

Meeting	Authority Meeting
Date	25 March 2020
Location	Tele-conference
Title of Paper	Police Scotland's Response to Covid-19
Presented By	DCC Graham, Crime and Operations
Recommendation to Members	For Discussion
Appendix Attached	No

PURPOSE

The purpose of this paper is to provide an update to the Scottish Police Authority on the policing operation surrounding the Police Service of Scotland (PSOS) response to Covid-19 known as Operation Talla.

Members are invited to discuss the contents of this paper.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Operation TALLA has been established by PSOS to manage the police planning, preparedness and response phases in relation to COVID-19 within the UK.
- 1.2 To ensure the report is considered in detail, five key themes have been looked at as outlined below:
- Business continuity
 - Training and equipment
 - Staff communications and welfare
 - Partnership arrangements
 - Next steps
- 1.3 The strategy which informs the Operation Talla response in Scotland is:
- Maximise public safety by providing an appropriate police response, in support of health professionals, to incidents involving the coronavirus.
 - Safeguard health, safety and wellbeing of staff through appropriate planning, preparation and response arrangements.
 - Provide appropriate communications to inform and reassure public and staff, in line with Public Health guidance.
 - Work with other agencies to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
 - Monitor and respond appropriately to any community tensions and ensure all Operation Talla related activities are consistent with EQHRIA principles and are underpinned by a sound legal framework.
 - Ensure business continuity arrangements are in place within Police Scotland (PSOS).

- 1.4 Health Protection Scotland remain the lead agency in respect of COVID-19 in Scotland and have primacy in the provision of policy, direction and guidance to other healthcare providers and supporting agencies.
- 1.5 PSOS focus is on keeping people safe, and protecting people from threats to their safety and wellbeing. Our strategic assessment tells us we must direct our resources to protect vulnerable people and address issues which cause the most harm, this includes supporting partner agencies in the response to COVID-19.
- 1.6 Planning and processes cut across a range of relevant national strategies and factors; all of which could be impacted upon as PSOS prepare to firstly respond to the demands directly placed upon them from COVID-19, whilst adapting to the changing needs of day to day policing such as prisoner welfare and depleting members of staff due to absences.
- 1.7 Notwithstanding the foregoing, PSOS are preparing for the potential impact of COVID-19 on policing and society as a whole, which will be significant.
- 1.8 From the outset there has been a strong emphasis on proportionality ensuring any changes to current working practices or service delivery are subject to robust consideration founded upon a clear rationale supporting the necessity for any such change.

2. **FURTHER DETAIL ON THE REPORT TOPIC**

- 2.1 Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak PSOS had prepared a Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Framework which has been utilised to inform Operation Talla planning in Scotland.
- 2.2 A command structure has been implemented to manage the planning, preparedness and response phases of this public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC). The identified command structure is:
 - Gold – Deputy Chief Constable Malcolm Graham
 - Silver - Assistant Chief Constable Mark Williams
 - Bronze - A number of key task managers have been identified to support the operation.

2.3 The Preparedness Framework outlines critical functions aligned to the strategic processes PSOS will maintain through business continuity procedures. The six strategic processes are:

- Custody Management
- Operational Policing (Response & Community Policing)
- Contact, Command and Control
- Criminal Investigation
- Health, Safety & Welfare
- Supporting the Criminal Justice System

A number of sub groups support Operation Talla including Business Continuity, People and Development (including Health and Safety), Logistics (including Procurement), Criminal Justice (including Custody) and Communications.

2.4 In the first instance, a planning team was established to support operation Talla and its logistical requirements, this was initially staffed through Emergency, Events and Resilience Planning structures. The team has recently been expanded to support the operation as it moves into the response phase in line with emerging circumstances.

2.5 Immediate resource requirement on PSOS is significant. The commitment of officers to planning, preparation and response to COVID-19 coupled with abstractions associated with illness, caring responsibilities and home isolation will have an impact across the entire Force.

2.6 BUSINESS CONTINUITY

2.6.1 In February 2020, in an early response to COVID-19 the Emergency, Events and Resilience Planning (EERP) business continuity function required all Divisions and Departments to update their Business Continuity Plans - Pandemic Influenza Appendix.

2.6.2 93 individual Business Continuity plans, covering critical business areas, were submitted to EERP. Each plan was reviewed and feedback provided, highlighting interdependencies and cross cutting issues beyond individual business areas, ensuring all critical considerations were addressed.

- 2.6.3 Individual plans have been tested through a series of exercises with a completion date of 13 March 2020. As a result plans have been updated with learning points, ensuring each plan is updated and fine-tuned in line with the required response.
- 2.6.4 Business Continuity planning and exercising is being undertaken at strategic and senior management level to ensure preparedness at a pan PSOS level.

2.7 TRAINING AND EQUIPMENT

- 2.7.1 PSOS continue to procure personal protective equipment (PPE), including Health Protection Scotland approved FFP3 face masks, to equip officers enabling them to attend COVID-19 related calls.
- 2.7.2 Officers from Operational Support and Criminal Justice Divisions are trained and fitted with appropriate PPE within in line with risk assessment based prioritisation. Work is ongoing to expand this capability to include those areas of policing where officers may come into contact with COVID-19, such as Border Policing Command and response policing.
- 2.7.3 PSOS along with other agencies are experiencing significant challenges in securing appropriate PPE and hygiene products e.g. hand sanitisers, in the volumes required. Issues have been flagged through national partnership arrangements; and are being pursued by PSOS as a matter of urgency. Without resolution PSOS may be required to operate out with current procurement frameworks. Options in this regard are being explored with senior representation from Finance and Procurement on Operation Talla. Procurement remains a significant ongoing challenge.

2.8 STAFF COMMUNICATION AND WELFARE

- 2.8.1 With the increasing publicity and concern around COVID-19, a dedicated team has been established within Corporate Communications to coordinate both internal and external communications requirements. The team is aligned to the Gold Commander, ensuring a consistency of messaging both nationally and locally regarding the PSOS response to COVID-19.

- 2.8.2 PSOS Corporate Communications are linking in with partners through Public Communications Groups across Scotland again ensuring consistency of messaging.
- 2.8.3 There is a dedicated area on the PSOS intranet allowing officers and staff to access relevant information, guidance and advice from PSOS and partners.
- 2.8.4 Internal messaging is focusing on health and safety advice, absence management, special leave policy advice for individuals who may need to be absent and a Frequently Asked Questions page, informed by questions raised by officers and staff.
- 2.8.5 All information being shared with officers and staff is informed by guidance available from NHS, Public Health, Scottish and UK Government's and reviewed by PSOS Corporate Communications on a daily basis.
- 2.8.6 Absences are being closely monitored with daily reporting; allowing PSOS to evaluate the impact and act on any potential changes to service levels, implementing contingency plans and communicating changes to service delivery without delay.

2.9 PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENTS

- 2.9.1 The Scottish Government Resilience Room at both Ministerial and Official levels have been activated. There is a flow of information from these meetings into the Resilience Partnerships through the Resilience Coordinators for each area.
- 2.9.2 The Scottish Resilience Partnership is supported by a COVID-19 Sub Group which has been established to ensure the activity of relevant agencies in Scotland is coordinated. PSOS is represented on both groups.
- 2.9.3 A Justice Board COVID-19 Sub Group has been established to ensure activity of relevant justice agencies in Scotland is coordinated. PSOS is represented on this group.
- 2.9.4 PSOS is represented on the National Police Chief's Council COVID-19 Gold Group which has been established to ensure the activity of policing agencies across the United Kingdom is coordinated and consistent.

2.10 NEXT STEPS

- 2.10.1 PSOS will continue to enhance operational capacity to respond to COVID-19 related incidents requiring a police response. The overriding assumption in respect of police support to COVID-19 related incidents is there will be no automatic requirement for police to attend.
- 2.10.2 If required, a National Coordination Centre will be stood up and staffed to take command and control of national incidents. Commanders and support structures with the appropriate skill set will be identified to take on specified roles.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are, and will continue to be, financial implications in respect of the PSOS response to COVID-19. This is being tracked and collated.

4. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are personnel implications in respect of Operation Talla. People and Development has developed absence guidance for officers and staff. PSOS has engaged with the Scottish Police Federation, Staff Unions and Health and Safety to ensure personnel implications are correctly considered and addressed.
- 4.2 In conjunction with Operation Talla, Corporate Communications are ensuring a consistency of messaging for officers and staff, keeping the dedicated intranet area up to date and informed with developments and guidance as required.
- 4.3 Contingency planning incorporates the uplift of officers and staff to the logistics operation and to the Coordination Centre. Base posts of officers and staff filling these posts will require to be backfilled.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 PSOS procurement team continue to engage with suppliers to fulfil requirements outlined within the Procurement Framework.

- 5.2 PSOS Health and Safety are fully embedded within Operation Talla structures to ensure compliance with relevant legislation. There is a dedicated Health and Safety Bronze Commander and Sub-group.

6. REPUTATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 In order to ensure public trust and confidence in PSOS is maintained, work is ongoing to develop its ability to respond effectively to the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak.
- 6.2 PSOS will seek to respond directly to external demands and expectations, such as supporting health efforts; however, consideration will be given to the internal needs of PSOS in relation to COVID-19, such as ensuring prisoner welfare is maintained, the potential for isolating particular prisoners; with consideration also afforded to the very real possibility of mass absence.
- 6.3 Significant work is being undertaken to ensure the business continuity of PSOS throughout the outbreak. Scenario planning continues to be undertaken to ensure that as the Covid-19 outbreak develops PSOS is able to maximise the service it provides, prioritising the most serious crimes and incidents.
- 6.4 As mentioned previously significant challenges persist in procuring PPE and hygiene products for officers and staff. This issue is a priority for Operation Talla and is being pursued internally through national structures.
- 6.5 Media strategies are in place to proactively promote key messages both internally and externally through various media outlets, highlighting good work and examples of positive partnership working, whilst providing information regarding service delivery to the public in an attempt to provide reassurance whilst maintaining public trust and confidence.

7. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The public health emergency of international concern is one of the main focuses of the media. Covid-19 continues to have significant impact upon society as a whole.

8. COMMUNITY IMPACT

- 8.1 PSOS, Safer Communities is monitoring community impact and has engaged with relevant communities to provide reassurance. Daily reporting of related incidents is being provided to Operation Talla.

9. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Due to the health, safety and wellbeing requirements and in line with manufacturer recommendations and scientific research, officers and staff who are to be fitted for FFP3 masks are instructed to be clean shaven.
- 9.2 Officers are being instructed to be clean shaven in order to be fitted with the FFP3 mask and remain clean shaven for the duration of the outbreak. Staff who wear facial hair for medical, religious or cultural reasons or who have a certain facial characteristics which may prevent the FFP3 from providing adequate protection are requested to contact Operation Talla in order that bespoke considerations may be made.

10. ENVIRONMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Attendance at COVID-19 related incidents will result in an increase of waste being generated. This waste is to be treated as medical waste, as such it required to be disposed of in accordance with established procedures.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are requested to discuss the content of this report.