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| Information Services |
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| Annual Report |
|  |
| 2023/24 |

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| **1.** | | **PURPOSE AND RECOMMENDATION** | | |
| 1.1 | | The report presents the annual outturn on the delivery of Information Services in Gwent Police. | | |
| 1.2 | | There are no recommendations made requiring a decision. | | |
| **2.** | | **INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND** | | |
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| 2.1 | | The Information Services structure is headed by the Head of Information Services and provides disclosure on data management provision for the force in line with legislative requirements. Other services provided include Police National Computer maintenance and the Firearms Licencing management. | | |
| 2.2  2.3  2.4  2.5 | | This report presents the key performance areas for Information Services which are monitored through the Information Assurance Board (IAB).  Under the auspices of the National Enabling Programme, an Information Management Collaboration Project has undertaken a review of both Information Services (Phase 1) and Information Governance functions. The organisational structures, policies and processes within each force were reviewed and recommendations were made to the respective Governance Boards. The business case was approved in November and implementation commenced in January 2023.  The agreed business case supported the option for a mirrored collaborative structure; effectively managing organisational risk and aligning structures that mirror each of the business areas across both Gwent and South Wales. In doing so, both forces are adequately resourced in managing demand, providing an opportunity to mutually support one another, enabling business continuity. Aligning and extending the skills and knowledge across the teams was an essential element of this proposal. To ensure effectiveness both forces will utilise the same performance framework and maintain regular monthly meetings together with assisting with ongoing post implementation reviews.  The project has achieved outcomes of aligned processes, joint policies and procedures, a wider network of skills and knowledge, efficiency gains across the business functions, compliance with legislation, reduced risk to our communities, improved succession planning, collaborative working, improved resilience and leadership structure, improved business continuity, demand sharing together with the ability to mutually support one another.  Phase 2 of the Information Services review was suspended on the basis that the demand profile and process maps no longer reflected demand practice.  A Continuous Improvement Review is currently underway across all the Information Services functions, assessing demand, processes and capacity. The includes the evaluation of automation to improve both efficiency and compliance. The findings are expected in Q2 24/25. | | |
| **3**. | | **ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION** | | |
| 3.1 | | The reporting arrangements have been operational throughout the financial year. | | |
| **3.2** | | **INFORMATION SERVICES – DISCLOSURES** | | |
| 3.2.1 | | The disclosure performance areas are summarised below;   * Subject Rights Provisions * Right of Access (Subject Access Requests) * Right to Be Informed * Right to Erasure * Right to Rectification * Right to Restrict Processing * Freedom of Information (FOI) * Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) * Children and Family Court Advisory & Support Service (CAFCASS) * Road Traffic Collision (RTC) Disclosure * Criminal Injury Compensation Authority (CICA) * Family Court Orders * Data Protection requests * Common Law Police Disclosures * Notifications * Disclosures * Local Authority Safeguarding Checks * Probation Services Domestic Abuse Checks * Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) * Police National Computer (PNC) * Creation * History | | |
|  | | ***Subject Rights Provisions***  *Right to be Informed*  Individuals have the right to be informed about the collection and use of their personal data. Data Controllers must provide certain information, such as purposes of processing, retention periods, data processors. This information is set out within the Corporate Privacy Notice.  *Right of Access Rights or Subject Access Rights (SAR)*  The SAR service involves the processing of requests from Data Subjects wishing to access their personal data.  This can include conviction data, non-conviction data, BWV, custody interviews.  SARs must be responded to within one month unless an extension or exemption applies. Exemptions may be applied if requests are excessive, manifestly unfounded, involve information about other people or involve legal professional privilege.  Performance fluctuated throughout the year, the lowest being 13% in December, compared to 100% in February. There were 438 SARs received in the period, and 456 SARs closed. Compliance was met for two of the 12 reporting months. The Force mean average for the year was 62% (Annex 1: Annual SAR FOI Performance). The National average was 74%. The force is investing in redaction tools to improve performance in the forthcoming year.  *Right to Erasure*  GDPR introduces a right for individuals to have personal data erased. The right to erasure is also known as ‘the right to be forgotten’. There were five requests in the reporting period, all processed within the statutory timescale.  *Right to Rectification*  GDPR includes a right for individuals to have inaccurate personal data rectified or completed if it is incomplete. There were three requests in the reporting period, all of which were processed within the statutory timescale.  *Freedom of Information (FOI) Requests*  The FOI service involves the processing of requests from members of the public and the media for information held by the force.  As a result of high-profile misconduct cases involving serving Police Officers, and Baroness Casey’s Report into Standards and Behaviour in the Metropolitan Police Service, there has been a national surge for FOI requests in relation to Police Misconduct. This has placed demand on both the FOI Team and the Professional Standards Department in terms of analytical capability. FOI requests increased to 1,182 requests in 2023/24, which is the highest recorded annual volume. Demand is predicted to steadily increase in 2024/25.  The statutory compliance target for FOI responses is 90% within 20 working days. Monthly force compliance for the year fluctuated from a low of 21% to a high of 82%. The Force average for the year was 55% (Annex 2: FOI SAR Assessment). The National average for all forces was 69%. The number of FOI requests that are overdue (over 20 working days) also steadily increased in 2023/24.  Performance is affected by capacity within the FOI Team to process requests and capacity within business areas to provide responses. An internal audit of Disclosure was conducted in 2023, which resulted in *Limited Assurance.* Key findings relating to the FOI team involved capacity and resourcing. The FOI Team has recently been fully staffed, and a temporary resource has been approved for 6mths to assist with demand.  In March 2022, the Information Commissioners Office published a follow-up report based on their thematic report issued in 2020 entitled 'Information Access Request Timeliness' in relation to SAR and FOI compliance. It produced recommendations aimed at driving compliance with the statutory time for responding to information access requests.  A self-assessment of force performance against the recommendations was completed in early 2024. It indicated that Gwent is achieving the following outcomes: ‘Good’ in two of the quality areas; ‘Adequate’ in two areas; and ‘Unsatisfactory’ in two areas. The latter related to the delay in response from departments exceeding the specified time limits, and the lack of ownership at departmental level in terms of setting targets for compliance.  An FOI improvement plan is now in place, which is monitored through force governance. It includes the use of the Publication Scheme, and development of an O365 “Lists” application to systematically record and administer requests (implementation expected Q2 24/25). It also includes development of a performance dashboard, automation of processes and increased Chief Officer focus.  FOIs with overdue status are reported to Chief Officers through force governance. They receive schedules of overdue FOIs in each of their departments, which allows them to ensure timely responses are correctly prioritised. A corporate risk has also been raised in respect of FOI performance.  The Publication Scheme is available via the website at the following link: [Published items | Gwent Police](https://www.gwent.police.uk/foi-ai/af/accessing-information/published-items/?q=&dt=Disclosure+log,Environmental+information+regulation,Publication+scheme&fdte=&tdte=&ic=&dir=&bor=)    *Environmental Information Regulations (EIR)*  The EIR provides public access to environmental information held by public authorities. Public authorities must make environmental information available proactively, and members of the public are entitled environmental information. We received one request in the reporting period.  *Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS)*  CAFCASS is an independent arbitration service representing children in Family Court.  These include Public and Private Law cases. The function includes the provision of Police National Computer (PNC) review and also locally held Police information. Disclosure is required within 5,10 or 15 days depending upon the level of check required. With effect from November 2023, CAFCASS Cymru centralised the PNC level checks which accounted for the greater number of checks received. This is demonstrated in the decrease in overall checks from that period and the decrease in average monthly checks from 62 to 15. There were 538 requests during the reporting period.  Performance has been at 100% compliance throughout the year.  *Road Traffic Collision Disclosures (RTC)*  Requests fall into five main categories:     * Motor Insurance Bureau (MIB) - disclosures for untraced drivers; * Association of British Insurers (ABI) - validating insurance claims; * Search requests - Insurance claims; * 3rd Party requests * Other - primarily requests for OIC reports.   There are key performance indicators for MIB requests (20 working days) and ABI (30 working days) requests, all other requests are dealt with subject to demand and capacity. This is a high demand area and there are mechanisms in place to ensure performance is monitored.  During this reporting period, a temporary resource has been approved to assist with the accrual of disclosure requests for RTC information however demand has continued to exceed capacity in this area, resulting in a significant backlog and the requirement to disclose under a Court Order on three occasions. There were 1,045 recorded requests during the reporting period. Resources have been realigned to support this area of demand, to good effect.  *Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority (CICA)*  This involves the processing of requests and provision of information to CICA, who handle requests on behalf of injured parties. There were 872 recorded requests during the reporting period.  Performance has been at 100% compliance throughout the year.  *Family Court Disclosure*  This involves the provision of Police held information as detailed in the Court Order, relating to Private and Public Law matters. There were 72 Orders received for Private Law, and 540 Orders received from the Local Authorities, during the period.  Performance has been at 100% for eight months of the reporting period.  *Data Protection / Disclosure*  This involves the general disclosure matters and information sharing with regulatory bodies and partners. There is no specified timescale to respond to these requests. There were 453 recorded requests during the reporting period.  *Common Law Police Disclosures (CLPD)*  This involves disclosures to regulatory bodies or employers in respect of nominals that have been arrested/charged for a recordable offence where they are considered a risk to children or vulnerable adults. There is no statutory timescale but a local target of 72 hrs in which to disclose. There were 936 recorded requests during the reporting period.  Performance has been at 100% for eight months of the reporting period.  *Safeguarding Checks*  This is the provision of information to Local Authority Safeguarding Teams in respect of risk assessing children and vulnerable adult placements. The recording of requests changed from *number of nominals* to *number of requests* to align with SW Police as part of the collaborative approach. Therefore, the estimated requests totalled 1,973 over the reporting period.  Performance has been at 100% compliance for ten months of the reporting period.  *Probation Service Domestic Abuse Checks*  The requirement to provide the Probation Service with Police disclosure in respect of domestic abuse incidents was significantly increased in February 2023 following two serious case reviews. In recognition of the demand placed upon Police, the National Probation Service agreed to contribute towards the resourcing. This amounts to 0.5WTE for Gwent. The funding for 23/24 has been approved retrospectively albeit there hasn’t been any increase in resource during this period. The post has been approved as part of the Information Services established posts and will be in place for 24/25. There were 2,699 requests received during the reporting period.  *Disclosure Barring Service (DBS)*  The DBS team is externally funded and process all DBS applications for the Gwent area.  These include:   * Initial research of force systems; * Recording of information onto the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF); * Disclosures; * Handling disputes; * ID fingerprints; and * Referrals to Barring.   Performance is measured in terms of timeliness and productivity. In the reporting period, incoming demand was 37,055 checks, which averaged 11% above forecast demand. The service standard for completing work in progress is 12 days; the force averaged 5 days. In terms of the % of checks completed within 15 days, the force achieved 96% against the service standard of 65% (Annex 3: DBS BSC).  The Standards & Compliance Unit (SCU) within DBS manage performance in respect of compliance against the Quality Assurance Framework, for both Disclosure and Barring elements of demand.  During the reporting period the end of year grading for Barring was *Good*. The end of year grading for Disclosure was *Inadequate*. This is based on the DBS weighting assessed against the current year’s performance and the two previous years where a *Requires Improvement* grading was applied.  The SCU assess how effective the force is at applying and complying with the QAF framework (including the relevant Statutory Guidance) for an individual case - it is not an assessment of the ultimate decision of the Chief Officer to disclose or not disclose. A summary of the SCU review outcomes is detailed below.   | **Grade** | **Number** | | --- | --- | | Good | 16 | | Requires Improvement | 9 | | Adequate | 3 | | Inadequate | 2 |   Under section 117A of the Policing Act, the Independent Monitor has a role to consider those cases within which a person believes that the information disclosed by police within a Disclosure and Barring Service Enhanced Criminal Records Certificate is either not relevant to the workforce they are applying for, or that it ought not be disclosed. During the review period, there were two cases reviewed by the Independent Monitor, both of which upheld the force’s decision to disclose information.  The plan to improve the force’s Disclosure grading focuses on upskilling key staff, subsequent performance monitoring and Chief Officer focus through the Information Assurance Board.    *Police National Computer Bureau (PNCB)*  The PNCB team maintain PNC Name and Vehicle updates including entering new records, managing alerts, updating current records and deleting records upon request, court resulting, impending prosecutions, and warrants administration.  The team is also responsible for inputting Road Traffic Collision injury reports onto the mapping service (AccsMap) and provide RTC statistics to Welsh Government.  Performance in respect of Arrest Summons Creation averaged 87%. The target is 90% within 24hrs. The National average was 88.1%.  Performance in respect of Disposal History updates averaged 74.5%. The target is 75% within 10 days. The National average was 83.7%. | | |
| 3.2.2 | Firearms Licensing  The Firearms Licensing Unit consists of the Administration Team and the Firearms Enquiry Officers (FEO). Since January, the Unit has also been supported by a Police Constable. Tasks include services involving the granting of certificates which are:     * renewals, variations, transfers, clubs and registered firearms dealers; * explosive certificates; * vetting and medical process; * suitability and security visits / telephone assessments. | | |
|  | There is a separate Annual Report for Firearms Licensing. For the purposes of this report, the following items are noted.  The FLU was subject to review in 2022 and the changes implemented in January 2023. Since this review, the Home Office issued revised Statutory Guidance in response to the Public Inquiry into the Plymouth Shootings. In recognition of this, it was acknowledged that previous process timings and demands were no longer accurate.  Temporary additional resource has been agreed to support Firearms Licensing functions to assist with the increased demand for Suitability assessments and the Grant application demand. This comprises; 3 x Police Constables and a Police Sergeant (Decision Maker).  Firearms Licensing is incorporated as part of a wider Information Services Continuous Improvement Project.  Since the response to the Plymouth Shootings, the Delegated Authority in respect of refusals and revocations of licenses remains with the Assistant Chief Constable (ACC) Operations, and a temporary Inspector remains in post.    Authorised Professional Practice (APP)  The APP for Firearms Licensing has been revised and assessment against requirements has been undertaken locally and an action plan developed.  Statutory Guidance  The Statutory Guidance for Firearms Licensing was revised in February 2023, following the public inquiry into the Plymouth Shootings. An assessment against requirements has been undertaken locally and an action plan developed. As a result of procedural changes. | | |
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| **4.** | **COLLABORATION** | | |
| 4.1 | As part of the All-Wales Collaboration Programme, a review of Information Services (Phase 1) was completed in January 2023. This included Disclosure and Firearms Licensing functions and the alignment of processes to implement a best practice model. | | |
| 4.2  4.3 | In light of legislative changes, demand shifts and procedural changes across the Information Services Department, the process maps captured in Phase 1 of the Information Services Review conducted in 2021-2022, along with the resource profilers were no longer reflective of actual process timings or demands.  It was determined that work should be undertaken to fully understand processes across the whole department, alongside the actual demand. It is recognised that there may be scope for the use of available technology to streamline processes across the department. In January 2024, the Continuous Improvement Review commenced across the whole department. This project supersedes Phase 2 of the Information Services Review, which has been suspended. | | |
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| **5.** | **NEXT STEPS** | | |
| 5.1 | The force will continue to report performance for all areas within Information Services via the Information Assurance Board. | | |
| 5.2 | The Improvement Plans in respect of FOI compliance and the DBS Disclosure Grading will be monitored and reported via the Senior Information Risk Owner and the Information Assurance Board. | | |
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| **6.** | **FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS** | | |
| 6.1 | There are no financial considerations in this report. | | |
| **7.** | **PERSONNEL CONSIDERATIONS** | | |
| 7.1 | Training and support is provided to staff to ensure they are able to meet the obligations of their role. | | |
| **8.** | **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS** | | |
| 8.1 | There are no legal implications at this stage. | | |
| **9.** | **EQUALITIES AND HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS** | | |
| 9.1 | This project/proposal has been considered against the general duty to promote equality, as stipulated under the Single Equality Scheme and has been assessed not to discriminate against any particular group. | | |
| 9.2 | 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. | | |
| **10.** | **RISK** | | |
| 10.1 |  | | |
|  | A Strategic Issue has been raised in respect of the FOI Compliance which will be monitored via the Information Assurance Board. | | |
| **11.** | **PUBLIC INTEREST** | | |
| 11.1 | In producing this report, has consideration been given to ‘public confidence’? **Yes** | | |
| 11.2 | Are the contents of this report, observations and appendices necessary and suitable for the public domain? **Yes** | | |
| 11.3 | If you consider this report to be exempt from the public domain, please state the reasons: **N/A** | | |
| 11.4 | Media, Stakeholder and Community Impacts: **None** | | |
| **12.** | **REPORT AUTHOR** | | |
| 12.1 | Natasha Gilbert, Head of Information Services | | |
| **13.** | **LEAD CHIEF OFFICER** | | |
| 13.1 | ACC Nick McLain | | |
| **14.** | **ANNEXES**   1. Annual SAR FOI Performance 2. FOI SAR Assessment 3. DBS BSC | | |
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| **15.** | **CHIEF OFFICER APPROVAL** | | |
| 15.1 | The following report was presented for scrutiny at a Chief Officer meeting.  Meeting chaired by:  **ACC Nick McLain**  Meeting date:  **02.05.2024**  I confirm thisreport has been discussed and approved at a formal Chief Officers’ meeting.  Meeting chaired by:  **CC Pam Kelly**  Meeting date:  **15.05.2024**  I confirm this report is suitable for the public domain. | | |
|  | **Signature:**  **Date: 15.05.2024** | | |
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