



Police Service
of Northern Ireland

Chief Constable's Accountability Report

to Northern Ireland
Policing Board

Report Date:

Covering Period of 30 November
2023 to 25 January 2024

Presented at Policing Board
Meeting:

1 February 2024



we care
we listen
we act

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Unless otherwise stated the statistics in this report are unvalidated management information sourced from administrative systems and are subject to change.

Foreword

As I publish my first accountability report of 2024, I do so having observed with increasing concern the recent rise and fall of expectation that an agreement will be achieved for the return of Stormont to deliver devolved Government, including a resolution to funding the crisis in public services.

It is not my place to comment on the political decisions taken by the various parties involved. However, I do have a responsibility to be clear about the consequences and implications of the current deadlock. Whether resolution to the crisis in funding public services comes from a restored Northern Ireland Executive or direct intervention from the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is for others to take political positions on. It is clear to me that the current situation is having a serious and critical impact on policing and other public services in Northern Ireland.

I have a professional duty to make clear the consequences of the current inadequate funding of policing and, as a result, our ability to keep people safe.

As previously reported to the Board, I am determined to progress outstanding pay awards for both officers and staff. I very much value the support of the Board in this endeavour and I am continuing to seek a solution with the Department of Justice and others. I am aware that historically the Courts have, as a general proposition, found it undesirable to get involved in questions of how financial priorities are afforded. Nonetheless, I am exploring all such options as the pay issue has to be positively resolved. Public services, and especially policing in Northern Ireland, cannot be put at risk through political stalemate.

Similarly, it is my firm intention to stop the decline in police officer numbers. I am determined not to fall below the 6,358 officer and 2,341 staff numbers predicted for the end of March 2024. We are at the lowest numbers policing has known since before the Troubles and officer numbers continue to fall. This cannot continue and necessitates the commencement of recruitment from April 2024. I realise these student officer's will not be deployable for some six months, however, to get such a recruitment programme underway is a significant and welcome turning point for the Service.

It should be remembered that the additional burden on other public services of insufficient funding often results in demand they cannot meet falling to policing. I need to be clear, capacity within policing is being stretched. You need look no further than the introduction of Domestic Abuse Protection Orders/Notices later this year as evidence of this, with the expected requirement to manage in the region of 8,000 applications, Police Inspectors presenting evidence in Court, and additional arrests anticipated in their hundreds. All with the projected cost of £8.5m. The importance of these orders as a preventative measure will be clear to everyone. The result of such additional demand is we neither have the time, nor the expertise, to deal with the specialist demands of others.

For me, policing is about protecting people and fighting crime. Outside of these core priorities we should not be doing the work of others. ACC Ryan Henderson is leading a review to establish what we are doing in addition to that of our core business, and how we can work with our partners to stop

those demands falling on policing. I am very conscious of the demands our partners face, so we need to work together to find the right person right care approach.

I understand the various challenges and background to the current impasse regarding the Northern Ireland Executive sits outside of my control. However, I am increasingly concerned that those outside policing and public service do not realise the gravity of the situation in which we are being placed. The time it will take to fix the position is already going to take far too long and the longer this goes on the longer it will take policing, and wider public services, to recover.

Despite these challenges, the professionalism and commitment of PSNI officers and staff remains unwavering. My report this month provides detail on the fantastic, and far ranging, work that is being carried out on a daily basis across Northern Ireland.

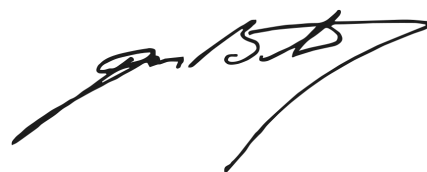
During December, officers and staff were engaged in supporting communities to have a safe and peaceful festive period. Operation Season's Greetings saw an emphasis placed on high visible reassurance policing on our roads and in our towns and villages, along with an aim to raise awareness of our activity to protect the vulnerable and to increase reports of domestic abuse and sexual assault. Throughout the period we received 2,228 calls for help in relation to incidents of domestic abuse. Although these figures are substantially more than the daily average, we are starting to see the number of reports during this period start to decrease. Sadly, we have noted an increase in the number of under 18's being arrested and detained for domestic abuse offences. Throughout the year we have used social media to raise awareness of abusive behaviours with a younger audience, and hope that this has played a part in providing young people with the confidence to recognise and report these behaviours to us.

Numerous sizeable drugs seizures have taken place, the like of which most other police services simply do not experience. Of particular note was the seizure of cocaine with an estimated street value of £10m by officers from Slieve Gullion Neighbourhood Policing Team and Organised Crime Branch. This is the largest such seizure in the Police Service's history. Each seizure, and the recovery of eye watering sums of money, significantly frustrates and dismantles those crime gangs who exploit people through the misery that drugs bring to our society.

Another example of excellent policing that stands out for me, is when officers responded to a report from a member of the public that a woman was trying to enter the river Foyle while carrying a baby. Despite the challenges this situation posed, including a number of officers being injured, those that attended did so with empathy and compassion and were able to remove both the baby and mother from danger. I believe that day two lives were saved by those officers.

My senior team and I, most importantly, all the communities we serve, are incredibly fortunate to have officers and staff who perform as they do.

Finally, I was immensely proud to see colleagues honoured in the King's New Year Honours list. I want to pay tribute to their years of dedicated public service and their contribution to policing in Northern Ireland, which have been recognised in this significant and fitting way.



Jon Boutcher QPM
Chief Constable
Police Service of Northern Ireland



Finance and Resource Update

As at the end of December 2023, the projected over spend against budget for the full year remains at some £49.9m. This reflects our initial projected deficit of £38m for the year, as set out in our Resource Plan, inflated by some emerging pressures including a higher than expected pay award and rising depreciation costs.

We continue to respond to the critical incident of a material data leak last August and this has incurred costs of £2.8m to date. There was significant progress in negotiations about further financial assistance with Treasury and others in December. Although we are still awaiting final confirmation of the outcome, I am pleased to report that sufficient progress was made to enable the roll out of a Universal Offer to all officers and staff impacted by the data leak. In short, the offer enables officers and staff to be reimbursed up to £500 for measures taken to improve their sense of security.

Importantly, the Department of Finance commissioned an exercise in mid-December to help plan for the 2024/5 budget. This exercise reflected three scenarios including a flat cash roll over budget, a 2% reduction and a 5% reduction. On the best outcome of a flat budget and based on maintaining police officer headcount at 6,358, the anticipated funding gap is over £130m next year. The pressure grows to over £300m if provision is included for compensation and legal costs associated with Holiday pay and the Data leak.

The reality is that these type of scenarios are both damaging and undeliverable for the Police Service. The next number of weeks and months will be critical in defining a way forward for the Service and I would welcome

the advocacy of both the Board and public in demanding adequate resourcing for policing moving forward.

Our Performance

Transformation Branch

Building on the earlier work of the 90 day reviews, Transformation Branch are supporting a number of projects across the organisation. The following are three of the key projects currently receiving significant focus.

Legacy

Phase 1 of the legacy project, understanding the current operating model and identifying what will be retained by the Police Service or passed to the new Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery, has been completed and work has commenced on phase 2, which seeks to design the interface processes with ICRIR and develop information sharing protocols.

Service Management Statement (SMS)

Work is progressing to prepare the next SMS. A detailed exercise has been completed to map resources and costs across the organisation showing trends over the last year. This, along with refreshed demand data will be used to inform the next SMS and establish an evidenced based position that underpins and prioritises our future operating model.

Right Care Right Person (RCRP)

This work is focused on better management of the demand associated with mental health, to ensure that the most appropriate public sector resources are tasked with dealing.

The RCRP approach has been used successfully by police services in Great Britain, and work to enable its adoption in Northern Ireland is in the early stages.

A case study has been conducted at Altnagelvin hospital to ascertain the scale of time officers spent at the hospital. Early analysis of the data suggests that there is scope to move demand away from police officers to more suitably skilled health professionals.

Official Statistics

The information in this section is extracted from our Official Statistics published reports. The full reports can all be accessed from the following link. <https://www.psni.police.uk/about-us/our-publications-and-reports/official-statistics>. These are in-year provisional figures and may be subject to change.

Recorded Crime

In the 12 months from 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2023:

- There were 107,095 crimes recorded, a decrease of 2,809 (-2.6%) on the previous 12 months.
- There were 56 police recorded crimes per 1,000 population in the 12 months January 2023 to December 2023 compared with 58 in the previous 12 months.
- Higher crime levels were seen in robbery, theft offences, drug offences, possession of weapons and miscellaneous crimes against society.
- Lower crime levels were seen in violence against the person, criminal damage and public order offences.

Anti-Social Behaviour

In the 12 months from 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2023:

- There were 45,963 anti-social behaviour incidents in Northern Ireland, a decrease of 2,167 (-4.5%) on the previous 12 months. This is the lowest 12 month figure since the data series began in 2006/07.

Security Situation

In 12 months from 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2023:

- There were no security related deaths, compared to one during the previous 12 months. **This is the first calendar year since records began in 1969 that there has not been a security related death.**
- There were 8 bombing incidents, compared to 5 during the previous 12 months and 33 shooting incidents, compared to 29.
- There were 31 casualties of paramilitary style assaults, compared to 25 during the previous 12 months. Belfast experienced the greatest number of assaults (12). All 31 casualties were aged 18 years or older.
- There were 19 casualties of paramilitary style shootings, compared to 8 during the previous 12 months. All 19 casualties were aged 18 years or older.
- There were 104 security related arrests under Section 41 of the Terrorism Act 2000, compared to 110 during the previous 12 months.
- 21 persons were subsequently charged, compared to 13 during the previous 12 months.

Motoring Offences

In the 12 months from 1 December 2022 to 30 November 2023:

- There were 39,402 detections for motoring offences, of which 98% were dealt with by means of a fixed penalty notice or referral for prosecution.
- The remaining 2% (880) resulted in the completion of a speed awareness or safer driver course.
- Total detections decreased by 8% on the 42,793 detections recorded in the previous 12 months, with a notable reduction in speeding offences which was down by 1,578 (22%).
- Conversely, insurance offences increased, albeit by a much lesser extent over the year (2%), making them the largest offence group recorded (7,179), which along with speeding (5,553) accounted for one-third of the total detections.
- The highest speed detected by PSNI officers in the latest 12 months was 144mph, on the M2, Belfast.

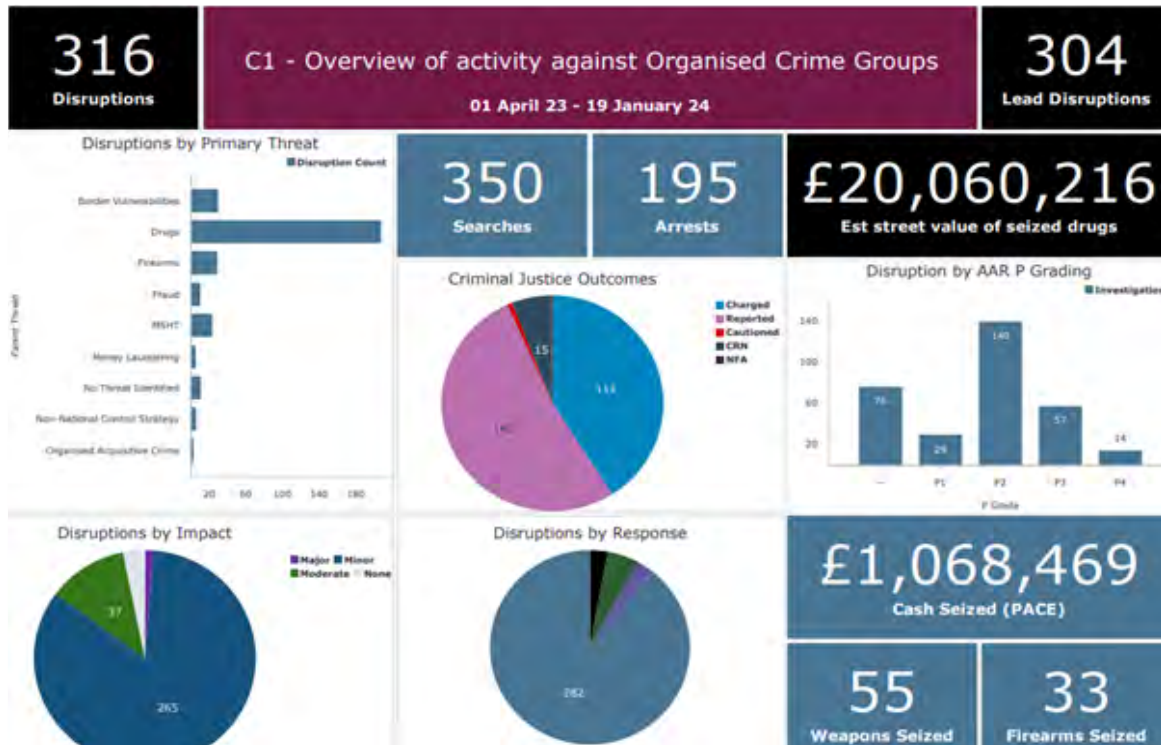
Outcome 1

We Have a Safe Community

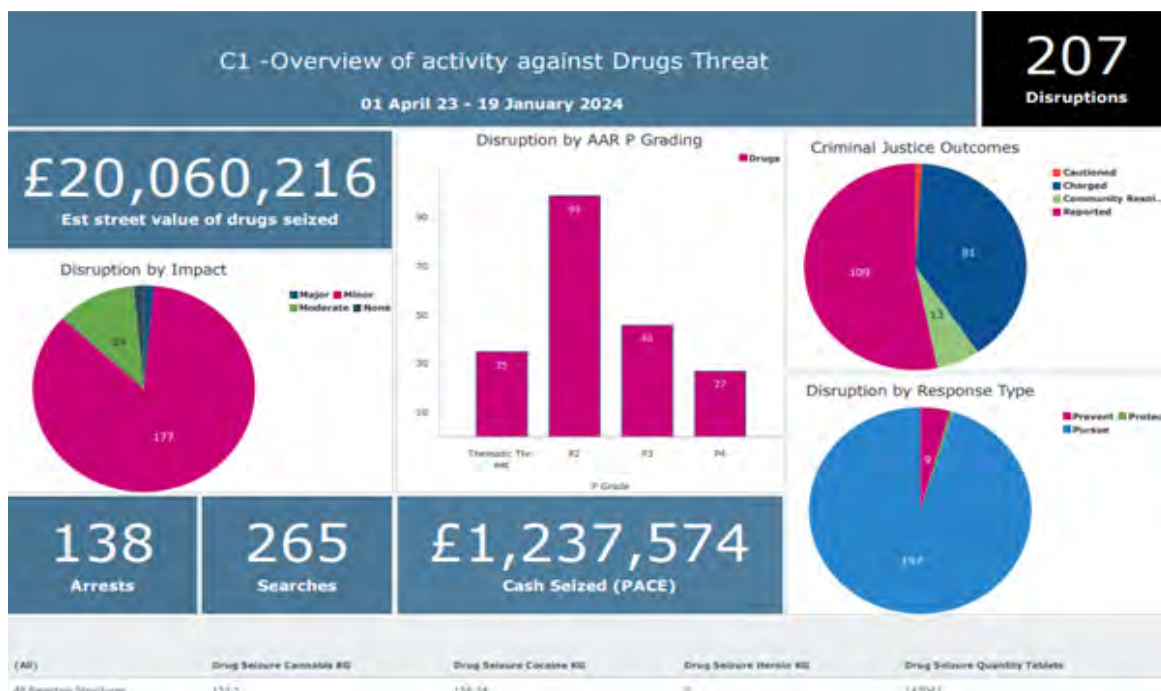
Crime Department

Organised Crime Branch

Overall Branch Activity



Drugs Threat



This financial year to date Organised Crime Branch has seized Controlled Drugs with an estimated street value of over £20m. This compares with £9.2m seized for the whole of the previous financial year and represents a 116% increase in the value of drugs seized.

These drugs were likely destined to end up in streets and communities right across Northern Ireland bringing untold harm. This is evidence of our ongoing commitment to tackling the harm that drug related crime presents to our communities.

Investigation

- On Monday 11 December 2023, Slieve Gullion Neighbourhood Policing Team officers on routine patrol in the Jonesborough area of South Armagh stopped a suspicious lorry. A subsequent search of the vehicle revealed a large quantity of suspected cocaine concealed within boxes containing frozen meat products. This cocaine had an estimated street value of £10m.

A man, aged 38, was later charged by detectives from Organised Crime Branch to appear at Newry Magistrates Court with a number of offences, including possession of Class A controlled drugs, driving while disqualified and paying for sexual services.

This is the Police Services' largest seizure of suspected cocaine. The sophistication of the concealment method and sheer quantity of the drugs gives an indication of the scale of criminality involved.

- During December, Officers from Organised Crime Branch arrested a 22 year old man and recovered suspected herbal cannabis with an estimated street value of £200,000. He was arrested at Belfast International Airport following the seizure of 14 vacuum packed bags containing herbal cannabis from his luggage. He was later charged to appear at Limavady Magistrate's Court in

relation to a number of offences, including possession of a Class B controlled drug with intent to supply.

- In January 2024, detectives recovered approximately £250,000 in cash and cocaine with a potential street value of £100,000 following a search of a vehicle on the A1 between Hillsborough and Dromore. Follow up searches at two houses in the West Belfast area led to the recovery of further cash and quantities of cocaine.

A 24 year old man and a 21 year old woman were arrested on suspicion of possessing criminal property and possession of a Class A controlled drug with intent to supply. The man was charged to Court and the woman released on police bail to allow for further police enquiries.

- Also in January, detectives working in partnership with UK Border Force seized suspected Class C controlled drugs and medication with a potential street value of £450,000.

A large quantity of these drugs appear to have been imported from outside the EU and bear all the hallmarks of being counterfeit and as such are not licenced for human consumption in the UK or EU.

Searches were conducted at four addresses in North and East Belfast by Detectives, Neighbourhood officers and members of the Tactical Support Group. A 34 year old man and a 36 year old woman were arrested on suspicion of a number of drug-related offences. Both were later released on Police bail to allow for further enquiries.



Suspected drugs seized during the searches in North and East Belfast

- During January, a 36-year-old man was arrested in the Glenavy area on suspicion of being concerned in the sale of suspected counterfeit goods. Over 1,000 items of suspected counterfeit clothing, footwear and electrical equipment were seized as part of the investigation. An initial assessment puts the potential loss to the brands concerned at around £130,000. The man has been released on police bail to allow for further police enquiries.



Some of the counterfeit items seized in Glenavy.

Sentencing

- During December 2023, two men were sentenced at Belfast Crown Court for fraud-related offences in connection with a

puppy smuggling investigation in August 2022 when detectives stopped a van in Belfast and recovered 60 animals, mainly puppies.

One of the men was convicted of fraud by false representation and received a four month custodial sentence. He also forfeited £3,493.40 and 1,482 Euro under civil Proceeds of Crime Act legislation. The second was convicted of conspiracy to commit fraud by false representation and received a three-month custodial sentence that was suspended for one year.

Paramilitary Crime Task Force

Our Paramilitary Crime Task Force (PCTF), along with partner organisations, continue to robustly and proactively pursue those who are intent on damaging our communities.

- In December 2023, officers investigating drugs criminality linked to the North West INLA seized a quantity of suspected Class A controlled drugs, namely cocaine with an estimated street value of £50,000, and arrested two men following a search of a vehicle in the vicinity of the Foyle Bridge, Derry/Londonderry.

They were arrested on suspicion of possession of a Class A controlled drug and possession of a Class A controlled drug with intent to supply, with one of the men also arrested on suspicion of driving while disqualified. Both were charged to appear at Londonderry Magistrates Court.

- In December 2023, detectives carried out a search at a property in the Shankill Road area of North Belfast as part of an ongoing investigation into criminality linked to the West Belfast UDA. A number of items were seized including a vehicle and a quantity of suspected Class A controlled drugs.

A 45 year old man was arrested on suspicion of Possession of Class A controlled drugs and possession of Class A controlled drugs with intent to supply. He was charged to appear at Laganside Magistrates Court.

Sentencing

- Two men, aged 26 and 23, were sentenced at Belfast Crown Court on, Friday 5 January, for a number of drug related offences. One was convicted of possession of a Class B controlled drug with intent to supply, namely cannabis. He was sentenced to a total of 20 months' imprisonment with 10 months to be served in custody and 10 months on licence.

The other was also convicted of two counts of possession of cannabis and received an 18-month Probation Order.

This follows an investigation into drugs criminality linked to the East Belfast UVF when the search of a property in East Belfast in January 2022 led to the recovery of 4kg of herbal cannabis, along with a quantity of cannabis-laced sweets.

Cyber Crime

Sentencing

On Monday 15 January 2024, a 30 year old man was sentenced at Dungannon Crown Court for numerous offences including harassment, sexual offences and computer misuse, having previously pleaded guilty to 49 offences relating to 34 victims.

He was handed a three-year concurrent sentence. This includes three years for attempted intimidation, three years for attempted blackmail, one year for disclosing private sexual photographs with intent to cause distress, and two and a half years for

attempting to cause a person to engage in sexual activity. He will be placed on the Sex Offenders Register and will also be subjected to a Sexual Offences Prevention Order for 10 years.

The sentencing is the result of an investigation into offences carried out between October 2019 and June 2022. The victims were identified not only in Northern Ireland, but also in England, Scotland and Wales. The significant protracted period of offending, coupled with the wide range of victims' locations, highlights both the scale of the offending and the complexities of the investigation. It involved investigators and technical officers from our Cyber Crime team, with support from Action Fraud and police Cyber Teams in England.

The offender used a variety of techniques, including social engineering, to obtain personal pictures of victims. On some occasions he used compromised social media accounts, often posing as friends, to gain access to victims' accounts. He managed to access personal information in private areas of accounts. And, in some instances, he posed as a representative for lingerie companies in an attempt to obtain images. Whatever the deceptive means, the end result was the same: a violation of privacy and trust, resulting in understandable distress.

The victims in this case were targeted through cybercrime, despite the defendant being previously banned from using the internet as part of a Sexual Offences Prevention Order.

This sentencing sends a clear message to anyone involved in this type of cybercrime that they cannot act with impunity and that they are not anonymous.

Economic Crime Unit

During this reporting period, ECU successfully obtained four confiscation orders;

- A restraint was obtained in November 2018, following the conviction of a 47 year old male and female in August 2020 for drugs and money laundering offences. A confiscation order was secured on 4 December 2023 of £73,732 against the 47 year old male, and £1 nominal order against the 47 year old female, both payable within 3 months. Confiscation proceedings remain ongoing in relation to a third defendant who is also subject to restraint.
- A restraint was obtained in September 2019 and following a conviction in July 2022 of a 61 year old male for Human Trafficking, Prostitution and money laundering offences. ECU successfully secured a confiscation order on 8 December 2023 for the recoverable amount of £40,445.28, which is to be paid within 3 months.
- Following a complaint by a car dealer in the Coleraine area, a 48 year old female was convicted of theft by employee in July 2023. ECU worked with CID Coleraine and successfully secured a Confiscation Order against the suspect on 5 December 2023. She was ordered to pay £132,047.55 compensation to her previous employer within 3 months.

Operation Aidant

During December 2023, detectives from Organised Crime Branch supported the National Crime Agency's Operation Aidant in efforts to tackle the issue of modern slavery and human trafficking.

Detectives from our Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Unit and Economic Crime Unit worked with Harbour Police, Ports Intelligence Officers and other partners from the Joint Agency Task Force, including An Garda Síochána and Border Force. Officers engaged with passengers from flights arriving into Belfast International Airport. Officers also enlisted the support of cash-detection Police Dog Nittu in order to detect any potential cash derived from trafficking.

Along with Harbour Police, officers spoke with passengers at Belfast Port. Our Safe Transport Team also engaged with passengers using the local transport hubs.



Police Dog Nittu

Serious Crime Branch

OP BEGRAIN

Op Begrain is the investigation into the clinical practices of former Consultant Neurologist Michael Watt at the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (BHSCT) between 1998 and 2017. Our investigation was formally launched on Tuesday November 2023. As of mid-January 2024, 140 persons have contacted investigators. This includes patients reporting concerns around their own treatment and families reporting concerns around the treatment of patients who are now deceased. The dedicated phone number remains open Monday to Friday 0930 – 1530, and the online reporting facility is also available via Major Incident Police Portal (MIPP).

The investigation is continuing.

Sentencing

- A 32 year old man has pleaded guilty to the murder of Caoimhe Morgan in December 2021 and has been sentenced to life imprisonment.
- A 26 year old man has been sentenced to minimum of 12 years imprisonment for the murder of Eamonn O'Hanlon in May 2022.
- A 31 year old man pleaded guilty to the manslaughter of David Conville in May 2022 and will be sentenced at a later date.
- A 34 year old man pleaded guilty to the murder of Roy Reynolds in March 2022 and was sentenced to life imprisonment.
- A 44 year old man was sentenced to minimum of 15 years imprisonment for the murder of Nathan Gibson in January 2020.
- Two men aged 47 years and 48 years were sentenced to 30 months and 18 months imprisonment respectively in relation to membership of a proscribed organisation.

- A 42 year old man was sentenced to 3 years imprisonment for 4 x Possession of Explosives in Suspicious Circumstances. He must serve at least 2/3 of his sentence before being considered for release and will also be subject to Terrorism notification requirements for 10 years.

Public Protection Branch

Following the introduction of a lower threshold attached to the Domestic Violence and Abuse Disclosure Scheme in December 2023, we have seen a slight increase in the number of disclosures that have been made following 'Right To Ask' and 'Power To Tell' applications being completed. A number of workshops, managed by partners from Women's Aid, began in January to test the new thresholds against case studies. In attendance were officers from our Public Protection Branch and Local Policing.

Following the introduction of the remaining offences under the Justice (SOTV) Act 2022, January 2024 saw the first person to be charged with sending a private sexual image.

Industrial Action

The 18th January saw a day of large scale public sector industrial action. A significant public safety policing operation was put in place involving almost 300 officers in visible roles at parades and picket lines in towns and cities across Northern Ireland. This was supplemented by over 80 officers and staff in command, planning and other supporting roles.

The day passed without major incident and we thank the wide range of partners and parade organisers with whom we worked for their support and assistance, as well as all those taking part for their responsible approach.

Road Safety

2023 saw 71 people die on our roads, an eight year high. Conversely, this is in the context of an overall reduction in 2023 of collisions being reported and a reduction in the number of road users seriously injured. Strategic analysis has commenced to examine themes, trends, causes and opportunities for learning. Having already identified road safety as a priority and having also developed a control strategy with numerous actions, efforts are continuing to make 2024 a safer year for all road users.

To fully engage strategic partners, the first ever meeting of the Northern Ireland Road Safety Strategic Forum took place on Wednesday 17 January 2024 with the police service, fire service, ambulance service, Department for Infrastructure, Department of Justice and Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs all represented. Whilst there was unanimous agreement that the various partners involved can do more collaboratively to improve road safety, there was also a clear realisation that all road users must take more responsibility for their actions. Joint communications from all of the partners are now being developed.

To ensure our approach to road safety is world class, the UK Road Safety Trust has agreed to assist with a peer review of our governance and operational activity across Ireland. An initial meeting date has been agreed with the Trust and with An Garda Síochána to develop terms of reference.

To maximise our co-ordinated approach to Road Safety we will be delivering further road safety events across every District via Operation SUBREFERENCE; and we will also be launching two new operations focused on the safety of pedestrians (Operation SAFERSTEPS) and tackling speeding (Operation LIFESAVER).

Outcome 2

We Have Confidence in Policing

Op SEASON'S GREETINGS

Op Seasons Greetings ran across all Districts between 27 November 2023 and 2 January 2024. This operation aimed to align visible policing to deal with the increased demands faced across the Christmas and New Year period. The operation focused on three key areas; safer roads, safer shopping and safer socialising, the latter of which incorporated areas and objectives outlined in our Violence Against Women and Girls Acton Plan. In order to support this operation 62 key areas for patrols were identified across Northern Ireland, with officers conducting multiple visible patrols in these areas every single day.

While outcomes from this year's operation are still being finalised, we can report that a total of 2,228 calls for help were received in relation to domestic abuse incidents. 1,113 arrests were made for domestic abuse offences, an increase of nearly 12% compared to the previous year.

Op TARLAC

We continue to monitor any tensions associated with the conflict in the Middle East and feed into the National operation, Op TARLAC. This will continue in light of developments in the Gulf.

Although we continue to see protest activity and parades associated with the conflict, these have, by and large, been peaceful and lawful.

In January, three men were arrested for Disorderly Behaviour in Derry/ Londonderry after they had climbed a construction crane near Craigavon Bridge and unfurled a Palestinian flag. The three have been

charged to Londonderry Magistrates Court with Disorderly Behaviour.

To date we have seen some 330 reports in relation to the conflict, with 157 protests taking place. Protests have passed off without incident and there have been no arrests directly connected with them. 17 reports so far relate to Anti-Semitic hate crimes or incidents and 6 to Islamophobic hate crimes or incidents. There have been 7 related arrests in total linked with Op TARLAC.

Our Strategic Community Engagement Team continue with strategic level engagements on behalf of the Service, aimed at improving confidence in policing and monitoring any tensions, including with eight groups across a range of communities.

OP AMBULING

Since November 2023, a number of hate incidents have been reported across housing estates in Northern Ireland. These incidents have been in the form of posters, flags and graffiti targeted at the issue of housing and immigration. As a result Commanders have been increasingly required to make operational decisions, particularly on the decision to remove the offending material.

Operation AMBULING is our policing response to this uplift in incidents and has provided guidance to Commanders when assessing the legal obligations of police and other statutory agencies alongside reviews conducted into the police response to similar type incidents. Work is being taken forward with strategic partners as a result of this emerging issue and a Strategic Partners

Group meeting, involving NIHE, The Executive Office, the Department of Justice and ourselves, took place on the 17 January.

To date there have been 90 occurrences linked to Op AMBULING; 44 instances of Graffiti, 14 of other criminal Damage 26 relating to posters, two concerning flags and two concerning Social media posts. 60 have been recorded as Hate Crimes.

Scientific Support Branch

Crime Scene App

On 17 January, Crime Scene Investigators (CSI) began a pilot to move to the electronic recording of crime scene notes. This takes the form of a secure specialist App which assists the investigator to produce standardised high quality notes, annotate photographs of the crime scene and upload direct to information management systems. The objective is to help investigators and courts understand the evidence collected more easily and benefit from imaging supporting the collected evidence.

Impact of Forensics

We have commenced sharing the outcomes of forensic examinations with the University of Ulster in support of a report later this year identifying where forensic science has had an impact in police investigations. This will allow us to identify where we are achieving most value in applying forensic science to the investigative cases, and how it has helped.

Outcome 3

We Have Engaged and Supportive Communities

Supporting International Students

During January 2024, officers from our Economic Crime Unit, along with South Belfast Neighbourhood Policing Team (NPT) officers, welcomed a new intake of students to Queen's University Belfast.

Students were provided with advice on how to protect themselves from financial crimes such as fraud and sextortion, as well as guidance on not allowing others to use their personal bank accounts.

Advice was also given on staying safe and supporting each other at university. The Ask Angela campaign was explained, alongside the issue of consent.

Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking

During December 2023, officers from our Organised Crime Branch, Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Unit and An Garda Síochána colleagues attended a training seminar in Dublin. The event was hosted by Ruhama, an Irish NGO and registered charity that offers nationwide support to women impacted by prostitution, sex trafficking and other forms of commercial sexual exploitation. The training focused on providing officers with the necessary skills needed to identify and appropriately engage with sex workers who may be trapped in exploitation.

Key Campaigns and Events

Online Reporting



In January we launched our campaign to encourage the public to use our online reporting service which allows an incident or crime to be reported at anytime, anywhere, straightaway and without delay.

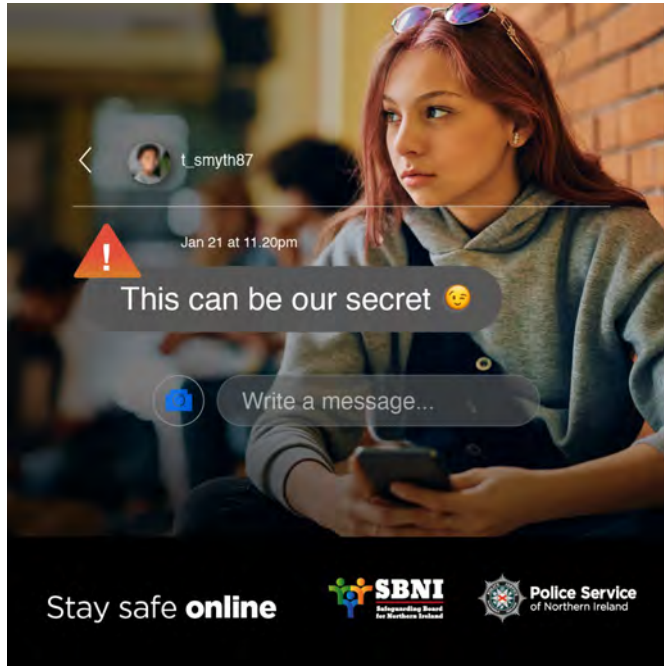
Almost 27,204 reports were made online to the Police Service from 1 January 2023 to 1 January 2024, while close to 499,642 '101' calls were made during the same period.

Online reports are considered in live time, in the exact same way as a '101' call. There's no waiting in a '101' queue and people get an incident reference number straightaway. It's a simple, quick and easy process, and we hope that for more people, online reporting will be the option they use.

Reports can be made online at <https://www.psni.police.uk/report>.

The public can continue to call us to report a non-emergency incident via 101, **and should always dial 999 in an emergency.**

Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland



Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland and the Police Service are working together to educate young people and their parents and carers about online risks and reporting pathways.

The campaign, running from January to March 2024, will focus on the following areas:

- Sextortion
- Online grooming
- Risks around young people sharing intimate images online

This campaign will use social media to promote educational, preventative messaging which aims to reduce the number of people falling victim to crimes whereby the offender encourages images to be sent online eg sextortion, online grooming.

National Neighbourhood Policing Week

National Neighbourhood Policing Week 2024 started on Monday 22 January and will run until Sunday 28 January 2024.

This week of action has been developed to recognise and celebrate the vital work that neighbourhood policing teams and officers do to protect the public and keep people safe.

Our officers have been and will continue to use their local social media channels, to raise awareness of the fantastic proactive work they do to protect their communities, increase engagement and build safer communities.

Our People, Your Service

Cultural Audit

We have started to put our commitment to the findings and recommendations of the cultural audit into action. During December we held a series of engagement events with our Senior Leaders, Staff Associations and Minority Support Associations to communicate the findings of the cultural audit and cascade the results throughout the organisation.

Continued engagement with our Staff Associations and Minority Support Networks will be at the centre of how we move forward, to hear their feedback as they take time to engage with their wider membership and provide further insights into prioritisation and action planning.

This valuable feedback from our people will help inform and update our approach to our People Strategy, to shape how we improve the services we provide to protect people and fight crime and to improve the working lives of our workforce.

We have committed to invest in a programme of engagement and recognition events targeted at rebuilding trust and confidence with all of our officers and staff. This will prioritise directly taking time to meet each other and providing opportunity to work and develop together, across teams, with senior leaders and to celebrate and share our successes.

Commitment has also been made to supporting Career Pathways and a Talent & development Framework in response to the audits findings around promotion processes, inclusion, transparency and fairness when developing our people and selecting for new roles.

Forward look

Sexual Violence and Awareness Week

Public Protection Branch will hold a number of engagement events during this week in February with universities and other settings for engagement opportunities. This includes The Rowan conference on Wednesday 7 February which marks 10 years of the Rowan, and the partnership between Department of Justice and Department of Health to better support victims of sexual crimes

Public Protection Branch are also undertaking a masterclass at Magee college in February. This is part of an accredited programme within Ulster University into investigating domestic abuse and there is a police masterclass to highlight good practice in supporting victims, how to investigate allegations of domestic abuse and the support services that can be offered when someone remains in the justice process. This is the first programme and is seen as a pilot for further consideration to expand this academic qualification across other campus locations.

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