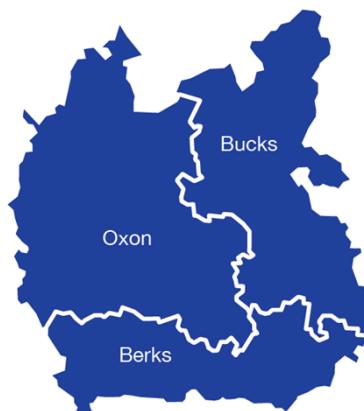


Report to the Thames Valley Police & Crime Panel

Title: **Topical Issues**

Date: **21 June 2019**

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Thames Valley Police & Crime
Panel**



£140,000 available to community and voluntary groups

The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for Thames Valley, Anthony Stansfeld, and the Chief Constable, John Campbell, on 30 May, 2019 opened a new grant round of 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. Last year £198,650 was distributed to 52 different organisations in addressing Police and Crime Plan priorities and the PCC and Chief Constable expect to allocate around £140,000 in this grant round.

Applications were invited from local voluntary and community groups who can contribute towards two of the PCC's strategic priorities in his Police and Crime Plan priorities, which are:

- Reducing Reoffending
- Local response to Serious Organised Crime and Terrorism

Examples of projects which would be considered include those that aim to tackle:

- Substance abuse
- Gangs and knife crime
- Offender management
- Domestic violence perpetrators
- Public awareness of serious organised crime
- Prevent violent extremism
- Dare to Share culture across agencies who deal with vulnerable young people and adults.
- Exploitation of vulnerable people

The closing date for this round of applications is **9am Thursday 20th June** and applications will be considered jointly by the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and the Chief Constable. More information and the application form can be found at:

<https://www.thamesvalley-pcc.gov.uk/get-involved/police-property-act-fund/>

New local police headquarters secured for Reading

The Police and Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley announced the exchange of contracts on a new Area Headquarters for Reading Local Policing Area (LPA). The new Area Headquarters will be at Atlantic House, located off Imperial Way to the south of Reading town centre.

Report praises Thames Valley Police's approach to domestic abuse

A new 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 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.

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.

Collaborating with other Emergency Services (From the Deputy PCC's May Newsletter)

Collaboration makes a real difference in keeping the public safe. Earlier this month I attended the ground breaking ceremony for the new Tri-Service Station at Crowthorne. This is just the latest collaborations between Thames Valley Police and the three Fire and Rescue Services across Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire.

Once completed the new building will provide a base for Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service, Thames Valley Police and South Central Ambulance Service. Not only is it more cost effective to share premises, but it also fosters the ever closer working relationship between the emergency services.

A change in the law is needed to tackle illegal encampments (From the Deputy PCC's May Newsletter)

"It is almost universally the case that the public expectation of action by the police in dealing with illegal traveller encampments is not matched by legislation. The limited powers that the police have, especially when an encampment is on private land, is a frustration to the landowners, local communities and indeed many police officers. I fear it can also damage wider confidence in policing as the public do not necessarily understand the limited powers the police have.

Last year the Government consulted on the powers to tackle unauthorised encampments and it has now indicated its intention to change the law to give greater powers to the police and local authorities. This is welcomed but the details will need to be scrutinised. There is an indication of some of the areas that will be considered, such as changing the threshold number of vehicles

that constitutes an unauthorised encampment and extending the period before anyone can return. The devil will be in the detail however and if meaningful changes are to be brought about it will need changes in the law and a different approach from the police and local authorities.

I have written to all twenty-one of the MPs across Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Buckinghamshire asking them to meet collectively to discuss the problem of unauthorised encampments once the government proposals have been published. In the meantime Thames Valley Police have made significant progress with local authorities in establishing a joint protocol to better coordinate the response to unauthorised encampments. The lack of transit sites in the Thames Valley is one of the issues that limit the powers that the police have at their disposal and one of the issues that I believe needs to be addressed.

I will continue to encourage the police to do everything they can to use their powers within the existing system in order to limit the harm to communities from unauthorised encampments, but the system is flawed and I welcome the opportunity being offered by the Government to change it.

Tackling County Lines and criminal exploitation (From the Deputy PCC's May Newsletter)

The threat from serious organised crime has never been greater as shown by the National Crime Agency's (NCA's) recent national assessment. The impact of County Lines drugs gangs and criminal exploitation is a threat that Thames Valley Police has been taking incredibly seriously. In a recent week of action alone more than 70 arrests were made and £85,000 seized across 42 separate operations.

Crime up by 10 per cent in Thames Valley

<https://www.bucksfreepress.co.uk/news/17647535.crime-up-by-10-per-cent-in-thames-valley-see-the-breakdown-of-every-type-of-crime/>

Crime recorded by Thames Valley Police is up by 10 per cent, according to police figures collated by the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW). This is three per cent higher than the average in England and Wales, according to the latest statistics for the calendar year of 2018.

Five types of crimes have been recorded less in 2018 compared to 2017: Bicycle theft, criminal damage and arson, death or serious injury caused by illegal driving, homicide, and shoplifting.

All other crimes have gone up, including drug offences, possession of weapons offences and robbery. Stalking and harassment more than doubled from 2017 to 2018, while violence without injury, public order offences and residential burglary has also risen significantly.

The data does not include fraud and cybercrime, which is now recorded by Action Fraud on behalf of individual police forces and has gone up by 17 per cent in the last year.

An increase in the number of crimes recorded by the police does not necessarily mean the level of crime has increased. For many types of crime, police recorded crime statistics do not provide a reliable measure of levels or trends in crime as they only cover crimes that come to the attention of the police.

Police recorded crime can be affected by changes in policing activity and recording practice and by willingness of victims to report.

The CSEW does not cover crimes against businesses or those not resident in households and is not well-suited to measuring trends in some of the more harmful crimes that occur in relatively low volumes, such as homicide.

Crime up but cases facing criminal justice system at 50-year low

<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/crime/crime-up-but-cases-facing-criminal-justice-system-at-50year-low-a4144026.html>

The number of people formally dealt with by the criminal justice system fell last year to the lowest level since 1970 despite police figures showing a six per cent rise in offending, official statistics revealed today. The Ministry of Justice figures showed that the number of people dealt with by the justice system in England and Wales fell by three per cent in 2018.

The decline was made up of a two per cent drop in prosecutions and an 11 per cent fall in “out-of-court disposals”, such as community punishments.

The statistics also revealed that nearly two-fifths of offenders now have long criminal records, up by 10 per cent on the figure a decade ago.

The disclosures will heighten concerns that cuts to police funding and other parts of the justice system are affecting the ability of law enforcers to bring criminals to court and to stop reoffending.

Among the exceptions to the trend were prosecutions for possession of weapons, which rose by four per cent during 2018 in response to the significant increase in knife offending nationwide.

Prosecutions for sex offences and fraud were also up over the year, but all other categories of offending fell.

The result was that the number of people taken to court fell to 1.38 million, marking a 16 per cent drop compared with the equivalent tally for 2008.

An analysis accompanying the figures said a nine per cent fall in people charged by police over the past year was one factor behind the phenomenon.

It also pointed out that police recorded crime rose by six per cent over the same period, with a total of 5.7 million offences, including fraud crimes, registered by forces during 2018. The conviction rate remained high at 87 per cent.

Police not investigating stalking cases effectively, report finds

<https://www.itv.com/news/2019-04-10/stalking-laws-shana-grice-sussex-police-protection-against-stalking-definition/>

Firefighters acting as Police Officers

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/apr/15/firefighters-police-officers-devon-somerset-separate>

The police and crime commissioner for Devon and Cornwall, has commented that she welcomes a new pilot scheme that will see seven firefighters trained up to be the UK's first firefighter-police hybrids or "special constables". The Devon and Cornwall police force has lost 600 officers over the past decade, with the national picture frequently described in recent months as being at tipping point.

The Devon and Somerset fire and rescue service scheme is being launched to ease the pressure on the chronic shortage of police cover in rural areas. Various pilot schemes around the country in recent times have deployed firefighters for a range of other tasks, from identifying vulnerable elderly people during fire safety visits etc.

Police detectors to warn mobile phone-using drivers

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-47896472>

The Thames Valley and Hampshire forces are rolling out the technology to show when motorists are using their phones. A sign will flash at the driver telling them to stop using their mobile - but the detectors cannot tell if it is a driver or passenger using the phone.

The technology will not be used as an "enforcement tool", the forces said, but was instead aimed at educating motorists and identifying offending "hotspots".

Thames Valley Police and Hampshire Constabulary have developed the technology with Westcotec Ltd. The system, which cannot record footage, was initially tested in Norfolk last year.

The detector picks up 2G, 3G and 4G signals and will therefore flash to alert people in cars who are using phones to call, text or data. If people are using a Bluetooth hands-free device, the detector will recognise this and not flash. The technology cannot distinguish if a passenger or a driver of a vehicle is using a phone and so the sign will be activated regardless of who is using the mobile.

The forces say the two detectors, which cost £6,000 each, will be located on the A34 in Oxfordshire but will be posted at different locations throughout the Thames Valley and Hampshire to start - but more could be rolled out.

Drivers caught using a mobile phone while driving are currently fined £200 and given six points on their licence.

Police are using buses to catch drivers on mobile phones

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-england-hampshire-48091981/police-are-using-buses-to-catch-drivers-on-mobile-phones>

Police officers are riding on buses to catch drivers using their mobile phones. Road Safety Officers from Hampshire and the Thames Valley are taking part in a joint operation, using the height of a bus as a vantage point to spot wrongdoing.

Those caught using a mobile phone while driving can get a fixed penalty notice.

Mental health nurses join police officers on duty

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-england-berkshire-47941819/mental-health-nurses-join-police-officers-on-duty>

Police in Berkshire have stopped more than 150 mental health patients from being sectioned or detained unnecessarily in cells over the past year. Officers credit an initiative where mental health nurses join them on duty for an evening. Thames Valley Police said the "invaluable" service saves officers' time because the nurses have access to medical records. There are now calls for the service to be expanded so it's available around the clock.

Thames Valley Police volunteer led scheme wins prestigious award for upholding police custody standards

<https://www.bracknellnews.co.uk/news/17685868.thames-valley-police-volunteer-led-scheme-wins-prestigious-award-for-upholding-police-custody-standards/>

The independent custody visiting association (ICVA) presented Thames Valley Polices' Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner with a Code Compliant Award at a ceremony held at the House of Lords on May 15. Delivered by a group of dedicated volunteers, the Independent Visitor Scheme (ICV) makes unannounced visits to police custody to check on the rights, entitlements, well-being and dignity of detainees held in police custody.

The volunteers then report their findings to the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) who in turn holds the Chief Constable to account.

The ICVA is the national organisation which supports, leads and represents locally-run custody visiting schemes.

Councils with large cuts to youth services were more likely to also have seen an increase in knife crime in the area's police force, research suggests

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-48176397>

The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Knife Crime (APPG) studied budgets for youth services from 2014/15 to 2017/18. It also analysed knife crime data. It said the four areas worst-hit by youth spending cuts also saw some of the biggest knife crime rises. But comparison is not like for like as council and policing areas differ.

The government said there was a "range of factors" driving the increase in knife crime, which it called "complex". It said changes to the drugs market is one factor.

The APPG's research found the average council cut spending on youth services - such as youth clubs - from 1.9m in 2014/15 to 1.2m in 2017/18. In real terms, this marked a decrease of 40%, it said.

The City of Wolverhampton and the City of Westminster were the worst hit, with youth services cut by 91% since 2014/15, followed by Cambridgeshire County Council (88%) and Wokingham

Borough Council (81%), according to the figures. Although it is not possible to directly compare the geographical areas covered by police forces and local authority boundaries, the APPG analysis suggests forces serving areas with the biggest cuts, such as West Midlands Police, the Metropolitan Police, Cambridgeshire Police, and Thames Valley Police, have also seen some of the highest increases in knife crime.

West Midlands Police has seen an 87% increase in knife crime offences since 2013/14, while there has been a 47% rise for the Metropolitan Police, a 95% increase for Cambridgeshire Police, and a 99% increase for Thames Valley.

The APPG obtained the figures on youth service budgets using freedom of information requests sent to 154 local authorities in England, which 106 replied to.

Knife crime reached a record level last year in England and Wales with 40,829 offences involving knives or sharp objects recorded by police in 2018.

The Office for National Statistics said cases of murder and manslaughter, excluding terror attacks, increased by 12%. There were 732 killings, up from 655 in 2017 - the highest since 2007. The Metropolitan Police recorded the most knife offences - 14,660 - representing a 1% yearly rise. The biggest increase of 54% was recorded by British Transport Police, while Merseyside saw a 35% rise and Dyfed-Powys 28%.

The figures show there were 252 killings involving a knife or sharp instrument in 2018. There were 18,950 assaults and 17,402 robberies where a knife or sharp instrument was used.

Prison increases youth knife-crime reoffending, says police report

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/apr/27/prison-increases-youth-knife-crime-reoffending-says-police-report>

Prison does not work for young knife-crime offenders, and while stop and search has a short-term benefit, it risks alienating key sections of society, a police study has found.

The study by the College of Policing, the government-backed body aiming to improve law enforcement, has been sent to all forces in England and Wales as they grapple with rising knife crime. It reviewed research on causes and effective strategies.

Knife Crime reached record levels

<https://www.itv.com/news/central/2019-04-25/knife-crime-reached-record-level-across-britain-in-2018/>

Victims of Crime including rape victims among those to be asked to hand phones to police

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-48086244>

Consent forms asking for permission to access information including emails, messages and photographs have been rolled out in England and Wales. It comes after a number of rape and serious sexual assault cases collapsed when crucial evidence emerged.

Victim Support said the move could stop victims coming forward. But police and prosecutors say the forms can plug a gap in the law which says complainants and witnesses cannot be forced to disclose relevant content from phones, laptops, tablets or smart watches.

Domestic abuse: PM vows to end 'postcode lottery' for victims

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-48249330>

Councils in England will have a legal duty to provide secure homes for victims of domestic abuse under new plans announced by Theresa May. People seeking refuge from abuse and violence can receive varying levels of support depending on their location. But Mrs May has vowed to end the "postcode lottery" for victims and their children, creating a legal duty for councils to provide refuge.

Oxford Against Cutting launches campaign to boost girls' body confidence

<https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/17618590.oxford-against-cutting-launches-campaign-to-boost-girls-body-confidence/>

A charity fighting to save girls from mutilation in Africa, is combatting what it says are unrealistic depictions of female bodies at home.

Anti-female genital mutilation (FMG) group, Oxford Against Cutting (OAC) is holding a workshop for young women to address the increasing social pressures put on young people to look a certain way, including altering their genitalia. It wants to show young people that social media, pornography and other influencing factors are often untrue representations of reality.

Banking fraud complaints surge 43% to all time high

<https://www.itv.com/news/2019-05-15/banking-fraud-complaints-surge-43-to-all-time-high-heres-how-you-can-stay-safe-online-when-moving-money/>

Teens in care 'abandoned to crime gangs'

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-48300157>

Thousands of teenagers in care are being "dumped" in unregulated homes and "abandoned to organised crime gangs", the BBC has been told. The number of looked-after children aged 16 and over living in unregistered accommodation in England has increased 70% in a decade, Newsnight has found.

Police forces have raised concerns, saying criminals see the premises as an easy target for recruitment. The government said children in care "deserve good quality accommodation".

The Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) said local authorities do "many things" - including unannounced checks and DBS checks - to monitor provision.

As part of a special series of reports, Britain's Hidden Children's Homes, Newsnight has learned that - according to figures from the Department for Education - around 5,000 looked after children

in England are living in so-called 16+ supported or semi-supported accommodation - up from 2,900 10 years ago.

This type of accommodation is not inspected or registered by Ofsted, even though residents are in the care of the state. But because they are deemed to be receiving support, rather than care, the accommodation is not subject to the same checks and inspections as registered children's homes.

Local authorities can pay to place children in unregistered accommodation if they deem it is in a child's best interests. This can often be simply a house on a residential street, with staff on site or visiting for as little as a few hours a week.

Police arrest 586 people in county lines crackdown

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-48345399>

More than 144,000 accessing child sex abuse images through dark web in Britain

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/child-porn-dark-web-uk-number-nca-serious-organised-crime-a8912306.html>

Tens of thousands of individuals accessing the most harmful categories of child abuse images through the dark web are in part fuelling the "truly staggering" level of serious and organised crime in the UK. Top child abuse investigators have warned more than 144,000 web users in Britain are increasingly using the anonymisation technology to chase niche material while lowering the risk of detection.

Lynne Owens, director general of the National Crime Agency (NCA), said the scale of serious and organised crime in the UK posed a "chronic and corrosive" threat to the country. She called for a £2.7bn investment from the government to tackle the swelling numbers of people

In its annual report on serious and organised crime released on Tuesday, the NCA said the majority of child sexual abuse material existed on the open web. However, it said its own research had found almost 2.9 million individuals worldwide were now accessing the most harmful materials available through the dark web.

Meanwhile, the NCA also said it had seen a 700 per cent increase in the number of reports of online child abuse and exploitation it received from internet firms. The report also noted the number of county line chains across the country had rocketed from 720 to around 2,000 in little over a year.

The agency also said fraud cases had risen by 32 per cent between April and September 2018, with 3.6 million incidents reported across England and Wales in 2018.

It estimated at least 181,000 people were involved in either organised crime or dark web-based child sexual abuse.

Although the NCA says reports it receives involve male runners between the ages of 15 and 17, it also believes the number of cases involving teenage girls and vulnerable adults are under-reported. The agency has called on the government to make more funding available for tackling

serious and organised crime, which it says should be used to fund digital forensics, covert surveillance and financial investigations.

Forced marriage cases dealt with by an official outreach unit jumped 47% in a year

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2019/may/24/forced-marriage-unit-reports-spike-cases-awareness-rises>

A forced marriage is defined as one in which one or both spouses do not or cannot consent to the marriage, and violence, threats, or any other form of coercion is involved, and is a criminal offence. The Forced Marriage Unit (FMU), a joint Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and Home Office unit which leads on the government's forced marriage policy, outreach and casework, gave advice or support related to a forced marriage in 1,764 cases in 2018, up 568 cases or 47% on 2017, an annual report shows.

Cash machine thefts: How rural communities are paying for ATM crime

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-48024850>

Home office announces that calls to 101 the police non-emergency number will be free

<https://policehour.co.uk/2019/05/sajid-javid-has-today-announced-calls-to-101-police-non-emergency-number-will-be-free-from-april-2020/>

Currently it costs people 15p to call and report an emergency, those without credit on their phones or unable to pay the 15p have been unable to call.

While others have called the free 999 number and have been told despite having no money to make the call they'd have to call 101 which only results in crime and incidents being unreported.

The 101 number receives over 30 million calls a year and connects people to their local police force.

The intention of the 101 number was launched to free up 999 calls and jump 999 calls ahead of waiting 101 calls.

Despite the number being answered by the same people in the control room as 999 call handlers it is for reporting non-emergency incidents.

The Home Office will also fund a national website where the public will be able to contact police and report crimes online.

The service, named the Single Online Home (SOH), will be fully launched in the summer.

The region's police force is losing more than 50 officers every year on average, according to recent figures.

<https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/17670060.thames-valley-police-losing-more-than-50-officers-a-year/?ref=ebln>