



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

Committee for Justice

# OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

Police Service of Northern Ireland Budget  
and Funding Issues:  
Police Service of Northern Ireland

25 February 2016

# NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

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**Members present for all or part of the proceedings:**

Mr Alastair Ross (Chairperson)  
Mr Raymond McCartney (Deputy Chairperson)  
Mr Alex Attwood  
Mr Sammy Douglas  
Mr Paul Frew  
Mr Danny Kennedy  
Mr Seán Lynch  
Ms Bronwyn McGahan  
Mr Edwin Poots

**Witnesses:**

Chief Constable George Hamilton Police Service of Northern Ireland  
Deputy Chief Constable Drew Harris Police Service of Northern Ireland  
Mr Mark McNaughten Police Service of Northern Ireland

**The Chairperson (Mr Ross):** I welcome to the meeting the Chief Constable; the Deputy Chief Constable, Drew Harris; and Mr Mark McNaughten, temporary director of HR. The session will be recorded by Hansard. Once you have made some opening comments, we will open up the meeting to questions. Chief Constable, when you are ready, I ask you to make some opening comments.

**Chief Constable George Hamilton (Police Service of Northern Ireland):** Thank you, Chair, for the opportunity to attend the Committee this afternoon. We shared in advance with the Committee various documents on finance and some related issues, including an overview report, so I do not plan on simply reading those to you; rather, I will give a few headlines that we think are pertinent information that the Committee should know about. It would be useful to take questions on those headlines and on the papers that we have presented. That may be a more incisive way of getting to the issues.

Over the past four years — from 2011 to 2015 — the police budget has been reduced by £217.3 million. Between 2010 and 2014, we reduced police officer headcount by almost a thousand — 933 — officers. That is a 12% reduction in those four years and mirrors reductions in police headcount across the UK. It is also very similar to what happened with an Garda Síochána owing to austerity.

The police resource departmental expenditure limit (DEL) budget is approximately £735 million, and that includes £52 million of additional security funding. You will not be surprised to hear that almost 80% of the costs are salary-related. The capital budget is around £30 million, £9 million of which is

additional security funding. In addition to the £40 million taken off the opening budget this year, for 2015-16, we had to achieve an in-year cut or contribution to other pressures in the system of £26.2 million. That therefore equates to a total of £66.6 million off the budget, which is an 8.4% reduction on the 2014-15 baseline. Looking forward to the year that we are about to commence, 2016-17, we can achieve a balanced budget only by applying a cut in the region of 10% to non-pay costs. We are trying to retain our capacity and the capability of police officers and police staff as far as possible, and, to do that, we need to cut even deeper into non-staff budgets.

I will set out some of the pressures or demands that we face. As we move forward, our reducing resources will be prioritised, in a way in which we have not done as sharply in the past, around threat, harm, risk and vulnerability. We are really moving towards policing the absolute essentials on the basis of those principles of threat, harm, risk and vulnerability. We will use a model of priority-based resourcing to help align resource with service delivery. We have commenced some work to identify future demand on the PSNI. That is telling us things that are, I suppose, obvious, but, when you really have to start finding the efficiencies, a precursor to that is to understand the demand more accurately.

Every day, there are over 1,300 calls for service, 4.4% of which require an immediate emergency response. Every day, we investigate 281 new crimes, 32 of which involve violence. Every day, we investigate 26 cases of missing people, many of whom are in the high-risk category, so we need to take cases seriously. Every day, we seize, on average, £27,000 worth of controlled drugs, taking them off the streets and out of the supply chain. Over 100,000 victims of crime are updated every day.

On dealing with vulnerability in particular, of the 26,800 people detained in custody during 2015, 18.6% had self-harm issues. Those are people whom we have arrested for certain offences and brought into our custody and therefore our care. Right up front, we identified that 18.6% had self-harm issues, 6.2% were suicidal, 6.1% had other mental disorder issues and 6.7% had issues with drugs.

We are also challenged every day by FOI requests. We get between three and four FOI requests every day, most of which require significant hours of work. That means 1,300 FOI requests every year. Of course, we also have the routine stuff that you expect the police to deal with, such as the murders, rapes, burglaries and road traffic collisions. In January alone, for example, we had four murders to deal with, each of which entails a major piece of work.

There are also emerging threats and demands that we are still trying to get a better understanding of. For example, in the areas of cybercrime and cyberdependent crime, we are constantly seeing new methodologies emerge. There has also been increasing use of new technologies by organised crime groups; for example, encrypted communications, the Dark Web and privacy-based browsers, all of which make it more difficult for us to know what they are doing. Another area of emerging demand and threat that we are trying to understand better is human trafficking. In the past year alone, we have recovered 53 potential victims of human trafficking. That is more than one a week and is an increase of about 20% on the previous year. It is a growth area of work for us. Child sexual exploitation (CSE) has been very evident in the news in GB of late, and there has been some attention paid to it here as well. It is a growing area of concern, and we need to put more and more investigative resources into tackling it. The nature of the work means that resources tend to be less visible. It involves working in a private place with children and young people, rather than patrolling the streets in yellow coats. That clearly has a detrimental effect on reassurance. Without doubt, regarding demand, the future of the Police Service will be even more challenging than it is today. Cybercrime, human trafficking and CSE all seem to be on the rise.

I have no doubt that you, as public representatives, will be interested in the potential impact that a reducing budget has on our services. Eighteen months ago, when we were looking at very significant cuts, I said that, if we continued at that pace of cuts, policing would change and become unrecognisable from what it was then to what it would need to become. I do not mean that we are unrecognisable just yet, but the service that we deliver and how we appear to communities and citizens is changing because of budgetary pressures. That reveals itself in things that are simply must-dos. We are in the final stages of reviewing the process for the closure of at least 12 more police stations and a reduction in opening hours in some others. Investigations are having to be prioritised. They will all get a response from us, commensurate with our statutory responsibilities, but that will not always mean police attendance at the scene of a crime, unless there is an evidential reason for it or, clearly, it is an emergency or a crime in action. However, we need to be more discerning about the calls that we attend. Reduced access to police and delayed or scheduled response times will become more and more of a characteristic of how we deliver the service.

A concerning one for us, especially because of the greater reduction in the capital budget and spend, is the reduced ability to invest in technology, which, given the increasing demand around e-crime and cybercrime, means that things are going in the wrong direction for us. We will have greater reliance on police officers in mixed-economy teams. That allows us to keep the police officer headcount up, but it is not particularly efficient. We are putting police officers into jobs that we had previously civilianised, but there is a certain floor that we cannot fall below for police officer numbers, in order to be able to deal with surges in public disorder, public safety and other civil contingencies. There will be a significant reduction, as there already has been, in overtime spend, and that will impact on our ability to respond to major and critical issues. Of course, investing in our own people is suffering because of the budget reduction. In particular, leadership training is suffering, and other mandatory training is having to be curtailed or done in a different way to make sure that costs are reduced. We are having to reduce costs right across the organisation.

You will not be surprised to hear me talk about the pressures of legacy, by which I mean coronial inquests and legacy investigations. The legacy investigation branch currently has a heavy workload, with the Bloody Sunday investigation, the Military Reaction Force (MRF) investigation, investigations emanating from the Boston College tapes and the Lady Justice Hallett review of the so-called on-the-runs scheme. We have had to go through hundreds of cases and review them to make sure that matters are properly addressed and we do not get a mistake, as we did last summer with the Hyde Park bomb outcome, which was not desirable for us.

On top of that, the Historical Enquiries Team (HET), which I closed for reasons that have been well articulated — I am happy to discuss them if members want to go there — has left behind 937 cases that still have not been reviewed. We have 48 investigators working in the legacy investigation branch. That is a significant number, but, given the scale of the work, it is actually quite small. By way of comparison and worryingly for us, there are seven working in the human trafficking unit and 16 police officers working in the cybercrime unit.

Operation Kenova is probably a very novel and contentious issue. We have shared with the Committee a restricted paper outlining some of the challenges, the background and the statutory obligations on us, along with some indication of the costs. Those are additional costs that have come forward, having been part of our integrated financial planning process. We are in a challenging place with that. It is not currently budgeted for, and, from discussions with the Secretary of State and the Department of Justice, it is clear that no additional money will be made available for the investigation and that the attendant financial risk rests with the Police Service.

To conclude, given that the focus of this hearing is on finances, I wish to flag up some things that really limit our ability to do proper, strategic financial planning in the way in which we want to. I am not sure what can be done about them, given Treasury rules and accounting rules for government, but they are challenges that do not apply to other police forces, certainly not in the United Kingdom. I think of the need for a longer-term budgetary settlement, rather than for 12 months or, at a push, two to three years. We are hopeful that, after the Assembly elections, we will get a longer-term settlement. That is a real challenge for us, because we have a significant budget with lots of complexity. As the accounting officer, I cannot overspend, and getting in as close to that budget as possible is a real challenge. Of course, a small underspend in percentage terms quickly turns into a horrible headline of £7 million or £10 million, even though it is maybe only 1% or 1.2% of the budget. However, I cannot go the other way, at the cost of my job.

Another big issue — this is one that there could be a way through — is that we do not have any ability to carry over money or to build up any sort of reserve. Even though we can see pressures coming, we cannot, through prudence and careful stewardship of the money that has been allocated to us, create any sort of reserve for carry-over. In England, Wales and Scotland, the policing organisations, through the police authorities, police and crime commissioners (PCCs) and the police services, have the opportunity to negotiate precepting, which is a local levy through council tax that is specific to policing, normally to deal with specific issues. Ironically, it was recommended in the Patten report but was not accepted politically at the time. As budgets continue to shrink, it is something that we would find useful, but it does not currently stand for us. I will try to finish on a slightly more positive note. The Deputy Chief Constable often reminds me that, although we have all those pressures, we also have a significant budget. Our job is to keep people safe and to use the £700 million of revenue budget to do that. We try to put that to best use. It is a significant budget, and we are grateful for the decisions that the Executive took in the Fresh Start Agreement, in which there was a degree of protection for the police budget. While I was never going to put my hand up for a 2% reduction, it was certainly much better than some of the figures that were being quoted. It is important to put it on the record that we

appreciate that acknowledgement of the importance of policing and the stresses that the police budget has been under over the past number of years.

I am happy to take questions.

**The Chairperson (Mr Ross):** Thank you very much. First, on the confidential documents, I know that you supplied those on Monday, but members got them only when they arrived today, because we wanted to make sure that they were not leaked. We take every precaution. If any member wants to ask questions about the documents, we will need to go into closed session, and we will do that after we have discussed the budget issues. Given that members might not have had as much of a chance to digest the information as would have been the case otherwise, we may not take that opportunity.

**Chief Constable Hamilton:** If members want to take up the issue with us on a bilateral basis outside the formalities, we are happy to help in any way that we can.

**The Chairperson (Mr Ross):** I appreciate that.

I want to address a couple of issues before I open the session to questions. I want to keep things moving, because we have a heavy schedule today. You mentioned the changing landscape of crime. Last year, the Committee held a conference, 'Justice in a Digital Age', and we identified how much cybercrime is now part of the work that law enforcement agencies do. You will tell me that there is plenty of traditional crime that is keeping you all busy, but how much of a shift in crime are you seeing, even over the past number of years, towards cybercrime? Will that general shift help with budgetary processes, with a lot of that work being done at a national or European level, or will it be as resource-intensive as traditional crime?

**Chief Constable Hamilton:** There is a more sophisticated way of looking at recorded crime. Recorded crime in this jurisdiction has pretty much stayed level: around 100,000 crimes are recorded every year. In fairness, the Policing Board has now got that and recognised that there is some recorded crime that we want to see increase. That is because there is sometimes under-reporting, as a result of a lack of confidence in the police or the challenges for victims if they report it. Increases in sexual crime, hate crime and domestic violence are actually a sign of positive policing. There is less of a fixation from our accountability body, the Policing Board, on crime levels going up and down. There has been a downward trajectory over the past 10 years, and, over the past couple of years, it has been fairly level at around 100,000 recorded crimes.

What we do not know is the amount of crime that is happening online. In some ways, it is like shooting fish in a barrel, because there is so much of it. Acquisitive crime outside of cyberspace looks as though it is decreasing, but we believe that that is because it is increasing online. Even some of the big financial institutions are sometimes reluctant to report it to us. They would rather take the loss than deal with the reputational issue of having had a fraud or a theft occur digitally or online.

The other issue is to do with some of the accounting mechanisms. Crime is crime, whether it happens in cyberspace or on the high street. When it comes to the accounting rules, we need to have a better mechanism of recording what is cybercrime. Some of it is crime that happens online, and some of it is enabled by the Internet so that other things can happen, such as blackmail and so on. It is a picture that probably does not have all the colours in it just yet, to give you a full answer. What we know is that we are having to put more and more people to it in order to understand it and deal with the increased reports and the increased detections that we are making around it. We are not yet in a position to quantify in percentage terms the scale of growth compared with non-cybercrime.

**The Chairperson (Mr Ross):** One of the other areas that we looked at before with departmental officials is the fact that you have 60% of the Department of Justice's budget, so it is the area that the Department will look at first for savings. I want to ask you about shared services. I know that, from a policing point of view, there will be certain security issues that mean that you cannot have the same shared services as the rest of the Civil Service. There are other areas, however, in which there is no reason that you cannot have shared services. What will that look like in the future with regard, for instance, to procurement issues? Will there be more of an opportunity to work with other Civil Service departments, where you can work alongside them, to find efficiencies?

**Chief Constable Hamilton:** Our starting position is to look for opportunities to do that. There will be a small number of issues, largely to do with personal data, personal security and so on for which we will probably have to have stand-alone systems, but those will be minimal. The scale of our operation is

such that that collaboration can work two ways. It is not that we want to take over the world, but, if it makes sense for us to do something for other people at an overall reduced cost, we are absolutely up for discussing that with our sponsoring Department and beyond.

**The Chairperson (Mr Ross):** Is that happening at present, or is it something that you are discussing with Department officials?

**Chief Constable Hamilton:** There have been some discussions on payroll and internal audit, for instance, and those are ongoing. Those things are certainly being talked about. We have, for example, taken on, on behalf of the Prison Service, some aspects of legal services work. I do not want to get into the details, but there are efficiencies and economies of scale being developed in a small way through such things. I am trying to reassure you that there is certainly a willingness on our part to do that.

**Mr Lynch:** I have a number of questions, if that is OK, Chair. We come from a rural community, and you are talking about reductions, George. In our area, there are a lot of farm thefts, cattle theft and that. How do you propose to protect those communities, given the reduction?

**Chief Constable Hamilton:** No area of crime or criminality will be ring-fenced from the budget cuts, but, at the same time, we are trying to identify what creates the most risk and threat for communities. The sometimes isolated existence of people in rural communities means that they are more vulnerable, so, as we prioritise how we use our resources, things such as that will come to the fore. It is a challenge for us. We have collaborated with the Ulster Farmers' Union, for example, and co-funded an analytical support mechanism so that we can be better informed about where the rural crime is. That has revealed really good results, because it allows us to target police efforts better.

A lot of rural crime is opportunistic. We had a big push on the preventative side, especially in Fermanagh, and I have had some real successes with it, particularly in encouraging people in rural communities to take responsibility and implement some very basic crime prevention measures that can have a disproportionate impact in reducing rural crime.

**Mr Lynch:** To go back to one of the pressures that you talked about, what is the overall impact of legacy on your budget?

**Deputy Chief Constable Drew Harris (Police Service of Northern Ireland):** It is in the order of £10 million. That is spread across the legacy investigation branch, which investigates the incidents set out by the Chief Constable, and the legacy support unit, which supports the work of the coronial service and other legal services work on civil actions. There is also an element that pays our legal fees. We have 48 investigators in the legacy investigation branch, and they were drawn from the major investigation teams and the serious case review team to form that branch. That had an immediate operational impact, to the detriment of the crimes of today that we investigate, but we have a legislative duty in respect of those offences, and those are active investigations set to modern standards. There are 930-odd cases unfinished by the HET, and those are still to be subjected to full review and report.

**Mr Lynch:** Drew, you mentioned civil actions and legal fees. You seem to spend a huge amount on challenging cases. To the ordinary person, that does not seem to be anything other than trying to prevent disclosure. I am sticking to the budget aspect of this.

**Deputy Chief Constable Harris:** There is always a decision to be taken about whether to advance a case. In large part, it comes down to our article 2 and article 8 responsibilities. The article 2 responsibilities that we have concerning individuals weigh heavily on us and place an obligation, at times, to engage, in effect, in a legal argument. That sets a principle by which we can move forward. The overall principle is that we are there very much to assist the courts and to do all in our power to assist the various processes. I know that we get a lot of bad media and it has sapped public confidence in certain areas of the coronial process, but we are there as agents of the coroner, working for the coroner in delivering an ECHR-compliant inquest. That is our overall, general and overriding purpose in this.

**Mr Lynch:** Before you take a case, you look at whether there is a chance of it succeeding, but most cases seem to go against you. You have lost quite a number, and that seems to be why you get negative publicity.

**Deputy Chief Constable Harris:** The journalistic reporting goes against us, but you will find that the judgements are a good deal more balanced. That is not reported. We do not engage in fruitless legal exercises. That would be a complete waste of public funds, so we would never do that.

**Chief Constable Hamilton:** Seán, there is a benefit that comes from judicial clarity. We do not keep taking the same cases. If there is a dilemma or competing perspectives between us and the other party, generally, principles will fall out of those cases. Whether they go for us or against us, judicial clarity helps to steer better practice in the future.

**Mr Lynch:** Do you see the funding of future legacy cases coming through the British Government?

**Chief Constable Hamilton:** I have made it clear that the funding of policing is a political decision. Whether that money comes from Whitehall, the Treasury and the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) or through the devolved space — from the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) into DOJ — is for others to agree on. I have not been drawn on that question previously. What I know — I referred to it in the briefing document that you received on the Kenova case, concerning the person known as Stakeknife — is that that is additionality and will require significant money. When the inquiry is up and running properly, it will cost between £5 million and £7 million a year, which translates to the recruitment of between 100 and 140 police officers a year. To pay for that, we need to turn off a recruitment tap or the money needs to be made available from London or Belfast, frankly. All I can do is outline the risk in a respectful way and show that we are using the money that we have been given as efficiently and effectively as possible. If we cannot find the easements and savings within the existing budget for the additional pressures, I will need some sort of political top cover or underwriting, because they are non-negotiable. Most of these cases place a statutory obligation on us because of their referral from the Director of Public Prosecutions.

**Mr Kennedy:** Thank you and welcome. There is a perception that tackling rural crime will be an early casualty of cutbacks and savings. Aligned to that, you say that some 12 stations could be subject to closure. Where are they? Are you able to outline the locations at this stage? It is a one-year budget, so there is a lot to be done in a year to save the money that needs to be saved. Stations are being identified, and, along with reduced opening hours, there will be an impact, particularly in rural communities, where it will reduce confidence and leave people feeling more exposed and more vulnerable. There are a lot of concerns about that.

**Chief Constable Hamilton:** We do not reduce the police estate lightly. Our internal governance processes have run their course in identifying the needs for the police estate into the future, and I have asked for a personal briefing to assure myself of the process and of the management of the consequences at community level of the closures. As well as making the savings, we need a specific plan for managing the consequences and the confidence deficit that you have identified. We take that seriously. I cannot remember exactly where all of the stations are, but there is a list. I will be briefed on that in the next week or two.

We will have to do better with the resources and the number of people we have. Officers sitting in police stations do not catch people committing rural crime or prevent rural crime. I know that, in the public's mind, it is reassuring to have a local police station. However, what they really need to see are local police officers, and, given the stretch in the budget and the fact that we have to spread the jam more thinly, it does not make any sense to keep police stations open with people tied to them for security purposes and or to staff desks on the basis of a model that existed in the 1960s and 1970s, when there were no mobile phones or computers. We are trying to invest in the technology. In fact, just this week, we are launching a new website that will allow people to report crime online — to do all the things that you would do when applying for a passport or a driving licence online — instead of coming to a police station.

Members of the public may well like the idea and the security of a police station in their locality, but do they ever go into it? Very rarely. What they need is an agile police service and a workforce that is able to move to where the threat, risk and harm are. The final decision on dealing with the police estate is for the Policing Board, but we cannot be compelled to have police officers sitting in buildings and not adding any value to keeping people safe. We try to do this in partnership with the board, but it is a thorny issue and one in which perception and reality are sometimes in different places, Danny.

**Mr Kennedy:** Whilst I accept that, it is also fair to say that closures are generally a fairly long and tortuous process, so we would be interested in further information confirming the locations. I take the point that a lot of people do not use police stations, but it is the old argument that 'Dixon of Dock

Green' was more popular than 'Z Cars': people want to see the bobby on the beat rather than a car driving past them. It is that presence, particularly in rural areas, that a lot of communities feel comforted by.

**Chief Constable Hamilton:** I accept that. Through the various accountability bodies, including the Committee, the Policing Board and, at a local level, the police and community safety partnerships (PCSPs), it is absolutely right that people should challenge us about the best use of resources, but let us not forget that we have taken nearly 1,000 police officers — 12% — out of the headcount in the last four years. That has to show somewhere. I cannot pretend that we can magic up some strategy that will make the policing profile look and feel the same as it did four years ago, when we had 933 more officers, or 14 years ago, when we had twice as many officers as we have now, albeit that we were policing in a different style and with different threats.

Part of our approach needs to be about openness and authenticity and not pretending that everything will be the same as it was: it will not. We cannot keep taking money out of the budget, reducing the headcount and pretending that there will be the same policing footprint. It cannot happen. We can be stretched, pushed and called to account on the best use of resources that we have, and lots of that goes on. However, there is only so much that can be done on reconfiguration, changing shift patterns and moving officers. There is a certain floor, and, when we move beneath it, the public will notice.

**Mr Kennedy:** You touched on human trafficking and the resources that you deploy to tackle it. Those seem fairly minimal: seven members of staff, I think. Given current events in Europe and other places including Syria, the very apparent international threats and the fact that Northern Ireland could be used as a back-door entrance to the rest of the UK, will there be further savings made there, or might you find yourself having to enhance that service as opposed to reducing it?

**Chief Constable Hamilton:** It is inevitable that we will need to increase the numbers there. However, the police numbers overall will, at best, remain static and, more likely, have to reduce, just on the basis of affordability. If that happens, we will be taking resources from somewhere else to put into the human trafficking unit. We have improved coordination mechanisms whereby we can surge resources across lines that were previously silos. The public protection unit, the serious crime branch, the organised crime branch and the legacy investigations branch all benefit from each other's resources at times. The human trafficking unit sits within the organised crime branch; it is one part of it. We can take people off other organised crime activities, for example, and put them into the human trafficking unit, as long as the skills required there are generalist, because a specific skills set needs to be built up.

I do not want you to think that, out of an organisation of 6,800 police officers, we have seven in the human trafficking unit and never deploy more to that. That is the size of the team whose day job that is. It is incumbent on us to have the organisational agility and flexibility to surge when we need to, and we do that. Also on human trafficking, the support that we now have on a legislative footing from the National Crime Agency (NCA) is significant in terms of capacity, knowledge, experience and international reach. The NCA's international liaison officer network, which extends across 170 countries, means that we do not have to deploy people to do that. On the basis of the legislation, we can now engage through that network, which saves everybody money. It is not even just about saving money; the people deployed to those countries understand it and are better at it than we would be doing it on an ad hoc basis.

**Mr Kennedy:** My final point is on legacies. You are on public record as saying recently that you wish to initiate some kind of public debate. The initial reactions to that included quite a bit of concern from victims and families of victims for whom there has been no investigation, little inquiry and no news conferences or other events. I know that you appreciate the raw emotions that flow from here, but, although people may not ultimately get full justice, they are entitled to pursue maximum justice and, certainly, maximum truth.

**Chief Constable Hamilton:** I want to put the record straight: I have not tried to launch a public debate. In an hour-long media interview, I was asked one question about whether a line should be drawn under the past. I said that that was a political decision and that I thought that a debate was needed because nobody was fully satisfied with the current arrangements and outcomes or the closure being brought to legacy issues. All I was doing was answering a question; I was not trying to launch some sort of national debate on the issue, although I accept that my utterances may well have resulted in that.

**Mr Kennedy:** It certainly led to speculation about that.

**Chief Constable Hamilton:** Yes. It is not for me or for us to express a view on that one way or the other. Yesterday evening, I spent an hour and a half with seven victims of one of the most horrific atrocities that we had. I will spend tomorrow night at a function with over 100 police widows. I will spend Saturday afternoon with a victims' group in Fermanagh. Maybe I do not fully understand the pain, trauma and suffering that victims still live with today because I have not experienced it at first hand, but I have some level of understanding. I have carried enough police coffins and lost enough colleagues to understand that there is no straight answer or one-size-fits-all solution. That is the point that I was making with that comment. I was asked one question about whether that was an option, and I said that it was for the politicians to decide how to deal with the past and that that option needed to form part of the debate. That is as far as I went on that, and I am grateful for the opportunity to put that straight.

**Mr Douglas:** Thank you for your presentation. Chief Constable, you mentioned that, in the last four years, your budget has been cut by £217 million and you have met all your targets. Well done: I know that it has been very difficult to achieve that. You paint a fairly gloomy picture of where things are financially. The reality is that it will get worse over the next number of years, with the present Government into more austerity cuts. What does the future look like for the PSNI with more cuts?

**Chief Constable Hamilton:** I think that we might have already been in this area. We will need to become sharper in how we deploy our resources, which is why we need some very firm principles. Over the last year and a half, Drew has taken the lead on the notion of identifying threat, risk, harm and vulnerability. It is on that basis that we will carve up the resource. Part of the problem with that, Sammy, is that you can end up with issues — we have just been talking about a couple — such as cybercrime, human trafficking and child sexual exploitation, all of which are on the increase, and the police response tends to be at a workbench examining a computer or sitting quietly in an interview suite with victims of crime, getting their support and taking many hours over it. Unfortunately, all of those emerging crime types have the tendency to make policing less visible, even though it is more effective in tackling harm. People dealing with human trafficking, cybercrime and so on do not wear high-visibility jackets and patrol estates. There is an obligation on all of us to deal with public expectation and keep the public informed of what the pressures are. Without raising the fear of crime, if people have an understanding of what kinds of harm could come to them, they may be more understanding of the police having to use their resources in a less visible way. It is a bit of a conundrum.

**Mr Douglas:** You are recruiting, are you not?

**Chief Constable Hamilton:** Yes.

**Mr Douglas:** Will that continue for the foreseeable future?

**Deputy Chief Constable Harris:** Between now and 2020, almost 1,400 officers can retire from the service, and that level of natural wastage means that we will have to keep recruiting. On the basis of our recruitment profile in the 1990s, that wastage is likely to slow in the next decade. However, it tells us that, over the next number of years, we will need a recruitment programme, which we hope to run each year. We set that against our budget provision, and we have set a figure based on the evidence and on our judgement of the operational strength required in the organisation. The police officer operational strength sits at 6,963, and we have worked towards that figure. We are in the high 6,800s now and intend to be as operationally strong as we can be, particularly in the year that we face, 2016.

**Mr Douglas:** You mentioned current pressures and upcoming pressures, such as the number of officers needed for the Stakeknife investigation, which will cost between £5 million and £7 million a year. Today, my office received a report on flags from Queen's University. As someone who has been involved in negotiating with community leaders and others about taking down flags, I understand that there are huge difficulties. Recent reports have said that police should get involved in the removal of flags, with all of the difficulties that we all understand would go with that. Have you done an analysis of what that would look like and, more importantly, what it would cost?

**Chief Constable Hamilton:** We have been involved in working groups and will be at the table offering a police perspective when it comes to resolving the flags issue. We know that, generally speaking, if we take a flag down, about 26 will go up the next night on the surrounding lamp posts. We need a problem-solving approach and a community response whereby things are done with consent. That is not us shirking our responsibility; it is the reality of community dynamics on flags. Also, there is no

legislative basis for us to do any of that, other than common law on breach of the peace, maintaining public safety and so on. If there were to be a solution to it through legislation, we would probably look to you to come up with something creative. Of course, we would be happy to be part of the consultation, but there is no easy answer. In this Building and in the relevant Departments, people have been trying for years to find a solution. I am not even critical of the fact that we do not have a solution, because it is hugely complex and emotive. It is all about community identity, marking out territory and all of that. Where we have taken steps to remove flags, it was on a case-by-case basis on public safety grounds and mindful of the equal and opposite reaction when we do it.

**Mr Douglas:** Finally, George, as you know, I was on the Policing Board and saw the work that the PSNI does on many levels. Of course, you get support in the Northern Ireland Assembly for what you do, but what can we do to help you? In a few weeks' time, we will be away, but what help can the next Justice Committee provide?

**Chief Constable Hamilton:** Drew or Mark might have some ideas. My reaction is to think of some of the inquiries that the Committee has done into things like delay in the criminal justice system. In some ways, you are telling us what we know, but, when an arm of government tells you that it has taken evidence from all stakeholders and not just from a police perspective or that of the PPS or whatever, a certain authority comes with that, and it becomes a lever for us to bring about change. Something in the inquiry work that you do adds real value.

Also, the cross-party nature of the Committee is positive. It is good for us to be able to come here today, and we need to be briefed so that we are able to answer your questions. We do not really want to close 11 police stations, but it is good for all the parties to understand why we have to do it, and the fact that we have no police in 10 of them anyway says something. There is just something about the cross-party nature of it.

I am not advocating anything or trying to be smart when I say that funding of policing is a political decision. That is me being respectful to you. I accept that there is less money to go around than there was and all the rest of it, but I also see this as a forum for me to explain to you that there are consequences with budget cuts. We will always try to do our best with what we have, but we cannot pretend that we can run the same initiatives and keep the same police estate as we did when we were better off financially.

Is there anything else you want to contribute to that question, Drew?

**Deputy Chief Constable Harris:** I think there is just one issue, and it is about us having a more cross-cutting view of some of the areas where the Executive and voluntary agencies spend a lot of effort. We have people who are vulnerable, and they create a demand for us, but they also create demand across education, health and the councils. A pilot is starting in Derry and Strabane for individuals where there are real concerns about their safety and well-being. That looks at what all the agencies can do to help. We can share information, identify people and perhaps come to solutions that reduce demand across all the services. In effect, we all get a win from it. The Chief Constable tells me that, in Scotland, the approach adopted in austere times was how people could work together to get effective outcomes and proper early interventions that were successful. We look towards that. Part of coping with austerity and reducing budgets is looking at the demand that comes to our door, so the issue with the 500,000 calls that we have every year is how we can reduce the demand and work with other agencies. Just to pick up on the point the Chair made, we have services that where we can work in collaboration not just within the DOJ family but outside it. There are very practical areas of collaboration that we could have with other emergency services etc.

**Mr Douglas:** Thanks very much. I wish you all the best.

**The Chairperson (Mr Ross):** On that collaboration work, Chief Constable, you mentioned the problem-solving approach to the flags issue. One of the areas that the Committee has been particularly interested in for the last year has been a problem-solving model of justice. You mentioned in your opening remarks that many people were coming into contact with policing and the criminal justice system who have addiction issues, whether it is drugs or alcohol, or have mental health issues. We have been looking at the idea that has taken over in Brooklyn, and in Glasgow they have something similar with the drugs courts. It is the idea that you do not always need a criminal justice response to an issue; sometimes you need a mandated healthcare response. Obviously, for that to work, you need all the law enforcement and all the health agencies to be on the same page. Where it is most successful, the police have bought into that concept, so police officers who are out arresting

people for offences are not getting frustrated that they may be given a community sentence, rather than a custodial sentence. I know I did not give you advance warning I was going to ask about this, but I just wondered whether you had any views on problem-solving justice and the idea of having mental health courts or drugs courts where the solution is a community response or a mandated health response.

**Chief Constable Hamilton:** No, we do not need notice of that because we talk about it and get frustrated sometimes about the lack of progress or willingness. It was what Drew was talking about. In Glasgow, I had experience of domestic abuse courts, drugs courts and alcohol courts, and that works. The arrangements imposed are not even always sentences; they could be some form of restorative practice right through rehabilitation and people helping themselves, frankly. We see that as a positive thing, but there is work to do even before you get to that stage where you have to take people into a formal setting like a themed court. The work we did in Glasgow was based on the old 80:20 rule: 80% of the demand is created by 20% of the people. Also, there was an overlap of around 80% of people providing demand on policing, education, housing and health, because people who are abusing alcohol will probably be involved in domestic abuse and there will probably be tenancy issues and so on. What the agencies need to be able to do on information-sharing, with political support and legislative top cover sometimes, is share information as much as possible as early as possible and then collectively come to a view on the most appropriate intervention. By the time the police get involved, it is normally chaotic and too late to help that citizen. They have become an offender almost because they have been a victim of all these other things or because things have not gone for them the way they would in a more affluent area.

Part of my observation — I will maybe use the "frustration" word — is that, in the four or five years I have been back from Scotland, I have been having this conversation with senior officials, politicians, Ministers and Committee Chairs. Everybody agrees and nods, but, for some reason, we cannot seem to get the traction strategically. On the basis of acknowledging that, we have started the other way round in Derry/Londonderry with this vulnerability pilot. We are not calling it that any more — what is it called now?

**Deputy Chief Constable Harris:** "Vulnerability" means different things across the agency, so it is a "concern hub".

**Chief Constable Hamilton:** It is a concern hub. People bring their concerns to the table and share the information. Mark McEwan, the district commander in Derry and Strabane, has had to engage with the Information Commissioner to give everybody the reassurance that it is OK and the police will not use this as some sort of sneaky intelligence to go away and do stuff. It is about public bodies exchanging information for the good of the citizen, not to their detriment. We are almost starting from the bottom up, and whatever support the Committee can bring to that would be really welcome. The early signs in that pilot are very positive. We hardly need to do a pilot, because we know from other places that it works.

**The Chairperson (Mr Ross):** Of course, when it works properly, you save money elsewhere in the system, which then goes back in.

**Chief Constable Hamilton:** Yes.

**Ms McGahan:** Thank you for your presentation. George, I will give you a practical example of an issue that I was involved in fairly recently that involved three statutory agencies: the PSNI, the Housing Executive and social services. Basically, the PSNI took a young vulnerable girl in a very distressed state to Craigavon Area Hospital from Dungannon. They had to stay overnight with her. Two police officers then had to be released from Dungannon police station to Craigavon to release the two officers and again stay with the young girl until she was discharged. They did a good job, but is that a policing issue? Does that fall within your statutory duty? Is that the best use of your resources? I felt that another agency got off the hook. I just wonder how often that happens.

**Chief Constable Hamilton:** It is a good question. We suffer that every day in accident and emergency units and other places. I do not mean to be critical of colleagues in health — they have budget cuts, austerity, backlogs and trolley waits and all those things, which I am sympathetic about — but it is not the best use of police officer time to sit with vulnerable people who are waiting to be seen in accident and emergency. Unfortunately, that is not an uncommon example; I would say that, every day of the week, we could find an example like that.

Another issue in this is that, as budgets shrink, people move to an entrenched and more risk-averse position. We have had people turn up at accident and emergency who, after being registered and triaged, are told, "You'll be seen in four and a half hours". After an hour, they get bored and say, "Actually, my ankle is not that bad", so they go off and do not tell anybody. That gets reported to us as a missing person. If the person has some sort of dependencies or issues, they might be a high-risk missing person. Of course, we have been on the wrong end of ombudsman's reports because we have not fully followed through on such incidents or have made the wrong assumptions and some of those missing people have turned up dead.

That spiral of demand is created because people are not working together, which is what needs to happen. It is the same with children going missing from children's homes. That links in with child sexual exploitation and other serious issues, so we cannot afford to take them lightly. When a young person in care who is from a troubled family or whatever goes missing, the first thing that happens is that that risk is transferred to the police. We would say, "No, the responsibility should rest with the people who are charged with their care". There are countless examples of that.

The more we can get an outcomes-based approach to accountability and government, the more it will force people to work together. You do not get positive outcomes by working in isolation. The very fact that you are working towards a higher-level outcome, rather than a performance indicator such as the number of burglaries or road traffic collisions, means that you are more likely to be forced to work in partnership.

**Ms McGahan:** But, George, in that example, is it your statutory duty to do that? To stay in A&E —

**Chief Constable Hamilton:** It depends on the context in which we took the person to hospital. In the case of that young distressed woman, I do not know whether she had been arrested, for example, or had mental health issues. We could arrive at the hospital and say, "Over to you" and walk away from it, but, if the hospital is not going to take the responsibility, we are left in that position. Our job is to keep people safe under the Police Act. That is pretty basic stuff. With someone who has mental health issues, without supervision and without another agency lifting that responsibility, as human beings, we would be unlikely to walk away from it.

**Ms McGahan:** I have to say that this is not the first example I have come across where the police have played the role of a social worker. I was very surprised.

**Chief Constable Hamilton:** I have a lovely man who comes to the public meeting of the Policing Board most months. The poor man has challenges with his teenage son, who has addiction problems and mental health issues. He speaks very highly of the police and with total frustration about other agencies that, when it comes to 5.00 pm, have an answering machine until 9.00 the next morning. When I talk about us being more agile to deliver a better service, I think the same needs to apply right across the public sector. The service delivery model needs to map the demand for social work and in health in the same way as happens in policing. It is easy for policing because we are an emergency service and are expected to be there 24/7, but there are other services that need to be in that place as well and to have the agility. When they are not there, we, as the service of last resort, end up getting pulled into it, and then we are not doing the things we should be doing, such as dealing with rural crime. You cannot sit in A&E and catch people stealing plant: it does not work.

**Ms McGahan:** OK. My second question is this: when you refer to the model of policing being based on threat, risk, harm and vulnerability, where does policing with the community fit in?

**Chief Constable Hamilton:** I have said for a long time — as an executive team, we are in agreement on this — that policing with the community is an ethos. We have had too many glossy brochures and initiatives that we have called "policing with the community". Policing with the community should be exactly what it says on the tin, so, when we are dealing with threat, risk or vulnerability, we should do it with the community. It is a way of thinking. That is why I have said to the Policing Board and to our people that, no matter how big the budget cut, policing with the community is our way of thinking. I do not think we have got there yet completely, by the way, but I know where we need to get to.

We have serious work going on, and there is big scrutiny from the Policing Board on what that actually means. It is values and behaviours, including things like fairness, courtesy, respect, accountability, collaborative decision-making and working in partnership. It is those things. We do not want policing with the community to be read as neighbourhood officers only; I want TSG officers who do searches to think in terms of fairness, courtesy, respect and accountability. I want people dealing with child sexual

exploitation to think that way. It is about engaging with communities and policing alongside them. I do not see austerity jeopardising the policing with the community ethos; it is more of a cultural issue that, 15 years after Patten, we need to keep driving at. I do not think we have nailed it yet.

**Ms McGahan:** Policing with the community is absolutely vital in crime prevention. You are networking and engaging with the community to get information on key issues in the community. As you know, I sat on the district policing partnership in Dungannon. I remember that, at a DPP meeting in Fivemiletown, the police were frustrated because they felt that they were not getting any information from people, and someone from the public said that there was no community response because there was no police response. Engagement with the community is absolutely vital, and it will help your roles as well.

**Chief Constable Hamilton:** Yes. Excuse me for oversimplifying this, but we used to have a model of neighbourhood policing teams and response policing, then specialisms and the TSG, who did search and public order and all that, and then the crime ops people, who did the big investigations such as organised and serious crime, intelligence and so on. I generalise a bit, but there was a general perception of "Neighbourhood cops good; response police bad; TSG really bad; and crime operations really, really bad". We are making sure that there is one ethos that cuts right across all that in the policing with the community approach. Even on the response piece, partly because of austerity and budget cuts, we have gone from 90-something neighbourhood policing teams down to 36 critical neighbourhood policing teams. On the basis of deprivation, inequality, crime levels, social problems and so on, we have these intervention teams — the critical neighbourhood policing teams. The rest of the service delivery model for front-line policing, rather than being response, is what are called local policing teams. That is not just a name or a label; each local policing team is allocated to a DEA under the local government arrangements. In the past, people who were responding to calls would just have gone wherever the dispatcher sent them; now we are trying to get people aligned. We will go where the emergency is, clearly, but we try to get people aligned to that local ownership and to build relationships, engage with people, find out their needs, priorities and perceptions and work to address those.

**Mr Attwood:** Thank you for the written information and the answers to our questions. If I cross into the responsibilities of the Policing Board, will you pull me back? I do not want to stray into the responsibilities of the Policing Board. We need to navigate that line of demarcation carefully.

I have a number of questions. First, the Stormont House Agreement proposed £150 million to deal with legacy. However, you said about Kenova and the activities of the person known as Stakeknife that your view was that those funds were additionality. To probe that a bit further, was it the case that, at the time of the Stormont House Agreement, there had been no reference to the police by the Director of Public Prosecutions in respect of Stakeknife and that, therefore, the sums that we are now talking about for that investigation — somewhere between the low twenties and the high twenties — even though they are estimates, are now more concrete and have to be recognised as additional to and outwith any of the Stormont House figures? Is that your view?

**Chief Constable Hamilton:** The Kenova referral came to me from the director at the end of August. You get a three-page letter, and you have to go away and understand what it means and see the breadth and scope of it. While you were all in Stormont House doing the Fresh Start piece and all that — the second time around, I mean — we had this referral from the director and were working out what it would cost. I had to have for the court for the end of January a clear plan of what the cost would be and how I would resource it — *[Inaudible.]* — the first Stormont House Agreement in 2014, so we would not even have had it then.

**Mr Attwood:** Have you advised the British Government that funding for this investigation, in your view, has to be outwith Stormont House and is additional?

**Chief Constable Hamilton:** I have said that it is a significant spend that we could not have foreseen and, therefore, it is additional. It is up to them how they fund it. They can push back to me and say to me, "Go and find the efficiencies in your budget", and, of course, I will do that, as accounting officer, as best I can. But I need some sort of underwriting from some sort of political top cover to make sure that I can fulfil that statutory obligation. That is what I am looking at. I am not saying whether that £5 million should be out of the £150 million or in addition to it or whatever, but I need to be clear about this. It is a significant spend of 100-plus police officers.

**Mr Attwood:** That is certainly our view. Our party leader has written to the British Government on the matter to say that the Stormont House figure of £150 million has to be revised for a lot of reasons, including the figures that have now been forthcoming in respect of your investigation into Operation Kenova. That will be a very important approach, especially if, as I suspect, people are warming up for a legacy outcome immediately after the May elections. The British Government do not seem to recognise that the circumstances are different from those 18 months ago and that that means that the financial proposals have to be different as well.

Could I ask you a second question? Arising from Fresh Start, although they were coming anyway, you and, I presume, to the Security Service were provided with additional moneys in respect of the counter-terror work of the PSNI. Is it not the case that there has been that uplift in your finances?

**Chief Constable Hamilton:** The additional security funding that has been running for a number of years is largely matched by the Executive and the Treasury. My understanding is that the Stormont House Agreement, while it may have been presented in a certain way, was effectively an agreement to continue that arrangement; in other words, it was the parties — the Executive — agreeing to continue with the additional security funding, which was about £30 million a year from Belfast and £30 million a year from London.

**Mr Attwood:** You are in receipt of those moneys.

**Chief Constable Hamilton:** Are we?

**Mr Mark McNaughten (Police Service of Northern Ireland):** Yes.

**Mr Attwood:** I welcome that. Fresh Start said that some of those moneys would also be allocated for your efforts in respect to criminality and paramilitarism generally. Has there been any increase in-house by the PSNI of budget allocations for your work on organised crime since Fresh Start, given that Fresh Start said that some of that money might be used for that purpose?

**Mr McNaughten:** You are referring to the additional criminality funding in the Stormont House Agreement.

**Mr Attwood:** Yes. I know there is additional criminality funding of £25 million from London and £25 million from here over five years.

**Deputy Chief Constable Harris:** Beyond that again, that budget has not yet been allocated.

**Mr Attwood:** Have you put bids in for that money yet?

**Chief Constable Hamilton:** Yes.

**Mr Attwood:** Is that bid for moneys for, among other things, organised crime?

**Deputy Chief Constable Harris:** Yes, for investigators etc.

**Mr Attwood:** But no budget lines for that have come back yet from London or here.

**Deputy Chief Constable Harris:** No.

**Mr Attwood:** Separate from that, there is what some people refer to as a national security uplift — the moneys that you had before and are now continuing. Fresh Start says that some of that money should go on organised crime and paramilitarism, as well as the paramilitary terror threat. Has any of that money gone into the organised crime efforts of the PSNI?

**Deputy Chief Constable Harris:** My reading of it was that it was additional criminality funding, as opposed to additional security funding. The additional security funding is very strictly controlled in that it must counter, in effect, what is termed a "national security threat" and prevent or reduce national security threats in Northern Ireland. That does not extend to organised crime work. The additional criminality funding was for dealing with organised crime, and there is the other money, which is yet to be allotted, for tackling paramilitaries. We view the line between some of those paramilitary groups

and organised crime as a pretty shallow one. One would think that it would require that funding to be applied, but additional security funding is very strictly controlled against the threats of today.

**Mr Attwood:** The point I make is that some of your colleagues who were here last week confirmed that there were 88 drug gangs in the North and that most of the drugs that came into the North were from the South. We know that there is a greater profile around drug families in the South. The NCA confirmed to the SDLP at a meeting last Friday that it had not yet got any of that extra money. The sooner that money is made available to you and the NCA to deal with organised crime, the better it will be.

**Chief Constable Hamilton:** It is right for two reasons: first, there is a need and a threat that needs to be policed; secondly, turning the cash into capacity takes a while in terms of recruitment, specialism, training and all of that.

**Mr Attwood:** It does indeed.

I have two or three more questions. One of your predecessors made some very public comments during the week about withdrawal from the European Union. Sir Hugh Orde said that, if there is withdrawal from the European Union — I use his words — the terrorist threat will increase. He said that the United Kingdom would be a magnet for fugitives and he was concerned that you would be outside the European intelligence network. Do you, in your role as the Chief Constable, given your policing responsibilities, have any view on the potential increased terrorist threat, the North being a magnet for fugitives or being outwith the European intelligence network? Do you have concerns about those matters in respect of the in/out debate on Europe?

**Chief Constable Hamilton:** It is easy for a former Chief Constable who is no longer fettered by office to make such political utterances on the in/out debate. I am not going into that space, or I, too, will become a former Chief Constable very quickly. What I will say is that the referendum will come and go, and you people will make your decisions and all the rest of it, but a large part of the international law enforcement capability is not necessarily dependent on EU membership. For example, if you take Schengen, which is largely about information-sharing among European countries, you will see that there is huge overlap between EU membership and membership of Schengen. However, the UK Government have only very partially bought into Schengen and are a minimal player in it already, despite the UK being an EU member state. Europol, Eurojust and so on are not necessarily dependent on EU membership. Now, I am not advocating exit; I am simply saying that I do not share —

**The Chairperson (Mr Ross):** There is your headline today. *[Laughter.]*

**Chief Constable Hamilton:** I do not share the pessimism of Sir Hugh Orde on the issue.

**Mr Attwood:** I am sure that you will be questioned further on that at the Policing Board, if nowhere else.

**Chief Constable Hamilton:** I look forward to it.

**Mr Attwood:** Without going into the detail today, I think that Lord Justice Weir's comments on the issue of disclosure generally by the MOD, the British Army, the Security Service and the PSNI were, at least, not good and, at times, withering. I hope that the police and the agencies in Britain, not least the Prime Minister, fully recognise all of that.

The Committee might want to look at certain things in answer to the question that was raised previously. You named three issues: the long-term budgetary settlements, the carry-overs and the policing precept. There is a capacity for the Northern Ireland Executive to have a carry-over, and there does not seem, therefore, to be an issue of principle about enabling their agencies to have a carry-over. They could look at the precept, but with caution. The reason why there was caution, way back after Patten, about the precept is that there was concern that it could lead to undue community control, input and influence over policing, and that issue might endure.

**Chief Constable Hamilton:** Fair enough.

**Mr Attwood:** I also welcome the comments you have made, Chief Constable, in respect of your recent comments on dealing with the past. I fully appreciate what you have said, but they are open to interpretation. I remember, on a previous occasion, a senior person in Northern Ireland saying that, for example, dealing with the past would reveal things that were evil and that our society could not take it. I hope that we are not going back to that sort of thinking or approach, and that is why I am reassured by your comments.

**Chief Constable Hamilton:** In the same interview, I said that the job of the police, as it currently stands, on the past as well as the present is set out in section 32 of the Police Act: gather evidence, investigate and bring offenders to justice. Our mission is quite simple. If there is a political debate about trying to bring closure and deal with the past in a different way that helps, we are happy to contribute to that discussion, if it is appropriate. However, I was not advocating an abdication of our responsibilities.

**Mr McCartney:** I have a couple of broad questions. I want to ask about the idea of the hub, which you are rolling out in Derry and Strabane. Will that include the scenarios that Bronwyn has outlined? Who should have the responsibility when the police are doing something that you are not supposed to be doing, given the role of other statutory agencies? How will you resolve that in the future?

**Deputy Chief Constable Harris:** The particular scenario is this: if there is a vulnerability or a real threat to the safety of an individual and the police are required, we will be there. We want to deal with some of the demand that comes around missing persons, for instance. We get 26 reports a day, and about half of those will be from hospitals or children's homes. Not all the other 13 on that day will be critical missing persons cases. In effect, it will be hospital staff following through on guidance issued by the trust.

We are working with the trusts on a memorandum of understanding about when the police should be called. The last thing we want is emergency services — police, accident and emergency or ambulance staff — in conflict on the ground about what they should be called to. We need to resolve this at organisational level so that there is a decent memorandum of understanding that provides people with viable tactical advice on the ground that they can apply at 2.00 am on a Saturday. It is hard to envisage a situation where somebody is at risk and hospital staff feel that they need the police for their safety and the safety of the individual but we will not be with there: of course we will be there. However, we get a lot of demand, and there really is a question about whether it is necessary to involve the police at all in some scenarios. That is what we want to rule out.

The hub that the PCSP is leading on in Derry looks very positive. We just need to get that bedded out. We wish to see progress this year on rolling that out across the rest of the Police Service and working with the other agencies that are involved. It has been very positive and has been a good focus for the Policing Board, the local PCSP and process, so we are very positive about that.

**Chief Constable Hamilton:** I think that the example that Bronwyn gave would probably be picked up retrospectively with the hub: "This happened, so what is the vulnerability of that teenager and what measures can be put in place so that it does not look like the police are taking her to sit overnight in A&E?". There are bound to be upstream interventions by health, education and social work that could prevent us getting to that point. That is the sort of thing that the hub should do.

**Mr McCartney:** I do not want to use the word "waste" because it is not a waste of resource. Obviously, a valuable thing was carried out. When the people from the finance end of the Department were here, I asked what conversations took place between the agencies when budgets are being struck. It is understandable that, from a policing point of view, you want to protect your budget. However, other parts of the system or even other parts of your system, such as community policing, may suffer. Take away from community policing and reduce the numbers of community police officers, and that might have an impact on crime, and that then brings in investigators, who are dear and investigation is dear. Is any review set in place to allow you to watch the changes that you make to ensure that, while you are controlling your budget, you do not put on a pressure that is a bigger resource than if you had kept the community police officers? That is one example.

**Deputy Chief Constable Harris:** We moved with the review of public administration and now have the 11 districts that are coterminous with the district councils. As part of that, we introduced neighbourhood policing teams, but we also introduced local policing teams. All of those teams have a particular geographical and local focus. It is very much their responsibility to take ownership, deal with problems and problem-solve together with other partners. That has been in place since 1 April and

was fully live since 1 October. There is a review process, and that will take place throughout the year. We want to make sure that the resources are in the right place, and we want to review how the overarching processes and structures that will allow resources to flex, which the Chief Constable has touched on, are working. We want to see whether, when we see a risk or a demand, we respond to it quickly and in an agile fashion. The RPA was introduced on 1 April, and that was when we introduced our changes, so it is still early days, and the evaluation is ongoing.

**Mr McCartney:** I attended a meeting last Friday about car crime, and you could see that the community safety partnership had not got the concept of community policing and the new structure. They thought that there was nearly a gap. That is just a broad point.

You talked about delay in cases. Is there an overall manager for that? Obviously, the longer a case takes, the more costly it is. Somewhere along the line, a long case may collapse even before it comes to trial. That obviously puts a strain on your budget, but it also puts a strain on the legal aid budget, whereas, if there was better management and oversight perhaps sometimes there would be better decision-making. I understand that someone may allow a case to run until they have exhausted every avenue and then collapse it, but, somewhere along the line, someone might say that it is going nowhere and that it is better to stop it now than waste another six months of resource, with the pressure that that puts on your budget. Between the PSNI and the PPS, who has responsibility for that?

**Deputy Chief Constable Harris:** The PPS obviously takes forward prosecutions, and, ultimately, decisions on prosecutions are theirs. We are working in a very collaborative sense with them on the back of the Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland report on improving the quality and timeliness of our work and improved decision-making with the PPS. It is becoming less about firing the files over and letting them sort it out. We want to be far more collaborative and responsive to their feedback and make sure that we give them a timely, quality product. We are working through a series of recommendations with them, and it is very much a joint approach.

**Mr McCartney:** Would there be any part of that process, when a case has collapsed, for example, where someone would examine it and find that you had let it run for six months too long or that you had wasted resource somewhere? How do you make sure that that does not happen the next time? That is part of your budget process.

**Chief Constable Hamilton:** A few years ago, we professionalised the occurrence case management system. That took out a lot of unnecessary bureaucracy and so on, and it was a significant improvement. Also, in partnership with the PPS, we created mechanisms that allowed the PPS to continue to oversee and agree decisions about disposals but give us some discretion on discretionary disposals and, for example, the use of penalty notices for disorder or even non-criminal restorative justice outcomes and approaches. Huge progress has been made with all that in the last six or seven years, but there is probably still some way to go.

I think that the bit that you are getting to, Raymond, is file quality and file timeliness, which have always been a challenge. It is getting better. The benefit of the Criminal Justice Inspection report is working its way through with us, and there is are joined-up initiatives on speedier justice with the Court Service, the Lord Chief Justice's office, us and the PPS.

Everybody in the criminal justice system used to guard their independence so preciously that it almost became dysfunctional. There is now a recognition of interdependency without compromising people's independence, especially the prosecutors' and the courts'.

**Mr McCartney:** There is obviously a consultation on statutory time limits, which that will inform. You obviously need your procedures, but you do not want to put pressure on people and say that you have 100 days when 100 days is just not doable. We need some sense that people are managing it to ensure that the process, whatever you decide on, is at the appropriate level and that you do not lose something simply because of time. The other side of it is that something should not just run on because somebody says that you have as long as it takes.

Finally, we would prefer the Policing Board to be involved in a discussion of the document that we got today. A bilateral meeting would be the best way to deal with that confidential document.

**Chief Constable Hamilton:** All right. OK.

**The Chairperson (Mr Ross):** There are no other questions from members. Thank you all very much. I appreciate that.