

## HMICIC Annual Assessment of Policing in England and Wales – APCC Response

### 1. What are the most significant issues and difficulties which have faced the police service in England and Wales in 2019, and how well has the service responded to them?

*Current threats.* The police service has needed to adapt to meet recent and evolving threats and challenges, including:

- Serious and Organised Crime/county lines
- Modern slavery and human trafficking
- Child Sexual Abuse and exploitation
- Fraud and cyber-crime
- Serious violence, including knife crime
- Drug markets and county lines
- Violence against women and girls
- Tackling rural crime
- Hate crime and targeting of vulnerable people

There are many examples of effective police programmes and operations that are addressing these forms of crime across the country, but also significant challenges remaining, not least the current focus on Covid 19 and the police role in enforcing on-going restrictions and social distancing measures.

*Pressure on resources.* The ability to respond to these new threats depends on appropriate – and appropriately targeted – resourcing for policing and community safety. As HMICFRS noted in the *State of Policing* report 2018, there was a real term reduction of 19% in police funding since 2010-11; in 2018-19 police funding was £12.9 billion, just 2% of public expenditure; and while the recent uplift in police funding is welcome, it does not in itself deal with the legacy of the austerity years and, at the same time, the public has high expectations of the police service.

We also note the pressures placed on policing by non-police demand. A good example is the police's role in responding to people with mental health problems, as discussed in the HMICFRS report *Policing and Mental Health – Picking up the Pieces* (2018), with police force estimations of the time they spend on dealing with mental health related issues ranging from 25% to 40%. Likewise, weaknesses in the courts and wider criminal justice systems also place additional burdens on the police, for instance in relation to offender management.

The policing sector has effectively made the case for additional investment through the Police Uplift Programme and will now want to make the most of the opportunities this presents. While welcoming the PUP investment, PCCs will continue to make the case for investment in policing. There is also an urgent need to review the police funding formula, and allocation of funding between forces.

*Effectiveness of response.* PCCs and policing colleagues have developed a range of new approaches to address these threats, including: developing the role of ROCUs; establishing Violence Reduction Units; facilitating the Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Network; leading the National Rural Crime Network; and working together on a range of local interventions and service models to prevent and reduce crime and improve support for victims.

The implementation of the *Policing Vision 2025* supported by the Police Transformation Fund has driven forward programmes to transform policing by investing in digitalisation, improving diversity, supporting local policing and developing new capabilities. The PTF invested £223 million in 98 projects in Phase 1 (2016-18) and is now prioritising the delivery of key national programmes, including Single Online Home (policing website), National Enabling Programme (IT Productivity Tools, Identity and Access Management and Information Security Monitoring, through the National Management Centre) and collaboration on a national forensics network. These projects are clearly vital to addressing the new challenges for policing and there is significant work to do to deliver them. Once delivered we will need to see how they can be built on further.

**2. What do you consider the service does especially well, and in what respects should it improve?**

Policing continues to provide the best service it can to the public and to show vision and flexibility in responding to new threats and adapting to new ways of working. Many of the key challenges where there is still more work to do are identified above: for example, the challenge of increasing diversity so local police forces better reflect the communities that they police and developing digital and technological capabilities. HMICFRS has also noted in its reports over the last couple of years their concerns about shortages in some key policing skills, such as detectives/civilian investigators, and the hollowing-out of neighbourhood policing teams, which we share – although we expect the Police Uplift Programme currently underway to resolve this situation over time. However, we anticipate that capacity and capability will continue to be challenged in the short term, particularly during the Covid 19 crisis.

The police service remains a ‘can do’ service but this risks spreading a finite resource too thinly, so we need to find a way that both police and partners can play a full role as we get into Covid recovery – this is an opportunity to re-set the dial and PCCs have a role to play in bringing local partners together. A priority for the APCC is to continue to improve the transparency and accountability of policing, as this is essential for PCCs to fulfil their role, and provide appropriate support, check and challenge. Relatedly, from a PCC perspective, we look forward to policing building on the positive work that’s been done to develop its engagement with the public’s experiences, needs and expectations.

**3. What should the police service be doing now to ensure it can provide the best possible service to the public in the year ahead?**

*Listen to the public.* Now more than ever, policing needs to ensure it is properly balancing the needs of victims and witnesses in their local communities, with what residents and businesses want to see action taken on. With extra resources will come the expectation that more is done about burglary, antisocial behaviour, rural crime, drug dealing and other issues which affect local neighbourhoods. Police and Crime Commissioners, through the setting of local Police and Crime plans, provide the local engagement and governance to ensure that these issues and others are being addressed.

*Recruitment, learning and development.* Giving police officers the skills and competencies to work with complex communities and new technologies, and a more diverse police force that better reflects the communities that it polices. The APCC has supported and helped to shape the new Police Education Qualifications Framework (PEQF), which we believe will help to equip the service to respond to the increasing complexity of crime and to new demands on the service. In addition, we

are supporting the Police Uplift Programme which should begin to have an impact in restoring police capacity over the next 2-3 years.

*Digital and technology.* Developing policing and society's technological competencies to improve online and digital security and prevent and detect cyber-crime, while further developing digital tools to combat crime – e.g. ANPR. The significant investment by the Police Reform and Transformation Board in digital technologies over the last couple of years and the recent launch of a National Policing Digital Strategy for 2020-30 have helped to lay the groundwork. It is now important to implement this: to ensure that digital and technological capacity is effectively developed by the NPB; that robust governance is in place; that the role of the Police ICT Company is developed and that police officers are training to deploy new technologies. It is also important to ensure as far as possible that other CJS partners are exploiting technology effectively to reduce demand on both their resources and the police.

*Information governance.* There is a need to develop robust information governance protocols and mechanisms for policing, given the large volumes of personal and sensitive data that are held by police forces, the developing technologies around biometrics, the requirements of the new legal frameworks for information governance (especially GDPR) and the potential benefits of improved data sharing between partners (e.g. the police, NHS and local government).

*Emergency Service Collaboration.* Many of the demands on policing could be mitigated through better pooling of resources and collaborative working by Emergency Services – for example, working with the ambulance service to manage the night time economy or to get support for people in mental health crisis or with the fire service to help to ensure older people keep safe in their homes.

*Wider partnership working and whole system approaches.* The Policing Vision 2025 says that '*policing must address the sources of demand on its resources working with a range of partner agencies including health, education, social services, other emergency services, criminal justice and victims' organisations ... to reflect the more complex emerging crime challenges while being conscious of service drift, as partner agencies capacity is reduced*'. This remains a challenging area, and we believe that joining partners up better requires leadership from cross-government departments to be effective, which needs to be replicated at local level, where PCCs have a role. As mentioned earlier, the Covid recovery period may offer opportunities to reset the landscape. In any event, PCCs will continue to play a vital role in bringing local partners together through forums including Health and Wellbeing Boards, Criminal Justice Boards and Community Safety Partnerships.

*An effective criminal justice system.* Reducing re-offending and rehabilitating offenders will continue to play a critical part in managing the demand on police resources and keeping communities safe. The new model of the probation service will have an important role to play here – along with local voluntary sector providers. We have yet to see how the new arrangements will work in practice, but PCCs look forward to developing their role in probation and rehabilitation services and engaging with the proposed Royal Commission on Criminal Justice.

*Prevention and Early Intervention.* Done well, this could greatly reduce future demand on policing, although the evidence base of what works needs to be developed in some areas. Many PCCs have invested in prevention services locally, particularly in relation to Adverse Childhood Experiences, as part of the wider response to knife crime/county lines, etc. PCCs continuing to develop new

approaches with local partners (e.g. VRUs), and to contribute to the building evidence-based practice and commissioning of early intervention services.

*Political engagement.* Some of the key actions needed to reduce police demand will need to be led by central government and other national agencies, so it is vital that local policing and community safety voices are able to influence national policy decisions.

*Collaboration across police force areas and jurisdictions.* New threats for policing are often happening across borders and/or digitally or online – for example, County Lines, where drug operations run from large metropolitan centres in one police force area serving markets in other local areas. We note crime happens across international boundaries and the importance of ensuring that policing continues to connect effectively with its European counterparts post-Brexit.

#### **4. How do you think the police service is facing the challenges of the changing faces of criminality?**

A number of these have been identified above, and would include:

- Constructive police engagement with new national policing structures (e.g. National Policing board) and programmes (e.g. Police Uplift programme)
- Prioritising workforce development (and recognising the opportunity of PUP) – including actively seeking to enhance diversity and recognising the new skills agenda
- Police support for PCC-led regional arrangements to address the SOC challenge (e.g. ROCUs)
- Police engagement with local partners to prevent crime (e.g. involvement in PCC-led VRUs)
- Launch of a National Policing Digital Strategy, setting a direction of travel for developing digital and technological capabilities, with the challenge now being to implement it
- Funding and resourcing – the policing sector has started to work with officials to develop a compelling, evidence-based case for further investment as part of the Spending Review process, particularly given the existing PUP investment. Although the SR has been suspended for now, PCCs and Chiefs will continue work to build the case for investment in policing once normal life resumes.

APCC

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