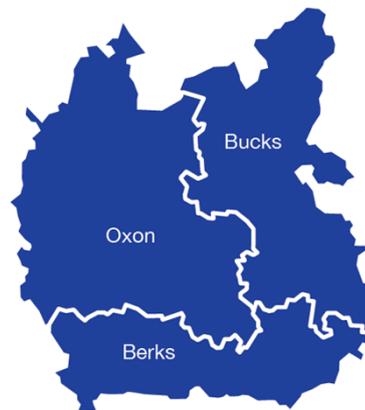


Report to the Thames Valley Police & Crime Panel

Title: Topical Issues

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Panel



Victims First Celebrates One Year Anniversary

Victims First, a service which supports victims of crime across Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire, celebrates its one year anniversary today (26/3). Victims First was launched by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley.

The service offers free emotional and practical support to all victims and witnesses of crime or abuse across the Thames Valley as well as family members of victims. Victims can receive support regardless of when the crime took place or whether they have chosen to report the crime to the police.

Within its first year Victims First has dealt with over 18,000 referrals into its service for victims of all crime types including theft, burglary, fraud, rape and sexual assault, criminal damage and domestic abuse. Referrals were received across all age groups with over 6,000 referrals for victims aged under 25 and nearly 3,500 referrals for victims aged over 60.

The type of assistance available to victims includes telephone and face to face support, advocacy including help to access other services such as sexual health clinics, drug and alcohol services and legal services, support through the criminal justice system (if victims have reported the crime to the police) and therapeutic counselling.

Almost 2,000 victims referred to Victims First went on to receive additional support. Over half received support from the Victims First Emotional Support Service, with others referred to other services including services for victims of sexual violence and domestic abuse, a young victim's service which works with anyone under the age of 18 and a service supporting victims of exploitation and complex needs.

Victims First Campaign launched to highlight the signs of abusive relationships

Victims First, which supports victims of crime and abuse across Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire, has launched a campaign to raise awareness of coercive control and emotional abuse in relationships.

The campaign is called 'Know this isn't Love' and focuses on early warning signs of controlling behaviour and emotional abuse to help victims identify any potential signs within their own relationships and seek support.

Coercive control became a criminal offence in 2015 and involves an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse by a perpetrator that is used to harm, punish or frighten their victim.

Government plans changes to the law regarding illegal encampments

Thames Valley has seen the impact of illegal encampments across the three counties. This is an issue regularly raised with the Police & Crime Commissioner by residents and councillors. Action has already been taken and, by working alongside local authorities, the PCC has supported the police in agreeing a new protocol which came into force last year.

This documents sets out the powers and responsibilities of the police and councils in dealing with illegal encampments. As the names suggest, in most cases these sites are illegal - but they are not criminal - meaning the actions that the police can take are very limited.

The Government has now responded to the consultation it ran last year on whether changes in the law were needed to tackle the problem. Both Thames Valley Police and the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner responded and we are pleased that the Government has now announced that there will be action to change the law.

The headline changes include:

- Permit the police to direct trespassers to suitable authorised sites located in neighbouring local authority areas;
- Increase the period of time in which trespassers directed from land would be unable to return;
- Lower the number of vehicles needing to be involved in an unauthorised encampment before police powers can be exercised – changing this from six or more, to two or more; and
- Enable the police to remove trespassers from land that forms part of the highway.

The Government is also considering a new criminal trespass offence.

Drivers face postcode lottery for speeding fines and penalty points

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/drivers-face-postcode-lottery-for-speeding-fines-and-penalty-points-prkm8qzhc?shareToken=40caba999dff6298c79d97168ca62088>

A postcode lottery for speeding offences has been revealed, with detection rates up to 167 times higher in some areas than others. Figures show that one police force, Avon and Somerset, caught almost 200,000 motorists speeding on its roads last year while neighbouring Wiltshire detected only 1,191 offenders.

The study commissioned by the RAC Foundation also found motorists in some areas were far more likely than others to be offered the chance of taking a speed-awareness course instead of receiving penalty points and a possible driving ban.

The RAC Foundation said that the disparity exposed huge gulfs in policing priorities between parts of England and Wales. It means drivers face a far higher chance of being caught speeding — and being hit by fines and penalty points — in some areas than others.

Steve Gooding, director of the RAC Foundation, said: “There will be many varied and obvious reasons to explain some of the differences between forces such as geographical area, road type and traffic volume. But a lot of it will come down to local policing priorities. It is the job of police and crime commissioners, and chief constables to target resources appropriately, recognising the issues of greatest local concern. Changes and variations in the numbers of offences detected will reflect not just driver behaviour but also the extent of enforcement activity in any one year. Drivers tempted to flout the law should recognise that any targeted crackdown on speeding to curtail risky behaviour could swiftly be repeated if those reckless attitudes start to re-emerge.”

Nationally 97 per cent of speeding offences were detected by camera rather than individual police officers.

Department for Transport figures show 220 people were killed and a further 1,493 seriously injured in crashes on Britain’s roads in 2017 in which a vehicle exceeding the speed limit was a contributory factor.

Police forces with most speeding offences detected in 2017-18: Avon and Somerset 199,337, West Yorkshire 174,796, Metropolitan Police (including City of London) 139,318 and **Thames Valley 131,401.**

Knife crime: Fatal stabbings at highest level since records began in 1946

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-47156957>

Police have been promised an extra £100m by the government to help them tackle a knife crime "epidemic" in England and Wales.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-47558117>

The National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) welcomed the new money, saying it would boost the number of officers patrolling crime hotspots, increase the use of stop and search, and help to disrupt criminal gangs. The funding would also be used to fund Violence Reduction Units that seek to tackle the underlying causes of violent crime.

The forces that will mainly benefit from the new funding are: Metropolitan Police, West Midlands Police, Greater Manchester Police, Merseyside Police, South Yorkshire Police, West Yorkshire Police and South Wales Police. While 80% of the money is new Treasury funding, 20% is from the Home Office's "re-prioritisation" of funds.

The funding announcement comes after the government in December pledged £161m for police forces, saying it would protect police budgets in "real terms". It also said police and crime commissioners would be able to raise additional funds by increasing council tax. Both changes are due to come into effect in April.

NPCC chief constable Sara Thornton said of the extra £100m being promised: "The additional government funding announced today is very welcome. It will help police forces strengthen our immediate response to knife crime and serious violence.

"Bringing violence down is a police priority."

She said all forces across England and Wales were undertaking a week-long intensive operation to tackle knife crime, including test purchasing weapons from shops, weapons sweeps and speaking to young people about the dangers of knives. There were 285 homicides where the method of killing was by a knife or sharp weapon in the year to March 2018 - the highest number since records began in 1946.

PCC awarded Home Office funding to tackle youth violence and exploitation

The Home Office has awarded the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for Thames Valley £822,000 from its Early Intervention Youth Fund to help tackle youth violence, vulnerability and exploitation across Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire. The Office of the PCC is leading on the programme in partnership with a range of organisations across the Thames Valley including Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs), Youth Offending Teams (YOTs), Substance Misuse Services, Local Authorities and Secondary Schools.

The programme will include four tiers of intervention:

1. Raising awareness in all secondary schools across the Thames Valley. This may include knife crime/youth violence workshop sessions for young people and training for teachers and other professionals.
2. Support for teachers and schools in tackling school exclusions, providing specialist support such as youth workers, YOT workers and Speech and Language Therapists within approximately a third of secondary schools.
3. Detached youth work to support and provide opportunities for young people who are not in education or employment and who are not engaging in mainstream services.
4. Targeted engagement with young people already involved in gangs and knife crime, providing intensive support including access to therapies and skills training.

Police and Crime Commissioner awards £800,000 funding to tackle youth violence and knife crime

The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) has awarded £800,000 to 14 organisations across the Thames Valley to deliver projects to tackle youth violence, knife crime and exploitation.

In November the Office of the PCC was awarded £822,000 from the Home Office Early Intervention Fund and is now leading on rolling out a programme of activities across Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire.

The work will be delivered in partnership with a range of organisations including Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs), Youth Offending Teams (YOTs), Youth Service providers, Local Authorities and Secondary Schools, as well as community and voluntary groups.

The programme includes a range of interventions, from raising awareness of youth violence and exploitation across secondary schools to targeted intervention with young people already involved

in gangs and knife crime. To successfully deliver this work the PCC made available grant funding opportunities to organisations that can provide these interventions.

Funding has also been awarded to a number of organisations to deliver local activity, such as working with schools to tackle youth exclusion, youth outreach work and one-to-one or group programmes with young people involved in gangs or crime.

Schools and NHS could be held accountable over youth crime

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-47768631>

Teachers, NHS workers and police officers in England and Wales could be held accountable for failing to spot violent crime among young people under government plans announced. Home Secretary Sajid Javid has launched a consultation to assess whether there is a "public health duty" to report concerns over children at risk.

But unions for teachers and NHS staff have raised concerns about the plans. A summit on serious youth violence was held at Downing Street on 1 April. The government says its plan is intended to "help spot the warning signs that a young person could be in danger, such as presenting in A&E with suspicious injury, to worrying behaviour at school or issues at home".

Knife crime: More stop and search powers for police

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-47760645>

Police in England and Wales are being given greater stop and search powers to tackle rising knife crime. Home Secretary Sajid Javid is making it easier for officers to search people without reasonable suspicion in places where serious violence may occur.

It comes after fatal stabbings rose last year to the highest point since records began.

Stop and search powers have been controversial for many years, with evidence that they are frequently misused and that they target black people disproportionately.

The change is being trialled in seven police force areas where more than 60% of knife crime occurs: London, the West Midlands, Merseyside, South Yorkshire, West Yorkshire, South Wales and Greater Manchester.

Under the new rules, inspectors will be able to authorise the use of section 60. Currently, more senior officers have to give approval. There will also be a lower threshold. Police will only need to reasonably believe serious violence "may" occur, not that it "will".

Section 60 has been used at large events such as Notting Hill Carnival last year and after violent incidents such as the stabbing of a man outside Clapham Common Underground station on Friday.

Other powers which account for the majority of searches will remain the same, and will still require officers to have reasonable suspicion of an offence. With 285 deaths from stabbings in 2017-18, the most ever recorded in the UK, ministers have come under increasing pressure to tackle knife crime.

Knife Crime - Operation Sceptre – News

<https://news.sky.com/story/knife-crime-operation-sceptre-begins-amid-surge-in-violence-11661738>

<https://www.itv.com/news/granada/2019-03-11/operation-sceptre-police-forces-join-national-campaign-to-crack-down-on-knife-crime/>

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6792577/Knife-crime-rising-faster-rate-Home-Counties-rural-areas-London.html>

<https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/17505841.thames-valley-polices-operation-sceptre-week-of-action-finds-knives-across-city/>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-47481301>

Knife crime: Cressida Dick says violent crime rise linked to policing numbers

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-47452799>

Schools are failing to teach pupils about knife crime for fear of 'reputational' damage, Ofsted finds

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/2019/03/12/schools-failing-teach-pupils-knife-crime-fear-reputational-damage/>

Thames Valley Police recorded the fourth-highest use for spit hoods and Tasers

<https://www.readingchronicle.co.uk/news/17503092.thames-valley-police-recorded-the-fourth-highest-use-for-spit-hoods-and-tasers/>

Tasers and spit hoods were deployed by officers across Thames Valley more than most other regions to deal with incidents involving children, it has emerged. Only three policing areas needed to use Tasers more in 2018, with Thames Valley Police recording the fourth-highest use for spit hoods in the first nine months of last year.

The force started using spit hoods in February 2017, after more than 300 officers were spat at the previous year. Taser training has also been rolled, following concerns over the number of frontline officers being assaulted in the execution of duty.

Breast ironing awareness 'needed in school'

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-47695169>

Breast ironing awareness should be made part of the mandatory school curriculum to protect young girls from abuse, the National Education Union has said. The practice involves ironing a girl's chest with hot objects to delay breasts from growing, so she does not attract male attention.

It is often the child's mother who will undertake the breast ironing, which usually involves heating a stone or spoon on a flame then pressing, massaging or flattening the breast.

Some girls are also made to wear an extremely tight strap around their chest. It is thought that around 1,000 girls in the UK have been affected by breast ironing.

But while awareness is growing around female genital mutilation (FGM), there are fears that few people know about breast ironing.

Taxi and private hire drivers to face enhanced criminal record checks

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-47205790>

Taxi and private hire drivers could have to pass enhanced criminal record checks before being granted a licence. Under the proposals, every council in England would be told to carry out checks on all applicants.

Current guidelines allow councils to set their own driver standards, including whether to make the checks. The plans also include introducing national minimum standards and a database to stop applicants applying to councils after being refused elsewhere.

Thames Valley launches PCSO Apprenticeships

In 2019, TVP are introducing a range of new entry routes into policing, including the newly launched Police Community Support Officer Apprenticeship (PCSOA). Applications are now open for our new PCSO Apprenticeship, with the first cohort of Officers planned to join the force in May.

Matthew Barber, Deputy Police & Crime Commissioner said; "This is a great opportunity for people to learn on the job and gain valuable qualifications. Policing is a complex business and the public rightly expect the best from Thames Valley Police. The new PCSO apprentices will play a vital role in delivering policing in our communities and transforming routes into policing."

Thames Valley Police will not punish those caught with heroin, cocaine and ecstasy under controversial new scheme

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6500245/Thames-Valley-Police-not-punish-caught-heroin-cocaine-controversial-scheme.html>

People caught with hard drugs including heroin, ecstasy and cocaine will escape any punishment under a controversial new scheme launched by TVP. Instead of arresting those found carrying drugs, officers will recommend that they speak to an addiction service – but they will not face any sanction if they ignore the advice.

Users found in possession of Class A drugs including heroin, cocaine and ecstasy will be sent on their way without so much as an official caution under Thames Valley Police's new initiative.

The 'drugs diversion' project goes further than existing schemes in Avon and Somerset, where users are required to attend an education session to avoid prosecution, and in Durham, where addicts are arrested and must abide by a 'good behaviour' contract to prevent prosecution. In Cleveland, a handful of drug users will next year be allowed to inject heroin at a police-funded clinic.

Even if the same person is later caught again with drugs, they will escape prosecution if they are seen to be 'positively engaging' with the health service. However, if someone caught with drugs appears to be a dealer, or refuses to co-operate, they will be arrested. The same will apply if someone is caught having previously failed to attend the health appointment. Thames Valley will record the possession of drugs as a crime, but will not take the person into custody nor give them any warning, caution or conviction.

Brexit Agreement – Implications for Policing (Taken from BBC website)

Under the proposed transition deal, the UK will still be allowed to:

- Use the European Arrest Warrant to send criminals to face trial in the EU - and bring suspects to justice in the UK
- Use powerful EU databases to check for alerts for missing people, arrest alerts and look for matches to DNA, fingerprints and vehicle number plates. These systems are used more than a million times a day by British police
- Continue to take part in a large number of ongoing cross-border policing operations which are co-ordinated by the EU's policing agency, Europol, where the UK is one of the leading partners
- Check quickly for the criminal records of any foreign suspects arrested in the UK

Under a special caveat (Article 185), nations could tell the UK that they can no longer send suspects to face trial, because their own constitution may not allow them to do so. Germany has an explicit ban on sending its citizens to face trial outside the EU.

And once transition ends, so does the access to data. The deal includes an explicit article that will lock the UK out of all EU databases and systems at the end of 2020.

The UK will be able to temporarily continue to request access to systems that will provide intelligence on suspects - but largely only in relation to investigations that are already under way.

As for what follows, the Outline Political Declaration on the future relationship makes clear that the UK wishes to remain part of all the existing security arrangements - including a new form of extradition and database sharing. That will require a special security treaty.

But the document also acknowledges that there may be legal roadblocks that prevent the EU sharing data with the UK on anything like the current scale.

Police and Crime Commissioner's funding expands support for ex-offenders

The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) has awarded Aspire over £72,000 to support its 'Through the Gate' programme in Oxfordshire and expand it into Buckinghamshire. The employment charity and social enterprise has operated a 'Through the Gate' Programme in Oxfordshire for 3 years and provides holistic support for both people in custody and ex-offenders in the community.

The programme works with ex-offenders to help them gain employment by providing support such as CV writing and interview skills workshops, training and work experience on Aspire's own enterprise businesses. They also work with local employers to encourage and support them in recruiting ex-offenders. The £72,000 funding is for a one year period and is part of the PCC's Community Safety Fund, supporting the Police and Crime Plan's strategic priority of reducing reoffending. It has enabled Aspire to expand its 'Through the Gate' programme into Buckinghamshire and provide ex-offenders with specialist employment support and links to employers in Milton Keynes and High Wycombe.

Voluntary and community organisations awarded over £100,000 to support policing and crime priorities

The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and Thames Valley Police have awarded voluntary and community organisations £100,700 from the Police Property Act Fund.

The fund, which is jointly managed by the PCC and the Chief Constable, is created from money recovered by the police and the proceeds from the sale of items that cannot be returned to identified owners, including seizures from criminals.

There were 116 applications to the current funding round with 32 organisations successful in receiving funding of between £1000 – £6,000 to support the PCC's Police and Crime Plan strategic priorities of Vulnerability, Prevention and Early Intervention.

The successful projects receiving funding support a range of issues including mental health, youth crime prevention work, homelessness, and hidden harm, such as elder abuse, hate crime and peer on peer abuse. 10 of the successful projects cover the whole of the Thames Valley, 10 are focused in Berkshire and 6 in both Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire.

Strategy to end violence against women and girls: 2016 to 2020

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategy-to-end-violence-against-women-and-girls-2016-to-2020>

Report praises Thames Valley Police's approach to domestic abuse

<http://www.mynewsdesk.com/uk/thames-valley-police/news/report-praises-thames-valley-polices-approach-to-domestic-abuse-362644>

A report has praised a pilot scheme aiming to improve the outcomes for domestic abuse victims in the Thames Valley. Thames Valley Police has been working closely with Her Majesty's Courts and

Tribunal Service to decrease the time in which domestic abuse cases are listed to be heard at Aylesbury Crown Court.

The report entitled “An evaluation of the protocol for the handling of domestic abuse cases at Aylesbury Crown Court” was written by Dr John Synnott and Dr Maria Ioannau, from Huddersfield University.

The report aimed to examine the effectiveness of the pilot in improving the efficiency with which domestic abuse cases are managed in the crown court. It also looked at identifying areas of potential improvement and to explore the merits of rolling out this initiative nationally. Both victims and offenders were interviewed to seek their views on the scheme.

The report was commissioned by Thames Valley Police and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley. Matthew Barber, Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley, said: “I am pleased to fund this report. We know from working with victims of crime the impact a lengthy criminal justice process can have on their wellbeing and on attrition rates.

“This pilot demonstrates how a new approach to case management can help protect victims of domestic abuse and bring offenders to justice. It is an excellent example of partnership working, the results of which I hope will be looked at nationally.”

During the trial period the report examined, from October 2016 to November 2018, a total of 153 cases of domestic abuse were subject to the protocol. Fifty nine of the 153 cases met the criteria for fast tracking and of these cases more than 83 per cent resulted in a guilty plea. On average it took eight days between a person being charged and their first court hearing.

Domestic abuse reports rise in Oxfordshire

<https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/17260730.domestic-abuse-reports-rise-in-oxfordshire/?ref=ebIn>

New figures released by Thames Valley Police under a Freedom of Information request revealed the rise, just as a regulator raised concerns about the safety of some domestic abuse victims in the area.

In Cherwell and West Oxfordshire districts, the number of domestic abuse crimes has risen from 1,010 in 2016 to 1,129 in 2017 and 1,349 in 2018, up 19 per cent.

In South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse, 1,115 domestic abuse crimes were recorded in 2018, up 17 per cent on 2016.

In Oxford, numbers increased by 12 per cent from 897 to 943.

Figures covered the period between November and October, except in Oxford, where the time frame ran from October to September.

The HM Inspectorate of Probation, which investigates youth offending and probation services, rated that in the Thames Valley 'requires improvement'. It awarded its second-worst rating to the

Thames Valley Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC), which is responsible for supervising about 4,000 convicts serving community and prison sentences, and promoting rehabilitation following release. One concern was weaknesses in work to keep victims safe, including in domestic abuse cases.

County Lines – “Line 18: £3m per day county lines drugs business fuelling knife crime”

<https://news.sky.com/story/line-18-3-million-per-day-county-lines-drugs-business-fuelling-knife-crime-11566109>

County Lines – “Cuckooing”

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-46738016>

Drug gangs, teenage mules and county lines

<https://magazine.theweek.co.uk/editions/uk.co.dennis.theweek.single.issue1213/data/89109/index.html>

Thames Valley children commit more drug crimes amid warning on county lines gangs

<https://www.bucksherald.co.uk/news/thames-valley-children-commit-more-drug-crimes-amid-warning-on-county-lines-gangs-1-8799060>