



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Welsh Affairs Committee

Oral evidence: [One-off session on policing in Wales](#),
HC 1172

Wednesday 30 March 2022

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Members present: Ben Lake; Simon Baynes; Geraint Davies; Ruth Jones; Robin Millar; Beth Winter.

In the absence of the Chair, Ben Lake was called to the Chair.

Questions 1 - 39

Witnesses

I: Jeremy Vaughan, Chief Constable, South Wales Police; Amanda Blakeman, Deputy Chief Constable, Gwent Police; Carl Foulkes QPM, Chief Constable, North Wales Police; Dr Richard Lewis, Chief Constable, Dyfed-Powys Police.



Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Jeremy Vaughan, Amanda Blakeman, Carl Foulkes QPM and Dr Richard Lewis.

[This evidence was taken by video conference]

Q1 **Chair:** Good morning; bore da ichi gyd. Welcome to this morning's session of the Welsh Affairs Select Committee. We are holding a one-off session on policing in Wales. I am very pleased that we have representatives from all four police forces in Wales this morning; we are looking forward to hearing what they have to say. To start, I will ask each of you in turn to introduce yourselves for the purposes of the record.

Dr Lewis: Bore da ichi gyd, a diolch am y chroeso cynnes. Thank you for the warm welcome. My name is Richard Lewis and I am the Chief Constable of Dyfed-Powys Police.

Carl Foulkes: Bore da. Carl Foulkes, Chief Constable of North Wales. I do apologise for the surroundings, but I am self-isolating with Covid.

Chair: Thank you very much for joining us, and I hope you make a speedy recovery.

Amanda Blakeman: Bore da. Deputy Chief Constable Amanda Blakeman from Gwent Police.

Jeremy Vaughan: Bore da, diolch. Thank you for the welcome. I am Chief Constable Jeremy Vaughan from South Wales Police.

Q2 **Chair:** Wonderful. Thank you all again for joining us. I will start with a general question. How would you describe the challenges facing the Welsh police forces?

Jeremy Vaughan: Thank you for the opportunity to speak. The last couple of years have been extremely challenging in policing, with a global health pandemic. On 24 March 2020, the rest of the population went home—I often use the phrase that you could ride a skateboard down the M4 on 24 March, because nobody was out—but policing came to work, along with other emergency services. Policing came to work with no real idea about what PPE should be worn and no real idea about the impact of the virus. We all, in Wales, had police officers who were living away from home, staying in student accommodation, because they were worried about taking things to vulnerable people at home. Not once did any of us, I am sure, get a grumble from people about the mission of policing. That is important context because as we try to move beyond the pandemic, we know that it has a very long tail.

Pre-pandemic, we thankfully and gratefully received a commitment from Government to bring police officer numbers, broadly speaking, back to where they were in 2010. That meant we pushed hard on recruitment. On the workforce profile, by the end of uplift, a broad estimation is that 75%



of the front line will have had less than three years' service, and most of those three years will have been spent policing a global health pandemic, where the night-time economy has looked different, domestic abuse has looked different and access to other services, importantly, has looked very different. Part of what we are doing locally is to make sure that the breadth of the demands that policing faces, and the numbers, are widely understood by partners. We have an excellent working relationship across the Welsh Government in Wales.

While we gratefully receive the uplift money, it has an impact on the workforce, and it is a workforce that, at least according to Police Federation morale figures, is in challenging conditions following a pay freeze last year. The data about the level of affordability for police officers is surprising. Their disposable income every month is so low. We have some workforce issues. The uplift money is gratefully received, but the budget is pretty flat elsewhere so we are all left with financial pressures that continue.

Of course, importantly—I do not want to keep all the time—public confidence in policing has taken a real hit in the last couple of years. Some significant and abhorrent national events have affected the way people feel about policing, and, of course, policing has to step in and police populations that we have never policed before in the same way. Telling people that they cannot take their dog to use the toilet in the woods because they are not allowed out of their house at any given time has caused police officers to have conversations with certain sections of the community that they might not have expected to. Tensions were running pretty high and it was difficult. Then, naturally, people wanted their voices heard, and rightly so. I speak probably for my colleagues when I say that we are all desperately keen to protect people's rights to protest, among other things, yet that ran into conflict with legislation that was written very quickly and presented challenges about how we policed it.

We have some workforce challenges with motivation and morale. I am not saying that people are not committed to the missions—I think they are—but there is a reality about the age and profile of the workforce and their level of remuneration moving forward. We have some financial challenges ahead of us still, we must keep working hard and drive on efficiencies, and I think publicly we have a lot of work to do to rebuild confidence in policing among some. Locally, the conversation is that you do that in the moment you deal with a victim, the moment you deal with somebody who you stop and the moment that you show empathy to those who need it the most. That is the broad assessment, Chair. I could probably go on too long in answer to that question but I recognise it was a broad opener.

Q3 **Chair:** Thank you very much for that answer. I know that we will be returning to some of the points that you made later in the session. Amanda Blakeman, are those challenges also seen in Gwent? Are those



the challenges that you also face?

Amanda Blakeman: Yes, Jeremy has given a very fair summary of the challenges that I think we are all seeing across Wales. The pandemic was a real challenge for us in the speed of change of legislation. Especially in a force that borders England, where perhaps we saw some differences in legislation, we were trying to get those messages out very quickly to our staff, who did a tremendous job in being able to take that very much to the community and police continually with consent. That has been the set-up for the challenges that we are seeing.

Jeremy also touched upon some of the trust and confidence issues that we are seeing in policing and the challenges that those bring to everyday interactions, doing a difficult job already. We ask our officers to deal with quite chaotic situations in certain instances, without all of the full facts in front of them, and to make some critical decisions. Obviously, within that, there is the continuation of trying to build trust and confidence in our communities. I think that our staff do an amazing job in the circumstances in which they are working but that takes its toll, over time, on how they feel. We have put a huge amount of work into wellbeing and welfare for our officers, understanding the long-lasting impacts of trauma and the ongoing grind. We are very much alive to it, very much responding to it, very much there to support and make sure that our staff have the kit, the equipment and the facilities they need, but with that comes the budget to do it. It is probably a very fair assessment.

Q4 **Chair:** Thank you very much. Carl Foulkes, are there any other challenges that you are facing in North Wales that you would want to add?

Carl Foulkes: It has been a very fair summary so far from Amanda and Jeremy. The only area I will mention is that, as Jeremy said, we had a very different demand profile through Covid. Our normal crime, as we would discuss it, very much dropped off and we were dealing with other things. That normality of crime is definitely back to where we were but we are still dealing with some of the challenges left over from the pandemic. Working with other emergency services, we see the pressure on the Welsh ambulance services when we deal with the front end of that and we see some of the challenges around provision of mental health services. While we are over the hump of the pandemic, we still have some legacy issues that we are dealing with as police in Wales, and much of that is around partnership working and how we interact with our partners.

Some of the demand that we would see in our normal crime is still suppressed, when I look at my own burglary and robbery figures. Some of it—violent crime, domestic abuse, rape—is absolutely back to where it was pre-pandemic. It is an interesting demand for our staff, as Jeremy has talked about, especially when they have been used to dealing with certain types of incidents and now we are asking them to deal with a very different profile.



Q5 **Chair:** Diolch, thank you. Dr Richard Lewis?

Dr Lewis: Diolch, thank you, Chair. First of all, I associate myself with the comments made by my colleagues already, but the one additional dynamic we face in Wales that I did not face as the Chief Constable of Cleveland Police in England recently was to follow the thread of money that sometimes came out of the Home Office. The additional question often needs to be asked, "Does this include Wales?"

A recent example might be the additional funding announced by the Home Office in response to Dame Carol Black's review into the drug strategy. As the Chief Constable of Cleveland Police, I did not have to ask the additional question of whether this applied to Wales and whether the funding would be easy to establish. I could apply and bid for funding because I knew it would apply to me as the chief constable of an English force. I have returned to Wales and am getting used to having to ask that additional question.

It is fair to say that the Home Office is better at that now than when I was last working in Wales, but it remains a challenge in us finding the thread of money that has been allocated perhaps to the devolved Administration for things such as health, and whether we can access some of that funding. That is an additional challenge faced in Wales.

What I will say, having recently returned, is that I have yet to work in another area or see another region of policing that has such collaborative arrangements and good working partnerships, between all four of the Welsh forces, as we have here in Wales. It is a pleasure to be home and to work with colleagues that do that so collaboratively.

Q6 **Chair:** Diolch yn fawr iawn. Very briefly on the point about certain Home Office grants or funding streams, do you have any ideas as to how things could be improved? Is it a matter that sometimes the Home Office could be clearer in its messaging as to whom it applies, or is it something that needs a more significant rethink?

Dr Lewis: I think it is just a dialogue matter, continuing open conversation with the Home Office. We have very good links in Wales with the Home Office. There is obviously an office in Cardiff and across Wales as well. It is continuous dialogue. They are getting better at anticipating the questions than perhaps they once were. It is an improving picture and I cannot think of any one thing that can be done to improve that beyond a continuous conversation between ourselves and some of the officials at the Home Office.

Q7 **Chair:** Before I bring in my colleagues, I know that there has been some discussion this week about the possibility of a single police force for Wales and it has attracted a great deal of interest. As briefly as you can, of course, with such a big question, I am interested to know what your thoughts are, and particularly whether it would be possible to balance some of the policing needs of rural and urban areas. Wales has plenty of



both, of course.

Dr Lewis: Diolch. It is a statement that I have made publicly but I do so on my own behalf. I do not do it with the consent of anyone else, whether it is the police and crime commissioner in Dyfed-Powys, Dafydd Llywelyn, or my colleagues across Wales. It is a personal view that I hold.

It is a template that has worked successfully in Scotland, albeit with initial problems in the set-up as they brought eight forces down to one. It has worked successfully there—and of course they have issues of rurality in Scotland as well—in the brigading of specialist resources in particular. We have seen savings of, I think, in excess of £2 billion, on a much larger model than we have here in Wales. There are efficiencies that can be reinvested into policing in Wales, including into police staff members. At the moment, the national uplift programme means that we are bound to increase police officer numbers; I would like to make a similar investment into police staff members.

If you do not mind, Chair, I will draw your attention to a comment made by four chief constables who worked in Wales before me. We are going back to 2006. There was evidence provided to the Welsh Assembly Government back at that time about force amalgamation. I will quote the Chief Constable of North Wales Police, if I may, from his evidence given back in May 2006, “You will recall that all four of us”—that is the chiefs in Wales—“are on public record as saying that in principle we are in favour of an all-Wales police force, done properly. There are three particular caveats to that.” Thereafter, Chair, I paraphrase but I will sign up to them. They are suitable governance, suitable command arrangements and adequate and sustainable financing.

It has felt this week that perhaps I am the only person who has held this view, but there was a view among all chiefs in Wales not that long ago that this was a model that might be required. That was, of course, on the back of Charles Clarke, as Home Secretary, asking forces to consider amalgamations right across England and Wales. It was a different environment; the governance was different—police and crime commissioners did not exist back then, of course—and I do not pretend that things are exactly as they were back in 2006, but I am certainly not the first person to say so publicly.

Jeremy Vaughan: This is probably the first place that I will have made commentary on this outside the four walls of my office. I will start by saying that Richard did speak for himself, as he has pointed out, and he is entitled to form a view. I have no problem with that. In my view, the way the law has organised policing at the moment means that I cannot really instigate the conversation, because the law sets out that the 43 police and crime commissioners are elected by the local electorate to set policing priorities. I have not said anything in public about it because I have not been invited by those who might seek to influence the law to do so until now.



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The first thing is that I do not think you could go for a single Welsh police force until you devolved policing to Wales. I do not really see the benefit of operating on a single force model if you would not then have a greater degree of leverage and influence with partners in Wales. To me, that would need to happen alongside devolution of policing to maximise the benefits. Of course, that is a patently political decision.

There are two questions to answer for me. The first question is: could you make it more efficient? I have no doubt on that one. You could, with a greater scale, have better single IT infrastructure systems, better back office functions and greater procurement ability, albeit we procure a lot on an all-Wales basis now. I think that the potential for you to do things at scale more efficiently is clear. I do not think you need to do a lot of work to demonstrate that. It is intuitive.

That you could provide a better service as a consequence is less clear to me. There are some big questions that would need resolving in how you police Dolgellau, from where I hail, and how you police the centre of Swansea. You are, frankly, not going to get a riot in Dolgellau ever, but we know that we had one in Swansea recently. I think it would take quite a long time for it to settle down to deliver a better service. I do not think this would ever be a short-term delivery. You might deliver efficiencies in the short term but service improvement would take longer to embed, if there was the political will and appetite to see that unfold over time. Then I think it becomes about leadership, Chair. Given the right set of leaders running it and organising it, you could improve the service that you provide in the end, as with anything.

They are my views, broadly speaking, and I have not commented publicly because I think that the way that the law is organised at the moment means that it is a patently political decision.

Amanda Blakeman: I very much respect Richard's individual view around this matter. I suppose I come at this from some experience of working in England in a strategic alliance between two forces, West Mercia and Warwickshire. Everything across policing was merged between those two organisations apart from a very small amount of it. The relationship broke down and the cost of that was worked through.

My personal view is that bigger is not always better. We are here to deliver a service locally. We are locally accountable public servants. My focus at the moment is on being able to deliver the best possible service that I can to the residents of Gwent, in the face of other things that are going on in policing that we should be concentrating our efforts on. We do collaborate. We collaborate strongly across Wales. There is the opportunity to collaborate more and make more of the efficiencies that were spoken about. We could concentrate on those areas, but the key to this is that if you want to follow a model like Scotland, clearly you need to be looking at the devolved status, and we are not there.



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Carl Foulkes: Obviously, we always like a debate in Wales, and Richard has been very honest in his views. I gave evidence to the Thomas commission soon after starting as the chief in North Wales and we talked about criminal justice and devolution. If that was the next step that would need to be the bedrock of the future, but ultimately it will be a political decision.

If I talk parochially from a North Wales point of view, Wales operates quite well left to right, but it struggles up to down sometimes, and we see that with our crime. The threat of serious organised crime, for me, comes left to right: it comes from Merseyside, from Manchester. All my working partnerships are with the north-west, with the North West ROCU, with my dog section, which I combine, and my firearms unit, which I combine with forces. There is an operational thread through. However, we have our shared culture, our shared language and our shared belief, absolutely, in Wales. There are some challenges to move and get over for us in North Wales. That local element that Jeremy spoke so highly about—although I hope you do not get a riot in Dolgellau—is important, and how you maintain that local service delivery on a national level could be a challenge.

Chair: Thank you to you all.

Q8 **Ruth Jones:** Thank you to all four of you for your time this morning. It is much appreciated. It is a matter of public record that the Welsh Government have funded a significant number of PCSOs—500 at the moment, going up to 600. How useful do you find them and how do you bed them in with other initiatives in preventing crimes and working across your police force?

Amanda Blakeman: Thank you for the question and the opportunity to talk about the investment that we have seen in CSOs, which is very welcome. As I have said, having worked in England, there was very much an envy of the amount of additionality that we see in our community support officers. They are a key part of our engagement strategy in Gwent, very much at the heart of some of our problem-solving activity, specifically in areas where we want to focus that activity.

Some of the initiatives that they are coming up with have identified and reduced crime, particularly in Newport. Identifying some problem areas that were significant for shopkeepers, being able to put a neighbourhood panel together and to work with the parents and young person to rectify the position has not only solved the problem locally but has also prevented that young person being criminalised in the future, which is a really important thing in building safe, happy, healthy communities for the future.

We have also been able to use the skills of our PCSOs in some of our Safer Streets activity. Again, there has been a good amount of funding into Safer Streets initiatives but we have been able to use those particularly around a piece of work that we have commissioned across



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Gwent, We Don't Buy Crime, where our community support officers have been able to give out crime prevention packs and do SmartWater marking in premises. We have seen that reduce crime significantly in those areas as well.

Again, they are key. One of the areas that they excel at is in the interaction that they have with our next generation community, our cadets and our Heddlu Bach, and all of the engagement activity that happens. That seeks to turn the tide and make sure that we have young people entering their adult life with the right attitudes and responses to policing. It is a huge investment but a huge benefit to our communities and we continue to work across communities to make sure that our PCSOs form the backbone of our engagement activity.

Q9 Ruth Jones: Thank you, Amanda, that was a very comprehensive answer. Shall I go to Jeremy Vaughan? Is there anything you would like to add to that?

Jeremy Vaughan: I will be very brief because I am conscious that there are probably lots of questions. Neighbourhood policing is the absolute centre of the universe for me in South Wales—I am sure my colleagues would say the same—and PCSOs are the centre of the centre of that universe. The reality of drawing on policing resources to do all sorts of other things after a long period of austerity, and now trying to catch up a little bit as a result of that, means that the people I have left to do neighbourhood policing are PCSOs. How they engage with communities, who they engage with and how they build trust and confidence in communities is so important to everything we do, as is how they problem solve. That ranges from helping with a difficult issue outside a school all the way through to a dealing with a difficult antisocial behaviour issue in the middle of Pontypridd town centre, which could turn into knife crime and violence. In the spectrum in between, they are the absolute centre of the universe.

Importantly, I massively welcome the investment from the Welsh Government. I am a massive believer and fan of the Crime and Disorder Act and its obligations on others to prevent crime and do things to promote community safety. We have co-invested with PCSOs and partners across the whole of South Wales in things like early intervention and early help hubs with partners to give people the services they need sooner, rather than when they get to acute and critical places. We allied with Public Health Wales on adverse childhood experiences research and the Early Action Together programme is a consequence. They are so important to what we do in our co-investment in the joint enforcement teams across South Wales to help manage the implications of Covid.

I keep reminding my organisation that they do not exist in some parts of England, and that we ought to be very proud and precious over that investment and ought to expect a great deal of return from it.

Q10 Ruth Jones: Thank you. Carl Foulkes, do you have anything extra to add



to that?

Carl Foulkes: No, Jeremy said it very powerfully. The fact that we are all continuing, even locally, to invest in our PCSOs shows how valuable we think they are. As an example, I think you could move a chief constable quite easily but if I move a local PCSOs out of one of my neighbourhoods, the flurry of correspondence I get is remarkable. That goes to show the value that they put in.

Q11 **Ruth Jones:** Absolutely, yes, community policing. Richard Lewis, for completeness, do you have anything to add?

Dr Lewis: Only that our PCSOs pay full-time attention to the type of things we expected our police officers to do 30 or 40 years ago, but that they do not seem to have the time to do anymore. They are also, given the additional funding from Welsh Government, able to work towards some of the wellbeing goals in the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, such as cohesive communities. The additional funding from Welsh Government to do that—on top of the settlement from central government, of course—means that we can pay attention to some of those Wales-only challenges that were set out by Welsh Government.

Q12 **Robin Millar:** Diolch i chi gyd am eich amser bore ma—thank you all for your time this morning. I want to look at the experience of policing during the pandemic, please. I know several of you have made comments already, but let's pull the pin off this one straightaway.

I will turn to Carl first. Obviously I know you well for the work that you do with the team in North Wales, but we saw in North Wales problems of cars being clamped and removed during the pandemic, we heard rumours of border patrols on the A55, and most recently we heard of differences in legislation between England and Wales causing problems for the football club in Chester because the entrance to the ground is in England but the ground itself is in Wales. Could I ask each of you, perhaps, to pick up some of these challenges that you have faced during the pandemic? I have some follow-up questions so there will be opportunity to speak again later on that.

Carl Foulkes: North Wales issued about 3,000 fixed penalty notices through the pandemic, in two years. I genuinely think we got the balance pretty right, not just in North Wales but across Wales. The four Es approach very much started with engagement, moving on through encouragement and only using enforcement at the very last. That was right.

There is no doubt, though, that one of our greatest challenges was communication. How did we get the message of the law as it stands in Wales across to England? We worked really hard with forces across the border in England to make sure that the message resonated and that people understood the law that they were coming into and complied with that. That definitely caused some challenges. There were also lots of myths that went out. I think at one point somebody thought I was



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building the Berlin Wall across the A55, and that simply was not the case. We had to do a lot of myth-busting, as well as making sure that people understood the laws as they were operating.

Going back to the four Es, it was the engagement approach and making sure that our officers, in the first point, were not looking to an enforcement-type strategy but encouraging people to do the right thing. Making sure people understood the law, the context and the local area was really important.

There is no doubt—and Jeremy mentioned it at the start—that when we first went into lockdown, over that first period, there was a challenge around protective equipment and the legislation, which was drafted very quickly and created challenges for our officers to interpret. However, I think we got on top of that very quickly with support from the College of Policing and National Police Chiefs' Council to make sure that the law as it was understood in Wales and England, and the difference, was clearly communicated to our officers and our staff. That was really helpful.

Certainly for me and in the north that communication element remained a challenge throughout the pandemic. We were very grateful for the Welsh Government's support around it but we also needed to work very hard with our neighbouring forces to make sure that their messages were clear on the disparities. We had some anomalies and clearly Chester Football Club was one of the anomalies. It is still there today, actually.

Dr Lewis: Most of my time during the pandemic was, of course, spent leading Cleveland Police in England. I looked with awe across Offa's Dyke at the response of Welsh policing, given how difficult it must have been to deliver messages that were different to those of central government, which were the daily press briefings that we were getting from No. 10 Downing Street. With a different set of rules and regulations in Wales, I am sure it would have been very difficult to police.

In my experience of the pandemic, it was very important that we kept reminding our officers, staff and volunteers—volunteers played a crucial role, of course, in our response to the pandemic—just how coercive the powers, necessary powers, were that we had during that time. We were able to stop cars and ask people why they were not at home. It was important that we established and maintained a relationship with our communities that lasted beyond the pandemic, and that once those powers had ceased—and they needed to, of course—the relationship continued. We were provided with very coercive powers for a short time. I am pleased to say that that relationship endures in Wales and in my old force area as well.

It was understanding that those are very important powers but we start with the other three Es before we get to enforcement. To perhaps close the loop on something Carl said, there were just over 2,000 enforcement notices in Dyfed-Powys, a significant number, because we were net importers of people coming down to our beautiful coastlines in Ceredigion



and Pembrokeshire. It was an outstanding response, but that is my assessment from afar.

Amanda Blakeman: Carl and Richard have covered a lot of the challenges. We had just over 1,200 notices issued. For us it was around that balance, making sure that we were adopting the four Es approach and using the enforcement part of it as the last resort. It was an incredibly difficult time, and the powers are particularly coercive and quite intrusive for stopping people where you would not necessarily ordinarily be able to. Getting that balance right was key to be able to make sure that we maintained a good relationship with our communities, while also being on the border of England and seeing, sometimes, changes in legislation where it was different depending on where you were. Those are some of the points that Carl has already picked up on.

Communication was a key point for us, being able to get the messages out quickly to our community, being able to explain why, and also to our staff so that they could keep up to date. During the time when we were stopping vehicles, we saw an increase in identifying those who were out for criminal purposes. We saw an increase in the number of seizures that we made, the amount of cash that was seized and the number of arrests that were made because the individuals who were out on the roads for criminal purposes became more identifiable and were not able to mill in with the crowd as they could do usually.

One of the other areas that was quite tricky in maintaining the balance was being able to access things like shops, being able to go and get essential items, and being in a position to balance the communication and messaging there. That was all incredibly challenging for our staff and for the community, but I am really proud of our response across Wales. I think we worked well together and worked well with Welsh Government to try to make sure that we did that effectively.

Q13 **Robin Millar:** Thank you. Mr Vaughan, do you have anything to add to those comments? Then I will come to one or two of you on some specific points.

Jeremy Vaughan: I do, building on them, but not a huge amount. I ascribe myself to the comments of all my colleagues.

I probably cannot emphasise enough how deeply worried we were about the legacy relationship with the public as a result of this. The legislation that we follow every day in our normal lives has been developed over a period in response to ongoing issues that have had lots of thought applied to them through the legislative process and get refined on case law, so that most people, most of the time, believe in the laws that are put in place. Of course, in a global health pandemic the laws were written quickly, because they had to be written quickly, and police officers were called upon to play a role in helping to enforce them.



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I felt pressure at times to take more enforcement than I was willing and wanting to do. I felt pressure when we allowed protests to take place, albeit it was illegal at the time according to the regulations, but people's voices needed to be heard on certain important subjects. The moment I stepped in to shut down a protest, I would have had a long-term breakdown in relationships with members of the public. We had pressure to stand at airports to stop people going abroad and, when they came back from abroad, give them tickets for being abroad. I do not think I have ever seen in my time a period where operational independence has been so challenged locally.

Operational independence is manifest in the discretion we afford to police officers to make a decision in the moment, based on the circumstances that they deal with and they face. There was pressure locally for more enforcement because you had one half of the population saying, "How can the other half be doing this?" and the other half of the population saying, "These laws are ridiculous. They don't make sense. I can drive 10 miles to Tesco's to buy a new toaster but I can't drive one mile to take my dog into the woods."

The thing I will close on—we fought long and hard about that; I opened with a comment about us being desperately keen to protect people's rights to protest and to protect civil liberties—is that whoever designed the four Es for policing deserves the Nobel Prize because that was a vehicle for us to describe why enforcement was the last resort, not the first resort. Of course, as time went on, people needed less explanation. You did not need much explanation about the rules to know that on New Year's Eve from 2020 to 2021 you should not be holding a house party, having a super-spreader event. When we turned up to those house parties there was less room for discretion, knowing that other people were having to give up New Year's Eve and you did not, for example.

It has been an unbelievably interesting period and an unbelievably challenging one, from the bobby who has to deal with it there and then, all the way through to the pressure that the services felt.

Q14 Robin Millar: Thank you. We know that there were differences in the health protection regulations between England and Wales. Rather than rehearse that, because I suspect we know about those, can I pick up your point at the end, Mr Vaughan? You have given some very powerful evidence. Can I ask you about that relationship with the public? Do you think that there has been a permanent change in the relationship between the police and the public in Wales as a consequence of the pandemic?

Jeremy Vaughan: No. My view is that changes to relationships are never permanent. It will have had an effect. We were policing sections of the community and stopping people who we would not have stopped before, having conversations that we never thought we would have with them, and there is no doubt that generally speaking, tensions were higher. They were higher within the workforce because the human beings



who work for us felt the effects of the pandemic as much as anybody. They were higher out there in society because people did not have the usual release valves and mechanisms to get on with their lives and enjoy the things they used to, and then of course we were pulled in to play an enforcement role in that.

I think it will have had an effect on public relationships, but we work really hard every day to mitigate and manage that, including, at times making some very strong public statements like, "Stop saying the rules are hard to understand. They are just hard to follow. Don't conflate the two things, please." We did, among us, say things like that because we were called upon to do so and it was important that we did so. I do not think it will be permanent because anything you know about public confidence in policing in history means that it will go up and down over time. There will be times when it will increase and go up, and our job is to just keep on that constantly every day.

Q15 Robin Millar: Thank you. I will finish with this question and invite your colleagues to comment. Mr Lewis, Ms Blakeman or Carl up in North Wales, is there anything you would like to add or challenge on that? I am particularly interested in what frustrations may have been felt by members of the public towards the police because of a conflict in health regulations. Again, I am not looking at the actual nature of the conflict but just the fact that there was a conflict and what that may have done to the relationship that the public have with the police, or even indeed policing by consent, which underpins all of our activity.

Amanda Blakeman: One of the really difficult things for the public was, when they lost a loved one, being able to mourn and to attend a celebration of their life. That was a very difficult time for anybody who lost a loved one. It was the same with being able to visit residential care homes and really challenging for our colleagues working in the care home provision and setting. Those issues have been well and widely spoken about. We have heard lots about relatives who lost loved ones during that time and the impact was huge.

That, alongside lots of other restrictions on people being able to move about freely and carry out their lives as they would do normally, with an officer saying, "You can't do this particular thing", was a real frustration. As Jeremy said, the four Es approach helped us to have a good conversation to explain all of that before we ever got towards enforcement, which is why you see the enforcement figures you do. We were working sensitively to make sure that we understood the backdrop, the individual's position and what was going on for that individual, so that we could make the right choices.

We have managed the relationship between us and the public in the pandemic. We have managed that because of the skill of our officers on the street daily, doing the job that we ask them to do. As I say, it was very difficult on occasion for officers working not necessarily always with all of the facts in front of them, trying to gather those and trying to make



some difficult decisions. One of the areas that I felt was very impactful was the loss of loved ones and being able to attend funerals.

Carl Foulkes: We can run the risk of putting the pandemic of two years into one bubble. I do not think it was, because when we look back there was a different level of tolerance and expectation at the start than probably there was at the end around the use of powers and our approach. If I look back at the start, people were generally compliant and our use of powers was limited. When I look towards the end, the public's tolerance of some of the restrictions was much diminished. We certainly saw that more in certain areas in North Wales where we had some real challenges towards the end of the latest period.

On a positive, though, the pandemic developed our relationship with Welsh Government and in drafting the legislation in Wales became ever more powerful. The work by the police liaison unit and chiefs here to make sure we had a consistent, clear approach and we understood the law before it came through, so that we could then balance that approach in a consistent way, was very helpful. I do not think, when we look at the pandemic, that we are looking at one two-year block. We are looking at a number of different blocks and a number of different times within there.

Going back to Jeremy's point, I absolutely agree. Do I think the pandemic has damaged our relationship with the communities of Wales? No, I do not think it has. When I look at the correspondence I got, the vast majority was positive rather than negative, and I will always take that one. Sadly, there are other issues that have occurred across policing over the last 12 months that have probably had a much bigger impact.

Dr Lewis: During the height of the pandemic I was training the strategic co-ordinating group for the north-east of England and as a cohort of multiagency partners we were astonished at the level of compliance among the British public. I think it is important to note our thanks for the support the public showed for the new regulations, laws that we were interpreting on the hoof. The vast majority of our communities, of course, complied entirely and continue to. That made policing the pandemic a much easier task than if we had faced a lot more difficulties in our communities during those difficult months, indeed years. Our staff members, of course, are also members of the public. They suffered the same losses as a general member of the public.

I see no evidence base, to go back to your original question, that the relationship between the police service and the public has fundamentally changed because of the pandemic, but we would be wise to keep that under review and to ensure that we continue to work at that relationship that I mentioned in my earlier answer.

Q16 **Simon Baynes:** Thank you to all the panellists this morning for your contributions. I know you are very busy people and we appreciate your time.



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I want to turn to police and crime commissioners. I have two or three questions here but I think I can wrap them into one general question and then ask each of you to comment on that. First, have you been invited to contribute to the UK Government's review of the police and crime commissioner model? What are your views on this review and the potential impact it could have on the relationship between the PCCs and chief constables? Indeed, on that point, what are your thoughts on the process of appointing chief constables by the PCCs? Could you cover those topics in one chunk from each of you, please?

Dr Lewis: The relationship between the police and crime commissioner and the chief constable in any force is fundamental to the success of the scrutiny applied by the police and crime commissioner him or herself and the way that we operate as chief constables with operational independence. The cornerstone of that relationship is the Policing Protocol. It sets out very clearly the responsibilities of the police and crime commissioner and those of the chief constable. That has formed the basis of the relationship certainly in the PCCs that I had at Cleveland and the one PCC that I have worked with here at Dyfed-Powys.

It is always important to note that they are elected on a mandate from the public. The relationship that endures is not simply between the police and crime commissioner and the chief constable but with the various staff working on both sides of the corporations as well. It is important to note the work that is done underneath that immediate relationship to ensure that the relationship between the chief and PCC endures. We do not always agree on everything, of course, as operationally independent police officers, with police and crime commissioners across England and Wales, but fundamentally it is a relationship that I think has worked.

On the ability of police and crime commissioners to dismiss chief constables and to appoint, of course they do so with a mandate from the public and it is on the basis of an open and fair selection process. I have been through two of those selection processes and felt supported through both of them by the police and crime commissioners. It is an enduring relationship that requires continuous work.

On the long-term strategy for police and crime commissioners and the relationship with chiefs, it is ensuring that the relationship endures despite the difficulties that inevitably will occur in forces up and down the country. I will go back to the main point that I made, that the Policing Protocol is a particularly important document that guides the way that we work together, and of course that is currently under review from the Home Office.

Q17 **Simon Baynes:** Have you been invited to contribute to that review?

Dr Lewis: We have as the National Police Chiefs' Council. We will provide a composite response nationally.

Q18 **Simon Baynes:** That is great. Thank you very much. Ms Blakeman?



Amanda Blakeman: Richard has spoken quite comprehensively about relationships, operational independence and scrutiny. I know a constable who has had the opportunity to feed back into the review, therefore I know that that has happened via the National Police Chiefs' Council. On the recruitment process, I am sure the chief constables, having been appointed through that process, will have seen that the process itself is subject to and has a lot of national guidance around it from the College of Policing. There is the opportunity to have the necessary guidance in the recruitment of chief constables and, by the conduct processes, the dismissal of any chief constable. It has the secondary opportunity to be able to identify any issues.

From my position, full feedback has been given. The relationship remains one of operational independence. I am very respectful of the fact that the police and crime commissioner is publicly elected and represents the views of the public. The Police and Crime Plan clearly sets out that position and we have a chief constables delivery plan set around that. That is where I will stay on that one, if that is okay.

Jeremy Vaughan: I will not restate Amanda's points on appointment. I think there is clear guidance there from the College of Policing for police and crime commissioners. Broadly speaking, that guidance is adhered to, with some exceptions, and they are the subject of scrutiny by others.

I point people towards the very compelling read that is the David Crompton case, the former Chief Constable of South Yorkshire who was dismissed by his police and crime commissioner. That was subject to judicial review and was the first time that the relationship between the chief constable and the police and crime commissioner was scrutinised by the judiciary and that dismissal was found to be unlawful. There is a real description of the application of the Policing Protocol there. It established that chief constables have protection and they need to be treated reasonably in making decisions.

We have contributed to the PCC review, yes, and I am broadly supportive of the direction of travel, but I will turn to the Policing Protocol. We are in the process of feeding back and consulting on it. The risk I think that we face is that the operational independence of the office of chief constable and, by extension police officers, is diluted in any way. That is an absolute cornerstone of the way we organise ourselves in British policing and it is so important that that is protected. I, locally, am like a caged tiger on that boundary. However, I am also deeply respectful of the fact that the police and crime commissioner has been elected by the electorate to hold me to account for the efficient and effective running of a police force and then to set local policing priorities. I do not think those two things lie in conflict.

My police and crime commissioner has been in since it first was introduced in 2012. In 10 years, we have developed an excellent working relationship and we make that work. The police and crime commissioner



can influence things at a political and partnership level that I simply find more difficult. In the same way, the police and crime commissioner simply cannot tell me what to do. That relationship should be held in tension and in balance but for the benefit of the public.

Carl Foulkes: I have nothing too much to add. I had fed back on both phase 1 and phase 2 of the police and crime commissioner review. I go back to Jeremy's point, I think that the review of the Policing Protocol, which is the cornerstone of the tripartite relationship between the Home Secretary, police and crime commissioners and chiefs, is absolutely critical. Making sure that that operational independence is not stepped over is key. I have been very fortunate to work with two very different commissioners in North Wales, both of whom have absolutely understood that. They have held me to account around local delivery, absolutely as they should do, but recognised the operational independence and the bar that is set up. It is set up for a very good reason.

Q19 **Geraint Davies:** I would like some response to the assessment that was made in 2018-19—pre-pandemic, of course—of the police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy assessments. What action has been taken by the different forces since then to improve scores? I know this is a very wide question. Could you give a couple of top lines from each of the forces?

Amanda Blakeman: The assessment is important because it is an opportunity for the public to see and have the confidence in what we are delivering. We are due to be reviewed at the end of this year and we have a number of pieces of work ongoing for it. We continually self-assess on the question sets so that we can make sure that we are delivering to the standard that the public should expect. Obviously, ours is to come. There is ongoing work—very clear and methodical work—on improving areas continually. We are very much focused on the fact that this is an opportunity for the public to have real confidence in the standard of services that we deliver.

We are thematically inspected in a number of areas, and have been over that period, with some really pleasing results, but we are also alive to the continuous improvement approach that we have here. We keep that very much at the heart of what we do. A lot of our assurance and legitimacy work is around making sure that the areas for improvement have tangible pieces of work behind them that are delivering for our public.

Q20 **Geraint Davies:** Richard Lewis, are there any areas that stand out as opportunities to take action to improve efficiency, or is it very much across the board trying to improve things?

Dr Lewis: Yes, very much across the board. We are moving now to HMICFRS continuously assessing police forces, as opposed to arriving at a particular set time at a particular year and assessing our performance there. I think we will get a more rounded picture of the performance of all



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of our police forces in the years to come because HMIC will always be with us assessing some part of our work.

The PEEL assessment process is necessarily broad and shallow. It assesses so much of our work and, therefore, cannot hope to do it in the level of detail that we would hope. As a result of that, we cannot rely simply on HMICFRS to tell us how we are doing. I think Amanda mentioned the internal continuous assessment we do of our own systems and processes, which is complemented by the scrutiny provided by police and crime commissioners. HMICFRS is just one element of the assessments that we undertake as a police service.

I have inherited a force that is doing reasonably well. I previously worked in a force that was in special measures, and inherited a force in that state, of course. I understand the impact that has on the public. The scorecards provided by HMICFRS may not be read by everybody in our public because they do not always feature heavily in the news cycle, but they offer an indication of how well a police force is doing. Of course this is based across two forces.

Q21 Geraint Davies: Carl Foulkes, are there any areas that stand out where you are looking to improve, or not?

Carl Foulkes: One area that we have invested heavily in—and it is often not one of the most exciting areas of policing—is our business planning. Recognising the challenges that we know have occurred in funding over the years and the need for austerity, we have invested heavily in our business planning function to make sure that we are the most efficient and effective we can be with the budget and the finance we have, we understand where we need to invest efficiently and effectively going forward on the back of our force management statements, and also where we can take money out of the organisation. That is absolutely focused on delivering a better level of service. An example is if we can turn down one area of delivery but focus on rural crime, for example, which is a threat particularly here, or cyber crime, as we see that as an area that is developing for us.

That business planning element, going back to 2018, was not as strong in North Wales. It is absolutely now at the heart of what we do, and it directly links with Richard and Amanda's comments about the continuous improvement methodology. How do we improve? Rather than just moments in time, there is a consistent methodology through the organisation to get better and to improve the service that we offer at the front end.

Q22 Geraint Davies: Finally, Jeremy Vaughan, what stands out as areas of focus for improvement moving forward?

Jeremy Vaughan: The inspectorate was last with us to do its PEEL assessment in 2016. It has been back with us since the end of the summer and is just finishing off now. I wanted to make the point, just so



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it was not lost, about the level of inspection. I am averaging an inspection, either a thematic or a PEEL inspection, once a month at the moment.

It felt a little bit, in the summer of 2021, like the dam that was Covid burst. The 999 calls were at crisis levels every day for three or four weeks, New Year's Eve levels, because the economy burst open at the seams. As we were trying to cope with the impact of that dam bursting, the inspectorate was peering over our shoulders, which is okay in the public interest. The areas of focus that were in my plan as chief before it arrived were, first, victim services. In all the volume of things we deal with, all the spread, our performance in keeping victims of crime updated was not where it should be, so there was a real focus on us for that.

I was concerned that, following uplift, people would make bids for where we might grow the organisation and the police officer numbers back and we would stop thinking about productivity. We have a robust productivity strategy now that we know where we are making investments and we are getting a good return on that.

The inspectorate has just finished with us. We have not had the formal hot day brief yet, but it is finding some cracks in where we interface with other services. For example, the management of serious and other violent offenders relies on our partnership with the probation service and that has been tested at times in the global pandemic when people have not been at work in the same way or we have had to manage things in a different way. I think there may be some cracks there that will have been exposed as a result of the inspectorate but that will be focused on.

I will finish on this. I don't think there is a chief constable out there, certainly not in Wales, who does not have a rigour and structure around HMIC PEEL assessments, areas for improvements. None of us wants a bad report because it does not play out well in public confidence in the service we provide.

Q23 Geraint Davies: I should declare an interest because my great-grandfather, Samuel Jones of Llandeilo, was the deputy chief constable in Carmarthenshire, but that was a long time ago. He cannot be with us today.

Keeping with you, Jeremy, and turning to your comments about desperately wanting to keep the right to protest, we are all aware we have legislation moving forward with the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill. How do you see this balance? The legislation allows you to move in and stop protests that are expected to be noisy, in essence, and this will create a great difficulty for the police as the interface between people who want to express their collective concerns on a key issue and the police force becoming a force rather than a service.

Jeremy Vaughan: The application of any legislation is always difficult but the application of legislation when it comes to challenging people's



human rights and the right to freedom of assembly and expression is more difficult still. We do not underestimate the challenges there.

First, most of us would be vociferous and protective of people's right to express their views and protest itself, by its very nature, needs to be disruptive. I am not sure that I would say in response to an ongoing protest, "I know you need to be disruptive so we welcome it", but we are constantly playing the balance between allowing the public to go about their daily business, go about their lives, having their human rights protected, their right to privacy and to move about compromised by people's right to express.

It is difficult, and I will give you a tangible example. There was specific legislation in place during the Covid-19 pandemic but the principles are precisely the same. We had a tragic death following police contact of a gentleman in Cardiff, and the public was hungry for information about what happened. We were limited about what we could say because it was in the hands of an independent inspectorate, an independent oversight. We also recognised that unless those voices were allowed to be heard, if we sought to step in the way and try to curtail those voices, we would lose so much in public confidence.

It is not easy because in the 4,000, 5,000 or 6,000 people who are protesting, you might have 5% who stand on the front line and are racially abusive to police officers, homophobic against police officers, violent against police officers. To take intervening action with 1% of a 1,000 crowd is quite hard because there are all the other people there that you have to try to navigate and allow that freedom.

It is tricky and a difficult part of the legislation. To mitigate, we invest in professional training and development, put good command structures in place and when they are in place, people are properly accredited and are thoughtful and put in good strategies, but it comes down to the cop at the front line making good decisions and treating people in the way they might expect to be treated themselves. It will be challenging and difficult.

Q24 **Geraint Davies:** My own personal experience in Swansea of being at protests—including protests and counter-protests, in which a right-wing grouping arrives and counter-protests, and the police hold the line between those protests—is that the police have performed excellently. My concern with this new legislation is that we will have a situation where people want to make a noise in a protest, because that is what they are doing, and someone will say to the police, "You should stop this happening in the first place because according to the law now there is not supposed to be any noise, so what are you doing about it?" If you stop that, there is a problem with, as you say, the right to assembly and expression, which may be worse than the problems you described.

Jeremy Vaughan: I do not anticipate the underlying challenge of one part of the population that we police saying we are not doing enough and



the other part of the population on the same issue saying we are doing too much. It exists now and it will exist in the future.

Q25 Geraint Davies: Richard Lewis, what are your thoughts about balancing people's right to protest and naturally making a bit of noise, and the new laws that say the police should step in and stop noisy protests?

Dr Lewis: The interpretation of the law will be where the battle is won or lost, if I can characterise it in that way. Case law developing in the years to come will assist the police in making those decisions consistently in Wales over the years to come. The right to protest is enshrined within our law. It is one of the cornerstones of living in a democracy such as we do. I previously trained as a public order commander—I am no longer accredited—and while we did discuss the legislation itself on those courses and development, most of that training was based on the relationship you build with those who protest. It is not a legislation base. It is about building and maintaining relationships with those that protest while looking forward, as the years advance, to the body of case law around this legislation that will help us interpret where the balance might be.

Q26 Geraint Davies: I will not ask everybody every question because we do not have time. Carl Foulkes, the new legislation, the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, seems to prohibit or at least inhibit picketing as well, because there are issues about business continuity to certain services, including transport. It would include, for instance, protest and picketing outside P&O, who just sacked 800 workers. Do you have concerns about the police suddenly being thrust in to stop picketing under this legislation?

Carl Foulkes: Jeremy and Richard summed up things very well. Never more so than in protest is policing the thin blue line because you are generally between groups with very different fundamental views, and that is what we have always done around the legislation through a number of years. One element I will always come back to is policing has discretion and that is my individual officers and commanders who do the right thing and make the right decisions.

That does not necessarily mean that we will bring the full weight of the law. We go back to the Covid-19 regulations and talk about that many times. We always have the ability to use legislation and to impose legislation. It does not mean that we have to or we need to in every circumstance because our discretion and the impartiality of policing allows us to balance the needs, the rights of individuals at any one moment.

Does that mean we can be put in difficult positions by commentators? Absolutely, and policing has faced that and continues to face it daily. The discretion that sits with our front-line operational officers all the way through to our gold and silver commanders who make difficult conversations sits right at the heart of what we do, and I think that is



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important with any new legislation. It is there for a purpose and Parliament has decided that it is the will of the people to do so. The enactment of it is down to policing day to day.

Q27 Geraint Davies: Amanda Blakeman, it seems to me from what has been said that the police already have the operational power and discretion to decide how to police a difficult protest. Is it your feeling that some of this new legislation to stop noisy protests or whatever is not necessary and could create more problems than it solves?

Amanda Blakeman: My colleagues have identified the amount of work we go through before we ever get to use the legislation, and it is reflective of the approach we saw in the pandemic. Our public order commanders will do a huge amount of work around intelligence gathering, working with protesters but, importantly, also understanding the sentiment behind the protest. We have recently seen protests on Black Lives Matter, violence against women and girls. Understanding and being able to interpret that, alongside the use of discretion and the ability to use legislation, enables our officers to police with consent.

I am not saying that the legislation is not needed. It gives a greater toolbox of legislative opportunities, should we get to that point, but there are many more steps to take before we ever get to use legislation about protests. The work we do is to make sure that the relationship we have with our communities and any protest groups is one of openness and transparency, where there are no surprises. We are policing to make sure people can have their fundamental rights but also that the greater rights of the public are protected. It is a tricky one to put a balance on and it is very difficult to say the legislation is not needed, because it may well be in some circumstances.

Q28 Geraint Davies: Finally, I will ask Jeremy Vaughan about the completely different issue of spiking. There has been a lot of reporting of spiking of women in particular in Swansea, both in drinks, but also physically with needles. Across the country we have heard from police forces that there is not the evidence to back this. I am hearing on the front line about dozens of cases, in particular from students, where sometimes women approach to say they have been spiked and are told, "You are just drunk, love". Therefore, we do not have the evidence we need. What is your approach and plan to combat the growth of spiking?

Jeremy Vaughan: My immediate response on any officer who says, if somebody complains to them they have been spiked, "You are just drunk, love", is if you hear evidence of that, I want to know who they are. Please, and I know you do, pass it through to the office, because we will investigate that as a particular complaint about the service we provide. That is not the service I am expecting, and not what we are telling the public. We are telling people to report it to us, because the more we get reports, the more we can investigate and build a picture of the problem existing locally.



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Secondly, this has to be done in partnership with local authorities, particularly because of the responsibilities we can hold on licensed premises, with them addressing and tackling the problem. Spiking takes in licensed premises, as we know, and as a consequence people need to discharge their responsibilities in looking after people too. I see evidence of where that happens. I see evidence of it in Swansea and Cardiff, and some of the initiatives in place in the business improvement district areas demonstrate to me that people are grasping it as a partnership problem.

I cannot be clearer on my response as chief constable. I want to know about them and I want to know where people have had a service that I would not expect them to have had, and that is to give the answer that you have given.

Q29 Geraint Davies: Would you support new measures for greater CCTV surveillance in clubs, and more testing and searching of people on entry to check whether they have needles and that sort of stuff? Perhaps more testing available for people to see if they have been spiked, to create more protection and also to create deterrents against people who think they can go to clubs and render someone semi-conscious, with a view to raping them or stealing from them?

Jeremy Vaughan: I will always say yes to that question. There is a balance of how people are allowed to move about freely in accordance with their rights. Good licensed premises do this well; others need to be run better. They make money on the back of allowing people to drink to a point where they do not have a quite complete grasp of all their faculties at times and they have a deep duty to look after people as a consequence. If that means that the people who come into those premises are safe and are not intent on criminality, they should have whatever powers they need.

Chair: We are fast running out of time and we still have a few questions we want to ask. I ask that both questions and answers are as brief as possible and we should be able to get everything through.

Q30 Ruth Jones: I will be very quick. Thank you for answering questions about how the performance of services are being scrutinised across Wales. I want to drill down into the performance of individual officers, for instance, misconduct hearings and disciplinary proceedings. There was an element of disquiet among the public and the media that some misconduct hearings are being held in private. I am talking generally here, and there is an understanding as to why this is happening. For instance, in the health service any healthcare professional would always have their misconduct hearing in public. Why is the decision being made to have these hearings in private, because the public wants to know? I will go to Mr Vaughan first for that.

Jeremy Vaughan: I can speak about my local data. There are two sets of hearings. There is a hearing where a legally qualified, independent person chairs it and makes the decision as to whether it should be held in



public or private. The presumption under the law is that it should be held in public, so the applicant for privacy needs to make out the circumstances for privacy. Those circumstances could include the protection of witnesses because of serious vulnerabilities or mental health issues. They could include a number of things.

The way that the law is organised, independent, legally qualified chairs make those decisions, not police forces and not chief constables. Chief constables then make decisions on cases where the evidence is incontrovertible. That means conduct has taken place, the case is obviously proven and most of the time the officer admits their conduct. I have dismissed nine people in the last 18 months and 80% of those hearings have been held in public. Being held in public means I invite the press in. They sit in the conduct hearing and I read out exactly what has happened in the case and read out my assessment and determination of what the sanctions will be.

The cases I have held in private are because there are serious mental health concerns for witnesses, and I am no pushover in that. It has to be either real medical evidence that a public hearing could be damaging, a suicide risk or something of that ilk, or it compromises and what often gets lost is an ongoing criminal investigation. Sometimes we will fast track a dismissal but what follows is a criminal case in the court, and I would never want to compromise that criminal case by having evidence heard that could go out into the public domain. They are, generally speaking, the occasions when they are held in private, but 80% I have done have been held in public and they have been publicised and the media invited in.

Q31 Ruth Jones: Ms Blakeman, are you happy with the length of time it takes for investigations of police officer at the moment?

Amanda Blakeman: We have a very clear framework set out in misconduct regulations. We have a very clear framework set out in the mandatory referrals to the Independent Office for Police Conduct. Within that comes an investigation that in some instances takes quite a long time. When I have gone through each of those with the timeline, there are very good reasons that they take a significant amount of time.

However, I would like it to be shorter, of course. I would like a further position to be clearer for the individual employees and the public, but I am very clear that there is a framework we have to follow and if we do not follow that framework, we end up with police appeals tribunals or subject to judicial review. I am very committed to making sure that the job is done professionally and properly. Sometimes that takes a significant amount of time but, clearly, we follow the rules that are there and have been there some significant time.

Q32 Beth Winter: Diolch yn fawr am eich amser heddiw. Thank you very much for your time today. Are police forces institutionally racist and what can and is being done to address racism within the police force? I will ask



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Jeremy Vaughan first, please.

Jeremy Vaughan: I do not think the police force is institutionally racist but I think that policing, along with other public services and public sectors, and indeed society, have some real, deep-seated systemic issues of bias and racism, and they are two separate and distinct things. The fact that there is racism in our society and there is discrimination and bias in our data is irrefutable, and I would not seek to question it. I have been pushing the Wales Race Equality Action Plan, on which Emma Wools, Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner, is leading for policing, alongside Professor Emmanuel Ogbonna, on that we make a broad public declaration in Wales, among all chief executives of all services, that we are working and fighting for an anti-racist Wales.

That is my view on the response. I know, following the protests in the summer of 2020 after certain incidents that took place in South Wales, that I needed to work hard on the conversation with my organisation about the prevalence of race discrimination in society, because I do not think people understood it. As a consequence, we put 4,500 people through our Let's Talk About Race programme.

We have invested heavily in our scrutiny of stop/search with community cohesion groups, independent advisory groups, the police accountability and legitimacy group, who will review stop/searches and body-worn videos to critique our performance. Yet we still see discrimination in our data, albeit that discrimination is coming down. We still see a disproportionate effect particularly on black people on the level of stop/search and we are putting a lot of scrutiny over that.

One of the casualties of austerity was a depleted qualities teams, people who can invest in training in time with people to explain things. We have rebuilt that and I know that has happened across the rest of Wales. We scrutinise, with the IOPC, incidents of discrimination and bias following contact with policing. I meet probably once a week with various people to try to explain some of the work we are doing in South Wales, particularly to deal with the prevalence of racial discrimination outside and indeed within the organisation and the workforce.

Q33 **Beth Winter:** I see that the National Police Chiefs' Council is due to publish a plan to make police anti-racist, and that is imminent. Do you have any comments on that very quickly, please?

Jeremy Vaughan: We have all been involved in creating it. It has been a matter of discussion at the council last week and at the Chiefs' Council every single week.

Q34 **Beth Winter:** You accept that racism exists, if this plan is going to be published?

Jeremy Vaughan: Absolutely, I accept that racism exists.

Q35 **Beth Winter:** Mr Foulkes, do have any additional comments, because we



are strapped for time?

Carl Foulkes: I fully support Jeremy's comments. I absolutely recognise that racism exists in policing, as it does in pretty much the whole of society. We need to do better. We need to build the confidence of our communities, especially those who feel that we are not representative of them. That is what the national plan is for, but in Wales we have already moved on with the criminal justice partners and Welsh Government to make some much stronger statements about where we are, where we want to be and how to fully represent all the communities we serve.

Dr Lewis: I check my own thinking on this on the basis that I am not black, of Asian heritage or have no other ethnic minority group I can represent myself with either. I checked my own internal staff network, who are represented by people who are black, Asian or ethnic, and our feeling as a group, informed by the information they provided me with, is that Dyfed-Powys is not institutionally racist.

However, it is important to acknowledge that we police a society that has elements of structural racism within it. Black people are disproportionately represented in the prison population, disproportionately stop/searched, and it is important we recognise that there is work for us to do in conjunction with our diverse communities on a procedural justice element.

Q36 **Beth Winter:** Due to time constraints, I will move on to my second question and I will ask Ms Blakeman first if you want to add anything to the previous comments. My other question relates to sexual harassment and violence against women and misogyny in society and also in the police force. We have a terrible rate of rape convictions, around 1.6%, and I notice that only five stalking protection orders were issued in Wales compared to 7,000 complaints. In Gwent police, of 1,278 reports of stalking, none were pursued. What are your views on that, Ms Blakeman?

Amanda Blakeman: To come to violence against women and girls in the broadest possible sense, we are working incredibly hard in Wales with Welsh Government on a very clear strategy and a blueprint underneath that we are delivering on for all elements of violence against women and girls. One area is rape convictions and South Wales force is piloting and has in place Soteria that is specifically focused on that. I know that we are picking that up in Gwent as well.

I have personally looked at the stalking prevention order situation because it is not where we want to be in those areas. Where we are pursuing a substantive offence we do not pursue stalking prevention orders. For those we have referred for legal services to look at for us to see whether or not we are able to pursue a stalking prevention order, we have been able to secure a conviction for that. A prevention order has not been needed because a conviction has had a remedy as part of it. I have been working hard to review our situation and make sure that we are able to remedy any additionality and put in place, for anybody who is a



victim of stalking, prevention orders moving forward. We recognise where we have been is not where we want to move into the future.

Q37 **Beth Winter:** Close to 1,300 orders have been applied for. Does anyone else want to respond to that?

Jeremy Vaughan: I want to specifically talk about Soteria that is in response to the rape investigations you raised. We are part of a national pilot on it. We have engaged with all the forces in Wales on that and we have persuaded the Home Office to engage all of Wales as the national pilot area. The whole of Wales will be working with CPS to improve the way we structure our response to rape investigations particularly.

Beth Winter: Wales has the lowest rate of rape convictions of the 14 CPS regions, which is extremely concerning. I am sure you share that concern.

Q38 **Simon Baynes:** We will keep this very brief because we are almost out of time. We wanted to finish by looking at rural crime, what actions you are taking to reduce rural crime and the impact it has had on rural communities. Please keep your comments very brief and, Carl, we will start with you.

Carl Foulkes: I will keep it brief. We have invested more staff into rural crime because we recognise the impact on our rural communities. That comes in a number of forms. We see organised crime target communities. We see vulnerability within those communities that are often very isolated. Specifically, we have just refreshed our rural crime strategy within Wales. Welsh Government have just funded a dedicated lead in Rob Taylor for rural crime. It is around broad and we have done it consistently across Wales, sharing the good practice, sharing its work, bringing those rural crime teams together across all Wales forces about what is working and what the impact has been. We have some exceptional good practice in Wales that we share with our English colleagues as well.

Amanda Blakeman: There is very much an investment in rural crime and it is very important for our communities in Gwent. We are very fortunate to have the benefit of our rural crime regional lead. With our rural communities at the moment we have a close eye on the rising cost of fuel and fuel thefts that come alongside other thefts, damage and crime that happens in our rural community that has a massive impact on business and can be a make or break. We are very aware of that and focused on making sure that we have our team particularly for crime prevention and detection. We have invested in a rural crime team to be out in our communities, making sure that we are delivering in this area.

Jeremy Vaughan: We are similarly committed to the Wales rural crime co-ordinator to help us understand and improve our police there. We have a rural crime strategy in South Wales Police. We are still in discussions about establishing a dedicated team or making it part of neighbourhood policing, because we are organised slightly differently for



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neighbourhood policing in South Wales than elsewhere. But our commitment is absolute and we recognise that there is a big section of the community in South Wales that is rural and needs the service as much as anybody.

Q39 **Simon Baynes:** Finally, Dr Lewis, I think you could generally say large chunks of your patch are very rural indeed.

Dr Lewis: Absolutely. There is an argument to be made that Dyfed-Powys needs an urban strategy for crime support in rural, because rural is the predominant nature of the work we do here. It is a success factor across Wales. There are other regions across England that are beating a path to us here in Wales to see how we do it and that is a testament to my colleagues who have been working across Wales long before I arrived back in the country. We have 40 officers and PCSOs now trained right across the country who are delivering a service. A rural crime survey has just been published with the response of those who live in rural areas and we are working through the recommendations from that to ensure that we give our rural communities the service they so richly deserve.

Part of that will be a technological advancement that connects us more closely to our rural communities, but the most important aspect in the questionnaire that we have had back now is about the rural officers we have dedicated to those tasks right across Wales. Our rural communities found that those are the most important assets we have in tackling rural crime.

Chair: I thank all of you for the very useful evidence and testimony you have given us this morning, and thank you for making very generous time to the Committee. Thanks also to colleagues. We rattled through them all in the end.