

## NORTHERN IRELAND

# APPROPRIATE ADULT SCHEME

**BEEN ARRESTED?  
IN A POLICE STATION?  
FRIGHTENED,  
CONFUSED, ALONE?**

**IF YOU ARE A YOUNG PERSON  
UNDER 18 OR MENTALLY  
VULNERABLE PERSON WHO  
WILL NOT FACE THIS ALONE,  
AN APPROPRIATE ADULT CAN  
BE THERE WITH ADVICE,  
SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE.**

### APPROPRIATE ADULTS

**ARE PEOPLE TRAINED TO HELP  
YOU UNDERSTAND YOUR RIGHTS  
AND WHAT HAPPENS IN A  
POLICE STATION, TO BE THERE  
WHEN POLICE QUESTION YOU  
AND TO ASSIST YOU THROUGH  
THE PROCESS.**

**NIAAS**  
BECAUSE SUPPORT MATTERS.

## Annual Report 2020-2021

To the Department of Justice, the Northern Ireland Appropriate Adult Scheme (NIAAS)  
Delivered by MindWise



## Introduction

The Department of Justice is accountable for ensuring the effective provision of the Northern Ireland Appropriate Adult Scheme (NIAAS). The Northern Ireland Appropriate Adult Scheme is delivered by MindWise, a membership charity which supports those affected by severe mental illness and other mental health difficulties and promotes early intervention.

## Reporting

The statistical information is drawn from a data base which provides an insight into trends and patterns of service delivery.

This report is in respect of the period 1st December 2020 – 30th November 2021.

## MindWise

### Our Mission:

To transform lives and develop new visions for mental health.

### Our Values

Underpin everything we do in supporting people affected by severe mental health illness and mental health difficulties, they are:

- Passion
- Respect
- Empathy
- Togetherness

# NIAAS Manager's Introduction

This was the second year of delivering the scheme in police custody suites against the backdrop of Coronavirus Covid 19. Reports of new variants such as Delta and Omicron along with speculation on transmission rates created natural concerns for management and the NIAAS team.

The challenge in delivering the service was staff engaging with detainees whilst concerned about their own health as well as that of the detainees some of whom were indifferent to pandemic. Regardless of a detainees covid status or their attitude towards the pandemic our staff recognised that young people and vulnerable adults required help to make informed decisions that they find challenging because of their poor mental health. Our staff team offered the appropriate level of support to ensure that the people we supported understood what is happening to them and why, and that they made informed choices whilst in police custody.

The challenge for management was that of keeping the staff safe from infection by ensuring they took all appropriate safety measures whilst still meeting service delivery needs. I acknowledge and thank the Director

of Services in MindWise for the regular weekly covid risk bulletins that updated the staff on infection rates, government regulations and the guidance provided to support MindWise staff so appropriate measures could be taken.

Confidentiality prevents this report from including specific challenges and case complexities; neither can it reveal how particular vulnerable people were navigated through a series of processes that were intimidating and alien to them, I can indicate that there were a number of lengthy cases of a serious nature that required our staff to spend many hours in an interview room assisting and supporting a detainee not knowing if covid was present or not, and knowing the person being supported did not follow safety measures.

We acknowledge the professionalism of the PSNI custody staff, and we have found them to be courteous and compassionate towards the people we are called upon to support particularly when faced with the ongoing challenge of this pandemic.

**Stanley Booth MBE**  
Manager NIAAS

# Our 2020-2021 Report

The NIAAS was delivered by our staff team throughout Northern Ireland 365 days of the year between 08.00 hours and 23.00 hours, with an out of hour's call out facility between 23.00 hours and 08.00 hours when circumstances necessitated attendance.

During this reporting year the NIAAS staff team responded to 3,635 calls to attend PSNI stations. This was seventy-nine more than last year's attendance.

Month	Quarter	
Dec	294	Q1 825
Jan	292	
Feb	239	
Mar	350	Q2 966
Apr	320	
May	296	
Jun	336	Q3 913
Jul	276	
Aug	301	
Sep	335	Q4 931
Oct	284	
Nov	312	
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,635</b>	<b>3,635</b>

## Risk Management

In addition to our standard risk assessment processes our staff sought information from custody staff as to whether a Covid risk assessment had been conducted by PSNI staff before deciding to attend.

When attending our staff consulted with custody staff to ensure suitable PPE provision was in place to support infection control. We found the PSNI to be proactive in providing suitable PPE provision for our staff in both the Covid suite where detainees were confirmed as positive which elevated the risk, and non-Covid suites where the potential for infection still existed.

The strategies to minimise risks are contained within the NIAAS Risk Management Plan, which is regularly reviewed and updated by the NIAAS Manager who is responsible for all aspects of risk analysis and is supported by the MindWise Senior Management Team. The Scheme is compliant with the DOJ security framework, reporting regularly against Key Performance Indicators, relating to Governance, Health and Safety and ICT. These form part of specific performance indicators across a range of issues, such as service delivery, health and safety, ICT, risk management and finance. The CEO of MindWise, upon being satisfied the service is meeting the governance directives, provides assurance statements of compliance with HMG standards and DOJ security framework contractual standards as required.

We provide quarterly reports to our governance board representatives as part of our reporting process. All risks (including information and IT security risks) are assigned to an owner. Our governance body are informed that a copy of the MindWise Risk Register is available for viewing on request. When travelling to and from police stations staff are required to utilise 'People Safe' which is a lone working support and monitoring system which plays a role in staff safety during their journeys.

## The role of the Appropriate Adult

The Police and Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 Codes of Practice require that a parent or legal guardian be the first to be contacted. On occasions a Trust may be a legal guardian for looked after child in care (LAC), meaning the Trust is the corporate parent under the Children (NI) Order 1995.

When the PSNI have difficulty contacting a parent or family member, to perform the role of Appropriate Adult they turn to our scheme. Our trained staff ensure that Police adhere to the Police and Criminal Evidence (NI) Order 1989 (PACE) and the PACE codes of practice.

This is a complex role which demands and encompasses an understanding of the rights of the detained person as well as a clear understanding of the appropriate adult role and its boundaries. Interpersonal and communication skills are necessary as well as being conversant with police procedures and fully appreciating the various mental health conditions found in police custody that can impact upon a person's vulnerability.

The appropriate adult has specific rights contained within the PACE codes of practice to ensure they can fulfil their role, examples which include:

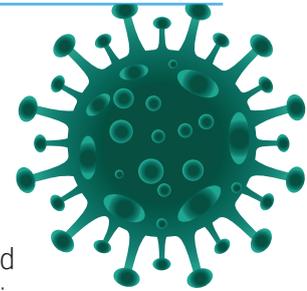
- A. To inspect the custody record of the detained person upon arrival at the police station, and at any time during their detention.
- B. To intervene in an interview if it is necessary in the interests of the detained person to facilitate effective communication with the police.
- C. To request a break in any interview for the detained person to seek legal advice or consult with the detained person (particularly if the interview is a lengthy one, or if the detained person becomes distressed or ill).



## Covid Impact:

The impact of Covid continued this year which disrupted routine procedures in the interest of health and safety. The changes to the pre covid delivery included.

- a) Remote Legal Advice: phone call legal advice dominated throughout the year. NIAAS staff recorded 308 legal representations were in person, with attendances via skype on 230 occasions (the negative aspects of skype indicated by legal professionals is that they are unable to view both interviewee and interviewer at the same time).
- b) There was no manual signing of the NICHE custody record; this was replaced with typed information.
- c) Where possible doors left open for air circulation.
- d) Some interview rooms were fitted with pvc screening.
- e) Some interviews within the covid suites were conducted at the cell door.
- f) Social distancing with the with detainee occurred where possible.
- g) Mask wearing and sanitising were common practice.
- h) Full PPE covers, gloves, goggles, masks are made available to NIAAS staff within covid suites.
- i) Staff were required to self-isolate once they were aware of a Covid contact.
- j) Staff attending a covid suite were required to return home and take sanitising measures before going to another PSNI station to avoid cross contamination. This can include a shower and change of clothes before attending another station.



## Safeguarding, Children and Vulnerable Adults

MindWise have a clear safeguarding policy and accompanying procedures, as well as a Child and Adult Safeguarding Champion within the organisation. We train our staff team to identify safeguarding issues regarding children and vulnerable adults and to report any concerns. In this reporting period staff identified two safeguarding issues that were reported to PSNI for investigation.

## Looked after Children

Following discussions with PSNI custody management and the delivery of appropriate adult training to Trust staff, the trust engages with all looked after children and NIAAS involvement with a looked after child only occurs when it is unknown to police that a child is a looked after child.

## Periods spent within PSNI stations

There is a range of procedures that may occur during the detention period all of which can impact on the length of time an appropriate adult may be inside a police station. A detainee may be subjected to a medical examination, identification procedures, fingerprinting, DNA sampling, and not least the interview. Whilst the PSNI processes and procedures within police custody are similar and the allegations may be common to the officers, the case detail and detainee circumstances are not all the same and may on occasions be unique. It is important for our staff to be available to respond to what could be a lengthy complex case that may run beyond their anticipated attendance period, or even late into the night. Therefore, our appropriate adults need to be flexible and adaptable to meet the demands of the service as well as being able to appropriately support and assist the detainee.

## Length of cases

Within PACE, a person may be detained by police for a maximum of 96 hours, occasionally in the most serious of cases we are called upon to support a person throughout the full detention period. (Other than when they are sleeping).

There are those cases that may not seem serious in nature but may have a profound effect on the accused and the victim, and our staff are sensitive to this. There are those frequent matters that can take little time, but others can be major complex investigations taking all day, and occasionally the following day or days. Our staff have become skilled and carrying multiple less serious cases at the same time moving in and out of cases to speed processes along.

The average period staff spent engaged with a case in a police station this year reduced to 120 minutes (2 hours per case) contact was kept to a minimum to reduce infection risk. Our staff worked with PSNI to create speedy turnaround times to minimise service user, appropriate adult, and officer contact time. Alongside this the majority of solicitor's one to one on site consultations were replaced with telephone advice and Skype viewing of the interview.

## Voluntary Interviews

A voluntary attendee can appear at a station with their solicitor when requested by police to do so, and the interview may be conducted on a voluntary basis. These enquiries are usually short but occasionally they can last for days, with people returning each day for interview until matters are cleared to the satisfaction of the investigators.



## Arrival times

This year we responded to 3,635 calls, these calls are divided between planned calls and unplanned calls.

## Planned

These are calls to attend a police station however immediate arrival is not necessary, this is because a particular activity must occur before an interview can commence. The detainee person may need to be examined by a Forensic Medical Officer (Doctor) or Nurse and declared fit for interview, or they cannot be interviewed by police until they are sufficiently sober, or the detainees solicitor is available. These amongst a variety of legitimate reasons can delay an interview which in turn impacts on the person detention period.

Custody Sergeants in conjunction with investigators routinely arrange for the appropriate adult to arrive at the custody suite at a given time which often ties in with the arrival of the solicitor or the giving of legal advice remotely as part of the efficient running of the custody process, and the appropriate adult must be able to respond to a fluid situation where the timings may change with no notice, such as when the detainee is taken ill and taken to hospital.

We are frequently requested to delay our attendance until a specific time, this typically occurs with overnight arrests when our call centre is contacted during the night requesting staff to attend in the morning, when the detainee becomes fit for interview.

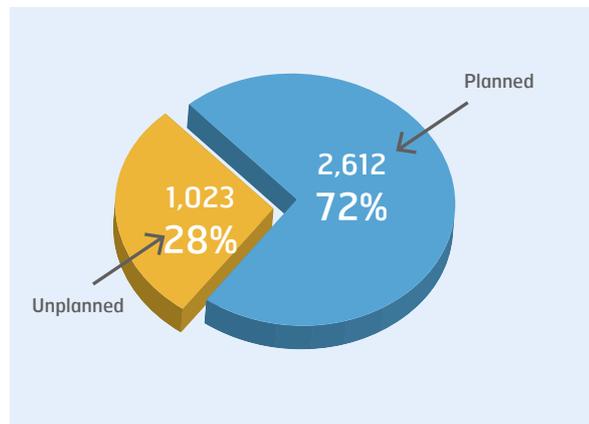
Planned calls can also be for future dates after people are granted bail, to return in the future, or forensic evidence may not be available for many months, therefore the scheme ensures

there is an appropriate adult available and in attendance at the given time and place, which facilitates the police to continue their enquiries.

This year 2,612 (72%) of calls fell into the planned category 7% up on last year, largely because of the ongoing covid situation, this results in a ZERO wait time for police, and helps the scheme achieve excellent arrival statistics. (Table 1)

Planned/Unplanned		
Planned	72%	2,612
Unplanned	28%	1,023

**TABLE 1: PLANNED/UNPLANNED ATTENDANCES**



To facilitate planned booking, we have an online booking system which allows any officer anywhere to log on and plan their interview days, weeks, or months into the future. This secures a staff member and reassures the officer that their enquires can continue or commence at a given date and time.

## Total arrivals

When both planned arrivals and unplanned arrivals requests to attend are collectively counted NIAAS staff team arrived when they were expected to arrive in 99% of all requests, this is directly attributed to having staff on site at Musgrave street PSNI station 8am-5pm each day, and an advance online bookings system in conjunction with a responsive in house call handling system with skilled staff involved in ‘call allocation’ responding to a speedy call answering system provided by Answerforce.

The 1% of arrivals outside of our KPI time frames can be due to several reasons mainly because the staff are already fully committed in custody suites elsewhere or even within the same suite and are unable to proceed to the next case until the present matter is concluded, or a high volume of calls arrive at the same time which exceed the number of staff available to respond immediately, which mean the PSNI find themselves waiting for the first appropriate adult to become available.

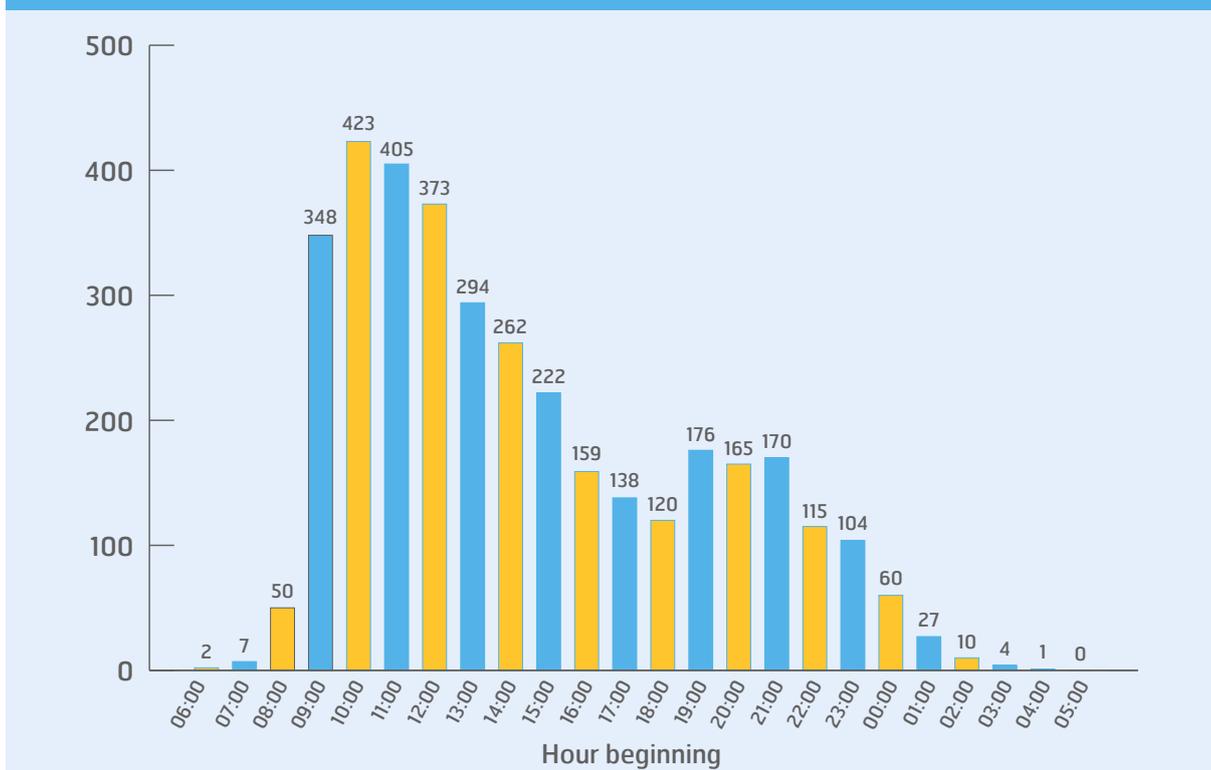
## The pattern of appropriate adult attendance

The NIAAS service delivery is on a 24 hour per day, 365 days per year basis. We attend at PSNI stations as and when required to do so. Whilst the normal service period is between 08.00 hours and 23.00 hours, we can see a pattern of attendance emerge throughout the reporting period.

The main attendance period for the NIAAS was the morning period between 08.00 hours and 13.00 hours, with 1893 attendances, 52% (identical to last year’s report) with a peak at 10.00 hours which is largely impacted by staff being on site at Musgrave street Monday-Friday 8am-5pm and ready to deal with a matter immediately after the detainees has had breakfast, seen a doctor, received legal advice etc. (Table 2)

The ‘out of hours’ call out service was utilised on 215 occasions, averaging 4.1 out of hours attendances per week.

**TABLE 2: ATTENDANCE TIME CHART**



This year we saw the overnight staff being called out after midnight on 111 occasions, to meet specific PSNI requests. This may relate to an interview, or it may be a non-interview procedure, such as the urgent need to obtain forensic samples, to compare with samples found at a crime scene.

The attendance of an Appropriate Adult's after 22.00 or 23.00 hours can take them in to

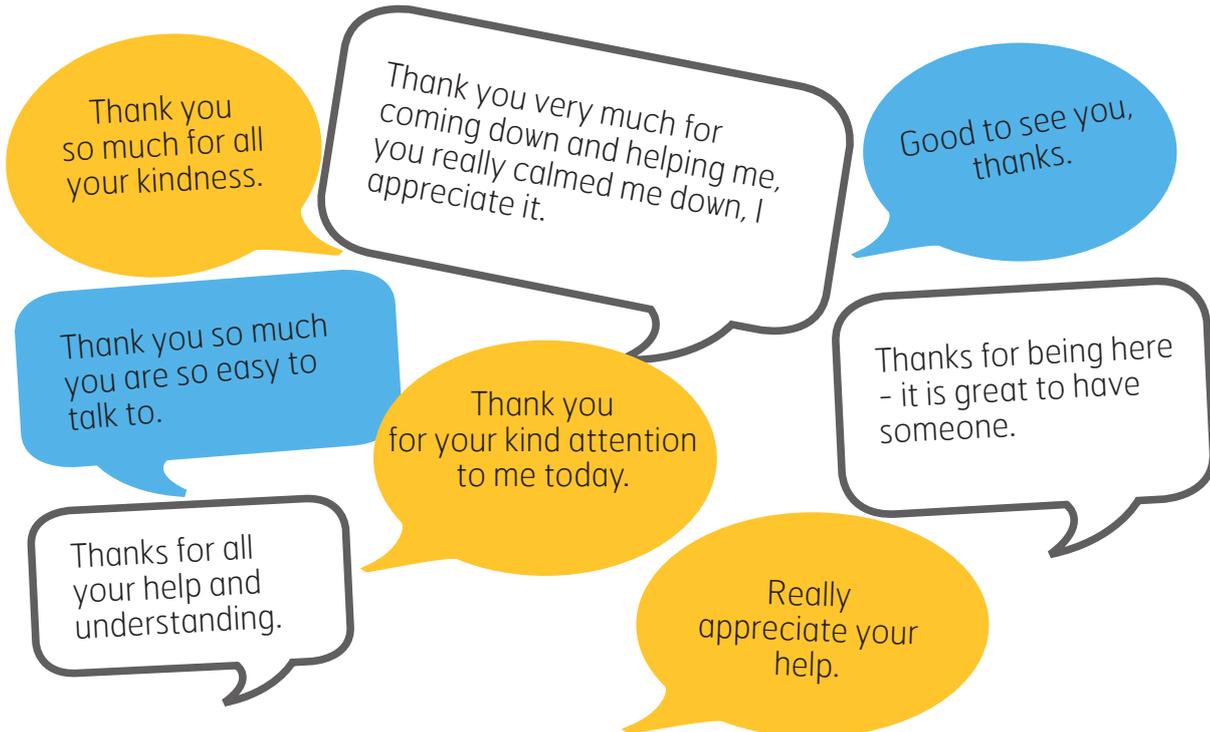
early hours of the morning before a matter is concluded, therefore it is not uncommon for staff to arrive at a station at 22.00 and leave at 01.00 or 02.00. This year PSNI and the DOJ agreed to a poster being placed in custody suites to advise officers not to call out NIAAS staff overnight unless there are exceptional circumstances.



## Comments from PSNI and Detainees

When staff attend at difficult or complex calls or attend during unsocial hours or public holidays or late at night, they are appreciated by PSNI custody staff and detainees. We capture comments indicating their appreciation and include a sample in this report.

Many detainees simply say thank you, to the appropriate adult at the close of the support, a few say a little more to indicate their appreciation.



PSNI custody staff also express their appreciation at the close of a case.



## Supporting mentally vulnerable detainees

When a detained person arrives at a police custody suite a Custody Sergeant is responsible for identifying if the person detained is vulnerable or not, and whether they require the support of an appropriate adult or not. To do this he/she may form an opinion as to the person’s condition following a range of questions listed within a police computer system or the person may have been examined by a healthcare professional such as a Forensic Medical Officer (Doctor) or a health care nurse working within the custody suite who can advise the Sergeant about the detainees mental health or if in their opinion the support of an appropriate adult is necessary.

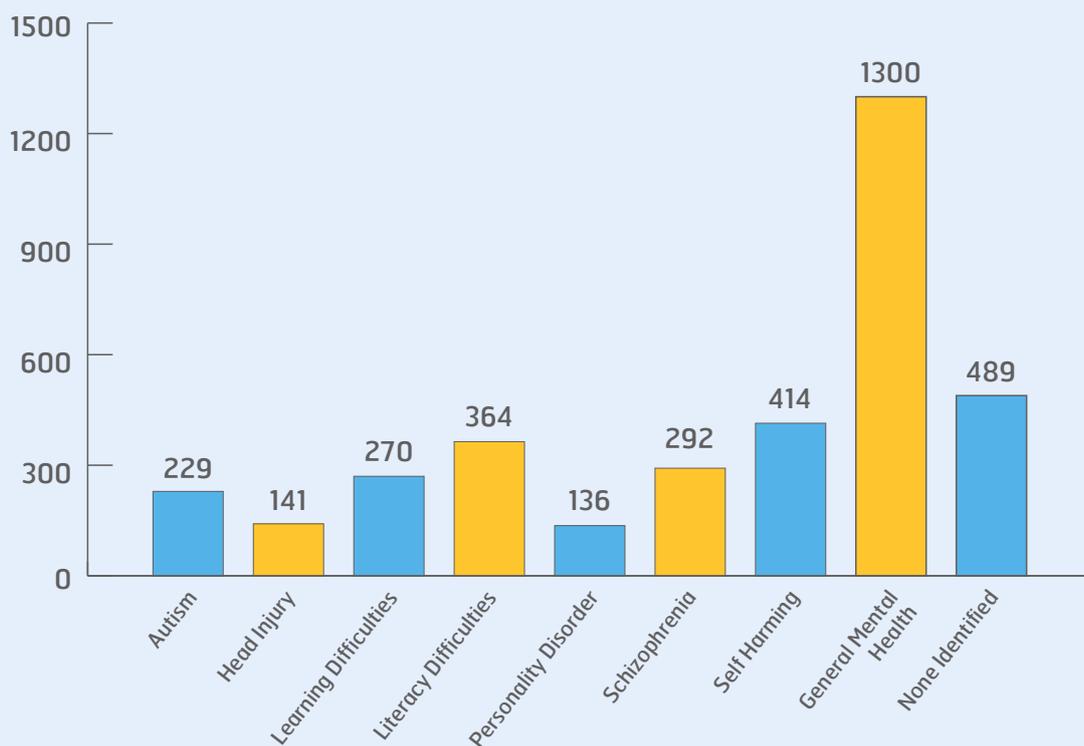
On arrival at a PSNI station our staff identify a range of mental health issues, either from a known diagnosis or from information provided to custody staff by the detainee, or having

been already identified by the Forensic Medical Officer, or other professional in the health care field.

In 3,146 (86.5%) of attendances a particular vulnerability was identified by NIAAS staff or healthcare professionals, however in 489 (13.5%) attendances there was no such identification, this is because young people are considered vulnerable by virtue of being under 18 years of age and may have no other co-existing vulnerability identified.

The NIAAS staff encounter a range of vulnerabilities frequently found within police custody. Within our report the term mental health issues include depression, anxiety, and bipolar disorder. The service also supports people affected by autism, head injuries, and personality disorders including self-harming. Within the support provided learning difficulties includes those affected by attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). (Table 3).

**TABLE 3: NATURE OF VULNERABILITIES**



## Age Band

Juveniles: This year we supported 3 x 10-year-old, 1 x 11-year-old, 9 x 12-year-old and 41 x 13-year-old, and 55 young people aged 14 years.

These figures show a decline from last year re juveniles aged 13 years from 41 to 25 (down 39%) and 14-year-olds from 69 to 55 (down 19%)

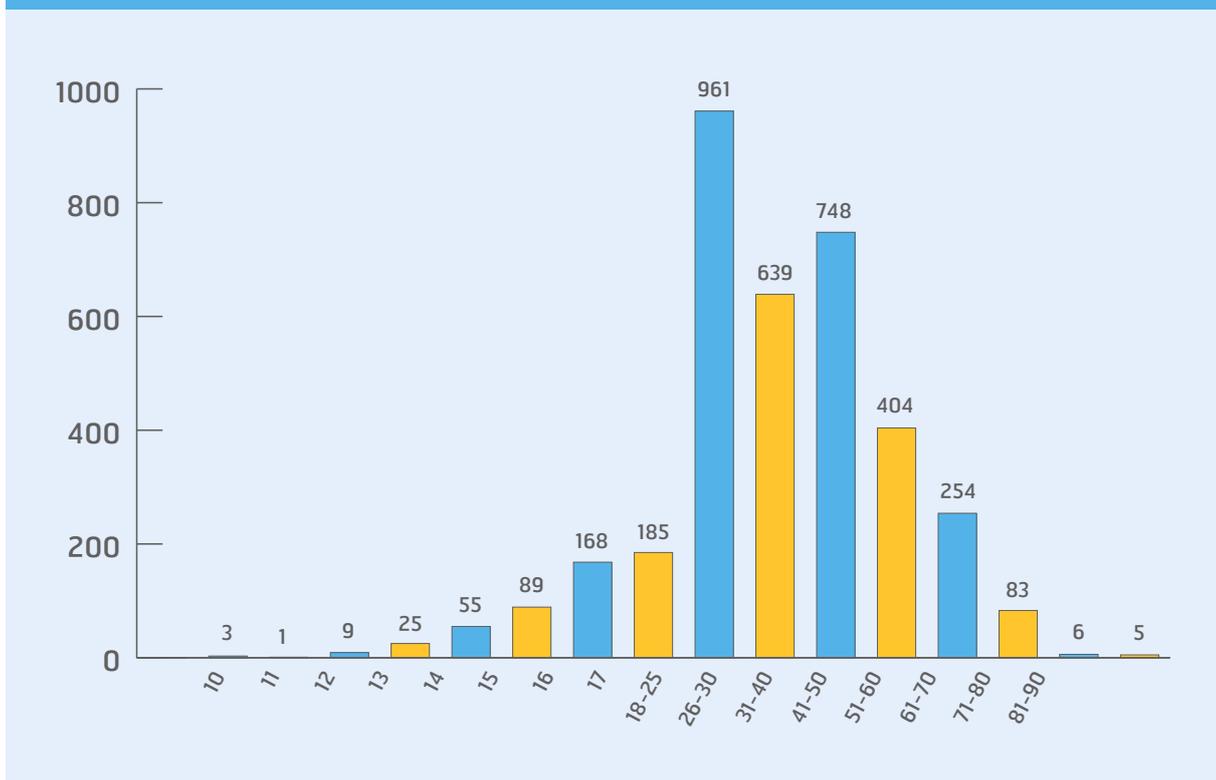
The 14–16-year age range within this group accounted for 312 (8.5%) down 132 on the 444 (12%) last year. The 17-year-olds accounted for 185 (5%) down on the 269 (7%) last year.

All the juveniles we supported accounted for 535 (15%) down 229 on the 764 (22%) last year.

These figures indicate that PSNI secured family members to act as their appropriate adults more frequently than last year or they detained fewer juveniles than last year or a mixture of both.

Adults: Each year we see the 18–25-year-old age range accounting for the majority of all our attendances, this cohort accounted for 961 (26%) like last year’s figure. At the other end of the age range, we supported people aged between 71–80 years of age on six occasions 60% down on the fifteen supported last year, and 5 aged 81–90 years similar to last years figure. (Table 4).

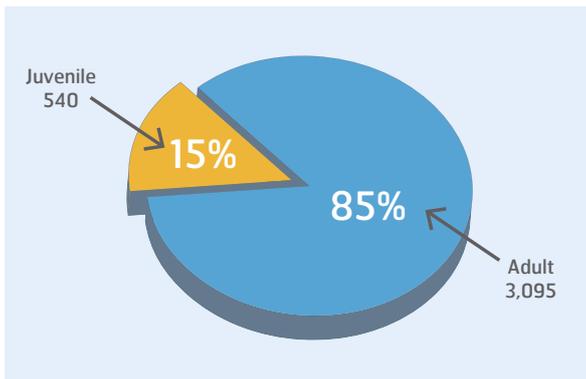
**TABLE 4: AGE RANGE**



## Adult / Juvenile ratio

This year we supported 3,095 adults (85%) and 535 juveniles (15%) the percentage of juveniles supported is 7% lower than last year. The request to support a juvenile or adult arises when a parent or family member cannot attend a police station due to their circumstances, such as no available transport or they choose not to attend for personal or domestic reasons, or it may be inappropriate for them to attend such as when they are the complainant or a witness in the case. (Table 5)

**TABLE 5: ADULT/JUVENILE RATIO**

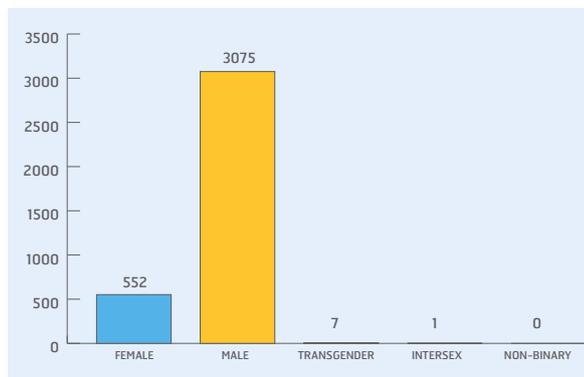


## Gender

This year we updated our data collection to represent people identifying as transgender, intersex, or non-binary as this term matches the national appropriate adult categories of gender. (Table 6).

The gender figures show that 3,075 (84%) people identified as male and 552 (15%) as female this year 7 people identified as transgender and one as intersex. When these figures are viewed alongside the age chart, it becomes evident that young men in their late teens and early twenties are a specific group in need of our services.

**TABLE 6: GENDER**



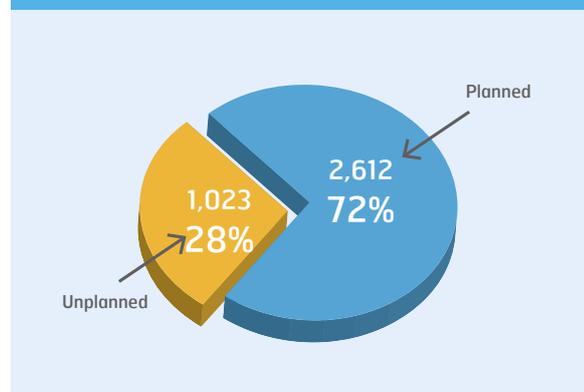
## PSNI Station Attendance

The attendance at PSNI stations depends entirely upon police requirements, the NIAAS staff team attends as and when they are requested to do so. We attend Belfast Musgrave Station as the main holding centre for the greater city area and it is by far the busiest station for the scheme. Staff attend there daily and often find that before completion of one case another detainee has arrived or is already in custody and in need of support from the appropriate adult on site. We have experienced three appropriate adults being present in Musgrave custody suite at the same time all being engaged in different matters running concurrently within the suite.

The PSNI have an ongoing refurbishment plan for custody suites which mean a suite may be closed for renovations, also there are provincial towns that do not have an operational custody suite, which can inflate attendance figures in another area, therefore our attendance figures at PSNI stations should not be seen as a reflection of crime figures for that area.

This year Bangor station became the covid custody suite for the PSNI and we attended there on thirty-four occasions wearing full PPE. Whilst covid remained a concern we attended twenty-one stations across the PSNI estate and staff engaged with detainees not knowing if the detainee was in the infection incubation period or not, however we took all reasonable precautions and service delivery continued with masks and sanitisation throughout the year, and no call / request was declined. (Table 7)

**TABLE 7: STATIONS ATTENDED**



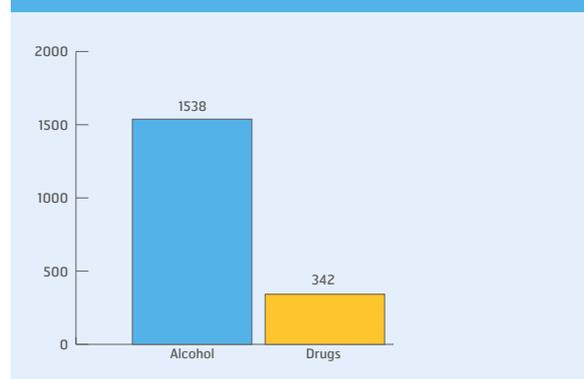
## Alcohol and Drugs

Whilst staff are consulting with a detainee and examining the police custody record, they may discuss a person’s personal difficulties and capture data beyond mental health issues such as the misuse of alcohol and drugs prior to arrest.

Police do not conduct an interview whilst a person is under the influence of a substance; however, there are many offences that flow from the misuse of drink or drugs. We find detainees frank with staff and acknowledged that drink or drugs played a part in the events that lead to their arrest.

This year staff identified alcohol in 1,538 (42%) the same percentage as last year, however drug use was down from to 342 (9.4%) from the 909 (25%) last year. (Table 8)

**TABLE 8: ALCOHOL AND DRUGS**



## Days of the week attendance

We have both weekday and weekend staff overseeing ‘call allocation’ whereby experienced staff monitor the incoming calls received via the call centre ‘Answerforce’ to ensure the call has been responded too in a timely manner, or to take steps to identify a suitable staff member who can respond. The role includes monitoring attendance completion times to know what staff are available and their location at any given time of the day.

This report period we saw Wednesday 565 (15.5%) followed by Tuesday 561 (15.4%) as the busiest periods. This is a consistent outcome

with weekends Saturday 452 (12.4%) and Sundays 474 (13%) being the least busy. We deliver the service continually seven days per week and whilst volumes fluctuate from day to day there is a need to maintain sufficient staff availability to meet these fluctuations as and when they occur.

The report does not specifically highlight public holidays such as Christmas and Easter when there can be a dip in call outs however they quickly pick up post-holiday as postponed enquires are followed up by investigators. (Table 9).

**TABLE 9: DAY OF THE WEEK ATTENDANCE**



## Closing comments

Our staff team attended 3,635 calls across 21 PSNI stations 24/7 during another awful year of covid which brought more infectious variants. The covid lockdown at the end of Dec 2020 and a stay-at-home directive early January 2021 with restrictions continuing to the beginning of March, help to explain the 7% reduction in juvenile support this year.

I must commend the PSNI custody staff for their patience and support in facilitating our risk assessment questioning and the provision of PPE in both covid and non-covid suites. I express my admiration for the NIAAS staff team who delivered the service throughout the year come rain or shine including those summer days when wearing full PPE for long hours in an enclosed space made service delivery uncomfortable.

I also express my thanks and gratitude to DOJ who have been understanding of the challenge we faced. I also wish to thank the MindWise Chief Executive, Board of Trustees, and Senior Management Team, for the organisational support we received, and again this year as in previous years the MindWise administration and financial staff have been particularly helpful in their support and assistance, which feeds into the success in our delivery.

Whilst we are not complacent and continue to search for ways to improve the service, I believe the scheme to be efficient, effective, and professional in its support for vulnerable people within police custody.

### **Stanley Booth MBE**

Appropriate Adult Scheme Manager

**TRANSFORMING LIVES AND  
DEVELOPING NEW VISIONS  
FOR MENTAL HEALTH BY  
CHALLENGING STIGMA  
AND DISCRIMINATION  
AND PROVIDING QUALITY  
SERVICES AND SUPPORT**



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