

**POLICE AND CRIME**  
**PANEL 25<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2020**  
**REPORT OF THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR**  
**DERBYSHIRE**

**COVID-19 UPDATE**

**1.0 BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 The following briefing is to keep the Police and Crime Panel for Derbyshire informed of the work of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Derbyshire and Derbyshire Constabulary during the Covid-19 pandemic.

**2.0 FORCE APPROACH**

- 2.1 As with all major incidents, the Force has an established Gold, Silver and Bronze command system in place for Covid-19. The Gold Group was established in mid-February, well before many forces, and the PCC is represented on this group by his deputy, CEO and Chief Finance Officer.
- 2.2 It is through this group that the PCC is able to be assured of the work being undertaken and understand how he can add value to the Force's work through his engagement with the Policing Minister and other PCCs.
- 2.3 The Force is represented on the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) and the Deputy Chief Constable chairs the Strategic Co-ordination Group (SCG).

**3.0 WORKFORCE**

- 3.1 The OPCC and Force took early action to ensure staff and officers were able to keep themselves safe and observe social distancing. Any non-essential staff who were able to have been working from home and the Force have closely monitored the number of people who were either off sick, or who were shielding, self-isolating or caring for people who were sick.
- 3.2 At the start of the epidemic the Force were reporting **626** staff and officers not in the organisation, this represented **17.3%** of the workforce. As of 15<sup>th</sup> June,

the figure was **334** off, representing **9%** of the workforce. (This figure includes **91** individuals who are absent for non Covid-19 related issues.)

- 3.3 It should be noted that whilst people may be absent from the workplace this does not necessarily mean they are not able to work. Of those staff and officers not at work due to Covid-19, just over **87%** are working from home.
- 3.4 As part of its commitment to its staff and officers the Force undertook a staff survey in April to take the temperature of the organisation in terms of how supported staff and officers felt. The figures showed that the vast majority of staff felt they were being properly supported and were being kept informed. Work is ongoing to try and address the issues of those who did not feel that way and a follow up survey found that the levels of satisfaction had grown within the Force, suggesting that the approach adopted has been the right one.
- 3.5 At the very beginning of the pandemic the Force were planning for significantly higher levels of sickness and absenteeism and it is through the decisive work it has undertaken we have been able to reduce sickness levels from their initial peak and continue to drive the number down.
- 3.6 Despite the Covid-19 situation the Force have continued to recruit police officers as part of the Uplift Programme as well as 20 new PCSOs. The training has seen some real innovation in the development of a combination of social distancing and digital training.

#### **4.0 PPE**

- 4.1 There has been significant coverage in the national media about stocks of PPE and its availability to frontline staff. As previously stated the Force started work on the potential impact of Covid-19 early. This included sourcing PPE. As a result, the Force is in a strong position and has healthy stocks and good supply chains for ensuring stocks are maintained. So much so that the Force have, on occasions, been asked to help support neighbouring forces whose stocks have run low.
- 4.2 National guidance has been produced on the right PPE for frontline workers within law enforcement and Derbyshire is surpassing this level of protection for staff and officers.

## 5.0 **ENFORCEMENT**

5.1 The overall approach to enforcement of the regulations is based on a 4 E model:

<b>ENGAGE</b>	Engage with people around their behaviours
<b>EXPLAIN</b>	Explain why it is important to comply with the regulations
<b>ENCOURAGE</b>	Encourage people to comply, for example asking people to disperse
<b>ENFORCE</b>	Enforcement through the use of Fixed Penalty Notices, though this is only seen as a matter of last resort

5.2 Latest figures show that Derbyshire have issued **251 FPNs** between 27<sup>th</sup> March and 8<sup>th</sup> June, which puts it towards the middle of the pack compared with other forces nationally.

5.3 As the lockdown arrangements have been relaxed it is anticipated that the number of FPNs will also likely drop.

5.4 Derbyshire has seen a number of key locations attracting large numbers of visitors since the easing of lockdown. Notably these have included Matlock Bath, Harpur Hill (the so called 'Blue Lagoon') and Middle Peak Quarry.

5.5 The Force have been working closely with colleagues within local authorities, the Peak Park Authority and local MPs to try and manage the situation. A careful balance needs to be struck between responding to the concerns of local residents and allowing people to travel in line with current regulations.

## 6.0 **CRIME**

6.1 As has been reported nationally, Derbyshire saw a significant reduction in volume crime since lockdown. This included a reduction in domestic abuse reports and incidents. Both the PCC and Force are aware that the current lockdown arrangement will mean that many individuals will be in situations where they are in households with their abusers and opportunities to report may be limited. Significant work is being undertaken by both the Force and

the PCC's commissioned Victim Services to ensure that avenues for reporting and support remain open.

- 6.2 The Force are now seeing general levels of crime and anti-social behaviour return to 'pre-Covid' levels which has presented challenges in terms of resource allocation.
- 6.3 The protests following the death of George Floyd in the United States has also presented a number of challenges both in terms of managing protests and a focus on key sites around the County such as the 'Black Head' in Ashbourne that was removed.
- 6.4 Following an initial decrease in road usage the Force saw an increase in cars on the roads and those who are seeing the quieter roads as an opportunity to commit speeding offences. The Force put detailed plans in place and activity is being undertaken to tackle the issue.
- 6.5 The Force are also working hard to ensure that whilst people are in lockdown they do not fall victim to cyber or cyber enabled crime and advice and guidance is being issued through all the Force's communication channels.
- 6.6 The Force are also specifically monitoring incidents of Hate Crime as there have been reports across the country of members of certain ethnic groups being targeted due to Covid-19. Whilst there have been a few isolated incidents in Derbyshire we have not seen any particular patterns or trends, but a watching brief is being kept on this.
- 6.7 With the regulations and social distancing requirements we are currently living with we have seen significant pressures within the wider Criminal Justice System. Trials have been postponed and the Crown Court is currently closed and the local Magistrates Courts are working as virtual courts. This has seen increased pressures on the Force especially around remand hearings as these are taking place within a custody setting.
- 6.8 One area that Derbyshire is leading the way is in relation to virtual work when there is a potential risk to a victim/witness in a case, particularly around domestic abuse, and ensuring that these are considered. We have successfully managed to get cases postponed rather than dropped due to successful engagement with the judiciary around these risks.

## **7.0 CONTACT MANAGEMENT**

- 7.1 Following an initial downturn in 999 calls, numbers have returned to a more expected level.
- 7.2 As of 15<sup>th</sup> June the average number of 999 calls per day was **353** the average wait for a call to be answered was **9 seconds**.
- 7.3 101 calls saw an initial increase with people reporting breaches of regulations. Currently there are on average just over **899** calls per day, with an average wait time of **168 seconds** for a call to be answered.
- 7.4 The Force also saw a spike in the number of regulation breach reports through the Single Online Home portal.
- 7.5 A LiveChat function has also been introduced which will add an additional way in which the public will be able to access the Force. As an aside this functionality is currently being supported by some of those staff who are not in the workplace but are able to work from home.

## **8.0 RECOVERY**

- 8.1 The Force are currently working on detailed plans to allow people to start returning to work. A significant challenge is being able to do this safely and allow for social distancing.
- 8.2 The Government guidance remains clear – if you can work from home you should continue to do so and this means that the PCC's office is likely to remain working remotely for the foreseeable future.
- 8.3 As other parts of the country respond to the easing of lockdown arrangements it is anticipated that there may be an increased call on police resources both in terms of re-emerging crime types such as shoplifting as well as the role police may have to play in enforcement for the use of facial coverings on public transport.
- 8.4 Like all police forces Derbyshire continues to look to the Centre and the National Police Chief's Council to understand how the changing regulations and guidance should be applied.
- 8.5 Significant work is also being undertaken with wider criminal justice partners to manage the growing crisis within the Criminal Justice System due to a

growing backlog of cases.

## **9.0 CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

9.1 Social distancing rules have meant that the delivery of an effective criminal justice system has been severely impaired. This area is of great concern and that HMCTS appears to lack a plan for restarting courts to a degree that the justice system to return to some degree of normality.

9.2 Up until 27<sup>th</sup> May there were:

- 98 Crown Court trials which has been adjourned, with no new dates set
- 166 trials listed between 01/07/20 – 25/12/20 but no indication how many of these will be able to progress
- 261 Magistrate trials adjourned with no new date set
- 560 cases adjourned for first hearings, Domestic Abuse court, GAP/NGAP<sup>1</sup> and Youth Court

9.3 Scaled up it becomes clear that there is a significant risk developing and the backlog may take years to clear.

9.4 Remand hearings are also an issue and as a result the custody suite at Ripley has been reopened as a remand suite with dedicated staff to support it.

9.5 As Chair of the local Criminal Justice Board the PCC has been working with partners to try and find solutions that will mitigate the ever-increasing risk.

## **10.0 VICTIM SERVICES**

10.1 One of the key functions of the PCC is the commissioning of support services for victims of crime. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic we have needed to work closely with our service providers to ensure that services are able to be provided, albeit in a different format.

1.2 We are also required to engage and report with the Ministry of Justice who provide the funding of these services to the PCC. The MOJ have put out a request for information from PCCs regarding any emergency funding needs in

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<sup>1</sup> GAP – ‘Guilty Anticipated Plea’; NGAP – ‘Not Guilty Anticipated Plea’

the victim services space. We have responded to that request and await feedback on whether any additional funding will be provided so the PCC can expand his support for organisations within Derbyshire as they adapt to current working conditions.

## **11.0 FINANCIAL MATTERS**

- 11.1 As would be expected there have been a number of additional costs generated during this situation. The Force are working with national colleagues to collate all of these costs and feed them into Government, who have said they will meet them.
- 11.2 Areas of expenditure have included on IT equipment to allow for remote working and obviously spend relating to the purchase of PPE.
- 11.3 The PCC has also provided additional resource to some of the Victim Service providers to allow for remote working.

## **12.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- i. The Police and Crime Panel of Derbyshire note the update provided.
- ii. That the Panel gains assurance that the Force and OPCC are responding well to the Covid-19 situation

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## **ATTACHMENTS**

None