

# Community Conversations

Community Conversations aim to provide residents across South Wales with the opportunity to talk to the South Wales Police & Crime Commissioner about their local policing, issues impacting their community and the role of the Commissioner.

On Monday 19th October, 2020, the Commissioner held a virtual conversation with residents of **Swansea**.

Here's a round up of what was discussed.....

**“ We need to get involved with young people and work with them ”**

A resident noted that all agencies needed to be plugged into mental health issues, as the majority of service users had a 'backstory' linked to mental health.

**The Commissioner agreed that mental health was a massive concern, especially in light of current circumstances. The Commissioner agreed that it was important that all services tried to understand individual behaviour, so that the appropriate support could be provided.**

**The Commissioner referred to 'Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)', which was currently leading the world in providing key understanding to police officers and partners.**

**The Commissioner noted his concerns about the demand placed on officers and noted that South Wales Police now had mental health nurses in the Public Service Centre. This meant that when officers were dealing with issues relating to mental health on the ground, they could easily access a triage service in-house.**

**“ There is a big problem with drugs and exploitation by gangs from elsewhere ”**

A resident raised concerns about the ever-growing problem of drugs and substance misuse in Townhill. In the past, several officers were on patrol in this area, however, this had reduced significantly over the years. The resident acknowledged that Government cuts had not helped to maintain resources.

**The Commissioner noted that the police had been successful in disrupting organised crime and county line activity, however, county lines continuously adapted.**

**The Commissioner advised that his team and South Wales Police was committed to working in partnership with health boards, local authorities and community groups to tackle this malicious activity.**

**“ What is South Wales Police's plan to recruit more BAME officers? ”**

A couple of residents raised concerns about the lack of Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) officers visible in their community. They noted that there were only a handful of BAME officers, compared to a significantly higher BAME population in Swansea.

A representative from a local BAME organisation also noted that it was important for community representatives to be involved in discussions with the force about race equality, so that feedback from grassroots communities could be taken into account and incorporated into planning.

**The Commissioner noted that race equality remained a priority for him and he continued to invest in improving the representation of BAME officers and staff across the organisation. The force had improved on the number of BAME officers compared to 2 years ago, however, acknowledged more work needed to be done to continue increasing the diversity within the force, as it was really important that the force represented their communities.**



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“  
People are concerned about Halloween and Bonfire night in light of ‘firebreak’ restrictions  
”

A resident noted that they were aware of numerous concerns in the community about Halloween and bonfire night. They felt apprehensive about answering doors to strangers.

The Commissioner noted that the First Minister had included this point in his statement and explicitly made it clear that trick-o-treating and outdoor/indoor gatherings should not be taking place. It was important that all agencies were able to communicate this important message and encourage alternative activities, which were in line with the ‘firebreak’ restrictions.



“  
Is there a strategy in place to deal with anti-social behaviour and drug use in the town centre?  
”

A resident raised concerns about increases in public disorder and drug use, particularly involving younger people.

The Local Policing Inspector advised that the local policing team continued to take a collaborative approach to address these issues and were linking in daily with the business district and city rangers. They also continued to signpost to outreach agencies.

The Commissioner also noted that the development of the ‘Help Point’ in the city centre, was in place to assist with preventing violent crime in the night-time economy. Its aim was to provide a safe place to treat people needing help to recover from heavy alcohol consumption.



“  
Is there work being done to reassure Muslim communities that they are safe?  
”

A resident noted concerns in relation to hate crime, particularly against the Muslim community and queried what strategies were in place for the police to reassure communities.

The Commissioner stressed that all hate crimes were abhorrent. The Commissioner referred to how social media had built up antagonism and reinforced prejudice. Brexit had also contributed to heightened emotions.

The Commissioner provided reassurance that PCSOs and police officers were working to provide support and increased patrols where there were concerns and tensions in communities.

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