

Meeting	Authority Meeting
Date	20 May 2020
Location	Video-conference
Title of Paper	Policing Response to Covid-19
Presented By	Deputy Chief Constable Crime and Operations
Recommendation to Members	For Discussion
Appendix Attached	No

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the Scottish Police Authority on Operation TALLA.

Members are invited to discuss the content of this paper.

1. Background and Governance

- 1.1 Operation TALLA is Police Scotland's response to COVID-19. In February 2020, a command structure and operational capability was established. The Chief Constable appointed DCC Graham as the Strategic Lead for Police Scotland.
- 1.2 Police Scotland's response to the pandemic is under constant review to ensure it remains appropriate and comprehensive. At the last board update on 30th April 2020 a change in the Op TALLA Command Structure was reported. Since that time there has continued to be considerable attention on the key and emerging issues arising, in what remains a very dynamic and changing set of circumstances.
- 1.3 The Chief Constable is implementing appropriate leadership and oversight mechanisms for the transition through the continuing response phase of the crisis, whilst recognising the requirement for a sustainable and effective focus on delivering effective policing across Scotland's communities, capturing learning, leading change and supporting our people towards a 'new normality' in time.
- 1.4 The organisational governance structures ensure appropriate leadership, internal assurance, decision-making capability and information flow. External engagement is maintained through regular discussion with the Vice Chair of the SPA and the Cabinet Secretary for Justice, as well as active participation in many forums including, Scottish Government Resilience Room meetings (chaired by the First Minister), the Strategic Coordinating Group, and national, regional and local resilience partnership arrangements.

2. Maintaining service delivery and critical service police functions

- 2.1 Operational policing activities have changed enormously since the implementation of Operation TALLA but are beginning to stabilise into a new normal. Volume of calls, types of incidents and levels of recorded crime, while still markedly different to those experienced at comparable times in previous years, are beginning to trend in-line with comparable weeks in previous years.
- 2.2 The accelerated rollout of the Contact Assessment Model (CAM) to all areas of Scotland continues to assess and identify those who are most vulnerable to ensure they are prioritised for face-to-face resolution. The Mental Health Pathways project supports this approach, with additional funding from Scottish Government

allowing the opening hours of the hub to be extended to full 24/7 coverage within the next 6 - 8 weeks (June 2020). This will permit suitable calls received by Police Scotland to be referred to the hub, allowing individuals rapid access to the appropriate services. Projects such as Digital Contact are examining the feasibility of utilising technologies to improve contact with the public by providing remote face-to-face engagement.

- 2.3 Police Scotland social media channels continue to be used to proactively address any identified concerns and raise community awareness around COVID legislation and emerging crime trends, such as Cyber fraud and Domestic Violence. Police Scotland continues to strive to identify people who may be at risk and put in place measures that will help keep them safe. Despite organisational change caused by the pandemic there has not been, nor will there be, any change in Police Scotland's key priority to protect vulnerable individuals and reduce harm. A national Domestic Abuse campaign has been launched in conjunction with Scottish Government to reassure victims and those at risk along with signposting to help and support. Meetings continue with NPCC colleagues and partners to share information on emerging trends or issues and Scottish Government's Child Protection Unit have refreshed and issued supplementary guidance.

3. Protecting and supporting our workforce

- 3.1 As would be expected, the organisation has seen increased levels of absence reflecting those requiring to self-isolate, shield or displaying COVID-19 symptoms, in addition to the usual sickness absence. Since peaking at 3,745 absences on 29 March there has been a steady increase of people returning to work however, absence levels are still slightly higher than would normally be seen. As of 7 May, the number of people reporting absent is 1,486.
- 3.2 Securing suitable PPE continues to be challenging and the dedicated Logistics cell has continued to provide extensive training, equipping and resupply, operating on a 24/7 basis. At present, over 11,000 frontline police officers and staff have been trained and equipped or re-supplied with the necessary PPE.
- 3.3 The Police Scotland COVID-19 testing regime continues to provide reassurance to officers and staff who are symptomatic and to assist in returning them to work as soon as possible. As of 29th April Police Scotland has arranged for 827 employees to be tested, 163 of whom have tested positive. Further work is in progress with Scottish Government and staff associations to establish if the

testing regime can be extended for Police Scotland in recognition of some of the unique challenges faced by officers and staff.

- 3.4 The organisation recognises that supporting the wellbeing of those who work for Police Scotland throughout and beyond this challenging time is critical and there is a dedicated Wellbeing and Welfare cell as part of the Op TALLA structure. Recently a 'Wellbeing Hub' has been created on the Intranet, with external access available on the internet, to ensure our people have a simple, easy single point through which they can access relevant wellbeing support, guidance and information at any time. The Wellbeing Champions network remains fully active and members are in receipt of weekly updates on key areas so they can offer enhanced support to local teams and managers.
- 3.5 People & Development have extended the hours of the People Direct Service Desk to a seven day operational model providing support to officers and staff. They have also distributed a line manager's toolkit to assist leaders on specific key COVID-19 topics and messaging.
- 3.6 Police Scotland continues to support the need to work remotely or from home to protect our staff. There continues to be increased procurement and distribution of laptops, other ICT products and ongoing technical support in relation to the software required to facilitate this.

4. Providing an appropriate policing response

- 4.1 On the 27 March 2020, emergency legislation in the form of the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions) (Scotland) Regulations 2020 and Coronavirus Act 2020 came into effect in Scotland. Policing has a crucial role to play to ensure the public cooperate with these new regulations to limit the spread of the virus.
- 4.2 From the outset, the Chief Constable established a clear and consistent policing style, posture and deployment methodology. Officers and staff continue to apply common sense and engage in a friendly and courteous manner and enforcement action is only taken where efforts to engage, explain and encourage have been exhausted. From the introduction of the new legislation through to 29th April 2020, police officers across Scotland have engaged with individuals approximately 19,000 times in relation to the new legislation. Around 90% of all these interactions result in no enforcement action being taken with the remaining 10% of

engagements resulting in some form of enforcement, the vast majority of these being the issue of a Fixed Penalty Notice. Edinburgh and Greater Glasgow Divisions are proactively engaging minority communities with literature in relevant languages to improve awareness and understanding of the legislation and Scottish Government Guidance.

- 4.3 Rural and island communities have adopted a partnership approach at ferry terminals through which transport operators, supported by the police where appropriate, pro-actively engage passengers to encourage only necessary travel.
- 4.4 A nationally consistent approach to dealing with business premises failing to comply with the new regulations has been rolled out with Trading Standards and Environmental Health being the primary responders to reports and callers to Police Scotland are being referred to these partners.
- 4.5 Police Scotland continues to monitor hate crime and community tensions recognising the importance of strong partnerships at a local and national level to enable a holistic approach to tackle emerging or ongoing issues. The Service has been working closely with partners and stakeholders, developing and enhancing existing working relationships since the initial stages of this crisis. It was recognised in the early stages of Operation TALLA that Chinese and other East-Asian communities were increasingly likely to be the victims of hate crime. Police Scotland continue to work closely with potentially targeted communities and engage with our established group of Community Advisors in order to promote reporting of such incidents.
- 4.6 Police Scotland have active engagement with COSLA & SOLACE to address vulnerability issues within communities. In addition to this, Police Scotland have been working with disability partners such as Scottish Autism, the Gypsy/Traveller Community, children and young peoples' organisations and Victim Support Scotland among others to ensure that the needs of all communities are acknowledged and recognised and forms part of our cohesive approach. Shielding Liaison Officers are in place via Local Resilience Partnerships supporting the Scottish Government's Shielding Programme and helping meet the needs of the most vulnerable.
- 4.7 All Local Policing divisions are fully engaged with partners in the private, public and voluntary sectors through existing relationships, arrangements and their Local Resilience Partnerships. These relationships are driving daily prevention and partnership working to

tackle local priorities throughout the public health emergency. The Operation TALLA Local Policing Co-ordination Unit provides support to all divisions with the identification, highlighting and sharing of emerging good practice and learning across the country.

5. Maintaining trust and confidence

- 5.1 Police Scotland is committed to the provision of an effective and responsive policing capability in all our local divisions and specialist support capabilities during this time of heightened concern and tension.
- 5.2 However, as a result of the COVID19 crisis, Police Scotland has altered its deployment model, in order to promote the health of individuals within local communities, to support our key strategic partners and safeguard the health and well-being of our people.
- 5.3 This has resulted in a significant reduction in face to face contact with members of our communities, due to the manner in which the virus is transmitted and the need to adhere to social distancing guidelines, where operationally safe to do so.
- 5.4 In recognition of this change and to monitor the impact, Police Scotland currently has two open surveys in operation, these being the 'Your Police Survey' and the 'User Experience Survey'.
- 5.5 The 'Your Police Survey' went live on 9 April 2020 and within a short timescale, the response was unprecedented and delivered the largest survey of its kind in the UK at this time.
- 5.6 The high level outputs from this combined survey activity have shown that Public confidence in Scottish policing is currently 66% and has increased since the lockdown by around 20% - around two-thirds of people have confidence in their local police at this time. Additionally, one in two people fully support the approach taken by Police Scotland to handling the lockdown - significantly higher than the UK average. Almost everyone (over 90%) agrees with Police Scotland using new powers, particularly encourage and enforce.
- 5.7 There continues to be open and transparent data sharing and publication of information through weekly and monthly reporting for the duration of the pandemic response, with an Operation TALLA Information Cell dedicated to this purpose. Police Scotland continues to provide a daily bulletin internally and to partners to report good practice, challenges and better inform readers of the contemporary policing picture. Police Scotland continues to provide

information to the UK and Scottish governments, on issues such as PPE levels, absence and the co-operation of the public with physical distancing measures. Intelligence is also shared with forces in England & Wales to identify emerging threats or trends. Police Scotland also release a weekly bulletin, which is provided to the SPA and published on the internet to provide the public with information on the current policing landscape.

- 5.8 A national Community Impact Assessment is ongoing which is updated on a daily basis. Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment (EqHRIA) processes continue to be refined to ensure that they reflect the changing nature of Police Scotland's response to COVID-19 and how that impacts on certain sectors and communities. Following discussion with Scotland's Children's Commissioner, co-production of a specific Children and Young People's Rights Impact Assessment was conducted with participation by the Commissioner's Youth Advisory Group on advice and guidance for officers. This builds on our existing approach to engaging with young people and the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- 5.9 An Independent Advisory Group (IAG) chaired by Mr John Scott, QC is developing its approach and continues to be strongly supported by Police Scotland in its efforts to provide rigorous and impartial advice and guidance on the use of the new police powers during this crisis. A request for relevant data and access to employees is being progressed to allow the IAG to gather the necessary information required to establish a dynamic feedback process on the impact and proportionality of the application of new police powers.

6. Supporting partners

- 6.1 Police Scotland continues to accommodate and facilitate a National Coordination Centre (NCC) in respect of the COVID-19 response and ACC Mark Williams continues to chair the Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG). This is the strategic level of coordination for the Local Resilience Partnerships currently active across Scotland who have been involved in much of the local partnership working detailed earlier in the paper. National coordination with this partnership takes place 24/7 with reach to all partner agencies in a virtual model.
- 6.2 As Scotland moves from the initial response to 'living with the virus' the SCG will move to assist partners with a Test, Trace, Isolate and Support approach. While this evolves, Police Scotland will ensure that the coordination and support moves effectively to fulfil the

requirements, managing information flows from Scottish Government through the SCG to Local Resilience Partnerships and the development of national planning assumptions to support contingency planning.

7. Post COVID Planning

- 7.1 In a climate of continued global uncertainty surrounding COVID-19, Police Scotland is preparing for the medium and longer term implications of the pandemic and possible impacts of a number of scenarios. To plan and prepare for returning to a new normality, a Recovery Coordination Group (RCG) has been developed under the direction of ACC Bernie Higgins. The recovery strategy will focus on three key areas: Recovery, Learning and Operational Response.
- 7.2 Tactical policing options, consistent with the current policing style and tone used throughout the policing operational response to COVID-19 have been developed. The options focus on maintaining the 4E communication and engagement model and will be maintained throughout any potential changes to restriction levels. An assessment to capture the impact of COVID-19 on the organisation has been collated. The assessment will capture the current position within each business area in relation to their critical functions and understand what recovery work has been undertaken to date.
- 7.3 An Organisational Learning Group has been established which will support the ability to identify, capture, communicate and action organisational learning in relation to our planning for, response to and recovery from COVID-19.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 The finance team continues to work closely with all tiers of the Operation TALLA command structure to monitor spending in relation to COVID-19. As of 7th May, a total cost of £9.48m had been incurred on goods ordered (including goods yet to be received) and overtime/TOIL.
- 8.2 This headline figure of £9.48m, with supplies such as PPE and ICT kit accounting for £6.85m of this total, is based on orders placed and there is a risk that not all orders will be fulfilled. Circa £1.44m of orders have been terminated to date. Furthermore, costs do not hit the ledger until goods have been receipted. At present a total of £2.89m of supplies, services and ICT kit have been received.

8.3 The focus so far has been on costs incurred to date however Finance are now undertaking work to understand and estimate the financial impact of COVID-19 on the wider organisation over the medium to long term. Along with the focus on the longer term budgetary impact of operating in a COVID-19 environment, Finance will be providing ongoing support and challenge to ensure that financial control, governance and discipline are maintained.

9. Conclusion

9.1 Police Scotland remains committed to providing essential policing services which will help to save lives and support the NHS through this health crisis. The importance of ensuring co-operation with the social distancing measures through engagement and encouragement is paramount, however, Police Scotland recognises the responsibility to use the unprecedented legislative powers in a manner that is compatible with the organisational values and the principle of policing by consent.

9.2 Police Scotland will continue to be open and transparent with the sharing of data and information. On that basis there will be weekly updates to the Authority and publically, detailing the operational demands, resource availability and the numbers of Coronavirus legislation interventions that have occurred. This will be in addition to standard authority reporting.

9.3 As changes to Scottish Government or UK Government regulations and guidance occur, the service will maintain the approach to policing in Scotland that has been broadly met with support to date. This will include dynamic changes to the many physical distancing measures in place across Scotland, and may also therefore require the development of guidance and messaging internally and externally reflecting different approaches by Scotland than in other parts of the UK. Whilst the specific responsibilities and role of the service in policing the public health measures will change over as yet unknown timescales, the focus on saving lives, maintaining public support and confidence and protecting the safety and wellbeing of our people will be a constant.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are invited to discuss the content of this report.