

ACCOUNTABILITY BOARD

Meeting to be held on 13 February 2024

College of Policing Independent Review – recommendations progress report.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report sets out the actions taken by the Chief Constable, in response to the recommendations for Lancashire Constabulary, that were identified by the College of Policing in their "Independent External Review of Lancashire Constabulary's operational response to reported missing person Nicola Bulley" published in autumn 2023, as commissioned by the PCC.

RECOMMENDATION

The Police and Crime Commissioner is asked to note and comment on the progress made by Lancashire Constabulary against the recommendations made by the College of Policing in the "Independent External Review Of Lancashire Constabulary's operational response to reported missing person Nicola Bulley" published in autumn 2023.

1. Background

1.1 In Spring 2023, the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for Lancashire, in accordance with his statutory function of holding the Chief Constable of Lancashire Constabulary to account commissioned the College of Policing to undertake an "Independent External Review of Lancashire Constabulary's operational response to reported missing person Nicola Bulley" and this was published in autumn 2023.

1.2 The PCC took this step due to the extraordinary and unprecedented level of local and national public interest in the police response to, and handling of, this case provided the basis for the externally conducted independent review.

1.3 The review focused on three distinct themes:

(i) The operational response by Lancashire Constabulary to this high-risk missing person investigation, and should include, but not necessarily be limited to, determining the effectiveness and reasonableness of:

- the initial police response
- the family liaison strategy

- investigative strategies and policy
- search strategies, including the extent to which the local community and any external specialists were engaged and involved
- internal command structures
- the resourcing of the investigation • guidance & support mechanisms, both internal & external.

(ii) Communication and engagement with press and media, public and the Bulley family and any associated Media & Communication strategy & decision making.

(iii) The decision-making surrounding the proactive disclosure of Ms Bulley’s sensitive personal information.

1.4 The review was to provide an independent external assessment of the policing response with reference to applicable national policy and guidance. The review was intended to provide impartial assurance to the PCC in the discharge of his accountability functions. Recommendations from this review were primarily intended to be for Lancashire Constabulary but it was agreed and accepted by the PCC that recommendations may be shared for wider learning to police forces nationally.

1.5 The independent report was published in autumn 2023 and whilst other recommendations were made to the wider policing family, seven recommendations were specific to Lancashire Constabulary.

2. Progress of Recommendations for Lancashire Constabulary

2.1 Following the seven recommendations made by the College of Policing, the Chief Constable and his team formulated an action plan and progress against each recommendation is set out below.

Progress of Recommendations for Lancashire Constabulary

<i>Lancashire Constabulary should ensure that their M&E team has sufficient influence and representation in the decision-making process for the declaration of critical incidents, to provide a better understanding of the media interest and public confidence levels.</i>	
Media and Engagement to attend all Gold Group and GRIP meetings where the decision to declare a Critical Incident would be taken. As an attendee at the meeting, the Media and Engagement representative will have a voice and influence in the decision.	Complete

A CPD event regarding media engagement to be arranged for February 2024.	Arranged, timescale February 2024
A Peer review of the Media and Engagement Team has been agreed and dates to be arranged.	Timescale to be confirmed
<i>Lancashire Constabulary should ensure greater clarity regarding the point at which a gold command structure should be formally established. A formalised gold command, supported by silver and bronze roles, should operate to a clear strategy, outlining the purpose, management and objectives sought. This strategy should have sufficient chief officer oversight.</i>	
The daily Chief Officer chaired Pacesetter meeting to capture details of all GOLD groups and any other potential major and critical incidents.	Complete
Responses to be recorded and any relevant intelligence of such incidents to be brought to the attention of the Chair who can ensure that the appropriate structure and strategy are in place.	Complete
<i>Lancashire Constabulary should consider the inclusion – and benefits – of external and community representation within their gold group structures when public confidence is affected. Such representation will allow for community sentiment to be heard and for gold command and leadership to recognise the level of concern about public confidence.</i>	
All Gold groups to consider the inclusion of appropriate external and community representation, utilising membership of its Independent Advisory Groups (IAGs) where appropriate.	Complete
<i>Lancashire Constabulary's chief officer team should review how media expertise is connected to chief officer oversight and discussion, to ensure it has suitable influence in decision making.</i>	
Media and Engagement to be represented in all Strategic Meetings (Chief Officer Team, Pacesetter, Gold Groups)	Complete
<i>Lancashire Constabulary's chief officer team should consider how to improve the relationships with gold groups within Lancashire Constabulary, specifically, the degree of delegation of authority. It should consider how senior officers should approach the overruling of decisions made by the gold commander or within gold group and should ensure that there are associated opportunities for challenge.</i>	
The Pacesetter process to provide Chief Officers with an oversight into all GOLD Groups and a forum through which queries and differing approaches can be discussed and captured.	Complete

<i>Lancashire Constabulary should explore what additional practical steps can be taken to ensure that officers and staff wellbeing is supported by the chief officer team during high-profile and highly scrutinised investigations.</i>	
The GOLD command strategy to continue with welfare considerations and Chief Officer oversight.	Complete
<i>Lancashire Constabulary should routinely review statements made during press conferences to ensure the accuracy of comments made and, where necessary, look to clarify or retract comments at the earliest opportunity.</i>	
In all future press conferences, an experienced press and communications officer to be in attendance alongside additional press officers as required to record all statements, questions asked, and answers provided.	Complete

3. Links to the Police and Crime Plan

3.1 The role of the Police and Crime Commissioner is to hold the Chief Constable to account and to be the local link between the Police and communities of Lancashire.

4. Consultation

N/A

5. Implications

a. Legal

There are no legal implications for this report. In considering the report the Commissioner is undertaking his role to hold the chief constable to account.

b. Financial

There are no financial implications for this decision.

c. Equality considerations

There are no Equality comments associated with this paper.

6. Background Papers

None

7. Public access to information

Information in this form is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and other legislation.

Part 1 of this form will be made available on the PCC website within 3 working days of approval. Any facts/advice/recommendations that should not be made available on request should not be included in Part 1 but instead on the separate Part 2 form.