

Decision log PCCG-2021-021

Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent Annual Report 2020/21

Introduction

The impact of Covid-19 throughout the 2020/21 financial year was substantial.

Inevitably, this had a significant impact on how my office and I undertook our roles and upon what we focused our efforts. It inevitably led to much of our planned work being done in different ways, as efforts were rightly focused on enabling Gwent Police to respond as efficiently and effectively as possible to the disruption caused by the pandemic.

However, despite these challenges, we still delivered, supported or scrutinised substantial pieces of work, both from our business plan and reacting quickly to the constantly changing environment caused by Covid-19. I am incredibly proud of how flexible and resilient both my team and Gwent Police have been in adapting to the changes required to respond to Covid-19 and enable recovery.

Before detailing how we have delivered against the priorities within my Police and Crime Plan in 2020/21, I will explain some of the work that has been undertaken specifically in relation to Covid-19 and its implications. In addition to this, almost all the work set against my priorities that is highlighted in this annual report was delivered as a result of the pandemic or was affected by it.

It would be remiss of me not to take this opportunity to thank all police officers, staff, healthcare workers, local authorities and other partners who have been working around the clock throughout the pandemic to manage the response in Gwent. The situation has been unparalleled and the Chief Constable has needed to ensure the right balance when considering the use of police powers. This positive approach was reflected in the HMICFRS thematic report on policing the pandemic that was published later in the year.

My main responsibility is to ensure that Gwent has an efficient and effective policing service and Covid-19 has not deterred this. Although I enabled the Chief Constable to do what needs to be done, trying my best not to distract or unnecessarily burden, I held the force to account over how well the service was being delivered. This support and scrutiny was achieved through regular conferences (often daily) with the Chief Constable and my office's participation in the daily Gold and Silver strategic and operational meetings. This was important in understanding operational decisions, particularly where a major shift in policy was being implemented. It also allowed us to offer reasonable challenge where necessary, to ensure appropriate checks and balances were in place.

The approach by Gwent Police throughout the pandemic was to engage, explain and encourage compliance with the guidance about staying home to save lives. During the year, I was challenged on the police's approach by members of the public. However, there was a fairly even split between those thinking the force was being

too strict, to those believing it was not doing enough. Enforcement was the last resort, and this is an approach I fully supported.

The protection of police, emergency and other key workers is always a real focus for me and we supported Gwent Police to ensure the health and safety of its officers and staff. Concerns around the police having appropriate measures in place when dealing with members of the public and the need for adequate stocks of personal protection equipment (PPE) for staff were consistent throughout 2020/21. These topics were covered daily in the Gold group meetings and I was pleased with the force's handling of these areas.

Our investments in technology over the past two years means that the majority of office-based staff were able to work from home, in-line with the government's guidance for people to do so wherever possible. A coordination cell was set up with Gwent Police early on to reallocate work so business as usual could be maintained as much as possible. Our Business Continuity Plan helped provide resilience around our key decision-making roles and responsibilities within the schemes of consent and delegations, financial regulations and standings orders.

Despite these challenges, we continued to hold formal governance and assurance meetings to help me fulfil my statutory responsibilities, including Strategy and Performance Board, Joint Audit Committee and Gwent Police and Crime Panel meetings.

Partnership working with other organisations and our communities has been paramount throughout the pandemic. Throughout the year, my office took part in weekly national meetings to share learning and ensure consistent approaches wherever possible across Wales. A member of my team chaired the local Criminal Justice System weekly meetings to ensure that everything was in place that could be. This included information for victims, direct support, and ensuring any issues raised were addressed with urgency. The Women's Pathfinder Service, which is partly-funded through my office, was also fully utilised to support women on early release.

To ensure Gwent Police is in the best possible place to move forward and to ensure all learning from the pandemic is captured, a Recovery Plan is being developed to ensure any adverse effects of Covid-19 on the force are actively managed and reduced. There are opportunities here. The Chief Constable and I will be looking to capitalise on enforced learning from the Covid-19 emergency as, like many other organisations, we have had to become more adaptable and agile in how we work. These opportunities and examples of good work are being captured in the Recovery Plan, rolled out in our day-to-day work, and factored into future business continuity planning.

There is a cost implication to this. The UK government has said funding will be made available to Commissioners to cover the policing response to Covid-19; however, we do not know the true costs at the time of writing.

Finally, Covid-19 also impacted on the Police and Crime Commissioner elections that were due to have taken place in May 2020. The elections took place in May 2021, which means that the current of office will be three years rather than four years. I reviewed my Police and Crime Plan in light of Covid-19 and its implications; however, as I only updated it last year, I extended it to 2022.

PRIORITY 1 – CRIME PREVENTION

Promoting and reducing crime that causes the most harm in our communities and against the most vulnerable people.

Number of total recorded crimes

| Crime types | 2018–2019 | 2019–2020 | 2020–2021 |
|-------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| All other theft | 4,753 | 4,303 | 2,971 |
| Bicycle theft | 425 | 329 | 273 |
| Burglary dwelling | 2,540 | 2,546 | 1,947 |
| Burglary non-dwelling | 1,163 | 1,098 | 684 |
| Criminal damage & arson | 9,419 | 8,584 | 6,750 |
| Drug offences | 1,463 | 1,498 | 1,683 |
| Homicide | 4 | 6 | 4 |
| Miscellaneous crimes | 1,403 | 1,370 | 1,312 |
| Other sexual offences | 981 | 1,040 | 632 |
| Possession of weapons | 237 | 251 | 230 |
| Public order offences | 7,872 | 7,975 | 7,281 |
| Rape | 574 | 499 | 297 |
| Robbery | 301 | 304 | 242 |
| Shoplifting | 3,533 | 3,459 | 2,058 |
| Theft from the person | 373 | 314 | 151 |
| Vehicle crime | 3,398 | 3,256 | 2,217 |
| Violence with injury | 5,823 | 5,741 | 4,315 |
| Violence without injury | 14,176 | 14,853 | 13,460 |
| Total | 58,438 | 57,426 | 46,509 |

The Covid-19 pandemic had a significant impact on recorded crime. The effects of the pandemic can be observed in the 18% reduction in recorded crime between 2019/20 and 2020/21. Public health measures, such as lockdowns, reduced opportunities for both committing and reporting crime. Therefore, it is expected that crime will start to return to pre-Covid levels as we exit the pandemic. In fact, there is reason to believe that crime may initially see a spike that exceeds pre-Covid levels due to the pressurised environment lockdowns have created. The re-opening of the night-time economy is one area where crime is anticipated to rise, with public order offences and alcohol-related violence likely driving up demand on police resources. Crimes such as shoplifting and theft from the person are also expected to increase with the easing of restrictions.

As noted above, public health measures also limited opportunities to report crime. We are particularly concerned about crimes such as domestic abuse, rape and other sexual offences. Lockdowns exacerbated the challenges faced by victims of these crime types, with stay at home measures placing them in close proximity to the

offender for prolonged periods of time. These conditions also made it difficult for victims to report offences to police. It is expected that victims may come forward to disclose as lockdown is relaxed, which is likely to present high demand for the force. Gwent Police and my office will continue to monitor crime trends as public health measures are lifted to gauge how demand compares with pre-Covid levels of crime.

Crime statistics

The latest Crime Survey for England and Wales continues to show that Gwent has one of the lowest levels of recorded crime in the UK. However, we know that areas such as domestic abuse and sexual violence remain under-reported. This was of particular concern during the pandemic, with so many people confined to their homes due to lockdowns, local restrictions and the Welsh 'firebreak'. We have worked with partners including Welsh Government, Gwent Police and the regional Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) partnership on public messaging to encourage victims to seek support. We have also worked with Public Health Wales and the other three Welsh OPCCs to ensure that there is information available at track and trace centres, as many victims have limited opportunities to get support information due to Covid-19 restrictions.

Cyber crime

The increase in the use of online technology during school closures and home learning due to Covid-19 raised the importance of keeping children and young people safe online. Throughout the year, my office shared safety information with our key partners and worked with young people to help tackle child sexual exploitation (CSE). We launched a joint campaign with Gwent Police called 'Stop. Talk. Protect.'. We provided insight and support to the planning of this, arranging workshops with local children and young people to help co-produce the key messaging, branding and approach. The campaign worked with key partners and the local education authorities to warn parents about the dangers that lurk online. BBC, ITV, Wales Online and South Wales Argus all covered the campaign.

We promoted the Police Cyber Alarm and encouraged businesses to stay safe online. This is a government-funded scheme that monitors cyber-threats and provides businesses with regular reports that highlight any vulnerabilities within their organisations.

We also worked with Gwent Police's Cyber Crime Team as it rolled out online safety training to more than 70 police cadets. The young people were taught how to recognise online threats and modify their own behaviour to avoid online scams. We supported this work by continuing to speak with residents about cyber issues and promoted advice to groups who are at risk.

Diversion schemes

Deputy First Minister Jane Hutt and Victims' Commissioner Dame Vera Baird praised two of our services that are helping offenders to break cycles of criminality and improve their lives. The Women's Pathfinder Whole System Approach and 18–25 Early Intervention Service are jointly commissioned by my office and South Wales OPCC. They provide targeted support to women and young people, supporting them with issues such as alcohol and substance misuse, mental health problems, and improving family relationships. The services work to divert people from criminality and re-offending by creating a support network and helping them live safer, healthier lives. They are shining examples of effective collaboration between public, private

and third sector organisations. They support some of the most vulnerable people in our society, with almost 2,300 people helped in 2020/21, and 3,249 since launch.

Gwent Drug and Alcohol Service

We know that alcohol and drugs are two of the main drivers of crime, and that addressing these issues is integral to any crime prevention strategy. There are often multiple issues at play, with many people with substance misuse issues having experienced adverse childhood experiences in their lives. The Gwent Drug and Alcohol Service (GDAS) helps people address any underlying needs and substance misuse issues. This work was commissioned by Gwent Area Planning Board, of which I am an executive member. My office also contributed £820,279 to the delivery of the GDAS criminal justice service in 2020/21.

GDAS and consortium partners had to implement a range of responsive measures in response to Covid-19. Criminal justice staff were split into teams to alternate delivery from sites and homeworking, and to engage service users by telephone, email, social media and online platforms where possible. Some excellent partnership work was undertaken with police and probation colleagues during the year. Prison leavers and statutory order cases were prioritised for access to treatment. Crucially, throughout this period, no service users were refused treatment due to the pandemic. Clinical treatment was sustained, with minimal face-to-face contact.

Police Community Fund

Every year, organisations in Gwent can bid for a share of £300,000 from my Police Community Fund (PCF). The fund is open to non-profit organisations that support children and young people who are involved, or at risk of becoming involved, in crime and anti-social behaviour, or those who have been victims of crime. The fund is partly made up from money seized from criminals. Organisations can bid for sums from £10,000 up to £50,000. There were 21 bids for funding, with the following receiving funding for 2021/22:

| Organisation | Area | Project name | Amount |
|---|---------------|---|---------------|
| Cymru Creations | Blaenau Gwent | Blaenau Gwent Film Academy - creating films based on participants' experiences on topics such as dangerous driving, anti-social behaviour and hate crime. | £25,000 |
| Senghenydd Youth Drop in Centre (SYDIC) | Caerphilly | SYDIC - diversionary activities for young people in effort to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour | £31,314.49 |
| KidCare4U | Newport | Black, Asian and minority ethnic Saturday Kids Club Project - provides weekend childcare to families in Pillgwenlly while promoting integration and reducing barriers between disadvantaged ethnic groups and other communities | £22,000 |

| | | | |
|------------------------|---------------|---|------------|
| Cyfannol Women's Aid | Gwent | Assertive Outreach 16-24 - provides support to victims of domestic abuse at the point of crisis | £27,314.15 |
| Ffin Dance | Blaenau Gwent | Dance and Enhance | £10,000 |
| Duffryn Community Link | Newport | DCL Detached Youth Work – engaging young people and address anti-social behaviour in the area. | £28,028 |

Ring-fenced funding for year two and three projects previously awarded were:

| | | | |
|---------------------------------|---------|--|-----------|
| Urban Circle Productions | Newport | U-Turn Project – using the creative arts to tackle social problems affecting young people in and around the Pillgwenlly area of Newport. | 50,000 |
| Cwmbran Centre for Young People | Torfaen | Open access drop-in – activities to help tackle anti-social behaviour in Cwmbran town centre. | 40,314.72 |
| The Gap Wales | Newport | The Sanctuary project – a charity that supports vulnerable children and young people who have been trafficked into the UK, or arrived seeking asylum, providing a safeguarding role and helping them to access services. | 16,931 |
| Community House | Newport | Maindee Youth schools project – youth workers provide educational and diversionary projects for children and young people, along with a budget for activities and associated costs. | 48,351 |

Roads policing

I recently welcomed Gwent Police's commitment to implementing the findings of a review of roads policing in Gwent, following a review of Gwent Police's current roads policing provision that I undertook in 2019/20. As well as recognising the good work carried out by Gwent Police, it made several recommendations for consideration, including that the force invest more resources into roads policing across the region. The significant investment we have made in about 170 new police officer posts since 2016, and the recent investment in additional officers by the UK Government through Operation Uplift, has allowed Gwent Police to review its operating model. I am pleased that this is going to include a new Roads Policing and Specialist Operations

Unit that will incorporate the recommendations I made. Other recommendations include a commitment to invest in more specialist data collection and research to better understand the root causes of traffic collisions in Gwent, and to implement new performance measures to provide more insight into police performance.

During October, Gwent Police supported Project EDWARD, a national campaign that stands for 'every day without a road death'. Officers carried out a range of traffic enforcement activities across Gwent, while also engaging residents with the Gwent Police crash car to demonstrate why road safety is so important. The reality is that almost all traffic incidents that result in serious injury and death could have been easily avoided. During the week-long driver safety campaign supported by my office, Gwent Police recorded 1,022 road-related offences, including seatbelt offences, speeding and mobile phone use.

I am a road safety lead for the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC). During Project EDWARD we promoted an APCC survey on roads policing. A total of 66,266 people across the UK took part and the key findings were that most people want drivers who speed to face higher penalties, and for more of the money raised from speeding fines to be invested in enforcement. The APCC will use the results to inform its work with UK Government's roads policing review.

Scams

Throughout 2020/21, we proactively shared scam awareness information from Gwent Police, Scam Aware and Action Fraud. Gwent Police led a national proactive scam awareness campaign, and this was supported internally and externally. We also targeted specific scam awareness information to specific demographics; for example, we contacted Age Concern with information targeting older people to be cascaded to service users. We worked with Gwent Police's cyber protect officer to arrange for scam information to be delivered through local authority food parcels as a way of reaching off-line communities. We sent advice to businesses encouraging them to ensure their own cyber resilience and took part in Scam Awareness Fortnight. Scam information was shared with more than 58,000 residents via email. In June, I was invited on BBC Radio Wales Breakfast to talk about Covid-19 scams, where I reinforced the advice on how to stay safe. I have since become the all-Wales Commissioner lead for tackling cyber-crime, with Chief Constable Pam Kelly leading from a Welsh police force perspective.

Serious and organised crime

Despite the challenges presented by Covid-19, I was reassured throughout the year that Gwent Police continued to tackle serious and organised crime as a priority. This was reflected in a number of high-profile raids that were covered in the national media. I remain proud to see officers continuing to protect our communities from the most serious and damaging crimes that have such a negative impact on many lives.

However, enforcement operations such as this are only part of the solution. Prevention and intervention are equally important. The work to tackle serious and organised crime is supported by projects that my office funds, including those run by Positive Futures, Barnardo's and St Giles Trust. These are on the ground in communities offering diversionary activities to identified young people to help tackle this.

Some of this work had to change due to the pandemic, but the services adapted. For example, CrimeStoppers' Fearless project ran online learning sessions to raise

awareness of County Lines. We encouraged youth organisations in Gwent and young people to take part in them. Fearless maximised the use of video conferencing to promote its services, resources and anonymous reporting mechanism to professionals in Gwent. During the year, Fearless delivered e-training to more than 600 professionals working with young people, including teachers, youth workers and charity workers. They also filmed a short 'true or false' knife crime awareness video, supported community action days, undertook youth outreach with SchoolBeat and Positive Futures, run campaigns to help prevent anti-social behaviour and firework misuse, and delivered workshops to 390 children and young people. Fearless campaigns helped provide a counter-narrative to the use of social media by criminal gangs to exploit young people. The 'Aaron's Story' and 'Amy's Story' campaigns reached 35,977 and 34,681 young people across Gwent respectively. This resulted in 1,948 young people engaging with the adverts by 'swiping up' to watch the video and/or visit the website.

In addition to the Fearless-commissioned activity, my office contributes to the CrimeStoppers contact centre. In order for Gwent Police to receive information on priority crime areas, CrimeStoppers runs regular campaigns. During the second half of September, its county lines digital campaign reached about 100,000 people across Wales. During October, it partnered with Victim Support Cymru to support National Hate Crime Awareness Week with a new campaign to 'Speak Up Stop Hate Crime', while in November the 'Silence Won't Stop Violence' campaign supported efforts to tackle knife crime. I supported all of these.

In addition to this, I gave £372,145 to pilot interventions which protect children and young people from serious harm caused by serious violence and organised crime, by delivering interventions that support those involved in criminality.

Violence against pharmacists and retail staff

Following a presentation by the Pharmacists' Defence Association (PDA) at the All Wales Policing Group, we raised awareness of violence against community pharmacists in Gwent. Pharmacists are included in the Assaults on Emergency Workers (Offences) Act 2018. I campaigned for this. Internal communications for Gwent Police officers on this issue were published on the force's intranet, while statements of support to pharmacists were issued during the Covid-19 lockdown. This drew praise from pharmacists across Wales. I also raised this issue in articles in the South Wales Argus and Caerphilly Observer. The PDA has since thanked us for our support, and for enabling a meeting between the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners and the PDA. This resulted in other PCCs championing this cause.

However, such incidents in shops are not limited to pharmacy staff. Gwent Police and I heard from retail workers from across Wales as part of National Respect for Shopworkers Week. The discussion, hosted by the shopworkers' trade union USDAW and community retailer Co-op, centred around incidents during lockdown. A USDAW survey showed that 75 per cent of retail staff had seen an increase in abuse during the coronavirus crisis. I heard how retail staff face daily fear of abuse, theft and attack, and I was appalled and disgusted to hear about incidents in Wales where staff have been spat at. Following this, I worked with Gwent Police and USDAW to campaign for no tolerance for abuse against shopworkers, and for people to report these incidents to the police.

PRIORITY 2 – SUPPORTING VICTIMS

Providing excellent support for victims of crime, particularly focusing on those who have experienced the most serious harm.

Victim satisfaction survey results

| | 2018–2019 | 2019–2020 | 2020–2021 |
|------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Whole experience | 75% | 75% | 82% |
| Ease of contact | 89% | 95% | 95% |
| Action taken | 71% | 76% | 82% |
| Way treated | 87% | 85% | 91% |
| Kept informed | 64% | 46% | 75% |

The Victims' Board has continued to oversee a programme of improvement work and scrutinise performance of services for victims. There has been improvement in four of the five areas, with the fifth area remaining consistent. Most notably, the satisfaction rate for being kept informed has improved. This is significant as, historically, satisfaction has been lower than other aspects of service. Many crimes or incidents are now resolved at the first point of contact, and during the first quarter of 2020/21, changes to the survey script were made. The question is now not asked of anyone whose case is "resolved without deployment". While this improvement is encouraging, both the force and I recognise the need to further provide better services for victims in Gwent. Further developments are planned for 2021/22 to providing a more accurate understanding of victim experiences that support positive change.

Connect Gwent

Connect Gwent is a multi-agency victim support service that provides a range of services to people impacted by crime to help them cope and recover. It is funded by my office, via a Ministry of Justice grant. Being a multi-agency service allows people to access the most relevant and appropriate support according to their needs. Support may be provided by a single agency within Connect Gwent or by agencies working together in a coordinated way. In 2020/21, I provided £561,092 to Connect Gwent to provide a multi-agency hub for victims and witnesses of crime in Gwent. During the year, the arrangements for victim support were reviewed and improved with the new structure coming in at the start of 2021/2022. The next steps will be to re-commission our victims' services.

During this year, Connect Gwent received 25,357 referrals. In 2020/21, it moved to a 'consent only' model meaning that victims were referred to support agencies following a needs assessment to understand if support is required. The implied consent model resulted in only 3% of the 25,357 referrals engaging in ongoing support. The model allows support services to target their resources at those that require support. During 2020/21, Connect Gwent achieved the following outcomes:

| Outcome | Number reporting improvement |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Better able to cope and recover | 681 |
| Better informed and empowered to act | 728 |
| Improved health and well-being | 599 |
| Improved feelings of safety | 559 |

Domestic abuse and sexual violence funding

As the entire of 2020/21 took place during the pandemic, we were concerned that issues of domestic abuse and sexual violence were being under-reported. This was recognised at a national level, with the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) making Covid-19 extraordinary funding available to Commissioners to help tackle these issues. We successfully bid for an element of this, which could be used by local charities to meet additional costs incurred while adapting services and dealing with additional demand. In total, we gave more than £200,000 to New Pathways, Cyfannol, Phoenix Domestic Abuse, BAWSO, Llamau and Victim Support. This funding helped these frontline charities provide survivors with the help they needed. It also helped to develop new ways of working and many of these will be continued having proven to be popular with many victims, including remote counselling and support.

Last financial year, we made an expression of interest to the MOJ for three independent sexual violence advocates (ISVAs). In March 2019, we were informed that we were successful in securing funding for two posts, and in July we were notified of funding for a further post. Funded for two years, a total award of £234,097 has been made to fund the ISVAs; one to support children, another for victims with mental health issues, and another to provide community outreach support.

A successful bid for £205,469 was submitted to the Home Office VAWDASV perpetrator programme fund in September 2019, which saw Phoenix Domestic Abuse Services behavioural change intervention to perpetrators of domestic abuse run until September 2021. This expanded existing adult and youth behavioural change provision across Gwent, widen eligibility criteria for group and 1-2-1 work, tested an online provision, and extended support for victims and families.

In addition to the above, we provided the following funding to domestic abuse and sexual violence services in Gwent in 2020-21:

| | | |
|-----------------|--|----------|
| Sexual violence | To provide sexual assault referral centre, ISVA and counselling provision for victims of any age or gender affected by sexual violence or child sexual abuse/exploitation | £385,023 |
| Domestic abuse | To provide a service coordinating multi-agency support to high risk domestic abuse victims aged 16 and older. A regional high-risk IDVA service was jointly commissioned with Newport City Council with each contributing about 50% of costs. An annual grant is to be provided to Newport City Council for delivery of the service. | £156,363 |

Don't Suffer In Silence

My office teamed up with Gwent VAWDASV Regional Team and Gwent Police to run a joint campaign to highlight VAWDASV and encourage people experiencing it to seek help. The 'Don't Suffer In Silence' campaign encouraged people to report via the Live Fear Free helpline and signposted people to Gwent Safeguarding's website for information. In total, 30 survivors of VAWDASV informed its content and some of them took part in it. As part of the campaign, we:

- Distributed approximately 1,200 posters and 9,500 leaflets to more than 280 locations in Gwent;
- Generated more than £21,000 worth of media coverage;
- Had more than 200k impressions on social media; and
- Sent the information to 58,00 residents via email.

In order to ensure this messaging reached as wide an audience as possible, a series of paid-for promoted posts also ran on Instagram and Facebook. Critically, this was reaching people who don't follow our channels. The Instagram posts were tailored to target people aged 35 and under in Gwent, while the Facebook posts targeted people aged 45+. This was done following a data analysis with VAWDASV partners.

Due to Covid-19, Gwent Police also brought forward its 'Read Between the Lines' campaign on domestic abuse. We also supported this, repeatedly shared key messaging and encouraged our partners to do likewise. This complemented our existing work within the wider VAWDASV agenda.

Throughout this period, both the Chief Constable and I were very clear that we wanted people experiencing VAWDASV to seek help. I worked with the force to develop ways to ensure that vulnerable victims of domestic abuse were safeguarded, regardless as to whether there are current reports. Gwent Police identified repeat victims that had not reported during lockdown and contacted them. They also worked with the Probation Service to identify and manage high-risk perpetrators where they were living with or having contact with victims.

Elder abuse

Monday 15 June was World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, which aims to focus global attention on the problem of physical, emotional, and financial abuse of older people. As part of this, I urged older people and their families to learn how to spot the signs of financial abuse and elder exploitation. We know that older people are particularly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation, and we feared that opportunities for this to happen rose due to the increased isolation caused by Covid-19. There will always be people who seek to exploit the vulnerable, so during the pandemic it was important for people to keep an eye out for any signs of abuse.

To help tackle this, a press release and supporting materials were issued to the press, 58,000 residents via email, councillors and councils, registered social landlords and sheltered housing schemes, care agencies, Age Cymru, 50+ and senior citizens forums, Age Connects Torfaen, pharmacies, community connectors, voluntary organisations, and council staff organising Covid-19 volunteers. Local transport companies shared information with staff to look out for signs of elder abuse, as did some of the housing associations. Information was also shared on our social media platforms and those of partners.

Modern-day slavery

I am the all-Wales commissioner lead for modern day slavery and campaigns are important in encouraging people to look-out for and report suspicious activities. An eight-week campaign by CrimeStoppers, supported by Wales' four Police and Crime Commissioners and anti-slavery partner agencies, focused on trafficking along the coastline and sexual exploitation of vulnerable people in towns and cities. It resulted in more than 5,200 views of the campaign page, while Facebook adverts reached about 378,000 people. Gwent Police received an 18% increase in CrimeStoppers reports relating to drug manufacture and cultivation during the campaign.

I supported the National Anti-Trafficking and Modern Day Slavery Network, met with the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner and members of the Wales Anti-Slavery Leadership Group, and was interviewed by GRETA – the Council of Europe's group of experts on action against trafficking in human beings. GRETA members praised

the work in Gwent for the strong partnerships we have with Welsh Government and other police forces.

Rape review

In 2020/21, my office conducted an in-depth review into the criminal justice response to rape in Gwent. This review was largely focussed on how Gwent Police responds to and deals with rape; however, it did also include additional data from the Crown Prosecution Service in order to understand how effectively the process works both before and after a charge has been. The review also sought the views of victims and staff in Gwent, which offered qualitative insight to complement the quantitative data analysis. Recommendations and suggestions on how to improve and enhance the force's performance were included in the review. I have shared the report with the Chief Constable and are awaiting a formal response to the findings of the review and its recommendations.

Victims

We also attended fortnightly meetings with the Victims' Commissioner to inform her work regarding Covid-19 implications and any other issues of significant concern. The Victims' Commissioner raises matters on behalf of victims with the UK Government, Crown Prosecution Service, Her Majesty's Courts & Tribunals Service, and others. Although we do the same, this collaborative approach strengthens our arguments and ensures consistency to help achieve better outcomes for victims. We highlighted our concerns around funding for services due to increased pressure and court hearing backlogs. We also attended the Gwent Police Victim Care Group to explore what changes need to be made to improve communications with victims. This will be fed back to the Victims' Board. There is a business case being developed to inform the future development of Connect Gwent services for victims.

#149Challenge

The annual White Ribbon Day took place on Thursday 25 November. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, the annual community walk held in Gwent for the last several years was unable to take place, so instead a virtual challenge was launched based around the number 149. The latest Femicide Census report at the time showed that 149 women were killed by men in the UK in 2018. To help tackle this, residents, schools, organisations, sports teams and community groups across Gwent were encouraged to complete the #149Challenge. This could have been anything from walking or running for 149 minutes, baking 149 cakes, or undertaking a task 149 times. My office created and coordinated this year's event, working in partnership with Gwent VAWDASV regional team, Llamau, housing associations and all five local authorities to raise awareness of the day with communities across Gwent.

Social media channels and our website provided platforms to share information about the challenge. An activity pack was developed in English, Welsh and a range of six other languages to encourage all communities to take part. The #149Challenge was well received by sports organisations and clubs, including Newport County FC whose players wore White Ribbon t-shirts during pre-match warm-ups and worked with young people in Newport who participate in the Premier League Kicks initiative to raise awareness of the day.

The awareness campaign was successful in its aims, particularly on Twitter (the primary channel), with 3,200,000 potential impressions and a potential reach of 489,500. In total, it generated 990 tweets from 240 contributors. There were 1,347

engagements with Twitter content on the OPCC account, including 101 retweets and 280 likes. On secondary channels, almost 50,000 were reached by the OPCC Facebook page, while 12,000 people were engaged via Instagram. White Ribbon Day was covered on ITV Wales at Six, with an interview with the Deputy Chief Constable Amanda Blakeman, who also undertook her own #149Challenge, as did the Chief Constable. Gwent Police shared information about White Ribbon Day on 25 November via all channels and reached an additional 344,916 people.

PRIORITY 3 – COMMUNITY COHESION

Increasing understanding and respect among communities to improve equality, safety and well-being.

Number of hate crime incidents and repeat victims

| | 2018–2019 | 2019–2020 | 2020–2021 |
|---------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Hate crime occurrence | 1,138 | 967 | 689 |
| Hate crime repeat victims | 92 | 89 | 66 |
| Hate crimes sent to Home Office | 797 | 668 | 692 |

A sustained reduction in hate crime offences led to 3.1% fewer hate crime offences reported compared to 2019/20. However, the impact of Covid-19 restrictions contributed to the 16.6% increase in the number of repeat victims. Hate crime continues to be affected by national and international events and news. We have continued to work with our communities to encourage reporting and understand their issues and concerns to develop more effective approaches to engaging with and supporting hate crime victims.

Black, Asian and minority ethnic

Existing political differences, coupled with social and economic anxieties, were exacerbated in 2020/21 due to Covid-19. The spread of this virus, and the effects of the social restrictions put in place to tackle it, put clear pressures on all our communities, but our Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities were disproportionately affected by this. The death of George Floyd in America also, understandably, left many in these communities feeling anger and dismay. Trust in policing across the world was damaged. Moving forward, it is essential that we rebuild trust and reassure people that anyone dealing with the police in Gwent will be treated equally, fairly and with respect. The last 12 months were some of the most socially and politically challenging of my life, but there have been many positive. The conversations we have had with our communities, and a move to digital platforms by necessity, has resulted in bringing us closer together in many ways.

Community dial-ins (see below) started during the first national lockdown in March as a way for our communities to raise local issues with the police and public sector partners. Further to this, Chief Constable Kelly and I started holding regular meetings with community leaders from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities across Gwent. These resulted in some incredibly valuable conversations, some of which have been challenging. Crucially we were, and continue to be, united in wanting the best possible outcomes for our communities.

I started working with the Chief Constable to look internally at our own organisations and ensure that our shared commitment to racial equality and diversity is reflected across our workforce. It is important that, as far as reasonably practical, our workforces visibly reflect the communities we serve. The Chief Constable and I made clear commitments to strengthening relationships between the police and our Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, including further training for staff, targeted recruitment, and working with the public service boards to address local issues.

I met with representatives of religious group Bahá'í Faith who shared with me their desire to educate communities on the plight of refugees and asylum seekers. Hearing their personal journeys was compelling. Communities need to hear these voices to really understand why people and families need to flee genocide and war. We continued to support the Sanctuary project in Newport. The project, which receives money from my office, provides advice, social activities, mentoring and support to young asylum seekers and refugees

My office attended the virtual launch of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) manifesto in December, along with representatives of the other Welsh OPCCs and police forces. Discussions focused on inclusion, opportunities and rights for black people in Wales. Policing in Wales has supported the work of BLM's regional leaders and are working with them to ensure that we police all of our communities in a fair, open and transparent way. A key item for discussion was stop and search, and commitments were made to ensure that it is used proportionately and appropriately at all times.

Community dial-ins

My team engaged in weekly community dial-in meetings throughout 2020/21. Run by Gwent Police, the meetings enabled us to hear from a wide range of organisations, including members of the independent advisory group, faith organisations, Sanctuary refugee group, Travelling Ahead representing Gypsy Traveller communities, and Mencap Cymru. The meetings helped foster relations and strengthen engagement between the communities, the force and my office. Although these meetings were set up to improve community cohesion during Covid-19 lockdowns, the meetings continued and I use the information gathered to inform my opinion when holding the Chief Constable to account.

We took part in a series of engagement events set up by Newport City Council to look at the impact of Covid-19 on communities in Newport. The themed meetings provided an insight into the lives of refugees, migrants, asylum seekers, people with disabilities, carers, children and young people, Black, Asian and ethnic minorities, and LGBTQ+ communities. My team engaged and provided feedback on a number of community safety issues that arose during the pandemic.

EYST support

In July, my team and the VAWDASV Regional Team provided information to Ethnic Minorities and Youth Support Team Wales' (EYST) older people's forum about the many aspects of abuse that affects all communities. The group welcomed the information and were able to feedback valuable insights. This helped VAWSDAV and my office to convey the most appropriate messages to our Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities. We have since worked with EYST on a number of topics, including promotion of our policing survey to Black, Asian and minority ethnic

communities and a number of campaigns encouraging people to report domestic abuse and sexual violence.

Hate crime

We monitored the levels of hate crimes reported during lockdown and the impact of the easing of restrictions. This was done internally through Gwent Police's hate crime meeting and nationally at the All-Wales Hate Crime Criminal Justice Board. Local hate crime case management is a feature of the internal hate crime meeting, which supports and drive improvements in Gwent Police's performance in this area. We are a member of Gwent Police's new Police and Communities Hate Crime Forum, which met for the first time in July. This is a multi-agency meeting to improve the partnership response to hate crime victims, case management and any other matters agreed by the forum. At the beginning of 2020/21, reporting levels fell rapidly due to the first lockdown; however, they then returned to expected levels.

In addition to this, we monitored the impact of Covid-19 on our communities by:

- Encouraging Gwent Police to undertake an equality impact assessment on Covid-19 which was then used to inform recovery planning.
- Scrutinising the use of fixed penalty notices through a number of internal mechanisms to identify inequality and understand usage.
- Attending the force's Independent Advisory Group meetings.

As part of Hate Crime Awareness Week, I organised an online engagement session with residents who have had first-hand experience of this appalling crime. I was joined by the Chief Constable and we heard from victims about the hatred they have been subjected to as they go about their daily lives. I am committed, through my Police and Crime Plan for Gwent, to tackling hate crime and improving the support offered to victims. However, we can only do that if we listen to what victims are telling us about their experiences.

We supported the launch of a new project for LGBTQ+ Black, Asian and minority ethnic children, young people and their families, who have experienced or are experiencing trauma. We also publicised and signposted people to Umbrella Cymru, which worked with national charities to distribute Comic Relief funding to LGBTQ+ organisations during the pandemic.

Legitimacy scrutiny panel

Due to the first lockdown, the legitimacy scrutiny panel was unable to meet in May to look at 'stop and search'. My office therefore carried out a random dip-sample of stop and search records for October 2019 to March 2020. While I acknowledge this does not provide the same level of independent scrutiny as the panel, it helped me hold the Chief Constable to account in this area. Overall, Gwent Police continues to demonstrate improvements, with my report recommendations focusing on:

- Monitoring data transfer processes;
- Stop and search training content;
- Understanding the impact of operational activity;
- Publication of stop and search data;
- Understanding and communicating disproportionality/inequality reasons;
- Build trust with communities regarding use of police powers; and
- Feedback to my office on progress against the recommendations.

Race Equality training

Race Equality First launched a competition for young people to help raise awareness of its 2020 anti-racism competition. We worked with schools, youth groups and organisations working with children to encourage them to take part. Improving community cohesion is at the heart of my Police and Crime Plan and such interactions between communities and policing services can help build relationships.

Race Equality First also ran racism awareness training for all OPCC staff. This helped inform our future engagement work and work in tackling hate crime. Unconscious bias training, which is also being rolled-out across the force, was also undertaken by staff in 2020/21.

Strategic Equality Plan

We engaged with residents across Gwent to help shape the Strategic Equality Plan (SEP), before developing objectives and an action plan to ensure the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion are embedded into everything we do. The objectives aim to challenge discrimination and support my Police and Crime Plan. A comprehensive series of face-to-face engagement sessions had been planned for the end of March and April, but these were largely cancelled due to Covid-19. Therefore, the engagement was undertaken predominately via social media and partnerships. Despite this:

- 771 responses were received (almost double the previous SEP survey response);
- The views of more than 100 children and young people were captured at the Youth Question Time event in March; and
- A number of responses were generated from a Talk Blaenau Gwent event and an Ethnic Minorities and Youth Support Team Wales meeting, helping us reach some seldom heard groups.

The responses were analysed to influence the final document.

PRIORITY 4 – TACKLING ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Ensuring Gwent Police works to resolve anti-social behaviour (ASB), working closely with partner organisations to help address this issue effectively.

Number of ASB incidents

| | 2018–2019 | 2019–2020 | 2020–2021 |
|----------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| East LPA | 4,781 | 4,856 | 5,036 |
| West LPA | 5,944 | 5,999 | 6,762 |
| Total | 10,725 | 10,855 | 13,524 |

In 2020/21, there was a 29.6% increase in ASB compared to 2019/20. Broken down quarterly, data trends show a large percentage increase in the first and second quarters of 2020/21. It is believed that these increases may be largely attributable to Covid-19 reports being incorrectly flagged as ASB incidents.

As Covid restrictions ease, it is expected that ASB incidents will rise significantly. Gwent Police will focus on ASB prevention through the implementation of the problem solving hubs in order to counter the rise in incidents over the next year.

While the number of ASB incidents saw a notable rise over the year, the number of repeat victims of ASB increased at the lower rate of 3.6%.

I remain committed to tackling ASB and have provided funding in order to deliver on this priority. In 2020/21, I funded the Gwent ASB co-ordinator post to provide oversight and joined up working across partners in the region, as well as funding to the Community Safety Partnerships in each local authority area.

Halloween and Bonfire Night

Halloween was obviously very different this year, with gatherings banned and the Welsh Government strongly advising people to avoid trick or treating. My office supported key messaging from our police and fire service partners, and shared resource packs for children that were produced by Gwent Police.

Since 2018, my office has contributed funding to Urban Circle's U-Turn project, which uses the creative arts to tackle social problems affecting young people. Urban Circle and G-Expressions, a Newport-based creative arts youth project, hosted a special Halloween event young people, part-funded through my community fund. It aimed to give young people a fantastic Halloween experience in their own homes in a safe, online environment. For the last few years, it has run a large Halloween event to try and prevent young people getting involved in anti-social behaviour. Due to the 'firebreak', a virtual celebration was held this year, which saw five days of interactive and engaging challenges across social media platforms. On Halloween itself, young people were given access to an all-inclusive Zoom experience, where they took part in interactive games and challenges focusing primarily on creative arts and media. The four-hour event saw 267 young people engaged on the night.

Positive Futures

A youth inclusion programme that uses sport and activity to engage young people aged 10-18, Positive Futures received £181,000 from my office in 2020/21. It delivers diversionary activities and alternative education to young people living in significantly deprived areas in Gwent, who are at risk of becoming involved in anti-social behaviour and crime. As these are largely delivered in community settings, the programme had to adapt its work throughout the year due to Covid-19.

It increased use of its social media platforms to share important messages using its ambassadors, as well as running online question and answer sessions to reinforce key messages to young people. These promoted the importance of the role of sport and having positive engagement in their lives, as well as how people have managed to cope with difficult situations and mental health struggles. Online social media challenges for young people were also been created, while staff signposted people to information about what provision available for vulnerable families. In addition, schools and social services accessed sports equipment.

Across Gwent it also:

- Developed and delivered door-to-door well-being packs to young people
- Provided IT equipment to vulnerable, digitally-excluded young people
- Held weekly contact with parents of young people in its alternative education programme continued
- Distributed Asdan (qualification) booklets and sports packs
- Supported work at school hubs during lockdowns

- Created an adverse childhood experiences/sport training package
- Delivered community work to help reduce anti-social behaviour around Halloween and Bonfire Night

#StayInForGwent

The approach by Gwent Police throughout lockdown has been to engage, explain and encourage compliance with the guidance about staying home to save lives. We therefore created a peer-led unbranded joint communications campaign on social media using short clips of pledges from young people to reinforce the national social distancing messaging. Linking in with the participation leads at the five Gwent councils, as well as project leaders from some local youth diversionary projects funded by my office, we crowd-sourced content. This meant we captured authentic voices and views from within our communities. This approach also meant it was not police-driven, but focused on young people reinforcing safety messages. The campaign wasn't locked to Gwent, so it could be replicated wider, and we deliberately didn't brand the content with anything to do with Gwent Police or my office.

The aim of the peer-led campaign was to encourage young people not to go out during the first lockdown. In total:

- 32 organisations endorsed the campaign;
- More than 160 tweets mentioned #StayInForGwent;
- 120 posts on Instagram mentioned #StayInForGwent; and
- There was a combined reach of more than 600,000 using #StayInForGwent

Welsh Government's Youth Work Bulletin highlighted the #StayInForGwent campaign as best practice.

PRIORITY 5 – EFFECTIVE SERVICE DELIVERY

Ensuring that Gwent Police deliver services that meet the priority needs of our communities.

Number of 999 and 101 calls

| | 2018–2019 | 2019–2020 | 2020–2021 |
|-----------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Total 999 calls | 83,269 | 81,290 | 73,396 |
| Total 101 calls | 221,235 | 199,082 | 149,871 |
| 101 Answered | 181,415 | 180,407 | 132,099 |
| 101 Abandoned | 39,847 | 18,607 | 17,739 |

Demand on 999 has fallen year on year between 2019/20 and 2020/21, decreasing by 10.1%. However, it is worth noting that quarter two of this year saw a three-year high in calls totalling 22,469. It is likely that this spike in demand was tied to the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly during the early stages of lockdown. During this time, Gwent Police received a high volume of calls from the public asking questions concerning the newly introduced public health measures.

Compared to 2019/20, 101 demand fell by 24.7% in 2020/21. This follows the same trend seen with 999 calls, though the decrease was more significant. The most significant decline in 101 demand was seen in quarters 3 and 4. The 101 abandoned rate fell slightly, with a 4.6% decrease.

Award winners

I was delighted to present three Police and Crime Commissioner's partnership awards, as part of the Gwent Police Force Awards 2020. These went to Urban Circle, the Adverse Childhood Experiences team, and the Newport Serious and Organised Crime team. Since 2018, my office has contributed funding to Urban Circle's U-Turn project, which uses the creative arts to tackle social problems affecting young people. The work the team are doing has supported hundreds of young people in Newport to learn, build their confidence and make friends, while crucially setting them up with the skills they need to get jobs in the future. The Adverse Childhood Experiences team has been working to improve the response from the police and partners to stressful and traumatic childhood experiences. Since the project was established in 2018, the team has trained about 1,300 police officers and 400 staff from partner agencies to recognise the signs of adverse childhood experiences. Almost 900 children and 500 families have been supported since the start of the project. Meanwhile, Newport Serious and Organising Crime team has been delivering sterling work in tackling the significant harm felt by individuals and communities on a daily basis from these types of criminality.

Gwent Police and I also sponsored the Community Hero Award as part of the South Wales Argus's Pride of Gwent Awards. Bernard Dawson, from Caerwent, took home the award, after he created a community initiative to support local people who were shielding or vulnerable during the pandemic.

Board assurance framework

We have developed a Board Assurance Framework (BAF) for my office and Gwent Police as suggested by the Joint Audit Committee. This has helped us identify areas of compliance and areas for improvement with statutory requirements, as set out in the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 and our joint Manual of Corporate Governance.

Although the BAF has identified many areas of compliance and good practice, the areas identified as requiring additional work have been pulled into an action plan so that we can recognise and mitigate any risks. This action plan will be scrutinised by the Strategic Planning Group that is chaired jointly by the Chief Executive and DCC. An annual update will also be provided to the Joint Audit Committee. In addition, plans will be made to brief the performance subgroup of the Police and Crime Panel during 2021/22 after the BAF has been embedded into our governance processes.

Cadets

We promoted Cadet recruitment via social media and proactively sent emails to local organisations working with children and young people, as well as town and community councils, all secondary schools in Gwent and GAVO. The recruitment drive was successful, with 104 applications being received from young people across Gwent. The Cadets were also an integral part of the #StayInForGwent campaign, with the Cadets setting a wonderful example for others to follow.

Child-centred policing

We started work with Gwent Police on a child-centred policing strategy that aims to build better relationships between police and children and young people. It will help to prevent children and young people being drawn into crime and the criminal justice system. A priority of the strategy will be to increase positive criminal justice outcomes for children and young people and divert them away from it. There will also be work to enhance services for child victims of crime, particularly those exposed to domestic abuse. We are in the process of finalising the strategy, surveying key stakeholders, and developing a work plan. Pilot work is being undertaken in Newport on addressing children's needs and behaviour that increases the likelihood of becoming involved in crime including exploitation. My office has been integral to providing insight and support in designing a child-centred policing survey for partners, professional and young people. This will inform a prioritised work plan. My office is also working with Gwent Police, youth offending services and local authorities to establish a platform to enable children and young people to have a voice in policing and wider criminal justice services. This work will complement my office's work towards achieving Kitemark status for our approach to youth engagement.

Commissioning

There were a number of significant areas of commissioning activity during the year, including my office's work with the Area Planning Board to commission a new service for substance misuse to be in place from 2022/23. The aim of this is to build on the successes of the existing provision and improve services for substance misuse in Gwent. There is a renewed aim to reduce repeat referrals by ensuring that people can get the support they need. Work has also been undertaken to commission an evaluation of diversionary services funded and a review of ISVA provision. These will be completed in 2020-21 and will inform future commissioning decisions.

I also developed a commissioning framework that complements, aligns with and supports the delivery of my Police and Crime Plan by outlining:

- My mechanism for oversight of commissioning direction and activity;
- My commissioning principles, our commissioning cycle and deliverables at each stage of the process; and
- The roles and responsibilities of OPCC staff in relation to commissioning

Throughout the year, there was also significant work to manage and support the contracts and grants that we fund, coordinate bids we submitted and administering funding received. In managing the grants and contracts awarded, all of which were affected by Covid-19, consideration was given to large-scale disruption caused by lockdowns, local restrictions and the 'firebreak', as we supported to provide services and meet needs of service users. A number of grant agreements were extended due to the pandemic, while many others had alterations to budgets in order for them to be able to re-start projects. We have also created an online map to show what we currently fund and commission.

In addition the above I provided about £300,000 to Safer Gwent, which was distributed to the key community safety partners to deliver projects and services across the five local authorities in Gwent. Each of these supported delivery of my Police and Crime Plan priorities. I also gave about £200,000 to the youth offending fund to help deliver projects and services in Gwent to minimise future youth

offending and support positive outcomes for young people involved in the criminal justice system.

I contributed £60,000 to the Gwent High Sheriff's Fund, as part of my commitment to preventing crime and anti-social behaviour in our communities. Groups could apply for grants of up to £5,000 for projects that help to reduce crime and improve safety in their community. Successful applicants were decided at a participatory grant making event that allowed local people to decide which initiatives would best address local issues. The High Sheriff Fund gave out grants totalling £98,518, to 20 organisations.

Criminal justice

We worked with partners, both in Gwent and on an all-Wales basis, to develop plans to ensure the criminal justice systems was able to recover from the impact of Covid-19. We engaged with partners to ensure that new protocols, such as the custody time limits, were effective. We worked closely with HM Courts & Tribunals Service on understanding the courts backlog and how to solve this, as there were concerns that delays in criminal justice would impact on victims' confidence in the system. We also responded to the Victims' Commissioner's 'improving the Victims' Code' consultation.

Complaints

On 1 February 2020, the Police (Complaints and Misconduct) Regulations 2020 introduced the legal requirement for Commissioners to become the relevant body for reviews (formerly known as appeals and dealt with by forces) requested by the public into recorded complaints that meet a specific set of criteria.

During 2020/21, we received 34 requests for complaint reviews. Two of these did not meet the eligibility for the review process to be initiated. Of the 32 that met the review criteria, 21 were finalised during 2020/21. Each review took an average of 29 working days to resolve. Nine ongoing reviews that came in towards the end of 2020/21 will be finalised in 2021/22.

The demand the review process placed on OPCCs was unknown at the start, but it has since been identified that this is a risk area in relation to resourcing, not just in Gwent, but nationally. Therefore work is being undertaken to address this additional demand. On average, when the work was undertaken by the force, they received an average of 25 reviews (or appeals as they were then known) per year. In the first year that I have taken on this responsibility, 32 have been received which is an increase of 22%. Further detailed information on the reviews will be published in the first complaint reviews annual report.

Estates

Substantial work was completed on the new Gwent Police headquarters in Cwmbran. Although work was impeded by Covid-19, it did not impact on the overall construction timeline. The 5,178sqm facility at Llantarnam Industrial Estate will accommodate 480 officers and staff, and will be home to the force control room, which is the first point of contact for 999 and 101 calls. Once complete it will play a key role in ensuring the well-being and training needs of policing staff in Gwent are met, helping them to protect and reassure the communities they serve. It will also house major crime teams, support services and senior management. It will occupy about half the footprint of the current site in Croesyceiliog and is estimated to make

about a £1.1million year-on-year saving due to lower running costs. Construction is due to be completed in spring 2021.

An estates performance sub-group of the Police and Crime Panel was also set-up, to ensure greater scrutiny of estates issues going forward.

HR

We fully implemented our business plan and complemented this with the rollout of a new professional development plan (PDR) process for all staff. The purpose of this is to ensure managers review work, set objectives, check on wellbeing and identify areas for development. The office is creating a new digital media apprentice post in September 2021, so work began on planning and facilitating this.

Joint audit committee (JAC)

JAC provides independent assurance of risk, internal control, scrutiny and oversight of financial performance reporting processes for both Gwent Police and my office. In October, it published its annual report for 2019/20 alongside the statement of accounts. These provided reassurance of the robustness of the work undertaken by JAC during the year.

During 2020/21, JAC supported the development of the BAF and have been provided with assurance in relation to the governance of the new police headquarters. JAC continues to meet its statutory requirements and provides added value and assurance to the work of my office and Gwent Police.

Out of court disposals

Throughout the year, my office chaired a scrutiny panel that examined the ways in which offences were dealt in relation to out of court disposals. This is a partnership meeting with magistrates, CPS and Gwent Police reviewing cases where an out of court disposal (caution, conditional caution or community resolution) is given to a child or adult after they commit a low-level offence. The scrutiny panel reviews the decision-making process and rationale, the outcome as compared with the legal guidance for decision making and, where applicable, referral to diversion services.

The panel will be further developed in the coming year, dip-sampling a greater number of disposals and providing additional feedback to Gwent Police's Learning the Lessons meeting.

Performance framework

The OPCC continued work with Gwent Police on the development and implementation of a whole organisational performance framework. This was well supported by the Police and Crime Panel performance sub-group. Workshops were held with the entire panel to review the reporting format, and help panel members understand the reports. It also provided an opportunity for discussion on how the reports and scrutiny of the reports can be improved.

Resources

Throughout the year, we welcomed a series of intakes of new Police Officers and Community Support Officers into Gwent Police. These brought our year-end establishment figures to 1,363 Police Officers and 132 Community Support Officers. All of our officers are dedicated to protecting and serving our communities and the

new officers were a welcome addition to Gwent Police at a crucial time. These officers mean there are approaching 200 more frontline officers than in 2016. We have also been working closely with Gwent Police to review its operating model. Implementation of the new model began in February and will ensure that resources are best placed to meet the challenges facing policing now and in the foreseeable future. The new way of working puts crime prevention, victims, problem solving, safeguarding, and continuous improvement at the centre of everything we do. This is firmly in line with the priorities in my Police and Crime Plan. The new operating model sees more dedicated resources for neighbourhood policing, a new approach to integrated offender management, more victim care officers, more intelligence officers to better support frontline policing, a new crime prevention initiative 'We Don't Buy Crime', additional investment in the Criminal Investigation Department, and a new roads policing and specialist operations unit.

The Chief Executive attends the Gold Group for Operation Uplift where the plans for the police uplift programme is coordinated and scrutinised. To 31 March, 2021, we had a target of recruiting 62 new uplift officers; however, at that date we had recruited 76. These 14 additional officers will form part of our targeted 61 officers in 2021/22, with 42 planned in 2022/23.

Road policing report

Having undertaken a review of Gwent Police's current roads policing provision in 2019-20, I welcomed Gwent Police's commitment to implementing the findings of our review. As well as recognising the good work carried out by Gwent Police it made several recommendations for consideration, including that the force invest more resources into roads policing across the region. I am pleased that Gwent Police is going to include a new Roads Policing and Specialist Operations Unit that will incorporate the recommendations made by my office. Recommendations in the report include a commitment to invest in more specialist data collection and research to better understand the root causes of traffic collisions in Gwent, to fill vacant posts in the force's Area Support Unit, and to implement new performance measures to provide more insight into police performance.

Social media

The OPCC Twitter account grew by 6%, taking the total number of followers to 5,465. There were 1,034 posts, totalling 1,110,500 impressions during this time, as well as 1,491 retweets and more than 2,649 likes. Facebook has shown a 25% increase in followers to date, bringing the total number to 2,401. There were 374 posts, with a combined reach of almost 350,000. Instagram followers are still low at 642 but has grown by 109% in this time-period and is high compared to comparable OPCCs. The e-bulletin continues to grow steadily, with 1,775 subscribers (an increase of 48 per cent). Analytics show that 62 per cent of subscribers are highly engaged and regularly open their emails. This is exceptionally high and it is expected that this will reduce, in line with typical opening rates of public sector email bulletins.

The Welsh language social media pages continue to offer better engagement for residents who wish to communicate through the medium of Welsh. However, take-up remains low. There are 22 subscribers to the ebulletin and nine followers to the Facebook channel. I am committed to ensuring that Welsh speaking residents in Gwent receive the best possible service.

Understanding the Triggers

I released a new report calling on public services in Wales to develop new ways of preventing and reducing child criminality and exploitation. The Understanding The Triggers report identifies a series of improvements that public services in Wales can make to tackle these issues at the earliest opportunity and reduce the risk of children becoming vulnerable to criminal exploitation. The research found recurring triggers in a group of local children identified through offending data, including trauma within the home and challenges within education. Understanding the Triggers makes an important contribution to our collective understanding of child criminal and sexual exploitation in Wales by providing an evidence base to steer action and improve outcomes for vulnerable children. The report's findings are stark and demonstrate the devastating impact criminality and exploitation has on children's lives.

The report was produced as part of a multi-agency research project carried out by office, in partnership with Newport City Council, Gwent Police and the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board. In November I met with the Deputy Minister and Chief Whip, Jane Hutt, to discuss the report and opportunities to work together to address the issues identified in the report.

Voluntary schemes

Both the Animal Welfare Scheme and Independent Custody Visiting Scheme were temporarily put on hold in mid-March 2020 due to Covid-19. Custody visitors started undertaking visits via telephone in June and have continued to do so throughout the year; this has enabled detainees to speak directly and in private with Custody Visitors. In the meantime, we have received regular briefings from Gwent Police to ensure there are no issues of concern regarding the welfare of detainees in custody or the welfare of police dogs. As Covid-19 continues to pose a risk, detainee welfare will continue to be monitored via the alternative telephone process. Once restrictions have been lifted, a dual process will be implemented of both telephone calls and face-to-face visits to custody. To encourage uptake in the telephone calls, posters have been displayed in custody and leaflets distributed to detainees to publicise the role of the Independent Custody Visitors. As the majority of visits undertaken by Animal Welfare visitors are outside, it was expected that visits would resume in September. However, restrictions meant this hasn't happened yet and preparations are being made for visits to commence from May. Quarterly meetings for both schemes have continued online. We plan to recruit for both schemes in 2021/22.

Website changes

The OPCC website has been completely rebuilt to ensure it complies with new accessibility regulations that came into effect in September. This was a significant piece of work, as the website was rebuilt over a number of months in an entirely new content management system (CMS). Although the website itself appears very similar in appearance, we took the opportunity to refine some of the CMS functionality, iron-out some performance issues and added some features. Refining work in the CMS of the website has continued since then, as we add new features. However, due to a prominent new cookies banner, the amount of recorded web views has been significantly reduced. To illustrate this, the stats for the three months prior to the launch and post launch are shown:

| Month | Page views |
|--------------|-------------------|
| July | 10,118 |

| | |
|-----------|--------|
| August | 10,718 |
| September | 16,463 |
| October | 2,496 |
| November | 1,713 |
| December | 1,486 |

ENGAGEMENT

I always find community engagement incredibly beneficial and it helps inform my conversations when holding the Chief Constable to account. I normally run a large-scale summer engagement programme across Gwent; however, all these events were cancelled by organisers because of Covid-19. I also had to postpone all planned walkabouts in communities and general engagement opportunities that we had intended to rollout throughout the year. Despite this, here is a selection of some of the main engagement my office and I undertook in 2020/21.

Black, Asian and minority ethnic and community dial-ins

As stated previously, this year saw the introduction of joint conference calls with Gwent Police and representatives of Gwent's Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, as well as weekly community dial-ins.

Behind the Badge

This year's popular Behind the Badge open day was cancelled due to Covid-19. For the last couple of years, it has given residents a chance to look behind the scenes of policing. It is one of the largest community events in Gwent and is a fun, engaging way in which to highlight the work of a modern police force and other emergency services to a wider, diverse audience. Gwent Police ran a virtual open day on social media instead this year. This proved incredibly popular, with more than 51,000 people viewing content. We complemented this throughout the day by posting a range of clips to give residents a greater insight into the work of my office.

Budget setting

Every year, I have to engage with ratepayers on the police budget, which includes the part of the council tax that is allocated to the Commissioner known as the precept. This year, we ran a 'have your say on policing' survey for nine weeks. The two previous years saw a dual approach for engagement, with a series of face-to-face engagement events across all council areas being complemented with an online survey. The original aim was to replicate this approach for the 2021/22 survey; however, this was not viable due to Covid-19. A new approach was introduced that allowed the OPCC to pulse-test a variety of opinions on policing issues. This focused primarily on promoting the survey online, coupled with multiple opportunities for virtual face-to-face engagement and increased targeting of harder to reach communities. An in-person offer was available and promoted to organisations, so the OPCC did not have a broadcast-only approach.

This year's survey had an expanded question set and more information about policing in Gwent. Before people could complete the survey, they were provided with information about the PCC, the role of the OPCC, the daily demands on policing in Gwent, police budgets and the medium-term financial plan. This information was

more in-depth than in previous years, allowing people to have an even greater informed opinion when voicing their views on policing. It was agreed, prior to the launch of the survey, that a representative sample size of 600 would be used. However, in the end 1,259 people completed the survey.

Creating ready-to-use bespoke content for partners and organisations significantly increased use and sharing, which played a critical role in doubling the online response to this year's survey. Multi-dialect communications were used to promote the survey for the first time. Posts were translated into Punjabi Indian, Bengali, Urdu and Polish then shared with council community cohesion officers.

Of the 1,259 survey respondents:

- 1,128 completed it online;
- 121 completed it as part of virtual face-to-face engagement; and
- 10 completed paper copies of the survey.

When collated, the total responses were:

- 689 (54.7%) of respondents supported the principle of up to a £2 per month increase;
- 411 (32.6%) of respondents did not support the principle of up to a £2 per month increase;
- 159 (12.6%) of respondents were unsure;

Children's charter

My office has become the first OPCC in Wales to be awarded the Children and Young People's Participation Standards Charter. We have pledged a commitment to work toward the seven National Participation Standards when engaging and working with children and young people. The standards aim to help organisations put children and young people at the centre of their work when shaping processes, plans and projects. The signing of the charter is the first step in achieving the National Participation Standards Kitemark award, which will assess how well my office engages, listens and feeds back information. One of the events that will help us achieve this is our annual Youth Question Time event in March. I have every confidence that the Kitemark will be achieved in the next two years.

Covid-19 Q&A

To help me understand the issues communities and individuals were facing during the first lockdown, I ran a Q&A initiative on social media. This offered residents the opportunity to ask any questions they had about Covid-19 and local policing. The request for questions was published on all our channels, as well as in the Abergavenny Chronicle, Monmouthshire Beacon and South Wales Argus. In total, more than 50 questions were submitted. Many of these focused on similar themes, so responses to which were posted on social media. Where people had emailed questions, my team and I responded to them personally via email to reassure them, as well as posting general information more widely on social media.

Youth Question Time

I held by third Youth Question Time event in March, with more than 100 young people and professionals, including youth workers, voluntary organisations and public services from across Gwent attending the digital event. We worked with the Regional Youth Forum to look at the best platform to enable young people to ask decision makers questions about issues that are important to them. Teams was the

preferred choice for this year's Youth Question Time, chosen by young people and the Regional Youth Forum workers.

This year, in keeping with previous years, I was joined by a senior representative from Gwent Police and panellists based on the issues that were important to young people in Gwent. These issues were identified via the British Youth Council's 'make your mark' survey. In Gwent, mental health, domestic abuse and homelessness are the top three most important priorities for young people, so panel members reflected these issues.

The event was hosted by five young people from the RYF. This year there was a strong appetite from young people from all five forums to get involved, so several roles were created, including a social media team who created content for Instagram and Twitter.

Prior to the event, we received 33 questions from young people on a range of subjects, including policing during the pandemic, anti-social behaviour, mental health, suicide, homelessness and domestic abuse. During the 90-minute event, 18 questions were asked. Due to time restrictions, and the amount of questions that were submitted, several questions were not asked. These questions were answered after the event and responses fed back to young people via short clips on social media and through the youth groups. A webpage detailing these Q&As was also created on the OPCC website. The event was also recorded and is available on the OPCC YouTube channel.

Feedback from attendees was overwhelmingly positive:

- 100% were either satisfied or very satisfied with the event as a whole.
- 100% found the day and time of the event good or very good.
- 100% found the event content good or very good.
- 100% found the panellists good or very good.
- 100% said they would attend an event like this again.
- Panel members' responses also saw 100% of young people who asked a question say they were satisfied with the response that they received.

FINANCE

Audited accounts

Existing Welsh legislation allows for revised timescales for the delivery of the annual statements of accounts of public bodies, in the event of extraordinary circumstances. The production of the annual statements of accounts for my office and that of Gwent Police were not delayed due to the disruption caused by Covid-19, with draft accounts published before the statutory deadline of 31 May, 2021.

Budget setting

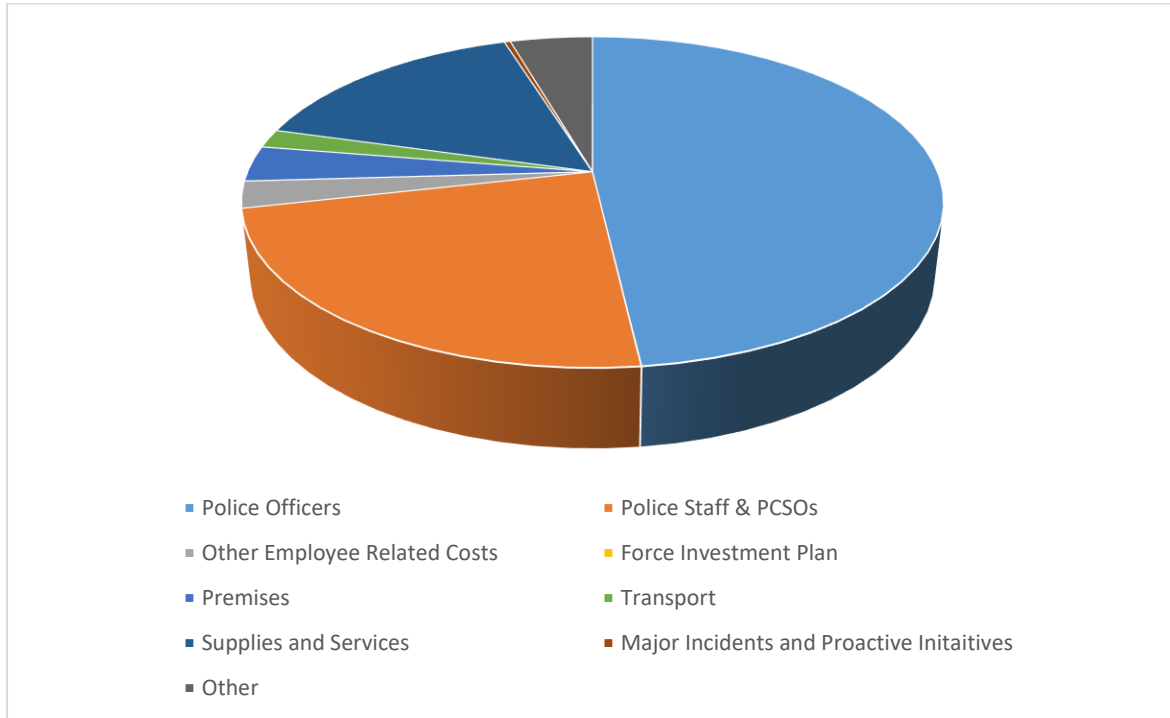
I receive regular reports from Gwent Police to help ensure that we have a police service that is value for money. This year I have:

- Agreed a budget for Gwent Police for 2021/22 of £147.55m (£8.56m more than the previous year);
- Set the council tax increase at 5.49 per cent;
- Created a capital budget for 2021/22 of £26.37m; and

- Continued to monitor Gwent Police’s service improvement work, which has delivered £52.01m of cashable efficiency savings since 2008/09.

Setting the budget:

For 2020/21, the following budgets were set for policing services in Gwent:



At the end of 2020/21, the overall spend on policing services in Gwent produced a small surplus of £0.22m (0.16 per cent) against the overall budget of £142.02m.

In addition, the following capital budgets were set in Gwent:

- Estate - £22.63m
- Vehicles - £1.59m
- Information and Communication Systems - £1.64m
- Other - £0.51m

The overall capital spend on policing services in Gwent was £15.97m against the overall capital budget of £26.37m, due to expenditure on significant capital estate schemes (such as the new HQ) slipping into the next financial year.

Ensuring value for money:

I have ensured that my office and Gwent Police have delivered value for money, while ensuring residents have an effective and efficient police service, by:

- Annually benchmarking costs via HMICFRS value for money profiles;
- Receiving an assurance judgement from internal auditors that we have adequate and effective management, control and governance processes;
- Receiving an assurance statement of ‘substantial’ from Torfaen County Borough Council for IT services provided by SRS;
- Publishing my Annual Governance Statement, which evidences the effectiveness of our governance; and

- Ensuring Audit Wales audits my statement of accounts annually.

MEETING STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

My main responsibility is to ensure that Gwent has an efficient and effective policing service. One of the ways in which I do that is by holding the Chief Constable to account for the performance of Gwent Police. My office and I do this on a daily basis, while I also hold a quarterly Strategy and Performance Board in public.

I ensure that my office is accessible, transparent and provides the public with the information they require to build their confidence in the work being undertaken. The key statutory areas for compliance are detailed below.

HMICFRS inspection responses:

I am required to respond to the Home Secretary on any HMICFRS inspection reports prepared under Section 55 of the Police Act 1996. During 2020/21, I responded to fourteen reports providing my overall response to the report and where applicable, information on how Gwent Police would address any recommendations, but also commending positive work. Responding to the reports provides information to the public on the performance of policing, not just locally but nationally as well. It also allows the Home Office and HMICFRS to determine future areas of inspection and if any further action may be needed.

Data protection:

We have a data protection officer (DPO) who monitors compliance and advises us on our statutory obligations. No data breaches were reported in 2020/21.

A Subject Access Request (SAR) is a request to an organisation asking for access to the personal information it holds on you. Twelve SARs were received compared to three in 2019/20; all were requesting information held by Gwent Police. The requesters were provided with the correct contact details. The increase has happened since the force moved to a national website platform. This has been fed back to the force and additional clarity has been added to the OPCC website to try and ensure requests for information are not delayed and are sent to the correct organisation.

My office drafted an all-Wales SAR policy and procedure on behalf of the four Welsh OPCCs, to ensure members of the public only had one process to understand when requesting their personal information from any of the Welsh OPCCs.

Work to review electronic information has taken place to ensure we are compliant with our retention and disposal schedule. Work to review, record and dispose of hard copy documents is also nearly complete. This has been a large and key project that has been progressed as when able to due to the pandemic, to ensure we comply with the requirements of the Data Protection Act.

Freedom Of Information Act

During the year, there were 31 requests received under the Freedom of Information Act compared to 28 in 2019/20. The compliance rate with the 20 working day response period was 100%, an increase from 96% in the previous year.

Key themes were in relation to finance and OPCC staffing, a number of requests were also received by us that were for operational information held by Gwent Police. Finance is a recurring theme annually and generally covers salaries and office costs.

It took 6 days on average to respond to a request, down from an average of 10 days last year. No appeals were received.

My office maintains a publication scheme that commits us to making information available to the public as part of our normal business activities and supports the information we are required to publish under the Specified Information Order 2011. We were fully compliant in 2020/21.

Transparency Quality Mark Award

There is a large amount of information that we are required to publish under the Specified Information Order, Freedom of Information Act and other legislation. Therefore, I am pleased to report that for the sixth year in a row my office has achieved a national award for transparency. This is due to key information being published on my website in an accessible, navigable and transparent format. The award was given by Comparing Police and Crime Commissioners (known as CoPaCC), an independent body that monitors police governance.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The impact of Covid-19 and its implications have been massive, creating a new set of challenges for all us, both in terms of our private and professional lives. I don't believe that any of us thought at the start of the financial year that we would still be in living under restrictions one full year on. However, an unprecedented pandemic has seen unprecedented measures.

I would like to again reaffirm my ongoing thanks to all police officers, staff, healthcare workers, local authorities and other partners who have worked tirelessly throughout the last year to help tackle this. The self-sacrifice, dedication and public service shown has been commendable.

During the year, the UK government published the recommendations from part one of its two-part review of Police and Crime Commissioners. The initial recommendations include:

- Changing the voting system for Police and Crime Commissioners to first-past-the-post.
- Ensuring that Commissioners provide the public with clear information on their force's performance.
- Mandating the appointment of Deputy Police and Crime Commissioners.
- Making changes to ensure more effective and consistent relationships between Commissioners and Chief Constables.

As Police and Crime Commissioners are elected to provide a public service, it is right and proper that the role should be reviewed to ensure that they continue to represent the best method of making policing accountable to the public. That said, there are no surprises in the first part of the UK Government's review. I am confident that here in Gwent we are already delivering on the recommendations announced today as part of our commitment to ensuring that the public receive an efficient and effective service from their police force.

We are committed to improving the way in which Gwent Police's performance is reported and this is regularly scrutinised by the Gwent Police and Crime Panel whose job it is to hold me accountable on behalf of the public.

I am also fortunate to have a strong and effective working relationship with the Chief Constable of Gwent Police where we both share the common goals of making Gwent a safe place to live, work and visit, while safeguarding the most vulnerable in our society.

We are not complacent and will always look for ways to ensure we can improve further, but this review has provided reassurance that in Gwent we continue to operate in-line with current best practice.

Jeff Cuthbert

April 2021

Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent:

I confirm that I have considered whether or not I have any personal or prejudicial interest in this matter and take the proposed decision in compliance with the Code of Conduct. The above request has my approval.

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeff Cuthbert', written in a cursive style.

Date:

10/11/2021