Report for the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel

Update on Local Policing Model

Author: Chief Supt Gavin Wong

1.0 Introduction

This paper provides an update on the current Local Policing model within Thames Valley Police. It outlines the history of the model, previously known as the 'Operating Model', including the rationale for change, and highlights the challenges following implementation. It also explains how further changes have been incorporated following extensive review and feedback, and highlights the benefits that the model has achieved.

2.0 Context

In 2015 a number of reviews including the Patrol Strategy Review, made recommendations requiring a "re-think" of activity and structure at the Local Police Area (LPA) level to meet new demands, particularly in the case of reduced resourcing. This meant further reductions of 70 police officers and 30 police staff.

Following extensive demand profiling, engagement and analysis, a new operating model was developed to meet that demand, which ensured neighbourhood policing remained as the cornerstone of policing activity, focusing on problem solving. This was in stark contrast with some forces that were unable to continue supporting the Neighbourhood Policing style in the manner that they might wish.

The new operating model was introduced on the 1st June 2017. (Figure 1)

It was intended to manage demand more effectively, and to provide a 'one touch' response to the public, reducing the number of officers that victims had contact with.

Figure 1
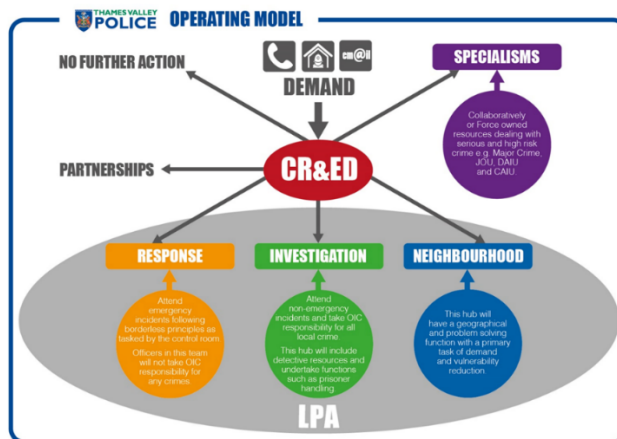
To meet this demand, the 24 hr Response Teams were reduced in size to provide a more specialist resource that could attend immediate and urgent incidents, following borderless principles as tasked by Control Room. These teams could conduct 'Golden Hour' investigative activities and maximise evidential potential. The Response teams would not carry an investigative workload which would allow them to concentrate on responding.

An Investigation Hub was developed that consisted of detectives, uniformed officers and police staff case investigators. These teams would be responsible for all local crime including prisoner handling, and other responsibilities such as missing persons, fear for welfare enquiries and scene/cell watches. The Investigation Hub, as the largest team, would also support the Response teams by providing additional resources during period of 'surge' demand.

The Neighbourhood teams were restructured to incorporate geographical teams to provide visibility and engagement, while the Problem Solving teams would focus on the longer term issues and early intervention. While a number of Neighbourhood posts were lost, there was greater 'ring fencing' of these resources to prevent them from being utilised to support non-neighbourhood issues.

To support the management of demand, each LPA was required to provide a Smarter Resolution function where low risk demand could be resolved or filtered out from the front line, essentially providing a triage function on the LPAs.

Some LPAs maintained or developed Proactive teams to target local priorities.

The more sophisticated assessment of demand, allowed for the resourcing levels of each LPAs to be reviewed. This resulted in a redistribution of resources across the LPAs, which reflected demand more accurately. In addition, the shift patterns also reflected calls for service, and increased the number of officers available during the day and evening, while reducing the night turn.

3.0 Implementation and Challenges

This was a considerable change to operational policing and the implementation was supported by a programme board. However, the implementation coincided with a significant increase in calls for service that was unprecedented. Control Room experienced call volumes, at times comparable with New Year's Eve. This was an increase that was also reflected nationally, and not just within TVP. Indeed, the move to critical level following the Manchester bombing just prior to implementation, and later as a result of the Parsons Green attack demonstrated how unpredictable the national demand on policing was becoming.

At the same time, the Force saw a sharp reduction in its overall establishment. While there was an aspiration to reduce by 70 officers, at the implementation of the model, the Force was actually closer to 150 officer's under-establishment. This was caused by large numbers of retirement and also resignations that had not been predicted.

The impact of this significant increase in demand, and reduction of establishment was substantial. A staff survey conducted by Durham University also highlighted the impact the changes were having, particularly on staff welfare caused by the change of shift pattern. Officers were reporting being continually tired and unable to recuperate effectively.

As a result of a 6 month review, a number of changes were recommended. These included a change to the shift pattern, a review of command areas, a review of the Smarter Resolution function and the workforce mix between police and police staff.

CCMT agreed the recommendations and made a decision to change the previously agreed shift pattern, to one that supported welfare more strongly. The shift pattern changed to a six on, four off rota. This changes had an immediate impact on staff morale and was well received.

The necessity to recruit more officers was also recognised and prioritised. An ambitious recruitment campaign was commenced to return the Force to full establishment under the governance of the Strategic Resourcing and Retention Board.

With the Force under a challenging position in relation to its resourcing, during 2018 it was also subject of unprecedented demand from major events. The marriage of His Royal Highness Prince Harry to Miss Meghan Markle was the largest deployment of resources within TVP's history. This was shortly followed by an even larger deployment for the President of the United States, Donald Trump who visited four locations within the TVP area.

Towards the end of the first year, the calls for service did return to some normality and over the year actually reduced compared to the previous year. However, the impact of legacy demand, the levels of low establishment and inexperience were still causing concern.

4.0 Further Changes

The model was subject of ongoing reviews through Service Improvement Reviews on the LPAs, and a 16 month review commissioned by the Programme Board. While there had been a number of changes already, it was clear that the model was not delivering the service improvements required.

While the model was intended to improve the quality of investigation, the consequence of an increasing level of new officers (student officers) and their experience levels impacted on investigative performance.

It was clear that changes were required and the Force moved quickly to find solutions.

The ACC for Local Policing met with all LPA senior management teams, People Directorate, Crime and other stakeholders to identify solutions to the issues being raised. The following actions were agreed.

1. Merge the Response team and Investigation Hub - Feedback from both staff and commanders emphasised the importance of a one team ethos which the model failed to achieve, despite being a core aspiration. The overwhelming demand had created 'silo' mentality. It was also felt that this integration would share the burden of investigative work more equitably between resources and achieve better supervision. This team is now called the Incident and Crime Response (ICR) team.

2. Inspector rank distribution - In order to provide adequate and consistent leadership to staff as well as LPA performance accountability, each LPA now has a dedicated Inspector for each of the five ICR teams. In addition each LPA has a Detective Inspector and a minimum of two Neighbourhood Inspectors.

3. **Review of minimum / safe staffing** - To ensure safety and force resilience remained a priority at the front end of 24 hour operational response.

4. **SRT** - Each LPA to maintain a Smarter Resolution Team and this team to have a dedicated supervisor.

5. Team 6 (Tasking) - Each LPA to develop a proactive capability to have a Team 6 if desired. This teams now particularly focus on the threats posed by County Drug's lines.

6. Maintain and develop the Area CID function.

In order to support the LPAs in securing these changes, CCMT agreed to an increase of 18 Police Officers to support the front line, and an extension of temporary police staff investigators. The increase in precept has been essential in achieving this.

The Force anticipates that it will be up to full establishment for Police officers by September 2019. This is welcome but of course there are consequences for increases in recruitment, including the initial, and local training of officers on LPAs.

These changes have now almost been completed. The Response and Investigation teams are integrated and a minor change to the shift pattern will be achieved in August that will standardise resources to support the one team ethos. Subject to further review, morale appears to be improving and LPA Commanders are more comfortable with the control of their resources.

5.0 Impact on Performance

It is difficult to specifically quantify the impact that the changes to the operating model had on performance. The new structure was well considered, but the unprecedented increase in demand caused issues for all forces and it is likely that any model would have also struggled. The impact of the reduction in staff cannot be underestimated and unfortunately prior to the new model, there was already an

unwelcome downturn in performance in some areas. Despite this, performance within TVP still compares favourably with its similar Forces.

That said, is fair to say that performance was not significantly improved by the model, which was an aspiration. The most recent changes to the model should have a positive impact on performance which will be easier to assess over the next 12 months.

6.0 Benefits

While this has been a hugely challenging period for policing, particularly on the LPAs, there have been some areas of success which are important to highlight.

Neighbourhood Policing
TVP remain committed to Neighbourhood Policing as a foundation stone for its policing model. Although the Neighbourhood team numbers were reduced, the greater protection they have received has led to one of the main successes of the model. Service Improvement Reviews are consistent in the assessment by Neighbourhood officers that they have been able to focus on their core business. This has allowed for more effective problem solving, working better with local authorities and partners, and targeting the priorities of the LPAs.   Problem solving conferences are an indication of the improvements that these teams have made. The table below demonstrates the impact that the model has had on incident volume generators, which have reduced on all LPAs.

LPA	Oct 16 - Sep 17	Oct 17 - Sep 18	% change
Aylesbury Vale	1,719	908	-47%
Bracknell Forest & Wokingham	1,146	1,056	-8%
Cherwell & West Oxfordshire	1,500	1,122	-25%
Chiltern and South Bucks	993	783	-21%
Milton Keynes	2,235	1,424	-36%
Oxford	1,705	959	-44%
Reading	2,261	1,085	-52%
Slough	1,463	902	-38%
South and Vale	1,060	647	-39%
West Berkshire	1,025	669	-35%
Windsor And Maidenhead	865	416	-52%
Wycombe	1,302	802	-38%
Thames Valley	17,274	10,773	-38%

Change in incident volumes generated from the top 50 callers of 16/17 in each LPA.

Smarter Resolution Teams

The 16 month review was clear that the benefits of a dedicated SRT were significant. Assessment of LPAs who had dedicated teams over those that didn't, reflected a considerable ability to effectively review the demand that the Front Line officers received by up to 30%.

Tasking Teams

The new model allows LPAs to develop greater proactive capacity, often badged under the 'Stronghold' Organise Crime banner. The development of Tasking teams has allowed LPAs to focus on areas such as county drug lines or other local priorities with great success. County drug lines in particular have a huge impact on communities, especially the vulnerable. The ability to be able to target these gangs is critical for disruption and the latest changes to the model support this focus.

Supervision

The latest changes also allow LPAs to provide more and better supervision to its staff. Response teams all have a dedicated Inspector and Sergeants are more locally accountable. This is an important aspect considering the potential inexperience of staff.

7.0 Further Challenges and Opportunities

There is a greater sense of optimism across the LPAs in respect of the amended model and the integration of the Response and Investigation teams has had a significant impact on morale. The Force recognises the importance of a period of stability is achieved to allow the changes to embed and succeed.

The challenge of recruitment and retention will remain an issue. A number of Forces did not recruit for some time and now are, so TVP continues to try to mitigate the impact of officers transferring back to their local Forces.

8.0 Conclusion

The implementation of a new structure to deliver front line policing in 2017 has clearly been challenging. Factors have impacted on the success of the model that were difficult to predict, and have been challenging to resolve. To address these issues, a number of changes have been implemented that improve the structure, provide for a one team ethos, and gives greater flexibility to Commanders. The recruitment programme is currently delivering success and the Force is approaching a more sustainable level of establishment. The changes made will allow for some stability on the LPAs that aims to improve staff wellbeing which will have a significant impact on performance.

Gavin WONG
Head of Local Policing and Resilience