

**RESPONSE DATED 28TH APRIL 2021 TO ‘GETTING THE BALANCE RIGHT? AN INSPECTION OF HOW EFFECTIVELY THE POLICE DEAL WITH PROTESTS’ PUBLISHED BY HMICFRS ON 11TH MARCH 2021**

This report contains two recommendations and three areas for improvement for the Chief Constable which are set out below.

**Recommendation 4**

By 31 December 2021, chief constables should make sure that their legal services teams subscribe to the College of Policing Knowledge Hub’s Association of Police Lawyers group.

**Recommendation 6**

By 31 December 2021, chief constables should ensure that their forces have sufficiently robust governance arrangements in place to secure consistent, effective debrief processes for protest policing. Such arrangements should ensure that:

- forces give adequate consideration to debriefing all protest-related policing operations;
- the extent of any debrief is proportionate to the scale of the operation;
- a national post-event learning review form is prepared after every debrief; and
- the form is signed off by a gold commander prior to submission to the National Police Coordination Centre.

**Area for Improvement 1**

Forces should improve the quality of the protest-related intelligence they provide to the National Police Coordination Centre’s Strategic Intelligence and Briefing team. And this team should ensure that its intelligence collection process is fit for purpose.

**Area for Improvement 2**

On a national, regional and local basis, the police should develop a stronger rationale for determining the number of commanders, specialist officers and staff needed to police protests.

**Area for Improvement 4**

The police’s protest-related community impact assessments are an area for improvement, particularly those that need to be completed after the event. These assessments should assist the police to understand fully the impact of protests on communities. They should include assessments of the impact of protest on local residents, visitors to an area, businesses, and the critical infrastructure including transport networks and hospitals.

In response to these recommendations and areas for improvement, I can confirm the following.

#### Recommendation 4

The Constabulary's legal team were already signed up to the knowledge hub. However this recommendation highlighted an area of the knowledge hub that was not known to the team: the Association of Police Lawyers group. The Head of Legal Services and other lawyers within the department have now joined this group and hope to utilise it in the future to share information.

More broadly the Constabulary is looking to better utilise the hub through Continued Professional Development days. It is working to understand what the hub can offer and promote this to officers following their public order command training at Bronze and Silver levels. This is trying to go further than the College of Policing aim which is to sign up officers at Gold Commander level.

#### Recommendation 6

The Constabulary have two different levels of debrief depending on the scale of the disorder. For all events where a command structure has been put in place, a National Policing Events Report and hot debrief is carried out after the event and is led by the Silver Commander. The Silver Commander will fill out a National Post Event Learning Review form within 48 hours. These forms are completed for every public order incident policed to ensure learning is captured and shared locally and nationally. This form is then sent to all the command team including Bronze and all tactical advisors for their input and then submitted to the Strategic Intelligence Briefing team (SIB). This had previously been signed off by Silver Commander but following this recommendation they will now be signed off by a Gold Commander from the Operation Planning Team.

The second level used – if the disorder meets the criteria – is a structured debrief. These debriefs are conducted in accordance with College of Policing (CoP) and National Police Coordination Centre (NPoCC) Structured Debrief Policy. These must be conducted by officers and staff who have completed the relevant CoP training and cannot have had direct involvement in the disorder itself. The Constabulary currently has seven people trained to conduct these debriefs and additional resilience is provided through other forces in the region who will do this in Avon and Somerset if required.

There are three tiers of structured debriefs and it is the responsibility of the Regional Coordinator to determine which tier is required.

- Tier 1 – A local incident with a local response that is likely to establish learning relevant to the force/region only. In which case local force debriefers can be used.
- Tier 2 – An incident that is likely to establish learning on a national scale and has the potential to alter national policy and process. In which case the Regional Coordinator will appoint a debriefer from out of force using the national database.
- Tier 3 – An incident that falls into Tier 2 but additionally has an enhanced international, political, reputational or operational impact that has the potential to have a significant impact on policing. In which case as per tier two, the Regional Coordinator will appoint a debriefer from out of force as well as a representative from NPoCC or CoP.

Structured debriefing, along with testing and exercising, is an area the Constabulary are prioritising to expand within their Contingency Planning. They are in the process of identifying and training more of their workforce to conduct structured debriefs to be able to do these more regularly. The Constabulary will be holding a number of debriefs for the recent disorder in Bristol and the policing operation which followed.

With greater capacity and capability the Constabulary aim is to make the Contingency Planning team represent the gold standard of emergency preparedness for policing. They want to ensure their Permanent Operational Orders and Emergency Plans go beyond the statutory requirements and are thoroughly tested and exercised. This will embed the learning from debriefs and incidents in force, and across the country, and will be disseminated across the organisation.

### Area for Improvement 1

The Constabulary has a team – consisting of an Intelligence Manager and a Researcher – that is specifically dedicated to protest intelligence. Their role is to routinely scan for protest related intelligence, which is threat assessed and forms part of a planning meeting with Operations. This enables the risk to be mitigated by allocating sufficient resources to police the event according to anticipated attendance numbers and the risk of disorder. During live time operations there will always be a dedicated intelligence resource in Silver Command which enables live time information to be passed to the commanders in charge of a protest operation. There will be a Proactive Intelligence Development (PID) record for every operation: this PID will consist of information and intelligence with a threat level and a briefing for Operations.

During the recent protests in Bristol, the Constabulary worked closely with NPoCC ensuring a two way flow of intelligence to inform the national picture for other forces. The Constabulary have refreshed the intelligence strategy which outlines the proactive work to identify high harm protest offenders that are likely to cause disorder or incite violence. This in turn allows for a review of where preventative action or engagement can be put in place ahead of high risk protests. The Constabulary are also working with the South West Regional Organised Crime Unit and other regions to improve intelligence collection and risk assessments.

Commanders will fill out a National Events Learning form after every protest which flows through local Intelligence teams and onto the Strategic Intelligence Briefing Team (SIB).

### Area for Improvement 2

The Constabulary use the National Decision Making Model (NDM), as advocated by the CoP, to inform them of the resources required for any particular protest. An intelligence package will inform the Silver Commander who then makes a threat and risk assessment; their experience and professional judgement is used to determine the level of resource required for each particular event while applying the NDM.

In terms of readiness the Constabulary currently have a shortage of skills at Gold, Silver and Bronze levels. There is not set number or calculation of how many people the Constabulary should have with each of these competencies. In order to increase the force's overall capacity and capability they have a course running in June 2021 for Silver Commanders and a course later this year for Bronze Commanders. These roles do now form part of more

proactive workforce planning going forward. There is also greater support for these roles. For example once an officer has received their relevant accreditation, all new Silver Commanders are allocated a mentor and an event planner to ensure they are supported to become operationally competent as soon as possible. Part of the improved governance will include making the 'skills database' available to Directorate Heads to ensure there is local accountability. The Directorates will work with the Operations team to address any gaps.

These command roles are not just relevant to protest but are deployed in relation to events such as football matches, concerts, festivals, carnivals and key dates that impact the night time economy. The Constabulary have previously stated that all Chief Inspectors should have a command function (Public Order, Tactical Firearms or Senior Investigation Officer) however they recognise there is still a shortage of volunteers for public order command roles. To address this shortage the Constabulary will now be mandating that to be promoted to Chief Inspector an officer must have at least one of the command functions. The aim is to implement this for the next set of Chief Inspector Boards in 2022.

The Constabulary also has a National Mobilisation Responsibility which states they have to be able to provide nine, level two, Police Support Units (PSUs) to support national requirements. Part of this responsibility is that the Constabulary must be able to deploy at least one PSU, within one hour, to anywhere in the country. To ensure these obligations can always be filled, meetings are held a few times a year between Operational Planning and Operational Training to establish the force's current capabilities and where the training needs to be focussed for the next period to maintain these. This process includes other specialist roles such as Forward Intelligence Team officers, Evidence Gatherers and medics.

#### Area for Improvement 4

The Constabulary do not currently conduct Community Impact Assessments (CIAs) after every protest and recognise this is an area for improvement; they are used for those that are high risk. It is important to note that for a CIA to be completed properly and add value they are comprehensive and time consuming; therefore their use needs to be proportionate. The instigation of a CIA is a joint decision between the public order commander and the local Area Commander.

As a result of this report the Constabulary have appointed an Inspector to lead on this particular piece of work. Over the next couple of months the Inspector will engage with other forces, particularly the Met who experience high volumes of protest. They will look to see what can be learnt from the other forces and then compile an action plan for Avon and Somerset.

Although the Constabulary currently does not always go through the formality of CIAs they do recognise the importance of the community and the impact on it. When operational planning meetings are held they include a representative from the neighbourhood policing area, normally the local Neighbourhood Inspector. These neighbourhood representatives form a significant part of the planning process and are vital in the risk assessment.

## Glossary of terms

- Bronze, Silver and Gold Commanders – this is a national tiered response structure to particular incidents: Gold (strategic), Silver (tactical), Bronze (operational) and people are assigned to lead at each level (Commanders).
- Debrief – is a process to identify good practice and areas for improvement, which could include organisational learning.
- Hot debrief – conducted immediately after an event or operation.
- National Police Coordination Centre (NPOCC) – is responsible for coordinating the deployment of police officers and staff from across UK policing to support forces during large scale events, operations and in times of national crisis.
- Permanent Operational Orders – these are procedures for how a force will deal with specified significant incidents e.g. terrorism events or incidents at key infrastructure sites.

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