

# Police Accountability and Legitimacy Group (PALG)

Police Headquarters  
03 June 2020

## MINUTES

### Attendees

#### Police and Crime Commissioner's Team

Lee Jones - Chair (LJ)	Chief Executive (Interim)
Hannah Jenkins-Jones (HJJ)	Strategic Lead for Scrutiny, Assurance and Equality
Sarah Mahon (SM)	Engagement and Assurance Officer
Nia Scourfield (NS)	Governance Support Officer

#### South Wales Police

Marc Attwell (MA)	Superintendent, Corporate Services
Jenny Gilmer (JG)	Assistant Chief Constable
Jeremy Vaughan (JV)	Deputy Chief Constable

#### PALG Members

Alex Drummond (AD)	Independent Advisor
Steve Bartley (SB)	Older People's Commissioner for Wales
Jasmine Jones (JJ)	Gypsies & Travellers Wales
Judith Major (JM)	Hafal
Reynette Reynolds (RR)	Oasis
Charlotte Singleton (CS)	South Wales Victim Focus
Liz Baker (LB)	Barnardos
Sarah Kikpatrick (SarahK)	Welsh Women's Aid
Samina Khan (SK)	Muslim Council of Wales
Jalal Goni (JG)	Ethnic Minorities & Youth Support Team (EYST)
Holly Taylor (HT)	Welsh Refugee Council

## 1. Welcome and Introductions

LJ welcomed attendees and introduced new representatives from organisations who had been invited to provide additional perspectives in response to policing during covid-19.

Minutes from the previous meeting were discussed. AD requested minor changes to phrasing of some comments.

### Action updates

1. Information from the 'coercive control board' will be incorporated into future meetings as appropriate.
2. Progress updates on the delivery of the Joint Equality Plan will be incorporated into future meetings.

## **2. Policing during Covid-19**

LJ invited HJJ to provide an overview of the Commissioner's team report. The report outlined feedback gathered from members of the public and partner agencies in relation to any queries or concerns they had in response to policing during the pandemic. HJJ noted that specific queries from the public had been responded to individually and that the report contained relevant topics for discussion at the meeting.

### Feedback from the Public

HJJ summarised the feedback gathered from the public and noted there were mixed comments about how the police had enforced the coronavirus legislation. Some people felt the police were proportionate in their approach, whilst others left comments regarding disproportionate action. Some comments also alluded to the police not doing enough to take action against those that breached social distancing restrictions. Queries related to whether there had been increases in hate crime reporting and increases in anti-social behaviour or crimes against older people. Some people also queried what measures were in place to protect officers and staff from contracting the virus and what their social distancing approach was when dealing with people who were shielding. HJJ also highlighted a number of positive examples raised by members of the public and partner agencies, which included comments praising police officer actions during lockdown and sensitively attending a number of mental health crisis issues during lockdown.

### Complaints from the Public

HJJ provided a brief overview of the number of covid-19 related complaints received by members of the public to the Commissioner. A total of 18 covid-related complaints and letters of concern were received between March – May 2020. This represented around 16% of all complaints to the Commissioner for the period. To date, 40 complaints had also been made to South Wales Police regarding their policing of the covid-19 legislation since lockdown began. Complaint themes related to officers allegedly not adhering to social distancing guidance, reports of covid-19 breaches not being responded to and current restrictions leading to delays in police dealing with current investigations.

### PALG Feedback

HJJ referred to issues that she would like PALG to discuss. In particular, the information provided by organisations about the issues facing their clients during lockdown and how ethnic minority groups had been affected.

SarahK referred to the issues of timeliness raised by complainants and asked whether there were any comparators in terms of what timeliness in dealing with investigations would usually look like. ACC Gilmer agreed that timeliness complaints were not a new issue for the force, however, the delays experienced during covid-19 were not always entirely down to the police. DCC Vaughan added that timeliness was often raised as concern as naturally people wanted their matters dealt with as quickly as possible. DCC Vaughan noted that the force was getting through more positive outcomes than they had been before. Timeliness complaints were also lower in numbers compared to last year. SarahK asked whether outcomes for charging were proportionately going up or down. DCC Vaughan advised that charging had increased significantly. The force was currently working hard on responding to domestic abuse incidents and arresting proportionally more people, even though reports were down.

## Performance Presentation

LJJ invited MA to present the covid-19 performance analysis for the force. MA explained that the presentation provided an overview of some of the demands faced by the force since the 24th March and supplementary qualitative analysis about why this could be happening. MA presented the crime and disorder priorities for the force and reassured the group that these priorities remained unchanged during the pandemic.

MA provided a headline assessment of the force's activity since covid-19. The demand for the police service remained high, but was largely driven by covid-19 related calls. The force's approach to enforcement appeared to be effective and officers had generally observed a lot of community compliance with the restrictions. Spikes in reporting mainly peaked over weekends and bank holidays, especially during spells of good weather. VE bank holiday weekend saw one of the busiest days in force history. MA provided a detailed breakdown of the volume of 999 and 101 calls received by the public service centre between February and May 2020.

MA provided an overview of occurrences during the lockdown period, versus the same period in 2019. The increase in ASB occurrences, linked to the covid-related breaches, dominated the changes. All other occurrence categories had seen a reduction, with crime being the most notable.

MA provided a detailed breakdown of volumes in reporting for each crime category and provided comparable data for the same period in 2019. Headline figures highlighted increases in crime for harassment and possession of drugs, particularly cannabis. The biggest decreases were for the acquisitive crime types such as shoplifting and sexual offences, which was perceived to be due to reduced opportunities. MA noted that there had been an initial drop in domestic abuse reporting, which had then slightly increased and dropped off again. MA noted concerns of downward trends in reporting of child protection offences. MA suggested this was likely down to current restrictions and children not being able to attend schools, youth clubs etc. Children were also more likely to become victims of online crime, as online use had increased since the majority of education was being delivered online.

JM asked whether the force had observed an increase in occurrences relating to mental health. MA advised that he had not seen a significant increase, however, this could be reviewed as a thematic to provide reassurance that the force were triaging appropriately. LJ queried whether there was a consistent approach in guidance given to officers and staff in response to the covid-19 regulations. MA confirmed consistent guidance was provided to officers and staff about how to deal with individuals who breached guidelines. College of Policing had also provided guidance, which detailed how calls were triaged.

SB advised that the Older People's Commissioner for Wales had seen a significant increase in older people contacting their office in relation to anti-social behaviour. SB asked whether the force had data on the profiles of individuals contacting them and whether they had noticed particular increases in reporting from older people. MA advised that the force had not seen an increase in older people being targeted and that there was a significant decrease in over 60s being targets of crime.

LB queried whether the force data relating to anti-social behaviour and covid-19 breaches could be broken down further into age groups. MA advised that this currently was not available, however, this could be explored further and brought back to the group at a later date.

MA advised that the national approach of 'engage, explain, encourage, enforce', had been successful and the need for enforcement was not necessary if individuals were compliant. The group discussed the impact of the pandemic on vulnerable families and the overall reduction of referrals into family services. LB reiterated the point about children not being visible to partner agencies in their homes and schools. The 'Early Action Together' (EAT) team was interested in working with the police to refer into early intervention and support services as opposed to just child protection. MA provided reassurance that the force's public protection unit was engaging with partner agencies to ensure good reporting links were maintained. Work was also ongoing to ensure the force were not blind to 'reporting gaps'.

The group discussed increases in non-intimate domestic abuse incidents during the extended lockdown period. KJ queried what the force was doing to address the accommodation needs of perpetrators in instances where DVPOs were being issued. MA advised that the force had been looking into this and were issuing as many DVPOs as they were pre covid-19. MA noted that the force encouraged officers to use their discretion in each case to consider where accommodation was an issue. The force did not want to be overly prescriptive with this process. MA noted that the force had issued 7 DVPOs since lockdown began.

SB asked whether there was safeguarding data available in relation to vulnerable adults at risk. MA advised that this was unfortunately not immediately available, but could be looked into.

### Crime Trends

MA proceeded to present the data relating to crime trends during lockdown and noted that possession of drugs was causing national concern in the policing community. MA noted that although the force was concerned about the sustained increase, it did not indicate that the drug market had become bigger. Habitual drug use was easier to detect, as officers were approaching more people and subsequently leading to detection of drug. Drug trafficking delivery methods had also adapted during lockdown. The force was continuing to monitor this with the National Crime Agency.

MA welcomed feedback from PALG members about their awareness of any trends amongst particular demographics.

SK asked whether the force monitored the ethnicity of individuals across the different crime types reported. MA advised that the force monitored this when this information was provided.

SK commented that BAME communities could be more vulnerable in a variety of ways, and did not always know how to report things or did not always have the skills to deal with certain issues e.g. online crime. SK added that campaigns often do not reach communities because of language barriers. JG agreed that a deeper analysis on age, ethnicity and gender was something that the force could dig into a little deeper. LJ agreed that it was important to understand the vulnerability aspects of communities and that this could be a role for the group to play and revisit at a future meeting.

## Internal Workplace Issues

The group discussed the protection of officers against the virus and MA explained that accommodation options had been made available for officers whose families were shielding.

MA also noted that there was no shortage of PPE equipment for officers, ensuring that officers were able to safely engage with communities. JM noted positive feedback received from custody in relation to PPE for appropriate adults.

AD referred to the percentage officers who had been referred for testing and noted that 60% of referrals did not get a result back. In relation to 'track and trace', AD asked whether colleagues were informed if someone received a positive test result. MA advised that there was a 'testing cell' in force, which centrally tracked and monitored cases. In terms of obligation to inform colleagues of positive cases, it was difficult to do this because of the sensitive nature of individuals having to self-isolate. AD was concerned about the number of officers exposed to infection on duty. AD referred to a recent example in Cardiff where three officers were not wearing any PPE. MA advised that the force maintained stock levels of PPE, however, it would quickly deplete if officers were constantly wearing it. Advice sought from Public Health Wales indicated in broad terms that if the subject or a member of the household was not displaying covid-19 symptoms, it was reasonable and safe not to wear PPE, providing that social distance was maintained. MA also noted that PPE, including gloves, masks, aprons, and sanitiser was stocked in cars should officers need it.

## Fixed Penalties

MA provided a brief overview of the number of fixed penalty notices issued by the force in relation to Covid-19. MA informed the group that 216 fixed penalty notices had been issued to date, which indicated that the enforcement of regulations by the force had been proportionate, particularly when compared to other Welsh forces, where one force had issued 800+ fixed penalty notices. MA noted a large number of fixed penalty notices did not state or record the ethnicity of individuals. MA advised that this was something the force would keep a close eye on and would report back to the Chief Officer group meetings to maintain visibility.

SK queried the data presented on enforcement action, which showed that enforcement was higher for the BAME population. MA advised that there were two routes for identifying a breach of the regulations. This was either via a report by a member of the public, or an officer on patrol, or via an individual committing an offence first and subsequently a breach then also being revealed. SK noted it would be really helpful to understand the different avenues of referrals coming into police and advised that it was more likely that someone was going to report an incident involving an individual from a BAME background because of discrimination and pre-existing tensions. SK advised that it was important that the force monitored those aspects to prevent negative impacts on BAME communities. MA suggested a conversation with LJ and HJJ to determine the best route to explore this further.

SarahK queried the large proportion of FPNs in relation to Covid breaches where ethnicity was not recorded and asked whether this recording issue was systemic, or as a result of the rapid development of processes in response to the covid-19 legislation. MA advised that the process was developed at great speed and the same forms were used nationally. JG

suggested that she would look at wider sample of performance data for ethnicity recording to understand whether or not this was an isolated issue with FPNs.

LJ thanked MA for his input and thanked PALG members for their feedback. LJ suggested that if on reflection any members had further queries, they could contact SM or HJJ.

**ACTION – MA to work with PPD to retrieve detailed breakdown of information in relation to safeguarding data of vulnerable adults.**

**ACTION – MA to seek information about the FPN recording process for capturing ethnicity data.**

**ACTION - SWP to look at wider sample of performance data for ethnicity recording to understand whether or not this was an isolated issue with FPNs.**

### **Any Other Business.**

- SB informed the group that the Older People’s Commissioner for Wales had established a working group on preventing abuse of older people. A collaboration of organisations were involved in this.
- CS noted a positive response from police colleagues in referring victims and witnesses over the last few months. CS informed the group that Victim Focus had also adapted their support service for victims during restrictions. Following recent MOJ funding, the service had now introduced ‘live chat’, which victims could access 24 hours.
- JM referred to the Mental Health Sanctuary Service in Swansea and Neath Port Talbot. Due to the current Covid-19 pandemic, the Sanctuary had been operating as a telephone support service.
- KJ noted a really positive experience with officers at Sandfields Police Station.
- HT welcomed more work into ethnicity issues discussed. HT noted that it was incredibly hard for some communities, in particular refugees, to stay in their accommodation.
- LB noted it would be useful to understand the NICHE recording process of breaches involving young people. LB also noted positive feedback from colleagues who had service interactions with the force.

### Action Table

<b>Action</b>	<b>Lead</b>
<b>Liaise with PPD to retrieve detailed breakdown of information in relation to safeguarding data of vulnerable adults.</b>	Marc Attwell
<b>Seek information about the FPN recording process for capturing ethnicity data.</b>	Marc Attwell

**Review wider sample of performance data for ethnicity recording to understand whether or not this was an isolated issue with FPNs.**

Marc Attwell