

Police and Crime Commissioner for Dyfed-Powys response to State of Policing: Annual Assessment of Policing in England and Wales 2022

I have read with interest Andy Cooke's first annual report to the Secretary of State as His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary. Below I have outlined my considerations under the main themes highlighted within the report.

Police aren't always focusing on the issues that matter most to the public

Whilst there have been falling rates of satisfaction across the country, I am encouraged by the data from the September 2022 Crime Survey of England and Wales, which identifies that Dyfed-Powys Police compares favourably with other forces in terms of understanding local concerns, addressing local priorities and provision of overall service. The Dyfed-Powys Police commitment to neighbourhood policing is essential in maintaining this level of confidence. We are fortunate that in Wales, forces have not had to reduce Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) numbers to meet funding gaps due to the ongoing, and recently bolstered, funding from Welsh Government. I am pleased to report that Dyfed-Powys Police remains on track to recruit to its target of 163 PCSOs. These will be deployed across a recently refined Neighbourhood Policing Team model.

In relation to consulting victims in the use of out-of-court disposals, my office has recently consulted the public to support the refresh of our community remedy menu. Once finalised, this revised menu will be published on a dedicated page on the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) website. I will be encouraging the use of this menu in supporting victims to have a say in how offenders repair the damage caused by their crimes.

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) has recently queried how the Force is communicating its priority areas and performance to the public of the Dyfed-Powys area. This is an area that my office and the Force intend to jointly develop to ensure we collectively provide greater reassurance that the service is focused on what matters most to communities.

Resources/Funding

There are restrictions in how forces can allocate their budgets, which are linked to officer numbers and penalties if targets are not met. Dyfed-Powys Police has continued to invest in priority areas such as digital policing, even when required to achieve significant savings. It is recognised that this is an area of risk, given the challenges of the current cost of living crisis.

Police Uplift

The report outlines the national concerns that the sheer scale of recruitment has increased the risk that forces are granting vetting clearances to substantial numbers of unsuitable applicants. I am assured that all Dyfed-Powys Police recruitment vetting standards have been maintained despite the significant influx of new officers. In addition, Dyfed-Powys Police has recently undertaken a review and identified the need for a new post of a 'Talent Attraction Officer'. This role will assist in targeted recruitment through educational establishments to attract quality candidates. Recruitment and retention of police staff remains challenging, with higher pay being offered by other public bodies and increased opportunities to work remotely. Consideration is currently being given to increasing internship opportunities to develop a future pathway into specialised areas.

Role of Policing

I would agree with the observation in the report that the role of policing has become confused and needs to be more tightly defined, requiring open and honest conversations with the public in relation to expectations. Nationally, forces are beginning to roll out the 'Right Care, Right Person' approach to dealing with mental health demand. Dyfed-Powys Police has structures in place to manage this transition and will ensure that engagement takes place to ensure that all Welsh forces maintain a consistent approach.

Efficiency needs to be improved

The report highlights the volume of areas for improvement and causes for concern in this area, with a number of these stemming from the police's reliance on outdated Information Technology (IT). The delivery of national IT projects has been problematic with delays and projects overrunning on costs.

Dyfed-Powys Police has recently undertaken arguably its largest ever IT project, transitioning to the Niche Records Management System. The project has been relatively successful, notwithstanding some teething problems and officers and staff adapting to new systems. This has also restricted the Force's capability and capacity to deliver against other IT projects, such as Robotic Process Automation.

HMICFRS has commented on a reluctance to collaborate across support functions, such as Human Resources, Finance and IT. However, there are some effective collaborative arrangements in place across Wales, such as the All-Wales Human Resources and Learning Development Services Collaboration. This project sees all four Welsh forces utilising one recruitment system, resulting in a more streamlined application experience.

The Police aren't always getting the basics right

HMICFRS indicated that some of the basics in terms of answering the phones, attending incidents and investigating crimes are not being done well.

In its most recent inspection, Dyfed-Powys Police's Force Communications Centre performed well against the Victims Service Assessment. Whilst the high abandonment rate of 101 calls was highlighted, Dyfed-Powys Police achieved 100% compliance in cases considered for the appropriate grading of calls, checks for vulnerable victims being completed, call handlers being polite and professional, the timely arrest of suspects and victims being updated throughout investigations.

The findings were also generally favourable in respect of investigations. Of the cases considered, Dyfed-Powys Police achieved 100% compliance in relation to investigations being allocated appropriately and arrests being made at the earliest opportunity. In addition, evidence-led prosecutions in the Dyfed-Powys area have increased from 8 in 2020 to 48 in 2022.

However, Dyfed-Powys Police recognises that improvements are required in relation to crimes allocated to response officers, delays in relation to digital forensics and digital examinations, measuring Victims Code of Practice compliance, file submission quality and completion of victim contracts.

Stop and Search

I note within the report that Stop and Search was considered an essential tool that needs to be better understood, and that it must solve more problems than it creates.

As a force with a large geographic boundary, stop and search is used to prevent and detect crime from travelling criminals and for those who distribute drugs within our area.

The Chief Constable has encouraged greater proactivity in his ambition to make the Dyfed-Powys Police area hostile to those that deal drugs. This has required greater safeguards in terms of identifying and monitoring disproportionality. This has been evidenced through supervision, Body Worn Video activation and audit of records, together with the scrutiny from the Independent Audit Group and my Quality Assurance Panel.

The Force has identified that they need to reinforce the message of why this tactic is being promoted, so it is seen as an effective tool to minimise harm to our communities, as opposed to a method to improve performance figures.

Data analysis

The report identifies that the police don't collect and analyse data well enough. Dyfed-Powys Police has improved its performance analysis greatly, benefitting from engagement with a specialist company and developing capability within the Force. However, analytical resources are scarce and it is difficult to retain specialist staff within policing.

The future direction of predictive analysis and Artificial Intelligence are great opportunities to enhance capability and capacity. However, policing faces a significant challenge to be able to finance the large investment required and to obtain the skills necessary to deliver on such projects.

Governance, Leadership and Workforce Reform

Leadership

The report identifies that the police service needs to improve the way it identifies officers capable of becoming senior leaders, support those leaders at more junior ranks and improve foresight for strategic challenges faced.

Dyfed-Powys Police is aligning its Leadership Strategy to the five stages of the Leadership Programme introduced by the College of Policing. The Force is actively engaged in the workshops and currently have three officers on the Executive Leadership Programme. The Force has reintroduced entry level training for Sergeants and Inspectors and has implemented mandatory inputs on critical conversations and attendance at a Human Resources Masterclass for all supervisors.

Standards and Culture

Dyfed-Powys Police continues to work towards the recommendations and areas for improvement identified within the inspection of vetting, misconduct and misogyny in the police service. I am assured that the Force has been submitting updates in a timely manner and considers it has made significant progress against the majority of the recommendations.

THIS RESPONSE IS ALSO AVAILABLE IN WELSH



There is also merit in highlighting here that the department, like all others in England and Wales, was recently subject to the 'rapid review' that was commissioned by the Home Office in respect of the complaints and misconduct, anti-corruption and vetting business areas. The purpose of the review, conducted by HMICFRS, was to satisfy the Home Office that forces were progressing the recommendations.

The rapid review included a dip sample of anti-corruption intelligence cases, complaints and misconduct files. The HMICFRS Inspector was complimentary of the investigative approach taken in every case that was sampled, as well as the manner in which decisions were documented.

I am pleased that HMICFRS has highlighted Dyfed-Powys Police vetting department as effectively dealing with disproportionality and mitigating risk in the decision process for vetting. Positive commentary was received in respect of the quality of the vetting decision making and the associated rationale documents, which referenced the Vetting Authorised Professional Practice, Code of Practice, Code of Ethics, Standards of Professional Behaviour and the National Decision Model. I have been advised that two other forces have been in contact with Dyfed-Powys to learn from their approach.

In relation to the historic data wash, all relevant checks have been conducted on every staff member working within Dyfed-Powys Police. This includes police officers, police staff, volunteers and all staff within my office. The Force is in the process of finalising the report and awaiting instruction of how to submit the returns.

I am grateful to Andy Cook for his annual report. My team and I 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 Dyfed and Powys.