



De Cymru
Comisiynydd yr Heddlu a Throseddu
Police and Crime Commissioner
South Wales



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Overview of our
activity 2020-21





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Your **Police and Crime** Commissioner

Your Commissioner, Alun Michael, is an elected representative who is responsible for bringing a public voice to policing in South Wales. Meeting people, talking to people, and listening, are all important in helping the Commissioner to understand policing and community safety issues concerning communities across South Wales. Hearing directly from people in the area enables the Commissioner to effectively hold South Wales Police to account on behalf of the public, ensuring the police provides an effective and efficient service.

This report outlines how the Commissioner has conducted his community engagement throughout the 2020-21 financial year and provides an overview of the issues raised and topics discussed.

Our engagement approach in response to Covid-19

Amid all the challenges presented by Covid-19, social distancing had a huge impact on how the Commissioner and his team were able to engage with communities during the pandemic. As it was difficult to anticipate when we would be able to resume our face-to-face engagements, we felt it was important that our engagement approaches were adapted to continue engaging with communities during this period.

We developed a 'Covid-19 Interim Engagement Plan', which set out short-term engagement proposals, aimed at overcoming the limitations to our face-to-face activities. Whilst it was important that we paused physical engagement in order to limit the spread of Coronavirus, we also acknowledged that focussing all of our engagement activity online would prevent a number of people who were not computer literate or did not have access to a device, from being able to engage with us. In an effort to address this, we endeavoured to utilise as many platforms as possible, such as radio stations and media interviews, to extend the reach of our messaging. We also worked with local organisations to better understand alternative methods of communication that we could have used during this period.



Your Voice Your Imagination

As the nation entered lockdown in March 2020, we found ourselves in unprecedented and uncertain times from the Covid-19 outbreak. The core message from Government was for us to 'stay at home' and observe social distancing, to limit to the spread of Coronavirus.

The Commissioner echoed this plea through regular communication with the public, urging communities to adhere to Welsh Government legislation and guidance. To empower communities to work with us in developing and sharing important Coronavirus messages, the Commissioner launched the 'Your Voice, Your Imagination' initiative in May 2020. The aim of this initiative was to encourage children and young people to use their imagination and talents to think about safety messages they wanted to share with communities across our social media channels. We advertised this initiative via our online platforms, as well as with partners and by promoting it through local radio stations.

We were really pleased to receive a range of creations from young people, who had used their imaginations to express themselves using creative methods and powerful messaging. The messages reminded us all about the importance of staying safe, adhering to social distancing restrictions and to recognise the efforts of our 'key workers'. We were grateful for all the effort made and were extremely proud to be able to represent the voices of children and young people, who helped us to share important messaging during a critical period.

Examples of some of the amazing submissions we received and shared across our social media channels are illustrated below:





Community Conversations

Ordinarily, the Commissioner attends a series of ‘community walkabouts’ throughout the year, visiting and speaking to communities across the South Wales Police force area about local crime and community safety concerns. However, in response to Covid-19 social distancing restrictions, we adapted our approaches by temporarily replacing our walkabouts with ‘virtual community conversations’. This enabled us to ensure a dialogue between the Commissioner and the public was maintained during the pandemic.

Between September 2020 and March 2021, virtual community conversations were held with residents living in Merthyr Tydfil, Swansea, the Vale of Glamorgan, Neath Port Talbot and Cardiff. The Commissioner spoke to over 50 residents during this period via the digital platform ‘Zoom’, about the service provided by South Wales Police, as well as crime and anti-social behaviour-related issues affecting the local area.



Examples of the issues raised by residents at our Community Conversations are illustrated below:

“ What precautions are the police taking to protect people who are shielding? ”

Discussions took place about how the police were taking into consideration the health of individuals who were shielding when they were responding and interacting with the public.



“ Residents aren’t getting follow-up contact from the police ”

Examples were shared where victims who had reported to South Wales Police hadn’t received any follow up contact from officers since their initial report.



“ Some people are not reporting via 101 as they perceive it to not be a reliable service ”

Some residents mentioned that people had stopped reporting crimes via 101, because they couldn’t get through in the past. It was also felt that there appeared to be a lack of awareness of the online reporting option.



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

Some residents discussed their concerns about the ever-growing problem of drugs and substance misuse. Recent increases in public disorder, particularly involving younger people, were also raised as a concern.



“ It’s important that the police recognise and understand the impact that Covid is having on people’s mental health ”

Discussions took place about the impact that lockdown was having on people’s mental health. Residents felt that it was important that the police were compassionate in responding to people who were vulnerable and at crisis point.



“ How are you helping to divert young people from anti-social behaviour? ”

Some residents queried what work was being done with the community to help divert young people away from anti-social behaviour.



A full overview of the issues raised by residents at our ‘Community Conversations’, and the responses provided are available [here](#)

All issues raised at our Community Conversations are taken seriously by the Commissioner. Based on the nature of the matters discussed, the Commissioner speaks with local policing teams and partner agencies to appropriately address concerns raised at our meetings. The Commissioner also monitors re-occurring concerns and trends raised by the public, to feed into his scrutiny and accountability programme. This enables the Commissioner and his team to escalate concerns about policing practices and crime trends with police leaders in South Wales Police.



Young Voices Conversation

In Autumn 2020, the Commissioner established a 'Young Voices Conversation' forum. Our Young Voices Conversation aims to provide a regular forum for young people between the ages of 11 and 25 to share their feedback and experiences with the Commissioner and South Wales Police. Hearing directly from young people about the issues and concerns affecting them, enables the Commissioner to promote a better understanding of the needs and realities of young people in South Wales.

In December 2020, we launched our Young Voices Conversation forum using the virtual platform 'Zoom'. Over 40 young people attended the event, who were aged between 12 and 21. The Police and Crime Commissioner and Deputy Chief Constable were panel members at the event and encouraged young people to put forward their questions and feedback to them.



An overview of some of the feedback and queries raised by young people is outlined below:



A number of young people told us that they felt police inputs at schools and youth clubs should be held more regularly. They told us that police inputs on issues such as knife crime were very valuable and they hoped that engagement with young people would remain a priority for the police.



Queries were raised about how the police were trying to prevent young people carrying knives and whether the police felt they were in control of tackling and preventing knife crime.



Young people spoke to us about their concerns in relation to the number of young ethnic minority people being regularly stopped and searched by the police and asked how the police intended to address unconscious bias.



Covid restrictions were raised by a number of young people, who were interested in understanding how the police were planning to 'crack down' on those who weren't abiding by them.



A concern was raised in relation to 'cat calling' and other intimidating behaviours whilst out running, which caused many young women and girls to feel unsafe. It was queried what could be realistically done to address this behaviour.

A full overview of the issues raised by young people at our Young Voices Conversation and the responses provided are available [here](#)

Following the initial launch of our Young Voices Conversation forum, it was decided that local conversations with young people would be scheduled throughout the year to further discuss the key issues young people were concerned about. Young people will therefore be invited to present the key issues discussed at local conversations to the Commissioner and South Wales Police at our Young Voices Conversation forum meetings in 2021 and beyond. The advice, challenges and information shared by young people will be carefully considered by the Commissioner and South Wales Police and will enable the opportunity for joint working in the development of solutions.



Our Police Our Community

The Police and Crime Commissioner is responsible for allocating the police budget and setting the police precept level in South Wales. In the autumn of 2020, the Commissioner launched a public consultation survey to enable communities to share their views on policing priorities, including how much extra they would be willing to pay towards policing as part of their council tax (police precept) for 2021/2.

The consultation commenced on Tuesday 10th November 2020 and ran for a four-week period. To ensure the survey was accessible, it was created digitally using Smart Survey, with separate links for English, Welsh and Easy Read. Paper copy versions were also made available in English and Welsh upon request.

Due to Covid, we were unable to undertake any face to face engagement with the public, as we ordinarily would have during the consultation period. Therefore, our engagement with partner organisations and community groups, was vital to encourage participation from as many diverse groups of people as possible.



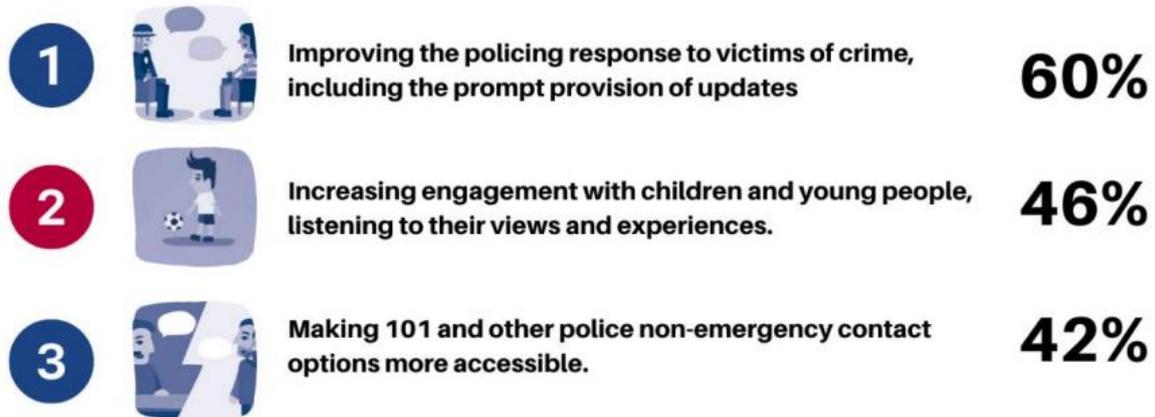
A total of 1,001 residents living in the South Wales area completed the survey. The survey results highlighted that 69% of residents were willing to pay more per month towards their council tax to support policing in South Wales, with nearly half (46.5%) telling us they would be prepared to pay an extra £2 a month.

Residents were also asked as part of the survey to tell us about crime and anti-social behaviour-related issues they were most concerned about in their community. Half of respondents (50%) ranked 'Drugs and Substance Misuse' in their top 3 concerns for their area. Over a quarter of residents ranked 'Speeding and Dangerous Driving' (35%) and 'Burglary and Theft' (34%) in their top 3 concerns.

The top 5 community concerns are illustrated below:

- 1 **Drugs and Substance Misuse**
- 2 **Speeding and Dangerous Driving**
- 3 **Burglary and Theft**
- 4 **Alcohol-related crime and disorder**
- 5 **Mental health-related crime and anti-social behaviour**

To help the Commissioner understand what residents felt the police should be prioritising, respondents were asked to select up to three organisational priorities from a pre-defined list. Over half of respondents (60%) ranked 'improving the policing response to victims of crime, including the prompt provision of updates' as a top policing priority. The top 3 priorities selected by participants are illustrated below:



The information gathered and the open and honest feedback received via the 'Our Police, Our Community' consultation assisted the Commissioner in his decision-making when setting the precept level for 2021/22. Feedback gathered in relation to local policing priorities and the service provided by South Wales Police also helped to inform the refresh of the Commissioner's Police and Crime Plan and will be considered as part of the Commissioner's scrutiny programme and policy and project portfolio for 2021/22.



Conclusion

During what has been an unprecedented year, engaging with our communities has been important more than ever. Whilst the pandemic has presented us with many challenges, it has also offered us opportunities to think differently about the way in which we communicate and interact with one another.

Our engagement with the public has enabled the Commissioner to be actively aware of the impact that the pandemic has had on communities, changes in crime trends, and also people's perceptions about how the police have enforced Coronavirus regulations. Speaking to communities has enabled the Commissioner to strengthen his understanding of the issues that need addressing, examples of good work, and ways in which our practices can better reflect what communities are telling us they need.

The Commissioner and his team will continue exploring the best methods to use to engage with communities, to ensure that we are able to offer a wide range of accessible activities for the public to participate in.

If you would like to involve the Commissioner or his team in a local event that you're organising, ask him to meet with a local community group, or provide an input at an event, please contact us on:

engagement@south-wales.police.uk



To find out more about your Commissioner
follow us via:



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We welcome correspondence in Welsh and English

This document is also available in Welsh