

HUMBERSIDE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

DATE	04 February 2021
REPORT OF	Chief Executive
SUBJECT	Progress report for Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner
STATUS	Open

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide the Police and Crime Panel with an update on the work of the OPCC.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members of the Police and Crime Panel use this report as background information to support oversight of the work of the PCC.

3. GENERAL

We have a retirement from our Head of Community Safety role held by Robbie Walker-Brown, due in March 2021. In light of the change we have looked again at the structure and made some small changes to line management reporting to allow for us to go out to the market with a new role to replace Robbie. The role will have a very similar portfolio but focus on policy and partnerships. Robbie has been a very valued and respected member of the team that we wish to record our thanks to his public service. We have made an offer of employment for the replacement role and this is pending vetting and references.

4. COVID UPDATE

The team remain working from home where possible and have maintained business as usual in this way which has been a real test of our business continuity planning, our culture (Employer of Choice) and teamwork, supporting each other and ensuring we add value and connect with communities and the vulnerable.

One of the key aims of the Police and Crime Plan is to ensure we always provide services to victims and the vulnerable that meet their needs. The pandemic and government response continues to change the nature of vulnerability, requiring a flexible and responsive capability, as demonstrated below;

- Carrying out social media campaigns for Domestic Abuse: campaigns entitled “You Are Not Alone” reached thousands of households across our area through leaflets, outdoor advertising and social media activity, highlighting the support services available and encouraging people to reach out for help. It was developed in consultation with service professionals, emphasising that anyone can be affected regardless of gender or background. Other messages are aimed at perpetrators of Domestic Abuse. Reach has been in excess of 400,000 people in Humber area.

- Maintaining our assurance function around the Force: including how the Force were implementing the new powers granted to them during the pandemic. We continued to run our Independent Custody Visitor scheme, albeit via telephone and through expanding our role in the examination of custody records on a regular basis. This has opened up a debate about how we can use technology to improve this service further in future.
- Providing additional funding: secured over £400k of additional funding for agencies supporting victims of domestic and sexual abuse at a time when demand on services is higher than ever. Among the specific measures being supported are additional domestic abuse practitioners, counselling and trauma support, emergency accommodation and food parcels, and an additional sexual violence practitioner.
- Home Office Safer Streets Fund: during lockdown we received a total of £650k (£550k in July 2020 and a further £100k boost in December 2020) to fund to improve the lives of residents living on the Westcliff Estate in Scunthorpe, one of our most deprived communities. This has been done in partnership with social housing provider Ongo Homes, to implement safety measures to homes and outbuildings and provide secure cycle pods and bike locks, bike register kits, secure garage doors and other security requirements. It also provides a Community Chest fund, empowering local residents to bid for community safety projects. We have already seen tangible results, built momentum and increase local community engagement.
- During the pandemic, the PCC also developed a regular blog to highlight to the public some of the things that we were doing to ensure vital services were maintained and vulnerable people supported. The blog outlined key features of the role of the PCC and that of the office, and the issues both locally and nationally. This was in line with the commissioners objective to see Humberside Police reconnect with, and re-build the confidence of, the public, while delivering safer and more resilient communities and protecting the vulnerable.

5. SCRUTINY VOLUNTEERS

The PCC role is to be the public representative, ensuring Humberside Police deliver an effective, efficient and legitimate service to its residents. One way in which we hold the Force to account is by scrutiny of certain aspects of police work to check that the Force is working well and ethically. To assist us with this work we have an aspiration to involve more people in our local communities to make a real difference. We felt it would be good practice for our scrutiny to include more diversity of thinking and be reflective of local communities and interests. By improving this representation we will be better able to influence local needs and we will all benefit from differences in thinking, points of view and approaches that diversity brings.

We have recently advertised for volunteers to join two new groups, looking at the use of police powers and how the police deal with hate crime. We are interested in hearing from those affected by the use of police powers and those with lived experience of hate crime.

Their findings will help inform a new Independent Ethics and Scrutiny Board, which will inform our discussions with the Chief Constable. We feel that Scrutiny Volunteers are vital because they: (i) provide real life experiences, (ii) generate new ideas and ways of doing things, and (iii) challenge assumptions about existing ways of working. We are currently recruiting for a chair for this new board too. This has been shared on our website, social media and through linkedin already gaining interest.

6. FUNDING FOR VETERAN SUPPORT

The PCC recently provided an additional £48,000 for Project Nova to support Armed Forces veterans. This funding will help to provide dedicated emotional and practical support services for veterans to help them gain social stability and health and wellbeing to support with the transition from military to civilian life.

Project Nova, delivered in partnership between RFEA – The Forces Employment Charity and Walking With The Wounded, offers help to veterans who have been arrested or deemed vulnerable. It also supports veterans who are referred by specialist police teams (including NHS Liaison and Diversion Teams), or other statutory organisations, because they are at risk of arrest. It focuses on improving social stability, health and wellbeing and employment. This continues through to securing sustainable employment.

Among the specific measures to be supported as part of this funding are: (i) responding early to existing and emerging threat of risk and harm, (ii) reducing reoffending for those who engage in their services, (iii) reducing victims and repeated cycle of offending, and (iv) reduce violence amongst veterans before they reach crisis point.

Some veterans find it difficult to re-adjust to civilian life and occasionally come into contact with the police and other agencies. They may also have been victims of crime themselves and are often found to be within the most vulnerable groups and requiring specialist support. With this funding we are assisting in bridging the gap between the individual and the services they need via a trusted partner such as Project Nova.

7. PUBLIC HEALTH APPROACH

Another major development we are instigating in the team is work to build a public health approach to crime (and violence in particular) without the additional funding (Violence Reduction Units) some areas have received to assist with this.

The work to really understand how we can do that is now underway and will add to the safety of our communities. To develop this approach further, we now have a part time Public Health Business Manager in place, along with analytical support. Although this tends not to be headline grabbing stuff, it is vitally important if we are ever to address the underlying issues that have caused our area to be one of relatively high crime rates for generations.

8. NOT IN OUR COMMUNITY (NIOC)

Not In Our Community (NIOC) is about education and helping young people protect themselves and friends against grooming that can lead to sexual and criminal exploitation, but also awareness and communication; helping communities understand the issues so they recognise and report exploitation if they see or suspect it.

In April 2020, the OPCC brought NIOC under increased oversight through direct commissioning and management from our office. Our first campaign aimed to raise awareness of child exploitation, through strong engagement via social media and online. As the pandemic has closed schools for the vast majority of young people, so the dangers of sexual and criminal exploitation have increased as young people have been not only out of school but spending more time unsupervised online.

To combat this, NIOC have produced a pack of home schooling resources aimed at parents, teachers and carers, and an online series “Becky’s Story”, showing how young people may become victims of online grooming. The campaign targets Years 6, Years 7-9, Years 10-11, parents, partners and professionals along with resources for teachers and those who work in youth engagement settings.

Added to this was the release of a new film “Missed Me?” telling the stories of young people who go missing for various reasons including criminal and sexual exploitation and mental health reasons. This film followed the earlier success of the film “Alfie’s Story”, about a boy groomed into selling drugs for a criminal gang, which won a major international award for Best Public Sector Marketing Strategy in November. Both films were commissioned by Community Safety Partnerships in Hull and North East Lincolnshire with funding from the OPCC.

Looking ahead to this year, NIOC will expand further with exciting new updates including an interactive e-learning platform that will be available for young people which will support a new level of engagement for educators and young people’s practitioners.

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