



Police & Crime Commissioner for Cleveland Cleveland Community Safety Hub

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Report of the Police and Crime Commissioner to the Chair and Members of the Police and Crime Panel

7th July 2020

Commissioners Update

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide members of the Cleveland Police and Crime Panel with an overview of the activity of the Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC) since the last meeting held in February 2020.
- 1.2 The report highlights the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and how the PCC and his Office have adapted and responded to the unprecedented situation, and provides specific updates aligned to the priorities of the Police & Crime Plan.
- 1.3 This report should be considered in conjunction with progress detailed in the PCC Scrutiny and Decisions of the PCC reports. Collectively, these reports provide progress in all areas of the Police & Crime Plan.
- 1.4 The PCC Performance report for this reporting period has been replaced by the PCC Annual Report, which provides details of performance activity against the Police & Crime Plan 2019/20.

2. COVID-19

- 2.1 Members will note that local elections, including the PCC election, were scheduled to take place on 7 May 2020. Due to the COVID-19 situation, on 13 March 2020, the Government announced the postponement of elections, with provisions under the Coronavirus Act 2020 (attached at Appendix A) including;
 - Rescheduling PCC elections to 6 May 2021;
 - Extending the current term of incumbent PCCs for one year.
- 2.2 In response to the announcement the PCC acknowledged the Government's decision and highlighted the importance of focussing attention on responding to the

COVID-19 crisis to save lives, and confirmed he would remain in post until the next election.

2.3 From the outset of this public health emergency, in early March, the PCC has been involved in the local assessment, planning and response to the COVID-19 crisis. Through structured briefings, the PCC has been updated on the work of the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) and the Strategic Co-ordination Group (SCG) which has overseen the multi-agency response to the local COVID-19 situation.

2.4 Daily contact with the Chief Constable has been maintained and the PCC's scrutiny and accountability programme has continued and where matters in relation to the Force's implementation and use of COVID-19 legislation has been reviewed, specific details are contained in the PCC's Scrutiny report.

2.5 Through effective business continuity arrangements the operational delivery of the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner (OPCC) has been maintained and uninterrupted. Agile working arrangements have been implemented, enabling the PCC and all team members to work from home, with many involved in liaising with partners to deal with the COVID crisis. During April 2020, the OPCC worked 3,860 hours – an increase of 456 hours or 13.4% in comparison with hours worked in April 2019. During this one month, OPCC staff:

- Handled 105 complaints and 51 pieces of correspondence
- Acknowledged 27 questions submitted for scrutiny of Cleveland Police
- Launched two major public consultations
- Issued 10 press releases, 76 tweets and 31 Facebook posts

2.6 The health and wellbeing of staff has been of upmost priority with regular contact been maintained between the PCC and team members via telephone/video conference call.

2.7 The continued provision and sustainability of PCC commissioned services, and maintaining effective communication and engagement with communities across Cleveland has been of significant importance. During this time the PCC has;

- Established regular contact with commissioned services to review business continuity arrangements, understand demand and impacts of any service disruption, and offer any required advice and support.
- Launched a dedicated COVID-19 webpage on the PCC website that brings together Government advice and guidance, and information on COVID-19 legislation, funding opportunities, support services and volunteering opportunities - <https://www.cleveland.pcc.police.uk/Information/Coronavirus-COVID-19.aspx>
- Developed a COVID-19 partner and stakeholder update bulletin.
- Maintained the Your Force Your Voice engagement programme, through the promotion of alternative methods of communication via the PCC website and social media platforms.
- Continued the production and distribution of the PCC monthly newsletter. <https://www.cleveland.pcc.police.uk/News-and-Events/PCC-Newsletter-Archive.aspx>

- Utilised social media to disseminate information to communities from the Government and partners, promote safety and support messages in relation to domestic abuse, substance misuse, online safety and protection against scams.

2.8 Both at a national and regional level the PCC has engaged in a range of 'virtual' meetings including:

- Weekly calls with Policing Minister Kit Malthouse, escalating Cleveland specific matters in relation to funding for serious violence, the use of short prison sentences and urgent assurance in relation to the supply of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for frontline police officers and staff.
- PCC Group and Association of Police & Crime Commissioners (APCC) meetings, covering a range of crime, policing, safeguarding, modern day slavery and criminal justice matters.
- National Police Air Support Board, working on the future direction of service provision.
- North East Regional PCC's meeting, providing oversight of the collaborative response to serious and organised crime delivered through the North East Specialist Operations Unit (NERSOU).
- Cleveland and Durham Joint Collaboration Board, focussing on specialist operation and capabilities for firearms and road policing.

2.9 As Government restrictions begin to lift and local recovery plans are implemented, the PCC will closely monitor the impact on policing, crime and community safety. As a member of the Middlesbrough Local Outbreak Engagement Board the PCC, along with other local elected members, will play a critical role in shaping local outbreak plans to address surges in COVID-19 infection rates including the use of testing, contact tracing and implementation of local restrictions.

3. Investing in Our Police

3.1 Members will recall at the last meeting in February, the Force had commenced its 'Towards 2025 - Road to Improvement' programme noting significant progress had been made in stabilising operational activity.

3.2 Despite additional policing challenges brought about by the COVID-19, the Chief Constable confirmed that the Service Improvement Programme (SIP) would continue throughout the pandemic.

3.3 In May, as part of the service improvement work and the PCC's commitment to strengthen Neighbourhood Policing, an additional 28 Police Officers joined Neighbourhood Policing Teams across Cleveland to provide a greater focus on prevention and problem solving activity.

3.4 During this time progress has been made in relation to programme governance, leadership, planning and delivery, where key appointments have been made by the Force to lead the Service Improvement Team. These roles include the appointment of a:

- Superintendent - with significant experience within investigation and organisational change
- Programme Manager with significant experience of corporate governance, change and scrutiny, including a former Associate Inspector role with HMICFRS.

3.5 The College of Policing have continued to support the Force with its improvement work and facilitated the first session of the Cleveland Police Senior Leadership Programme.

3.6 Overseen by the PCC, the Everyone Matters Programme has been integrated into the service improvement workstreams ensuring equality, diversity and inclusion requirements are considered in all aspects of improvement work and future Force recruitment campaigns.

3.7 The Force's improvement work is a key feature of the PCC's Scrutiny and Accountability Work Programme, where future monthly progress updates will be scrutinised through the review of programme control documents, outcomes tracked against the programme stage plan and assurances being sought from internal and external sources, including HMICFRS, to evidence programme delivery and impact.

3.8 It is noted, the first stage of the programme is planned for completion during September 2020, with the remaining months focusing on a combination of review work and implementation of change summarised in the table below:

Organisational Reviews	Implementation Work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End to end domestic abuse mapping • Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Assessment • Community Safety • Internal business processes such as Recruitment, Promotion, Grievance • Demand Management – Duties, Events, Civil Contingencies and Critical Incidents • Multi Agency and Children Safeguarding • Clarification of Investigation demand • Leadership Training Needs Assessment • Longer term approaches to regional Murder Investigation Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progression of the Vulnerability Desk • Development of Neighbourhood Policing • Problem Solving, Prevention and Tasking • Development of Ethics and EDI including increasing champions • Philomena Protocol • Senior Leadership Coaching • Victims Code of Practice development • Complaints legislation • Crime Assessment & Allocation Framework • Raising Investigative Standards Development Programme

3.9 During this time the PCC has secured further investment in Cleveland Police through the development of a successful bid to the Home Office; resulting in almost £40,000 funding to increase the number of Tasers for frontline police

officers. To inform the development of the bid development, through an on-line survey the PCC sought public opinion on Police use of Tasers. Analysis of responses showed overwhelming support with:

- Two third of residents were in favour of additional Taser capacity in Cleveland;
- More than 67% of respondents said they would feel safer if every police officer carried a Taser;
- More than 74% of respondents said it would make no difference to their decision in approaching a police officer if they were carrying a Taser
- Around 88% of respondent said they would trust Cleveland Police to use a Taser responsibly.

3.11 Despite COVID-19 restrictions preventing Independent Custody Visitors from undertaking face to face visits in the Cleveland police custody suite, oversight and scrutiny of custody arrangements and treatment of detainees has been maintained through the dip sampling of police custody records, results of which are fed into the national dataset collated by the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA), and shared with the Police Custody Management Team to support continuous improvement.

3.12 On 1 February, national changes to the way police complaints are handled were introduced. As such, the OPCC is now responsible for undertaking independent reviews of complaints dealt with by the Force. To date, eight reviews have taken place with one complaint upheld. The PCC's complaints 'triage' team have been maintaining business as usual throughout the pandemic and have responded to numerous concerns and complaints linked to COVID-19, providing advice and assistance and resolving issues for the public.

4. A Better Deal for Victims

4.1 At the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the PCC recognised the priority of ensuring vulnerable people and victims of crime have access to the vital services they need, many of which are commissioned by the PCC.

4.2 Throughout the pandemic all locally PCC commissioned services including the Victim Care and Advice Service (VCAS), Domestic Abuse Support Services, Sexual Violence Support Services and Restorative Cleveland Services have adapted their delivery models to meet Government social-distancing guidelines and have continued to accept new referrals, engage and offer support to individuals.

4.3 In response to the national emergence of COVID-19 online scams, around 1,000 previous victims of fraud in Cleveland were contacted by VCAS and provided with prevention advice to reduce the risk of repeat victimisation. Many of the individuals contacted reported feeling vulnerable, isolated and afraid and did not know who to turn to for help. Through this intervention VCAS were able to signpost people to a wide range of support, from telephone befriending to food banks and prescription delivery.

4.4 While feedback from victims in relation to VCAS continues to be positive and has included 'VCAS have been amazing' and 'I would have cracked up without them',

however the need for instant support has been highlighted as gap To address this gap, the PCC has recently extended a pilot where two VCAS Support Officers are based in Police control room and can take calls directly from control room operatives to support our most vulnerable victims at first point of contact. The VCAS Support Officers can provide direct emotional and practical support to ensure victims can cope with the impact of crime. A visit can then be arranged between a Victim Care Officer and the victim to ensure they can partake in effective recovery. Early indications from the pilot has shown positive results and more information can be provided in future reports. The posts have been especially crucial during the pandemic when vulnerable community members have not required police resources but not been sure who else to contact. The VCAS Support Officers have been able to take the call and refer individuals onto more appropriate community based services.

4.4 The PCC has placed a particular focus on Domestic Abuse during the lockdown period recognising that victims may find it more difficult to seek help and support due to the continuous close proximity of the perpetrator. In partnership with the Chief Constable and Domestic Abuse charities, the PCC has raised awareness of support services, smartphone apps and provided messages of reassurance that domestic abuse is still a priority for the Police and support services are still available to help.

4.5 Through the development of successful funding applications the PCC has secured £477k from the Ministry of Justice and NHS England to support vulnerable people, children and families affected by domestic abuse and sexual violence. Supporting nine organisations across Cleveland including; A Way Out, Eva, Arch, Safer Communities, Nacro – SWITCH Project, My Sister’s Place, Harbour, Foundation and Halo, the funding will be used to:

- Purchase digital equipment and technical support to allow staff to support vulnerable people remotely;
- Provide welfare supplies for vulnerable victims including groceries, household goods and mobile phones to ease isolation;
- Support additional provision or staff to deal with an increase in demand or to replace work normally carried out by volunteers;
- Provide additional support for young people affected by domestic abuse, including support workers and specialist counselling;
- Set-up a remote evidence video link to support victims in giving evidence without attending court;
- Protect the wellbeing of staff who have continued to work throughout the pandemic through increased supervision;
- Provide cleaning supplies and PPE equipment.

4.6 During this reporting period the Cleveland Anti-Slavery Network held a ‘virtual’ meeting to assess the impact of COVID-19 on current activity/trends and receive partnership updates from the four local authority areas, Police and Government agencies.

5. Tackling Offending and Reoffending

- 5.1 The PCC funded Heroin Assisted Treatment scheme and Cleveland Divert Adult Deferred Prosecution Scheme have been recognised by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation as innovative ways to tackle crime, address substance misuse and prevent re-offending behaviour. Both of these schemes have continued to operate throughout the pandemic to support people to live positive and crime free lives.
- 5.2 As the chair of the Local Criminal Justice Partnership, the PCC has held fortnightly meetings bringing together partners from across the criminal justice landscape to understand and address the impact of COVID-19 on the Criminal Justice System including court operations, changes to charging protocols and use of technology. During this time period the PCC has sought reassurances on the early prisoner release scheme and escalated concerns about the pressure short sentences are placing on the prison system to the Policing Minister.
- 5.3 While the Partnership has implemented video enabled technology to assist in remand hearings from Police custody suites, the COVID-19 restrictions have severely affected court operations and delayed the progression of cases. Through national structures the PCC has raised concerns to the Lord Chancellor and supported the call on the Government to consider alternative solutions to address the court backlog including extending court opening times and establishing 'nightingale' courts.
- 5.4 The PCC has worked in partnership with Community Safety Partnerships, VCAS, Police and Fire to submit a bid to the Home Office Safer Streets Fund. If successful, funding will be used to deliver a programme of crime prevention measures, including target hardening and community development work, to reduce acquisitive crime rates in selected areas.
- 5.5 The PCC has renewed his call on Government for resources to address serious violence in Cleveland. Despite having the third highest violent crime rate in the country, Cleveland have failed to qualify for Home Office Serious Violence funding. Following raising concerns in a letter to the Home Secretary and directly with the Policing Minister (attached at Appendix B), on 23rd June, the PCC held a call with the Policing Minister and Home Office colleagues. The PCC presented the Minister with research that had been conducted by his office, highlighting the scale and cost of violence in Cleveland and a proposal for a Cleveland Unit for Reducing Violence to prevent and address the issue. The Minister welcomed discussions and offered ongoing support from the Home Office to develop and consider these plans further.
- 5.6 The PCC continues to explore alternative funding options to support the prevention of young people becoming engaged in serious crime and violence, and was instrumental in bringing together key stakeholders to discuss the possibility of bids to the Youth Endowment COVID-19 Fund which has been established to fund engagement activity with vulnerable children and young people that can be undertaken remotely or whilst adhering to social distancing guidelines. This is in response to concerns that most youth outreach work has had to be paused during COVID-19, including a range of targeted youth intervention projects funded by the OPCC. A range of local bids have been submitted to the fund, with decisions expected by July 1st.

6. Working Together to Make Cleveland Safer/Securing the Future of Our Communities

6.1 The PCC has formed a unique partnership with Teesside University to undertake independent research to understand:

- Community perceptions regarding Cleveland Police's implementation of the Coronavirus Act powers - The University will be an independent player acting to advise the PCC on public perceptions regarding Cleveland Police's use of COVID-19 powers to ascertain whether the community, and in particular 'at risk' groups, feel that the new powers are being used appropriately with the desired focus on engagement, education and encouragement before resorting to enforcement. This will include engagement to understand how communities would like the Police and PCC to educate them regarding the new powers.
- How the community would like the PCC and Cleveland Police to engage with them during the period of social distancing when traditional face to face engagement mechanisms are not appropriate – This will potentially include recommendations regarding future engagement mechanisms to better reflect the diverse range of platforms available for engagement, and will potentially have longer term implications for the format of community engagement, going beyond the timescales of the pandemic. Research will be undertaken to look at best practice regarding community engagement in other Force areas, including a review of the benefits of a range of social media platforms.

The project has been promoted through the PCC and Teesside University websites and social media. The final report is expected in August.

6.2 Early in the pandemic concerns were raised both locally and nationally that rural communities were particularly impacted by the social distancing measures. The PCC launched a Rural Crime Survey to better understand how the pandemic was impacting rural communities and their experiences of crime and antisocial behaviour.

6.3 From the 169 responses received, with over one half (60%) stated that they feel community safety concerns have increased during the pandemic. The main concerns highlighted have been fly-tipping, antisocial behaviour, off-road vehicles and deliberate fires. Many respondents have also expressed concern at the number of people coming to rural areas for their allowed exercise and the impact this has had in terms of social distancing and lack of respect for rural property with gates being left open allowing livestock to escape and dogs not being kept in control around livestock.

6.4 In response to the concerns raised the PCC has convened monthly virtual meetings of a Tees Rural Crime Task Force, bringing together Police, Specials, Rural Volunteers, Fire, Local Authorities and Environment Agency. In advance of the meetings the wider community members of the Tees Rural Crime Forum are asked to feed in local concerns to ensure that these are reflected in the discussions due to the difficulties of holding a virtual meeting of the wider forum. Action taken following the Task Force's first meeting includes:

- Additional patrols of rural areas using Specials and Neighbourhood Teams
- Drone patrols of Eston Hills and Guisborough Woods, two sites that have had ongoing issues with fire setting during the pandemic

- Increased promotion through social media of the partnership work ongoing to provide public reassurance
 - Engagement with local MP to ensure partnership linkages
- 6.5 The PCC has commissioned a not-for-profit social enterprise to work with Cleveland OPCC to engage with young people from across Cleveland to establish a Cleveland Youth Commission as a sustainable, structured system for young people aged 14-25 to influence decisions about policing and crime in Cleveland. Leaders Unlocked have a key aim to allow young people and under-represented groups to have a stronger voice on the issues that affect their lives. The project will represent the views of young people across Cleveland to the Police and Crime Commissioner to support the development and delivery of the Police and Crime Plan.
- 6.6 Following the tragic death of George Floyd in the USA, the PCC reaffirmed his commitment to drive forward the local Equality, Diversity and Inclusion agenda through the Everyone Matters programme. Striving to achieve diversity in the workplace and improve understanding of our communities, while ensuring the Police act without unconscious bias and use their powers in a fair and proportionate manner through independent scrutiny and accountability structures, including the Strategic Independent Advisory Group and Independent External Ethics Committee.
- 6.7 On 7 June, the PCC stood in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement when attending a large peaceful and socially distanced demonstration in Centre Square, Middlesbrough.
- 6.8 A reduction in hate crime reports during the early part of the pandemic raised concerns that victims were failing to report incidents. The PCC and Force issued a joint press release urging communities to continue to report incidents during the pandemic.
- 6.9 Monthly virtual meetings of the Cleveland Strategic Hate Crime & Incidents group have been convened. Chaired by the PCC and involve representatives from a wide range of community safety and criminal justice organisations including Police, Local Authorities, Youth Offending, Housing, and VCAS. A key element of the meeting is monitoring community tensions. Some of the key outcomes from the meeting have been:
- Application to Faith, Race and Hate Crime grant scheme – more details below
 - Plans for a Cleveland Police Cadets hate crime awareness campaign on social media – risk assessments currently being undertaken
 - Tension monitoring regarding the George Floyd murder and the associated Black Lives Matter activity
- 6.10 The PCC has worked in partnership with VCAS, Regional Refugee Forum and Show Racism the Red Card to submit a bid to the Faith, Race and Hate Crime grant scheme. If successful, funding will be used to deliver a:

- Professional hate crime awareness campaign, coordinated by OPCC
- Community Champion training sessions with refugee and asylum seeker community
- Hate crime awareness education