisions which ultimately improves our service to victims by providing the full facts to the CPS expeditiously. The exponential growth and success of this project is illustrated by the following table which shows the growth in the number of files accessed through the system by CPS and HMCTS over recent months:

Month	Nov 20	Dec 20	Jan 21	Feb 21	Mar 21
Volume of files viewed by CPS/HMCTS	8	41	545	832	1367

## 2.6 Local policing

I am exceptionally grateful to our local neighbourhood and response policing teams who have been there, at the frontline for our communities throughout the pandemic. Officers have supported people in times of crisis, engaged to explain the regulations, dealt with COVID related calls for service and all whilst meeting the needs of more common types of demand, such as road traffic collisions, mental health matters and domestic abuse. Our continued focus on the issue of domestic abuse and public messaging has resulted in reporting rates remaining stable during the pandemic period.

A notable change to our local policing approach has recently taken place through the implementation of a new operating model which re-shapes several operational business areas. This model will offer greater scrutiny and support from managers, whilst deploying staff in the most efficient way to protect our communities.

Led by an Inspector, we have also launched our 'We Don't Buy Crime' prevention team who will deploy award winning strategies that are evidence-based and proven to reduce demand generated by acquisitive crime. The team's work is designed to increase public confidence and improve opportunities to bring offenders to justice. The department will focus on six key strands:

- Burglary response and crime prevention.
- Second-hand and stolen goods markets.
- Covert tactics.
- Safer neighbourhoods.
- Fuel stations
- Associated harm

## 2.7 Organised Crime

Our determination to respond to serious and organised crime has led to several recent successful operations including:

### OP Minstrel

- A complex investigation targeting 10 suspects who were conspiring to supply wholesale quantities of high purity cocaine across the entire force area.
- £50,000 in cash, 7 vehicles and 2 kilos of cocaine were seized in an operation involving 90 police officers.
- All suspects have been charged and remanded. 3 have already been sentenced to 7 years imprisonment.

### Op Bovate

- Seizure of £161,050 cash from a single suspect who has since pleaded guilty to possession of criminal property and class A drugs.
- A significant custodial sentence is anticipated next month.

### Op Lyra

- A joint investigation with West Midlands Regional Organised Crime Unit resulting in the seizure of a high value vehicle and packaging for large quantities of cocaine.
- The suspect was charged and remanded.



### Modern Day Slavery (MDS)

- MDS Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) are now firmly established with over 20 participants from various agencies in regular attendance. Over the past 3 months over 20 potential victims of MDS have been safeguarded and supported alongside other activity aimed at disrupting offenders.
- Organised immigration crime workshops have been held with over 30 Gwent Police participants involved who can now be used as advisors when officers deal with such incidents.
- In partnership with our Learning and Development department the MDS team have created a training package to help officers with their investigations that involve individuals claiming to have committed crime as a result of coercion and exploitation. Our Regional Organised Crime Unit intends to share this good practice with neighbouring forces.

## 2.8 **Cybercrime and Police Online Investigation Team**

Our Cybercrime team have responsibility for safeguarding, prevention and investigation with the team continuing to focus on cyber-dependant crimes (crimes that can only be carried out by using a computer). A significant on-going case is that of a complex fraud involving a multinational organisation which has resulted in the prevention of further loss from countless victims.

Our Cyber Protect Officer and Cyber Community Support Officer continue to engage with victims of cyber-dependent and cyber-enabled crimes with the purpose of supporting safeguarding and preventing re-victimisation. Proactive engagement also focusses on reaching out to vulnerable groups with specific positive feedback being received in March from the Secretary of Blackwood Stroke Support Group, whose members were so impressed with the input from our Cyber CSO that they wanted to invite her back. This input focussed on basic cyber-security and how to identify and avoid online scams.

Our Police Online Investigation Team (POLIT) focuses on protecting the vulnerable online, particularly by targeting those involved in the viewing and distribution of indecent images of children. In a recent example a significant piece of collaborative work was carried out across the disciplines and resulted in the identification of a 'first generation' child abuse image. The suspected child victim was quickly identified and safeguarded and within hours an arrest was made. In a further example a suspect employed within a caring role was arrested and charged for similar offences, whilst another offender was charged after the discovery of over 4000 indecent images on his computer.

### **Other assets within the team include:**

- Our High-Tech Crime Unit (HTCU) – who have worked tirelessly over recent months to prepare for a key accreditation, the assessment for which took place in November. The accreditation inspector was impressed with the professionalism of the team and the robust processes implemented and comfortably awarded the unit's International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) accreditation for another year.



- Kiosk mobile phone downloads – our recently appointed Kiosk Manager has worked hard to implement a new Kiosk model that is already delivering significant improvements for frontline staff. This process also introduces full time Kiosk operators to deal with download requests and keep backlogs and escalations to the HTCUCU to a minimum.
- Our Victim identification officer recently illustrated the criticality of their role by identifying three child abuse victims located in Sweden, who following effective information sharing, will now be safeguarded.

## 2.9 Investigation

Our investigation and public protection teams play a vital role in dealing with serious and complex crime and protecting vulnerable members of our communities. A recent case saw the conviction and imprisonment for over 17 years of a male for committing sexual offences against a young child. Extensive work has also been undertaken to develop a complex investigation titled Operation Pinebank involving county lines which resulted in the arrest and charge of two adult males for offences of trafficking and conspiracy to supply Class A drugs.

## 2.10 Financial Crime

Our Financial Crime Unit continues in its important role of denying offenders access to their criminal gains. The increase in seizures over recent months in comparison to the year prior is exemplary and can be seen in the table below:

	01/09/2019 – 31/3/2020	01/09/2020 – 31/3/2021	% Change
Civil Detention Orders	£558,775.86	<b>£1,701,678.47</b>	+204.53%
Civil Forfeiture Orders	£66,368.61	<b>£148,678.94</b>	+124.02%

Gwent Police also currently holds an exceptionally high judicial outcome rate for frauds in comparison with other forces and during the period 01.09.20 – 31.03.21 made 338 financial safeguarding interventions that refunded or prevented losses to vulnerable victims to a value of £391,733.

## 2.11 Special Branch

Our commitment to protecting our communities from extremism and delivering vital training has continued throughout the pandemic, with PREVENT awareness sessions delivered to all public protection workstreams and new Police Officers, Special Constables and Community Support Officers. Furthermore, we have inducted over 25 new PREVENT champions across the force; a programme of work which received praise from the deputy coordinator at the Counter Terrorism Police HQ national delivery team.

## 2.12 Operation Jasmine

As part of a large-scale investigation into the care home sector in South Wales





known as Operation Jasmine, Gwent Police undertook a criminal investigation commencing in 2005 into the care of residents at various care homes - including Brithdir Nursing Home in New Tredegar and Grosvenor House residential home in Blaenau Gwent.

This was a huge and complex investigation resulting, in over 4000 statements, over 10,000 exhibits and 50,000 pieces of documentation weighing approximately 12.5 metric tonnes.

Following 16 years of un-answered questions for the families of those who died at Brithdir Nursing Home, an inquest dealing with the deaths of 7 residents was conducted between January and March 2021. The families passed on their appreciation to the team for the support provided to the Coroner, allowing the families to be presented with the truth after what has been a long and difficult journey for many.

A second Inquest of 4 weeks will commence on Monday 17th May 2021 and will deal with the death of an individual who was a resident at Grosvenor Nursing Home.

### 2.13 Heroin and Crack Cocaine Area Coordinator

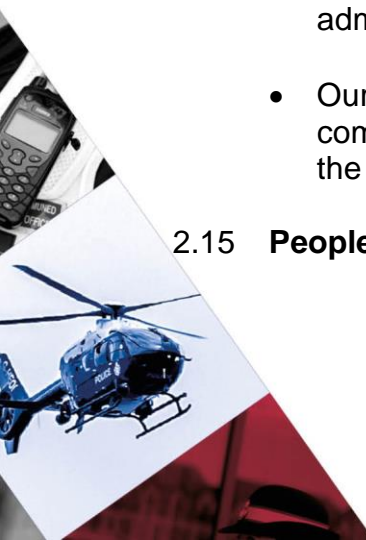
This comparatively new, partnership role continues to deliver for the force and promote safety within our communities and as a result has recently been extended until the end of March 2022. The role has recently led the business case for police officers to carry Nyxoid Nasal Naloxone within Gwent Police that can save lives in the event of drug overdoses. A pilot will now commence for 6 months utilising Advanced First Aiders within force.

### 2.14 Digital Services Division

Collaboration continues to be a key focus of the force in order to maximise financial efficiencies and improve our service to the public. Gwent and South Wales Police's joint Digital Services Division has (as noted in previous updates) played an integral part in our response to the pandemic, equipping officers with laptops and devices to ensure that work continued regardless of location. Since my last update, the team have also:

- Delivered 'Single Online Home' across both forces – a standardised website for policing that provides staff efficiencies, greater accessibility for the public and the ability to report crime online.
- Introduced Electronic Time Management across both forces - providing greater management and visibility of time and resource management plus a reduction in administrative bureaucracy.
- Our Digital Evidence Management System roll out (noted above) has also commenced which will allow the direct submission of digital evidence by members of the public to support investigations.

### 2.15 People Services



Our commitment to Operation Uplift (the UK Government policy to increase police numbers by 20,000) continues and due to successful workforce planning and recruitment, we were able to achieve a positive position of 14 Police Officers over our Operation Uplift target by the end of financial year 2020/2021, putting us in a healthy position for the commencement of Uplift Year 2. A workforce plan for Community Support Officers and Special Constables is also in place with our approach to Uplift monitored through a dedicated Gold Group.

Alternative routes into policing have also been introduced, with the commencement of direct entry Detectives through the Detective Now programme, the recent advertisement of the new 'pre-join degree' programme, a commitment to recruit 'Police Now' candidates under the Leadership Programme in August 2021 and preparation for the launch of our Apprenticeship Programme in April 2021.

Gwent Police is passionate about increasing the representation of its workforce and being an inclusive employer. A three-year action plan aligned to our Joint Strategic Equality plan has been implemented which encompasses the NPCC guidance on representative workforce. As part of this strategy our 'Positive Action Outreach' workers have continued to raise the level of community engagement with community groups and partners. A bespoke 'positive action recruitment journey' has also been developed with numerous support sessions provided to candidates through the Police Officer and Community Support Officer Campaigns, with increased links made with Universities and Colleges also to deliver career planning sessions. In the past few months (the period of this board) we have continued to see increases in the recruitment of colleagues from Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic communities with the financial year as a whole seeing a 27% increase in our number of Police Officers and a 100% increase of Community Support Officers from Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic communities

To support colleagues, we have also recently introduced a 'reverse mentoring' programme open to all staff regardless of rank or role.

The wellbeing of our staff is a vital area of business and the development of our wellbeing strategy has already seen the implementation of a wellbeing toolkit to support staff and a new specific PDR objective for all staff dealing with this important topic.

Training sessions on topics such as Mental Health, First Aid, Suicide Awareness and Fertility have all been scheduled. Due to COVID-19, leaflets regarding supporting emotional and physical health at home have also been created and disseminated along with online exercise programmes.

Our Occupational Health & Wellbeing Manager has played an integral part in the force's medical response to COVID. As noted above, our 'COVID Hub' manages case numbers whilst proactively limiting potential exposure to other staff, providing advice and guidance to vulnerable groups and working collaboratively with the other Welsh forces to develop an All Wales COVID Risk Assessment Document to provide on-going guidance to management on managing vulnerable individuals in the workplace. This work has been undertaken alongside our Occupational Health unit's core business of conducting thousands of regular appointments to support our workforce.

## 2.16 Inspections and surveys



Since my last update report the force, (along with others) has been subject of an inspection on its response to the COVID pandemic by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS).

The inspection was conducted between March and November 2020 and found that in general, police forces took immediate and decisive action to respond to the extreme circumstances of the pandemic. The inspection found that police forces introduced new ways of working during the pandemic that could provide future benefits to policing, for example, incorporating video conferencing technology when working with local safeguarding services.

Gwent Police were specifically highlighted for the following successful initiatives:

- Remote working within contact management - Gwent Police implemented an innovative facility for staff working from home to answer 101 non-emergency calls.
- Protecting Vulnerable People - Gwent Police and probation staff set up a successful daily meeting to discuss domestic abuse incidents and to share information.
- Criminal exploitation of children - staff engaged virtually with children at risk of exploitation by using audio and video technology. In some cases, this led to the children having more engagement with safeguarding professionals.

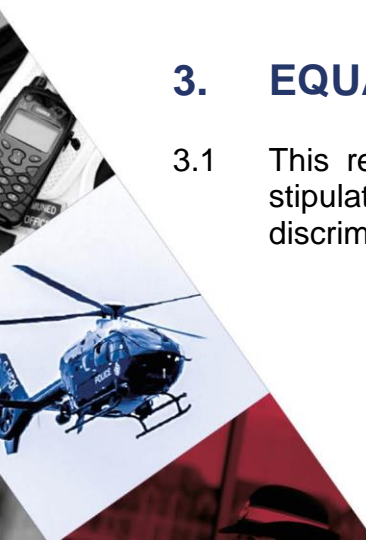
The force has also been inspected around mental health in the criminal justice system and although the formal report is awaited, initial feedback has been very positive.

We have also recently received the results of our staff survey conducted in partnership with Durham University. This survey took place between 19th October - 16th November 2020, with a 36% response rate and found that:

- There was progress in every key measure since the previous survey.
- The force performed particularly well in clarity of vision, organisational support, organisational pride and in providing supportive leadership.
- Our officers and staff reported they were particularly committed to the public, engaged with the force and satisfied with their job. There was improvement in the numbers who believed the force is a learning organisation, and a decline in those who feared making mistakes.

### **3. EQUALITIES & HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS**

- 3.1 This report has been considered against the general duty to promote equality, as stipulated under the Joint Strategic Equality Plan and has been assessed not to discriminate against any particular group.



- 3.2 In preparing this report, consideration has been given to requirements of the Articles contained in the European Convention on Human Rights and the Human Rights Act 1998.

## 4. RISK

- 4.1 None

## 5. PUBLIC INTEREST

- 5.1 In producing this report, has consideration been given to 'public confidence'? **Yes**
- 5.2 Are the contents of this report, observations and appendices necessary and suitable for the public domain? **Yes**
- 5.3 If you consider this report to be exempt from the public domain, please state the reasons:  
N/A

## 6. REPORT AUTHOR

- 6.1 Insp Robin Fuller

## 7. LEAD CHIEF OFFICER

- 7.1 Chief Constable Pam Kelly

## 8. ANNEXES

- 8.1 None

## 9. CHIEF OFFICER APPROVAL

- 9.1 I confirm this report has been discussed and approved at a formal Chief Officers' meeting.
- 9.2 I confirm this report is suitable for the public domain

Signature:



Date: 11.05.21

