

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR HOME AFFAIRS
BY DEPUTY M.R. HIGGINS OF ST. HELIER
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 22nd SEPTEMBER 2020**

Question

Will the Minister state, for each of the last five years –

- (a) the number of attacks on States of Jersey police officers, setting out the nature of each assault, the nature of any injuries sustained, the penalties imposed on the perpetrator, and how the officer thwarted or contained the attack;
- (b) the number of times an officer used a baton, pepper spray, taser or other restraining device, including the circumstances in which it was used;
- (c) the number of times firearms officers were called to incidents and drew their weapons on a person, including the circumstances of each case and the type of weapon used by the person the officers were dealing with;
- (d) the number of times an officer drew a weapon on either a child or a person with a learning disability or some form of mental illness, giving the circumstances in each incident;
- (e) the number of officers who underwent psychological training or assessment to determine their suitability for using pepper spray, tasers or firearms, describing the nature of any such training or assessment; and
- (f) the number of officers who experienced mental health illness or issues, or who left the service with such issues?

Answer

(a)

Whilst every assault on a police officer is recorded as part of a crime investigation, to fully answer this question would require a manual trawl of 181 records in order to provide a comprehensive answer. Furthermore, additional research would be required of judicial outcomes or disposals in order to ascertain any penalties imposed on offenders. It is therefore not possible to provide a full answer to the Deputy's question in the time available.

When considering the previous 5 year period (to date), there have been a total of 181 assaults against Police Officers in Jersey. A table showing the year on year breakdown can be seen below.

Year	Assaults on a Police Officer
2016	59
2017	34
2018	33
2019	23

2020 to date	32
Total	181

Of the 32 assaults against police officers in 2020, a number remain subject to investigation or are within the judicial process. Of those investigations which have concluded this year, the following outcomes have been recorded:

- 1 case was resolved with the individual having been issued with ‘words of advice’ as to their behaviour;
- A small number of cases were deemed to have either insufficient evidence or not be in public interest to proceed;
- A small number of cases involved incidents of mental health and were also deemed to be not in the public interest to proceed;
- A small number of other cases were amended from Assault on Police to the offence of Resisting Arrest.

(b)

Whenever officers have drawn or used PAVA, their ASP (baton) or Taser, a use of force form is submitted as per force policy. This form is assessed by the on-duty Inspector and disseminated more widely to the Training Department – specifically the Force’s Officer Safety Trainer – as well the Professional Standards Department. This use of force is then evaluated to ensure that it was lawful, proportionate, necessary and justified in the circumstances. Whenever a person has been subject to use of force by a police officer involving PAVA, their ASP or Taser, they are routinely seen by a Forensic Medical Examiner (a Doctor) and any injuries are treated, documented and photographed.

There have been 56 use of force forms submitted by officers so far in 2020 and 66 were submitted the previous year. Whilst it is not possible to provide individual details surrounding every incident as this would require a manual trawl of records in order to provide a comprehensive answer, the data is stored on Police systems. With the provision of more time, this information would be able to be provided to the Deputy.

(c)

The criteria for the deployment of police firearms must reach the nationally recognised threshold and is defined within the College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice as:

“When an officer has reason to suppose that they may have to protect themselves or others from a person who is in possession of or has immediate access to:

- a firearm or other potentially lethal weapon,
- or is otherwise so dangerous that the deployment of armed officers is considered to be appropriate
- or as an operational contingency in a specific operation (based on the threat assessment)
- or for the destruction of animals which are dangerous or suffering unnecessarily.”

Only a trained Tactical Firearms Commander can authorise the deployment of firearms and this decision must be ratified by a trained Strategic Firearms Commander as soon as is reasonably practicable to the circumstances.

The firearms training department keep records of the number of firearms authorities granted and declined. The records they hold are recorded from December to November each year.

- For the period of December 2018 to November 2019 there were a total of 99 firearms authorities granted. A further 26 requests were considered by a firearms commander and were declined on the basis of their assessment. 71% of the authorities granted related to a report of bladed weapons. A further 15% of authorities related to a report of a firearm. During this period no conventional firearms were discharged by police.
- For the period of December 2019 to the current date (18th September 2020) a total of 78 firearms authorities have been granted. A further 25 have been considered by a firearms commander and were declined on the basis of their assessment. 73% of the authorities granted related to a report of bladed weapons. A further 8% of authorities related to a report of a firearm. During this period no conventional firearms were discharged by police. Taser has been discharged twice this year.

The number of times officers may have pointed a weapon at an individual as part of the resolution of one of these incidents is not held. During any deployment under such an authority a Tactical Firearms Commander is in place throughout. In turn, they are overseen by a Strategic Firearms Commander. Each and every deployment is subject to constant review and monitoring by the commander in charge and in doing so they apply the training they have received and use the national decision making model.

Since its adoption in 2014, Taser has been 'used' in Jersey 341 times. A 'use' in terms of Taser has a broad definition. A 'use' can be counted as any one of the following –

- an officer equipped with a Taser unholstering the device;
- a verbal instruction or a physical gesture by the officer to highlight that they are in possession of a Taser;
- arcing the taser whereby showing an individual by way of a deterrent that the device carries an electric current;
- placing the red-dot laser on a person to indicate where the taser will strike should they fail to comply; and,
- actually discharging the taser at an individual because all other efforts have tried and failed or would be likely to fail if tried.

Of the 341 uses in Jersey there were 181 occasions where an officer opted to simply draw the Taser from its holster to indicate its presence by way of a deterrent, and a further 152 occasions where the red-dot laser was placed on a person as a warning of the officers' preparedness to use force. Taser has therefore only been discharged on 8 occasions with each achieving the intended outcome of bringing the incident to a safe resolution without injury to the person or officers involved. The majority of these discharges were against individuals in possession of bladed weapons, however Taser has also been deployed successfully to save life and has prevented persons from significant self-harm or suicide.

(d)

If it is suspected that a person may have a learning disability, impaired judgement or mental illness, officers will respond in accordance with their training, employing specific tactics to ensure that the individual is afforded additional time and space wherever possible to ensure that they understand and can consider their actions. Use of force is always the last option employed by the police.

Without significant additional research involving a manual trawl of individual records it is not possible to provide a full answer in the timeframe provided.

Information regarding use of Taser is available. Taser has never been discharged at a child or person under the age of 18 in Jersey, however 5 young people have had Taser pointed at them as a result of their possession of bladed weapons and the threat they posed to themselves or others.

(e)

The process of assessing the suitability of officers to carry out their duties is a continuous one.

Any new applicants who wish to join the States of Jersey Police as police officers are subject to a rigorous application process which includes medical and physical health assessments, as well as an extended interview day where characteristics and personality traits are drawn out and assessed as to their suitability for the role.

New student officers then undergo an intensive 10-week national initial training programme where they are subject to ongoing assessment and monitoring of their performance and behaviours, aligned to the Policing Professional Competency Framework and Code of Ethics. On completion of this 10-week training course, officers are then tutored by experienced Constables for an additional 10-week period and only once a series of competencies have been demonstrated and evidenced to a satisfactory standard are the new officers then permitted to work independently.

New officers remain on a 2-year probationary period thereafter where they undergo quarterly performance assessments with their line managers. Officers are not permitted to specialise in areas such as Firearms during this initial stage of their career and remain in uniform policing to ensure that they are competent in rank of Police Constable.

Throughout an officer's service, line managers will conduct 1:1 meetings with officers to identify and address any performance concerns or personal issues which may be affecting their ability to fulfil their role. If an issue is identified, mechanisms are in place to provide welfare support and if deemed necessary the officer can be temporarily withdrawn from frontline work.

Experienced Police Constables and Sergeants may apply to become Authorised Firearms Officers (AFO). The application process to become an AFO consists of a paper application process via their line managers, the Chief Firearms Instructor and the portfolio lead, and if successful applicants are then assessed against their performance records, disciplinary records and sickness levels. Prior to being accepted onto the firearms training course, every officer must undergo a medical with a Forensic Medical Examiner to determine their physical and mental wellness for the role. Those selected will undergo an initial Taser training course for 1-week prior to commencing the full firearms course. This is to allow the training staff to identify any judgement or performance issues early on which may then render them unsuitable to continue training as a firearms officer.

The full firearms course that follows is 8-weeks in duration and if successfully completed, the individual officers then continue with an ongoing training commitment of 108 hours throughout each calendar year, which equates to 2 days of training per month. The training focusses heavily on situational judgement, dealing with mentally unwell or unpredictable people, the use of negotiation and less lethal tactics. Training inputs are assessed on a pass or fail basis and officers will be subject to withdrawal from firearms duties if they are unsuccessful in any element. Further training and re-assessment is provided where necessary. The training programme consists of role plays, cinetronic judgemental inputs (a dynamic video-based system)

and live fire exercises to test an officer's ability to work under pressure and assess their decision making. All training is documented and debriefed after every section to identify learning or gaps which may need addressing or refreshing.

If a welfare issue is identified with a firearms officers, they will be withdrawn from carrying a firearm and removed from the firearms team until such time as it is deemed appropriate to have them return to this duty. This may include referrals to welfare support services or a referral to the occupational health service, AXA.

(f)

Sadly, a number of officers have and continue to experience mental health illness. Not all mental ill health relates to the workplace. Over the past 5-years, mental health has been cited in 46 instances of sickness reporting. Without additional detailed research it is not possible to establish how many individual officers this involves as one officer may have reported sick on more than one occasion.

Year	Number of reports
2016	11
2017	9
2018	9
2019	13
2020 to date	4
Total	46

Some of these individuals may have left the service during this period, either as a result of retirement or ill-health retirement.