



Minutes

Title of meeting	Police Covenant Oversight Board
Date	20 April 2023
Time	11.00 - 12.00
Venue	Virtual Meeting
Attendees	<p>Chris Philp – Chair – Minister of State for Crime, Policing and Fire Paul Fotheringham – Police Superintendents’ Association Belinda Goodwin – Police Federation of England and Wales Gareth Wilson – Chief Police Officers’ Staff Association Gavin Stephens - Chair of the National Police Chiefs’ Council Chris Rowley - National Lead for Police Wellbeing, National Police Chiefs’ Council Peter McCall - Cumbria Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Andy Tremayne – Association of Police and Crime Commissioners Andy Rhodes – College of Policing/National Police Chiefs’ Council John Harrison – Interim Chief Medical Officer, College of Policing Gary Haggarty - Welsh Government Matt Parr – HMICFRS Peter Spreadbury – Deputy Director, Home Office Katriona Welsh – PCOB Secretariat, Home Office Iain Barton – PCOB Secretariat, Home Office Emma Marriott –Wellbeing lead, Home Office</p>
Apologies	<p>Steve Hartshorn – Chair of Police Federation of England and Wales Andy Marsh – CEO, College of Policing Ben Priestley – Unison John Robins – Chief Police Officers’ Staff Association</p>

1) Welcome and introductory remarks

RT HON CHRIS PHILP MP, THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR CRIME, POLICING, AND FIRE welcomed attendees. He thanked attendees for their input on the Covenant annual report and explained that it was now being finalised for publication.

2) Priority workstream 13 update – NHS engagement

JOHN HARRISON set out the plans for NHS engagement and support for police officers and staff. He explained that anecdotal evidence suggested NHS support, particularly mental health provision, did not meet the needs of members of the police force. He set out the engagement that had taken place with the Armed Forces team within NHS England to learn about the development of the Armed Forces Covenant. He summarised a four-part work plan for priority workstream 13: the first part was the introduction of a national health and wellbeing strategy. He noted the key aim across the workstream was the need to influence NHS commissioning services. He referred to the production of a Ministry of Defence People, Health and Wellbeing Strategy for veterans, which was signed off by the chiefs of the armed forces. The Police National Wellbeing Strategy would be developed by the NPCC Health and Wellbeing Board supported by the National Police Wellbeing Service (NPWS) and as part of this, data analysis and a data capture capability would be established. The second area of work was to develop a model for assessing the health needs of the police family. This work would be led by the National Police Wellbeing Service and initially develop a bespoke police needs health assessment model in conjunction with NHS England and the Armed Forces team within the NHS. The model would be informed at a national and local level. He informed the Board that a short-term capability had already been procured which would engage with local integrated healthcare systems to better understand the process. This part of the work would be delivered by the end of May and commissioning pilots would then be explored in England and Wales. The third stage was to introduce an accredited healthcare provision which would build on the work that had already taken place to educate GPs and primary care teams of the health needs of police. The final stage of the workstream was the development of a national health care commissioning template which could be adapted by police forces to accommodate their local arrangements and needs. This would be explored once a data set was gathered about the job specific needs, and this would enable NHS England and the National Commissioning Board for Wales to take the requests forward. John highlighted the risks to the workstream, noting the challenging commissioning environment and teams with resources which were already stretched.

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR CRIME, POLICING, AND FIRE agreed with the need for a bespoke police health needs assessment and then looking to the NHS to ensure the commissioning services meet those needs in the way they did with the Armed Forces. He suggested the Armed Forces team within NHS England could be expanded and renamed to recognise other emergency services and that he would write to the appropriate Minister in the Department of Health and Social Care. He asked John how confident he was that the NHS would deliver and meet the asks identified in the health needs assessment.

JONH HARRISON reassured the Board that he was fairly confident in NHS delivery but experience from the Armed Forces suggested that additional leverage through a legal requirement supported the Armed Forces team.

PETER MCCALL emphasised the need for the Covenant to make a meaningful difference to policing and noted experiences of the Armed Forces Covenant and veterans who had been unable to access what they needed. He also explained that policing would most likely require mental health support and that mental health resources were already difficult to access.

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR CRIME, POLICING, AND FIRE agreed with the points raised and explained that the Board had previously discussed the importance of

introducing tangible benefits under the Covenant. He raised the need to acknowledge the fire service within the work with the NHS due to recent evidence that suggested cancer rates were higher amongst the fire service as a result of smoke inhalation.

GAVIN STEPHENS queried whether the health needs assessment would capture the data and evidence collected from third sector partners.

JOHN HARRISON explained that the NPWS was working with a data analytics provider to be inclusive of the data used and wider organisations were factored into that work.

PAUL FOTHERINGHAM welcomed the NHS engagement plans and the Minister's engagement. He cautioned against widening the scope of the NHS work to other emergency services and losing the focus of the Police Covenant. He explained that similar concern had been raised with the Emergency Services Covenant in Wales.

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR CRIME, POLICING, AND FIRE recognised the concerns and explained that it would be difficult to justify excluding fire fighters with the evidence that was available. He hoped that it could be possible for the NHS to cover more than one emergency service and continue to deliver for the police.

PETER SPREADBURY explained that it was an appropriate time to address the issues of the police and fire services with the NHS as other emergency services were considering the needs of their staff. He assured the Board that a letter to the Department of Health and Social Care could be drafted appropriately to reflect the specific context of the Police Covenant while recognising the potential requirements of other emergency services, particularly the fire sector.

CHRIS ROWLEY noted that the NHS engagement plans were discussed at the National Wellbeing Board. He explained that success in this area would result in substantial benefits and ensure policing could reinvest in the future in more officers.

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR CRIME, POLICING, AND FIRE agreed and noted that a substantial number of officers were on restricted duties due to health reasons and work should be underway by forces to set out back to work plans with support from the NHS.

MATT PARR also raised concern with the large number of officers on restricted duties without a plan to return to work.

BELINDA GOODWIN suggested the high number of absentees was due to mental health. She also echoed Paul's concerns about widening the scope of the NHS work to other emergency services but welcomed any intervention to improve the NHS provision.

ACTION - Policing Minister to write to the Department of Health and Social Care to seek to expand the scope and rename the Armed Forces NHS team to include the police and fire services.

3) Priority workstream 2 update – assaults against police

ANDY RHODES summarised the progress on Operation Hampshire and reported that forces were in a good position delivering the seven-point action plan. He set out the proposal to develop a consistent national data set based on the first line manager question set developed under Operation Hampshire. He explained that an app was being tested in forces to collate this data. The app was also free to all forces to use, and the question set

was designed to be quick for line managers to complete. He raised concern with the response from forces as only 16 forces responded with data for the year ending March 2022 after letters from Andy Marsh and the Policing Minister were sent to encourage responses. He cautioned that without a full response on assaults data it would be challenging for the police service to develop preventative strategies. The proposal would mandate a data response from forces and consideration had been given to adding assaults data to the Annual Data Requirement. He informed the Board that phase two of the data app would also capture data on death, suicide and serious injury.

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR CRIME, POLICING, AND FIRE emphasised the importance of assaults data capture and welcomed Gavin Stephens' view on whether the Annual Data Requirement was the best approach to ensure consistent data.

GAVIN STEPHENS agreed to support this effort and assured that he would work with Andy Rhodes to consider how best to achieve better results on data returns from forces.

CHRIS ROWLEY noted that the Annual Data Requirement was likely the best route, and the return would likely be accepted by Chief Officers as an additional request forming part of the yearly request for data.

ANDY RHODES explained that concerns were raised by the Annual Data Requirement team about any additional requests.

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR CRIME, POLICING, AND FIRE asked that the NPCC works with the Home Office team to make a robust case for the use of the Annual Data Requirement to address assaults data capture.

PAUL FOTHERINGHAM agreed that assaults data return should be mandated for Chief Officers and may need to form part of the Annual Data Requirement. He explained that some good work was taking place across forces. He noted the criminal justice system outcomes to assaults against police varied and there were examples of good practice for example, Kent Chief Constable wrote to the court in every case to highlight the impact to the individual and the wider police force which seemed to have an effect on sentencing.

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR CRIME, POLICING, AND FIRE asked whether this could be achieved on a national basis.

GAVIN STEPHENS confirmed that it was common practice for Chief Officers to write to the CPS to set out the impact of an assault and also instances of Chief Officers providing witness statements to hate crime.

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR CRIME, POLICING, AND FIRE asked whether it could be established in a national way and to encourage Chief Officers through a template document that would make it easier.

GAVIN STEPHENS agreed and noted that a template already existed which could be used.

CHRIS ROWLEY agreed to take the action on use of the CJS letter template. He also explained that many officers and staff downplay the impact of an assault when providing statements as there was a culture in policing of accepting assaults as part of the job.

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR CRIME, POLICING, AND FIRE asked whether data was available on the CJS outcomes of officers who are victims of assaults.

CHRIS ROWLEY explained that the data was not captured at the moment and that he would raise this with the National Wellbeing Board to understand what data is available at a local and national level.

BELINDA GOODWIN emphasised the importance of national data capture on assaults and the use of the Annual Data Requirement. She noted that assaults data is important to PFEW members, and this data could inform safety equipment and uniform for officers.

ACTION – Home Office officials to work with NPCC to set out a robust case for adding Operation Hampshire assaults data into the Annual Data Requirement.

ACTION – Chris Rowley to consider how to encourage Chief Officers to consistently use the template available to write to the CPS during instances of assaults that go to court.

ACTION – Chris Rowley to explore data available on CJS outcomes on cases of assault.

4) Communications and branding update

KATRYNA WELSH summarised the latest communications products and the intention to encourage forces to use the products to raise awareness of the Covenant with front line officers and staff. She explained that the products used the existing Covenant branding and gave a brief summary of what the Covenant was and where to go for further information. The products included a small leaflet, two posters with one summarising the Covenant Chief Constable pledge, pull up banners and social media quote templates. She also explained that all products were adaptable for forces to include their force logo and the Home Office would share the products with Board members and seek ways to share with forces.

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR CRIME, POLICING, AND FIRE noted the importance of delivering tangible benefits for officers and staff to ensure the communication products would have an impact.

5) Police Covenant dashboard

PETER SPREADBURY introduced the first dashboard and explained how it provided a clear position on developments under the Covenant. He also explained that the dashboard was created in response to previous discussions about focussing on practical and tangible deliverables. He explained that the dashboard gave a snapshot for each workstream of what the actions were, what had been completed and what the planned activity was, with an overall risk rating. The dashboard would be circulated ahead of every Board meeting with an opportunity to focus discussion on specific issues of concern. He noted the positive progress demonstrated on the dashboard and referred to examples of important deliverables such as the implementation of a bereavement counselling service.

ANDY RHODES referred to the occupational health work and noted that good progress had been made. However, there were significant challenges for forces due to lack of capabilities and workforce provision. He proposed to commission a piece of work which

would consider this issue and work with Blue Light Commercial to set out options to address the challenges with forces.

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR CRIME, POLICING, AND FIRE agreed with the proposal.

PAUL FOTHERINGHAM welcomed the dashboard and the ongoing engagement with the Home Office about the Covenant and the annual report. He suggested that the Home Office team engage with Board members ahead of the Board to consider whether any issues need to be addressed in the dashboard. He also emphasised the importance of capturing accurate risks in the dashboard and referred to the capacity example raised by Andy.

PETER SPREADBURY agreed and welcomed the view of Board members on what would make the dashboard helpful going forward.

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR CRIME, POLICING, AND FIRE agreed that it would be useful to circulate the dashboard and engage with Board members ahead of the next Board meeting. He also emphasised the importance of aiming to deliver tangible outcomes for officers and staff and suggested that further consideration should be given to ideas such as working charities and retailers to secure specific benefits for officers and staff. He noted that suggestions which require additional funding would need to be considered in the context of the future funding environment. He suggested that Board members provide any further suggestions on benefits that could be delivered under the Covenant, to be registered for future consideration.

ACTION – Andy Rhodes to commission a piece of work to identify and address challenges with occupational health capacity in forces.

ACTION – Home Office to circulate an updated dashboard ahead of each Board meeting and engage with Board members on specific areas of concern.

ACTION – Board members to consider further suggestions for benefits that could be delivered under the Covenant.

6) AOB

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR CRIME, POLICING, AND FIRE thanked the Board for their engagement and work and emphasised the importance of the Covenant.