

OPCC annual report 21/22

INTRODUCTION

In May 2021 I was re-elected to serve as the Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent for a second term.

I am naturally delighted to serve Gwent for another term and would like to sincerely thank everyone who took the time to vote in the election. I reappointed my deputy, Eleri Thomas, who continues to lead on my office's strategic work on children and young people, criminal justice, and violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence. This term of office will be three years instead of four, as the election was postponed a year due to the pandemic.

Working with the Chief Constable of Gwent Police and key partners, I am incredibly proud of what we achieved in my first term of office. Together we worked to protect the most vulnerable in our society, build greater cohesion within our communities, and ensure that Gwent Police have the resources needed to protect and reassure our residents.

According to the annual crime figures provided by the Office for National Statistics, Gwent continues to be one of the safest places to live and work in the UK. Gwent Police responded to more than 170,000 incidents last year, recording more than 53,000 crimes. This compares to 176,000 incidents and 47,000 crimes during 2020/21 at the height of the pandemic, and 183,000 incidents and 58,000 during my first year in office.

The last few months have seen a significant relaxation in the national guidance, as infection rates lower and vaccine levels increased. However, we must not be complacent. Throughout the last year, my office continued to link in with the Covid-19 Gold groups that Gwent Police ran and all Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) staff continued to work from home in the main, in line with Welsh Government guidelines at that time. At the time of writing, Wales is at alert level 0.

We are also in the midst of a cost-of-living crisis driven by the recovery from the pandemic and other significant geo-political issues, the likes of which we haven't seen for a generation. We do not know yet how this will fully impact on the lives and livelihoods of the people and communities of Gwent, but it potentially has far reaching implications for crime and community safety. I will continue to work closely with Gwent Police, partners and the public to do all we can to support the people of Gwent and deliver a responsible policing service.

I would like to again reaffirm my thanks to all Gwent Police officers and staff, my own team at the OPCC, and our partner organisations for their hard work and dedication to serving the people of Gwent throughout the last year.

NEW POLICE AND CRIME PLAN

Throughout the summer period, my office and I worked extensively on my new Police and Crime Plan. Not only did we factor in the UK Government's unexpected Beating Crime Plan, local demand, the need for productive partnership working and substantial research, but we also worked hard to ensure the voices of people in Gwent were captured to inform it.

I developed my plan following extensive engagement with the public and key stakeholders, listening to a range of views from across Gwent. To do this, I ran 30 engagement events, totalling 196 hours of engagement. My team and I spoke with more than 3,000 people, with 375 completing the survey as a result. Even when surveys weren't completed, comments were captured and reviewed so we could identify themes, issues and strength of feeling. This was in addition to the 1,461 people who completed the survey online, meaning 1,836 people answered the survey and had their say on policing priorities in Gwent in just seven weeks. I also reviewed comments left by people online and factored them into my thinking. My team and I also worked extensively with Gwent Police to understand the pressures facing it, daily demand and how best to capture this in the performance measures that we set. By gathering all these views, I gained further understanding of what matters to the people of Gwent, key stakeholders and our partners in policing.

I would like to thank everyone who voiced their views to us. I took everything onboard while writing my plan, and this gives me great confidence that my plan will address the matters most important to the people of Gwent.

The plan demonstrates the wide range of issues and challenges that we must tackle if we are to be successful in making Gwent an even safer place. The new priorities for Gwent are:

- Keep Neighbourhoods Safe
- Combat Serious Crime
- Support Victims and Protect the Vulnerable
- Increase Community Confidence in Policing
- Drive Sustainable Policing

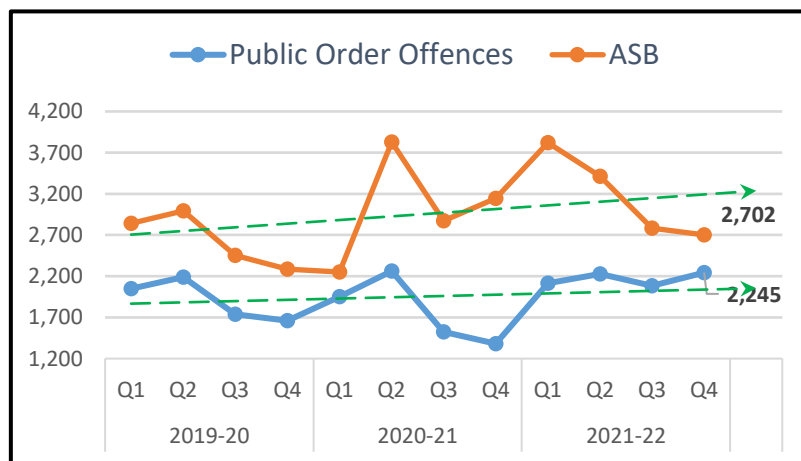
However, since the easing of Covid-19 restrictions and the cost-of-living crisis, we have seen some turbulence in the volume and types of crimes, incidents, and calls for service through 999, 101 and other contact channels. I will not be complacent in monitoring this and ensure that my plan, if necessary, adapts to this changing picture.

To support the delivery of my plan, therefore, my team and I have refined the performance framework that underpins it. Gwent Police will report to me on these indicators over the next three years.

KEEP NEIGHBOURHOODS SAFE

Tackling crime and anti-social behaviour that impacts the safety and well-being of communities in Gwent

It's positive that the general trend in crime figures is a reduction, but we cannot be complacent as we continue to recover from the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis bites. As one of the co-leads of the local policing portfolio for the national Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC), I am keen that the best practice we develop through that is applied here in Gwent to continue to improve performance.



As you can see in the table above, some of the turbulence I mentioned since the pandemic began is reflected in the levels of anti-social behaviour and public order across Gwent. We saw large peaks and troughs in the past couple of years as Covid-19 restrictions came in and then eased. Although we can't make direct comparisons between this year and the past couple of years, I'm pleased that throughout 2020/21, this seems to have stabilised closer to pre-pandemic levels. I am also pleased to see that during the last year, residential burglary, shoplifting, vehicle crime, bike and other thefts remained low, and haven't seen some of the increases seen in other crime types. We have also seen historic low levels of callouts to attend vehicle collisions and, thankfully, continued reductions in those who are killed or seriously injured on our roads.

However, of concern have been the rates of repeat victims and repeat offenders of anti-social behaviour, with the trends for both going up in the past year. I am keen to see this trend reversed. Gwent Police and my office focus on those who repeatedly carry out these acts, which is a specific commitment within my plan. Looking forward to the next year, I am keen to work with Gwent Police and partners to drive forward my priority of keeping neighbourhoods safe.

Road safety

Gwent Police has a new Roads Policing and Specialist Operations Unit which incorporates some of the recommendations I made in a review of roads policing in Gwent last year. Other recommendations included a commitment to invest in more

specialist data collection and research to better understand the root causes of traffic collisions in Gwent, and to implement new performance measures to provide more insight into police performance. These improvements are supported by local initiatives such as Operation Utah (a multi-agency day of action to tackle road users putting other motorists at risk) and Project EDWARD. As part of Project EDWARD, which stands for 'every day without a road death', we visited Coleg Gwent to give students an honest insight into the impact of careless driving. Educating drivers is vital in keeping our roads and communities safe. The sixth United Nations Global Road Safety Week called for speed limits of 20mph on roads in areas where people walk, live and play. I sit on Welsh Government's steering group that is looking to implement a default 20MPH speed limit on all urban roads in Wales by 2023. We are currently taking part in a pilot project to see how this could work. This small change will help save lives in our communities.

Rural crime

Farms and rural businesses are very important parts of our economy, but the scale of their operations and remote locations make them extremely vulnerable to theft. During the year, we joined Gwent Police's rural crime team for a meeting with farmers and representatives of National Farmers' Union. As well as listening to local concerns and reassuring them about all the proactive work Gwent Police does to tackle rural crime, we promoted We Don't Buy Crime (see below), which is helping to tackle acquisitive crime such as burglary and theft. We Don't Buy Crime has been proven to be especially effective in rural areas, not only by improving security but also tackling the criminal supply chain as well.

Safer Streets

During the year, we were successful in two of the three rounds of Safer Streets funding bidding. In the second round of applications, we received £699,564 from the Home Office to fund crime prevention measures in Pillgwenlly and Rhymney. This includes distributing door locks, window locks and doorbell CCTV cameras, as well as installing better lighting. Residents have also been provided with security advice. Further measures include speaking to second-hand retailers who may come into contact with stolen items that are intended to be sold onto the public. In the third round of applications, we received £673,181 in Safer Streets funding for Newport and Abergavenny. The Home Office grant focuses on tackling violence against women and girls, and increasing the feeling of safety in public spaces. £395,225 was allocated to the Stow Hill and Victoria wards in Newport; Grofield and Priory wards in Abergavenny received £277,956. An educational programme is being provided to help change unacceptable attitudes and behaviours towards women and girls, provide safety advice and encourage reporting of crimes. A 'safe space' business scheme is being set up for local businesses to be able to provide a place of safety for women and girls to access help. Additional street lighting and lighting bollards, CCTV cameras and gates in alleys in crime hotspot areas are being installed. Mobile community safety guardians will also provide patrols in Newport city centre and Abergavenny town centre. Both successful bidding rounds were the result of months of partnership working. This included working with Newport City Council and Gwent Police to encourage women and girls from Gwent to help us identify issues and

areas of need. Of the 300 responses to a Newport City Council survey to inform this bid, 178 response can as a response to our promotion.

We Don't Buy Crime

A new initiative focusing on tackling acquisitive crime such as burglary and theft launched in Gwent this year. We Don't Buy Crime has been used by forces in England to successfully reduce repeat offending and victimisation, so I am pleased that we are taking the lead in Wales by introducing it here in Gwent. Throughout the year, I went out with local officers in all five counties of Gwent to speak to people and businesses about the initiative and how it can help them stay safe. We have committed to underwrite the cost of this initiative by up to £210,000 a year for three years. Between March 2021 - May 2022, the team:

- Distributed 4,030 SmartWater packs;
- Forensically marked 906 bikes, 254 catalytic converters and 65 motorbikes;
- Reviewed 4,687 acquisitive crimes;
- Recovered £110,000 of stolen goods; and
- Signed up 59 second hand retailers to the scheme.

Positive Futures

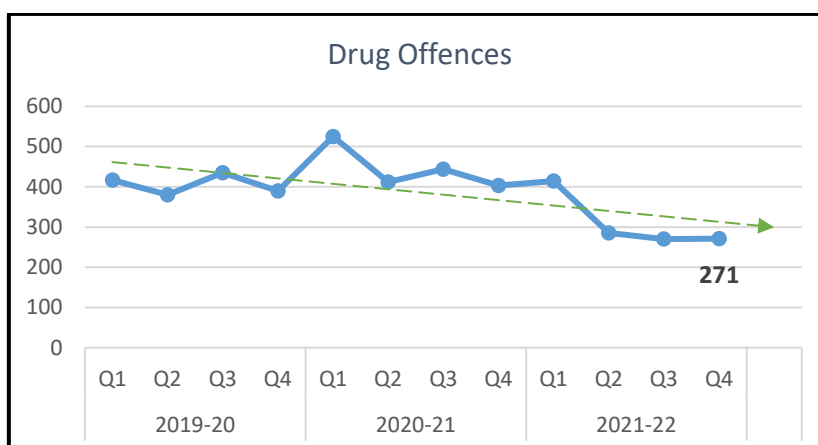
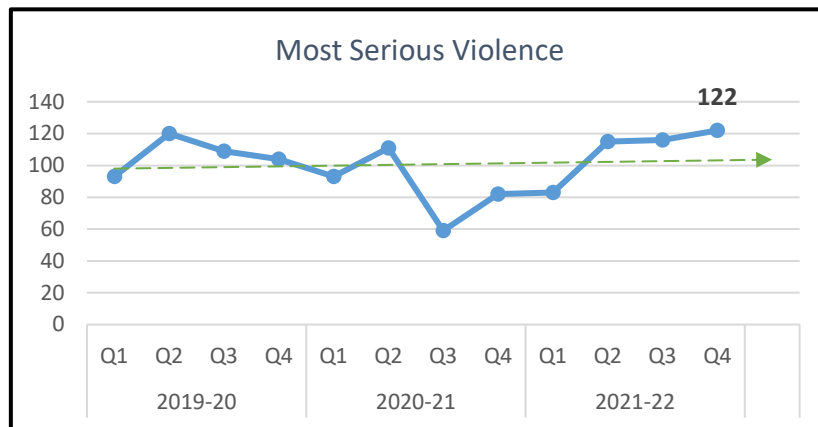
Positive Futures is a sport-based social inclusion programme that uses sport as a tool to engage with young people. The Positive Futures team run a range of open access, voluntary sessions across Gwent, as well as targeted work with young people through referrals from partnership agencies. The PCC funding is predominantly used to fund the salaries of project leaders to deliver a range of diversionary activities, and targeted one-to-one or group engagements. In addition to weekly sporting activities, and targeted work with schools and community groups, key projects this year include:

- Identifying the Triggers pilot. Working with the OPCC to develop a 'trusted adult role' with young people identified as at risk.
- Asylum Seeker and Refugee project. Weekly football sessions, delivered in partnership with the Sanctuary in Newport, for young males to attend Pill football pitch, free of charge, and engage with staff, receiving support where possible.
- Friday night skateboarding sessions across the Caerphilly County Borough Council area.
- Swimming sessions with a traveller group in Pontypool. The group had previously been causing issues at the leisure centre and part of the aim of this project was to build a relationship between the young people and the centre staff.

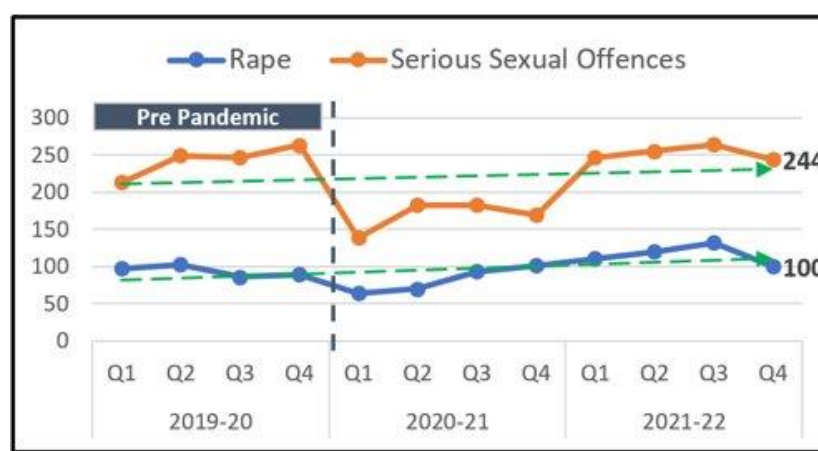
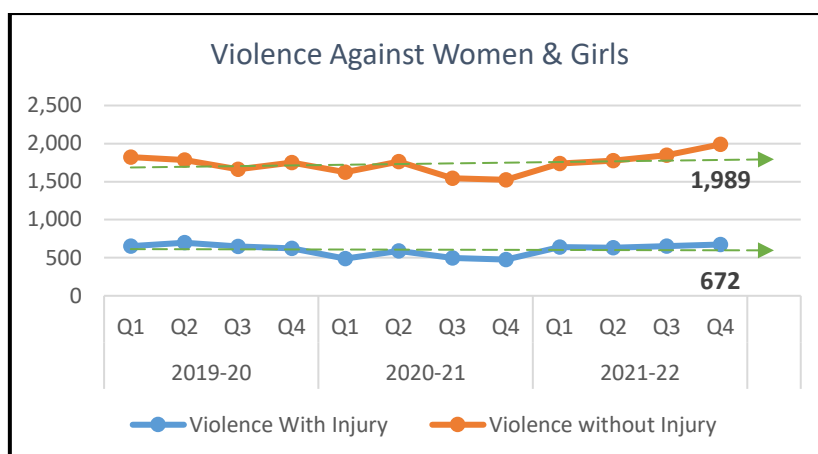
COMBAT SERIOUS CRIME

Preventing and reducing crimes that cause significant harm to communities and victims

With this priority, my focus is on offences with potential to cause significant harm to people and communities. For example, serious organised crime and violence, child criminal and sexual exploitation (CCE and CSE), hate crime and terrorism. In addition to these crimes, eradicating violence against women and girls is central to our work. This necessitates robust responses to rape and other sexual offences, domestic abuse, and stalking and harassment.



It has been a mixed picture throughout the year, with serious violence largely back to pre-pandemic levels. Thankfully the overall numbers remain low generally. Much of the rise this year is due to the easing of restrictions, but I am keen that we do not just return to 'normal' when it comes to serious crime. This is why we work closely with the partners such as the St Giles Trust and Fearless to try and prevent children and young people becoming involved at an early age. I am pleased that drug offences have continued to decline. Gwent's Organised Crime Team and the Regional Organised Crime Unit have had some excellent results throughout the year. The severity of harm from CSE and CCE requires a robust partnership approach. Gwent Police has Operation Quartz, which sees two dedicated CSE/CCE exploitation teams in the east and west local policing areas. Operation Quartz is working to ensure officers are well equipped to deal with CSE/CCE and prevent victimisation. It identifies people at risk and takes appropriate measures to protect them and relentlessly pursue perpetrators, using a range of tactics to prosecute and/or disrupt their activities.



Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV)

It is clearly concerning that rape, serious sexual offences, and violence against women and girls (as well as domestic abuse and sexual violence) have increased. However, I am pleased that vulnerable victims of these crimes have increasing confidence to report them to the police. One of the commitments in my plan, shared by the Chief Constable, is to continue to increase the confidence of vulnerable people who have been victims of serious crimes to report this to the police, knowing they will receive an excellent service when they do. I will continue to champion the needs of victims and ensure Gwent Police deliver excellence in their response to them. The same can be said for my commitment to reducing exploitation of people, particularly CCE/CSE and modern day slavery. We need to get better at identifying victims, safeguarding and supporting them, and taking appropriate measures to pursue offenders. I am pleased that we have been identifying more instances of these hidden crimes throughout the year.

A new all-Wales taskforce bringing together leading agencies is working to challenge attitudes and behaviours across Wales and rebuild women's trust in policing following the murder of Sarah Everard. The VAWDASV taskforce is co-chaired by my deputy Eleri Thomas and Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner for South Wales, Emma Wools. Gwent Police Deputy Chief Constable Amanda Blakeman is the operational lead for the taskforce, which is aiming to create a zero-tolerance culture towards sexist, misogynistic, racist and homophobic attitudes. Each day the vast

majority of officers deliver an exceptional service to the public and we must not allow the minority to dominate public perception. This is complemented by a Gold Group on violence against women and girls, and abuse of trust. It is attended by my deputy and chief executive. All officers and staff members in Gwent Police and the OPCC have face-to-face communication in relation to abuse of trust and codes of conduct to reinforce this. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services issued a report that commended UK forces for taking proactive measures to police domestic abuse during the pandemic. I must praise Gwent Police and our partners for their efforts during this difficult time. We worked extensively with both Gwent Police and the regional VAWDASV team to encourage people suffering abuse to come forward.

Domestic abuse perpetrator service

This year I took the decision to extend funding provided to Phoenix Domestic Abuse Service to deliver a pilot perpetrator programme since the initial set up and delivery was hampered by the pandemic. This service works with perpetrators by addressing and challenging abusive attitudes and behaviours. They are fully accredited and have appropriate safeguarding checks in place. Working with perpetrators is essential to tackling domestic abuse as it allows us to target the problem at its source. It also reduces the risk of repeat offending and, by extension, repeat victimisation. Learning from this pilot service will inform and enable a better understanding of commissioning requirements for any future domestic abuse perpetrator service.

Cyber Resilience Centre for Wales

During the year, Chief Constable Pam Kelly and I joined the board of the Cyber Resilience Centre for Wales (CRCW). I bring a wealth of experience and knowledge to this role, operating also as the deputy lead of both the APCC portfolio group on police technology and digital, and the APCC portfolio group on business enablers. I am also the lead for cyber-related crime for the four Police and Crime Commissioners in Wales. We know that cyber-crime is constantly evolving, so it is essential that we take a joined-up, partnership approach to tackling this growing problem. By joining the CRCW board, I am confident that I can help ensure policing and partners stand up to cyber criminals and keep our communities and businesses safe.

Scams

Whether it's through the post, on the doorstep, via the internet or over the telephone, scammers find ways to trick people out of money and assets. With the pandemic taking its toll, we saw a rise in online fraud across the country. To help tackle this, we routinely promoted scam awareness information urging people to be safe. For example, in the lead-up to Christmas, we highlighted anti-fraud messaging with a particular focus around Black Friday and Cyber Monday. As we were undertaking significant public engagement around this time, my team and I also reinforced this messaging at our face-to-face events, providing information to residents about how to stay safe online, while partnering with Gwent Police's Cyber Protect Officer at

events. During this period, we spoke to more than 1,200 people face-to-face about these issues. We supported Safer Internet Day with crime prevention advice across our communication channels, discussed it with residents at engagement events during the week, and encouraged partners working with young people to reiterate the importance of staying safe online. Similar work was undertaken about romance fraud on Valentine's Day and scam awareness training for people aged 50+.

Gwent SOS

Serious organised crime, serious violence and child criminal exploitation are all incredibly important issues, as reflected in my new Police and Crime Plan. St Giles Trust works with children and young people at risk of becoming exploited and/or involved in serious organised crime and violence. St Giles Trust workers have lived experience and can engage with the children and young people with whom they work in a way that is meaningful to them. This year, St Giles delivered 195 interventions for children and young people known to be actively involved in serious organised crime and/or being exploited. Reducing repeat victims of child criminal and sexual exploitation is a key commitment under my priority to Combat Serious Crime, so I am pleased we have a service that works with this vulnerable cohort.

Fearless

Since January 2019 Crimestoppers' Fearless team have delivered sessions on knife crime, child exploitation and drug running to almost 14,000 young people in Gwent. Sessions are designed to give young people the education and confidence to recognise these issues within their friendship groups and communities, but also to give them the knowledge and confidence to report them. They have also delivered training to more than 230 professionals, parents and carers on spotting the signs of organised crime.

Understanding the Triggers

Following the publication of the Understanding the Triggers report, my office has been working with Newport City Council to establish a pilot to test the report's recommendations. The pilot, based in the Llanwern area of Newport, supports vulnerable children believed to be at early risk of exposure to criminality and exploitation. There is also support available for their families. The pilot has an agreed core membership consisting of professionals from a range of services and with diverse expertise. This includes the youth offending service, education staff, mental health professionals, police and third sector youth workers such as Positive Futures. There have been promising developments with some of the referrals, with signs of clear breakthroughs for the children. However, given that these are children and families with complex needs and traumatic experiences, we expect bumps in the road and anticipate some will take longer than others to see positive change. The pilot is founded upon the idea of adapting to the needs of children and families as well as being trauma-informed. This means that we are not looking to criminalise or put emphasis on the negative aspects in their lives. Therefore, any challenges that flare up (such as getting excluded) will be responded to by stabilising the situation and then working with the child/family on addressing the underlying issues that may have resulted in this happening. The pilot will be evaluated using defined outcomes

and measures to establish a robust evidence base to assess what has worked and what can be improved. The evaluation report will be shared with Welsh Government. The final evaluation is not likely to be for another year as the pilot will be supporting current year six children through to the end of the next academic year (July 2023).

SUPPORT VICTIMS AND PROTECT THE VULNERABLE

Providing high quality support to victims of crime and protecting those who are most vulnerable from harm

As the Police and Crime Commissioner, I take my role as the champion of victims extremely seriously. Becoming a victim can have a devastating impact on someone's life and it is critical that Gwent Police, the support services that I fund, and our partners continue to improve how we respond to victims. Since the introduction of the Victim Care Unit (VCU) that I fund last year, early reports show that victim satisfaction rates have increased.

| Victim satisfaction measure | Baseline | Post VCU (Dec 21) | March 2022 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------|-------------------|
| Satisfied with how they have been treated by the officer | 85% | 81% | 94% |
| Satisfied with how they have been treated by the Victim Care Officer (in the VCU) | 85% | 100% | 100% |
| Satisfied with how well you have been kept informed | 74% | 85% | 92% |
| Satisfied with service as a whole | 75% | 81% | 81% |

In terms of 'vulnerability' based crime and incidents the police have to manage, the pandemic has had a lasting impact even into this year. There have been steady increases in attendances at 'adult at risk' incidents. Hate crimes have also increased but show signs of now reducing. Repeat victims have remained relatively high. As for children, we saw during the pandemic the numbers of missing children and safeguarding interventions go down significantly, which was understandable as most children were at home. However, occurrences have started to go back up again to pre-pandemic levels and beyond, which is an unsettling trend. We work closely with safeguarding partners to ensure we put the appropriate interventions in place, particularly as the cost-of-living crisis worsens. However, we also have to ensure effective youth services are in place across Gwent, some of which I fund, to offer the wrap around support and care that vulnerable young people need. I will use this priority to continue to drive improvements in services across the whole of Gwent in the coming year.

Domestic Abuse Act 2021

I supported the proposed amendments to the UK Government's Domestic Abuse Bill that would remove the presumption that continued contact with an abusive parent is in the child's best interest. It would also prohibit unsupervised contact for a parent

awaiting trial or on bail for domestic abuse offences, or where there are ongoing criminal proceedings for domestic abuse. The legislation previously treated domestic abuse in the home as a separate issue to a child's safety and welfare. We know that growing up in a home where domestic abuse is happening can seriously harm a child's mental health and can, in some cases, make them more likely to become involved with crime and anti-social behaviour. The Bill, which is now signed into law, also protects survivors, who were often forced to maintain contact with their abuser to facilitate the abuser's contact with their child.

Elder Abuse Day

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day aims to tackle physical, emotional, and financial abuse of older people. We created a toolkit for partners to help people understand the signs of abuse. The pack was sent to local authorities, pharmacies, care providers, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, voluntary organisations, housing associations, South Wales Fire and Rescue, local elected members, community councillors, AMs, MPs and Age Cymru. Graphics and information to highlight the forms of abuse was shared on our social media channels. We also organised and hosted a webinar aimed at professionals working on the frontline with older people in Gwent. A wide range of sectors, including health, policing, care sector and local housing associations, attended the session. In total, 106 people attended the virtual event, which featured best practice talks by Gwent Safeguarding Board, Hourglass Cymru, Re:Cognition, and Gwent Police. The session provided an opportunity for professionals to reflect on current practices. Feedback from the event was extremely positive. Overall, 100% of attendees were very satisfied or satisfied with the event, 100% felt both the presenters and overall event was very good or good, and 100% said they would attend a similar event in the future.

Hate crime

My office has been working in partnership with local disability friendship group My Mates about their understanding and experiences of hate crime. The group took part in a workshop with my team, Gwent Police and Mencap Cymru to discuss the impact hate crime has had on their lives. They also provided feedback on 'easy read' materials that are being created to help people with disabilities better understand how to report an incident and seek support. My office and I also visited Lewis School Pengam, which was delivering themed lessons to understand issues such as racism, disability issues and homophobia. Understanding matters surrounding equality and diversity is vital for young people who will be living and working in our communities in the future.

Gwent Police have been recognised by Victim Support with a Trustmark for taking steps to improve responses and support to victims and witnesses of hate crime. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services has previously praised local work on hate crime, and this latest recognition shows that we continue to work hard to improve services for victims of this appalling crime.

Independent sexual violence advocates

The Dyfed Powys and South Wales commissioners and I commissioned a review of the ISVA provision across south, mid and west Wales. This looked at the existing service provision and delivered an analysis of need to inform improvements to the services, with the development of a consistent, costed model and service specification for the regions. The final report was delivered in late 2021 and a project team and governance structure has been set up to deliver on the findings.

Support for victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence

In addition to an annual funding contribution of £679,145 to the Regional IDVA Service, and ISVA and Sexual Violence Counselling Provision in Gwent, I secured £644,446 of MOJ funding to provide four independent sexual violence advisors and four independent domestic violence advisors to work across Gwent for two years. I am committed to supporting victims of crime, particularly those who have experienced the most serious harm, and this funding will allow existing support services to expand. This was in addition to £139,000 of MOJ funding that was agreed earlier in the year to support projects working with Victims of DA and SV.

Victim Care Unit

Gwent Police launched a new victim care unit that is the central point of contact for victims, supporting them from the point of reporting a crime to the conclusion of the criminal justice process. This complements the existing Connect Gwent offer, which was the first victims' hub in Wales. The new unit sees a team of 19 victim care officers working closely with police officers to ensure victims are fully updated on their investigation. They also make sure that victims know and fully understand their rights under the Victims' Code, and work with Gwent's survivor engagement coordinator to feed back key issues to Gwent Police. By providing this targeted support to victims, I hope that we can build their confidence in the criminal justice system and help aid their recovery. Since the unit opened, more than 44,000 victims have been referred into the service. Of these referrals, about 6000 victims have consented to a needs assessment to determine what further support they may require. Although it's still a new team, the introduction of the unit has driven up satisfaction rates of victims, not just for the service they receive from victim care officers, but their experience with the force overall. A focus for my deputy and I will be to work with criminal justice partners to drive similar improvements across the wider criminal justice system. We have started to do that by introducing a regular multi-agency review of cases throughout the entire criminal justice process to monitor compliance with the Victims' Code of Practice and victim's satisfaction. This innovative approach is now being adopted across Wales.

Gwent Drug and Alcohol Service

Since 2014 the Office of the Police and Crimes Commissioner for Gwent has invested annually into the Gwent Drug and Alcohol Service (GDAS). In 2021 – 2022 we invested £828,279 in the service.

GDAS is a consortium of Kaleidoscope, Barod and G4S that provides advice and targeted support to drug and alcohol users, their families, and professionals who may deal with people presenting with drug and alcohol problems.

Drug and alcohol abuse is often a contributing factor to crime and antisocial behaviour. By addressing substance abuse directly and, in many cases, working with mental health professionals to examine its underlying causes, those dependent on drugs and alcohol are offered an alternative pathway in life which is also helping to prevent crime within communities.

Women's Pathfinder Whole System Approach and 18-25 Early Intervention Service

In October 2019 the Police and Crime Commissioners for Gwent and South Wales joined together with the Welsh Government and Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service in Wales to commission two new services: The Women's Pathfinder Whole System Approach and 18-25 Early Intervention Service, to support women and young people and help to prevent them from entering the criminal justice system.

They provide targeted support for issues such as alcohol and substance misuse and mental health problems while helping to improve family relationships, curb the cycle of adverse childhood experiences and improve community cohesion through a reduction in reoffending. The services work to divert individuals from criminality by creating a support network and helping them to live safer, healthier lives. We invested £488,931.72 into the services in 2021 – 2022.

White Ribbon Day

My office worked with Gwent Police and Gwent VAWDASV regional team to raise awareness of White Ribbon Day and the impact of domestic abuse on children and families. This is an annual event that marks the United Nation's International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. On average, 30 children and young people in Gwent are affected by incidents of domestic abuse every day. This accounts for incidents reported to Gwent Police. We know that many more cases go unreported. The #30Challenge was created to raise awareness of this issue. An activity pack was created to help people take part in the event, including graphics, social media content, challenge suggestions and ways to pledge support. Throughout the week, Cyfannol Women's Aid and Gwent Police supported our OPCC White Ribbon roadshow that was held on five consecutive days across Gwent. More than 50 organisations took part in the challenge and highlights include:

- 3.2million impressions on Twitter and reach of 1.2million;
- 605 mentions across all social media channels;
- Coverage in South Wales Argus, Free Press and Monmouthshire Beacon;
- Promotion of the content by Gwent Dragons;
- Phoenix DAS hosted a 30-hour sponsored walk;
- Schools provided pupils with information about safe relationships and encouraged classes to take part in sporting challenges during PE lessons;

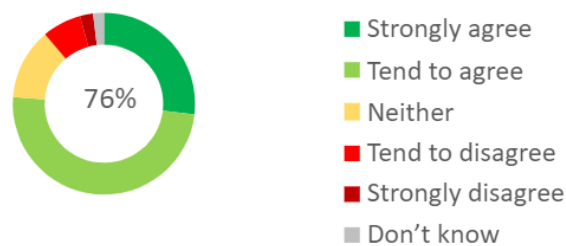
- Abertillery RFC wore White Ribbon t-shirts during training sessions and the pre-match warm-up which local neighbourhood officers and I attended; and
- In the House of Lords, Baroness Wilcox highlighted the campaign and its core messaging.

INCREASE COMMUNITY CONFIDENCE IN POLICING

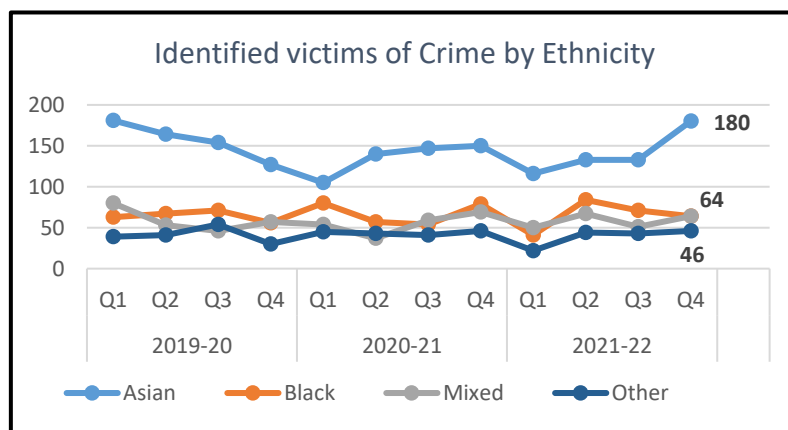
Working with Gwent Police to improve our relationships with our communities and improve public confidence in policing

The police service polices by consent. It's a fundamental principle that we expect our police officers and staff to adhere to. Situations both home and abroad can serve to damage confidence and trust in the police and, in the past year, policing has faced some significant challenges in this respect. Events such as the heinous murder of Sarah Everard in London and the abhorrent killing of George Floyd in the US, both by serving police officers, have had a ripple effect closer to home. This is particularly evident among already marginalised and underrepresented communities. This is why I created this specific priority in my new Police and Crime Plan and will continue to have a laser-like commitment to this during my tenure.

Public Confidence



Public confidence in the police remains steady at 76% of those surveyed, bucking national trends. Specifically, confidence has risen recently in relation to women and girls, and I reported earlier about the large amount of efforts my office and I have and continue to put into VAWDASV. The same can also be said for ethnic minorities. We are now starting to see the effects of this with increased reporting of hate crimes, but we still would expect to see more.



During the year, Gwent Police introduced a new 'culture board' to monitor this, which my office attends. I also welcomed and monitored their focus on stop and search, with Gwent having one of, if not the, lowest race disproportionality rates in the UK for stop and search. However, these are just some of the communities that we serve in Gwent. My aim is for Gwent Police to become one of the most modern, inclusive, forward-thinking police forces in the UK. This would see it understand the demographics of its population, offer a diverse and ever evolving range of contact channels, and provide an excellent response to victims and the wider community, attentive to their varying needs.

Award winners

Six Gwent Police officers were among the nominees honoured at the Police Bravery Awards 2020 in London. The awards were delayed a year due to the pandemic. PS Richard Shapland, PS Sarah Breakspear and PCs Lloyd Read, Paul Taylor, Craig Bracegirdle and Peter Whittington were nominated for their extraordinary bravery when facing a man who had barricaded himself in his flat armed with a knife and spear. Gwent Police's senior police cadets and Special Chief Inspector Esther McLaughlin won Lord Ferrers Awards, which recognise outstanding contributions to volunteering in policing. I sponsored this year's Torfaen Community and Voluntary Awards, which recognised the contributions volunteers played in communities during the pandemic. I was pleased to sponsor the 'personal journey' award, which was awarded to Chloe Goddard, a volunteer at Torfaen council's young parents project. I also sponsored the 'community hero' award as part of the South Wales Argus's Pride of Gwent Awards. Bernard Dawson, from Caerwent, took home the award, after he created a community initiative to support local people who were shielding or vulnerable during the pandemic.

Black, Asian and minority ethnic engagement

Throughout the year we have continued to work with our Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities in Gwent to build trust and improve relationships. Working with the Chief Constable, I want to reassure our communities that anyone dealing with the police in Gwent will be treated equally, fairly and with respect. One of the positives that we can take away from the pandemic is that we are now in more regular contact with our communities. Throughout the last year, weekly community dial-in calls took place between the police, my office, partners and the community. These have resulted in some incredibly valuable conversations, some of which have been challenging. In total, 22 community dial-ins were held in the last year.

We have also worked closely with partners within Criminal Justice in Wales on planning to develop its Anti Racism Action Plan. This includes providing funding to support engagement with Black, Asian and minority ethnic residents across Wales. The plan will be launched later in 2022.

Child-centred policing

We have continued to make significant progress in our child-centred policing work, in partnership with Gwent Police. This aims to build better relationships between police,

children and young people. My team visited schools and youth clubs to work with young people to create child-friendly and young people versions of the strategy, which we will be launched in later in the year.

Roma pupils from Maindee Primary School met with my deputy Eleri Thomas and then Children's Commissioner for Wales, Sally Holland, to talk about community safety. The pupils and their families now meet regularly with their neighbourhood policing team and have developed a 'safe faces' scheme to get to know local officers. This is building confidence and trust, and encouraging people to report issues to the police.

Pupils from John Frost School in Newport formed the first Gwent Police Youth Scrutiny Panel. Made up of volunteers from years 10 and 11, it provides honest feedback on the performance of Gwent Police officers in a variety of situations. The group meet throughout the year to scrutinise Gwent Police. We are also working with Gwent Police and partners to establish a platform to enable children and young people to have a voice in policing and wider criminal justice services.

My office engaged with young people across Gwent to find out what matters to them and used this to inform this year's Youth Question Time. Young people told us that the issues that are important are mental health, safe and healthy relationships, and tackling discrimination and hate crime. My fourth Youth Question Time took place in March, providing a safe platform for young people to ask decision makers and professionals questions about the issues that are important. More than 100 people attended this year's virtual event, which was planned and delivered in partnership with the Gwent Regional Youth Forum.

A new law ending the physical punishment of children in Wales came into effect in March. The Children (Abolition of Defence of Reasonable Punishment) (Wales) Act 2020 gives children the same protection from assault as adults. This means all types of physical punishment, such as smacking and shaking, is now illegal. We helped create the implementation plan and I am pleased that support services for families are available from councils. We will continue to work with Welsh Government to ensure that guidance is provided to parents. The law does not inadvertently criminalise parents and criminal action will only be taken when clearly necessary.

Cohesion Cup

We supported a football tournament organised by Ethnic Minorities and Youth Support Team Wales (EYST), Gwent Police, Newport Live and County in the Community. The aim was to break down barriers and strengthen relationships between communities. Officers, community support officers and staff from both Gwent Police and my office attended a series of matches in Newport. The tournament took place over a number of weekends, with teams representing the Bangladeshi, Yemeni, Polish and Sudanese communities from Newport competing. The winning Bangladeshi side then faced a Gwent Police and partners team in a 'super cup' final. I thoroughly enjoyed attending a number of the games, while we also took the opportunity to engage with residents on the proposed priorities in my Police and Crime Plan.

Criminal Justice Strategy Board

The Gwent Criminal Justice Strategy Board (CJSB) sits at the centre of the criminal justice system in Gwent. I chair this meeting, which brings together responsible agencies to promote joined-up criminal justice processes while working in partnership to provide a fair, efficient and effective local criminal justice system. During the year, the CJSB implemented a delivery plan with priorities that focus on victims and witnesses, offending, early intervention and prevention, and race equality. Tackling violence against women and girls and treatment of children in the youth justice system are golden threads that run through each of the priorities. An outcomes report for 2021/22 will be published to demonstrate the positive progress by the board. The priorities reflect those agreed by the Criminal Justice Board for Wales (CJBfW), a partnership between all the criminal justice agencies in Wales. Quarterly updates are provided by CJSB to CJBfW, highlighting positive outcomes and performance, along with any challenges at the local level. My deputy has been working with Gwent Police and partners to tackle matters of race disparity in the criminal justice system. A sub-group to the Gwent Criminal Justice Strategy Board has been set up to develop a delivery plan and key set of priorities. Meetings have also taken place with Welsh Government leads on strategic policy and its Race Equality Plan.

Gwent High Sheriff's Community Fund

Fifteen groups from across Gwent that run projects helping to build safer communities have received support from the High Sheriff's Community Fund. I donated £65,000 to the fund to help projects which mentor and inspire young people. A range of groups were awarded up to £5,000 each.

Halloween and Bonfire Night

My team joined Brynmawr neighbourhood officers for the annual 'Scare on the Square' event. This was a local initiative that encouraged children to dress up at Halloween and trick or treat at shops in the town. Not only did this give them something safe and positive to do at Halloween, it helped families discover some of the businesses available on their doorstep. The Brynmawr team did a frighteningly fantastic job transforming the station into a scary monster's lair, and it was a positive way to build relationships between the community and the local policing team. I provide funding to Positive Futures and the South Wales Fire and Rescue Service to tackle anti-social behaviour. They worked together in the run-up to Bonfire Night, as part of Op Bang. A national initiative to raise awareness of the dangers of fireworks and fire safety, Op Bang saw activities held across Gwent in the run up to Bonfire Night. For example, my team attended a fire-fighter training session for young people in Blaenau Gwent.

Legitimacy scrutiny panel

We held four independent legitimacy scrutiny panels during the year. These reviewed recent incidents involving Gwent Police officers where there was a use of force. The panel did sample body worn video footage and gave feedback about the

timing of camera use, as well as recommending additional training to be given to officers in response to specific incidents. Panel members also provided substantial feedback to highlight excellent engagement by officers, particularly when dealing with vulnerable people.

LGBTQ+

LGBT+ History Month was an opportunity to take a moment to reflect on how far we have come as a society, and to celebrate the contribution that LGBT+ communities make in Gwent. The social landscape has changed over the years, but some people still suffer appalling abuse and discrimination because of their gender identity or sexuality. My office funds Umbrella Cymru, which provides emotional and practical support, information, and advocacy for LGBT+ victims of crime. In February, my office attended a special Gwent Police community dial-in as part of LGBTQ+ History Month. This enabled a range of local organisations to share details of what they are doing to support the LGBTQ+ community and highlight any challenges that they face. Gwent Police is supporting this work, with its NXTGen team training cadets to become hate crime ambassadors. We promoted this information on our channels. We also worked in partnership with Gwent VAWDASV team to design graphics to support LGBT+ Domestic Abuse day.

Operation Jasmine

Following the conclusion of the coroner's inquests, I was pleased to be able to join the Chief Constable to commend police officers and staff who worked on Operation Jasmine, a major investigation into deaths in care homes in Gwent. The scale of this inquiry, which began in 2005, was huge and resulted in an independent review of the care sector in Wales. Everyone who worked on this case should be extremely proud of what they have achieved, and I know the families of the residents involved greatly appreciate the efforts of the police throughout this long and complex investigation.

Out of court disposal scrutiny panel

We held four independent out of court disposal (O OCD) scrutiny panels during the year. The multi-agency panel chaired by my office reviewed 80 randomly selected incidents where out of court disposals were issued. The panel assessed the suitability and appropriateness of the disposal, and identified learning to be fed back to Gwent Police. As always, the vast majority of disposals were considered appropriate, with questions only raised about a small number of cases where a court-based disposal or none at all may have been more appropriate. The subjective nature of O OCDs always leads to an interesting debate and highlights the difficult decisions officers have to make in determining what is the most appropriate course of action for both victim and offender.

Stephen Lawrence award

Other PCCs in the UK and I contributed to a new Fulbright award aimed at furthering research into policing and criminal justice. The Fulbright-Stephen Lawrence Scholar Award in Policing will enable a UK police officer or member of staff to conduct

research in a three-month programme hosted by three historically Black colleges and universities in America. Stephen's death in 1993 was a catalyst that brought to light the wider institutionalised racism throughout our public services. We have come a long way since then, but we know we have more work to do. This award will allow the UK and US to learn from each other and improve our services to residents.

Transparency award

My office has received the 'Open and Transparent' Quality Mark for the sixth year in a row. The award is given by Comparing Police and Crime Commissioners, which is an independent national body that monitors police governance. It demonstrates that we are conducting business openly, transparently, and that key statutory information is made available to residents in an accessible way.

Volunteers

Independent custody visitors (ICVs) help us to ensure that the strict conditions in Gwent Police's custody suites are met, and that the welfare and well-being of those detained are looked after. During the year we had nine volunteers who made 36 visits and a further 24 telephone calls to custody suites. There were 92 minor issues raised over the course of the year, with the majority in relation to detainees requesting water or food, to see the nurse or for family members, or for a solicitor to be contacted. The issues raised were dealt with by the custody officers on duty immediately. There were 13 issues referred to the OPCC, relating to low staffing levels, primarily due to the impact of Covid19 and a change of structure, however, staffing levels have since been addressed. The scheme manager continued to deliver ICV training to Gwent Police custody staff, and quarterly ICV panel meetings took place online during this period. We also recruited four new ICVs into the scheme.

Our animal welfare visitors play a crucial role in making sure that Gwent Police's dogs are well looked after and that high levels of animal welfare are met. During the year we recruited 12 new volunteers taking the total to 17. They carried out nine visits to Gwent Police dogs during the year, with outcomes from the visits recorded by the OPCC and shared with Gwent Police. There were no major issues of concern reported.

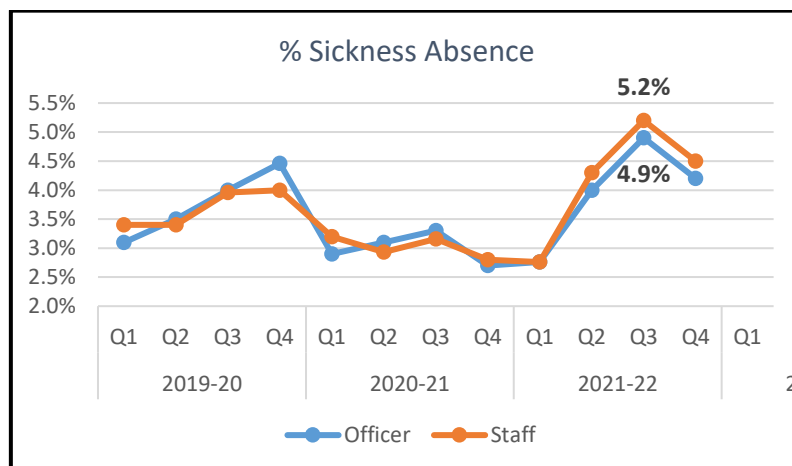
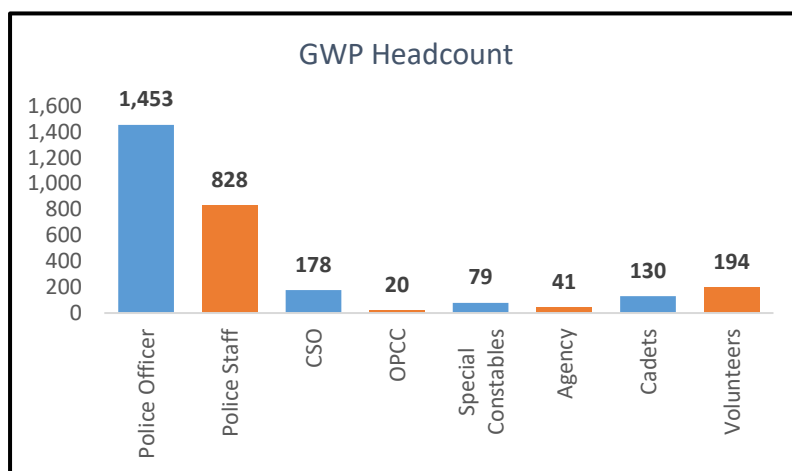
DRIVE SUSTAINABLE POLICING

Providing a value for money police service that operates responsibly, with sustainable infrastructures that support current and future demands

I want my office and Gwent Police to be modern services, with a developed culture of sustainability throughout. This means we need healthy, adaptable and resilient people, structures, finances, technology, fleet and buildings. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, which I introduced when in Welsh Government, provides the concept through which this priority can be viewed, despite policing not being devolved from UK Government to Welsh Government. I have monitored closely the implementation of Gwent Police's share of Operation Uplift, the

UK Government commitment to increase police officers by 20,000. I am pleased that we have finally reached the police officer levels last seen before austerity.

Numbers of officers and staff are just one part of a sustainable service. The health and well-being of each person is even more important. The officers and staff of Gwent Police can rightly be proud of how they maintained service levels during the pandemic, 24 hours a day. In the past year, we have seen increased sickness rates, both as a result of Covid-19 itself and increased burnout as a result of the unprecedented strains of the last couple of years. I welcomed Gwent Police introducing a new well-being strategy last year, which is starting to take effect. I have also sought reassurances that the strategy is fit for purpose, especially given the cost of living crisis. I will be monitoring this and doing all I can to support the well-being of staff in the coming year.



We also have a moral and ethical duty to play our part to foster sustainability in how my office and Gwent Police operate. This is not just about being a conscientious organisation and employer, although that is an important reason. This is also about doing what we can to limit the impacts of climate change and unsustainable practices on the communities of Gwent, which will inevitably create increased demand on the police. We are already starting to see this, so a joint 'greener Gwent'

strategy between Gwent Police and my office was developed in the last year. The target for the strategy will be net zero carbon emissions by 2030, along with reductions in waste, increases in sustainable travel, energy efficiency of buildings, bringing social value into procurement and contracts, developing a culture of sustainability across the workforce, and improving the health and well-being of our staff. We need an 11% year-on-year reduction in our carbon emissions to reach net zero by 2030 from our current calculated emissions of 24,000 tonnes. We have already started to progress with this in the past year, with new electric vehicles in the fleet and I have invested £250k to develop the electric car charging infrastructure in Gwent. We have switched energy tariffs to 100% renewable electricity, and we now have zero waste going to landfill. Our new headquarters is one of the most energy efficient buildings in Gwent. The new agile working policy for applicable staff has been introduced, taking advantage of technology and practices established during the pandemic to reduce unnecessary travel. We will be pushing for more innovative ways to go further to achieve these goals.

Abergavenny Police Station

We identified a suitable plot of land at Llanfoist and are currently applying for planning permission for a new purpose-built police station in Abergavenny. This will create a long-term home for the area's neighbourhood policing and response teams. A great deal of time and effort has gone into this project and I'm pleased that we can finally deliver on our commitment for a permanent base for Gwent Police in Abergavenny. I'm grateful to local residents and our police teams for working with us while we reached the right solution for the future.

Apprenticeships

Gwent Police and my office have employed 15 new apprentices (including the all-Wales public sector finance apprentice) and they started in their roles in September. The apprentices have a variety of roles, with 14 based with the force and one with my office (a digital media apprentice). The roles cover areas such as learning and development, business administration and IT. Apprenticeships can provide pathways and new opportunities for those that otherwise might feel excluded from higher level qualifications. I am look forward to seeing them all progress over the next year.

MeUs

Caerphilly County Borough Council and Gwent Police joined forces to launch an innovative joint leadership programme aimed at developing a new generation of bold and innovative leaders to enhance public service provision across Gwent. The initiative (MeUs) was launched in July by Jane Hutt, Minister for Social Justice. We want to ensure senior managers are equipped with the highest levels of skills and competencies. Eight employees from across both organisations formed the first-ever cohort – four from Caerphilly County Borough Council and four from Gwent Police.

Police and Crime Commissioner review

The UK Government published the recommendations from its review of Police and Crime Commissioners. As Commissioners are elected to provide a public service, it is right and proper that the role should be reviewed to ensure that they continue to represent the best method of making policing accountable to the public. The review has seen a requirement on Commissioners' offices to publish information relating to the force's performance against the government's national priorities for policing, HMICFRS performance reports force performance, and complaint handling. The national priorities for policing are specified in the Police and Crime Measures: reduce murder and other homicide; reduce serious violence; disrupt drugs supply and county lines; reduce neighbourhood crime; tackle cyber crime; and improve satisfaction among victims with a particular focus on victims of domestic abuse. These complement my local priorities as set out in my Police and Crime Plan.

Police HQ

We began moving into our new 5,178sqm headquarters in Llantarnam in January 2022. It will accommodate 480 officers and staff, and will be home to the control room, which is the first point of contact for 999 calls to the police, major crime teams, training functions, support services and senior management. The former headquarters in Croesyceiliog is almost 50 years old and needs substantial investment. All viable possibilities for staying at the current site, along with purchasing existing buildings, were assessed, but building a new headquarters in Llantarnam offered the best value for money. The cost of the build was £32million and prudent financial planning over many years means that it was paid for from a specific reserve fund. The annual running costs of the new headquarters are estimated to be £1.1million less per year than the costs of running the former headquarters and associated sites. The new headquarters is part of the first phase in our current estate strategy to improve police facilities in Gwent. The Chief Constable and I are currently reviewing this strategy to ensure we deliver a modern and effective policing service that utilises new technology and up-to-date working practices to safeguard and reassure the public.

Recruitment

We have recruited 178 new police officers and 54 new community support officers to Gwent Police during the year. This brings our establishment to 1,423, with a further 83 officers due to be recruited in the next year. This means there are more than 270 police officer posts than when I first became Commissioner in 2016. The decision to pursue a career as a front-line officer is a brave one, particularly during a global pandemic that has tested police forces like never before. These officers are a much-needed addition to Gwent Police at a crucial time and I wish them all the best in their careers.

POLICE COMMUNITY FUND

Every year, organisations in Gwent can bid for a share of £300,000 to support children and young people affected by crime. The fund is open to non-profit

organisations that support children and young people who are involved, or at risk of becoming involved, in crime and anti-social behaviour, or those who have been victims of crime. The fund is partly made up from money seized from criminals, and organisations can bid for sums from £10,000 up to £50,000. Children and young people are often the most vulnerable people in our communities, and this can put them at risk of becoming involved in crime and anti-social behaviour. By supporting organisations that offer positive, diversionary activities for young people, helping them to develop confidence, skills and learning, we can help them to realise their potential and create safer, more cohesive communities. During the year, the following projects were supported:

| Organisation | Area | Project name | Amount |
|-----------------------------------------|---------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Cymru Creations | Blaenau Gwent | Blaenau Gwent Film Academy. Creating films based on participants' experiences on topics such as dangerous driving, anti-social behaviour and hate crime. | £25,000 |
| Senghenydd Youth Drop in Centre (SYDIC) | Caerphilly | Diversionary activities for young people in an effort to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour. | £31,314.49 |
| KidCare4U | Newport | Black, Asian and minority ethnic Saturday Kids Club Project. Provides weekend childcare to families in Pillgwenlly while promoting integration and reducing barriers between disadvantaged ethnic groups and other communities | £22,000 |
| Cyfannol Women's Aid | Gwent | Assertive outreach to provide support to victims of domestic abuse aged 16-24 at the point of crisis. | £27,314.15 |

| | | | |
|------------------------|---------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| Ffin Dance | Blaenau Gwent | Dance and Enhance. Holding dance and fitness sessions for young people. | £10,000 |
| Duffryn Community Link | Newport | Detached youth work, engaging young people and address anti-social behaviour in the area | £28,028 |

Ring-fenced funding for year two and three projects previously awarded were:

| | | | |
|---------------------------------|---------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Urban Circle Productions | Newport | U-Turn Project. Using the creative arts to tackle social problems affecting young people in and around the Pillgwenlly area of Newport. | 50,000 |
| Cwmbran Centre for Young People | Torfaen | Open access drop-in activities to help tackle anti-social behaviour in Cwmbran town centre. | 40,314.72 |
| The Gap Wales | Newport | Sanctuary project. A charity that supports vulnerable children and young people who have been trafficked into the UK, or arrived seeking asylum, providing a safeguarding role and helping them to access services. | 16,931 |
| Community House | Newport | Maindee Youth schools' project. Youth workers provide educational and diversionary projects for children and young people, along with a budget for activities and associated costs. | 48,351 |

The examples below give a flavour of the work these projects are doing in our communities.

Community Youth Project – Newport

Funding from my office enabled the team at Community Youth Project – Newport (formally the Maindee Youth Project) to continue much needed detached youth work, as well as paying for trips to places like Aqua Park in Cardiff and Enflate Adventure Park in Newport. Staff also ran sport and play sessions in the city, including a paint project that can be seen on Corporation Road. This was designed and painted by young people wanting to share a positive message with others in the city.

Cymru Creations

Two short films created by young people and supported by my community fund have received awards at the Blaenau Gwent Film Academy Festival. Tredegar-based Cymru Creations worked with young people to create the films. The young people were responsible for every part of the process, from developing the stories, writing the scripts, acting, filming and editing. At the end of the project, they will receive a level one and two NVQ in film-making. The films will also be entered for an Arts Award at Trinity College London, which is seen as the equivalent to a GCSE. Both films are available on the Blaenau Gwent Film Academy YouTube channel. Cymru Creations have reported that the funding from my office has made a huge positive impact on the well-being of students attending and that, once completed, all the films will be published on social media and sent to local schools.

Ffin Dance

Young people in Abertillery have been exploring their creative side with drop-in dance workshops supported by my community fund. The sessions are run by Ffin Dance, a professional dance company based at Beaufort Theatre in Ebbw Vale, and aim to give participants positive, creative experiences to help steer them away from anti-social behaviour (ASB). As well as having fun and taking part in physical activity, they are learning something new, developing their confidence, and working with positive adult role models. This work, combined with proactive policing and work with partners, contributed to a reduction in reports of ASB in Abertillery.

KidCare4U

My team and I made a number of visits to KidCare4U at Pillgwenlly Millennium Centre to see how my community fund is being used to run a weekly Saturday club for local children. As well as activities that encourage young people to keep healthy, build their confidence and make friends, the club provides extra education support for those who need it. Staff and volunteers are all drawn from the local area. Not only is this project keeping young people off the streets and giving them something positive to do, the wider support offered to the young people in Pillgwenlly and their families will have long term benefits for their future.

Sanctuary

The Sanctuary (a project run by charity Gap Wales) and Positive Futures have been running weekly football matches for young refugees in the city. Both projects receive funding from my office and Newport is home to about one third of Wales's unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people. These are some of the most vulnerable young people in our community, many of whom have escaped war-torn countries or been trafficked into the UK to work for drug gangs. By offering them opportunities to take part in sports and other activities, we are helping their physical and mental well-being. We are also helping them to avoid potentially becoming involved with crime and to integrate with local residents, building a more cohesive community in the city.

ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement

I was incredibly grateful to have the opportunity to serve the residents of Gwent as Police and Crime Commissioner for another term and feel it is important to get back out into the community to talk to people about what really matters to them. Most of our planned engagement sessions within communities last year had to be cancelled due to the pandemic, although this did see us significantly improve the quality of our digital engagement work. This resulted in improved processes and partnership working.

During the year I held walkabouts in Abertillery, Abergavenny, Bargoed, Blaenavon, Brynmawr, Caerphilly, Caldicot, Chepstow, Cwmbran, Ebbw Vale, Monmouth, Newport, Pontypool, Rhymney and Tredegar. During each visit, I was pleased that local traders and residents were eager to talk to me about some of the current issues in their communities. Engagement is a key part of the role of a Police and Crime Commissioner, so the walkabouts have been invaluable in informing my conversations with the Chief Constable.

FINANCE

Audited accounts

The annual statements of accounts for my office and that of Gwent Police were published before the statutory deadline of 31 July, 2022.

Budget setting

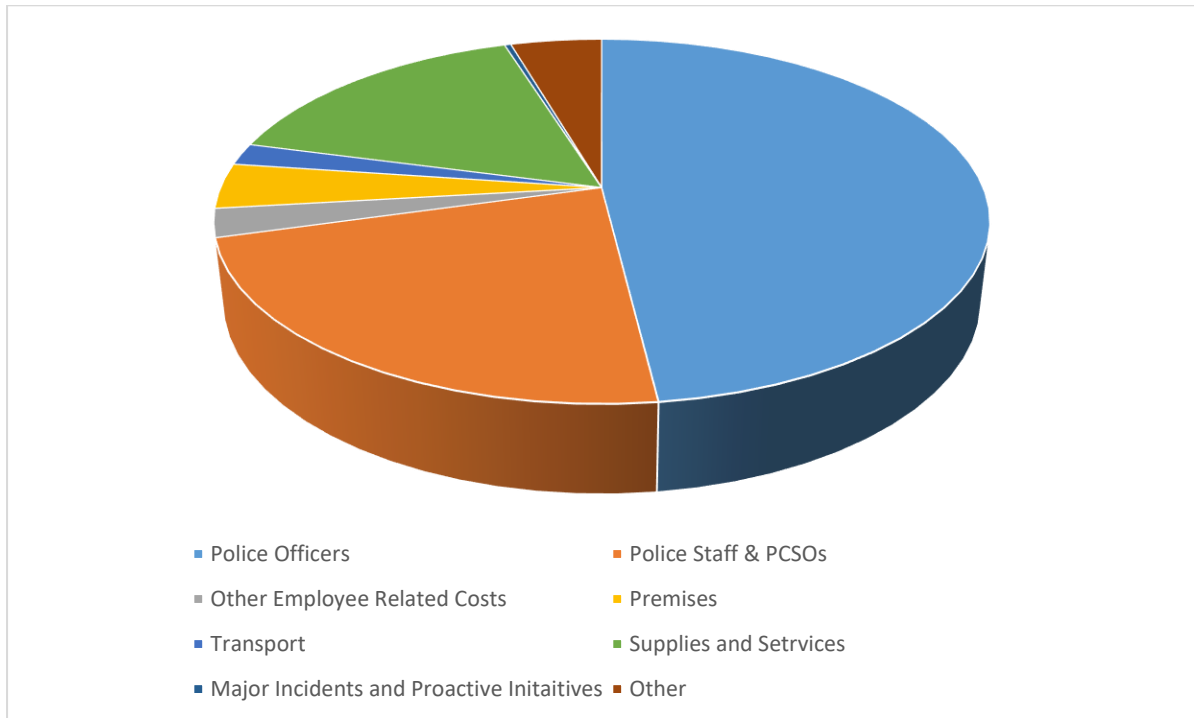
I receive regular reports from Gwent Police to help ensure that we have a police service that is value for money. This year I have:

- Agreed a budget for Gwent Police for 2022/23 of £156.4m (£8.9m more than the previous year);
- Set the council tax increase at 5.5 per cent;

- Created a capital budget for 2022/23 of £18m; and
- Continued to monitor Gwent Police's service improvement work, which has delivered £52.8m of cashable efficiency savings since 2008/09.

Setting the budget:

For 2021/22, the following budgets were set for policing services in Gwent:



At the end of 2021/22, the overall spend on policing services in Gwent produced a surplus of £4.1m (2.7 per cent) against the overall budget of £150.9m.

In addition, the following 2021/22 capital budgets were initially set in Gwent:

- Estate - £12.6m
- Vehicles - £1.4m
- Information and Communication Systems - £2.2m
- Other long term non-capital projects - £2.5m

The overall capital spend on policing services in Gwent for 2021/22 was £20.6m against the revised overall capital budget of £30.7m.

Ensuring value for money:

I have ensured that my office and Gwent Police have delivered value for money, while ensuring residents have an effective and efficient police service, by:

- Annually benchmarking costs via HMICFRS value for money profiles;
- Receiving an assurance judgement from internal auditors that we have adequate and effective management, control and governance processes;

- Receiving an assurance statement of 'generally satisfactory' from Torfaen County Borough Council for IT services provided by SRS;
- Publishing my annual governance statement, which evidences the effectiveness of our governance; and
- Ensuring Audit Wales audits my statement of accounts annually.

MEETING STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

My main responsibility is to ensure that Gwent has an efficient and effective policing service. One of the ways in which I do that is by holding the Chief Constable to account for the performance of Gwent Police. My office and I do this daily, while I also hold a quarterly Strategy and Performance Board in public. I ensure that my office is accessible, transparent and provides the public with the information they require to build their confidence in the work being undertaken. The key statutory areas for compliance are detailed below.

HMICFRS inspection responses:

I am required to respond to the Home Secretary on any HMICFRS inspection reports prepared under Section 55 of the Police Act 1996. During the year, I responded to 13 reports providing my overall response to the report and where applicable, information on how Gwent Police would address any recommendations, but also commending positive work. Responding to the reports provides information to the public on the performance of policing, not just locally but nationally as well. It also allows the Home Office and HMICFRS to determine future areas of inspection and if any further action may be needed.

Data protection:

We have a data protection officer (DPO) who monitors compliance and advises us on our statutory obligations. No data breaches were reported in 2021/22.

A Subject Access Request (SAR) is a request to an organisation asking for access to the personal information it holds on you. We received 34 SARs compared to three in 2019/20 and 12 in 2020/21. Two requests were for information held by the OPCC, the remaining requests were for information held by Gwent Police. The requesters were provided with the correct contact details. The increase has happened since the force moved to a national website platform. This has been fed back to the force who have in turn fed back to the national team and additional clarity has been added to the OPCC website to try and ensure requests for information are not delayed and are sent to the correct organisation.

Freedom Of Information Act

During the year, there were 64 requests received under the Freedom of Information Act compared to 31 in 2020/21. The compliance rate with the 20-working day response period was 100%. Key themes were in relation to finance, OPCC staffing and the police estate while a number of requests were also received by us that were

for operational information held by Gwent Police. Finance is a recurring theme annually and generally covers salaries and office costs. No appeals were received. My office maintains a publication scheme that commits us to making information available to the public as part of our normal business activities and supports the information we are required to publish under the Specified Information Order 2011. We were fully compliant in 2021/22.

Welsh Language Standards

We have continued to work to ensure the provision of sustainable Welsh language services and effective supporting processes. During the year, the Welsh Language Commissioner's Office conducted a compliance inspection of the organisation against the Welsh language standards. The outcome was positive, with feedback that my office is performing well, with opportunity to further strengthen existing bilingual provisions in collaboration with Gwent Police. A Welsh language standards annual compliance report will be published for 2021/22, highlighting the achievements and performance outcomes from the year. In addition, we have continued to monitor how Gwent Police has provided a bilingual policing service to the public of Gwent. Performance and compliance against the standards is reviewed at the internal Welsh language meeting, attended by my office. Some challenges remain; however, performance outcomes are encouraging, which will also be reported separately. We will continue to engage with the Welsh Language Commissioner and their team to identify and consider suitable initiatives and best practice that can further support our aim to become truly bilingual organisations.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

In February 2022 Russia invaded Ukraine, causing Europe's largest refugee crisis since World War 2. As well as understanding what this may mean for policing here in Gwent, the subsequent rise in fuel costs, combined with a growing cost of living crisis, threatens to have real implications for our communities, including our police officers and staff. Policing as an organisation will be greatly impacted. We don't yet fully know what this means for us going forward but it will be factored into all budget and resource planning for the year ahead.