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10 September 2024

Police and Crime Commissioner for Dyfed-Powys response to State of Policing 2023

I have read with interest the State of Policing: Annual Assessment of Policing in England and Wales Report for 2023. I have outlined my considerations below under the main themes highlighted within the report.

Restoring public trust and confidence

Recognising and addressing public perceptions

I agree with the report's observations around communicating with the public more effectively. I am encouraged by Dyfed-Powys Police's new 4-year Communications and Engagement Plan (2024-2028) which sets out objectives to improve trust and confidence.

In addition, both the Communications and Neighbourhood Policing teams are working together to introduce a digital engagement platform that will improve two-way digital engagement with communities.

I am encouraged that Dyfed-Powys Police recognises that effective Neighbourhood Policing can restore public confidence. Dyfed-Powys Police has launched a new Force Prevention Strategy, Neighbourhood Policing Strategy, Neighbourhood Policing Community Engagement Strategy, Neighbourhood Policing Abstraction Policy, Delivery Plan and Performance Framework. To monitor the progress of these key interventions, a Prevention Delivery Group has been created, with representatives from my office in attendance.

I have been assured that Dyfed-Powys Police has carried out work to improve vetting and tackling misconduct. In addition, they have conducted a historic data wash of 11,865 records of officers or staff, which did not return any significant concerns.

Dyfed-Powys Police has been recognised as an example of good practice by HMICFRS for their Vetting Disproportionality Review Panel and process.

Most types of crime are on a long-term downward trend

The Crime Survey for England and Wales shows a long-term downward trajectory for most crime types. However, shoplifting (retail crime) has increased, a trend that is reflected in the Dyfed-Powys area. Both Dyfed-Powys Police and my office have listened to concerns from businesses regarding shoplifting. Dyfed-Powys Police has created a Retail Crime Strategy which links with the work of



Neighbourhood Policing Teams. My office has also drafted a retail crime action plan to complement the Force Strategy and help build confidence among the retail community across the Dyfed-Powys area.

Dyfed-Powys Police has continually prioritised Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). Since the launch of the refreshed VAWG National Framework for delivery 2024-2027, the Deputy Chief Constable has taken responsibility as Force lead for VAWG, demonstrating strategic leadership of a high-profile area of concern for both the public and policing nationally.

I am assured that several new VAWG activities have been undertaken by Dyfed-Powys Police, including:

- The launch of the new Sexual Harassment Policy.
- Training programmes covering sexual harassment in the workplace, upstander, contextualising the Police Race Action Plan, and the Code of Ethics (7 e-learn modules).
- The student officer team has worked with the University of South Wales on misogyny research and surveys.
- The Professional Standards Department has reviewed their inputs to student officers and now deliver twice at strategic points in the student officer curriculum.
- Staff Support Network Chairs now participate in the Embracing Diversity Group, providing feedback directly to a Chief Officer to enable any emerging issues to be dealt with expediently.
- Independently led Staff Surveys and focus groups via Investors in People.
- Engagement and expectation events conducted throughout the Force by the Assistant Chief Constable are now being cascaded by all Heads of Department and reinforced at Chief Officer Roadshows.

Providing a service to victims and the most vulnerable

Victim Satisfaction with the police and criminal justice system

I was concerned to read in the report that very few victims perceived the criminal justice system to be effective and fair. The victim survey dashboard is now live in Dyfed-Powys Police and feeds back the results of an externally run survey with victims of crime. Those surveyed between 01/03/2023 and 31/05/2024 returned positive levels of satisfaction with the service provided by Dyfed-Powys Police, except for how well they had been kept informed. I have been notified that the correlation between this data and victim attrition rates is not fully understood. As such, an evaluation to understand this has been commissioned within the Criminal Justice department.

I am also assured that all dissatisfied responses are reviewed at monthly Local Policing Area and Deputy Chief Constable performance meetings and service recovery is extended to the dissatisfied victims.



Getting the basics right

Dyfed-Powys Police has assured me that performance in relation to the answering of 999 and 101 calls abandonment rates will continue to be an area of focus for 2024 – 2025.

During the first six months of 2024, Dyfed-Powys Police reported a 28% level of abandonment for its 101 calls. This figure was projected to increase to circa 40-50% abandonment during the high-peak summer demand period, resulting in the declaration of a critical incident and a Gold Group being set up.

Work has already been carried out to improve this, with twelve additional staff supporting the Force Communication Centre since June. The abandonment rate of 101 calls was recorded as 16.6% in June, with July being reported as 16.2%. Further work will be carried out in this area to ensure that improvements continue to be made.

The criminal justice system isn't providing access to justice

I am encouraged that Dyfed-Powys Police's 2023 PEEL Victim Service Assessment fieldwork results were excellent; however, it is recognised that there are always improvements that can be made to investigations.

Within Dyfed-Powys Police, I have been assured that Case Progression Units have been working to clear the backlog of case files to be sent to the Crown Prosecution Service.

A Superintendent for Prevention role has been introduced in Dyfed-Powys Police, with an initial priority of setting a strategy, performance framework and quality assurance framework. The Strategic Vulnerability Board now includes prevention and is focussed on ensuring these two important areas are closer aligned.

Dyfed-Powys Police has a considerable number of workstreams ongoing to ensure they and other agencies work together to deliver access to justice and prevent offending. These include:

- Force Drug Strategy – referring all drug possession offences to support agencies for diversionary action.
- Right Care Right Person – a phased approach in line with other forces across the country will commence in October 2024.
- Serious Violence Duty programme of work with Community Safety Partnerships.
- Op Soteria – following the national operating model for the investigation of rape and serious sexual offences (RASSO).
- Domestic Abuse Attrition Working Groups.



I am encouraged that there is a healthy joint working relationship between Dyfed-Powys Police and the Crown Prosecution Service. The Strategic Joint Operational Improvement Meeting (JOIM) is held quarterly and co-chaired between the Dyfed-Powys Police Assistant Chief Constable and Deputy Chief Crown Prosecutor Huw Rogers. It provides a forum for collaboration and is attended by all four Welsh police forces and the Crown Prosecution Service.

It is encouraging that Dyfed-Powys Police continues to perform above the national average in relation to the quality of files submitted to Crown Prosecution Service. This increases the number of guilty pleas at first hearing, reduces victim withdrawal rates post charge, and secures a high conviction rate at court. Dyfed-Powys Police is leading the way within Wales in this area and are fifth nationally.

It is extremely encouraging to report that the cultural and communication barriers highlighted within the report do not appear to exist within Dyfed-Powys Police.

I am encouraged by the timeliness of Domestic Abuse file reviews within the Central Processing Unit, with no Domestic Abuse or RASSO related backlogs. This results in quick turnaround for those offences.

Dyfed-Powys Police has recognised for several years that fraud and cybercrime pose a significant economic and security threat to its communities. Dyfed-Powys Police has acknowledged the findings of a recent review conducted by the City of London Police, which identified that the judicial outcome rate for fraud falls below the national outcome. I am assured that Dyfed-Powys Police is reviewing how it pursues offenders and how performance can be improved. The review also recommended that fraud should become an integral part of the force performance board. Consideration is being given as to the most productive way that this can be achieved within Dyfed-Powys Police.

Setting up the workforce for success

Impact of Police Uplift Programme (PUP)

The report's commentary on the impact of Operation Uplift is an accurate representation of the picture in Dyfed-Powys Police. I have been informed that from a workforce planning perspective, removal of Uplift maintenance targets and accompanying financial penalties would mitigate the risk that quantity may be prioritised over quality. This would enable Dyfed-Powys Police to recruit based on succession plan requirements for specific skills and geographies, as well as reduce the number of failed probationers and the associated tutor management time spent on performance management. I therefore agree with the recommendation made to the Government within the report.



An effective workforce needs strong leadership

I have been informed that 29 % of Police Officers in Dyfed-Powys Police have less than 5 years' service. This presents risks, both in terms of retention and in terms of the availability of experienced officers providing informal guidance and support to those young in service during a typical shift. To mitigate against this Dyfed-Powys Police has invested in a resource to conduct 'Say & Stay' interviews, resulting in the retention of 62% of participating police officers. Dyfed-Powys Police has also introduced a Peer Assisted Learning Support (PALS) process where trained volunteer police officers support their colleagues through the student officer process.

I have been assured that recruitment and local selection methods continue to be adapted to ensure the realities of a police officer role are understood by applicants.

I note that the report does not mention the talent attraction challenges relating to pay and working conditions in comparison to other public sector organisations. Dyfed-Powys Police are continually competing with local health boards to retain talent due to the higher salaries they can offer. In an employment market where flexible and hybrid working is now commonplace, the ability to attract student officers is further challenged.

Funding the police

Current and future funding

I welcome the recommendation relating to the need for future financial certainty through longer term funding settlement announcements, significant capital funding and consultation and financial determinations around the impact that changes to the funding formula might have on individual forces in the medium term.

Dyfed-Powys Police believes that replacing the Uplift targets with a better measure of operational police capacity should be a priority. Any such measure should take into account the vital role played by police staff in the delivery of front-line policing. This could result in more economic and effective workforce planning options returning to the table locally.

Dyfed-Powys Police is currently carrying out a Force Review to deliver productivity and efficiency improvements through the implementation of crime screening tools, Right Care Right Person, the Domestic Abuse Virtual Response Unit (DAVRU) and other changes aimed at bolstering the front line. In addition to other financial pressures, neighbourhood policing capacity has been challenged due to Welsh Government funding reductions in relation to Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) numbers (down from 89 to 44 FTE by April 2025).

It is imperative that the most recent pay increase of 4.75% is fully funded in settlements, as well as the financial impact of new requirements from Government



such as relating to dismissal and conduct, carbon reduction and so on. These will be a significant burden on smaller and rural Forces. Clarity is needed on how the manifesto commitment to increase officers, special constables, and police staff by an additional 13,000 FTE will be funded and implemented as well as on the future of officer uplift targets themselves.

I am grateful for the publication of this annual report. My team and I will continue to work closely with Dyfed-Powys Police representatives to ensure all relevant learning from insights generated through HMICFRS' activity is acted upon to improve the policing service for the residents of the Dyfed-Powys area.