

- HMICFRS FY21/22 Report

Though this report covers Q4, members will also be aware that in April, the HMICFRS published their PEEL Report for Dorset Police. I have submitted my formal response to the Home Secretary and the full response has been published on my website, but I thought it would be useful to summarise my reaction to the report here.

The Chief Constable and I note the conclusions of the report and it was pleasing to see that in their report, HMICFRS acknowledged the work of Dorset Police in preventing and proactively tackling crime and anti-social behaviour, as well as its efforts to work alongside partner agencies to challenge the issues that matter the most to our communities.

It was also welcome that the PEEL report also graded the Force's efforts of building, supporting and protecting the workforce as good, including the Force's recruitment plans, investment in officers and staff and its inclusive culture in terms of both equality and diversity.

I will be reviewing with the Chief Constable on a regular basis those areas where the Force were graded as adequate including, treating the public with fairness and respect, protecting vulnerable people and managing offenders and suspects.

Of particular interest, were the two areas which were graded as 'requires improvement' - namely how the Force is responding to the public and investigating crime. These were areas that I had identified as a candidate and raised with the Chief Constable. It is helpful to note that prior to the report, Dorset Police had already recognised the need to strengthen in these areas; and since the start of 2021 the Force has introduced two Local Policing Area commands, together with investment in county lines teams and Neighbourhood Enforcement Teams.

It is also relevant that the PEEL inspection took place at one of the most difficult times in Dorset Police's history, not only for our organisation but also our communities. This included the tricky period through the COVID-19 pandemic, a period of peak demand and unprecedented visitor numbers as the lockdown lifted, an increase in public demonstrations and mutual aid support for national events including G7 and COP 26.

I will work closely with the Chief Constable to understand where improvements are needed, in particular to better meet the needs of victims when responding to and investigating crimes.

I should also point out that each of the 11 Areas for Improvement (AFIs) identified by HMICFRS in their report, have been allocated to strategic leads within Dorset Police who will in turn develop plans to address them.

As Police and Crime Commissioner for Dorset, I can provide specific reassurance that the Force is investing in its public contact systems with a view to reducing call times and responding to incidents more quickly.

I welcome the increased level of scrutiny, accountability and transparency that feature in the PEEL report following the changes HMICFRS have introduced in the way they grade police forces across the country. This provides a foundation and gives me a good starting place to interrogate the Force and drive this work forward to ensure that Dorset is the safest county in England and Wales.

(00:22:00 on recording, PCC's overview of the Q4 Monitoring Report, the 6 Priority Areas and Panel Member questions)

Priority 1 – Cut Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour Questions:

- It is good to see a general downward trend for burglaries, including non-dwelling. There has however in the BCP area an increasing number of posts on social media on theft from cars. Can PCC rerun the campaign from last year to raise awareness on theft from vehicles?

“Of course, especially as the warmer weather starts, I will work with the Force to ensure members of the public are reminded to close their car windows and lock their car doors, as part of the #RemoveItLockIt campaign.

The advice from Dorset Police is to:

- Always lock your vehicle, even if you're just popping somewhere for a few moments
 - Close windows, sunroofs and convertible roofs when parking in the summer
 - Always park in attended car parks or a well lit area - think about where you're leaving your vehicle and if it will still seem secure if you are returning after dark
 - Not leave anything on display - even small change kept for car parking can be enticing to some thieves, and
 - Fit and use an approved alarm, immobiliser or use a steering lock.”
- Interesting to see that while Domestic Abuse Crimes are going down, Domestic Abuse Incidents are on the rise. What is the correlation here – if any?
 - Domestic Violence, Sexual Harm and Stalking are on the rise – do we have a breakdown of the numbers into the three types of crimes? Is there a prevalence of more incidents on one type and how is the PCC prioritising this?

“If I may, I will address the issues of domestic abuse, and of domestic violence, sexual offences, harassment and stalking in the round.

Domestic abuse can happen amongst people of all backgrounds and ages. Although mostly committed by men against women, victims can also be male and abuse can also happen within same-sex relationships.

Domestic abuse does not always have to be physical to be prosecuted - it can include any behaviour deployed by an offender to obtain control or power over another, and we recognise that emotional abuse can be just as harmful as physical violence.

Domestic abuse is not a specific offence per se. However, the term can be applied to a number of offences committed in a domestic environment. The domestic nature of the offending is an aggravating factor because of the abuse of trust involved. Victims will know and often live with, or have lived with, the perpetrator and there may be a continuing threat to the victim's safety and to the safety of those around them.

Therefore, DA crimes are not crime types in their own right, but are crimes of various types that have a DA flag attached to them in the police crime recording system as a potentially aggravating factor.

Therefore, there is no correlation between DA crimes and incidents. The increase in DA incidents noted here is partly a recording issue, due to the increased use of the DA flag in multi-agency risk assessment conferences (or MARACs). The rationale for this is to better understand the range of occurrences of DA, which partners now have and so are currently considering whether these should be excluded from the total.

Separately then, sexual offences, harassment and stalking have all increased between 2020/21 and 2021/22. This is partially due to the pandemic, as this may reflect a diminishing in the level of reporting in 2020/21 rather than a decrease in the number of offences. Like many other under-reported incidents and crime, we continue to actively drive-up victim confidence, and reporting levels.

The breakdown of these three crime types shows broadly comparable increases:

- A 12.6% increase in sexual offences between 2020/21 and 2021/22,
- A 15.4% increase in harassment between 2020/21 and 2021/22, and
- A 14.4% increase in stalking between 2020/21 and 2021/22.

In terms of how I am prioritising Violence Against Women and Girls more broadly? I have spoken about this at some length previously, but just to take the opportunity to mention Op Vigilant again – a real success story from my first year – which uses plain-clothed and uniformed officers patrolling inside and outside night-time venues across Dorset, in a bid to stop perpetrators approaching women and engaging in predatory behaviour. I have also formally challenged the Chief Constable on Dorset Police's response to such issues, and we have had success in the Safer Streets Fund to make our public spaces safer in the Dorset and Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole local authority areas."

Priority 2 – Make Policing More Visible and Connected. (01:03:35 on recording).

- 999 league tables:

Members will see that in Q4, the number of 999 calls answered within 10 seconds stood at 83%, against a target of 90%. And some of you may have also seen the

recent publication of the 999 League Tables on 31 May, which covered the period November 2021 through to March 2022 – the equivalent figure being 64% for this period for Dorset Police.

Contact management is an extremely complex area of business and, devoid of context, figures such as these are not always tremendously helpful. These figures don't take into account the time taken for the national call operators to transfer the call to Dorset Police, which can vary across the country; the volume per head of population; the severity or appropriateness of the 999 calls and, of course, most importantly the police despatch and response times to genuine emergency calls.

Nevertheless, it's pleasing to see that there has been a notable uplift in Force 999 performance observed since Christmas, as shown in the Q4 report. The Chief Constable has established a major programme of transformation for public contact and engagement and I expect this to bear fruit in the future.

Priority 3 – Fight Violent Crime and High Harm. (01:17:02 on recording)

- Combating County Lines: (01:18:41 on recording)

In Q4, through the PCC-created Operation Scorpion initiative to make the southwest a hostile environment for those who deal drugs and engage in anti-social drug taking activity – the five regional forces in the SW, arrested 194 people and seized suspected drugs with an estimated street value of £404k plus £131k of cash, in a county lines crackdown.

Through a series of raids carried out in the second week of March, officers also seized three vehicles, high-value items of clothing and handbags, and disrupted 21 drugs supply lines in the SW, as part of the 'ring of steel' approach which will continue in the months ahead.

This was the first time all five forces in the SW had come together with the same priority, utilising our collective regional intelligence and technical capability, and this operation also drew the national attention, being picked up by national press, and being quoted in dispatches by the Policing Minister.

In support of this enforcement activity, all forces:

- Proactively involved Neighbourhood Policing Teams to close any intelligence gaps,
- Engaged with drug treatment services in advance of activity,
- Undertook joint visits with partners to identified vulnerable users,
- Carried out schools' engagement, including drop-in sessions for concerned parents,
- And made extensive referrals for diversion/treatment.

Some specific highlights for Dorset include:

- A vehicle from Merseyside heading for Bournemouth being tracked and stopped, leading to the arrest of three persons from Merseyside. Approx. £10k of Heroin/Crack Cocaine recovered from the vehicle.
- And the execution of 17 warrants, and 46 overall disruptions, across 6 county lines.

PCC media quote: "Criminals don't see county borders when it comes to drug supply and dealing activities, and, now, neither do we."