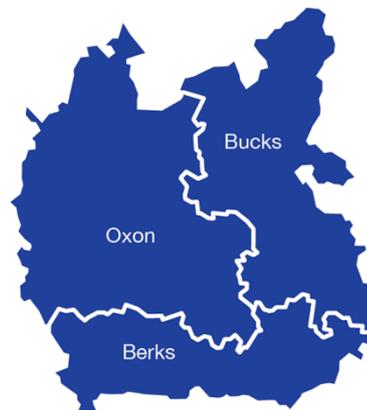


Report to the Thames Valley Police & Crime Panel

Title: Topical Issues

Date: 16 November 2018

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Thames Valley Police & Crime
Panel



Francis Habgood announces his retirement as Chief Constable for Thames Valley

Thames Valley Police Chief Constable Francis Habgood has announced that he is to retire from his role as Chief Constable at the end of March 2019, after four years in the post, 15 years within the force and more than 32 years in the police service.

The process for the recruitment of a Chief Constable is set out in guidance published by the Home Office and the College of Policing. The Police and Crime Commissioner plans to advertise the role in early November and the intention is that the process for selecting a preferred candidate will be completed before Christmas.

As part of the formal selection and appointment process, the preferred candidate will be required to appear before a Police and Crime Panel Confirmation Hearing, early in the New Year.

Thames Valley and Hampshire police £39m call system delayed by year

A "cutting edge" computer system to be used to deploy police officers to emergencies has been delayed by more than a year and gone £12m over budget. The joint initiative by Thames Valley Police and Hampshire Constabulary has now been put back three times since its original launch date in January 2018.

The forces say the system is "not performing to the standard we expect or require" and have allocated another £7m to the project. The Contact Management Platform (CMP), developed by Microsoft, will be the first used by UK police forces when it goes live. The system will replace more than 20 systems across both forces and give call handlers instant information on screen about a caller, recent crimes in an area and other data.

It will also recommend the most appropriate police resources to deploy, but "rigorous testing" has delayed the system three times.

Tougher taxi regulations needed after grooming scandal, says government review

The review, published on Monday (24 September) by the Department of Transport, calls for national standards to control licensing, compulsory visual and audio CCTV for all licensed taxis and public hire vehicles (PHV) and awareness training for child sexual abuse and exploitation.

Recommending more than 30 measures, the review also says that all journeys should start and/or end in the area for which the driver, vehicle and operator are licensed, meaning a loophole that lets drivers work in one area whilst being licensed elsewhere would be closed.

A national database of all licensed vehicles, drivers and operators must be established 'as a matter of urgency,' whilst all drivers must be subject to enhanced DBS and barred lists checks.

Licensing authorities must also use the National Anti-Fraud Network (NAFN) register of drivers who have been refused or had revoked taxi or PHV driver licence and must retain the reasons for any refusal, suspension or revocation and provide those to other authorities (as appropriate).

Supporting victims of modern slavery

The Thames Valley PCC marked Anti-Slavery Day by launching a new service to support victims of all forms of exploitation. The Victims First Willow Project will support victims of all forms of exploitation across the Thames Valley. This includes modern slavery, human trafficking and other forms of exploitation such as those exploited by County Lines drug dealing. Support workers from the Willow Project will work with victims and their families to provide crisis intervention, advocacy and long term practical and emotional support.

Three arrests after modern slavery raid in Iver, Buckinghamshire

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-beds-bucks-herts-45490454>

73 arrested as national modern slavery crackdown targets sexual exploitation

<http://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/news/1491-73-arrested-as-national-modern-slavery-crackdown-targets-sexual-exploitation>

Female trafficking victims unlawfully held in UK jails due to 'disturbing' failure to identify exploitation

<https://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/uknews/female-trafficking-victims-unlawfully-held-in-uk-jails-due>

Female victims of human trafficking are being routinely held in prison in breach of the law because of a "disturbing" government failure to identify exploitation.

Foreign national women who have committed offences as a result of exploitation and coercion by traffickers are routinely jailed in breach of Modern Slavery Act 2015, according to new research by the Prison Reform Trust.

The problem has been driven by an “overarching” aim of government policy in recent years to deport foreign national offenders as quickly as possible, with the stated intention to create a hostile environment for illegal immigrants, the report finds.

It will fuel concerns about the government’s treatment of modern slavery victims after it emerged earlier this year that victims were facing deportation from the UK despite fearing for their lives in their home countries.

Of the 585 foreign national female prisoners studied for the report between February 2013 and March 2017, 45 were identified as victims or potential victims of trafficking, suggesting one in 12 non-British inmates are affected. Their crimes included cannabis production, prostitution related offences and begging, as well as fraud and false document offences – indicator offences for trafficking and coercion.

The law enforcement response to county lines is set to be significantly strengthened as the National County Lines Coordination Centre becomes fully operational.

The UK response to county lines drug crime has been significantly strengthened as the £3.6 million National County Lines Coordination Centre became fully operational on 21 September 2018.

A new multi-agency 38-strong team of experts from the National Crime Agency (NCA), police officers and regional organised crime units will work together to develop the national intelligence picture of the complexity and scale of the threat, prioritise action against the most serious offenders, and engage with partners across government, including in the health, welfare and education spheres, to tackle the wider issues.

County lines crime relates to the supply of Class A drugs, primarily crack cocaine and heroin, from urban cities to market towns, coastal areas and rural locations by young people, using a branded mobile phone line.

Gangs and criminal networks use extreme violence and intimidation to establish and maintain markets, with practices including forcing vulnerable people from their homes to establish a base to sell drugs.

The county lines model involves modern slavery and exploitation of children alongside drugs supply and violent crime. The most recent national assessment of county lines, compiled by the NCA, suggests that there were more than 1000 lines in operation nationally with links to increasing levels of serious violence.

There are already 200 active county lines investigations underway, but the introduction of the centre will allow police forces to intensify their operations.

The National County Lines Coordination Centre is the latest measure in the government’s response to the recent rise in serious violence, set out in the £40 million Serious Violence Strategy, which places a new focus on early intervention alongside robust law enforcement.

As part of the strategy’s analysis into the rise in violent crime, county lines and the broader drugs market was identified as one of the key drivers. Between 2014 to 2015 and 2016 to 2017,

homicides where either the victim or suspect were known to be involved in using or dealing illicit drugs increased from 50% to 57%.

In addition to the National County Lines Coordination Centre, a number of Home Office measures are already in place to tackle county lines. The £13 million Trusted Relationship Fund helps foster relationships between frontline professionals and young people at risk of exploitation. Local areas facing new gang-related threats can apply for match funding reviews and guidance for frontline professionals on how to identify potential victims.

St Giles Trust raises concerns about information sharing over 'county lines' drugs rings

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/oct/01/children-caught-up-in-drugs-gangs-being-failed-by-police-says-home-office-report>

'County lines' drug dealer who trafficked children jailed

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-45733542>

'County lines' drug gangs recruit excluded schoolchildren – report

https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/sep/29/excluded-schoolchildren-groomed-by-county-lines-drug-gangs-home-office-report?CMP=share_btn_tw

Home Office says difficult pupils in small towns across the UK are being targeted. Pupil referral units 'appear to be fertile ground for recruitment and continuing involvement in a variety of negative activities including county lines,' the Home Office report says.

Gangs have been specifically targeting children who have been excluded from school to groom them as drug dealers in towns across the UK, a Home Office report is to warn.

The report said children were particularly vulnerable when they were sent to local authority-run pupil referral units (PRUs) after exclusion. It said gangs had been taking advantage of the propensity of some image-conscious institutions to remove difficult pupils.

The research, which was first reported by the Times, was conducted into "county lines", in which young people are recruited by gangs to deal hard drugs on their behalf in market and coastal towns and rural areas.

The report said. "Exclusion from school does appear to be a highly significant trigger point for the escalation of county lines involvement for children who might be on the fringes of such activity."

It added: "Provision in the PRU does not seem to engage the children and offers very little substance." The researchers quote a social worker as saying the children "do this twilight timetable where they go into school for one hour at four o'clock – so, of course they can get up to all sorts of stuff all day and no one would know".

The researchers believe some schools' fears about their reputations were pushing more children into a position where they were vulnerable to grooming by the gangs operating such networks.

According to the report: “[The education system] is highly competitive and sensitive to Ofsted inspections, exam results, public image, and parental and community pressure. Children with poor behaviour and low attainment adversely affect these factors and there appear to be no incentives and little specialist support to try and keep children affected by county lines involvement engaged in education”.

It said that mainstream schools – and particularly academies – should be assessed on the “frequency and nature of exclusions” to give them an incentive to address the issue.

Home Office launches campaign to help letting agents avoid letting their property to criminal ‘County Lines’ gangs

Urban drug dealing gangs are moving into rural towns and coastal communities, where they rent properties and establish a base. The National Crime Agency’s County Lines report shows that these gangs are now even moving into towns in affluent areas to do this.

These gangs use a drug dealing model, known as ‘County Lines’. Children and teenagers – some as young as 12 – are exploited by these gangs to carry drugs from urban areas to rural towns.

To help estate and letting agents avoid letting their properties to these criminal gangs, the Home Office, UKALA, NLA and CrimeStoppers are working together to increase awareness of the signs to spot criminal tenants, and to encourage staff to report concerns to CrimeStoppers.

Possible warning signs to look out for are:

The prospective tenant offers to pay rent for a long period (e.g. 6 months) upfront in cash

The prospective tenant is smartly dressed and appears affluent, but wants to rent an inexpensive property

The prospective tenant is unable to provide landlord or employment references

The tenant prefers to pay rent in cash, and is unable to provide a good justification

The tenant does not want to be disturbed, and tries to prevent you from inspecting your property when given reasonable notice.

County Lines gangs often use other people to procure accommodation as a means of distancing themselves from the criminality, meaning estate/letting agents may not have a contract with the actual criminal.

To minimise the risk of your property being used by a criminal gang:

Ask the prospective tenant appropriate questions about their reason for moving, try to judge if they seem genuine.

Visit your property within a few weeks of the start of the tenancy to confirm you have rented it to the tenants you think you have – but always remember you must observe your tenants’ right to ‘quiet enjoyment’.

Once the tenant is in situ, arrange regular inspections (quarterly or six-monthly) to ensure the property is being used according to the agreement and to check on the condition of the property. If the tenant seems overly reluctant to allow you to visit, be wary. If you have doubts it can be helpful to ask for feedback from legitimate contractors, for instance those carrying out gas and electricity safety inspections, as a way to assess what’s going on.

'My safe little town isn't safe any more': the toll of the county lines drug trade

Sam, 16, was sucked into drug trafficking in Oxfordshire and ended up being stabbed 13 times

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/sep/07/county-lines-illegal-drug-trade-trafficking-oxfordshire>

Police and Crime Commissioner awards over £300,000 to organisations to support Police and Crime priorities

Over £300,000 funding has been awarded by the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) to seven organisations delivering projects to support key strategic aims within the Police and Crime Plan.

The successful projects are spread across the Thames Valley and are between 1 and 2 years in length. Four of the projects focus on reducing re-offending, one on elder abuse and two on young people and exploitation or gangs.

Examples of funded projects include:

- an intervention to reduce violent re-offending of people under the influence of alcohol,
- safeguarding training for small community groups to support older people who may be vulnerable to abuse and exploitation,
- youth work aimed at vulnerable young people who may be at risk of exploitation from gangs, or on the edge of County Lines drug trafficking to get them involved in local activities or groups in the local community, and
- the development of an intervention programme to reduce re-offending of stranger rape.

Victims First Connect

The Victims First Connect programme is progressing which will allow victims and witnesses of crime to access information on support in their local community.

The information points will include community centres, shops, leisure centres, colleges, universities and libraries. People will be able to find out more about the services available to victims of crime, receive crime prevention/ safety advice, report a hate crime and/or have someone process a referral for support on their behalf.

The scheme is structured into three different tiers which will provide different levels of information and/or immediate support - from Tier1 which consists of displaying a poster and contact details to Tier 3 which will have the added benefit of a trained member of staff who can talk through the support that is available. They will also be able to provide basic crime prevention and safety advice if necessary, instigate a referral to Victims First and are able to process third party reports of hate crime.

New service to support victims of exploitation launched on Anti-Slavery Day

The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for Thames Valley on 18 October 2018, marked Anti-Slavery Day by launching his new service to support victims of all forms of exploitation.

The Willow Project is part of 'Victims First' and is one of a number of services for victims commissioned by the PCC. It will be delivered by Thames Valley Partnership under a two year contract with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Modern slavery includes child trafficking, forced labour, debt bondage, sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation and domestic servitude. In a PCC commissioned report* released last year, evaluation data from support services estimated that in 2016 there could be around 2,500 victims of modern slavery in the Thames Valley.

The Victims First Willow Project will support victims of all forms of exploitation across the Thames Valley. This includes modern slavery, human trafficking and other forms of exploitation such as those exploited by County Lines drug dealing. Support workers from the Willow Project will work with victims and their families to provide crisis intervention, advocacy and long term practical and emotional support. The service will also provide support to Thames Valley Police and other partner organisations including training on exploitation and modern slavery and attending police raids and other operational activity to provide assistance to the victims.

The service will also provide specialist support to victims of other forms of serious crime not who have developed complex needs as a result.

Three police forces to test eyesight of all drivers stopped

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-45387965>

Drivers who fail to read a number plate from 20m (65ft) away when stopped by police will have their licences revoked immediately in a new crackdown. Three forces in England are to test every motorist they stop in a bid to clamp down on drivers with defective eyesight. Police say data from the tests will be used to improve understanding of the extent of poor driver vision.

The forces taking part are Thames Valley, Hampshire and West Midlands.

Officers can request an urgent revocation of a licence through the Driver & Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) if they believe the safety of other road users will be put at risk if a driver remains on the road.

National Audit Office – Ministers do not know the impact that funding cuts have had on police forces.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-45477960>

According to the National Audit Office, the Home Office does not know whether the police system in England and Wales is "financially sustainable". It calls the approach to police funding "ineffective" and "detached" from the changing demands faced by officers.

A Home Office spokesman said the department had conducted a substantial review of police pressures last year. However, the Home Office had not even forecast the effect of losing 44,000 police officers and staff since 2010, the NAO said.

Since September 2009 there has been a cut of 22,424 police officers. There were 126,252 police officers in England and Wales in September 2017, according to the latest figures.

Historically there have been fewer officers - with 123,474 in 2001; 125,453 in 1991; and 116,544 in 1981, for example.

The report found:

- It took 18 days to charge an offence for the year ending March 2018 - four days longer than for the year ending March 2016
- The arrest rate fell to 14 arrests per 1,000 population in 2016-17, down from 17 per 1,000 population in 2014-15
- There have been fewer breathalyser tests, motoring fixed penalty notices and convictions for drugs trafficking and possession since 2010
- 33% of victims were not happy with police response in the year ending March 2018, up from 29% in the year ending March 2016

The NAO says the amount coming from the government is down 30% in real terms since 2010-11. The NAO's Tom McDonald said the Home Office "does not really understand the nature of the demand" facing police forces. He said the funding formula used to allocate money was "out of date", three years after the Home Office told Parliament that the formula was ineffective.

Policing at 'tipping point' over budget cuts, warns police chief

Policing has been left at a tipping point by government cuts and is on the verge of failing the public and struggling to detect crime, a senior police chief has said. Dave Thompson, the chief constable of the West Midlands force, said agreement was needed on what the police should stop doing. It is an idea discussed privately by police chiefs and carried out by stealth by some forces.

"The public's experience is policing that is less visible, less responsive and less proactive," he wrote in a post on the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) blog. "Core aspects of policing – such as answering calls, attending emergencies, investigating crime, bringing offenders to justice and neighbourhood policing – are being pushed beyond sustainability, and are in danger of becoming ineffective, to the detriment of confidence in the police."

"The government has had a partial view of policing in the last few years," he wrote. It was very interested in terrorism and high-end threats but less focused on local crimes, which had been left for forces and police and crime commissioners to manage amid steep budget cuts. "This more local agenda has many positives in setting priorities but it has come with steep budget reductions and a widening mission," he said. "There has been a real-term reduction of police budgets of 19% since 2010, but ranging between 11- 25% across forces."

Thompson said police had improved in the fight against terrorism and serious and organised crime. "But the gains we've made have come at a cost to perhaps the most important parts of policing for the public.

"Crime is rising and so is the demand on our service. The calls do not get answered as quickly as they did. Officers are not as fast at responding to emergencies and more crimes are dealt with on the phone. Fewer high-volume crimes like thefts are investigated and as a result fewer offenders brought to justice. The visibility and proactivity of neighbourhood policing is much reduced."

He added: “Bluntly, our ability to manage the big threats and protect the vulnerable, yet still be the traditional police the public want and need is becoming ever harder. We are in danger of pursuing efficiency to the point of ineffectiveness – where we can process the work but we’re not detecting crime as we should be and not meeting public expectations.”

Thompson said all this was putting a strain on officers. “Letting victims down or sharing their sense of dissatisfaction in the service they’ve received chips away at morale.”

Thompson said police, Home Office ministers and officials were preparing a joint bid for more money from the Treasury, and he said police may need to retreat from some services provided at present.

A Home Office spokesman said: “We remain committed to working closely with police and delivered a £460m increase in overall police funding in 2018/19, including increased funding for local policing through council tax. “We are also working with the police to put forward the evidence to ensure they receive the resources they need to do their vital work at the next spending review.”

Thames Valley Police loses more than 1,000 front line officers despite rise in violent crime in region

Thames Valley Police has lost more than 1,000 front line officers over the last three years, while violent crime has increased in the region. Figures from the Home Office show that 1,013 officers, in roles categorised as 'visible operational front line' have been lost from the force between March 2015 and this year – a drop of 41 per cent.

Over the same period, the number of violent crimes recorded in Thames Valley increased by 59 per cent. In the 12 months to March this year, 34,482 violent crimes were recorded.

In total, there were 1,475 officers in visible front line roles this March. They include 400 neighbourhood officers, who are posted in the community to gather intelligence and provide help at the scene of crimes, and 709 incident response officers.

Across England and Wales, more than 7,000 visible front line officers have been lost over the last three years, a reduction of 11 per cent.

The Home Office includes a number of other roles as 'non-visible front line', such as those involved intelligence gathering operations. These increased in number in Thames Valley Police, from 1,250 in 2015 to 2,048 this year. A spokeswoman for the Home Office said: “Forces are changing how they deliver local policing to reflect the priorities of local people and so that they can respond better to the changing nature of crime. They recognise effective community engagement is more than just having a visible police presence. Prevention, partnership working, problem-solving and safeguarding the vulnerable remain key.”

“Decisions about front line policing, and how resources are best deployed, are for Chief Constables and democratically accountable Police and Crime Commissioners. Most have already set out plans to either protect or increase front line policing this year.

“Last year, the Minister for Policing and the Fire Service spoke to every force about the changing demand they face and we are helping with a £460m increase in overall funding 2018/19, including increased funding to tackle counter-terrorism and increased funding for local policing through council tax precept.”

Stronghold – Fighting Organised Crime in Partnership

With over 6,000 Organised Crime Groups and nearly 50,000 individuals involved, organised crime costs the UK more than £24 billion per year.

Stronghold is Thames Valley Police making a commitment to seeing a reduction in levels of serious and organised crime in the region. Working closely with partners in local authority, social services and the other emergency services, TVP’s aim is to achieve better knowledge sharing and suitable resourcing to disrupt and prevent the work of organised crime gangs and provide safeguarding to the innocent victims caught up in the middle.

An organised crime group’s activities can cover different serious crime types, including; Child sexual exploitation and abuse, organised immigration crime, cybercrime, firearms, money laundering, drugs, economic crime, modern slavery and human trafficking (including for labour and sexual exploitation purposes), organised acquisitive crime.

Serious crime is defined by section 93(4) Police Act 1997 as crime that involves the use of violence, results in substantial financial gain or is conducted by a large number of persons in pursuit of common purpose, or crime for which a person aged 21 or over on first conviction could expect to be imprisoned for three or more years.

Thames Valley Police continues to work in line with the Government’s Serious Organised Crime Strategy for tackling organised crime. The aim of the strategy is to reduce the risk to the UK and its interests from organised crime by reducing the threat from organised criminals and reducing vulnerabilities and criminal opportunities. There are four main objectives:

PURSUE - prosecuting and disrupting people engaged in serious and organised criminality

PREVENT - preventing people from engaging in serious and organised crime

PROTECT - increasing protection against serious and organised crime

PREPARE - reducing the impact of this criminality where it takes place

Stop and Search – Racial Imparity

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/oct/13/racial-bias-stop-and-search-getting-worse-says-report-analysis>

<https://www.theguardian.com/law/2018/oct/13/racial-bias-police-stop-and-search-policy-black-people-report>

Donald Trump's four-day visit to the UK in July cost police almost £18m

Thousands of officers were deployed to cover the presidential visit in what was the largest mobilisation since the London riots of 2011, with Mr Trump travelling to four different force areas

over the course of his stay. Several protests also took place across the country, which required their own policing.

NPCC chair Sara Thornton said: "Nearly every force supported the operation with nearly 10,000 officers deployed from all over the country, performing over 26,000 shifts. "The full cost of the operation is still being worked out but an early estimate is nearly £18m."

That figure puts the security costs of the trip well above those incurred by either of the royal weddings this year, which required police in Windsor to ask the Home Office for extra money.

Between £2m and £4m is thought to have been spent on security when the Duke and Duchess of Sussex married, and another bill was racked up when Princess Eugenie married her fiancé Jack Brooksbank.

Ms Thornton said police were in especially "high demand" at the time of the visit of Mr Trump, as it coincided with increased calls linked to the World Cup, hot weather, and numerous events and festivals. "These demands affected local policing to differing degrees across the country with the host forces most impacted," the senior officer added. "The majority of forces had to cancel officers' rest days and extend the length of their shifts."

"Despite the challenges, the hard work of officers and staff made sure that the public were kept safe throughout."

Princess Eugenie's wedding: Police to apply for extra cash to cover security bill

Thames Valley Police have confirmed they will be applying for extra cash from the Home Office to help cover the cost of the two royal weddings in Windsor; Princess Eugenie and Jack Brooksbank, and the earlier wedding of the Duke and Duchess of Sussex.

Thames Valley Police's Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner said: "The policing of the Duke and Duchess of Sussex's wedding was a complicated operation involving a number of organisations and the cost incurred by Thames Valley and other forces has not yet been finalised. Once finalised, Thames Valley Police will release the information and we will submit a formal special grant request to the Home Office in due course." to give an estimate of how much this week's wedding may cost the force.

They are used to regularly dealing with large royal events in Windsor; however, the decision to invite members of the public into the castle grounds and have a carriage procession for the bride and groom along Windsor High Street will increase the police resources needed.

The Home Office said it is working with Thames Valley Police to support the policing operation. "The Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner has not applied for special grant funding at this point, but any such application will be considered carefully," a spokesperson said.

Crown Prosecution Service Head: "justice system can't cope"

Britain's criminal justice system is "creaking" and unable to cope with the huge amounts of data being generated by technology, the Head of the Crown Prosecution Service has warned in her final interview before stepping down. Alison Saunders has said the CPS and police were failing to

investigate thousands of cases efficiently – from rape to fraud to modern slavery – and were critically short of the skills and resources required to combat crime.

Her comments corroborated with a Home Affairs Select Committee report last week which had warned that police were struggling with outdated technology and at risk of becoming “irrelevant” as reported crime continues to surge, rising by 32% in three years. While fraud has become the most commonly reported crime in England and Wales, with 1.7 million offences a year, only one in 200 victims ever sees the perpetrator brought to justice. Saunders admitted that many cases were simply being ignored “because it takes time and a skilled investigator”.

The capability and capacity of the police should be an urgent concern for the Home Office, she said. In their report, MPs warned of “dire consequences for public safety and criminal justice” if police funding was not prioritised.

Prosecutors urged to ditch 'weak' rape cases to improve figures

<https://www.theguardian.com/law/2018/sep/24/prosecutors-rape-cases-cps-crown-prosecution-service-conviction-rates>

Prosecutors in England and Wales have been urged to take a more risk-averse approach in rape cases to help stem widespread criticism of the service’s low conviction rates.

The controversial advice to take a proportion of “weak cases out of the system” has been given to specialist rape prosecutors in training seminars, which has led some staff to fear the service has undertaken an undeclared change in policy. The advice has also caused alarm among experts and campaigners, who say it could severely limit victims’ access to justice. They warn it could lead to cases involving younger victims, students, or those with mental health issues being less likely to result in a charge.

Police demands for potential rape victims' data spark privacy fears

https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/sep/25/revealed-uk-police-demanding-access-data-potential-rape-victims?CMP=tw_t_gu

Police are demanding almost unfettered access to highly personal records and data from potential rape victims before pressing ahead with their cases.

In some areas, complainants are being asked to disclose health, school and college records, counselling notes and all data from their electronic devices, documents obtained under freedom of information requests show. In London, the Metropolitan police request access to social media, web browsing activity and content, instant messages, location data, emails, deleted data, images, videos, audio files, apps, contacts, documents, MMS and SMS messages – which can be kept for up to 100 years. The information provided can then be disclosed to the Crown Prosecution Service and the defence.

But in other parts of the UK no such information is required from complainants. The postcode lottery revealed by the documents has raised fears among campaigners that victims will be put off going to the police by the intrusion into their lives.

Rape and sexual assault victims have been told not to get counselling as lawyers could use their notes against them in court.

<https://linkprotect.cudasvc.com/urlvictims-told-not-to-get-counselling-as-lawyers-can-use-their-notes-against-them>