



Minutes

Title of meeting	Police Covenant Oversight Board
Date	21 January 2025
Time	11:30 – 12:30
Venue	Virtual Meeting

Attendees

- Rt Hon Dame Diana Johnson DBE – Chair – Minister of State for Policing, Fire & Crime Prevention
- Gavin Stephens - Chair of the National Police Chiefs' Council
- Sir Andy Marsh – CEO, College of Policing
- Nicola Faulconbridge – His Majesty's Inspector, HMICFRS
- Gareth Wilson - Chief Police Officers' Staff Association
- Tiffany Lynch - Police Federation of England and Wales
- Andy Tremayne – Association of Police and Crime Commissioners
- Andy Rhodes – Director, National Police Wellbeing Service
- David Wilbraham – Chair, Police Memorial Trust
- John Harrison - Chief Medical Officer, College of Policing
- Charlotte Bryant – Policing Director, Home Office
- Peter Spreadbury – Deputy Director, Home Office
- Harriet Mackinlay - Policy Team Lead, Home Office
- Iain Barton – Policy Lead, Home Office
- Emma Marriott – Policy Lead, Home Office
- Sally Hasselby – Board Secretariat, Home Office

Apologies

- Nick Smart – President, Police Superintendents' Association
- Ben Priestley – Unison

1) Welcome and introductory remarks

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR POLICING, FIRE & CRIME PREVENTION welcomed attendees. She noted that this was her first time chairing the PCOB and that she looked forward to collaborating with all the members on this important work.

2) Dashboard and delivery updates

ANDY RHODES gave an update on the dashboard that acts as a sitrep on what has been delivered so far through the Covenant. Some of the main deliverables include appointing John Harrison as the Chief Medical Officer and Operation Hampshire. He noted that the paper identifies six proposed projects (mental health crisis line, national psychological risk assessment platform, sleep fatigue and recovery coaching, NHS engagement work, national trauma support model and national police employment gateway), four of which he believes sit under the existing duty of care which chief officers must comply with in relation to the police workforce. Andy went on to explain that the forward-looking national proposals would require additional funding. He asked the Board for their thoughts on including this in a Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) bid.

GAVIN STEPHENS expressed support for all six projects on behalf of the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) and described them as practical proposals. He agreed it would be helpful to include these projects as part of the CSR given they are relatively small numbers and hopes the backing of the PCOB will help push them through.

TIFFANY LYNCH noted that the Police Federation had written to the Minister about the progress of the Covenant and thanked the Minister for her response. She explained that the Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW) is supportive of the Covenant and welcomed the proposals tabled by Andy Rhodes. She raised that the PFEW and Police Superintendents Association (PSA) would value a thematic review done by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services on wellbeing and make Covenant priorities mandatory for all Chief Constables. Tiffany felt this would demonstrate forces were putting the wellbeing of police officers and staff first.

ANDY MARSH endorsed the work being led by Andy Rhodes and described the work as high-value and low-cost. He agreed that the deliverables in the past, present and future cannot be delivered locally. Instead, Andy M argued that they must be national to ensure the consistency and quality that police officers and staff have every right to expect. He urged the board to pursue the suggestions brought forward by Andy Rhodes.

DAVID WILBRAHAM also offered support on behalf of policing charities for the recommendations that Andy Rhodes made. He noted that policing charities make an important contribution to policing as part of the overall funding landscape, so co-ordination and integration between local areas is needed to be able to maximise the resource that charities contribute.

ANDY RHODES raised including all 17 Operation Hampshire questions into the Home Office Annual Data Requirement (ADR), noting that seven are already agreed for addition from April 2025. He explained that this means there is still an incomplete national data set on police assaults. He added that where robust data has been collected, it highlighted opportunities to decrease the number of assaults in certain areas of policing. He also noted that existing data has identified trends that suggest an individual's length of service and protected characteristics can increase their likelihood of being assaulted and that

more needs to be done to ensure forces are providing extra support to these officers and staff.

CHARLOTTE BRYANT explained that the Home Office is very keen to include a chapter in the white paper setting out options on workforce measures with the aim of having a workforce that is “trusted, capable and well”. Charlotte made it clear that the Police Covenant Oversight Board has an important role to play in improving police performance, trust and confidence because if the workforce is not well, it cannot succeed. She suggested using the work in progress on the Home Office data hub to put new focus on assaults data. *Home Office to action.*

3) Police Covenant refocus

IAIN BARTON set out a suggested refocus for how the Home Office approaches the Covenant Annual Report. He explained that the Covenant has been able to deliver useful tangibles but has struggled to engage with the front line on the purpose of the Covenant and what it offers them. The Home Office is suggesting refocusing the Covenant on the disadvantages that police officers and staff experience and reframe the annual report to talk about how priorities of the Covenant fit under a specific disadvantage. This change would be implemented immediately, and the next annual report would be circulated to board members prior to the next PCOB. Iain opened this suggestion up to the board to seek their views.

GAVIN STEPHENS said that having a focus on delivery will help but there is potential risk around colleagues misinterpreting the change as de-prioritisation of the Covenant. It needs to be made clear that this is not the case.

PETER SPREADBURY raised that it is important that the aims and the impact of the Covenant are understood by the workforce. He opened this point back up to the Board to give them an opportunity to say their thoughts.

TIFFANY LYNCH agreed that officers have heard about the Covenant on its launch but are quite dismissive of its benefits for them currently and in the future, and it is seen as a minor commitment with no substance behind it. She explained that this is why the Covenant needs to deliver more tangible benefits that are consistent across England and Wales.

JOHN HARRISON showed his support for focusing on strategic delivery and this aligns with the policing national wellbeing strategy which has identified five areas of focus through the employment cycle. He raised an issue with language around disablement and disadvantage and said it is important to ensure that the Covenant has a strong focus on prevention.

ANDY MARSH talked about how far the police service has come in terms of wellbeing including the work being progressed by Andy Rhodes, but more needs to be done and he would be extremely supportive of a Covenant that resembles the one offered to military personnel.

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR POLICING, FIRE & CRIME PREVENTION *tasked Home Office officials to hold cross-government conversations about what more we could do to ensure the Police Covenant is as fundamental as others seen in the public sector.*

BOARD MEMBERS agreed to refocus the Covenant annual report as long as it is clear that work on the Covenant is not dwindling.

4) Healthcare update

JOHN HARRISON confirmed the launch of the National Wellbeing Strategy which is a priority deliverable under the Police Covenant. John updated the board on the NHS engagement work, including facilitating conversations between chiefs of police and healthcare commissioners about the introduction of a flag on medical records when police officers and staff are being seen in a healthcare setting. Pilots had been successfully undertaken in Gloucestershire and South Wales in March 2024. John explained that the work did not get as far as influencing healthcare commissioners, and it was evident from the pilots that these conversations can be challenging to set up. John also spoke about exploring the potential for a National Healthcare Commissioning Framework. He explained that this has been complicated due to the Department of Health and Social Care stating the overall aim of the Police Covenant needs to be made clearer. He suggested that work needs to be done to develop the narrative of what the ask is around healthcare provision. John has also been exploring the accreditation of healthcare provisions. He explained that success has been seen in the armed forces, and we should replicate that for the police. Lastly, John explained the occupational health standards in policing and the importance of driving these in the future, including the introduction of an Occupational Health Workforce Strategy.

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR POLICING, FIRE AND CRIME PREVENTION asked John Harrison if Ministerial level engagement with the Department of Health and Social might help unlock some of the barriers experienced when working on the National Healthcare Commissioning Framework. *The Minister committed to writing to DHSC and the equivalent in Wales about these issues.*

HARRIET MACKINLAY explained that the occupational health issue can be included in the workforce section of the Police Reform White Paper.

GAVIN STEPHENS *suggested Board members take an action from the meeting to think about occupational health more deeply.* He suggested looking across to the Ministry of Defence once again, to look at their specialist capabilities in terms of occupational health.

5) AOB and closing remarks

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR POLICING, FIRE AND CRIME PREVENTION thanked the Board for their continued engagement and work.

IAIN BARTON noted that the Home Office plans to circulate a first draft of the next Covenant Annual Report within the next two months with the aim to publish in May.