

# Police Federation for Northern Ireland



## Police Remuneration Review Body Submission

APRIL 2021

13<sup>th</sup> April 2021

*Dear Ms Bharucha,*

The Police Federation for Northern Ireland (PFNI) are pleased to attach our seventh submission to the Police Remuneration Review Body (PRRB) for the year 2021/22 and I would once again like to record my appreciation for your flexible approach in respect of extending submission dates for this report.

The delay in setting the 2020/21 Public Sector Pay Policy has, once again, had a detrimental impact on the implementation of the annual pay award for police officers in Northern Ireland. Last year was the fourth year such a delay has been evident, despite the Northern Ireland Assembly being fully functional for the past year. The impact of these consistent delays is felt by police officers and should not be underestimated. The delay would have been far greater if it had not been for the pragmatism and flexibility shown by officials in the Department of Justice (DoJ); this has once again highlighted the unworkable timeframes involved.

The recommended increases to student officer starting salaries and the implementation of revised Sergeant's pay scales have only just been approved. At the date of writing, officers are still not in receipt of either of these changes.

2020/21 has been an unprecedented year for policing across the United Kingdom. The Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in police officers putting themselves at daily risk from this deadly virus. Poorly thought out and frequently changing legislation has resulted in many officers putting themselves and their families at great risk. Unfortunately, the UK Government has failed to acknowledge this in any meaningful manner. Whilst NHS workers have been rewarded for their great work, the role of the PSNI in enforcing the guidance and legislation has been overlooked. Failure by Government to vaccinate or financially recognise their role has directly impacted upon the sense of value police officers feel is attributed to their vital public service.

The UK Government has directed that there will be a public sector pay freeze for this pay round. This raises the obvious question as to the point of submitting any evidence to PRRB for what may in effect be a fait accompli. The PFNI would urge PRRB in the strongest possible terms to make recommendations based on the evidence provided and not simply concede the Government's position on this matter. The independence of PRRB on making

recommendations based on evidence is crucial in ensuring confidence in the process is maintained.

The PFNI are still of the firm view that the issue of pay parity relates to core pay spines. This allows for regional variations without unnecessarily deconstructing the core pay structures. There remains broad agreement from all parties in Northern Ireland on this issue.

Budget pressures have once again been evident during 2020/21, with the much heralded New Decade, New Approach failing to progress the 7,500 officer headcount which was included in this agreement in January 2020. The budgetary situation facing the Chief Constable continues to present difficulties in forward planning and as a result presents many workplace uncertainties for police officers.

As requested by the PRRB in their Sixth Report on Northern Ireland, we have included some views on the phase out of the Competency Related Threshold Payment (CRTP) and the transition to replacement allowances. Our position is still that this allowance should have been retained until the College of Policing and the National Police Chiefs' Council had completed its work on workforce modernisation and Pay Reform. We are open to any suggestions in respect of this allowance and will work with PSNI around the implementation of any recommendations by PRRB.

I look forward to engaging with you and your team in the virtual oral evidence session.

Yours faithfully,



Mark Lindsay

*Chair of the Police Federation for Northern Ireland*

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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. Unsurprisingly, the Police Federation for Northern Ireland's (PFNI) 2021/22 pay review submission to the Police Remuneration Review Body (PRRB) is contextualised by the on-going global Covid-19 pandemic, the impact on the economy and the difficulties this has presented policing. The issues addressed within this report are reflective of the remit letter issued by the Northern Ireland (NI) Justice Minister in March 2021, the 2021/22 NI public sector pay policy, the remit letter issued by the Home Secretary in December 2020 as well as the Chancellor of the Exchequer's spending review of November 2020. Furthermore, the request for evidence as detailed by the PRRB in their Sixth Report on NI has influenced the content of this report.
- 1.2. In light of the Covid-19 pandemic and the challenges and dangers it has posed for police officers in NI and across the UK, the PFNI are frustrated that the UK Government would find it appropriate to introduce *another* pay freeze for police officers this year. Not only is this extremely unfair given the sacrifices made by police officers during the last year, continuing to provide a vital public service and often at great personal risk, but it has also reignited discussions around the independence of the pay review process. This does not assist in reassuring our members that their pay, terms and conditions are determined as part of a fair or independent process. It is worth reiterating that unlike other public sector workers, police officers are unable to join a union nor take industrial action, and therefore see a greater need than other public organisations to ensure that deliberations on issues directly affecting them are impartial, balanced and unprejudiced.
- 1.3. The PFNI were therefore pleased to see the NI Finance Minister move away from the position of the UK Government and the blanket ban on public sector pay increases (excluding the NHS). At the very least, this should enable the pay review process in NI to operate without restriction. We have therefore provided a range of evidence highlighting the realities of the current policing environment and have outlined our case for the provision of a pay award for police officers during this exceptionally challenging year.

- 1.4. Whilst the review of pay, terms and conditions of police officers in NI is undertaken separately from the review of officers in England and Wales, the PFNI have continued to reiterate the importance of reporting upon policing issues in NI as set within a broad UK context. This is particularly evident through our continued support for pay parity in core pay spines for police officers in NI with their counterparts in England and Wales. This remains our position.
- 1.5. This year however, differences have emerged between the two processes stemming from the divergence in position on public sector pay. However, the PFNI's continued support for pay parity does *not* mean the acceptance of a pay freeze for police officers in NI. Rather we believe this provides the opportunity to highlight the injustice of the situation in England and Wales and enable the evidence submitted by parties in NI to also reflect upon decisions made regarding our colleagues in England and Wales.
- 1.6. The evidence provided by the PFNI includes the consideration of the current NI security situation, the implications of Brexit in NI (including an understanding of the impact of this on community tensions and recent public disorder) and a detailed exploration of policing during the Covid-19 pandemic. This includes primary data from the PFNI Covid-19 and Wellbeing Survey. We have also highlighted changes in the PSNI workforce, including issues of recruitment and retention as well as changes in overtime and sickness absence during 2020/21 and the impact of Covid-19 on these areas. A brief outline of the UK and NI economies has also been provided.

## Recommendations

Based on the evidence presented, the PFNI set out the following recommendations to the PRRB for the 2021/22 review of police pay, terms and conditions:

**RECOMMENDATION 1:** An uplift of 3% to the annual salaries of all federated officers in the PSNI, as payable from September 2021.

**RECOMMENDATION 2:** A £500 bonus payment to be made available to all police officers in NI in recognition of their continued work during the Covid-19 pandemic.

**RECOMMENDATION 3:** Pay point 0 on the Constable pay scale should be removed and all student officers should be moved to pay point 1.

**RECOMMENDATION 4:** Notwithstanding the particulars regarding the transition away from the use of CRTP, both the Unsocial Hours Allowance and the Away from Home Overnight Allowance must be implemented within the PSNI in place of CRTP.

**RECOMMENDATION 5:** That the Northern Ireland Transitional Allowance (NITA) is uplifted in line with the pay award.

**RECOMMENDATION 6:** That the Dog Handler's allowance is uplifted in line with the pay award.

## 2. REMIT LETTER & PUBLIC SECTOR PAY

- 2.1. The 2021/22 review of pay, terms and conditions of police officers in Northern Ireland (NI) commenced on the 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2021 following the publication of the remit letter from the NI Justice Minister<sup>1</sup>. Whilst the timeframes within which the pay review is conducted have varied since the inception of the process in 2014, this year's review is taking place upon the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic, resulting in the process occurring later in the year. The process continued within more usual timeframes in England and Wales.
- 2.2. The remit letter from the NI Justice Minister outlines the specific areas to be included for consideration as part of the pay review in NI each year. This year's remit letter is particularly light in detail, referencing only the desire for the continuation of pay parity with England and Wales and the consideration of Assistant Chief Constable (ACC) pay. With a number of outstanding issues arising from the recommendations made by the PRRB in 2020, as well as new items alluded to by the Chancellor (i.e. the increase of at least £250 for those earning below £24,000) and important developments in police pay in England and Wales, it was surprising to us that the NI remit letter did *not* include other significant and ongoing elements for consideration, despite the request from the PFNI for their inclusion.
- 2.3. Nevertheless, and with a desire to see continued progress in these areas, the PFNI have provided evidence and commentary on a number of important areas of police pay. In doing so, and with a need to consider the broader context within which the review of police pay takes place across the UK, the PFNI have, in addition to the remit letter from the NI Justice Minister, given consideration to the remit letter issued by the Home Secretary to stakeholders in England and Wales<sup>2</sup>, as well as to the requests for information from the PRRB in their Sixth Report on Northern Ireland. We believe this is important to ensure this year's deliberations on police pay in NI are not made in isolation.

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix B



- 2.4. In November 2020 the Chancellor announced the reintroduction of the public sector pay freeze for all public servants, excluding those in the NHS. We are of course fully supportive of our colleagues in the NHS receiving a pay award this year, indeed we believe it is imperative that they do. However, in her remit letter on England and Wales, the Home Secretary confirmed that the pay freeze would apply to policing and in doing so effectively prevented the *independent* pay review body from even considering evidence on the need, affordability and merit of awarding a pay increase to police officers. Notwithstanding the disappointment and frustration arising from *another* pay freeze, especially at a time when our members have quite literally been at the forefront of ensuring public health and safety (often at great personal risk), the imposition of this level of constraint upon a so-called independent and evidence based process is astounding. We echo the concerns raised by our counterparts in England and Wales that for five of the seven years this process has been in operation, the UK Government have effectively inhibited the PRRB from operating as intended. This undoubtedly has significant implications for confidence in this process, both from the stakeholders involved and from the remit group.
- 2.5. The NI remit letter was less explicit regarding the imposition of a pay freeze for police officers in NI, although we note the statement from the Justice Minister that she will ‘not therefore be seeking any recommendation for police officer pay uplifts for 2021/22’. However, this position was published *before* the publication of the NI public sector pay policy and now stands at odds with this policy.
- 2.6. Whilst the Chancellor and the Home Secretary focus on the apparent increase in pay gap between public and private sector pay during the pandemic (a subjective account of events which risks creating division and discord between employees and business sectors at a very difficult time), the NI Finance Minister has taken a different approach, as has also been the case in Scotland. These differing approaches are undoubtedly reflective of the strength of public opinion regarding the unfairness of *not* rewarding those public servants who have continued to work in important public facing roles over the last year, whilst others stayed at home in order to stay safe.

- 2.7. The NI 2021/22 public sector pay policy provides scope for pay awards of ‘up to one percent...where this is affordable and where there is a commitment to reform and efficiency savings’<sup>3</sup>. This departure from previous years has, at the very least, opened up the opportunity for the PRRB to consider the evidence provided. This is a welcome step.
- 2.8. Despite this divergence in policy, the PFNI maintain their strong support for parity in core pay spines between policing in NI with that in England and Wales. This position has also been reiterated by the NI Justice Minister within the remit letter. This does *not* mean the acceptance of a pay freeze in NI simply owing to the current position in England and Wales. Rather this provides the opportunity to highlight the injustice of the situation in England and Wales and enable the evidence submitted by parties in NI to also reflect upon decisions made regarding our colleagues in England and Wales.

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<sup>3</sup> Department of Finance, 2021, Public Sector Pay Policy set for 2021/22, available from: <https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/news/public-sector-pay-policy-set-202122>

### 3. NORTHERN IRELAND CONTEXT

- 3.1. Unfortunately for the fourth consecutive year police officers in Northern Ireland have experienced a significant delay in receiving their pay award. It was not until February 2021 that officers got the 2020 PRRB recommended awards in respect of salary and allowances in their payslips. To date, despite being accepted and signed off by the Justice Minister, disappointingly the other PRRB recommendations in respect of Student Officer starting salaries and revising the Sergeant rank pay scale have yet to be implemented.

#### Northern Ireland Security Situation

- 3.2. The prevailing security situation continues to make the policing environment within Northern Ireland unique. The current threat level from Northern Ireland related terrorism is graded as “SEVERE” which means that an attack is *highly likely*. PSNI officers continue to face considerable challenges every day both on and off duty. The delivery of policing is made against the backdrop of a very difficult, demanding and dangerous working environment. During 2020/21, despite the COVID-19 pandemic and the various societal lockdowns, PSNI officers continued to see high levels of security related attack planning, procurement and bomb making and, as the level of activity remained significant, an attack was possible anywhere within Northern Ireland.

- 3.3. According to the PSNI recorded security situation statistics<sup>4</sup>, during the period 1 March 2020 to 28 February 2021, there were:

- 3 security related deaths, compared to 1 during the previous 12 months. All 3 of these deaths occurred in Belfast, one in May 2020, one in June 2020 and one in February 2021
- 13 bombing incidents, compared to 21 in the previous year and 47 shooting incidents, compared to 36 in the previous year

<sup>4</sup><https://www.psni.police.uk/globalassets/inside-the-psni/our-statistics/security-situation-statistics/2021/february/security-situation-statistics-to-february-2021.pdf>

- 19 casualties of paramilitary style shootings, compared to 15 during the previous 12 months
- 43 casualties of paramilitary style assaults, compared to 62 in the previous 12 months
- 83 persons arrested under Section 41 of the Terrorism Act 2000, compared to 127 during the previous 12 months.

3.4. The PSNI also note that:

- There were more bombings, shootings and paramilitary style shootings in Belfast than any other policing district;
- There were 6 casualties of paramilitary style shootings in Derry City and Strabane, 5 of which have occurred since the start of 2021 and;
- Causeway Coast and Glens saw the greatest increase in the number of shooting incidents (from 1 to 16) compared to the previous year. This district also saw the greatest increase in the number of persons arrested under Section 41 of the Terrorism Act 2000 (from 2 to 10) compared to the previous year.

3.5. The following examples of incidents during 2020/21 provide a flavour of the additional challenges faced by PSNI officers as a result of violent dissident republican activity:

- January 2020: Large bomb in lorry en-route to Belfast port intercepted in Lurgan;
- February 2020: Improvised Explosive Device (IED) discovered in the Silverwood Industrial Estate in Lurgan;
- June 2020: Viable explosive device found during a security alert in Belfast;
- June 2020: Viable explosive device discovered in Rocavan Meadow in Broughshane, Ballymena;
- August 2020: Elaborate hoax at Skeoge Road, Londonderry. Petrol bombs subsequently thrown at police;

- August 2020: Elaborate hoax at Levin Road, Lurgan. Petrol bombs subsequently thrown at police;
- January 2021: Two-week long security operation in Wattlebridge, Fermanagh. Claim made via mainstream media that a high powered rifle was discharged at airborne police helicopter.

### Brexit Tensions

3.6. The UK left the European Union (EU) on the 31 January 2020. A transition period was in place until 31 December 2020 and now a new relationship with the EU is beginning. This includes the Northern Ireland Protocol.

3.7. During negotiations the EU and UK agreed a Northern Ireland Protocol which aimed to ensure that there would be no new checks on goods crossing the border between NI and the Republic of Ireland (ROI). The protocol aims to:

- avoid a hard border between NI and the ROI;
- make sure of the integrity of the EU's single market for goods, and;
- facilitate unfettered access for NI goods to the GB market, and the inclusion of NI goods in free trade agreements between the UK and third countries<sup>5</sup>.

3.8. As a result of the protocol, NI has in effect remained in the EU's single market for goods (England, Scotland and Wales have left the EU's single market for goods). This should have allowed goods to flow to and from NI to the ROI and the rest of the EU as they did while the UK was a member of the EU, without customs checks, tariffs or new paperwork. However, the EU's rules on customs and regulation of agri-food products will continue to apply to goods arriving in NI, including from the rest of the UK. Despite a grace period being factored in, the NI Protocol has been beset with a myriad of issues in respect of delivery of a variety of goods and has created significant

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<sup>5</sup> NI Direct, 2021, EU Exit and the Northern Ireland Protocol, available from: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/eu-exit-and-northern-ireland-protocol>

discontent amongst the Unionist politicians and communities<sup>6</sup>. As alluded to in our previous submissions, the outworking's of Brexit in NI has resulted in an increase in community tensions across NI, however this is particularly evident within unionist/loyalist communities who view the NI Protocol as diminishing NI's place within the UK. During the Easter period these tensions have spilled over, with the eruption of serious public disorder incidents in a number of loyalist areas (and subsequently within nationalist communities and at interface areas) across NI on twelve consecutive nights, leaving 88 PSNI officers injured<sup>7</sup>.

- 3.9. A mix of Covid-19 related issues and Brexit complexities have politicised policing in NI to a level not seen for some time<sup>8</sup>. This is a worrying time for policing and for police officers in NI as they attempt to maintain order and keep people safe<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup>Kelso, P. 2021, Brexit: Northern Ireland Protocol trade arrangements have created a perfect storm, Sky News, available from: <https://news.sky.com/story/northern-ireland-post-brexit-trade-arrangements-have-created-a-perfect-storm-12248695>

<sup>7</sup> BBC News, 2021, NI riots: Fourteen police hurt in another night of violence, available from: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-56699716>

<sup>8</sup>Rainey, M. 2021, Policing in NI has never been 'more politicised and toxic: PFNI, Newsletter, available from: <https://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/crime/policing-in-ni-has-never-been-more-politicised-and-toxic-pfni-3188328>

<sup>9</sup> McClements, F. 2021, The Northern Ireland Protocol: "All shades of unionist are really angry", The Irish Times, available from: <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/the-northern-ireland-protocol-all-shades-of-unionist-are-really-angry-1.4489813>

#### 4. DEMAND

- 4.1. The demand on policing in Northern Ireland remains high. The range of crime that the PSNI are required to deal with has not reduced nor has the complexity of the cases that are presented. The PSNI are still faced with the challenging role of ‘plugging gaps’ in other services, including in mental health provision and in providing care for vulnerable people. Indeed, we believe that this misplaced demand has grown throughout the course of the Covid-19 pandemic, as mental health issues and issues of vulnerability increased due to lockdown conditions. Policing in the pre-pandemic world involved a high level of personal risk, however Covid-19 has multiplied this as officers risk their own and their families’ health, due to the threat of exposure to this deadly virus.

#### Covid-19

- 4.2. 2020 was a year of unprecedented demands on individuals, families and organisations from every sector. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic globally brought with it ever evolving restrictions, lockdowns and embargos which often caused confusion to the wider public and to those tasked with enforcement. Covid-19 has changed, challenged and complicated the role of policing within society. Officers have had to quickly adapt to the use of extra PPE, enforcing new and often conflicting legislation which has been adapted several times, as well as enforce changes in how prisoners and suspects are detained in custody to incorporate new guidance.
- 4.3. Although there is evidence that certain crime types reduced throughout the pandemic and consequential lockdowns, the continuous modifications to roles and responsibilities and how these were met, meant PSNI officers were faced with responding to a continued high level of demand, as well as policing the severe security threat, in extraordinary circumstances. The Chief Constable has stated that the PSNI experienced a peak in police demand in January 2021 when officers dealt with 3,639 Covid-related incidents including the issuing of 1,080 fixed-penalty notices in addition

to all other police work<sup>10</sup>. Similar to other frontline emergency services the PSNI have continued to work hard providing a vital public service whilst attempting to mitigate the risk associated with Covid-19 to officers and staff.

4.4. The Covid-19 pandemic impacted heavily on PSNI officers daily roles, caring responsibilities, childcare provisions and their health. As a frontline service, officers were frequently working in environments which exposed them to Covid-19. Roles carried out by PSNI officers which were directly associated with the enforcement of Covid-19 restrictions included; responding to crowds gathering contrary to legislation, breaking up parties in private dwellings and engaging with members of the public in everyday settings. Whilst conducting these vital public safety roles officers were, on occasion, spat at or coughed on by members of the public claiming to be Covid positive.

- Between 16<sup>th</sup> March 2020 and 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2021 a total of 521 PSNI officers had tested positive for Covid-19. This equates to 1 in 13 officers, compared to the NI figure of 1 in 300 people who have tested positive for Covid-19<sup>11</sup>
- During this period a total of 7,258 cases of self-isolation were recorded by PSNI officers. This equates to more than one period of self-isolation for every PSNI officer<sup>12</sup>.

#### PFNI Covid-19 & Wellbeing Survey

4.5. The PFNI 'Covid-19 & Wellbeing Survey' was launched on the 4<sup>th</sup> December 2020 and remained open until the 21<sup>st</sup> December 2020. The survey was open to all federated officers and it had one key aim; to understand, from those directly affected, the impact of policing in the pandemic on their personal and professional circumstances.

<sup>10</sup> Chief Constable, February 2021, PSNI Chief Constable report to NIPB, available from: <https://www.psni.police.uk/news/Latest-News/040221-chief-constable-report-to-nipb/>

<sup>11</sup> ONS, 2021, Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infection Survey, UK, 9 April 2021, available from: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/conditionsanddiseases/bulletins/coronaviruscovid19infectionsurveyspilot/9april2021>

<sup>12</sup> PSNI Data, April 2021, unpublished



4.6. This survey was a collaborative effort between the PFNI and the PSNI as a result of a new security related issue arising in the use of the PFNI's preferred online survey tool. As such, this survey was designed by the PFNI, but built on-line by the PSNI. It was then launched by email from the Chairman of the PFNI, but the results were collated by the PSNI and provided in raw format to the PFNI. Due to differences in the administration of online surveys and the role of the PSNI in building this survey on behalf of the PFNI, the response rate of 18% was lower than that previously achieved by PFNI surveys. The demographic and workforce characteristics of the respondents were broadly in line with that recorded in our 2018 Workforce Survey and with the PSNI workforce as a whole<sup>13</sup>. This includes:

- 70% of respondents who reported that they are male and 30% female;
- 73% of respondents reported they were at the rank of Constable, 18% were at the rank of Sergeant, 8% were at the rank of Inspector and 1% at the rank of Chief Inspector.

4.7. The analysis of respondents by job role does indicate some divergence from the workforce characteristics of the previous PFNI Workforce Survey, with the percentage of respondents who reported they are front line officers (i.e. neighbourhood or response officers) declining from 38% of all respondents in 2018 to 32% in 2020. At 32%, the proportion of respondents identifying as a frontline officer is also lower than the proportion within the PSNI. As such, it is likely that the views and opinions of frontline police officers are underrepresented within these results.

4.8. The analysis of the results presented below have been conducted by the PFNI Research Department on data provided by the PSNI.

#### Change in workload as a result of the pandemic

- **Almost three quarters of all respondents (73%) reported that their workload had changed during the course of the pandemic**, with the remaining 27% stating their workload had remained the same.

<sup>13</sup> Correct as at 1.2.2021 – as per PSNI statistics on workforce gender and rank

- Of those respondents who reported that their workload had changed, **86% stated their workload had increased/increased significantly**. Just 14% said that their workload had decreased.
- **69% of respondents reported that their level of responsibility had changed as a direct result of the pandemic**, in contrast to 32% who reported no change to their level of responsibility.
- Of the 69% who said that their level of responsibility had changed, an overwhelming **98% stated it had increased/increased significantly**. Just 2% stated that their level of responsibility had decreased/decreased significantly.
- 39% of all respondents stated that they had been abstracted from their roles at least once a month.

#### Impact on personal lives as a result of the pandemic

4.9. PSNI officers, like everyone else, have domestic / caring responsibilities outside of the workplace. The demands of working in a frontline service throughout the COVID pandemic have impacted upon all aspects of an officer's life.

- **85% of all respondents reported that they were concerned about their personal health whilst policing the pandemic.**
- **14% of respondents stated they had a condition/illness that meant they were considered clinically vulnerable**, whilst 24% said that they had members of their household who were living with a condition that meant they were considered clinically vulnerable.

4.10. The various iterations of 'lockdown' have had a significant impact on families and family life. Schools, educational institutions and child care settings closed resulting in parents and carers having no option but to stay home to look after their family and assist with home schooling. Many industries furloughed staff or permitted them to work from home, however for those workers who were deemed essential this wasn't an option.

- Respondents were asked if the Covid-19 pandemic impacted on their caring responsibilities. **Over three quarters (78%) of respondents said yes**, with just 22% stating there was no impact on their caring responsibilities.
- When asked what impact the Covid-19 pandemic had on their household income, **42% of respondents said they had experienced a negative impact financially** as a direct result of the pandemic.

## Crime Statistics

4.11. The official PSNI recorded crime statistics<sup>14</sup> identify that total recorded crime increased by 6.7% from a series low of 100,389 recorded crimes in 2012/13 to 107,155 in 2015/16; this was the highest number of crimes recorded since 2009/10. Between 2015/16 and 2016/17 the number of crimes recorded by the PSNI declined by 5.6%. However, the total number of recorded crimes (including fraud) reached 110,838 in 2019/20, an increase of 6.1% from 2018/19 and 10.4% since 2016/17. This resulted in Northern Ireland reaching its highest level of total recorded crime related demand since 2006/07.

4.12. Unsurprisingly, given the impact of Covid-19 and the societal lockdown, the figures for the first eleven months of 2020/21 identify a downward trend in recorded crime. Between April 2020 and February 2021 91,141 total crimes were recorded (including fraud)<sup>15</sup>. Based upon monthly average crime rates, the forecast annual recorded crime for 2020/21 is 99,427. It has been widely reported that the nationwide lockdown(s) had an impact upon crime rates, in particular more traditional crimes, and this should therefore be viewed outside of the longer term trends in crime.

<sup>14</sup> PSNI, 2020, Trends in Police Recorded Crime in Northern Ireland 1998/99 to 2019/20, available from: <https://www.psnipolice.uk/globalassets/inside-the-psni/our-statistics/police-recorded-crime-statistics/documents/police-recorded-crime-in-northern-ireland-1998-99-to-2019-20.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> PSNI, February 2020, Police Recorded Crime in Northern Ireland, Update to 28<sup>th</sup> February 2021, available from: [https://www.psnipolice.uk/globalassets/inside-the-psni/our-statistics/police-recorded-crime-statistics/2021/february/crime-bulletin\\_-feb-21.pdf](https://www.psnipolice.uk/globalassets/inside-the-psni/our-statistics/police-recorded-crime-statistics/2021/february/crime-bulletin_-feb-21.pdf)

- 4.13. The PSNI published an exceptional release in June 2020<sup>16</sup>, analysing the impact of the first nationwide lockdown on crime – this covered the period 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020 to 7<sup>th</sup> June 2020. This report indicated that overall crime rates had fallen by 23% relative to the same point in 2019. Offences which are considered as more opportunistic recorded the largest decline; theft offences reduced by 43%, sexual offences decreased by 34% and public order offences were 25% lower. Whilst these crime patterns have contextualised crime throughout the first year of the Covid-19 pandemic, as shown in Table 1 the longer term trends remain evident.
- 4.14. Violent crime, as a proportion of total crime, remains high, increasing from 17.0% of crime in 1998/99 to 39.2% of crime in the first eleven months of 2020/21. Between 2018/19 and 2019/20 there was an increase of 13.5% in the number of violent crimes recorded to 41,329 in 2019/20. However, with 35,760 violent crimes recorded between April 2020 and February 2021, the total number of violent crimes is likely to have reduced over the year 2020/21.
- 4.15. The upwards trend in the number of sexual offences continues, accounting for 3.2% of recorded crimes in the first eleven months of 2020/21. The highest number of sexual offences on record was in 2019/20 when 3,558 offences were recorded. This marked a slight increase from 3,536 in 2018/19. The number of sexual offences recorded during the first eleven months of 2020/21 was 3,175.

*Table 1: Northern Ireland Crime Profile - as a proportion of total crime, 1998/99-2020/21*

Year	Violent Crime	Sexual Offences	...of which rape	Robbery	Theft	Criminal Damage
1998/99	17.0%	1.5%	19.9%	1.3%	47.8%	25.3%
2009/10	27.3%	1.6%	25.7%	1.2%	37.2%	23.7%
2017/18	33.6%	3.4%	28.1%	0.6%	29.7%	18.0%
2018/19	34.9%	3.4%	31.0%	0.6%	29.3%	16.9%
2019/20	37.3%	3.2%	28.5	0.6%	26.3%	16.9%
2020/21 (February)	39.2%	3.2%		0.5%	20.6%	17.2%

<sup>16</sup> PSNI 2020, Police recorded crime in NI, levels recorded since lockdown measures were introduced, available from: <https://www.psni.police.uk/globalassets/inside-the-psni/our-statistics/police-recorded-crime-statistics/2020/crime-bulletin-23.03-to-07.06.pdf>

- 4.16. The proportion of crime categorised as robbery or theft have both been in decline over the longer term. These trends continued in 2019/20 and during the first eleven months of 2020/21. In contrast, despite the longer term trend, the proportion of crime which is categorised as 'criminal damage' increased during the first eleven months of 2020/21.
- 4.17. Similar crime trends have been noted in England and Wales over the last twelve months. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) released a report in February 2021 examining crime rates for England and Wales, year ending September 2020. Overall crime rates have reduced by 6%, and it was reported that the reduction in crime was driven by a substantial fall in crime in the second part of the year during lockdown. Figures identified that theft, firearm and knife crime all reduced during the first lockdown April-June 2020<sup>17</sup>.
- 4.18. In addition to traditional crimes, the PSNI also dealt with 24,115 domestic abuse incidents between April 2020 and December 2020<sup>18</sup> and 69,442 anti-social behaviour incidents between April 2020 and February 2021. Anti-social behaviour incidents increased by 37% relative to the same period the previous year<sup>19</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> ONS, 2021, Crime in England and Wales, available from: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/crimeinenglandandwales/yearendingseptember2020>

<sup>18</sup> PSNI, 2020, Domestic Abuse Incidents and Crimes Recorded by the Police in Northern Ireland, Update to 31 December 2020, available from: <https://www.psni.police.uk/globalassets/inside-the-psni/our-statistics/domestic-abuse-statistics/2020-21/q3/domestic-abuse-bulletin-dec-20.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> PSNI, 2021, Anti-Social Behaviour Incidents recorded by the Police in Northern Ireland, Update to 28 February 2021, available from: <https://www.psni.police.uk/globalassets/inside-the-psni/our-statistics/anti-social-behaviour-statistics/2021/february/asb-bulletin-feb-21.pdf>

## 5. WORKFORCE

### Recruitment and Retention

- 5.1. Previous PFNI submissions to the PRRB reported concerns about declining PSNI headcount figures and the subsequent negative impact on service delivery, countering the continuing terrorist threat and impacting working conditions for officers. Last year's submission was the first we were able to report an increase in officer numbers. We are therefore pleased to report a continuation of this trend, with officer numbers increasing by 94 from 6,894 in March 2020 to 6,986 in March 2021<sup>20</sup> (correct as at 1<sup>st</sup> March 2021). This increase stemmed from the above average number of student officers attesting from the PSNI college in 2019 (at 544 newly attested police constables), largely attributed to the additional Brexit funding secured by the PSNI in 2019. The number of new student officers has however reduced in 2020, falling to 357 in the eleven months to November<sup>21</sup>; identifying a slowing down of the trend of increased PSNI officer numbers throughout 2020.
- 5.2. The number of officers who left the PSNI during the financial year 2018/19 was the highest outflow level experienced within the PSNI over the last decade, this figure did however reduce by 12% in 2019/20 when a total of 359 left the PSNI compared to 408 the previous year. The figures for the first 8 months of 2020/21 (up to 30<sup>th</sup> November 2020) show that 182 officers had left the Service giving an average monthly outflow of 23, and an indication of a further reduction in officer outflow this year. However, it is worth remembering that there are a significant number of officers (more than 400) who can retire with full pension benefits at any stage, meaning this predicted outflow rate is significantly dependent upon their decision to stay or to retire.
- 5.3. Of the 182 officers who left the Service in the first eight months of 2021/22, almost 20% were aged 45 or under and therefore had not completed their 30 years' service. This has been a consistent trend in the outflow of officers from the PSNI over the last number of years, identifying a significant leakage of experienced, mid-service officers.

<sup>20</sup> PSNI, 2021, Strength of Police Service Statistics, available from: <https://www.psnipolice.uk/inside-psni/Statistics/strength-of-police-service-statistics/>

<sup>21</sup> PSNI Data, 2020, unpublished

This will ultimately be detrimental to service provision and can result in skills and knowledge gaps in many departments.

- 5.4. Since the end of 2019 the wider UK policing context has been dominated by Operation Uplift and the aim to recruit 20,000 new police officers in England and Wales by March 2023. Recent data indicates that by the end of 2020, the UK Government had achieved 33% of this target<sup>22</sup>. Whilst not connected to Operation Uplift, the publication of the New Decade, New Approach agreement in January 2020 signalled a commitment to increase police officer numbers in NI to 7,500 (i.e. the figure recommended by Patten). This commitment was cautiously welcomed by the PFNI with acknowledgement that this required on-going political will and adequate funding. Whilst there does not appear to be any medium/long term funding plan available to indicate how the PSNI will be able to recruit to this headcount figure, the provision of an additional £12.3m in the 2021/22 budget for 'staffing', does provide the Service with the necessary funding to recruit approximately 460 officers in the coming year. This is a welcome step and one in which we hope will see the Service move towards 7,500 officers, however the short-term, single year, nature of PSNI funding does not enable any clarity over the longevity of this trend. Furthermore, it is important to remember that recruitment does not happen in isolation, with officers continuously exiting the Service for a variety of reasons. It is anticipated that alongside the recruitment of 460 officers into the PSNI will be the simultaneous outflow of over 300 officers from the Service. As such, the situation regarding PSNI officer numbers remains highly volatile and uncertain.

## Overtime

- 5.5. The PSNI as a frontline emergency service rely on overtime to facilitate responses to unexpected incidents at any time. In 2016/17 PSNI officers recorded 1.78million overtime hours, this declined over the following years to 1.43million hours in

<sup>22</sup> UK Home Office, Feb 2021, Police Officer uplift, England and Wales, quarterly update to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020, available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-officer-uplift-quarterly-update-to-december-2020/police-officer-uplift-england-and-wales-quarterly-update-to-31-december-2020>

2019/20<sup>23</sup>. However, as previously highlighted by the PFNI this reduction continues to be based on pre-detailed overtime hours only, with casual overtime hours continuing to increase. There was an 18% increase in the percentage of casual overtime hours worked between 2018/19 and 2019/20, up from 38,935 hours to 45,981 in 2019/20.

*Table 2: Overtime hours worked, pre-detailed and casual 2015/16 - 2020/21 November<sup>24</sup>*

Year	Pre-detailed overtime hours	Casual overtime hours	Total
<b>2015/16</b>	1,726,122	37,933	1,764,055
<b>2016/17</b>	1,753,510	34,252	1,787,762
<b>2017/18</b>	1,553,950	38,189	1,592,139
<b>2018/19</b>	1,418,736	38,935	1,457,670
<b>2019/20</b>	1,389,525	45,981	1,435,506
<b>2020/21 (Apr-Nov)</b>	693,930	23,433	717,363

5.6. Available data for April to November 2020/21 indicates the likelihood that the number of overtime hours worked will reduce during the year. The need to provide social distancing in the workplace and the widespread cancellation of events which would typically take place annually in Northern Ireland, have had a positive impact on the amount of overtime required for 2020/21. However, it is anticipated that these will return when it is once again safe to have large public gatherings and will inevitably increase the level of demand on PSNI resources.

### Sickness Absence

5.7. As reported in previous submissions, sickness levels within the PSNI remain stubbornly high despite absence levels declining slightly in 2019/20. An average of 12.65 working days were lost in 2019/20 due to sickness absence, compared to 13.92 in 2018/19 and 13.40 in 2017/18. However this figure is higher than any period between 2005/06 and 2013/14<sup>25</sup> and higher than the average figure of 11.72 working days lost between 2003/04 and 2019/20. In 2019/20 the PSNI sickness absence levels fell slightly below

<sup>23</sup> PSNI Data, 2020, unpublished

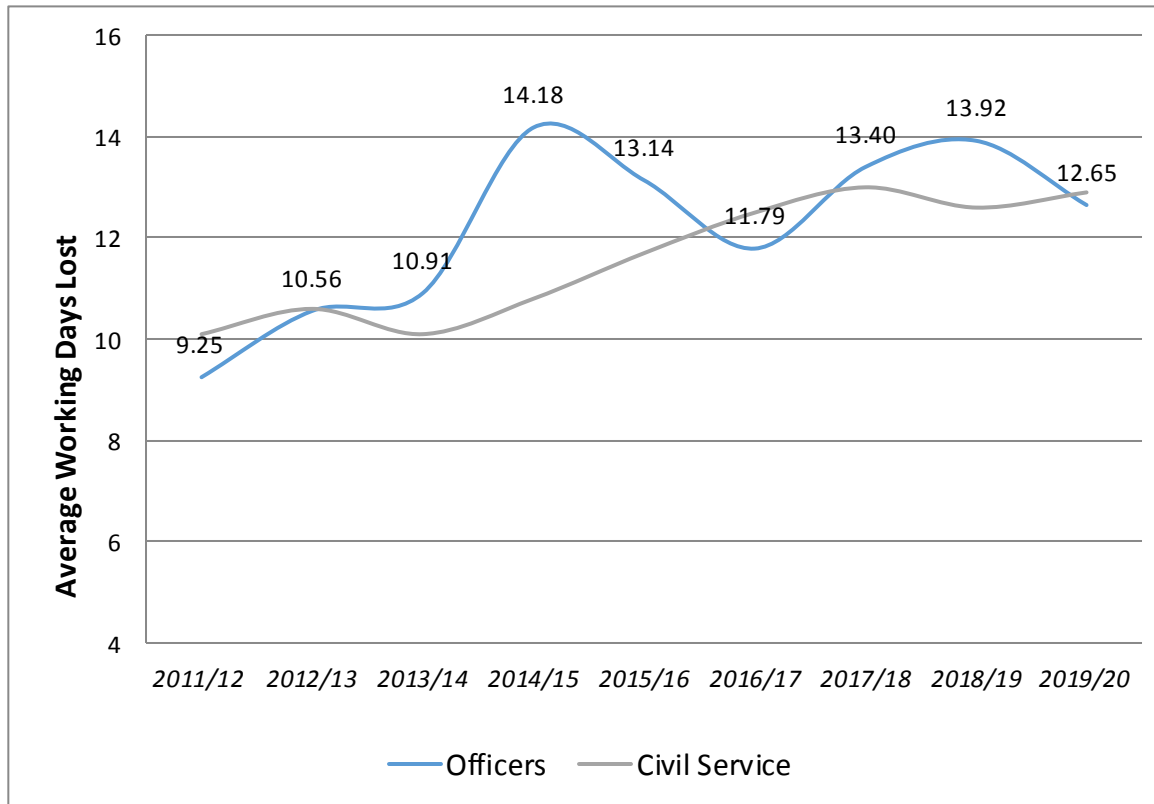
<sup>24</sup> PSNI Data, 2020, unpublished

<sup>25</sup> PSNI, 2020, Sickness Absence Management Information Report - unpublished



the NI Civil Service in 2019/20 for the first time since 2016/17. The overall trend in PSNI sickness absence since 2011/12 is of high and increasing levels.

Figure 1: Average Working Days Lost, PSNI & NI Civil Service, 2011/12 to 2019/20



5.8. The average number of working days lost by PSNI officers due to sickness between April and November 2020/21 was 7.25; giving a predicted annual figure of 11.03. Although this predicted figure indicates a further reduction in sickness absence it still remains comparatively high and is reflective of a significant change in working practices owing to Covid-19 and the increased ability to work from home, thus reducing the need for sickness absence.

5.9. Sickness absence due to mental health and psychological illness like previous years remains very high. The proportion of working days lost within the PSNI due to psychological illness for 2019/20 was 35% and for the first eight months of 2020/21 it contributed to 39% of all working days lost<sup>26</sup>. In comparison, national data identifies

<sup>26</sup> PSNI Data, 2020, unpublished

that the percentage of working days lost due to mental health in 2020 across the UK was just 11.6%<sup>27</sup>.

5.10. The PFNI have, on a number of occasions, highlighted significant issues with the provision of mental health care and support within the PSNI. These concerns have also been acknowledged by HMICFRS, who conducted a report into how the PSNI treats its workforce and the people of Northern Ireland. Unsurprisingly to the PFNI, HMIC highlighted the following area for improvement: “*The service should seek to reduce waiting times for mental health support*”<sup>28</sup>.

5.11. The report also described the approach the Service has to wellbeing provision as ‘disjointed’ with an overlap of central and local initiatives and noted the long waiting times to access mental health support compared to other services. The PFNI are concerned that without access to proper mental health provisions which are made available in a timely matter, the wellbeing of our members will continue to be negatively impacted and the sickness rate within the PSNI will be unlikely to improve.

## Assaults

5.12. The PFNI are alarmed at the recent statistics published by the PSNI relating to assaults against police officers in NI and we are aware of the direct link between such attacks and sickness levels within the PSNI. A total of 2,825 assaults on Police Officers were recorded in 2019/20, 665 of these assaults resulted in an injury, this has increased from 2018/19 when there was a total of 2,709 assaults with 626 resulting in injury. In March 2021 the Chief Constable stated that since the introduction of lockdown there has been a 14% rise in assaults on officers and a rise of nearly 25% in grievous bodily harm with intent, which he described as spitting on police officers. The Chief Constable went further to explain the consequences of these assaults, stating: “It has

<sup>27</sup> ONS, 2021, Sickness in the labour market, available from: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/labourproductivity/articles/sicknessabsenceinthelabourmarket/2020>

<sup>28</sup> HMIC, 2020, The Police Service of Northern Ireland, An inspection of how well the service treats its workforce and the people of Northern Ireland, HMIC, London.

an effect on them [police officers] in terms of injury, trauma and indeed their family lives<sup>29</sup>”.

5.13. As with other parts of the UK, a worrying trend has emerged in Northern Ireland in which people have used Covid-19 as a weapon against police officers. The increase in spitting and biting incidents against PSNI officers sparked the *eventual* introduction (on a trial basis) and deployment of Spit and Bite guards (in line with all other UK police forces) to all operational officers as protective equipment to be used against such attacks and the consequences of communicable diseases, such as Covid-19. For context, Spit and Bite Guards were deployed a total of 99 times by PSNI officers between 27<sup>th</sup> March 2020 and 24<sup>th</sup> February 2021<sup>30</sup> with no subsequent complaints made to the Police Ombudsman.

## Morale

5.14. The 2020 PFNI ‘Covid & Wellbeing’ Survey was used as a tool to identify and evidence morale levels within the PSNI. Respondents were asked to indicate how they would rate morale in three areas; personal morale, team morale and service morale. **More than half of all respondents reported low levels of morale across all three measures.**

*Table 3: PFNI Covid & Wellbeing Survey, 2020 - Morale*

	Very low/Low	Neither High nor Low	Very high/High
<b>Your own morale</b>	53%	32%	25%
<b>Morale in your team</b>	63%	27%	10%
<b>Morale in the Service</b>	83%	16%	1%

5.15. 53% of respondents said that their personal morale was low or very low. The proportion of respondents who said that team morale is low was 63%, whilst **83% of respondents said that morale across the PSNI as a whole is low.**

<sup>29</sup> Belfast Telegraph, 4<sup>th</sup> March 2021, available from: <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/funding-gap-could-result-in-300-fewer-officers-police-chief-warns-40159323.html>

<sup>30</sup> PSNI Data, 2021, unpublished

- 5.16. The proportion of respondents who reported that their personal morale is low or very low is very similar to that reported within the 2018 PFNI Workforce Survey, where 54% of respondents reported low personal morale. In contrast the percentage of respondents who reported low team morale and low service wide morale has declined by 7 percentage points and 9 percentage points respectively. This early evidence of a reduction in low morale is cautiously welcomed by the PFNI (however, it will require further analysis over time to understand if this is a lasting trend or reflective of a single point in time and/or changes which were made to the survey design/distribution). Anecdotal evidence from serving officers indicates that this reduction may be attributed to an increased recognition of wellbeing issues throughout the Service stemming from the impact of Covid-19 on working practices, which has led to an improved work/life balance. For example, this can be evidenced in the reduction in overtime hours required from officers during the early part of 2020/21.
- 5.17. The top three reasons reported as responsible for reducing personal morale in 2020 were; the delay in the implementation of the pay award (at 93%); pay and benefits (including pension) (at 86%) and; how the police were treated as a whole (at 83%). As in previous surveys, issues associated with remuneration remain key barriers to improvements in morale across the PSNI. However, the inclusion of 'how police are treated as a whole' as one of the top three reasons for low morale is a change to recent survey responses. It is likely that this is a reflection of the current policing environment in Northern Ireland, in particular relating to the difficulties of policing Covid-19 and the associated political blame game which has accompanied this.

## 6. THE ECONOMY, EARNINGS & POLICE PAY

- 6.1. The year 2020/21 has been a year of extremes in many ways, not least in economic terms. The sudden and substantial impact of the global pandemic on the UK economy is well known and so the intention is not to reiterate this detailed information here. In summary, Covid-19 has caused an economic downturn unprecedented in modern times, with UK Gross Domestic Product (GDP) falling by 9.9% in 2020 and a budget deficit never before experienced in peace times<sup>31</sup>. Economists differ in their predictions on how quickly the economy is likely to recover, however a general consensus is of a recovery rooted in consumer spending. The average forecast for UK GDP growth in 2021 is 4.8%, followed by 6.1% in 2022<sup>32</sup>. Historic growth following an historic fall.
- 6.2. The impact of Covid-19 and the introduction and re-introduction of lockdown restrictions have impacted upon the NI economy in a similar manner to that across the UK. As in the UK, the impact of each subsequent lockdown in NI has been less severe than the first, with businesses adapting or pivoting to new markets as the pandemic progressed. The impact of lockdowns and subsequent bounce backs have varied greatly both between and within sectors. For example, NI's services sector has recouped just two-thirds of the decrease in output experienced since the pandemic outbreak, whilst NI's manufacturers were able to recoup almost all of their post-pandemic slump in output in just a single quarter (Q3). Indeed, four local manufacturing sub-sectors reported higher levels of output in 2020 relative to 2019<sup>33</sup>. With restrictions still in place and the furlough scheme on-going, an analysis of labour market statistics would be premature.
- 6.3. In addition to the economic impact of Covid-19 and in contrast to GB, the NI economy has also been dealing with the direct and indirect consequences of the end of the

<sup>31</sup> Harari, D. & Keep, M. 2021, Coronavirus: Economic Impact, Briefing Paper No: 8866, House of Commons Library, London.

<sup>32</sup> HM Treasury, 2021, Forecasts for the UK Economy: a comparison of independent forecasts, No: 404, HM Treasury, London.

<sup>33</sup> Ramsey, R. 2021, Ulster Economix, Chief Economist's Weekly Briefing – One year on...Ulster Bank, Belfast002E

Brexit transition period and the introduction of the NI Protocol. As above, this situation remains in flux with a high degree of uncertainty and as such the medium/long term impact of Brexit and/or the NI Protocol on the NI economy remains unclear.

## Inflation

6.4. Inflationary pressures reduced during 2020, owing to the dramatic change in (and in some case complete closure of) consumer markets during the course of the pandemic. As shown below, both CPI and CPIH fell below 1% in 2020 whilst RPI was 1.5%. This is below the Bank of England's target rate of 2%, although this did have a positive impact upon the value of take home pay at a time of significant uncertainty in the labour market. However, early indications from 2021 are of a growing concern regarding the impact of inflation throughout 2021 and 2022 as the combined impact of Brexit and the pandemic fighting measures seem likely to push inflation towards and potentially beyond the 2% target<sup>34</sup>. This will have a negative impact on the value of take home wages, at a time when pay has been frozen for millions of public service workers, and will place additional pressures upon consumer spending, at a time when consumer spending is so vital to the economic recovery.

*Table 4: Inflation measures. UK 2018-2020*

	CPI	CPIH	RPI
<b>2018</b>	2.5%	2.3%	3.3%
<b>2019</b>	1.7%	1.7%	2.5%
<b>2020</b>	0.9%	1.0%	1.5%

## Affordability

6.5. The 2021/22 NI public sector pay policy repeats the request for pay awards which are 'affordable', requiring commentary from relevant parties on how their recommendations meet this affordability criteria<sup>35</sup>. The PFNI therefore welcome the recognition from the PRRB in their Sixth Report on England and Wales, that

<sup>34</sup> Bruce, A. & Schomberg, W. 2021, Reuters, UK Inflation starts climb as effects of covid and Brexit combine, available from: <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-britain-economy-inflation-idUSKBN29P0N0>

<sup>35</sup> Department of Finance, 2021, Public Sector Pay Policy set for 2021/22, available from: <https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/news/public-sector-pay-policy-set-202122>

understandings of affordability are in fact a matter of judgement<sup>36</sup>. We have stressed this point in our last number of submissions to the PRRB, noting the tensions which arise in the typically singular characterisation of affordability, as understood through simple high level financial parameters<sup>37</sup> and the need for judgement which emerges in broader considerations of affordability. This has remained our position.

- 6.6. The PRRB note that an assessment of affordability ‘needs to take into account the relationship between the overall cash budget and the demand placed on it’<sup>38</sup>. Whilst this is a welcome development in considerations of affordability, we believe it continues to overlook the role of the remit group as a key element of the demand and a key actor in *responding* to the demand placed on the budget i.e. this consideration continues to minimise the importance of police officers in the provision of an effective police service which offers value for money. Put simply, the judgement required in deliberations on affordability is a value judgement – are police officers and the important work they do valued? The importance of this question is amplified given the current Covid-19 context.
- 6.7. The requirement for a more comprehensive understanding of affordability has been particularly important to discussions in recent years owing to the repeated assertions of the requirement for pay awards to be made from within existing departmental budgets. It is our position that this requirement immediately impedes deliberations on pay if affordability is considered as a singular budgetary construct.

## Earnings

- 6.8. The most recent data pertaining to earnings growth in NI is taken from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE), however this data relates to the pay week which included 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2020 and therefore does not incorporate the medium/longer term impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. In brief ASHE 2020 identifies that median, gross weekly earnings for full-time employees in NI decreased by 1.1% from £535 in 2019 to £529 in 2020. This was the first annual decrease in weekly earnings since 2014 and the

<sup>36</sup> PRRB, 2020, Sixth Report on England and Wales, Office of Manpower Economics, London.

<sup>37</sup> PFNI, Police Remuneration Review Body Submission, February 2019, PFNI, Belfast.

<sup>38</sup> PRRB, 2020, Sixth Report on England and Wales, Office of Manpower Economics, London.

largest decrease on record. Weekly earnings overall in the UK *increased* by 0.1% to £586 – the difference between the UK and NI median therefore widened, with NI median weekly earnings now £57 or 9.7% below the UK median<sup>39</sup>.

- 6.9. The UK Chancellor justified the re-introduction of the public sector pay freeze (excluding the NHS) by creating a false dichotomy between public sector and private sector pay and the impact of the pandemic. Two issues arise from this narrative; firstly the realities of the often reported headline public/private pay gap are of a small and declining gap, which when adjusted to account for the compositional make-up of employees and employee types, actually identifies a pay gap in *favour* of the private sector.
- 6.10. Secondly, whilst it is undeniable that certain sub-sectors of the private sector have been hardest hit during the course of the pandemic (i.e. retail and hospitality) the impact has been uneven. As previously identified, some sub-sectors of the private sector reported higher output in 2020 relative to 2019 and as such, some sub-sectors have reported higher than expected profits and associated pay awards/bonuses. Indeed, pay forecast research undertaken by Xpert HR in January and February 2021 predicts a median pay award of 2% for 2021 based on the responses from over 200 private sector organisations. This includes a 2% pay award in general manufacturing, a 2.4% award in professional and business services, a 2% increase in retail and wholesale and a 1.5% increase in not-for-profit organisations<sup>40</sup>.
- 6.11. As this evidence shows, contrary to the justification used for the imposition of *another* public sector pay freeze, the private sector has reacted to the pandemic as any responsible employer should, through appropriate reward and recognition of work undertaken in an extremely difficult and uncertain environment. This is in stark contrast to how the public sector is being treated by the Government, effectively suppressing the pay review process and the strength of evidence which exists, before it can even be considered. All as part of an ‘independent’ process.

<sup>39</sup> NISRA, 2020, Northern Ireland Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, NISRA, Belfast.

<sup>40</sup> Byrne, S. 2021, Pay forecasts for 2021, Xpert HR, available from: <https://www.xperthr.co.uk/survey-analysis/pay-forecasts-for-2021/165887/>



## Police Pay

6.12. As already highlighted, police officers in NI have dealt with a *fourth* significant delay in the implementation of their pay award, with the 2020/21 increase of 2.5% delayed by four months. The PFNI have, on three separate occasions, expressed our frustrations at this on-going problem, however we were hopeful that with the resumption of the political institutions in NI in January 2020, this issue would have been resolved. Unbelievably this has not been the case. As has already been evidenced, this is a major issue for our members and is having a direct and negative impact upon morale within the PSNI.

6.13. When considered against *all* measures of inflation, the real terms value of police pay has been eroded over the last decade, following pay freezes, pay caps and pay restraint. A wide range of evidence has been produced during this time identifying the impact of this decade of pay decline on morale and motivation within policing across the UK. This information is widely available and is well known. However, by virtue of lower levels of inflation, the provision of a 2.5% pay award in both 2019/20 and 2020/21, produced the first real terms increases in police officer pay since 2010. This, alongside echoes of ‘the end of austerity’ and ‘investment in policing’ produced a sense of hope that conditions may improve. However, unfortunately policing finds itself back where it was in 2011, facing *another* pay freeze, justified as necessary to benefit others. The evidence already presented highlights the weakness in this argument and sets out why police officers *deserve* a pay award this year in particular.

6.14. In a year like no other, facing consequences like never before including a risk to their own and to their families health, police officers in NI and across the UK continued to serve the public through the maintenance of law and order, whilst others were told to stay at home in order to keep safe. Policing has been placed in the most unenviable position; enforcing ever changing and increasingly complex laws and regulations, which inhibited the everyday freedoms of millions of people. Everyday policing operations became entangled with complex, confusing and sometimes contradictory regulation which often changed the way in which police officers engaged with the public, and how police officers were responded to by the public. They became the

visible enforcers of laws unaccepted by some and disliked by many, thus facing protest at a time when physical contact with others posed a risk to their personal health and wellbeing. In NI, this challenging policing environment was further complicated by decades old divisions, which further tested public confidence in policing. It will undoubtedly take some time before this public perception can be mended.

6.15. Policing and police officers remained in position at the front line of this battle, protecting others, protecting the NHS and ultimately risking their own health. We are of course pleased to see some recognition for our colleagues in the NHS who have faced a monumental challenge over the last year, however to provide reward for one part of societies key responders and not for another is a devastating blow to everyone involved.

6.16. The Police Federation for Northern Ireland strongly believe that police officers in NI and across the UK are deserving of a pay award in 2021/22 and that the award provided should ensure a real terms increase in the value of take home pay. With the likelihood of inflation rising during the course of this year, it is our recommendation that the annual salaries of all federated police officers in the PSNI are uplifted by 3%, as payable from September 2021.

**RECOMMENDATION 1: An uplift of 3% to the annual salaries of all federated officers in the PSNI, as payable from September 2021.**

6.17. In addition to this, and based upon the huge sacrifices made by police officers during the year and their vital role in keeping people safe, protecting the NHS and saving lives, we believe all police officers in NI should be provided with a £500 bonus payment, similar to that awarded to our colleagues in the NHS.

**RECOMMENDATION 2: A £500 bonus payment to be made available to all police officers in NI in recognition of their continued work during the Covid-19 pandemic.**

6.18. In our last submission, the PFNI provided a detailed evidence base upon which we recommended an increase to the PSNI student officer starting salary, from pay point 0

to pay point 1. We were pleased that the PRRB accepted our evidence and the need for change; however we were disappointed that this change was facilitated through increased discretionary powers for the Chief Constable to set the starting salary at any level between pay point 0 and pay point 1. Almost 12 months on from the completion of the PRRB's Sixth Report on Northern Ireland and no change has yet been made to the starting salary, highlighting a key issue in the use of discretionary powers in setting pay. As per our 2020/21 recommendation, the PFNI firmly believe that a recommendation to remove pay point 0 from the Constable pay scale would undoubtedly have had a greater and more immediate impact.

6.19. Despite no acknowledgement within the NI Justice Ministers' Remit Letter, the UK Chancellor announced a £250 pay increase to be provided to the lowest earners within the public sector i.e. those currently earning under £24,000<sup>41</sup>. Due to the continued use of pay point 0 in PSNI student officer pay, these officers are therefore eligible for this pay increase. At the very least we expect this increase to be applied to the starting salary of our student officers from the 1<sup>st</sup> September, however we believe that the most appropriate course of action (when considering the implications of the Deloitte review<sup>42</sup> / PFNI Student Officer Pay Survey 2019<sup>43</sup>) is to remove pay point 0 and move all student officers to pay point 1. This would of course remove the need for the prioritisation of a £250 pay increase for the lowest paid PSNI officers.

**RECOMMENDATION 3: Pay point 0 on the Constable pay scale should be removed and all student officers should be moved to pay point 1.**

<sup>41</sup> HM Treasury, 2020, Spending Review to fight virus, deliver promises and invest in UK's recovery, available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/spending-review-to-fight-virus-deliver-promises-and-invest-in-uks-recovery>

<sup>42</sup> Deloitte, 2016, Understanding barriers affecting police officer recruitment, Deloitte, Belfast.

<sup>43</sup> PFNI, 2019, Student Officer Pay Survey, PFNI, Belfast.

## 7. ALLOWANCES

### Competency Related Threshold Payment (CRTP)

- 7.1. In the sixth report on NI from the PRRB in 2020, the recommendation was made that the Competency Related Threshold Payment (CRTP) should be phased out and that parties should submit proposals on suitable alternative arrangements. Despite no reflection of this request within the NI Justice Ministers' remit letter, we have outlined our position on the transition from CRTP in response to the request from the PRRB.
- 7.2. The PSNI and Police Federation for Northern Ireland have been involved in discussions around reviews of CRTP since 2017, with the PSNI submitting a final options paper for consideration in October 2020.
- 7.3. Whilst fundamentally opposed to the removal of this important allowance, the PFNI have reluctantly accepted the position of PRRB on the matter. However, the PFNI's position on the removal of this allowance is based upon the *immediate* implementation of appropriate replacement allowances, coinciding with the removal of CRTP. This will allow for parity with police officers in England and Wales to be maintained and ensure minimal detriment to the least number of officers.
- 7.4. The options for the removal of CRTP are as follows:
1. Full removal of CRTP on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 with the appropriate replacement allowances implemented *immediately* from that date;
  2. A phased removal of CRTP over two years, whilst remaining open to new applicants during this time. This would involve the reduction in the value of the allowance over a two-year period by approximately 33% each year. The scheme would remain open to new applicants and would be removed in its entirety by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024.
  3. A phased removal of CRTP over two years, however closed to new applicants during this time. This would involve a reduction in the allowance over two years as outlined above. The scheme would be closed to new applicants from 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 and removed in its entirety by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024.

- 7.5. Costs in respect of these options have been prepared by PSNI and a phased withdrawal is preferred in order to reduce the financial hardship for officers.

### Replacement Allowances

- 7.6. The Police Federation for Northern Ireland share the position adopted by PSNI and Department of Justice in respect of parity with police officers in England and Wales. On removal of CRTP allowance in England and Wales, replacement allowances were adopted.
- 7.7. It is our view that these allowances should also be adopted in Northern Ireland. Failure to do so would break from the position of parity and lead to a substantial reduction in the remuneration of police officers in the PSNI.
- 7.8. On the removal of CRTP, the following allowances should therefore be introduced:

#### **1. Unsocial Hours Allowance**

This allowance would allow for payments to be made to officers, regardless of length of service, to compensate them for every full hour worked between the hours of 8pm and 6am.

This allowance should be paid at an hourly rate of 10% of the member's hourly rate of pay, calculated by multiplying by 6/125200 the member's annual rate of pay. A fixed rate for a full-time officer working a standard shift system should also be implemented at the same rate as England and Wales.

#### **2. Away from Home Overnight Allowance**

This allowance should be paid to officers at the rank of Constable, Sergeant, Inspector or Chief Inspector at the rate of £50 per night, for every night in which an officer is held in reserve.

An officer is deemed to be held in reserve if serving away from his/her normal place of duty (whether because the member has been provided for the assistance of another police force under section 24 of the Police Act 1996 or otherwise) and is required to stay in a particular, specified place overnight rather than being allowed to return home by reason of the need to be ready for immediate deployment.

This would not include officers involved in training courses or carrying out routine enquiries but engaged in activity which forms part of their role or normal duties where due to the nature of that role or duty, or due to the distance from the home station, the officer is unable to return home.

- 7.9. In the interests of fairness and ensuring the most equitable transition from the use of CRTP for our members, it is the PFNI's position that these replacement allowances should be paid *immediately* to those officers to whom CRTP will *not* be open for application, and phased in for those officers currently in receipt of CRTP, as that allowance is removed over a period of time.

**RECOMMENDATION 4:** Notwithstanding the particulars regarding the transition away from the use of CRTP, both the Unsocial Hours Allowance and the Away from Home Overnight allowance must be implemented within the PSNI, in place of CRTP.

### Northern Ireland Transitional Allowance (NITA) & Dog Handler's Allowance

7.10. As per our previous submissions, it is our position that both the Northern Ireland Transitional Allowance (NITA) and Dog Handler's allowance should continue to be uplifted in line with the pay award.

RECOMMENDATION 5: That the Northern Ireland Transitional Allowance (NITA) is uplifted in line with the pay award.

RECOMMENDATION 6: That Dog Handler's allowance is uplifted in line with the pay award.

## 8. APPENDICES

### Appendix A – NI Remit letter

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE JUSTICE MINISTER



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Our ref: SUB-0111-2021

Anita Bharucha (Chair)  
Police Remuneration Review Body  
Office of Manpower Economics  
8<sup>th</sup> Floor Fleetbank House  
2-6 Salisbury Square  
LONDON  
EC4Y 8JX

2 March 2021

Dear Chair

#### POLICE REMUNERATION REVIEW BODY REMIT FOR 2021/22

Firstly, I would like to thank you for the work undertaken by the Police Remuneration Review Body (PRRB) in support of the 2020/21 pay process. On 16 December I approved the payment of the main 2020/21 award. Payments were made to the federated and superintending ranks in January salaries backdated to 1 September 2020. Officials are working to conclude the award for senior officers having recently received a pay remit for this cohort from the Northern Ireland Policing Board.

I can confirm that I have approved all the PRRB recommendations contained in the 6<sup>th</sup> report and my officials are liaising with the PSNI as to their practical application. I can confirm that I am content that the 6<sup>th</sup> report on Northern Ireland 2020 is now published on your website. In relation to the recommendation for a review of allowances for PSNI officers, preparatory work is now underway to take this forward. However, the pace with

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FROM THE OFFICE OF THE JUSTICE MINISTER



which we have been able to progress this recommendation has, inevitably, been impacted by the need to prioritise our response to the current pandemic.

I would be grateful if the PRRB would now commence its annual review in respect of officers of the PSNI for 2021/22, in conjunction with that for police officers in England and Wales.

I have had sight of the Home Secretary's remit letter for officers in England and Wales and note her position in support of a temporary pause to public sector pay awards for 2021/22. I have not yet been given any indication as to whether the Northern Ireland Executive will be considering a similar approach to public sector pay in this jurisdiction. However, I remain in favour of maintaining the principle of broad alignment on police pay between the different jurisdictions and will not therefore be seeking a recommendation for police officer pay uplifts for 2021/22.

The Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB) has also raised the issue of pay scales for Assistant Chief Constables (ACCs) in Northern Ireland, following a decline in the number of applicants for the recent ACC competition. The Board recently completed a review of senior officer allowances, as an outworking of their consideration of the written submission to the PRRB 2020/21 process and since the Board had not reviewed the Chief Officer allowances for a considerable period of time, which included a benchmarking exercise. I have taken the view that it would be preferable to look at the issue of ACC pay scales alongside the Board's proposals on the allowances available for ACCs, since allowances are also part of the reward package.

I would, therefore, welcome the PRRB's consideration of the parties' proposals in respect of the overall remuneration package for (ACCs), taking into account the Board's report of its review of allowances, a proposal on ACC pay scales from CPOSA and any other evidence provided by the parties in their submissions on the proposals being put forward on both pay scales and allowances.

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FROM THE OFFICE OF THE JUSTICE MINISTER



As in previous years, I would also invite you to have regard to PRRB's standing terms of reference.

I can confirm that stakeholders have received a copy of the PRRB's last report to inform preparation of their written evidence.

The Department would welcome receipt of your seventh report and recommendations by early June 2021. I look forward to working with you and your members in support of the process for the year ahead.

Yours sincerely,

**NAOMI LONG MLA**  
**Minister of Justice**

*Please ensure that you quote our reference number in any future related correspondence.*

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## Appendix B – England and Wales Remit Letter



Home Secretary

2 Marsham Street  
London SW1P 4DF  
[www.gov.uk/home-office](http://www.gov.uk/home-office)

### BY EMAIL ONLY

Anita Bharucha  
Chair  
Police Remuneration Review Body  
Office of Manpower Economics  
Fleetbank House  
2-6 Salisbury Square  
London  
EC4Y 8JX

16<sup>th</sup> December 2020

Dear Anita

### POLICE REMUNERATION REVIEW BODY REMIT 2021/22

I would like to thank the Police Remuneration Review Body (PRRB) for your work over the past year and for your recommendations and observations on police officer pay in your 2020 report. The Government appreciates and values the independent, expert advice and contribution that the PRRB makes.

The timing of the Spending Review announcement has unfortunately delayed the commencement of 2021/22 pay round. I am writing now to set out how the Government proposes working with the PRRB in this pay round, and to set out the areas I would like you to consider.

At the Spending Review, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that pay rises in the public sector will be restrained and targeted in 2021/22. As the Chancellor set out, Covid-19 is significantly impacting the economy, labour market and the fiscal position and has suppressed earnings growth and increased redundancies in the private sector. Public sector pay has been shielded from the pandemic's economic effects. Since March, the number of people in employment in the UK fell by 782,000, whilst over a similar period of time public sector employment increased.

If we continued with rises across the board, the existing gap between public sector reward and the private sector would widen significantly. Therefore, it is right to temporarily pause pay awards for the majority of the public sector as we assess the impact Covid-19 has had

on the wider economy and labour market. This approach will also allow us to protect public sector jobs and investment in public services as Covid-19 continues to have an impact. We will be able to reassess this picture after 2021/22 when the fuller impact of Covid-19 on the wider labour market will be clearer.

No member of the police workforce will face a cut to their existing reward package and the pause will apply to headline pay uplifts only – other payments, such as progression pay, overtime and special allowances will continue as before. HM Treasury will set out the justification and evidence for this policy in more detail in the upcoming informal economic discussion, which will be followed by the publication of the official economic evidence paper.

I greatly value the work of the PRRB and can assure you the Government has only taken this decision in extraordinary circumstances. While I will not be seeking a recommendation from the PRRB for police officer pay uplifts in 2021/22, I refer the following matters to you:

- For those earning the full time equivalent of gross earnings of less than £24,000, the Government proposes to continue pay uplifts at a value of £250 or the National Living Wage increase, whichever is higher. I look to the PRRB to provide recommendations on the implementation of this uplift and the number of officers it will apply to, taking into account the guidance provided in Annex A of this letter.
- To consider and make recommendations on the National Police Chiefs' Council's (NPCC) proposals to introduce a 'pay progression standard' and the timetable for implementation.
- In your last report, you provided thoughtful observations on the proposals submitted by the NPCC on benchmarking of police officer pay and valuation of the 'P factor'. I expect the NPCC to update you on the work undertaken to reach consensus with all parties on the methodologies used to benchmark the pay of all ranks and to value the 'P-factor' and I would be grateful for your updated commentary on this important work.

I ask that your recommendations and observations are considered in the context of the Government's commitment to increase police officer numbers by 20,000 over three years, while improving officer welfare and leadership - aims which should be supported by the pay structure.

As in previous years, I would also ask you to have regard to the standing terms of reference as set out in previous remit letters.

I offer my thanks to you for your continued hard work in this important area. I look forward to receiving your report no later than early May, subject to further discussion with the OME.



**Rt Hon Priti Patel MP**

## **Annex A: Treatment of employees earning less than £24,000**

### **Definition of employees earning less than £24,000**

This should be determined on the basis of basic salary of a full-time equivalent employee, pro-rated on the basis of hours worked, using the standard number of hours per week for that organisation.

- Part-time workers with an FTE salary of less than £24,000 should receive a pro-rata increase on the basis of the number of hours worked.
- The £24,000 is based on the normal interpretation of basic salary and does not include overtime, performance pay or bonuses, nor any regular payments such as London weighting, recruitment or retention premia or other allowances.

### **Size of increase**

We are asking the Review Bodies to recommend how the uplift should be implemented in a way that minimises distortion of existing pay spines, or for other structural reasons such as leapfrogging. The Government will consider higher awards to accommodate these factors. Higher awards should also be implemented where necessary to accommodate National Living Wage (NLW) policy, although employees should receive the higher of NLW or £250 (but not both). When considering their recommendation, Review Bodies may want to consider:

- The level of progression pay provided to the workforce
- Affordability
- NLW increases

How best to avoid 'leapfrogging' of those earning just under £24,000, with those earning just over £24,000. The Government will consider modest, necessary awards in excess of the £24,000 threshold to avoid structural issues such as leapfrogging, if there is a strong case.