



Minutes

Title of meeting	Police Covenant Oversight Board
Date	25 October 2023
Time	15.30 – 16.30
Venue	Virtual Meeting
Attendees	<p>Chris Philp – Chair – Minister of State for Crime, Policing and Fire John Robins – Chair, Chief Police Officers’ Staff Association Gavin Stephens – Chair, National Police Chiefs’ Council Chris Rowley – National lead for police wellbeing, National Police Chiefs’ Council Steve Hartshorn – Chair, Police Federation of England and Wales Peter McCall – Cumbria Police and Crime Commissioner David Wilbraham – Chair, Police Remembrance Trust; representative of Police Charities Andy Marsh – CEO, College of Policing Andy Rhodes – Director, National Police Wellbeing Service Alison Jackson – Staff officer, HMICFRS Karin Phillips – Director of Community Safety, Welsh Government Harriet Mackinlay – Policy Team Lead, Home Office Katriona Welsh – Covenant policy team, Home Office Emma Marriott – Wellbeing lead, Home Office</p>
Apologies	<p>Ben Priestley – National Officer, Unison Andy Tremayne – Senior Policy Manager, Association of Police and Crime Commissioners Paul Fotheringham – President, Police Superintendents’ Association John Harrison – Chief Medical Officer, College of Policing</p>

1) Welcome and introductory remarks

RT HON CHRIS PHILP MP, THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR CRIME, POLICING AND FIRE welcomed attendees. He summarised the agenda for the meeting and the importance of the tangible benefits discussion which would contribute to making the Covenant more meaningful to officers, staff and their families.

2) Summary of feedback on tangible benefit ideas

KATRYNA WELSH thanked the Board members for their feedback on the tangible benefits list. She explained how the list of ideas was developed through previous engagement with the Board, the Covenant Consultation Group and a workshop with Home Office officials, researchers and the National Police Wellbeing Service. The ideas were then assessed against the Covenant principle of addressing a detriment for those in policing, the deliverability and affordability. She proposed a final 14 ideas some of which related to existing Covenant workstreams and others presented new work areas. She set out the plan to reflect the 14 ideas in the next Covenant annual report and plan how the 14 ideas could be taken forward.

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR CRIME, POLICING, AND FIRE asked the Board for views, noting that some ideas were not captured in the 14 but could present good opportunities such as exploring bursaries for bereaved families or dependents.

CHRIS ROWLEY suggested that he could share the list with members of the NPCC National Wellbeing Board to consider the views of force representatives with the aim of receiving feedback by the end of October.

ACTION – Chris Rowley to share the tangible benefits list with NPCC National Wellbeing Board members and share feedback with the Home Office in November.

GAVIN STEPHENS proposed working with Chris Rowley to ensure that some tangible ideas are taken forward in activity at a national level. He also noted the importance of how the police workforce was feeling and the impact of negative media reporting around policing. He suggested that some positive communications about policing and the positive work many officers and staff do could improve retention. He also noted the recent speech by the King which referred to the negative reporting on public services.

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR CRIME, POLICING, AND FIRE agreed that a strategic communications plan should be created that further promotes the Police Bravery Awards and other good work of policing and use social media content.

ACTION – Home Office and NPCC to work together to develop a strategic comms strategy.

STEVE HARTSHORN noted the importance of considering bursaries for bereaved families. He also proposed annual psychological check-ups are expanded to all front line officers and staff, noting that such check-ups are currently in place for firearms teams. He emphasised the importance of ensuring that the right onward treatment and provision was in place for those who are assessed. He also noted one of the tangible benefit ideas proposed that all psychological injuries, as well as physical injuries, that occur on duty are formally recorded. He suggested that mandatory data recording of psychological injuries should be collected by chief constables.

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR CRIME, POLICING, AND FIRE noted that work would need to be done to understand whether there would be a viable delivery model for annual psychological check-ups, given the high numbers of individuals in the front line workforce. He explained that he was writing to the Department for Health and Social Care to request early cancer screening for firefighters which was a similar approach to early intervention psychological check-ups. He proposed that bursaries for bereaved dependents could be in the form of funding specific family-related 'wishes' or requests such as a trip with a loved one.

STEVE HARTSHORN acknowledged the cost of annual psychological assessments but emphasised the importance of supporting officer mental as well as physical wellbeing. He explained how early intervention could improve abstraction rates across the front line.

KARIN PHILLIPS highlighted that some services mentioned in the tangible benefits list would sit within devolved matters in Wales and the importance of continued engagement with officials and the Chief Medical Officer (CMO). She reported on the recent positive engagement between the CMOs for Wales and Policing, to inform thinking on how provision could be replicated in Wales.

DAVID WILBRAHAM thanked the Minister for the invitation to the Board and noticed that some of the tangible benefits were already delivered by charities. He explained that he would report back any discussions to the charities network. He also set out how many charities already provide bursaries for bereaved families and the importance of families also understanding their statutory entitlements. He proposed some scoping work to highlight where there is robust existing provision.

ACTION – David Wilbraham to provide an overview of existing provision for bereaved families and other support available.

JOHN ROBINS expressed his view that the idea to create an NHS vaccination programme for all front-line police workers that is in line with those available for frontline NHS workers, should be agreed and taken forward since it was something front line officers would welcome. He agreed that many support services were already in place for bereaved families and would like the Covenant to focus on delivery of new initiatives that benefit the majority of officers and staff.

ANDY MARSH supported the identification of tangible benefits moving forward and emphasised the importance of ensuring this work was linked to the continued effort to deliver a high standard of continuous professional development in policing.

CHRIS ROWLEY updated the Board on the new Wellbeing Authorised Professional Practice (APP) which sets out a list of roles that should be put forward for psychological assessments annually with the option for chief constables to provide this for other staff. He cautioned that budgets were limited in relation to occupational health and requested that when the Minister writes to Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC), the Minister also asks the NHS to replicate the additional services that are in place for the Armed Forces.

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR CRIME, POLICING, AND FIRE explained that he would write to DHSC to ask that Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) support is made available to police through the NHS as well as early cancer screening for firefighters. He asked the Board whether an evidence base existed that demonstrated police officers and staff experience higher rates of PTSD than the general population.

ANDY RHODES explained that lots of evidence and data is available. He also set out how the cost of expanding the provision of psychological assessments was not the main challenge, rather it was the pressures it would place on force occupational health services from the resulting referrals for support. He explained that the CMO was currently exploring how the NHS could support the onward referrals.

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR CRIME, POLICING, AND FIRE asked officials to amend the letter to DHSC to reflect the Board's discussion around PTSD treatment and support with referrals to counselling and treatment.

STEVE HARTSHORN suggested exploring the use of NHS trainee doctors to conduct annual psychological assessments – who are qualified but require a work placement.

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR CRIME, POLICING, AND FIRE noted that some may have concern about using students and suggested work would be needed to understand their qualifications and experience.

ANDY RHODES agreed with the importance of psychological assessments and that many assessments were already underway, some provided directly by National Police Wellbeing Service (NPWS). He emphasised the importance of the new Wellbeing APP which sets a clear standard while chief constables are still able to make local decisions for their workforce.

STEVE HARTSHORN supported the tangible benefits paper and the proposed list and explained how it provided an opportunity for positive messaging about the impact of the Covenant which the Police Federation could support.

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR CRIME, POLICING, AND FIRE requested further advice on how annual psychological check-ups could be delivered for all.

ACTION – further advice to be provided on how annual psychological assessments could be delivered for all front line officers and staff.

3) Wellbeing Survey report

ANDY RHODES set out the work being done under the existing staff association engagement workstream. He highlighted a report led by Durham University assessing all existing staff wellbeing surveys to understand common themes and issues raised. Over 200,000 survey responses were analysed as part of this work. He proposed a separate briefing session with members of the Board to consider the detail and outcomes of the report. He summarised the key themes and issues identified including: hindrance stressors, number of officers unable to take annual leave, sleep and fatigue issues and issues around how the workforce treat each other. He reminded the group of the existing work to tackle fatigue and exhaustion and the importance of delivering strong professional standards.

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR CRIME, POLICING, AND FIRE agreed to a separate briefing with Board members and asked that he be provided with the briefing in writing. He explained that he was pleased to see that work was already underway on a number of issues raised in the report but noted that further action may be needed to address any remaining issues. He asked that the report is assessed against the existing Covenant work and that any further actions required are reported back to the Board with recommendations.

ANDY RHODES agreed and noted that some substantial work is already underway through the NPCC and HMICFRS on internal conduct and that he would identify where work should be taken forward by the Covenant.

ACTION – Andy Rhodes to convene a briefing for Board members on the wellbeing survey report, provide the briefing in writing to the Minister and propose a list of recommendations where further issues are identified.

4) Op Hampshire – assaults data presentation

ANDY RHODES shared a presentation which set out the way in which assaults data could be used to demonstrate trends by time of day, demographics, rank and interaction at the time of assault. He explained that the NPCC tasked forces with providing the data and the College of Policing Safety Team were interested in the data insights which could inform officer safety training.

STEVE HARTSHORN thanked NPWS and the Operation Hampshire lead, Dave Brewster, for their work in delivering enhanced assaults data. He explained that a full set of 18 data metrics was needed to provide the best insight and proposed that the data should sit with the Home Office through the upcoming Annual Data Requirement (ADR). He emphasised the importance of the data and how it could be used in occupational health, HR, finance and safety training which could result in improved front line deployability rates. He also proposed that the data base and assaults data dashboard is provided to all chief constables at no cost.

CHRIS ROWLEY suggested that discussions around where data is held would be for the Home Office and NPCC and expressed that chief constables would likely want to see assaults data.

ACTION – Home Office officials to consider how the data collection could be embedded and maintained.

ANDY RHODES explained that the ADR group did not support collection of 18 metrics and that they had proposed a reduced data collection set. He set out the existing work that had taken place to support forces to provide the full data set including the provision of a free data collection app. He agreed that the Home Office ADR would present the best way to achieve the full data set collection in future.

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR CRIME, POLICING, AND FIRE asked Chris Rowley whether a full or reduced ADR should be taken forward and whether the NPCC would support a full data request.

CHRIS ROWLEY explained that although he supported the collection of the full 18 data metrics in theory, he noted the lack of capacity in forces to fulfil the request to a required standard and the challenge of delivering increased data requests while trying to ensure front line staffing was not reduced. He explained that he could pursue this with chief constables and that a full data collection could provide an opportunity to tailor occupational health services and provide an evidence base for supporting the workforce.

STEVE HARTSHORN emphasised the importance of using data to reduce officer assaults and cited a recent study that supported the use of technology to reduce police assaults.

5) Family support package launch

ANDY RHODES summarised phase 1 of the new family support package which would be launched at the Royal Foundation Symposium, 23 November. He explained how

substantial research, conducted by the Open University, provided a clear evidence base for the support package. Phase one had focused on educational resources and support for families on what to do when a loved one shows signs of post-traumatic stress. He set out the resources that will be made available on nutrition, sleep, communicating better with families, children's books, and activity packs. He also explained how workshops and engagement with forces would commence after the launch to ensure forces are signposting the resources such as during attestation ceremonies. He mentioned the work that was also underway with the Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development (CIPD) forum to consider how forces can deliver family friendly policies such as flexible working and improved maternity policies.

6) AOB

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR CRIME, POLICING, AND FIRE thanked everyone for the continued work and engagement and summarised the actions. He emphasised the importance of delivering the tangible benefits and thanked those who had worked on Operation Hampshire.