



1. Background

- 1.1 The Cabinet Office includes public disorder on the [national risk register](#) and notes that: *“Public disorder is a highly unpredictable risk. Although the majority of protests in the UK remain peaceful, on rare occasions these events can escalate towards conflict. The primary driver may be long-standing grievances, or it could occur as a spontaneous response to a single incident”*.
- 1.2 Following the horrendous incident in Southport on 29 July that led to three young children being killed and many others being seriously injured, far right activists started violent protests by hijacking a community led vigil to the deceased by attacking police and the surrounding area and shouting offensive phrases.
- 1.3 Despite calls for calm, protests subsequently began across the country, often targeting police officers, mosques and other buildings, including hotels housing asylum seekers. It’s believed some people may have been motivated by baseless claims on social media that the suspect had links to Islam, with false accusations and incorrect names of the attacker.
- 1.4 In circumstances like this (not seen since the 2011 riots), there is a collective response from policing nationally. National coordination is rapidly organised and forces unite to support one another through mutual aid and shared intelligence. The national operation in response to the recent public disorder was called Operation Navette.

2. Constabulary response

- 2.1 In Gloucestershire, the response to the disorder was coordinated under Operation Mariner. A Gold Group structure was rapidly put in place, led by ACC Donna Lawton. Silver and Bronze structures were put in place to oversee specific areas of activity.
- 2.2 Thankfully, Gloucestershire did not see any of the unrest experienced in other areas of the country, including within the region. In support of those areas that were experiencing disorder, officers, including the mounted section, were sent to Bristol and Dorset on mutual aid.
- 2.3 Even though Gloucestershire did not face disorder in the same way as other areas, community concern was, and remains, escalated. Community engagement and reassurance has been prioritised therefore and facilitated by shift extensions, meaning officers have worked extra hours and longer shifts. A positive example of this engagement activity is a PCSO in at Quedgeley, who spent the afternoon of Friday 2 August cycling more than 17 miles around local communities to provide reassurance in Gloucester.

Gold Group

- 2.4 As stated, oversight of Op. Mariner sat with a Gold Group. Gold Groups are rapidly organised whenever there is a major incident and will include representatives from across the Constabulary as well as (where relevant), partner agencies (in this case, Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service). They are usually supported by representatives from the Constabulary Independent Advisory Group and the OPCC to ensure the public voice is heard and represented and to make rapid finance related decisions where needed.
- 2.5 For Op. Mariner, the agreed Gold Group agenda for meetings (held several times a week) was:
- Community Update (led by the Superintendent of Neighbourhood Policing)
 - Independent Advisory Group update (IAG representative)
 - Intelligence update (Superintendent / Director of Intelligence)
 - Counter Terrorism update (CT team Superintendent)
 - Hate crime update (Constabulary hate crime lead)
 - Public Order Policing update (ACC with responsibility)
 - Force Control Room update (Chief Superintendent with responsibility for FCR)
 - Staffing update including shift changes and mutual aid requests (Specialist Operations Superintendent)
 - Staff Associations update (Federation and Unison)
 - Welfare (Occupational Health wellbeing lead)
 - Criminal Justice and investigations update (Lead Superintendent)
 - Communications update (Head of Public Affairs)
 - Special Constabulary update (Chief Inspector of Gloucestershire Special Constabulary)
 - Gloucestershire Fire & Rescue Service update (Deputy Chief Fire Officer)
 - Financial update (Finance team lead officer)
 - OPCC update (Chief Executive)
 - Frequency of meeting
 - AOB
- 2.6 An action plan was developed to capture activity agreed as a result of the meeting with strict monitoring of updates by the chair.


Mutual aid

- 2.7 Gloucestershire officers were sent to support other areas facing disorder, as set out through the Strategic Policing Requirement. This meant officers working extra shifts including being on stand-by, should they be required for deployment at short notice. Officers were deployed across the region as outlined above.
- 2.8 The period also included a time of pre-planned mutual aid to support a force in the North East of England to support with a planned environmental protest.
- 2.9 Nationally over 6,500 Public Order trained officers were on standby on the weekend of the 9/10 August to deal with any potential disorder. This was supported by extra support in the Criminal Justice system to facilitate processing of cases rapidly through to court.

- 2.10 We are very pleased to report that no Gloucestershire officers supporting with mutual aid were injured in the course of their duty.

Community engagement

- 2.11 The Constabulary maintains a database of 'key individual's' across all communities to support communication at a local level. This includes elected representatives, community leaders and partnerships such as the local Community Safety Partnership.
- 2.12 Information was shared as and when available with these networks by the Constabulary and information received by the networks was used to support duty planning. For example, the first football match of the season at home at Whaddon Road in Cheltenham and 'Stop the Far Right' protest in Stroud received additional support from the Constabulary. NB. the protest in Stroud stood attending officers down at 3pm as the protest dispersed with no issues of note.
- 2.13 Police (and the Deputy PCC) were also in attendance at community events at the request of local residents such as an event held at the Friendship café in Gloucester, in support of the Muslim community. This included a debate about how we, as agencies, can support with ongoing recovery and community building, support for reporting hate crime and crime and fire prevention advice for places of worship.
- 2.14 On 8 August, it was decided that a communication from the Constabulary was necessary following information shared online suggesting disorder was likely in Cheltenham and then Gloucester town and city centres. There was no police intelligence to suggest this was likely and led to shops being closed and staff being sent home from work. The press release is shown below:



Police assure communities following speculation online
Published: 16:40 07/08/2024

Statement below on behalf of Assistant Chief Constable Donna Lawton:
"Most of us would have seen the news over the past few days which has understandably left some people feeling concerned and worried about further disorder.

"We know people will be worried about this happening locally, and we are aware of posts circulating on social media.

"We are continuing to monitor information at a local and national level around possible disruption to ensure we have the right level of resources on duty and be able to respond to any incidents.

"Keeping people safe is our priority. To help us to do that, we have been working with partner organisations, and continuing our community engagement work, and reassurance patrols have been taking place across the county.

"We would like to take this time to remind people that if there are incidents locally, we will take robust action and anyone identified as engaging in disorder will be met with the full force of the law.

"The Constabulary will not hesitate to take action against those who seek to commit offences. Our advice to anyone considering in engaging in disorder is not to do so – you risk time in prison, and we have already seen people being charged, put before the courts and jailed in other parts of the country. If found guilty of violent disorder, you risk spending up to five years in prison.

"We know lots of disinformation has been spread on social media across the country, and we would urge people to think twice about what you read and share online."

If anyone has any information regarding pre-planned disorder or criminality, contact Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

You can also call us on 101 or provide non-urgent information online here: [Report a crime | Gloucestershire Constabulary](#)

In the case of an emergency dial 999.

- 2.15 Following the circulation of information online, work has been progressed between the Constabulary, OPCC and local organisations to try to strengthen communicating links and to prevent similar situations occurring again.

Constabulary communications

- 2.16 Good and regular force communication is vital in any major incident as officers and staff are expected to (and do) respond immediately and without fear when required. This was achieved by regular updates from ACC Lawton to the Constabulary via email and within the weekly Constabulary bulletin.
- 2.17 Updates included information obtained through attendance at national Op. Navette meetings, updates from the local Gold Group and community events as well as agreed advice and public messaging that could be shared by front line officers when asked about what residents could do to prepare.
- 2.18 Messages of thanks to officers and staff that responded to the requirement placed upon them, often at the expense of their personal plans were also shared with staff. This included a message of thanks from the PCC, sent directly to those officers that had been deployed, a message from HM the King and from forces that were supported though Mutual Aid:

Message from ACC Donna Lawton

Published:11/08/2024

I'd like to pass on to you a message from His Majesty the King who called the Chair of the National Police Chiefs' Council, Chief Constable Gavin Stephens QPM and the Gold Commander for Operation Navette (the national operation set up in response to widespread violent disorder) Chief Constable BJ Harrington QPM.

The King conveyed his enormous gratitude to officers, staff and volunteers who are working with such resilience to keep all communities, especially the most vulnerable, safe from harm. The King commented upon the courage and strength of character he had observed, expressing his feelings for colleagues and their families. In particular, The King sent his best wishes for recovery to those that have faced abuse, assault and injury, and wished to convey his deep admiration for the policing response.

I would also to share with you a message of thanks from Avon and Somerset Police for the contribution of Gloucestershire officers in support of A&S colleagues dealing with disorder in Bristol city centre on 3 August. My thanks too for all that you did that day.

You should all feel immensely proud of the work you are doing at this time to keep people safe – our communities are looking to us to protect them and here in Gloucestershire (as across the UK) we are not letting them down. I fully appreciate that many of you had plans over this weekend which you have had to cancel. I met some of you yesterday and it is clear the impact this has had. It is the summer holidays and inevitably this will have impacted your families.

Thank you for everything you are doing.

3. OPCC response

- 3.1 In any major incident, the Commissioner has to consider what the appropriate response should be given the circumstances as they are presented. The PCC is legally barred from a role in operational policing, but there is an expectation that the PCC is aware of the operational response and is the public voice in helping the Constabulary shape the operational response.
- 3.2 As a matter of principle, in the event of incidents like this, the Commissioner steps back from the front line of events and to allow the Constabulary to lead with Op. Mariner. The focus for the OPCC during the time of the operation was to ensure the public voice was heard wherever necessary (such as in the Gold Groups and the Strategic Coordinating Group of the Local Resilience Forum) and to support with any community engagement including drawing on the convening powers of the office and sharing public messaging agreed by Gold as appropriate.
- 3.3 It is a function of the office to consider how we collectively might learn from such incidents to improve future response. This work is underway. Of particular note is the early response to the disorder from the Constabulary. In a note of reflections to the Constabulary, the DPCC states:

Op Mariner reflections – DPCC Nick Evans

Email dated: 21/08/24

I was impressed with the way that you moved so quickly to put a command and governance structure around the situation. Rather than waiting for protests to occur in Gloucestershire, or even wait for intelligence, you gripped the issue early so that decisions could be made and logged with a full understanding of the wider

impacts. This should be seen as good practice in the future, and would certainly be the sort of approach I would anticipate seeing in future.

Community engagement

- 3.4 During this time, both the PCC and Deputy PCC attended community meetings to listen to concerns and to support with any community building activity. The office was involved in early community impact assessment activity and remained briefed from local neighbourhood teams as appropriate throughout. This supported the overall effort to share accurate information to stakeholders such as local councillors that would often make contact directly with the PCC and DPCC during this time.

Convening powers

- 3.5 Very early on in the period, it was agreed that a briefing should be facilitated by the OPCC with the county MPs. The invitation was extended to the Chair of the Police and Crime Panel and the meeting was held on Teams on 7 August.
- 3.6 The meeting included a welcome from the Chief Constable and PCC and an overview of main issues from ACC Lawton including an update from a national perspective (the regular national police coordination meetings attended by ACC Lawton). There was also time allocated for questions and answers.
- 3.7 The briefing was well received by those in attendance. On reflection however, the OPCC feels the invitation should have been extended further to possibly the Chief Executives of local councils and, should a similar situation arise again, we will ensure this happens.

National meetings

- 3.8 PCCs nationally were invited to attend a briefing with the Home Secretary and Policing Minister. This was held on Teams on 6 August and included information from an intelligence perspective and the national response including within the wider Criminal Justice System.
- 3.9 During this briefing, PCCs were informed that the Home Office was working with other agencies to tackle online agitation, and a team that was prepared to deal with misinformation created for the General Election had been stood back up to deal with Op. Navette related issues. This work included the Culture Secretary meeting social media companies to remind them of their legal and moral duties.
- 3.10 With regards to the cost of policing the response, the Home Secretary stated that the Home Office will provide the powers and resources that communities need. She said that funding will not be a barrier and the Home Office was seeking to use the special grant scheme to deal with overtime etc. to ensure that the robust response that we all want to see was able to be delivered.
- 3.11 The ask of PCCs was to assist with bringing community groups together and to support effort to reassure and unite. This is something that the OPCC is keen to build on and progress and embed within the next Police and Crime Prevention Plan.

Funding

- 3.12 Responsibility for the funding of the Constabulary sits with the PCC. An Op. Navette financial support request was submitted to the Home Office on 8 August as required, facilitated by a cost recording exercise overseen by the Finance Team. This includes the cost of officer and staff overtime (worked and forecasted), subsistence and accommodation, any damage to equipment and workplace health support as required.

Riot compensation scheme

- 3.13 Under the [Riot Compensation Act 2016](#) PCCs are liable for the costs of the claims at a local level, if the Home Secretary doesn't declare the riots as a national event. Decisions about when or where a riot took place are taken on a case-by-case basis.
- 3.14 Although not currently relevant to Gloucestershire, the PCC holds a £1.1m insurance reserve should this scheme be required in-county.