



01/06/21

## **RESPONSE OF THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER OF WILTSHIRE AND SWINDON TO THE HMICFRS REPORT**

### **Policing in the Pandemic**

#### **The Police response to the coronavirus pandemic during 2020**

##### **Police and Crime Commissioner's comments**

I welcome the HMICFRS report on "Policing in the pandemic", which was published at the end of April 2021 and I am pleased to see you have highlighted some of the key work we have done here in Wiltshire and I applaud the efforts of the CC officers during the three national lockdowns we have occurred. The report identifies that whilst all forces did the best they could under these unexpected circumstances, there are many factors we can take from this to learn and to even use going forward. This scrutiny included a thorough, and transparent review, of all action taken and I am pleased the report's findings recognised and reflected this.

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly changed the delivery of policing within Wiltshire. As colleagues began to vacate Police estate in favour of home working, ICT were placed under immediate and intense pressure as the department was committed to ensuring that Officers and Staff had access to the technology needed to work remotely and effectively providing reassurance and still being able to be contacted from the community. A police force is only as good as the people within it and I have always been passionate about workforce welfare. The officers and staff do an incredibly challenging and demanding job in normal everyday circumstances and it is only right that we do everything we can to ensure they have the technology and support they needed moving forward during these unprecedented times.

The early weeks of the pandemic involved significant monitoring of the forces contracted bandwidth, 4G mobile data usage and feedback from across the organisation regarding the stability of communication. Whilst over 700 colleagues transitioned to home working and support departments that had to remain on site, our ICT helped split the Crime and Communications Centre operations across two sites and ensured that previously dormant Police Stations were made fit for Covid-19 use. Alongside this, ICT supported key logistics cells and quickly assimilated and distributed hundreds of periphery items, such as headsets, keyboards and importantly computer monitors to ensure people's physical wellbeing working from home.

The road for ICT throughout 2020 and into 2021 continued to remain challenging; importantly, ICT continued to push forward with improvement projects and development over the last year. New services and solutions were introduced, and the future ahead looks promising. The projected working

structure of Wiltshire Police after this pandemic has yet to be established, however both our officers and staff are posed to ensure that whether working from home, in a station, or in the community, they will have access to the technology they need.

In response to the global COVID 19 pandemic, the Government introduced new legislation aimed at slowing the spread of the virus and saving lives, including giving police the power to sanction Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) to anyone breaching the guidance, I approved a process to provide scrutiny and oversight of the legality and proportionality of FPNs including a regular update for the communities 'Summary Overview' to ensure transparency and openness with our communities around any enforcement action that Wiltshire Police officers have taken.

I very much welcomed and support the idea from Devon and Cornwall of supporting new officer recruits to gain knowledge and experience working in a call centre to support their training to understand the types of calls that are received and a bonus to this they then have the knowledge should any gaps arise, allowing officers to still fulfil their duties of helping keep communities safe. My concern around doing this is having the time to be able to implement this. New force recruits already have multiple training and assessment upon arriving in the force and often need someone with the experience to assist them within the first few months of employment, to then also place them on an intensive training course to be able to handle calls is a lot and hope it doesn't have an effect on their mental wellbeing or passion for the role.

I believe Wiltshire in conjunction with many other forces have dealt very well with with challenges that COVID-19 brought and we have learnt and developed skills in order to handle anything that may occur like this in the future and I am proud of the reliance and the ability from everyone in adapting new ways of working.

### **Chief Officer comments**

The Chief Constable of Wiltshire notes the published report and recommendations made within it, welcoming the recommendations to ensure the force remains fit for purpose.

### **Portfolio lead comments**

Wiltshire Police has been able to demonstrate successful delivery against each recommendation made within the national report on Policing the Pandemic. Within the national report, Wiltshire was able to demonstrate many items of good practice which supported the response to the COVID Pandemic. This included creating a dedicated page on force website, which ensured our local communities understood the force response and could easily access information and advice. It also included specific advice for police officers on the risks of hidden harms, evaluating the application of the Four E's approach, establishing scrutiny panels to monitor if the regulations were affecting particular groups in society disproportionately, and finally the thorough assessment of employee wellbeing and support.

Overall, the past year has been a very challenging time, but one which Wiltshire Police has responded to effectively for the public of Wiltshire and the employees of our organisation.

Evidence against each recommendation is provided below.

<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Wiltshire response In progress required by 31<sup>st</sup> May</b>
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<p><b>Managing registered sex offenders</b></p> <p>Forces must immediately make sure that officers understand and correctly implement the guidance for managing registered sex offenders during the pandemic.</p>	<p>The Wiltshire Police MOSOVO team have all been briefed on the letter received from the NPCC lead and the principles outlined within it. Wiltshire offender managers continue to manage RSO's in compliance with the generic CoP risk principles and using offender specific risk assessments, derived from the Active Risk Management System, as well as responding to any new information or intelligence. They routinely use PPE to facilitate unannounced home visits and the enforcement of court orders as appropriate.</p>
<p><b>Legislation and guidance</b></p> <p>Forces must immediately make sure they can manage their responses to changes in coronavirus-related legislation. They must ensure frontline officers and staff are clear about the difference between legislation and guidance.</p>	<p>Wiltshire appointed a COVID Tactical Advisor (Tac Ad) in March of 2020 to provide support regards the implementation of briefings for all staff, advise and support for scrutiny of powers, providing tactical advice on specific issues (via on call if necessary) and providing support and advice to the command structures overseeing the COVID response operation. That Tac Ad is also a POPSA (Public Order Public Safety Advisor) and therefore more familiar with the interpretation of legislation and possesses skills and training in other potentially relevant areas. Part of the COVID Tac Ad's role is to monitor the relevant channels for updates, briefing material and advice from the NPCC and College of Policing and the COVID Tac Ad has access to the relevant information required. The COVID Tac Ad monitors other official channels such as Legislation.gov for new published COVID legislation and translates this into digestible information for staff and officers. New legislation can sometimes be published on Legislation.gov ahead of College of Policing Briefings being circulated. The COVID Tac Ad would review the legislation as published and where possible liaise with Op Talla to establish the timeline of the publication of briefing material. If that timeline is likely to run into the regulation becoming law, then an interim briefing product is produced which provides interim guidance to police officers and staff. This is immediately superseded with the college of policing product on arrival and a cross check done to ensure that the interim product reflects the CoP product. Officers and staff are briefed regarding the interim vs College of Policing Product. These briefings are circulated via the Tasking and Briefing Portal (TAB) which is the system used to brief all operational staff. This is supported by internal communications via email and publication of all briefings, SOP's and relevant forms on a bespoke COVID Operational Portal, which is the single point of reference for all operational COVID issues. The College of Policing products would sometimes be supplemented with additional detail relevant to our local response, such as messages from commanders and other local considerations. These supplemented elements were always clearly marked with the Wiltshire Police logo. We use an application on the work mobile phones called 'Siren' where staff can access Aid-Memoirs produced by the COVID Tac Ad. SOP's have been formed for more bespoke issues such as International Travel and Test and Trace Quarantine which enable officers to follow a clear process. The guidance produced is explicit regarding the exact detail of the legislation. In addition to the guidance and briefings circulated, an additional 'lessons learnt' briefing was produced which picks up potential new and arising issues and redresses them with staff. This picked up on issues of misunderstandings between guidance and law. These issues are fed in</p>

	<p>via advice requested and provided by the COVID Tac Ad, through surveys conducted with staff about their understanding of the legislation.</p> <p>As mentioned above, the COVID Tac Ad would also fulfil periods of On Call and be available for staff to call in the event of a misunderstanding of the legislation.</p> <p>Where a member of staff takes enforcement action, usually in the form of an FPN, in respect of COVID offences, the COVID Tac Ad undertakes an initial review of the FPN establishing if there is a prima facie legal case and if it appears proportionate. This is prior to the FPN being sent to ACRO. Any issues can be intercepted at this stage and there is a process to rescind the FPN if required. Two scrutiny panels sit which review the COVID FPN's. One of those panels focusses on the issue of proportionality and has a membership tailored to that (including local councillor, OPCC and Staff association attendance. The other panel is more preattentive and consists of Supervisors from local policing and a selection of other relevant roles such as Learning and Development and the Diversity and Equality Team). Any organisational learning from these panels is fed directly into the FPN Lessons Learnt Document which is circulated on TAB.</p>
<p><b>Test, track and trace</b></p> <p>Forces must immediately put in place a policy to make sure that they follow the guidance and self-isolation directions when members of the workforce come into contact with someone with coronavirus symptoms.</p>	<p>In September 2020 the Force and OPCC published our position in relation to having to self-isolate if you have either tested positive for coronavirus or have come into contact with someone that has tested positive.</p> <p>Dependent on whether you were in the workplace 48 hours prior to becoming symptomatic, your line manager will assess whether you are a 'sensitive case', an operational (including CCC staff) case or an enabling services case. Sensitive cases are likely to include covert operations, witness protection officers and child protection officers amongst others. If you suspect you are in a sensitive role, you must discuss this with your line manager. If you are a sensitive or operational case your line manager will raise it with a Superintendent or the Head of Occupational Health Unit for the appropriate assessment and action to be taken.</p> <p>If the case is not sensitive or operational (so is an enabling services case) then the individual should be referred to the Test and Trace service as soon as possible. Furthermore, officers and staff contacted by the test and trace service are expected to self-isolate for the required time from the day of last contact with the Covid positive individual.</p>
<p><b>Custody records</b></p> <p>Forces must immediately make sure that they clearly and consistently record on custody records information about how/when/if detainees are informed of the temporary changes to how they can exercise their rights to legal advice and representation. The record must make clear how any consents are obtained about the way in which legal advice and representation are provided.</p>	<p>Process in place to ensure this happens achieved by modifying the appropriate template in Niche for juvenile detainees accompanied with regular reminder communications to Custody Staff and dip sampling by support Sergeant to check compliance. Feedback is provided on errors to relevant staff members.</p>

<p><b>Overall scale and impact of changes</b></p> <p>Within six months, forces must assess the sustainability of any temporary measures introduced during the pandemic that change the way they work. They must understand positive, negative and unintended consequences of the scale and impact of the changes before determining if any of these new ways of working should continue.</p>	<p>We have a structure in place which enables the identification and understanding of new and innovative practice enforced by Covid. Within our Restart Programme, the Learning and Innovation Cell and Organisational Restart Cell are well placed to identify temporary measures put in place. These have been reviewed at a number of points- this included staff focus groups, productivity reports, and within the wider scanning and engagement. This identified positive changes such as virtual training, benefits of virtual conferences and introduction of virtual Police attendance. We have captured benefits through using our normal mechanisms- such as a pilot review of the VPA (A full Post Implementation Review is scheduled for Summer 2021). A further survey of the changes that we aim to keep is to be undertaken in May 2021. From this, benefits and disbenefits analysis will be undertaken to determine which elements to keep and why. The Regional Recovery Group are now developing a consistent template to capture these benefits and share them among our regional forces. Regular regional sessions are held with respective programme teams to assess the adjustments made and consider future approaches which can maximise productivity and effectiveness, whilst maintaining an improvement in wellness and staff morale.</p>
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**Police and Crime Commissioner’s comments**

*PCC’s comments in support of Chief Officers/business leads. Thereafter returned to HMICFRS through reporting portal.*

**HMI Williams comments/support;**

*HMI’s comments in support*