

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Public Protection
DATE	9 March 2021
EXEMPT	No
REPORT TITLE	Violence towards Police staff
REPORT NUMBER	POL/21/059
DIRECTOR	
CHIEF OFFICER	
REPORT AUTHOR	Chief Inspector Rob Sturton, North East Division, Police Scotland
TERMS OF REFERENCE	5.7

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide information to the Committee on the rise in Police Assaults and abusive behaviour towards Police Officers and Police Staff and the associated approach of Police Scotland and North East Division to protecting our people.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 2.1 That the Committee discuss, comment on, and endorse the report.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The unique job that Police Officers and Police Staff perform in society can be both challenging and rewarding. We recognise and understand that working in the Police service may result in exposure to abusive or violent behaviour which can impact on physical and mental wellbeing. The support and protection of Police Officers, Police Staff and Special Constables is of paramount importance.
- 3.2 Whilst overall violence has reduced across the country by **8.3%** this current fiscal year, violence directed towards Police Officers and Staff in Scotland has increased by **6.7%**. This picture is replicated in North East Division where overall violent crime has reduced by **15.6%** but there has been a **9.5%** increase in assaults on Police Officers and Staff.



- 3.3 In August 2020, the Chief Constable recognised and highlighted the unacceptable increase in assaults on Police Officers and Police Staff to the Scottish Police Authority. The figures returned showed an increase against the 5 year mean for the second consecutive year.
- 3.4 The Chief Constable has made it clear that aggressive or threatening behaviour including verbal abuse against Police Scotland personnel is 'simply not part of the job' and that no Police Officer or member of Police Staff should expect to be assaulted or abused in the course of their work.
- 3.5 This personal commitment is exemplified through the development of the Chief Constable's 'Your Safety Matters Assault Pledge' which has the aim of ensuring that all personnel.
- feel safe and supported while discharging their duties
 - are well prepared in terms of procedures, guidance and equipment
 - have confidence in reporting incidents in a timely manner
 - can seek additional support when required

Your Safety Matters (YSM)

- 3.6 'Your Safety Matters' is an initiative designed to co-ordinate a range of current work streams that crosscut the issue and include but are not limited to Officer Safety Training, Probationer Training, Personal Protective Equipment and Health and Safety.

- 3.7 To support the implementation, a 'YSM Diamond Group' led by DCC Fiona Taylor is undertaking an end-to-end strategic review of all safety matters impacting both Police Officers and Staff to ensure suitable protection, preparation and support.
- 3.8 The group also engages nationally with the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) in relation to its recently announced review of Officer Safety.
- 3.9 Representation includes business area leads for the cross cutting themes along with Staff Associations, Trade Unions, Criminal Justice, Corporate Communications, Wellbeing, and corporate enablers for future work streams that may arise from the strategic review.
- 3.10 The Group also provides strategic oversight to a variety of research and analytical products linked to Officer and Staff safety aligned to the following key developments;

Performance Dashboards

- 3.11 A bespoke suite of performance data has been developed to provide insight and analysis in relation to violence against Officers and Staff. The Dashboards examine both Crime and Health & Safety data to provide granular level information on the key elements of specific incidents. The how, where, what and why questions enable a greater understanding to inform a preventative focus.

Premises Reports

- 3.12 Focused national research has centred on assaults on Officers and Staff that occur at Police premises establishing that **86%** of assaults on Staff and **13%** of all assaults on Officers occurred at Police premises, generally within Custody Centres. Valuable learning and recommendations have already been drawn from this report. Whilst Officers and Staff should be at their most safe and protected in these environments it is clear that vigilance and compliance to guidance and training is vital to mitigate risks.

Officer Safety Training (OST)

- 3.13 A new two day enhanced OST training programme is in train including updated techniques and an enhanced First Aid training syllabus. Increased emphasis is placed on verbal de-escalation techniques to provide greater protection to Officers and Staff when dealing with conflict. Scenarios will also be based in the custody environment to embrace learning from recent analysis.

YSM Champions Network

- 3.14 A network of 'Champions' has been established comprising representation from each Local Policing Division and Specialist Support functions to create a direct channel for feedback from Officers and Staff to the YSM Group. The Network will also facilitate the implementation of recommendations to the front line through local Champions forums to streamline and embed processes. This will also enable local feedback and the sharing of ideas, learning and best practice.

Criminal Justice Court Feedback

- 3.15 Work is currently ongoing with the Crown Office & Procurator Fiscal's Service (COPFS) to establish a process to provide Officers and Staff who have been the victims of assault with feedback on Court case outcomes. Currently there is no mechanism in existence in the vast majority of instances. Potential solutions are being explored jointly recognising the importance of understanding the outcome for those affected.
- 3.16 New individual impact subsections are to be included in Standard Prosecution Reports to COPFS. Whilst approval is yet to be ratified it is anticipated that this will be implemented without delay and will allow victims, including Police Officers and Police Staff to explain precisely how they felt at the time of the crime and the impact the episode had on them.

Your Wellbeing Matters

- 3.17 The YSM secretariat continues to work closely with Wellbeing and Inclusion Teams recognising the close links between these areas. This includes the launch of the new **87% app**. The app, which will be accessed through Mobile Digital Devices, has been designed to provide useful information in an accessible yet private way. It aims to remove stigma, provide support and highlight the range of support that is available to Officers and Staff in relation to mental health.

3.18 Communications

The first tranche of national messaging promoting the Assault Pledge and reinforcing the unacceptable nature of violent or abusive behaviour to our people has been issued over the festive period. Internal messaging, posters and livery for vehicles promoting the key themes have been distributed. Examples are attached at Appendix A (or here).

North East Division Local Approaches

- 3.19 North East Division has not been insulated against the national trend and has seen an increase in assaults against Police Officers and Staff in comparison with last year and against the five year mean.
- 3.20 The Division is fully committed to all aspects of the Chief Constable's Assault Pledge to better understand the challenges and maintain a preventative focus to ensure that our people feel safe and protected.
- 3.21 We are fully engaged with colleagues across the country with an identified Chief Inspector (with lead responsibility for violence) identified as North East Division's YSM Champion. This enables the opportunity to share organisational learning, experience and innovative approaches.
- 3.22 A YSM focus group involving a cross section of Officers and Staff has been established and links closely with the Divisional Wellbeing and Health and Safety groups seeking to gain a more holistic understanding of the challenges experienced by our people.

- 3.23 In addition, a local microsite is being developed where Officers and Staff can access the latest information and guidance. 'Lived experience' videos highlighting the personal impact on affected staff in differing roles and work giving an insight to a 'day in the life' are in train.
- 3.24 Work is also ongoing with internal partners in relation to improving safety in custody settings highlighted through existing governance processes.
- 3.25 North East Division are also linking with blue light responders to share experiences with a view to joint communications promoting the unacceptable nature of abusive behaviour towards emergency workers and to jointly advocate for change.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

	Risk	Low (L), Medium (M), High (H)	Mitigation
Financial	N/A		
Legal	N/A		
Employee	N/A		
Customer	N/A		
Environment	N/A		
Technology	N/A		
Reputational	N/A		

7. OUTCOMES

Local Outcome Improvement Plan Themes	
	Impact of Report

Prosperous People	Police Scotland are key partners within Community Planning Aberdeen and help contribute to the shared vision for 2026 that ' <i>Aberdeen is a place where all people can prosper</i> ' and towards the achievement of the LOIP theme which aims to make people more resilient and protect them from harm; where every child, irrespective of their circumstances, is supported to grow, develop and reach their full potential; and where all people in Aberdeen are entitled to live within our community in a manner in which they feel safe and protected from harm, supported when necessary and fully included in the life of the city.
Prosperous Place	Police Scotland are key partners within Community Planning Aberdeen and help contribute to the shared vision for 2026 that ' <i>Aberdeen is a place where all people can prosper</i> ' and towards the achievement of the LOIP theme which aims to support individuals and communities to live in healthy, sustainable ways; and the development of sustainable communities with strong and resilient communities.

Design Principles of Target Operating Model	
	Impact of Report
Governance	The Council has an oversight role of the North East Division of Police Scotland in terms of its performance and delivery of the Local Police Plan.
Partnerships and Alliances	The Council and Police Scotland are Community Planning Aberdeen partners with a shared commitment to deliver the LOIP.

8. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Equality & Human Rights Impact Assessment	<i>Not required</i>
Data Protection Impact Assessment	<i>Not required</i>
Duty of Due Regard / Fairer Scotland Duty	<i>Not applicable</i>

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

N/A

10. APPENDICES (if applicable)

N/A

11. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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