

**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 provide the answer to the following –

- (a) what, if any, psychological testing is undertaken of States of Jersey Police officers, including when it takes place and its frequency and explaining what happens if an officer becomes psychologically unsuited to their role and what happens as a consequence;
- (b) what specific training do officers receive in the use of batons, pepper spray, tasers and firearms and where does such training take place;
- (c) what, if any, psychological assessments are undertaken of officers who are authorized to use pepper spray, tasers or firearms and how often does any such testing take place; and
- (d) how many officers have been found to be psychologically unsuited to be trained in the use of firearms?

Answer

(a)

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.

The States of Jersey police currently benefit from having a dedicated welfare officer and a committed volunteer welfare support team made up of individuals from within the organisation. Wellbeing sessions are available for staff and critical incident debriefing is routinely conducted after particularly stressful or challenging incidents. Counselling sessions can be provided where considered necessary and beneficial.

Officers who may need longer-term support and who may be abstracted from frontline duties for a period of time are managed by a 'Restricted Duties Review Group' which is chaired by a Senior Officer and is attended by a representative from Human Resources, other senior managers where needed and the Welfare Officer. This group ensures that officers receive the support that their on-going welfare needs are met and oversees the process so that they can return to full duties as swiftly as possible.

In recent weeks the States of Jersey Police leadership have launched a new wellbeing strategy specific to policing. This document will further seek to enhance the support and guidance available to officers and across the organisation.

(b)

As part of an officer's initial training they receive a week-long officer safety training programme (known as OST) which teaches them the safe and approved way to use their ASP baton, PAVA and handcuffs. This is a national police package. Prior to any practical training element, inputs are provided on effective decision making and considerations for using such equipment.

Each year thereafter, every officer is required to take part in a one-day officer safety training session which again focusses on the practical use of handcuffs, ASP and PAVA as well as physical control and restraint. This is also a national police package and focusses heavily on decision making, judgement, and the safety

and welfare of detainees. The National Decision Making model is at the forefront of the training delivery. At the start of this training day, officers are also required to complete and pass the national standard fitness test.

Officers who apply to become firearms officers receive additional training. The selection and training process is set out in the answer Written Question 340/2020.

(c)

The process of assessing an officers suitability in their role is a continuous one and is set out in the answer provided to question (a) above.

(d)

The term 'psychologically unsuited' is ambiguous. In respect of welfare and well-being, there have been occasions where officers who, for short periods of time, have been temporarily removed from firearms duties due to their personal circumstances. This may be in relation to a work-based issue or something in their personal lives and can be initiated by the organisation or the individual themselves. These officers are offered support and are subject to training assessment prior to be permitted to carry a firearm once again.