

Police and Crime Panel

1 February 2019

Campaigning and influencing activity

Report of the Office of the Police, Crime and Victims' Commissioner



1. Purpose

To provide the Panel with an annual update on campaign activity by the PCVC, to influence others; in particular central Government policy.

2. Background

In the current Police, Crime and Victims' Plan there is a commitment to campaign for change. This happens in a number of ways:

- Letters and meetings with Government Ministers and officials, raising key issues and making an evidence-based case for changes in Government policy, priorities, and funding decisions
- Working with partners, locally and nationally, to argue the case for change; and to co-commission
- Influencing local and regional partners in scheduled meetings, and on other occasions, to that the case for changing operational practices to meet community safety-based objectives is made

3. Campaigning and influencing activity in 2018

This section of the report takes a number of policy areas and describes relevant activity which has taken place.

Police Funding

- Letter to Home Secretary, November 2018, about police funding prior to funding announcement in December
- Letter to Secretary of State for Health about ring-fencing the public health grant; and consequent effects on demand for policing, November 2018
- Meeting with Home Secretary in Durham, July 2018
- Letter to Chancellor of the Exchequer about Police funding, January 2018

In addition there have been continuing discussions between PCCs, and a relatively united approach has been taken, about the need for grant funding from Government to be maintained rather than reduced in favour of increasing Policer funding by raising the policing element of Council tax.

Drug policy reform

- Drawing on the PCVC's 2017 manifesto 'Towards a Safer Drugs Policy', which made the case for reform in several areas so that harm could be reduced, the PCVC has met with individual politicians to move this agenda forward. This included briefing all local MPs and having follow up meetings with Grahame Morris, Laura Pidcock, and Helen Goodman, and MPs from further afield, Crispin Blunt MP and Ronnie Cowan MP.
- The manifesto has been shared with senior opposition politicians, including Jeremy Corbyn, Diane Abbot, and Louise Haigh.
- The PCVC, together with other PCC colleagues, has spoken at the Drug, Alcohol and Justice Cross Party Parliamentary Group to evidence the failings of current policy. A letter was to be sent from this group to the Home Secretary.
- The Government's decision to legalise the medical use of cannabis followed sustained campaigning by reform-oriented politicians and others.
- Activity to enable police to use naloxone in custody suites
- Making the evidence-based case for services in Durham and Darlington to reduce drug-based harm
- Arguing the case for change on the APCC substance misuse portfolio group, chaired by PCCs Hardyal Dhindsa (Derbyshire) and Arfon Jones (North Wales)

Victims of domestic abuse

- Participation in the 6 Force Whole Systems Approach that included working with Family Court partners to ensure the rights and support of victims are taken into account in family and civil court processes and embedding MATAC in Force processes
- Contributing to consultation on Domestic Abuse Bill (released 21 January 2019)
- Strong support for the No Less of a Man campaign, led by Durham's Young PCVC, Libby Wright, in 2018

Private Landlords

- Supporting Phil Wilson MP, who introduced a Private Member's Bill for the introduction of a mandatory licencing regime for private landlords; and following up with discussions with County Durham MPs, senior Councillors and then the Housing Minister Heather Wheeler MP, leading to the decision to develop a business case for 100% selective licencing for private landlords in County Durham

Minimum Unit Pricing for alcohol

- The 2016 Alcohol Harm Conference, which Police and Crime Panel members were part of, provided a foundation for activity in subsequent years. Working with the PCCs in Northumbria and Cleveland, the PCVC has pressed the Government to

reduce the drink-driving limit, to introduce a minimum unit price for alcohol, and to review the licensing. A video showcasing the impact of alcohol on the emergency services has been used during alcohol awareness week to raise awareness of the impact of harmful alcohol consumption on emergency services.

- The three North East PCCs have made the case to Government for minimum unit pricing, including via letters and in meetings.
- Locally, work with Durham County Council and Sheffield University to model the effects of minimum unit pricing locally – to form the basis of campaigning activity in 2019

Mental Health services

- For the third year in a row, the PCVC hosted ‘the night I spent a night in a cell’ charity event, to raise awareness of the impact of criminalising people in crisis and the need to ensure that vulnerable people are kept safe and supported to appropriate services. This also allowed respective charities to raise funds for their organisation. At the same time, the PCVC, alongside other PCC colleagues supported national campaigns during mental health awareness week, calling for adequate funding for mental health services. This has also been raised in the PCVC’s response to the Home Secretary, following the recent HMICFRS report in Mental Health Service provision

Modern day slavery (MDS)

- Planning for a number of events (one in March 2019 and another in April) for businesses and partners to raise awareness and agree joint action
- Contributing to consultation on National Referral Mechanism for victims of MDS
- Contributing to consultation on role of frontline officers in identifying and responding to concerns about potential MDS activity

- *Road safety*

Support for police campaigns around drink and drug-driving, speeding, use of mobile phones whilst driving. The 3 North East PCCs have called for the limit of driving with alcohol in the bloodstream to be reduced to the same level as was introduced in Scotland in 2014. The Commissioners recently backed a Private Members’ Bill in the House of Lords which called for the same reduction, and have today received a letter from the Secretary of State for Transport, stating that the Government ‘has no plans to change the drink driving limit in England and Wales’.

4. Recommendations

Panel Members are recommended to note the information contained in this report and to offer comments.

Ron Hogg

Police, Crime and Victims’ Commissioner

Appendix 1: Risks and Implications

Finance

None

Staffing

None

Equality and Diversity

None

Accommodation

None

Crime and Disorder

None

Children's Act 2004

None

Stakeholder/Community Engagement

None

Environment

None

Collaboration and Partnerships

None

Value for Money and Productivity

None

Potential Impact on Police and Crime Plan Priorities

Positive coverage of activity will help to boost confidence in policing.

Commissioning

None

Other risks

None

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