

## Home Affairs Committee

### Oral evidence: Home Office Preparedness for Covid-19, HC 232

Monday 6 April 2020

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Members present: Yvette Cooper (Chair); Janet Daby; Dehenna Davison; Stephen Doughty; Ruth Edwards; Laura Farris; Simon Fell; Adam Holloway; Tim Loughton; Holly Lynch.

Questions 110-196

#### Witnesses

**I:** Sergeant Simon Kempton, National Lead for Covid-19, Police Federation of England and Wales, and Chief Superintendent Paul Griffiths, Chair, Police Superintendents' Association.

**II:** Chief Constable Lisa Winward, North Yorkshire Police, Chief Constable Garry Forsyth, Bedfordshire Police, Chief Constable Peter Goodman, Derbyshire Police, and Chief Constable John Robins, West Yorkshire Police.



## Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Sergeant Simon Kempton, National Lead for Covid-19, Police Federation of England and Wales, and Chief Superintendent Paul Griffiths, Chair, Police Superintendents' Association.

**Q110 Chair:** Welcome, everyone, to this online session of the Select Committee on Home Affairs. I convey our gratitude to the House of Commons, which has made this possible and provided the technology that underpins this, and to our witnesses for joining us today, in the middle of this extremely difficult coronavirus crisis, when scrutiny and public information are immensely important. We are very grateful to everyone who has made the arrangements so that we can continue our work.

Today, we will be taking evidence from the police—first from the Police Federation and the Police Superintendents' Association, and then from the chief constables of four forces across the country. Next week, we look forward to hearing from the Home Secretary. The Committee is also seeking further evidence on domestic abuse and its consequences as part of the crisis.

I welcome our first panel: Police Sergeant Simon Kempton from the Police Federation and Chief Superintendent Paul Griffiths from the Police Superintendents' Association. I also convey our thanks to police officers and staff right across the country, who are working so hard at this extremely difficult time to keep people safe.

Welcome. May I ask you both what the main issues are that face the police across the country as a result of the coronavirus crisis? Beginning with Police Sergeant Simon Kempton.

**Sergeant Simon Kempton:** Good afternoon, Chair and Committee. Thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak to you. Normally, we would be represented by my colleague John Apter, our chair. He sends his apologies—he is still recovering from the coronavirus.

I have been our operational lead on covid-19 since the beginning of the outbreak. My role has been to facilitate communication between the frontline and the operational team, and particularly to reflect the main concerns of the frontline to the operational team, so that they can try to adjust their plans accordingly.

My operational colleagues tell me that they have four main concerns. The first is PPE, or personal protective equipment: access to it where and when they need it, getting it in a timely fashion, getting it replenished, and making sure that it is the right spec of kit.

The second is communications. My colleagues do a really difficult job in these incredible and unprecedented circumstances, and what makes their job easier is if the communications with chief officers and Government,



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and the guidance they are given, are clear, concise and consistent across the country.

The issue of testing is very important to my colleagues, partly because it affects them, and because it gives reassurance to their families. We have a huge amount of staff at the minute who are unable to work because they are in self-isolation, and testing could relieve some of the burden on the frontline, getting some people back.

Finally, the fourth main concern is that in unprecedented times—we have never had this before—we need to do our job of protecting the public in a different way. We need to be innovative, and we need to think about how we protect the public without putting officers and the public at greater risk of contracting this virus. Around the country, there are some pockets of superb practice, where we can still do our jobs and be there for the public, but without putting ourselves on offer. I would love the opportunity to answer any questions on those areas.

Q111 **Chair:** Thank you. Chief Superintendent Griffiths.

**Chief Superintendent Paul Griffiths:** Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak today. The pace and scale with which we have had to deal with this crisis is quite incredible. Our members are trained and equipped to deal with many crises—major incidents, serious incidents—but this puts us in unprecedented and uncharted waters. When we have spoken to our members—this is similar to Simon’s narrative—they have raised four key areas that we feel, as a service, that we need to ensure we focus on to deliver the best possible service in support of our health colleagues and the country.

To reiterate what Simon said, the safety and wellbeing of our staff is paramount, to make sure we can conduct our duties. Simon has already mentioned PPE and testing, which are both key, to enable our staff to return to work if they are self-isolating—that is on the testing front—and when they are deployed to make sure they have got the appropriate kit, and the appropriate advice and guidance as to how to do their duties effectively.

The second thing, both in the immediate present and forward thinking, is around the resilience of the service. Over the last 10 years, we have taken quite a dip in the amount of police officers we have available to do our duties. That was changing over the last six to nine months, with the announcement of the 20,000 uplift. There is the immediate issue of staff absence around those who are affected by the disease, those who are self-isolating and those who have caring duties, but our members are also looking forward at the resilience of the service as this crisis continues in the weeks and months to come. We really need to forward-look at the impact it could have on all police officers, at all ranks.

The third issue our members are raising is the changing demand that will come through our society. We are clearly seeing a downward trend in what I would call public offences—acquisitive crime and so on. There is a dip in



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emergency calls and non-emergency calls, and, naturally, arrests and custody, but crime and demand will change. We have concern about the private space—the risk around domestic abuse, child sexual abuse and other matters that may be occurring in a domestic residence. There is also the rise in online crime, technical crime and cyber-crime. Those are areas on which we need to properly focus, in terms of change in demand and change in incidence.

The final area our members are raising is our relationship with the public, which is dear to us; it is what we are about—policing by consent. With the new emergency powers, we need to maintain that working relationship with the public—it is really important for us to do so. We recognise the powers that we have been given, but our strategy remains strong, in terms of trying to engage and explain the situation before we have to turn, as a last resort, to enforcement. Those are the four key areas our members are raising as we look forward at the crisis, as it continues to develop.

Q112 **Chair:** Thank you. May I ask you about testing? Have you been given any idea of when the police might be able to access testing, in any form, as part of the Government's testing strategy?

**Chief Superintendent Paul Griffiths:** Obviously, the key workers they are focusing on at the moment are those in the national health service. We recognise the importance of testing for both national health colleagues and social care, but we are also key workers in the system, and we are keen to ensure that we have a positioning in the testing regime and prioritisation. At the moment, we have been given no indication as to when the testing will take place. We understand from the NPCC that orders have gone in for tests to come through, and a number of tests will be available for critical roles, but we are still waiting for definitive numbers and timescales on that.

Q113 **Chair:** So the police have done some ordering of testing?

**Chief Superintendent Paul Griffiths:** My understanding is that orders have gone in, and we are hopeful that during the course of this month, tests will start being made available for the police service.

Q114 **Chair:** Who have they been ordered from, and what kinds of tests are they? Are they antibody tests, or are they the current infection tests—the swab tests?

**Chief Superintendent Paul Griffiths:** My understanding is that they are the current tests, to test whether you have the disease in your system.

Q115 **Chair:** Do you know who they have been ordered from?

**Chief Superintendent Paul Griffiths:** No, I am afraid I don't know where they have been ordered from.

Q116 **Chair:** Okay. Simon Kempton.

**Sergeant Simon Kempton:** I do not know where they have been ordered from, but I am aware of some really welcome, innovative practice. NPoCC



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are looking, if they can, to repurpose some of our existing laboratory network, the Forensic Science Service, to try and build up the amount of tests that we can process, but even then—even if we are able to do that—there are going to be some really difficult decisions about which officers get the tests and which do not, or which get them first and which have to wait. One of the jobs of my senior colleagues is going to have to be to manage the effect that it might have on my colleagues. Again, we need to be really clear and really honest in our communication with my colleagues, so that their expectations are met and we meet the promises that we give them.

Q117 **Chair:** Have you been given any indication of the timetable for that?

**Sergeant Simon Kempton:** My expectation is that we will begin to see those tests coming online in the middle to the end of April, so not long now, but still, it is an anxious wait.

Q118 **Holly Lynch:** To echo the Chair's sentiments, thank you both for joining us this afternoon. I know it will be a very busy time for you both. You have both touched on PPE and the concerns of your members. We are hearing from senior officers that PPE is available; however, we are also picking up anxieties from police officers on the frontline that that PPE is not always readily available, and that the advice is that it is not always necessary for day-to-day, routine policing. Is that the feedback that you are getting from your members?

**Sergeant Simon Kempton:** You are right. On behalf of the Federation, I have undertaken quite a wide piece of work on this, to temperature-check what the true picture of PPE is across the country. I know that UK policing has taken possession of a huge amount of PPE, but I also know what my members tell me, and what I have seen; only last week, I was on an arrest inquiry about somebody who is known to be violent, and is suspected of having covid-19, and my colleague and I did not have the PPE when we went to make that arrest inquiry. We know that it is in the system, but we know it is not getting to all our colleagues, so that tells me that in the middle here, something has gone wrong, whether it is with the supply chain or with local management.

Some of my early indications are that on a very localised level, we need to be really, really careful. We need to be much better at managing our stocks of PPE. To give you an anecdotal example, a big box of PPE comes into a police station. When the officers come in off their duty, they will take a couple of masks, some bottles of sanitiser and some goggles, and then they will go to their next call as you would expect, but when the late shift or the night shift comes in, that PPE is not there anymore. Even within a very localised area, if you ask those officers, "Do you have the PPE?" you will get a different answer, because we need to really lock down that localised control.

**Chief Superintendent Paul Griffiths:** What we are picking up, particularly through our relationship with the NPCC and NPoCC—who are co-ordinating a lot of this—is that there definitely is energy and focus



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around this. There certainly were a few teething problems around the distribution to forces early on, but the concern is the distribution within forces, and making sure that it reaches the officers who are making daily contact with potential covid victims.

The second issue is a wider issue around supply chains. The service is working hard to make sure the supply chains are there to keep the feed for PPE continuing for the weeks and months ahead, but given the demand from many agencies—health colleagues, social care and others—there remains a concern that we could potentially run short.

**Sergeant Simon Kempton:** Another aspect of the question—I apologise that I didn't answer it—is around conflicting guidance and conflicting advice, and how that might have frustrated the police's efforts to get the right PPE in place. My colleagues in NPoCC tell me that there has been some confusion with different advice from the PHE and the HSE, and how that might have fed confusion into the PPE guidance that has then gone down to officers. Over the weekend a huge amount of work was put into getting some really good guidance to officers, but even then, even this morning, we are seeing that there is a conflict in some of the advice, and perhaps we need to get to the bottom of it very quickly, so that my operational colleagues know they have got the best possible advice, and can follow it clearly.

Q119 **Holly Lynch:** Are you satisfied that you are getting a hearing from the Home Office when you feed back some of these concerns on behalf of your members? Also, I have been appalled to see examples of arrests and charges relating to people deliberately coughing on officers and then saying that they have covid-19. Are you satisfied that you have the support of the CPS and the courts in prosecuting those individuals?

**Sergeant Simon Kempton:** On your second question, broadly speaking I am satisfied. We have seen some superb sentences being handed down. The crime of spitting at or biting somebody is terrible at the best of times, but during this crisis, when covid-19 is being weaponised against my colleagues, it heightens that fear. When you deal with somebody with a knife or another weapon, or when somebody tries to punch you, you know that once you have dealt with the situation the danger is over and you can go home. With covid-19 the situation is different, because you don't know whether you are taking it home with you. That is why weaponising covid-19 is so reprehensible.

I am really grateful that we have seen some very strong sentences, perhaps on the back of work that members of this Committee, and Parliament more widely, have done to protect us at work. But still only this morning—I won't go into the case—I heard that a colleague from a northern force was racially abused and spat at last week by a member of the public who, while being processed in custody, said, "I've got covid-19." Unfortunately, on this occasion that has not been charged as an aggravated offence because of covid-19, which is something I am trying to get to the bottom of today.



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**Chief Superintendent Paul Griffiths:** It is worth saying that the vast majority of the public have been absolutely supportive of the police, and we need to put it in perspective, but there are extreme and vile behaviours going on in relation to coughing and spitting. I can only reiterate what Simon has said: strong sentences are being issued and we are really supportive of that and of continuing to send out the message that such behaviour is really unacceptable.

On the point about raising PPE with the Home Office, I had a telephone meeting with the Home Secretary on Tuesday. I stressed the importance for our members of ensuring that the whole of the police service has sufficient quantities of PPE available, and that was well recognised and well appreciated. I am confident that the energy and drive is there from the Home Office and the Home Secretary.

Q120 **Chair:** Please convey our support to any officers who have faced those appalling and unacceptable crimes against them. On PPE, what is your estimate of the proportion of officers going out to respond to calls or to arrest somebody who do not have the appropriate PPE?

**Sergeant Simon Kempton:** I am afraid that I will have to give an unhelpful answer, because the picture across the country is so disparate. I have spoken to colleagues in some force areas and every single one of them has PPE available, whether it is on their person or in their vehicle. Colleagues in other parts of the country tell me that they have to share PPE among a group of officers. Some of that is down to the supply chains.

Going back to the innovative practices that have been adopted in some places, some forces have adopted what they call covid cars, so for any covid-related incident they will send a vehicle that definitely has the PPE, just to try and put in place that protection. But unfortunately some of my colleagues simply do not have the PPE even this far into the crisis.

**Chief Superintendent Paul Griffiths:** I don't think that the data collection is sharp enough to identify the proportions at the moment, but we can certainly send that inquiry back to NPoCC and try to get you a written reply.

Q121 **Chair:** That would be really helpful, because we need to know the scale of the problem. It would also be helpful if you could get back to us on the extent to which you need an oversupply in each area. If you are inevitably going to have some distribution problems or different shifts needing different levels of PPE, surely you will need an oversupply in each area to make sure that you have a buffer, so that you have enough as and when you need it, in case you suddenly need more.

**Chief Superintendent Paul Griffiths:** Certainly, and I do get the fact that forces have indicated their requirements on PPE. That relationship with NPoCC, in terms of the supply chain, is in place. We have not quite got the data to gauge the number of officers who may be devoid of the equipment they need. I will try to get you a written response on that.

**Chair:** Thank you.



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Q122 **Janet Daby:** Like you, Chair, I want to thank the various forces for responding and for being versatile at this time of national crisis. The legislation came into force on 26 March. I have in front of me two briefings—one from the College of Policing and one from the NPCC. What training have frontline officers received—whether existing officers, retired officers coming back or PCSOs—on enforcing the Government’s latest legislation?

**Chief Superintendent Paul Griffiths:** The pace and scale by which the change in the law came in was triggered by the Prime Minister’s announcement. That probably started the social behaviour by the police to try to enforce quite early on the Government’s policy intent, even before the legislation had gone through Parliament. There was a clear need to try to enforce social distancing, to safeguard against the spread of the disease.

We then worked really hard with the Home Office and the Police Powers Unit in the following 48 hours to implement in the best way possible the practicalities of trying to introduce legislation to achieve that policy intent. We gave advice on the practical issues that needed to be considered, and we had the opportunity to consider the draft legislation, to offer any views from a practicality perspective. Upon the introduction of that advice, the NPCC and the College of Policing moved to create guidance to best inform officers. Most officers had actually started trying to influence the behaviour of the public based on the Prime Minister’s announcement.

Usually, we have plenty of time to bring in legislation—to consult, engage and work with parliamentarians as the law goes through Parliament—but this was quick, swift and directive, and we had to move very quickly to resolve issues and work together with the public on maintaining social distancing. Since the legislation was introduced there have been efforts across the whole service to introduce the guidance and do training on a force-by-force basis, but it was introduced at a pace and on a scale that we have never before experienced.

**Sergeant Simon Kempton:** I guess that the briefings you are talking about are two PowerPoint presentations—one that is mainly black and red and the other blue and green.

**Janet Daby:** Yes, indeed.

**Sergeant Simon Kempton:** That is the training that we have received, which was your question. To echo Paul’s point, the regulations and, swiftly afterwards, the legislation, were introduced so quickly—there can be no criticism of Parliament on that; it needed to act and it did. But under normal circumstances there would be a process by which we could get the training in place so that we are all trained up before the legislation lands.

It was the other way around on this occasion. We had a period of several days where our only briefing was the very clear and stark guidance that Ministers and Government officials were giving the public. My colleagues on the ground were left in the position of understanding that this was so



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important. At the moment we see our job as being about protecting the NHS so that it can protect the rest of us. It was so important that we followed the guidance, but we did not have anything in writing at that time. That might have led to some of the inconsistencies in approach.

The College of Policing has been very good at engaging with the Police Federation—some of my colleagues and me. We have since received guidance that—I hope you will agree—is fairly clear, relatively concise and easy to follow. That has been disseminated to all officers. One of the things that we are going to have to consider for returning officers, retirees, is making sure that they are up to date, not just with everything else that is involved in policing—body-worn video and changes to the arrest conditions—but with this newest block of legislation.

We are in the middle of this pandemic: it is scary and unprecedented but it is going to end, and when it does the public are going to emerge and we are going to be in a very different world. They will have lost their jobs and businesses, and they are going to need protecting by the police at that point. We can best protect them not just by having the right equipment, but by maintaining that relationship. I am proud of the relationship we have with the public. What we need to do is strike that balance between protecting the NHS and protecting that relationship with the public, and that is where this guidance is so key.

**Chair:** Thank you. I call Laura Farris.

Q123 **Laura Farris:** Simon, if you had to identify the two or three biggest obstacles to effectively discharging your duties under the new powers, what would they be?

**Sergeant Simon Kempton:** The first thing I have to say is that the vast majority of the public get it. They understand why this is so important. It is inconvenient and they would rather it was not the case, but they get it and they want to comply. They want to help and they want to do their bit. But there are still a minority who simply do not wish to comply with the restrictions. We saw over the weekend, with the nice weather, some of my colleagues having a monumental task: one or two officers having to empty a park with hundreds of people in it, and most of those individuals wanted to argue their case for why they were doing something within the guidelines.

What would help, perhaps, is engaging the public on an emotional level, so that more of them wanted to comply—not just felt that they had to comply, but wanted to comply. That would relieve some of the burden on my colleagues and we would have to deal with fewer people. As Paul says, we call them the four Es, and we only go to enforcement when the other three have been exhausted. If we get that emotional engagement with the public so that they want to help the collective effort, we will have to go to enforcement on far fewer occasions.

Q124 **Laura Farris:** What do you think that would look like? Do you have something in mind when you say that, or are you just talking in a general sense?



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**Sergeant Simon Kempton:** Without being able to put more thought into it at the moment, it is a general sense. Part of the messaging at the moment is, "If you go out and breach the regulations, you may end up with a fine or a criminal record." But within the past 24 hours we have lost a nurse and a midwife to covid-19. If the message was more like, "By not going out, you are protecting these nurses and these doctors who are saving lives," that might have some more positive effect.

I know that Google has done some interesting work, using its tracking to see where the take-up has been more welcome or better received. That is broken down by town and by area, and there are some stark differences from area to area. It is quite interesting. Things such as that might help to focus our collective efforts—not just policing—to try to get more compliance.

**Chief Superintendent Paul Griffiths:** Early on, as the law was enacted and police officers could rely on it, you did see inconsistency across different forces. That was just about the pace and scale of training and education and the cohesion across the service. We police by consent; the relationship with the public is important to us, and we have the vast majority of the public working with us and understanding the principles of what we are trying to achieve. I think the police strategy of engagement, explanation and encouragement is absolutely spot on and that enforcement is the last resort.

This is about us trying to police a health issue through social distancing. We do not want powers for powers' sake. That is not the way we police our society, so it is important for us to spread that message more deeply. I concur with what Simon says about trying to educate the public as much as possible. There are certain narratives that came out to say, "This is not a public holiday." We cannot afford for groups of people to meet in parks or on beaches, because that is how the disease spreads. We just need to continue the communication strategy with the public so that they can have a thorough understanding of what they can and cannot do under the law.

**Chair:** Thank you. I call Ruth Edwards.

Q125 **Ruth Edwards:** I want to start by reiterating the Chair's thanks to both of you, Simon and Paul—and to your members and all police officers—for the incredible work that you are doing at the moment. We recognise that we are asking you to do a very difficult thing, as this is a huge contrast to the way of life that we are used to in the United Kingdom. You mentioned how quickly quite a large body of law has come into play. How confident do your members feel at the moment about enforcing those new laws?

**Sergeant Simon Kempton:** You are absolutely right. As Paul touched on earlier, the scope and scale at which we have moved is huge; it is unprecedented. My members did not feel confident initially, mainly because they were getting conflicting messages, and that is why you saw different areas perhaps interpreting things differently. We have been able to really reinforce that training, and we have seen more and more examples of really good practice and really good policing overtaking the



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narrative, which was quite negative and quite unfair in some parts of the media.

There are so many areas where my colleagues have just been engaging with the public—taking shopping to vulnerable people, and helping people to cope and get their heads around this incredible restriction on all of us. We have seen that type of thing start to take over the narrative, and that has given my colleagues more confidence in applying the common-sense approach. Let us not get distracted by some of the mistakes that might have been made at the beginning.

**Chief Superintendent Paul Griffiths:** I think that very early on there was probably some confusion. There was a real need for a clear and consistent message from the Government, the police and other agencies about what this meant. I think a lot of officers actually relied on the policy intent—clearly, before the law was enacted. The policy intent and the scientific evidence were exactly what we needed to keep people apart and to try to stop the spread of this disease. But as the law was introduced, we started to try to be more consistent and cohesive in terms of the messaging and guidance that was coming from NPCC and the College of Policing.

Were there mistakes? Yes, there probably were. Were there times that it could have been misinterpreted? Yes, there probably were. But actually the intent of the police service and the intent of what we are trying to achieve was absolutely clear to everybody; it was just the nuances with understanding the particulars of the regulations and the law.

Q126 **Ruth Edwards:** In your opinion, has that been ironed out now, particularly among the public as well as officers? I know, for example, that Government guidance is that people should only leave their house once a day for exercise, but that that is not actually stipulated in the regulations in England, which is a potential source of confusion. Have you been finding that that is a source of confusion, or have people been much more willing to follow instructions when they engage with your officers?

**Chief Superintendent Paul Griffiths:** In a broad sense, the fog is clearing for the police service in terms of the approach and strategy, what the law means and the best way of dealing with the communities in which our officers serve. I reiterate what I said previously, which is that we need to keep the momentum going in a communication strategy with the public. We need to maintain that pressure of understanding to ensure that everybody understands what they can and cannot do, and what is a reasonable excuse for leaving the home. That needs to continue through all agencies.

**Sergeant Simon Kempton:** I absolutely agree. The Government message must be so strong because the stakes are so high, but it must also be aligned with what the legislation and the regulations state, otherwise there will be confusion not only for the public, importantly, but for me. When I do my next shift and I am enforcing these regulations, I need to be clear in my mind so that I am not letting down the public.



**Q127 Ruth Edwards:** I have one final question along these lines. We have set out what are reasonable activities to leave home for. How do police officers verify that people are doing what they claim to be doing when they leave their home? Obviously, there is the famous example of the gentleman who had a car full of window frames and his wife in the boot. It is fairly obvious that he was not leaving home to go to the supermarket, or whatever. How would you try to verify, in those encounters, that people are leaving home for one of those excuses? It seems to me that it must be quite difficult to verify.

**Sergeant Simon Kempton:** You are absolutely right. To an extent, it is close to being impossible. If I stop someone jogging on the canal towpath and I engage with them, as my training says, and they tell me that it is their first jog of the day, I am not likely to start following them as they jog to make sure that they go home again. That engagement period—that explanation—is really vital, because, even if it is their third jog of the day, that is where I can influence them, not today but tomorrow. Tomorrow, they might say, “I get it now. I will only go for one jog.” We do not live in a police state, and none of us wants to do so. That verification process is the end of the line. That is the fourth E. Even if I have caught them doing something and we both know that they should not have done it, let us try to deal with it through education. Let us try to help them to understand so that they do not do it again.

**Chief Superintendent Paul Griffiths:** Thankfully, we have a long history of engagement with the public. We have a group of people who are very inquisitive by nature and have the ability to communicate effectively. We know what our strategy is and we know what we have to communicate, so we just ask the line of questioning that is necessary and give the encouragement to do the right thing, which is about protecting the NHS.

**Ruth Edwards:** Thank you; I have no more questions.

**Chair:** I call Simon Fell.

**Q128 Simon Fell:** We have touched on some of this before—the focus in the guidance on the four Es. I am wondering whether you have had any specific guidance, or whether you are working on specific guidance, for your teams around what each of those phases entails. Let me start with you, Paul.

**Chief Superintendent Paul Griffiths:** In terms of the training package that has gone out, we have not gone into the depths of breaking down what each element means, because this has been introduced in such a swift way. But we do rely on the common sense and the ability of our teams at all levels to apply it in the way that we have policed for hundreds of years, by which I mean working with the public, trying to understand the challenges that we are facing, and trying to encourage them to isolate themselves and stop the spread of the disease. So, have we broken it down? There may have been conversations in every police station on exactly what this means, but the underlying, underpinning theory by which we approach this is well understood by the service.



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**Sergeant Simon Kempton:** Paul is absolutely correct in what he says, but to give some reassurance, almost hot off the press, let me say that, just this morning, the College of Policing sent me some further guidance around the regulations and the legislation—the Act is obviously different from the regulations. This extra training and extra explanation will be disseminated as well.

Q129 **Simon Fell:** Are you comfortable that the escalation through those phases is consistent across forces and that it is being applied in the same way?

**Sergeant Simon Kempton:** That is a really good question. Given the hundreds of thousands of encounters that we have with the public every single day, it is impossible to take one regulation and apply it in the same way, because there are so many variables. Part of the variable is how the member of public approaches the regulations from their side. Broadly speaking, now that we have these training packages in place, we are seeing far more consistency. What we need next, which would help my operational colleagues, is to have a consistent message that goes with that training. In that way, the public are being asked to comply with the regulations that are there and that we are able to enforce and to engage around rather than something that is, perhaps, more aspirational.

**Chief Superintendent Paul Griffiths:** I would reiterate Simon's stance on this. We were aware of some misinterpretations of the law early on. We probably did not get it all right first time, but the reality is that a letter went out from the chair of the NPCC to all chief constables appealing for consistency in terms of approach. That, underpinned by the strategy and by the guidance, is certainly getting us into a better position in trying to police what is a really tricky piece of legislation.

Q130 **Simon Fell:** Can I pick up on that point about consistent messaging? Where do you think that should be focused from, and who do you think should be leading on it? Simon, you raised it, so I will go to you.

**Sergeant Simon Kempton:** As a police service, it is not our job to interpret; it is our job to enforce the legislation that is given to us by Parliament. I see the job of Government with the Home Office as being to set the direction, underpinned by the correct regulations and the correct legislation, and then it is the role of chief officers to give my colleagues very clear guidance and training. It must go in that direction. That is the way we get consistency across the UK. We lose that consistency if we do not take that top-down approach to what the message should be. That is my opinion.

Q131 **Simon Fell:** Is it your view that we are heading in the right direction, or is there more work to be done?

**Sergeant Simon Kempton:** There is always more work to be done, because I am a perfectionist in how I do my role, and my colleagues agree; we always want to be better. If I make a mistake—and I am well capable of making a mistake—I want to reflect on that and not repeat it. But if you look at the number of negative encounters and negative stories,



just over the last week, we are seeing a far more positive view of the police as we become more comfortable with the regulations. I have been in the police for 20 years. When I was at Hendon 20 years ago, nobody trained me in how to police a global pandemic with restrictions on movement the like of which we did not even see during the second world war. So when I go out and do my shifts alongside my colleagues, I am learning at the same time—but I am learning, which means that I am going to make fewer mistakes than I might have done a week ago. It is getting much better, and that is reflected in the way that we are being positively encouraged by the public. The public want to see us, by and large. It is only a tiny minority who are letting the rest down.

**Chief Superintendent Paul Griffiths:** From a police point of view, clearly it is the senior leaders who have a responsibility to get the communication, approach and strategy right and get that communicated out. In terms of the public, I think we have all got a duty—I think we have all got a responsibility, as individuals. Our agencies and all the public sector agencies need to be on the same sheet in terms of really pushing the communication advice to stop spreading this disease.

**Chair:** I call Dehenna Davison.

Q132 **Dehenna Davison:** I understand that the guidance from the NPCC has some specific bits on encouraging compliance among young people. What do you think the specific challenges are, and what strategies do you think we should have in place in order to combat them? I will go to Simon first.

**Sergeant Simon Kempton:** The younger part of our community is going to perhaps reflect differently on these regulations than other parts, particularly during half term. It is gorgeous weather—they are used to being able to go out, and suddenly they have these restrictions. One of the things that we have had to ensure that we are across is whether or not these restrictions might cause tension within households, and the potential for domestic violence or abuse within households with different age groups.

One of the things we need to recognise is that there is no one-size-fits-all message when we talk to the public. What might work for me, with my frame of reference, might not work for my daughter. My daughter is 21 years old, and she has a very different outlook on life from me when it comes to socialising with friends. Some of the messaging from Government has been really impactful and fantastic, but it might not work on all sections of the community, so we need to engage with them and say, “What would work with you?” We have groups around the country that the Government and other agencies can tap into specifically to help understand each other. Use those networks and help them to formulate and influence the communication strategy.

**Chief Superintendent Paul Griffiths:** It is certainly true that the relationship between the police and the youth is really vital. From my perspective, we recognise the frustrations that they may be going through at the moment, as Simon has just reiterated. An awful lot of police officers



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are parents and really do understand the frustrations of children and the youth about the restrictions that they are under at the moment. There needs to be more about what other purposes we can encourage them to engage in: what they can do online, what they can do in terms of their development, and what they can do in terms of their physical fitness and mental fitness. There must be more that we can do to try to engage the youth in activities that, sadly, are indoors but can keep them going in terms of their purpose and keep them entertained, engaged and off the street.

**Q133 Dehenna Davison:** Similarly, we know that social media is particularly used among our younger generations. Have you specifically noticed any increased reporting of people breaking the regulations through social media—for example, by posting a video of them out and about?

**Chief Superintendent Paul Griffiths:** I have to say I haven't personally seen any increase in breaches of the regulations through social media, but we can certainly look at whether that is an indicator or a warning signal for us to start thinking about how we engage better with the youth.

**Sergeant Simon Kempton:** If you will allow me, I will go off on a slight tangent, which builds on something that Paul said earlier. More and more of our young people are inside on their different devices, and one thing that policing has to keep in mind is the increased potential for them to be subject to online grooming and those sorts of offences. Although it is absolutely right that we put our effort and our resources into enforcing the regulations—protecting the NHS at the same time—the balancing act for chief officers is to make sure that we do not take our eye off these balls as well because, somewhere, somebody would take advantage of the situation for their own ends.

**Chair:** I call Stephen Doughty.

**Q134 Stephen Doughty:** Thank you, Chair, and thank you to both our witnesses for all that you and your members are doing. It was really brought home to me when I witnessed the aftermath of a terrible road traffic collision, with a fatality, near where I live on a visit to the shops the other day. The number of police having to deal with that situation—on top of all their other responsibilities—brings home the challenges that you are facing, so thank you to all of you and all of your members.

I want to ask some specific questions about domestic abuse. You will have seen the reporting today from Refuge that calls to them are up 25% since the lockdown started, and that visits to the UK-wide national domestic abuse website are up 150% compared with the same period last year. Can you say a little bit about what your members are feeding back to you about the increased incidence of domestic abuse and how they are responding to those cases?

**Sergeant Simon Kempton:** I do not have the same overview, clearly, that the Chiefs Council and the Home Office will have. Obviously, the Home Office collates these figures. I can give you only the frontline view, which is clearly going to be more anecdotal. It is a different picture across



the country, but one thing that is difficult for my colleagues is that, under normal circumstances, two of us might turn up to a domestic abuse situation. We try to deal with it in a set way: we will separate the parties. One of the things that is different here is that, because of staffing or coronavirus restrictions on our social distancing, sometimes we might not have a colleague with us, so that might make it more difficult to deal with such incidents in some places. Going back to the four Es, when we are dealing with someone who may be out of the house and we are worried that they are breaching the regulations, one of the things at the forefront of my colleagues' minds is that maybe they are escaping some sort of abuse situation. We need to remember that we cannot necessarily just send them home and think we have done our job, because we might be sending them back to a dangerous situation. Covid-19 has brought a really difficult aspect to every part of our work. Reflecting on what you have just said about the road traffic collision, that is just another aspect of this. This isn't business as usual, but our day job goes on, alongside Covid-19. We have got to do all of the other things that we always would, and that just increases the burden on our colleagues, of course.

**Chief Superintendent Paul Griffiths:** You have raised a really good point. Although the demand has gone down, in terms of some of the calls, crimes and incidents, the reality is that day-to-day policing does continue. It is just this additionality of trying to deal with the social space-type issues, through the new powers that we have got.

In terms of the vulnerability issues, I have been a big advocate of promoting and encouraging victims of vulnerability to take a step forward and seek help. The big fear of most of our members is that the usual, regular contact that vulnerable people have has been, in the main, taken away, leaving them even more prone or vulnerable to any sort of crimes of this nature. So, it really is on the risk register around domestic abuse, child sexual abuse and some of the harm and risk to the vulnerable people out there.

I think it is down to how we reach out to them, how we communicate to them. Our ability to communicate has probably got to focus on the main communication lines into them, either through television, social media or traditional media, and making sure that we react to those helplines. We still provide a service, and a good service, for people who flag up vulnerability issues, and we are still there to help people, and we need to make sure that message gets out to people.

Q135 **Stephen Doughty:** Paul, you mentioned child sexual abuse and other forms of abuse against children and young people. Of course, the assumption if you are seeing teenagers and young people out and about, congregating together and perhaps not being seen to follow the rules, is that they are doing something wrong, but some of them may be escaping very difficult home situations.

Can you just say a little bit more about what specific training or guidance is being given to your members about identifying those cases and ensuring that officers throughout the command chain are able to give the



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right advice to young people in particular?

**Chief Superintendent Paul Griffiths:** We have had a lot of training and education over the last few years around vulnerability. Our focus is really on making sure that the risk-harm threat that is out there in our community is monitored, controlled, supported and engaged with, and making sure that we actually reach out to those victims and bring them to safety, and try and support them in the best way we can.

Much of the vulnerability training has been really effective across the whole of England and Wales in the last few years, so officers will be acutely aware of their responsibilities in relation to vulnerability. We haven't seen any data yet in terms of any trend data to do with vulnerability crimes, but those indicators through helplines etc. are a warning signal to us all that we just need to keep the focus on people who may be out there and who may not be able to reach help, because we are still there to help people.

Q136 **Stephen Doughty:** Fantastic. Can I put a specific question about mental health to both of you, including from the perspective of dealing with increased mental health incidents? I mean, we have regularly found on the Committee over the last few years that the police have become a bit of a last resort for dealing with people with mental health difficulties, often serious ones.

However, given some of the things that you have said, for example about not being able to staff calls in the usual ways and perhaps not having the other supportive organisations there, what steps are being taken, both to support people who have perhaps been triggered or who have got into serious difficulties as a result of being isolated, and also to protect officers in those situations, and indeed their dealing themselves with the consequences of some very difficult circumstances?

**Chief Superintendent Paul Griffiths:** We are waiting to see the data on some of the mental health incidents that we will still be dealing with, but anecdotally what we are getting from members is that there is starting to be a slight increase. And looking forward, if we continue to keep these isolating strategies in place, there is a risk that mental health issues will increase over the coming weeks and months.

We are well versed in what our role is supporting members of the community in terms of their mental health challenges, working with other agencies, such as health, social care and local authorities. It is a well-trodden path, in terms of what we can do to maximise the support for those individuals, who will probably see an increase in pressure and more intense pressure, in terms of their wellbeing.

Q137 **Stephen Doughty:** Simon, are you picking up similar from your members?

**Sergeant Simon Kempton:** I am. At a very operational level forces are looking to make sure that they have got specialist resource—so hostage and crisis negotiators would often be a first port of call for perhaps someone who is in crisis, contemplating suicide, to make sure that even



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during covid-19 those cadres are there and can be called on by an operational commander. One of the difficulties we have got, as the police service is losing staff to abstractions through self-isolation or sickness—in mental health services and social services—is that it is going to be all too easy for some of these people in real crisis to fall through the gaps as we see those staffing levels start to come under more and more burden. It is something that we cannot lose sight of.

**Q138 Stephen Doughty:** Do you think overall that the system is coping at the moment but that there is a risk, as, potentially, the lockdown continues, that real pressures could come to bear and that people would fall through the cracks, as you are suggesting?

**Sergeant Simon Kempton:** You have hit the nail on the head. At the moment we are coping, but we are starting to see in some areas—particular specialist areas—that burden starting to grow as we lose staff; but I think you are absolutely right. It is going to be absolutely vital that we keep an eye on that and the very early indications of an increase in suicide attempts and suicides. It is far too early to say that that is a real trend, but there are very early indications of that. As you so rightly said, quite often the police are the agency who end up dealing, and trying to deal, with that situation.

**Q139 Stephen Doughty:** On that last point, what you just said about suicide—that would obviously be deeply concerning, but perhaps not surprising in the circumstances. What support is there for your members, who are potentially having to deal with those situations? I am aware of what police have to deal with on a regular basis. I know of an officer locally who had to deal with three in one day, some time ago. What support is there for them, having to deal with their own reactions to those situations, particularly with all the other pressures they are having to deal with?

**Sergeant Simon Kempton:** It is a great question. This feeds into some of the innovative processes that I mentioned earlier. Some forces have introduced the gold command structure specifically for welfare. Suicide—absolutely, but we know that if this outbreak continues in the way that the scientific and medical advice suggests, my colleagues and I are going to be dealing with an increase in dead bodies, for example, and over time that will take its toll. The police service has got measures in place, but because of the last 10 years of austerity cuts all too often the occupational health services are not as well stocked, shall we say, as they used to be.

The Police Federation has tried at least to help with that gap. We have got our welfare support programme, and branches around the country do a huge amount of work on the ground floor, but we—my colleagues—need to recognise over the next several weeks, we are going to be going through some really traumatic times and we need to make sure, when we come out the other side into the recovery phase, that we have got a well-functioning police service that can then pick up the society and take us through the next phase so that we do not completely collapse.



**Stephen Doughty:** One last technical point—

**Chair:** We are tight for time—sorry. Tim Loughton.

Q140 **Tim Loughton:** Can I reiterate what colleagues have said: I think it is incumbent on us as lawmakers absolutely to back up the police and the enforcement of the law at this unprecedented time, as well; and every platform we have, be it this or through social media, certainly we shall be doing that. There are two things I want to ask. First, can I just come back very quickly, Sergeant Kempton, to the issue of people deliberately coughing and then claiming they have got covid. Have you got access to spit hoods, or whatever the technical term was? There was some controversy about a year or so ago about whether they should be used or not. Are they being brought into use for this purpose now, regretfully?

**Sergeant Simon Kempton:** Every single force has got access to spit guards. Some forces still only use them in the custody environment. My plea to forces has always been we need those on the street as well, because I have got just as much chance of being spat at on the street as I have in custody, and it is an emotive one for me, because I have had other people's blood in my mouth after they have spat at me. Now more than ever, while covid-19 is being weaponised, we need those spit guards in the pocket of every single police officer—not just in custody, but on the street as well. We have some really tight guidelines about where and how they can be used. Quite rightly, there is a huge amount of oversight and accountability. Now that reassurance is there, every one of my colleagues deserves to have that spit guard, particularly while covid-19 is being weaponised.

Q141 **Tim Loughton:** Are you saying that you can use them, but they are not as available as they need to be, particularly now that they are effectively an alternative form of PPE?

**Sergeant Simon Kempton:** In some areas they are. In my force area of Dorset, I have a personal issue spit guard. When I go out on patrol, it is in my bag or my pocket. Some areas of the country are still only using them in the custody environment—so they are being issued, but only for use within the custody environment.

Q142 **Tim Loughton:** Okay. Superintendent Griffiths, earlier you mentioned the changes in demand for policing, as obviously things have been completely turned upside down. On the plus side, presumably you are dealing with fewer road traffic accidents at the moment, and hopefully there are fewer pub brawls and fewer home burglaries. However, conversely, there are probably going to be burglaries of some retail premises that people do not know about until they go back after the lockdown is lifted, and we have heard about the increase in domestic violence and cyber-crime. How do those balance out? Has the extra capacity from conventional things that you are not having to pursue been overtaken by what you are now having to do? Also, what are the absenteeism rates for police through self-isolation or infection? We seem to be hearing anecdotal evidence that the police have been more affected than other parts of the public



services. Is that true?

**Chief Superintendent Paul Griffiths:** You are right to raise the issue that demand is changing somewhat. Normal policing does continue, so although we are hearing from members that there has been a drop in calls of service, crime and incidents, and arrest rates and detentions, actually the capacity is being consumed by a desire and necessity to police the public space and enforce the law around social distancing. But then you underpin that with the capacity of the service; we are obviously experiencing an absence rate. The absence rate is approximately 13% across the whole of the national establishment, and that includes police officers and staff.

Some of those people will be sick, some will be self-isolating because of symptoms, and some will have caring responsibilities. Most are trying as best as possible to see whether they can work at home, which gives you an idea of the solidarity that continues across the police service, with people trying to do their very best under extreme circumstances. Although there is that capacity issue, ironically none of the police forces are flagging up anything that they cannot cope with at this stage, but there is a daily monitoring of the situation as more and more people are infected with this disease.

Q143 **Tim Loughton:** I am trying to put this into context. How does that 13% differ from normal anticipated absence rates among the police force? Just as we are trying to assess the capacity still within the national health service to deal with the increase in admissions, it would also be useful to get an idea of what capacity there is in the police now. If the lockdown has to be tightened, and the education and engagement role—those two Es—becomes more about enforcement, issuing penalties to people who are grouping outside and clamping down on additional exercise, just how far-stretched are you going to be? You will not be dealing with the same amount of road traffic accidents and everything else, but you may have to deal with a lot more in this regard. Where are we on that scale at the moment, do you think? How long is a piece of string, I know—but just give us your assessment.

**Chief Superintendent Paul Griffiths:** I am not sure what the national average sickness rate or absence rate is, so I will have to get back to you with the exact figures. But I can confirm that although forces obviously have absence rates, no forces are highlighting risk at this stage in terms of service provision. In terms of projection, the absence rate is plateauing off at the moment, but we are acutely aware that this could change—and could change rapidly—at any point. There is a daily monitoring of the situation. Quite frankly, we do not know what the impact will be if this disease continues to spread, particularly into members of the police family.

Q144 **Tim Loughton:** Sergeant Kempton—a comment from you. Are we effectively seeing the reprioritisation of some of your conventional policing roles at the moment? Are we also seeing—as I think is the case in my force in Sussex, from talks with the commissioner—that those in



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training are having their training expedited and getting out on to the street perhaps sooner than they might have done, to help with the increase in demand?

**Sergeant Simon Kempton:** You are absolutely right. The College of Policing worked with the Police Federation, the National Police Chiefs' Council and the Home Office to create an abridged syllabus to give new recruits the basic skills they need to keep themselves, their colleagues and the public safe. Once the outbreak has passed, they will revisit some of the other areas. For example, they will be given Theft Act and Public Order Act training, because that is vital; it is every day. Later on, we can look at the Fraud Act in more depth. We will make sure that, even though the trainees have had training, they are with a more qualified colleague who has at least two years' service. That is important because, as we start to lose staff through abstractions, we are going to need as many officers as possible. That is why we have supported giving that abridged training as a pragmatic answer to a crisis.

In terms of the capacity of the police service, at the moment we can cope and are coping, but that will become more difficult as the abstraction rate rises. What we might see then, by necessity, is chief officers reprioritising some areas above others. Three areas that we absolutely cannot allow to fall too low are armed policing, because we must have an armed policing response to terrorist events and crime; the investigation of crimes for which there may be a danger of losing evidence and that we cannot park; and effectively answering 999 calls, so long as it is obviously an appropriate 999 call. We must protect those areas. But even during this conversation we have touched on other areas that are really important, such as the protection of children online and the protection of domestic abuse victims. For my colleagues, it is really difficult to do that work, and for chief officers it is really difficult to manage those priorities.

**Chair:** Thank you very much, and I again once again convey our thanks to both of you for giving your evidence and your time and for the work that you, police officers and staff and all your members are doing right across the country to keep us safe. Thank you very much.

We are going to move on to our second panel. I ask everybody to bear with us while we sort out the technology of switching from one panel to the second.



## Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: Chief Constable Lisa Winward, Chief Constable Garry Forsyth, Chief Constable Peter Goodman and Chief Constable John Robins.

Q145 **Chair:** We have with us Chief Constable Lisa Winward from North Yorkshire Police, Chief Constable Garry Forsyth from Bedfordshire Police, Chief Constable Peter Goodman from Derbyshire Police and Chief Constable John Robins from West Yorkshire Police. To our second panel, I once again convey our huge thanks to all of you and your forces and all your staff and officers for all the work that you are doing not only to implement the regulations but to keep your communities safe much more widely.

I will begin by asking an opening question to each of you in turn. We are very grateful to have four chief constables with us today, but as we follow through with subsequent questions, I ask you not to follow up if you have nothing to add to what another chief constable may already have said but simply to add any additional information, so that we can cover as many of these important topics as possible.

I begin by asking each of you in turn to tell us what your overall experience has been of policing the new regulations during this coronavirus crisis. What is your assessment of the overall level of adherence to the regulations? Where have things worked well and where are you facing problems? I start with Chief Constable Lisa Winward.

**Chief Constable Lisa Winward:** Thank you very much, Chair and Committee. The overarching feeling from this unprecedented health crisis has been that it has been very fast moving. We have very experienced local resilience forums and critical incident structures already in place and well practised for these sorts of incidents, and we found it was very helpful to come together with partners we already work with in the longer term—we run tabletop exercises and we have practised for pandemic-type situations. We have found that, due to those existing relationships, those teams of people have been brought together very quickly.

In terms of the challenges, this being an unprecedented health crisis and very unusual—most of our critical incidents are police-led—it is vital that we take a partnership approach and that we put health and saving lives at the forefront of the incident that we face. The difficulty has been the legislation being passed very quickly. In normal circumstances, the legislation would be discussed in depth, over time, between the Home Office and key stakeholders; guidance and training would be afforded before the provisions were used out there, in the public space. The greatest challenge has been trying to get the learning and best practice in interpretation out into the public space, so that our officers and staff can learn from best practice and implement the legislation in a way that is proportionate and necessary, and absolutely not move away from our engagement style and the relationship we already have with the public,



which we in the British police service greatly value and do not want to damage.

Q146 **Chair:** Thank you. Chief Constable Forsyth?

**Chief Constable Garry Forsyth:** Good afternoon, Chair. May I add my thanks to you and the Committee for giving us the opportunity to come and talk to you today? I would like to express thanks as well for the positive sentiment conveyed in the earlier session. It makes a huge difference to our officers and staff to know that we have the support of our politicians at such a testing time, so thank you all for that.

The general feeling among the workforce is really incredible. It has been a brilliant response from our emergency services, officers and staff to get us to the position we are in. From the community perspective as well, there has been an extremely high level of support for the work we are doing across the organisation. As Lisa mentioned, the policing by consent that we enjoy in this country and that we rely on to police effectively is so important and dear to us, and that is something we have focused on very heavily here in Bedfordshire as well.

We focused specifically on the engage, explain and encourage elements of the four Es over the first week, for two reasons: first, because we have strong relationships with our communities and we wanted to maintain them and, indeed, take the opportunity to build on them with the right messaging about supporting the NHS and saving lives; and secondly, because we were not in a position to issue any enforcement until Friday last week. So there were dual factors involved.

The compliance we have seen through the approach we have taken is very good and very positive. Over the course of the weekend, there have been a few minor and limited instances where people are not complying with the guidance, but when engaged with and spoken to, they are then choosing to move on and comply with the guidance.

One of the biggest challenges has been trying to match the need for pace with the need for consistency across the country. I think we saw some of the challenges that were articulated very well by Simon and Paul in the earlier session. It has undoubtedly been a challenge and it felt a little difficult at the outset. The unprecedented nature of these events and the speed at which policing and all public services and sectors have responded have created some challenges, but I think we are in a better space now and the public are adjusting as they become more informed and educated. Undoubtedly a challenge has been pace versus consistency.

**Chief Constable Peter Goodman:** Thank you for this opportunity. May I—and, I am sure, my colleagues—again place on record our gratitude to our national health service for the brilliant job they are doing at this time? Secondly, I place on record my gratitude for the brilliant job that all the emergency services are doing, including the police service, at the frontline at this time.



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I don't want to say too much that my colleagues have said already, other than to say that our experience so far is that the public are behaving absolutely brilliantly, across the whole of Derbyshire and beyond. As an example of that, we can remember right at the start of this crisis, we had swathes of people going to Derbyshire and the Peak District. Frankly, that has disappeared. That has disappeared because the public are working with us. I think everybody realises that these are unprecedented times and everybody is pulling together.

In terms of the challenges for us, there is a challenge around absence, which is different to what we have had before. We think it is around 10% extra that we are facing here. At the same time, some of the demands on our services have gone down, which means that we are able to cope with some of that.

One of the important things that we all need to think about as we move forward is how we keep the messages fresh with the public—how we make sure that when we are carrying out our four Es strategy that we are doing it in a way that means that the message is still fresh and meaningful, and people don't forget about it or think that it is less important with every day that passes.

Q147 **Chair:** Thank you. Chief Constable John Robins.

**Chief Constable John Robins:** Good afternoon. I will start with the challenges. Quite simply, policing these new restrictions in a way that maintains public confidence in policing and at the same time protects the NHS is the key challenge that we have seen over the last couple of weeks.

Our second challenge locally is protecting the public and protecting people from harm in what is a new policing environment in terms of domestic abuse, child abuse, child sexual exploitation, fraud and cyber-related crime. We are having to adapt and change the way in which we are policing to ensure that we are still protecting vulnerable people.

The third challenge, as was mentioned in the earlier evidence, is our communications—our communications internally within the organisation to get the right message at the right time to the right staff, but also externally, with the public, to help explain what we are doing, why we have to do these things and what our new policing style is.

In terms of adherence, we are very fortunate. I am pleased to report that adherence across West Yorkshire has been very good and I thank the public of West Yorkshire for that. I think that chief constables up and down the country have seen that on a national level, despite some of the early difficult few days as we all settled into this. I think as a society, across the United Kingdom, we have seen very good adherence and that has helped us and helped the NHS and helped the whole of society response to this.

Lastly, in the questions you asked, you touched on what has worked well. For us, technology has worked really well. Mobile, agile, digitally-enabled environments have enabled us to continue policing. Nationally, the National Police Chiefs' Council co-ordination under NPoCC has worked



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really well as well. That has seen us getting a consistent and clear approach as we have gone forward. The support of the Home Office in what we have been doing more recently has also worked well.

Q148 **Chair:** Thank you very much. I welcome the points that you all have made about the high levels of adherence to the guidance across the country. Can I ask a very factual point? How many fines have your officers issued? Chief Constable Robins?

**Chief Constable John Robins:** We have taken an approach alongside everybody else nationally around engaging and explaining. We have spoken to thousands of people over the last couple of weeks and worked with them. We have then encouraged, and we have done that where people have clearly been breaching the restrictions. Out of 1,200 people, we have a record of one. That is not enforcement. That is a record of speaking to them and explaining the error of their ways.

In the last nine to 11 days, since the enforcement of these regulations, we have thankfully had to enforce only 20 cases. Those were cases where people were deliberately breaching the regulations, and were often associated with other criminality. It is few and far between because we have been in that place of engagement, encouragement and explanation, rather than getting to enforcement. It is only where we have to and only where we are trying to stop the spread of the virus.

Q149 **Chair:** So, to clarify, in order to implement the health measures, you have spoken to 1,200 people and implemented 20 fines.

**Chief Constable John Robins:** Yes, we have enforced 20.

**Chief Constable Peter Goodman:** It is exactly the same approach here in Derbyshire, where it has all been about “engage, explain, encourage”. We have had to give out fixed penalty notices on 30 occasions. Interestingly, over half of those were during the course of the last weekend, when we had better weather. Again, it is only where the first three Es have failed to encourage people to do the right thing that, unfortunately, we have had to use enforcement. But it is absolutely the last resort, and there has been no repeat enforcement, where the fixed penalty notices go up—these are all single occasions.

**Chief Constable Garry Forsyth:** As I mentioned earlier, we are one of the forces in the UK that was an early adopter of conditional cautioning, which meant that we did not have the infrastructure in place to deliver fines until 7 am on Friday this week. So we were very much focused, like other colleagues, on the “engage, encourage and explain” piece. Since we went live with fines on Friday at 7 am, we issued one over the course of the weekend, and that has been the full extent of our issues.

**Chief Constable Lisa Winward:** Likewise, we have predominantly adopted an “engage, explain and encourage people” approach. We only started to issue any enforcement on Thursday, four days ago, and we have issued 11 fines during that period, but only in cases where it has

been blatant disregard for what we are trying to achieve in preventing the spread of the virus.

Q150 **Chair:** Can I ask you specifically about parks? You will know the concerns that have been raised about urban parks particularly and the tension between making sure that people can get exercise and support their mental health and so on—especially those who do not have access to gardens, where it becomes even more important—and the need to maintain social distancing. We have seen the issue with Brockwell Park, which we are told was closed under police recommendation. Have any of you faced or considered issues around needing to close some of your busiest urban parks?

**Chief Constable Lisa Winward:** We experienced that very first weekend overwhelming visitors to North Yorkshire, simply because of the environment in which we police. We cover 3,300 square miles and nearly 6,000 miles of road, and predominantly people visit us from outside our area for our beauty spots, the coast and the city of York. We have millions of visitors. To try to discourage people, certain areas of our national parks have been closed by those agencies rather than the police, to try to avoid the spread of the virus. I am extremely grateful to our public here and to those we engaged with in the first week. We have seen much support this past weekend and people not visiting those areas, and we are very grateful for people now heeding that advice, taking their exercise more locally and not driving hundreds of miles to visit those beauty spots.

**Chair:** We will come back to the beauty spots issue, but this question is specifically on urban parks.

**Chief Constable John Robins:** In the first weekend, we did see significant gatherings in parks across all of West Yorkshire, in Leeds, Bradford, Huddersfield and Wakefield. Again, we used the engagement approach over the course of that week through local media and social media messages. We had the benefit of the support of local authorities, which took some decisions on closing parks. That assisted us, because it became a societal issue rather than just a policing issue. I am pleased to report that we have looked at 60 of our urban parks, and there has not been any breach of the restrictions during this last weekend. Bearing in mind that it was a particularly hot Sunday, that has been really beneficial to help stop the spread of the virus.

Q151 **Chair:** Have all your parks reopened, or are some of them still closed?

**Chief Constable John Robins:** There is a mixture across each of the districts. Some are open. The majority are closed, but there is a balance, because in each of our areas and districts, people have the ability and opportunity to get out and get exercise on one occasion a day for their own health and wellbeing. For those urban parks that were becoming a magnet for people, the local authorities have—quite rightly, in my view—taken the decision to close them on a few occasions.

Q152 **Chair:** What was the issue in those parks? Was it that they were so crowded that it was not possible for people to stand more than 2 metres



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apart from each other, or that people were deliberately sitting down in groups? What was it that was going against the regulations that required you to take such strong action in terms of park closures?

**Chief Constable John Robins:** Across West Yorkshire, we have a lot of residents in high-density populations. We have a lot of people who do not have access to a garden or even a yard. I have the utmost sympathy for people who need to get out, especially those with families and children. The issue was with people sitting, congregating or gathering, and therefore being, on some occasions, within 2 metres of each other and, equally, not fulfilling the spirit of exercising once a day.

Of course, for any young family out to exercise or play football, we do not want to enforce that, but it is not in the spirit of the legislation for groups of people to sit around on the first weekend—essentially drinking and listening to music—and it will not stop the spread of the virus. Once again, through education, wider engagement and, thankfully, greater public advice from the Government, we were able to get to a place so that people could take exercise, not sit around and take leisure time.

Q153 **Chair:** I am still not clear what is actually happening. Are those parks still closed? You made it sound as if they are open again and now people are playing football in them or taking exercise, rather than sitting down having picnics. Which is it? Are they closed, or are they now open and being used appropriately?

**Chief Constable John Robins:** Forgive me. There is a mixture of parks—some are closed and some are open for exercise. Across all 60 over this weekend, there were not any flagrant breaches of regulation, which was the most important thing for us. It depends on the local authority; they make the decision about the closure of parks. The vast majority are closed but there is still access to some parks for some people, for exercise.

Q154 **Chair:** On the ones that are closed, you said that you have issued only 20 fines. Did you, with the local authority, consider introducing a much stronger individual approach to take enforcement action against those who were breaching the regulations, so that you could then keep the parks open for other people who were not breaching the regulations and may have nowhere else to exercise?

**Chief Constable John Robins:** We have five local authority areas that all have their own command structures in place. From a West Yorkshire policing perspective, we co-ordinate and oversee those. That would be a decision made with local gold groups, between local policing partners and the local authorities. There is no unilateral West Yorkshire discussion about that. Those discussions will have happened locally, based on local knowledge, local people and a local understanding of what other facilities are available to them.

Q155 **Chair:** But you will understand that the question was about whether it is possible simply to increase enforcement rather than to close places altogether.



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**Chief Constable John Robins:** I am satisfied that, while some of the parks are closed, there are sufficient places for people to exercise for their health and wellbeing on their trips out once a day, if that answers your question.

Q156 **Chair:** Even though the majority of parks are now closed?

**Chief Constable John Robins:** Yes, because there are still sufficient areas where people can go. Despite it being West Yorkshire, as you well know, there are areas of countryside local to people, and those in cities and towns also have the ability to exercise in other areas. I maintain that some of the parks are still open—they are not all closed unilaterally.

Q157 **Chair:** Sure. In the couple of days before those parks were closed, were police officers or PCSOs attempting enforcement in them?

**Chief Constable John Robins:** I do not believe so. There was not that element of enforcement; there was only an element of encouragement, engagement and explanation. There were occasions where we walked through some parks or went through in vehicles and vans and engaged with people to try to move them on and explain what the legislation was. That was some 10 days ago now, on the first weekend, when it was still uncertain what exactly the restrictions meant for people in terms of exercise and their leisure time.

Q158 **Chair:** So some parks were closed in advance of any enforcement action within them?

**Chief Constable John Robins:** I cannot answer that question without learning the localities of each park, I am afraid.

**Chair:** Thank you. Garry Forsyth.

**Chief Constable Garry Forsyth:** We have incorporated the urban parks as part of our trial strategy, so officers have been attending them regularly. We have seen a high degree of adherence by people who are utilising the parks for exercise, so we have not seen any breaches there. We have been engaging with people throughout and making sure that they understand what the regulations are. We have not had any necessity at all—working with our local authority partners—to close any of the parks. Local authorities have put some signage up in the parks to reinforce the communication and the education piece that we are undertaking. Obviously, the children's play area equipment is closed off in some of those parks.

**Chair:** Okay. Peter Goodman.

**Chief Constable Peter Goodman:** I don't have much to ask. We have not had massive problems in our urban parks at all in terms of behaviour. We have dealt with some very minor stuff through engagement. We have not had any conversations with our local councils about shutting parks—it has not been a big issue for us in urban areas.

Q159 **Dehenna Davison:** Specifically for Garry, I understand you have a really



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low rate of enforcement so far. Is there a concern that that might show the public that it is not necessarily being taken all that seriously, and that might not necessarily have the appropriate impact on people correcting their behaviour?

**Chief Constable Garry Forsyth:** That is always a concern, but it is not one that we are seeing play out at the moment. Because we were not in a position to enforce at the outset, we focused heavily on communicating the messages through our local communities. We have very good relationships with our local communities. One of the things that we found worked very well for us was that we put out video messages in 16 different languages, through our social media channels, our website and other channels. That focused on encouraging people, explaining what we are dealing with and bringing people together to help us to help them to, ultimately, help the NHS and save lives. That message worked powerfully.

We do not think there is a risk of people thinking there is a soft touch in enforcement, because what we are trying to do is win the battle for hearts and minds, really. In addition to putting out those messages, we have the Bedfordshire Police Partnership Trust, which is a charity. We work with our partners to identify vulnerable individuals. We have delivered 107 care packages to vulnerable individuals through that police partnership trust, which is working with the fire service and the police and crime commissioner's office.

Things like that enable us to gain the support of the public and build on that momentum and encouragement that we have around the engagement piece, which means we do not have to get to the enforcement phase. But clearly, if we do, we will. The messaging is clear. While we have only enforced one ticket, there have been a number of arrests, charges and prosecutions of people who have spat at NHS workers or coughed towards officers. Our messaging around all that is clear, and it is important that we have the support of the public to enable us to continue with it.

Q160 **Dehenna Davison:** Thank you. A question for all four of you: have you noticed significant numbers of cases being reported, where people call in and say, "I've just seen someone in the park"? If so, how have you been following those up and enforcing them? Let's hear from you first, Garry.

**Chief Constable Garry Forsyth:** We haven't seen huge numbers. We have seen a slight drop-off in our overall call handling traffic, and obviously a reduction in overall crime. When we look at our cancellation of non-essential training, and redeploy those resources back on to the frontline, the reduction in crime means that we can enhance that patrol activity in those areas. About 1.6% of the overall information coming in to our force control room relates to covid matters. We have seen one or two items on social media, which is another effective way for us to respond to that. We are not inundated with people reporting breaches of the guidance or non-adherence to the rules.

**Chief Constable Peter Goodman:** Just over 11% of our calls for service from members of the public over the last weekend were in relation to



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covid-19. Some of that was about things taking place in public spaces; some of it was about people entertaining at their home addresses. We believe that some of that is a little misguided, and a little bit of it may be malicious—getting your own back on your neighbours—but the vast majority has been about concerned members of the public doing the responsible thing. We have seen a big shift in demand, and we expect that to continue, especially with the bank holiday weekend coming up.

**Chief Constable Lisa Winward:** Likewise, we have seen a shift in demand in calls for service; we have seen some calls into the control room and some social media, predominantly good-willed members of the public just trying to prevent the spread of the virus, as opposed to people trying to create a bad feeling in that community. There is genuine concern about the spread of the virus.

We have strong engagement and neighbourhood policing models throughout the force, and those officers and staff have been engaging with members of the public to provide that reassurance, guidance or advice about when those circumstances go beyond the “encourage and explain” stage and we need to take further action. But again, enforcement is the last resort to educating the public about working together as a community to keep us all safe and save lives.

**Chief Constable John Robins:** We are seeing a significant increase in calls around people not complying with the restrictions, but like my colleague in North Yorkshire, it has predominantly been people trying to assist, talking about people breaching guidelines in a way that has enabled us to get neighbourhood policing team officers to the right place and to engage and encourage people. So we have been able to cope with it, but it has been beneficial in some ways that they have been able to help us get to the right place.

Q161 **Dehenna Davison:** One more question, if I may. The NPCC guidance specifically referred to how we can encourage compliance among younger people. What are your thoughts on that? Are your forces facing any particular challenges? How you are trying to overcome them?

**Chief Constable John Robins:** Again, there are no specific challenges in relation to young people. I am cognisant of the reasons why young people may be out and about, but in reality, especially over this last week, there has been a significant improvement as people have been compliant. The staff who are doing the engagement work are predominantly neighbourhood policing team officers, who know their communities and the young people they work with, so it has not been an issue for us.

**Chief Constable Lisa Winward:** On the first weekend of the guidelines, we saw a lot of reports of antisocial behaviour by young people in groups and people genuinely concerned about the spread of the virus. Since that time, we have obviously been out and the guidance has been more available and more talked about, and we have seen a huge reduction in reports of antisocial behaviour in young people. We have put social media appeals out through parents to say, “Please, where are your children? We



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are just trying to protect them from harm.” We have very strong youth groups here, such as the North Yorkshire Youth Commission, which can communicate with young people directly as a peer group and try to encourage them to understand the risks. That has had a very effective outcome here in North Yorkshire.

**Chief Constable Garry Forsyth:** There are no particular challenges we have identified just yet, although one of the things we are doing is running an initiative called “Kids Keeping Beds Safe” which we are pushing through our website, because this gives us an opportunity to do some things in a different way. Our community officers are actually running online competitions for children that they can participate in. I do not think we will be quite as big a runaway success as Joe Wicks, but early indications are that we are getting some really positive feedback from our communities about how we can engage with some of our younger people in our communities around that.

Q162 **Dehenna Davison:** Brilliant. Peter?

**Chief Constable Peter Goodman:** Likewise. As we have got further into this public health crisis, we have found that the behaviour of all groups and all different backgrounds has improved; it is the same with young people. We have not had massive issues with young people ignoring the guidelines and advice or breaching the regulations. Where we have had that, we have generally been able to resolve it through engaging with them. We recognise that young people have different ways of engaging, so we are trying to be as innovative as we can be around use of different social media to engage them. Indeed—you will probably see this go viral at some point today—some of my officers will try to rap in one area of the city. It has gone down really, really well in the local community that the officers are trying to engage in a way that they understand.

**Dehenna Davison:** Brilliant. Thank you, all, and please do pass on our thanks to your staff for everything they are doing at the moment.

Q163 **Janet Daby:** Thank you, everybody, for attending this panel. My question is about the training that frontline officers have received from managers as well as those who may be returning to the police force to help out, such as retired officers. What type of training have they had on the new legislation and how is that monitored? Because there is a lot of new information out there for the public but also for the officers. How is that being managed?

**Chief Constable Garry Forsyth:** I think we have used the word unprecedented quite a few times today, but to go from starting out on a legislative process to implementation within such a short time is completely unheard of. It has been a challenge, and I think that is why we have seen some of the challenges around the difference of interpretation early on, but I think we are past that now.

In terms of our training model locally, what we did was a cascade briefing to all our frontline officers and teams through their supervisors. We put caveats on there that nobody could go to any enforcement action until we



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had a documented audit trail of the fact that they had received the appropriate training. That has been fed back and checked off as the training has been delivered through the supervisors. We are confident we know all of our officers and staff who have had the training and those who have yet to receive it, because either they have been off sick or self-isolating. They will be wrapped up again in a cascade briefing with an audit trail when they return to duty.

In terms of officers who will be potentially coming back as volunteers or special constables as we start to deploy those later, we will look very much to employ the same approach to training them as well. We are utilising some of our special constables at the moment to very good effect. We are training those who are being utilised before they are deployed, but we are holding some in reserve, because of some of the issues with PPE that were mentioned earlier. We want to have a proportion of the workforce that we can bring in as a reserve should we need to, and it is important that we do not exhaust our PPE supplies with over-provision of resource to some of these areas. We are collating a list of people, and thank you to all those people who have expressed an interest in returning to policing. It has been a considerable number. It has been really encouraging and really impressive. We are not deploying those people at the moment. We are holding them in a reserve position, because actually we are operating at a level at the moment that is very much business as usual for us by managing the cancellation of non-essential training and those other elements. Before anybody is deployed in any capacity, they will have an assessment made of what training they require to deliver the objective that will be relevant to that role. That will be provided to them individually.

**Chief Constable Peter Goodman:** Thank you for the question. It is very similar again. We have tried to use as many different methods as possible in the organisation to reinforce what officers and police staff should be doing as well. Every one of my officers and staff has mobile devices. They have received cascade training through those. We have done it through sergeants' briefings. We have also done it through practice on the intranet, including videos, as well as PowerPoint presentations and the like.

We actually have not got any officers who have returned who had retired, but when they do come back, we will be looking to deploy them in roles where they can do that kind of thing as well. Interestingly, during the course of April, our special constabulary has been a massive support to us. We have had 700 hours of additional service from our special constables, and they have all received the additional training as well. Our volunteer force is doing a fantastic job in supporting the frontline at this time.

Q164 **Janet Daby:** Brilliant, thank you. Lisa?

**Chief Constable Lisa Winward:** I would echo everything that has been said and give a huge thank you for that overwhelming response from the public of retired officers and volunteers who want to come and join us and assist. A huge thank you to them. Again, we are not utilising those people



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just yet, but a training needs assessment would take place depending on when they left the service and how up to date their accredited training was at the point of rejoining us. Alongside those briefings and cascade training through electronic devices, we have also issued a pocket guide to all our frontline officers and staff to take out with them on patrol, just as a reminder and a reference guide for them alongside that training.

Q165 **Janet Daby:** Very good. Finally, John.

**Chief Constable John Robins:** In terms of what colleagues have said around the training methodology, every frontline officer has had that training. It is worth putting on record that the NPCC and the College of Policing training product was excellent, given the very short timeframe that they had to put that together. It gave clarity and had clarity in the message and clarity on the tone of the policing style we want. We have done all those things that people have said.

In terms of the additionality, as I have said, one of the key challenges for us was communication in a large metropolitan force, but we have been clear through one daily singular gold briefing going out to all staff across all the organisation, and then there has been a series of videos to set the policing style. As any chief constable up and down the country will tell you, the way to test these things is to get out there yourself. I have been on many briefings, as other colleagues will have been, to sit alongside the frontline to see whether they understand the tone and temperament of exactly what we are trying to do here. I am pleased to say that, in the main, they are there and they get why we are doing this.

In terms of returners, we have some specifics around our communications facilities, so they will slot straight back into what they already understand and do, so their training will be specific to that. Other training will be specific to the role. We do not envisage, at this stage, having returning frontline police officers out on the streets, but we may get there in future, depending on how the crisis goes.

Q166 **Chair:** We missed out the issue of beauty spots when I was asking about the urban parks earlier. Lisa and Peter, you are covering some of the areas around beauty spots, and you have also had questions raised about drones issues, the use of road checks and so on. What are your reflections, a week on, about the concerns that were raised with you about some of those early measures, whether they were effective and what the impact has been overall?

**Chief Constable Peter Goodman:** Yes, it has been an interesting time for Derbyshire in the headlines in the last couple of weeks, particularly around drone usage. I should point out that we have not done any road checks in any of our beauty spots or at the entry to any of our beauty spots. It is interesting. If you look at the footage from this weekend, Chair, you will see lots of aerial footage of different parts of the country, and it has passed off without any kind of comment, so how the world changes in a week or so.



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We had a situation where we put the drones up because, frankly, the Peak park was inundated with visitors that weekend when we had very nice weather. Local communities were under siege. Elderly residents in our communities particularly felt that they could not leave their houses. They were already self-isolating, but they felt they could not go to the shops to get essentials and, when they eventually did go to the shops to get essentials, there was nothing in there, because the tourists had taken absolutely everything.

So it was a direct request from our communities in the Peak district that we did something to discourage people from coming. It was a bit controversial, but it created a conversation. That is what we wanted to do with the public: to ask, in these times of crisis—I do not care what the regulations say—is it really the right thing to do to get in your car and drive to beauty spots where elderly and vulnerable communities are trying to survive?

The consequence is that we have seen a huge drop-off in visiting the national parks. One thing we noted this weekend through our ANPR networks, however, is that across Derbyshire, we have seen a slight increase in vehicle movements across the county, which suggests that the battle is not completely won.

We need to keep reinforcing that message to please stay away from beauty spots, because they will remain rural and uninhabited only if you do not go there. If people decide to go there, they become crowded spaces.

**Chief Constable Lisa Winward:** As I mentioned, we have unique geography here, with thousands of square miles and thousands of miles of roads to police. We have found that some of our local media messages were not getting out to those millions of visitors who actually come from outside our county.

We are bordered by seven other counties and lots of people flood to our beauty spots, coastal areas and the city of York. We found that through setting up vehicle engagement points, we were able to speak to people and discuss the guidance, and adopt that approach to engage, explain and encourage people not to travel hundreds of miles to the beauty spots across our county and put people's lives at risk.

We have taken a lot of learning from that experience. We perhaps should have engaged with the media earlier, because it did come out in a headline as a roadblock, which in legislation is a completely different tactic—a much more enforcement style of tactic—and that was not intended by our engaging with and advising the public, and providing that information to encourage them not travel hundreds of miles.

The outcome has been very positive, on reflection. I have been out on patrol in Whitby this week, which is very isolated and there are not many visitors at all other than local residents out doing their essentials. We have seen a huge drop in travel across our roads. We have been able to remove



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those vehicle engagement points because the message appears to have got out there.

There have been lots of pictures on social media, in partnership, this weekend of our empty beaches and national parks, with a message that they will still be there after the crisis, and a thank you to the public for that engagement and the outcome of that early engagement through the vehicle points.

**Q167 Holly Lynch:** I reiterate what has already been said by colleagues and thank you once again. We are under no illusions about how difficult all your jobs will be at the moment, so we say thank you to you and your colleagues on the frontline.

Returning to PPE, which we have touched on, we are hearing anxieties from officers on the frontline and we heard them from your colleagues at the Police Federation and the Police Superintendents' Association in the previous panel. I am hearing from senior officers that there is PPE with police forces, but what are we doing inside those forces to make sure that that PPE is on the frontline and available for officers in their day-to-day interactions with their communities?

I am really grateful for the exchanges that I had earlier this week with my regional chief constable, so perhaps we will start with you, Chief Constable John Robins. For the benefit of the rest of the Committee, what are we doing inside forces to make sure that that PPE is on the frontline?

**Chief Constable John Robins:** There is a police-specific supply line into regional supply centres. In our region, it's in Wakefield, but there are eight up and down the country. From those centres they supply forces, and those forces, depending on the site, have an internal supply line out to the frontline, which goes to districts, police stations and teams. There is regular checking throughout the day by officers, on behalf of their colleagues, of what equipment is in place.

I want to make it clear that there have been some really specific issues throughout all this about gaining sufficient amounts of PPE. I am confident, in my force, that officers who need PPE right now on the streets have got it; they have got access to it, although it might not all be on them or with them at that moment in time.

There are three levels at the moment. First, in routine policing, where social distancing can apply, then as with every other member of the public, there is no need for routine PPE. Secondly, where they are entering into a position where they are going to be within 2 metres, where they are laying hands on for an arrest or a life-saving situation, of course they have access to PPE with the vehicles. Then, when they are entering into the third level, where there are more significant, higher risk incidents around death and critical incidents involving people who are covid-positive, there is a second level of higher protection PPE.

Some guidance about PPE for frontline officers has come out over the weekend from Public Health England and through the NPCC and the NHS.



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We are now working our way through that, but the challenge is always, as the NHS and the care system have seen, getting the supply line right, getting the replenishment right and getting the equipment to people.

My heart goes out to frontline officers and staff, who have done a brilliant job over the last couple of weeks, often—as the Police Federation and the Police Superintendents' Association have said—with sporadic elements of not having the right PPE. But they are stepping forward into this and doing their job of policing incredibly well. Our job as the leaders is to make sure we can get our hands on as much PPE as we can, but we are in a period of national crisis. Internationally, the whole supply chain is under pressure, so while we have stocks, I am not confident as to how long those stocks will last, especially as we go forward, but we are engaging with the National Police Chiefs Council and the NPoCC organisation, who have resupplied us.

**Q168 Holly Lynch:** Chief Constable Winward, what is the situation in North Yorkshire?

**Chief Constable Lisa Winward:** To echo what John said, I am really grateful for the work of the staff associations in supporting their staff and officers. Their wellbeing is paramount to us as chief constables: if we can keep them safe, they can go out and keep the public safe. We are grateful for the national support that has been provided around this—the work of NPoCC and the NPCC to get that supply chain moving in a more coordinated way now. We are grateful for that. We have supplies and we have been out, as I am sure my colleagues have, to check physically that that PPE is available; it is, and our officers and staff have it at the moment, but I share John's concerns about the supply line continuing as this crisis continues.

**Q169 Holly Lynch:** Chief Constable Garry Forsyth?

**Chief Constable Garry Forsyth:** I think I can confidently say, on behalf of all my colleagues at chief constable level across the country and all senior leaders in policing, that the safety and wellbeing of all our staff is of paramount importance to us at all times, especially at the moment. As I think Simon Kempton mentioned earlier, we are used to seeing officers running towards danger, but this is slightly different in that they cannot see that danger and there is a risk that they will carry it home with them. The use of PPE and its appropriate availability is obviously essential for all our officers and staff, who are responding so brilliantly to the challenges being presented to them.

We had some difficulty in getting close to what our sustainable stocks were last week. However, the support that we were offered, through the Home Secretary dialling in to the chief constables' call and giving us assurances on the PPE being made available, did play out, and I know that the Policing Minister intervened directly to support delivery to Bedfordshire through my PCC here, so we have had good, encouraging support from there as well.



The pace at which this is moving means that the guidance is always changing. That will be a challenge as we interpret the new guidance coming from various different places on making sure that we have enough PPE available going forward, but we will do everything we can to ensure that our officers have the right levels of PPE. We currently have daily checks. We have over-ordered, but if the guidance changes, we could have to use more of it and we will need to revisit the supply chains and over-order again, but we will do everything we can to make sure our officers and staff have the PPE they need.

Q170 **Holly Lynch:** And in Derbyshire?

**Chief Constable Peter Goodman:** I won't reiterate what my colleagues have said—all that is true—but will just add a couple of bits. First, we have slightly changed our policing model, so that we are now dealing with some of the incidents that we would have gone to before with an army of officers through staff who are working from home, because they are self-isolating, who are able to resolve them by means other than going to the incident. We are doing that on the basis of threat, harm, risk and vulnerability. That is not because we cannot cope; the whole purpose of it is to minimise the risk that my officers face. It means that we can provide a sustainable service over a longer period.

Secondly, I think we have all been planning for quite a long time for this—we saw it coming over the hill. We are in quite a fortunate position here in Derbyshire in that we have a lot of PPE—masks, surgical gloves, goggles; everything that we need—and we have plentiful supplies that will see us through, certainly over the next two to three months. That is because—again, a shout-out to the public in Derbyshire—we have had local suppliers provide that for us. We have nearly 2,000 pairs of goggles, which were provided to us by a local building firm, free of charge. We have had lots and lots of masks—21,000 at the moment—provided to us directly by a local firm. So as well as having the national and regional co-ordination, the people of Derbyshire have stepped forward again.

Q171 **Ruth Edwards:** I want to ask you about resources and the availability of officers for the frontline. We have talked about the huge impact on police numbers that people being in self-isolation and officers being off work unwell with the virus will obviously have. I know that there has been a campaign by a lot of police chiefs nationally to get employers to release their special constables on paid leave so that they can report for duty, including in my local police force. What proportion of your special constables have had their employers agree to voluntarily release them for duty? Perhaps I could start with Chief Constable Forsyth, going across my screen from left to right.

**Chief Constable Garry Forsyth:** I would have to get back to you with the specific figures. As I mentioned, we are utilising our special constabularies on a limited basis at the moment, because we want to hold them in strategic reserve. We are generally seeing abstraction levels across the workforce running at somewhere between 10% and 14%. As I mentioned earlier, the cancellation of non-essential training and the



reductions that we have seen in some of the overall demand created by reductions in crime reporting and call handling numbers mean that we are able to utilise our resources to maintain business as usual across all our areas of business. For me, it is important that, if we see a further spike in our abstraction rates and absence rates, for whatever reason, we have a strategic reserve that backfills that through volunteers and the use of the special constabulary. However, I do not know the exact availability numbers of our special constabulary at the moment, so will have to come back to you with those.

**Q172 Ruth Edwards:** That is fine. I asked a question about this in Parliament the other week, and a number of special constables from across the country have contacted me to say, "I would love to be able to volunteer full-time with my force, but my employer is not releasing me for duty. They are not willing to increase the amount of time I am released for, and there is nothing in the law that can compel them to release me." That is where my question is coming from really. Have you had any resistance—people who want to volunteer but are not able to because their employers will not let them—and would a tweak in the law or Government guidance be useful? Perhaps I could go to Chief Constable Goodman.

**Chief Constable Peter Goodman:** Thank you for the question. There have been some examples of employers releasing people, but it has only been a few; I think it is four employers that have released their special constables full-time to support us. I am really grateful to them, but I am also conscious that we have an economy to keep running, so some employers have been reluctant when we have approached them because they want to keep their businesses running where possible. We have written to all our special constables across the force to say, "Please have the conversation with your employer," and if they are interested, we will carry on with that. As I say, there is only a minor take-up rate at the moment.

Having said that, our actual absence levels are dropping. They are down 5% on where they were at the start of the crisis as we have got beyond the first two weeks of self-isolation. All our trends are saying that those levels are going to stay steady—if not decline a little further. As colleagues are saying, we are thinking about what we are doing in terms of special reserves as we move forward, but we are okay with things at the moment and we think we will be for the time being.

**Q173 Ruth Edwards:** That is good news. Thank you. Chief Constable Robins?

**Chief Constable John Robins:** Attendance levels have got better over the last week. We had a number of individuals off self-isolating and in the vulnerable categories, but we are now down at 8.3% of our workforce who are unable to work at this moment in time. Of those people, a significant number are actually working agilely—they are still putting in the work but not in the workplace, if that makes sense.



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There are 282 special constables across West Yorkshire; 18 of them are working full-time under the employee assistance programme, and 177 are in the process of asking their employers whether they can come and work for the police full-time. There is another group who we have to remember are actually key workers—whether they are working in the NHS or in other situations—who unfortunately we cannot now use as they are required elsewhere. We are going through the process of getting as many special constables, with the full warranted powers of police officers, working alongside us. I am grateful to those employers who have released them to date.

Q174 **Ruth Edwards:** Chief Constable Winward?

**Chief Constable Lisa Winward:** Earlier we heard the federation say that there was a 13% or 14% abstraction rate. Likewise, we have an abstraction rate of about 8%—that is both isolating and sick. Therefore, with the reduction in demand from things like the night-time economy and some other crimes, we are actually seeing an uplift in people who are turning out to deliver that engagement on our streets. Our capacity, fortunately, is good at the moment.

I have the privilege of being the national citizens in policing lead for the NPCC. That includes special constabulary, volunteers and so on. I have been very privileged to be involved in some of the background work that you have talked about. We are still doing that research. There are 180 companies—some of them national companies—that are engaged in employer-supported policing, which offers their special constabulary members of staff 12 days a year to come out on patrol as a special constable. We have written to all those companies asking them whether they can expand on that amount in this time of crisis. We have seen some companies whose staff cannot work at the moment, and those staff are putting their uniforms on and coming out with us almost full-time. That is great to see.

We are gathering data on DutySheet, which keeps a record of all the special constabulary hours and duties. We will be able to collect that information both nationally and locally and provide the Committee with those figures shortly. Obviously, extrapolating over a couple of weeks, rather than individual days and shifts, will give us a much better idea of what people were normally working before the crisis started, and then in the subsequent weeks that followed that crisis and the request for people to come and volunteer. As my colleagues have said, we are still at good capacity, so we might see more use of that capacity as things develop. In the background, we are looking at the longer-term opportunities to expand on the benefit brought by our special constabulary and volunteers in times of crisis, and at how we might look to change the legislation to support us in that in the longer term.

Q175 **Ruth Edwards:** I have one follow-up question to you, Chief Constable Winward, if I may, since you are the national lead. You mentioned a long-term project looking at the legislation. Do you think a tweak in the law might be helpful? It occurs to me that, since we passed the Coronavirus



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Bill a few weeks ago, health and social care workers—volunteers—have to be released by employers, but there seems to be a bit of a grey area over releasing policing resource. I imagine a pandemic may not be the only situation that we might feasibly face in the future where the power to have those individuals automatically released to you might be useful.

**Chief Constable Lisa Winward:** Absolutely, and I think we want to maintain that very special element of volunteering in policing, and therefore a look at the legislation in times of crisis would absolutely be welcomed, as opposed to a broader change in the legislation in terms of that volunteering, because it is a very special relationship at the moment in terms of our policing model.

**Chair:** Thank you.

Q176 **Stephen Doughty:** Thanks again, Chief Constables, for all that you are doing and all that your teams are doing. I also want to praise my own force, South Wales Police. During the course of this Committee, I have had officers coming back to me on a whole series of issues relating to some of the things we have been discussing today, and I am really conscious of how hard everybody is working at this time.

I want to ask, similarly to the first panel, about the rise in domestic abuse or at least in inquiries about domestic abuse that Refuge was highlighting today, and indeed the concerns I raised about the rise in potential child safeguarding issues as well. Can you tell me a little bit about what your experience in your force is, how you are responding to it and whether you believe that there is a problem?

**Chief Constable Garry Forsyth:** It is a concern for us obviously, and we anticipate at the outset that we might see an increase in domestic abuse, and concerns have been expressed around child sexual abuse as well.

We have included in our briefings to our officers, as part of our engagement approach, the need to be professionally curious as to why some people might not be indoors, because actually it might not be a safe place for them to be, and obviously to have that safeguarding awareness at the forefront of their mind when we are engaging with young people and potentially vulnerable individuals as well. One of the things that has been very useful for us to have as well is that our PCC, very early on, made £60,000 available for provision of accommodation, be it a hotel or short-term rents, for people who are subject to domestic abuse, so it is something we are very much alive to.

I have to say that, in terms of the statistics and tracking of those offences at the moment, we are not seeing a particularly appreciable increase in domestic abuse or child sex abuse at this moment in time, but it is very early days. The long-term trend is an upwards one, but it is a little bit too early on in terms of the numbers to be able to make definitive judgments, but it is certainly something we are alive to and we are tracking that on a daily basis.

Q177 **Stephen Doughty:** Are you making available—for example, through your



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999 call centre—the provision where I think somebody can dial 55 if they are experiencing domestic abuse but does not want to explain that on the phone?

**Chief Constable Garry Forsyth:** Yes, we do. I am pretty sure we have that available in ours. I remember reading that recently, so I think we have that.

Q178 **Stephen Doughty:** Okay. Chief Constable Lisa Winward?

**Chief Constable Lisa Winward:** As my colleague Garry has said, we have not seen an increase yet in those reports into our control room, but we have engaged with our officers and staff at briefings just to raise that awareness to look out for those things when they are called to other incidents, and to be more aware of those things that might not be reported because of the unique nature of people being perhaps trapped in a situation where they cannot come and speak to us. Our staff are very alive to that.

I think the tester will be through some of our partner agencies. We are doing a lot of work now where other agencies—voluntary agencies, domestic violence and abuse co-ordination services—are seeing that increasing contact, even though it is not police contact at the moment. That is a good indicator to us that there are some people starting to explore what their options are if they feel that they are in a difficult set of circumstances. I think a real partnership approach to this will help us to uncover some of those statistics that I think we will see go up in terms of child abuse and domestic violence.

Q179 **Stephen Doughty:** Chief Constable Goodman?

**Chief Constable Peter Goodman:** Again, I won't repeat what my colleagues have said, but I think that we all saw what the research in Italy and China told us about domestic abuse and child exploitation. So we are doing all the things that my colleagues are doing. But at the same time, we are not seeing a statistical rise in incidents or indeed crimes.

One of our concerns around that, which we are looking at very closely, is that we are seeing a reduction in referrals from partner agencies, partly because they have less capacity to do the work that they have to do. And we are busy working with them to try and make sure that we do not neglect that kind of referral from partner agencies, and that it is as robust as possible.

Secondly, we have maintained all our resources. Our resourcing in those areas of policing are as strong as they have ever been, and we are not seeing burnout in those areas.

Can I just put my national hat on for a moment, which is around cyber-crime and serious and organised crime? Again, we are very concerned about child sexual exploitation and abuse online at the moment, particularly because more and more people are online at home, and not at work or at school. Again, we are working across Government to try and



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make sure that we provide as many protective messages as possible, in as many means as possible, to discourage that.

Also, however, we are maintaining as some of our critical resources our national and regional cyber-crime capability, which we are turning to make sure that we try and go after people who might be exploiting people online.

Q180 **Stephen Doughty:** Just on that point about child sexual exploitation online, are you actually seeing an increase in incidents, or is it that you expect that there will be potentially one, and therefore preparing for it? At the moment, what sort of evidence base are you looking at?

**Chief Constable Peter Goodman:** At the moment, I think we are still relying upon the statistical data from Italy and China. I think it is an emerging picture that we have got here. So, as far as I am aware, there is no statistical basis for this. It's just good pre-emptive work.

Q181 **Stephen Doughty:** Absolutely. And Chief Constable Robins, do you think there is a lag going on between what, for example, Refuge is reporting today—25% up in terms of calls to their helpline and 150% up in people accessing their website, compared with the same period last year—and what you are seeing in reported cases?

**Chief Constable John Robins:** All the professional judgment and experience says there is, and we will see this coming to the fore as this crisis goes forward. As colleagues have said, all our safeguarding specialist resources are all still in place and all working really hard around this. We have seen no drop-off in the reporting of our domestic abuse situation in the last two weeks compared with last year. But professional judgment would say that we can expect to see more safeguarding issues within the household.

It isn't just domestic abuse. As Peter and others have said, it is also about child sexual exploitation within the house, about child sexual exploitation online and it is around indecent images of children and the vulnerability that that puts live children into internationally.

So we are working with colleagues nationally around domestic abuse and our safeguarding campaigns, both nationally and locally. We are all revitalising our non-999 reporting processes, such as where child methodology is being used, because we have got to get access to it. That is because as well as that report there today, locally we are seeing more people accessing our domestic abuse online services, and more people going to the self-help guidance, which has given us the indicator. Also, as Peter has said, there is less reporting from those third-party safeguarding adults, whether it be teachers or carers who see young vulnerable children, or people they have got access to.

So it is a real cause for concern for us and I mentioned it earlier as one of our significant challenges of the covid crisis. It is not just the operational response to the physicality of helping the NHS, but the policing response as well, which is keeping people who are vulnerable from exploitation but

also targeting those organised crime groups that look to exploit people. So we are working very hard and the NCA has provided some fantastic products recently to us.

Q182 **Stephen Doughty:** Chief Constable Robins, I am conscious of time, so maybe you could just answer this question. We talked to the previous panel about mental health, and obviously again there is likely to be an increase in serious mental health issues and incidents that the police have to deal with, including—tragically—people taking their own lives. What evidence have you seen so far, and what evidence have you been looking at from other countries? And what are you doing to support officers dealing with those incredibly difficult situations?

**Chief Constable John Robins:** Yes, we have all the structures in place that every police force up and down the country will have. Officer and colleague support is the primary method. There is also occupational health support and specialist support through trained officers, called trauma risk management or TRiM officers, which wraps around officers who have experienced these things.

However, often it is not just in the days and weeks ahead; it is in the months and years ahead that you get the effects of these things. That policing family—that approach of looking after each other as we look after the public—has always been really important to us and will continue to be important to us throughout this crisis.

Statistically, we have not seen any early signs yet about an increase in the tragedy of mental health or suicide, but again, that is maybe for the future, to look back and see the pressures. I am equally worried about the effect on the economy and the effect that has on society, on business and on future business-related crime as well. There is a whole host of things that we have got to face and that we are facing. The first step is to get control of this virus and support the NHS to save lives. I think that, in the main, the public have been fantastic on what they have done to help us do that.

Q183 **Stephen Doughty:** I have one practical question. We have heard some quite worrying stories in the past few days from penal directors and, indeed, from some parts of the NHS that they do not necessarily have the equipment in terms of bags for appropriate removal of bodies and other equipment that they would normally use for both health and safety and the dignity of all those involved. Are you confident that within police forces you have the resources to deal with those more tragic situations appropriately?

**Chief Constable John Robins:** In the police, we have. That is probably a matter for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. That is where the local resilience forum and the strategic co-ordination groups are coming to the fore, in relation to the planning for some of the most difficult parts of the crisis that are not directly police-related but also have an impact on policing. With us in policing, in terms of forensic recovery and our capabilities, we have all the equipment we need, but



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there is another element here within local authorities and the LRFs, which I know from personal experience are on with planning that and have good access to information and equipment.

**Stephen Doughty:** Does anybody else want to add anything on either of those two points? No. Thank you all.

Q184 **Tim Loughton:** Coming back to the issue of absence rates, I think you were sitting in on the earlier session and we heard that the estimate from the superintendent was that the absence rate was about 13%. We have heard from the two Yorkshire forces here that the absence rate is nearer 8% to 8.5% in your experience. You have seen people come back to work after self-isolation in the last few days. How do we explain that dichotomy? Are the figures that we had earlier wrong? Are they out of date? Are they being skewed by the experience of the Met, which we know is the biggest hotspot for coronavirus cases and ahead of the rest of the country? Do we have any explanation for that? What I was trying to get at before—to get your take on that would be good—is the capacity issue that we still have. If, as we expect in the next few days, the spread gets worse and the expectations on the police are greater, does the enforcement role become tougher?

**Chief Constable Lisa Winward:** The national figures are monitored on a daily basis, as are our local figures. I can only suspect that the percentage that was quoted earlier by our staff association is the average across the 43 forces. I think that, up here in the northern Yorkshire forces, we have not seen the sheer volume of contact, illness and impact on the community that some of our metropolitan built-up areas have seen. I am quite sure we could provide that data in more detail to the Committee, if that would be helpful.

The figures include people who are off ill with flu-like symptoms, even though they may not have been tested for covid. Also, those people who are isolated for other reasons and therefore cannot be at work because of people at home who might have the symptoms, and indeed, the abstraction rate of those who would be frontline but who are working at home and who are still delivering an element of service remotely from those places. I think it might be helpful if we provided a greater breakdown of those statistics.

Q185 **Tim Loughton:** Chief Forsyth, is it a north-south thing? You are the southernmost force represented here. Are they just tougher up north or what?

**Chief Constable Garry Forsyth:** I couldn't possibly comment. Paul Griffiths mentioned earlier on that there is a 13.1% absence rate across the country now. I think we will see some variations of that, and some of that will be linked to some of the spread of the virus we are seeing across the country as well. Similar to other forces, we seem to have plateaued in terms of our sickness level. We got to about 14% at the highest point. We are coming back down towards 10% now, but again, we may see that change as this goes on.



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On the capacity issue, as I have mentioned a few times, we are currently operating as business as usual, because some areas of business have reduced. That gives us extra capacity to operate in the areas we want to flex into around the engage and assurance patrols that we want to be visible in those communities. We have further options around withdrawing from some levels of service to create capacity in the organisation if the sickness level increases further, and, importantly, we are looking at what we can do to have a strategic reserve of special constables and volunteers that we can bring back in to flex that upwards as well.

We are not yet getting anywhere close to those areas where we start to take drastic action in relation to withdrawal of service. We are comfortable operating as business as usual at the moment with the capacity that we have, and we have well tried and tested plans. John mentioned earlier that a flu pandemic has been No. 1 on the risk register for us for about 10 years, so we do have tried and tested plans in place and we will work through those to make sure we have the capacity that we need.

Q186 **Tim Loughton:** Chief Forsyth, before I come to your two colleagues, what will reprioritisation look like if we get to that stage, notwithstanding the fact that, as you say, there is a fair bit of flex in the system at the moment?

**Chief Constable Garry Forsyth:** Clearly, we need to answer 999 calls. We need to respond to emergencies for the public—the serious crimes that are taking place. We need to be able to retain custody facilities, and we need to be able to respond to armed response incidents and serious crime. Those are the sorts of things that you would see us reprioritising and giving a greater level of service to as we started to deal with things in a slightly different way. That is not to say that we would not deal with them. Everything would be risk-assessed on the basis of threat, harm and risk, and we would do that on an individual basis, but those are the plans we have for incremental close-downs of some elements of our business.

As an example of what we have already started to do, our business change function is not critical for us at the moment, so we have taken people out of that to support things like our Disclosure and Barring Service, which is experiencing an increase in workload to service the volunteers going to the NHS. It is about flexing things across the organisation in that way.

Q187 **Tim Loughton:** Thank you. Chief Goodman, you didn't give your absence rate. I think you said it had come down 5%, but are you in line with the others?

**Chief Constable Peter Goodman:** We are slightly higher. We are at 15%. We think there are a couple of reasons for that. First, we are not sure that we are comparing apples with apples; there might be a bit of apples with pears in this. For example, we include in our figures those people we have sent home because, according to national guidance, they are in vulnerable groups and they should be self-isolating for a longer period of time. We have a substantial number in the organisation,

particularly among our police staff, who have some quite difficult health conditions. They are included, so that probably makes a bit of a difference.

Also, we looked at this and thought, very early on, "If anybody thinks that they or anybody in their household may be exhibiting symptoms, we would like them to go off straightaway, because you know what? We would rather have higher absence at the beginning and not spread the virus around the organisation than have higher absences as we move towards the end." Our experience has been that we have come down from nearly 20% to about 15%—almost dead on 15% now. That has been a fairly long-term trajectory.

The other thing I would say is that the midlands is a hotspot at the moment. It started in the west midlands; it has spread across to the east midlands in the community. I wonder whether some of our staff are a bit more conscious of what symptoms feel like because we are living in a bit of a hotspot. But we are doing fine, and I have to say that the reason we are doing fine is not that we are managing our absence well; it is that the public are behaving so brilliantly. Many of the calls to service that we would have got in normal circumstances we simply are not getting at the moment.

**Q188 Tim Loughton:** Chief Robins, can I just add to the question? On volunteers, we heard earlier that former police officers, retired or whatever, have been asked if they will come back. I have just had a complaint from some of my retired police officers that they have signed up and heard nothing more. What is the experience in your force? Is it just mine that has not got back to people? They are complaining now and saying, "We could have volunteered for something else if we were not actually going to be needed."

**Chief Constable John Robins:** I think most forces are experiencing a similar situation, but at this moment in time there is not a need to get volunteers back in, apart from for specialist services. However, they are just going through the technical processes of seeing how to get people back on board and get them back into the organisation.

There is a note of caution with all of these attendance figures: plenty of previous questions were on the variance up and down the country, which the National Police Chiefs Council can get to you, between 27% and 6%, depending on area. It also depends on changes by day. So those figures that you heard earlier are about the averages through that.

The challenge, really, is not so much the here and now as the second phase—the second wave of illness that is going to come as and when our frontline officers and staff get covid and have to self-isolate. That is the big operational challenge that is coming down the line to us. We are in a very fortunate, stable position, with some crimes going up but others going down. Some resources are not available to us but other resources can be reprioritised into that engagement activity. We are all in policing looking forward, although with some concern about the next wave. That is why we need to get volunteers, special constables, people retrained and



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equipped, plus the other facilities we can reuse, putting some of our back-office people into more of a frontline role. That is the challenge now.

We have got hold of the current demand, we have got hold of the public response and the new restrictions, and we have all said many times that we are grateful to the public for that. We are in contingency planning now for the next wave that is going to hit us and prioritising our policing services for it.

Q189 **Tim Loughton:** Finally, Chief Robins, when we do get back to some degree of normality, what is the biggest challenge going to be for policing?

**Chief Constable John Robins:** One of the elements that has been unfortunate throughout all of this is the wider criminal justice system. Policing is still at work, stepping forward into the face of the coronavirus, and we still have to undertake our usual activity. I do not know whether it is through design, deliberate Government policy or MOJ decisions, but unfortunately the other criminal justice agencies do not seem to have been declared as key workers in this, so now we are seeing challenges with the Crown Prosecution Service in terms of bringing charges against people.

We have all seen that the magistrates courts are no longer sitting, except for a very few single remaining court cases. We have seen the judiciary and Crown courts no longer sitting. The long-term effects of this cannot be taken into consideration until we see the backlogs going through. It is not just a return to normality immediately after restrictions are lifted; it is a return to normality and seeing how we take forward criminal justice processes. With each week and month that goes by, with those other agencies not working in the way they did before, I am really concerned for victims and witnesses, and about attrition, the backlog and the care and welfare of those people who have been subject to crime. I would like to see more done in relation to wider criminal justice over the next few weeks, to try to see what we can get back on track.

Forces have been very fortunate in some of the digital platforms we have got. Unfortunately, some of the other agencies are not able to engage with that and apply the same principles. I do not criticise those agencies. I just reflect and say that it is a shame that the wider criminal justice system has slowed right down at the very time that we need to keep on top of it.

Q190 **Chair:** I have a few quick follow-on questions—you can just nod or shake your heads and we will note that. On domestic abuse, are any of your forces or the agencies that you are actively working with proactively contacting households where you have had known abuse or call-outs previously?

Nobody seems to be nodding. I take it from that that none of your forces is involved in proactive contact with households—

**Chief Constable Peter Goodman:** I am shaking my head because I do not know, frankly, so I would have to get back to you on that.

Q191 **Chair:** That's fine. John Robins?

**Chief Constable John Robins:** The reason I did not make any movement is that there is a mixed answer to this. Safeguarding units are working and recontacting victims, and victim referral agencies are recontacting victims. What I think you are asking is whether we are proactively going back to previous victims. This is the challenge we have with inter-agency working. Often, some of our inter-agency partnerships would do that. So again, like Peter, I cannot say that we have got a specific initiative on that, but I am confident that for ongoing live investigations and for those who have been subject to repeat offending through MARAC processes there will be identified officers and police staff and other agencies that will get in contact with them.

Q192 **Chair:** Thanks. We are seeking additional information on domestic abuse, so any further information you can give us on any proactive work would be immensely helpful.

Secondly, going back to PPE, do any of you have facts on the proportion of your response cars that are in operation without PPE at any one time?

**Chief Constable Peter Goodman:** None; all our response cars

are fully equipped with PPE.

**Chief Constable Garry Forsyth:** None.

**Chief Constable John Robins:** None; all are equipped. I think the earlier references may have been to the first few days, but right now, none.

**Chair:** Lisa?

**Chief Constable Lisa Winward:** Likewise, all are equipped at the moment.

**Chair:** Holly, did you want to come back in on that?

Q193 **Holly Lynch:** Are your forces using spit guards, and have your officers got them on the frontline to help protect them from the covid-19 threat at this time?

**Chief Constable Garry Forsyth:** Spit guards are personal issue to all our officers and staff and they are frequently used as part of their personal protective equipment when dealing with members of the public.

**Chair:** Thank you. Does anybody else want to add to that?

**Chief Constable John Robins:** We are fortunate that spit guards have been issued as part of PPE for some time in West Yorkshire alongside body-worn video, which again assists in evidence gathering and protecting police officers as we go forward. For practices like this, it is the same as for routine policing.

**Chair:** Peter?

**Chief Constable Peter Goodman:** Likewise, and we are all increasing the number of tasers our officers have as well, which are, where



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appropriate, a very good distancing tool in difficult situations. All our officers have all of those things available to them.

Q194 **Chair:** Have you been told that you are definitely going to have access to testing as part of the Government testing strategy once the NHS testing is achieved?

**Chief Constable Garry Forsyth:** My latest understanding from a regional conference call earlier today was that Eurofins are making some antigen tests available to policing, and they should be available in the next two to three weeks. We are also hoping to get some spaces in the covid-19 slots in the NHS pipeline as well in the next two to three weeks. Rightly, they are being prioritised for NHS staff at present, but that would be enormously helpful for us in terms of managing people back into the workplace.

Q195 **Chair:** Who did you say you were getting them from, and did you say they were the antigen tests, not the antibody tests?

**Chief Constable Garry Forsyth:** My understanding is that they are the antigen tests and that it is Eurofins, one of our forensic suppliers.

**Chief Constable Peter Goodman:** May I act as a proxy for Martin Hewitt, the chair of the National Police Chiefs Council, who sent me this text message when this question was asked earlier? The message said that at the moment there are no tests validated by Public Health England; we will not be on the list for the antigen tests the NHS is getting at the moment, but the Home Office is pushing for that. We are progressing the antigen tests via the forensic network and may have that by late April. All still needs to be pushed through, though.

Q196 **Chair:** Thank you. Finally, we are aware that the Government have at all times asked us to consider whether they need stronger regulations in order to support the NHS and to support the health measures that are in place. There are different things they could be considering, or trading off, around further restrictions on non-essential workplaces where people are currently still going to work, or further restrictions on people being able to go outside for exercise. Given the different consequences of different measures and the possible trade-offs between them, and the fact that some will have more impact on you than others—some might have more impact on things like domestic abuse—have you been involved in the discussions about the trade-offs around any further restrictions that might be introduced? Obviously, none of you have individually, but are you aware of whether the police have been involved in any of those discussions?

**Chief Constable John Robins:** Martin Hewitt of the National Police Chiefs Council and various NPCC leads may have been involved, but we will have to check and come back to you. I think the answer will always be around following the science and following Public Health England guidance as to whether that will make it safer for our communities. I am not aware of colleagues who have been directly involved with those proposals.



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**Chief Constable Garry Forsyth:** Chair, this is just a brief point: I know that I have mentioned it a few times, but it is about the pace of this change. When the original guidance was put in place, we did have a very short window through Charlie Hall's operational policing committee to give feedback to the Government in relation to our views. It is fair to say that our input has been listened to and it has made its way back to central Government, so I am assuming that, again, through Martin and through the team centrally, we will be afforded that opportunity.

**Chair:** Thank you very much. I thank all of you again for your evidence this afternoon. We very much appreciate it. We are also very conscious that you have a job to do, which is to implement health measures that are about saving lives. The work that you and your officers are doing can sometimes be difficult, but, in the end, it is about saving lives and protecting the NHS, and you are doing that in the interests of everybody. We thank you very much for the work that you are doing and look forward to seeing the further evidence that we have asked you for. Thank you again.