

**Cross Party Group on Policing - Virtual Teams Meeting, Tuesday 15th March at
12:30**

1. Present

Senedd Cymru – Welsh Parliament

John Griffiths – Chair Member of the Senedd (MS) (Labour)
Alun Davies - Member of the Senedd (MS) (Labour)
Janet Finch-Saunders – Member of the Senedd (MS) (Welsh Conservative Party)
Rhys ab Owen – Member of the Senedd (MS) (Plaid Cymru)
Naomi White – Office of John Griffiths MS (Labour)
Ellie Richards – Office of Luke Fletcher MS (Plaid Cymru)
Leanne Parsell – Office of Elizabeth Buffy Williams MS (Labour)
Andrew Jenkins - Office of Sioned Williams MS (Plaid Cymru)
Ryland Doyle – Office of Mike Hedges MS – (Labour)
Dora Szalkay – Office of Huw Irancca Davies (Labour)
Ioan Bellin – Office of Rhys Ab Owen MS (Plaid Cymru)
Andrew Bettridge - Senior Communications Officer, Office of John Griffiths AM

Police and Crime Commissioners and Staff

Jeff Cuthbert – Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent
Andy Dunbobbin - Police and Crime Commissioner for North Wales

Chief Constables and Staff

Jeremy Vaughan – Chief Constable, South Wales Police, and Chair of the Welsh Chief Officer Group
Paul Morris – Head of Police Liaison Unit
Alun Davies – Police Liaison Unit
Lynda Young – Police Liaison Unit, Group Secretary
Nicky Ryan – Police Federation Welsh Lead

Invited attendees

Gary Haggaty – Deputy Director – Community Safety Division, Welsh Government

2. John Griffiths MS, Chair

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, stressing this has been a very difficult period and the pandemic has been a huge challenge for the delivery of all public services.

The Chair introduced Jeff Cuthbert, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent and Jeremy Vaughan the Chief Constable for South Wales Police, explaining the meeting was to give Members of Senedd the opportunity to discuss the winter pressures and impact on Policing in Wales.

3. Jeff Cuthbert – Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent

Jeff Cuthbert thanked the Chair and welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were given on behalf of Dafydd Llywelyn, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Dyfed Powys and Chair of the Policing in Wales Group, as Dafydd was unable to attend the meeting. Jeff Cuthbert stated as deputy Chair of the Policing in Wales Group and taking over as the Chair of Policing in Wales from June he would be representing Dafydd Llywelyn at this meeting.

Jeff Cuthbert stated the theme of this meeting is patient flow, winter pressures and the impact this has had on Policing in Wales, giving an opportunity to have an overview of the impact winter has had on policing and how we can all begin planning to improve the situation for the next winter.

Stressing that nothing said in this meeting today was a criticism of any other public services, PCC Cuthbert noted it was very much about pressures on all the public services highlighting that this is not relevant to Wales only, as this is very much the same for Policing across the UK.

There have been acute pressures faced by the NHS in Wales particularly on the Welsh Ambulance Service Trust with a number of incidents reported where policing has had to be involved, which would be discussed in more detail by Chief Constable Jeremy Vaughan. Everything has been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic and hopefully we are coming out of this phase, but PCC Cuthbert stressed the importance of planning for the worst outcome and taking forward the lessons learnt.

Some months ago the Senedd Health Committee called for evidence on the impact on public and emergency services over the winter and the pandemic pressures. Police Chiefs and Commissioners provided a joint letter to the Chair which set out Policing concerns.

These concerns were raised at the Joint Emergency Services Group (JESG), also at bi-lateral meetings with the Chair of Policing in Wales, Dafydd Llywelyn and the Minister for Social Justice, Jane Hutt. Additionally at the Policing Partnership Board for Wales Chaired by the First Minister with his Ministers, Officials and other key public services such as Local Government and Public Health. Policing is represented on the Welsh Government Winter Operations Task Group so there is a full understanding of how this matter is being addressed and what needs to be done in partnership for the future planning and recognition of issues.

PCC Cuthbert noted that Chief Constables were very concerned by the impact on Policing and late in 2021 commissioned a demand analysis to see exactly what and how this effects Policing in Wales for example time spent by Officers in dealing with displaced demand.

He stressed the importance of working in partnership and highlighted that Policing is a reserved service, not devolved to the Welsh Government unlike all the key partners in this work area who are devolved. Whether it is at a local level through

Public Service Boards or at a National level via the Policing Partnership Board, Policing in Wales work as if they were devolved and put aside the issues of reserved status or devolved status so the people in Wales can benefit from shared resource and planning.

Jeff Cuthbert introduced Jeremy Vaughan Chief Constable of South Wales Police, to discuss implications on operational Policing.

4. Jeremy Vaughan – Chief Constable for South Wales Police

Chief Constable Jeremy Vaughan introduced himself as the Chair of the Welsh Chief Officers Group and Joint Emergency Services Group (JESG). He welcomed everyone to the meeting, thanking them for giving him the opportunity to present.

CC Vaughan reiterated PCC Cuthbert's comments that this session was not about criticising anyone, confirming these are unprecedented times during a very busy period in public services and that the combined response has been exceptional with people working really hard and well together. This was more of an opportunity to enlighten members on Policing issues that may go unseen. He added that the issues which were going to be described are difficult and systemic and have been discussed with other Chief Executives.

CC Vaughan wanted to raise concerns around the time Police staff are spending dealing with medical emergencies and how that has increased this winter. More importantly, it was time to look forward together into the planner for the next autumn and winter making sure ambulances get to those patients in need.

A demand analysis focusing on critical issues was carried out over 2 days in October 2021. **110 incidents** were recorded which revealed:

- In **14%** of incidents officers conveyed a patient to hospital.

CC Vaughan stated there are many case studies evidencing this underlining that there are a host of reasons why that would sometimes happen. However, he pointed out that a police vehicle is not the most appropriate transport for someone who is ill and need medical support.

- In **15%** of incidents, officers spent an unnecessary amount of time waiting for WAST, involving 50 officers, an estimated total time of 45 hours.

CC Vaughan was quick to acknowledge that ambulance services are under pressure to categorise incidents in accordance to their priority, adding they are the professionals in that regard and he was in no way looking to criticise. However sometimes in policing it felt like there was a misalignment in what would seem like something requiring an urgent response, thus leaving officers in the difficult position at times.

- In **25%** of incidents, supporting WAST prevented the police from undertaking traditional policing activity.

Showing a quarter of those incidents Police Officers were unable to attend other calls because officers were with someone who needed medical attention and care.

- In **27%** of incidents, police analysis considered the request for police attendance to be inappropriate.

CC Vaughan highlighted a slide with a snapshot of some occasions where officers were called to deal with medical emergencies where there was no alternative but for policing to step in and deal.

He further indicated there is a requirement for the Police to refer cases to the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) when there has been any death following contact with policing, any alleged serious assault that has taken place at the hands of Police officers using force or any matter of alleged corruption or indeed any other matter that might be deemed in the public interest.

The vast majority of matters referred to the IOPC are referred back to policing to undertake enquires and in the vast majority of cases, the conduct of officers has been above and beyond reproach. However if you are an officer who is subject to a referral it adds significantly to the stress levels of that officer because they know an independent body will be investigating. Some of these enquires can be complexed and prolonged, particularly where an individual has lost their life. As a Chief Constable this is very concerning as the level of mental health abstractions is now higher than ever.

CC Vaughan noted this also adds to significant stress levels for responding staff for the ambulance service, with them knowing they can't get to jobs that they need to get to or turning up to jobs much later than they might have hoped to attend. This will have a significant impact on their health and wellbeing, so it's a real challenge for everybody.

CC Vaughan noted that there had been significant conversations at JESG and with the Chief Executive for NHS Wales who have been very engaging on the matter. There is a National Reset that started on the 2nd March 2022 for a fortnight which Police Chiefs look forward to hearing the outcome of.

CC Vaughan highlighted the typical picture of a queue of ambulances waiting outside A&E departments, with ambulance staff sat with patients waiting to hand onto accident and emergency departments, who aren't able to accept them because they have their own difficulties. Whilst this has been exacerbated by covid-19 this is a problem that has been revisited and highlighted every year.

CC Vaughan hoped that the presentation had been a helpful depiction of the problems faced by Policing across Wales without seeking to be critical of any of our colleges.

5. Questions and discussion

6. John Griffiths MS – Chair

John Griffiths opened the meeting for questions and discussion and asked if CC Vaughan and PCC Cuthbert could talk about the structures and mechanisms that allow for the exploration of these issues for the Police together with the Ambulance Services and NHS and possibly Welsh Government.

7. Jeremy Vaughan – Chief Constable for South Wales Police

CC Vaughan pointed out that in the response to an immediate crisis Police apply the Civil Contingencies Act which means that Policing has a coordinating role bringing together partners around a strategic coordinating group to put tactical plans in place to alleviate the problem. These tend to operate on a Police Force area basis.

He added that the Civil Contingencies structure is very good at dealing with an immediate response to an immediate problem such as a flood, a train or plane crash and has been put into good effect in respect to Covid-19, but even then it was tested as there had been no rule book written around a global health pandemic. However this method is not so effective when dealing with systemic issues. Policing in Wales have elevated and escalated a partnership response to the most senior levels including the Chief Executive NHS Wales, hoping to see good plans put in place on a local level. Policing have given evidence to committees and enquiries that take place in this regard to this issue as well as raising the issues at the Policing Partnership Board for Wales with Ministers as an interested and supportive party.

The Winter Pressures Group was formed to seek to address these issues and heard updates from Directors of Social Services about social care issues from Local Authorities about housing issues and so on.

8. Jeff Cuthbert – Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent

PCC Cuthbert confirmed and highlighted at a more local level these issues are also taken to the Public Service Boards held with key partners including Health looking at local pressures and issues. However, he stressed in the main these particular issues and other key issues are taken to the Policing Partnership Board for Wales with Ministers and key partners. All the mechanisms are in place and now it comes down the desire and drive to make the system work better.

9. John Griffiths MS – Chair

The Chair acknowledged that the drive can come from the partners involved but queried where there an issue there for Government.

10. Jeff Cuthbert – Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent

PCC Cuthbert confirmed this, stating Policing work in partnership with the Welsh Government although Policing is formally responsible to the Home Office. In spite of this the Home Office recognise that in Wales it is vital Policing work in close

collaboration with the Welsh Government as Welsh Government lead directly on the devolved matters of ambulance, health and public services so that partnership arrangement is crucial.

11. Jeremy Vaughan – Chief Constable for South Wales Police

CC Vaughan reiterated the offer of the Ride along Scheme, pointing out this is an ongoing and continued offer to all Members of the Senedd by all four Welsh Police forces, which has recently been difficult to put in place due to Covid-19 however this offer is always open.

12. Alun Davies - Member of the Senedd (MS) (Labour)

Alun Davies MS stressed the importance of getting the Ride along Scheme offer out to all Members of the Senedd so they can get in contact with their local Police forces particularly now coming out of the pandemic and into the summer months.

13. Jeremy Vaughan – Chief Constable for South Wales Police

CC Vaughan stated he would take an action to reinstate the offer, setting out what the scheme entails which can then be sent out to all Members of the Senedd.

10. Jeff Cuthbert – Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent

PCC Cuthbert offered the opportunity for Members of the Senedd to ask any questions in relation to Policing. There were no questions raised on the day.

11. Closing remarks - John Griffiths MS – Chair

The Chair thanked everyone for attending, stating that the presentation offered a great overview on pressures Policing and public services have faced during this difficult winter, with some key issues highlighted.

He stressed as always that if anyone wanted to get in touch before the next meeting with any follow up thoughts, ideas or comments from today or in relation to the Ride along Scheme they were encouraged to do so.