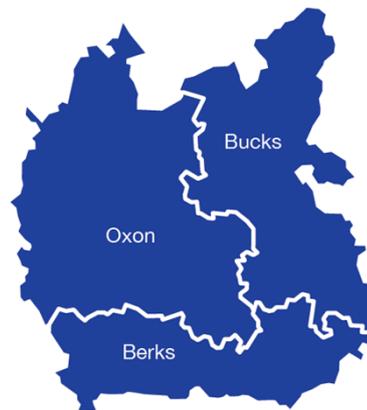


## **Report to the Thames Valley Police & Crime Panel**

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**Title:** Topical Issues  
**Date:** 22 November 2019  
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Thames Valley Police & Crime  
Panel



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### **Thames Valley Police set to get 600 new officers after Prime Minister's promise**

<https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/17869978.thames-valley-police-set-get-600-new-officers>

Six hundred of the Prime Minister's promised police officers are expected to be recruited across Thames Valley Police. If all goes to plan then Thames Valley Police will be given an estimated 600 police officers.

The PCC has previously said that eight years of cuts to TVP will be 'made good' by these new officers. At the time he explained: "Thames Valley Police continues to face an increase in both demand and financial pressures, and I was pleased that the prime minister has promised another 20,000 officers. This should make good the cuts to Thames Valley Police over the last eight years."

The Deputy PCC has already committed to using the promised police on the front line to tackle community issues such as shoplifting. The idea is that the officers will be in place within three years.

### **Home Office announces first wave of 20,000 police officer uplift (183 for Thames Valley)**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/home-office-announces-first-wave-of-20000-police-officer-uplift>

### **Recent announcements by the Home Secretary**

In addition to the recruitment of 20,000 additional police officers the Home Secretary has recently made a number of other announcements set to ensure the police are empowered to act to keep us all safe and that they have the resources and the support they need in carrying out their difficult and often dangerous job.

- £20m to step up the fight against county lines gangs that exploit children
- Proper sentences for those convicted of assaults on police officers

- The ending of automatic early release for violent and sexual offenders
- An increase in the use of electronic tagging to track offenders and reduce reoffending
- £10m to increase the number of officers trained to carry tasers.

## **HMICFRS has rated Thames Valley Police as 'Good' for Effectiveness, Efficiency and Legitimacy.**

In the first combined inspection report covering effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy the Inspectorate rate the force as 'Good' across the board. This performance is in line with TVP's peer forces. HMICFRS found that Thames Valley Police is effective at reducing crime and keeping people safe. It also noted that the force is good at protecting vulnerable people and works well with partner agencies to achieve this.

While the report says that TVP investigates serious crime well the inspectorate wants to see improvements in how the force investigates low-level crime. The report notes that the force has created a comprehensive plan to achieve this.

The inspectors found that the force continues to be outstanding in how it uses its resources to meet current demand and has a good understanding of trends in demand and the impact of changing technology. The report notes that the force is good at treating the public fairly but notes that the historical backlog in vetting officers is a cause for concern and that the force should take steps to ensure that officers and staff are aware of how to raise ethical issues.

Anthony Stansfeld, Police and Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley, said: "We are pleased that Thames Valley Police has been rated 'Good' by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS). It is testament to the hard work which has taken place and continues to progress. I was particularly pleased that HMICFRS found the force to be outstanding in the way it uses its resources to meet current demand. In the period of cuts to policing this has enabled TVP to continue providing an excellent service to the public. It reflects particularly well on the way TVP has been managed over this difficult period.

"Of course, we will continue to focus on areas which need improvement and we welcome the suggestions which have been made in the report. The recent announcement that we will be getting hundreds of new police officers will also have a positive impact and will support these improvements.

"Our priority is to support our local communities in any way we can and we are delighted that the HMICFRS has recognised this."

## **All police officers in Thames Valley Police are likely to be eventually equipped, trained and able to carry a Taser**

<https://thamestalk.co.uk/?p=70951>

Currently 550 officers at the force are Taser trained, but the Police Federation is working on increasing this number with the Chief Constable.

Home Secretary announced that up to 60% of officers could be equipped with Tasers earlier this month as part of a raft of plans aimed to crack down on crime. The Home Office pledged £10 million in ring-fenced funds to pay for the equipment and training, but added that it was up to chief constables to decide how many officers would be issued with the kit.

The force has had backing from the Police and Crime Commissioner, who had lobbied the Home Office for the extra protection for officers. The force has already seen a 15% uplift in Taser.

A Police Federation of England and Wales poll found earlier this year that 89% of officers would want to routinely carry Taser after being given appropriate training with nearly 97% saying their colleagues should be allowed to carry the devices.

### **Police response to 'transphobic' stickers branded 'extraordinary'**

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2019/10/14/police-response-transphobic-stickers-branded-extraordinary/>

### **101 Calls to Thames Valley Police**

<https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/17885195.performance-polices-101-service>

The performance of Thames Valley Police's non-emergency 101 hotline was 'dreadful' last year, according to the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner. Matthew Barber conceded it took too long for calls to be answered but insisted it was taking less time for them to be picked up by operators this year. According to TVP's own statistics, on average it took eight minutes to get through to an operator on 101 in 2018. But it said it is now taking an average of less than three minutes.

Currently, according to TVP figures, the average time for callers to wait until they are answered is two minutes and 45 seconds. Mr Barber said: "The target is to get [all calls answered] in less than three minutes next year and to get the call waiting time to two minutes.

"We are there at the moment under three minutes so we've achieved the target that we've set ourselves. There will be outliers to that but when I've used the service recently it has been improving."

### **Modern slavery**

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-49508981>

Of the almost 7,000 people referred to a Home Office scheme to combat modern slavery and help potential victims, almost a quarter, or 1,625, were born and raised in the UK, up from 820 such referrals in 2017, figures show.

Since 2015, people who have been used to traffic or sell drugs can be treated as victims of modern slavery rather than perpetrators of crime. To be classed as a victim, authorities have to be satisfied that a person was groomed by someone, usually through a combination of emotional blackmail, threats and violence. Experts say the official figures are unlikely to paint the full picture of modern

slavery in Britain. Yet despite the rapid rise in potential victims, the conviction rate is only around 2% of reported slavery-related crimes.

Kevin Hyland, who was the UK's first anti-slavery commissioner before leaving the role after a disagreement with the government last year, says one of the biggest factors behind low conviction rates is that few police forces have the issue within their policing and crime plans. He said, "This has got to be one of the biggest priorities but if it's not contained in policing plans it's going to be very difficult to get this as a priority,"

Police recorded 2,255 crimes relating to modern slavery in England and Wales during 2016-17. In 2017, 205 people were prosecuted for modern slavery offences in England and Wales, compared to 136 in 2016 and 162 in 2015. Yet convictions, which may come in subsequent years following a prosecution, remain much lower. In 2017, 59 people were convicted of modern slavery offences.

The Home Office has said conviction rates change due to the "relatively small number of cases" and the complexity of the crimes involved. The Association of Police and Crime Commissioners told the BBC that its members remain committed to "tackling trafficking and modern slavery at every level" and that "there have been substantial improvements" in processes.

### **Police 'dealing with more mental health incidents'**

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-49317060>

The number of mental health incidents dealt with by police has risen by more than a quarter in four years. While there were 385,206 incidents flagged as mental health-related in 2014, in 2018 that figure was 494,159, a rise of 28%. Police chiefs have said the issue is affecting the amount of time officers can focus on fighting crime.

A police incident could be classed as mental health related for a range of reasons, for example responding to someone in mental health crisis or a suspect with a mental health problem.

In 2018 there were 494,159 incidents flagged as mental health related - an average of 56 incidents per hour. The findings are a cause for alarm, echoing a warning from the Inspectorate of Constabulary that the police service has been "left to pick up the pieces" of a "broken" mental health system.

In November 2018, the watchdog said it had "grave concerns" about the extent to which officers were involved in mental health call-outs pointing out they often lacked the skills needed to deal with such complex issues. The effect is that people in crisis don't always get the right help, while dealing with such troubled individuals can take a heavy emotional toll on police themselves.

Some of the increase in mental health incidents is because there's greater awareness and better reporting; but it is also likely to be due to the growing reliance on police as the service of "last resort" amid cutbacks elsewhere - the service that can't say "no" when there's an emergency.

In response to the increasing demand, around 20 areas of the UK have mental health street triage vehicles, which are sent out by police in partnership with the NHS. The triage service is designed to deliver fast and efficient access to care and avoid unnecessary police detention for people in a

mental health crisis. Officers are joined by an NHS mental health practitioner and are prioritised to respond to calls relating to mental health. The government has announced an additional £2.3bn to enhance mental health services by 2023/24, providing the healthcare services to relieve the pressure on police.

## **Victims First launches video to help young people spot the signs of relationship abuse**

Victims First, which supports victims of crime and abuse across Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire, has launched a video to raise awareness of coercive control and emotional abuse in relationships. Following on from Victims First's 'Know It Isn't Love' campaign launched in February this year, the video, 'Don't Disappear' highlights the red flags to look out for in a relationship which can be the warning signs of controlling behaviour and abuse.

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.

Although many people associate domestic abuse with physical violence, coercive control recognises the damaging impact of other forms of abuse in relationships as well. 'Don't Disappear' follows the story of Jamie and Emma, from the seemingly loving early stages of their relationship, to the development of abusive behaviour.

Although anyone can be a victim of coercive control, 'Don't Disappear' is particularly aimed at younger people who may have less experience of relationships or people who are at the beginning of a relationship, to raise awareness of the red flags which at the time, may be missed or misinterpreted as acceptable behaviour.

The video covers a range of controlling behaviours exhibited from Jamie to Emma including:

- Jealousy and possessiveness including accusations of flirting and cheating
- Isolating her from her family and friends
- Controlling the use of her phone and social media
- Constantly checking on her whereabouts
- Sudden outbursts of anger and mood changes, and
- Love bombing - showering her with excessive affection and attention in order to retain control

Although in this example Emma is the victim, both men and women can be victims or perpetrators of coercive control which can take place in heterosexual and same sex relationships.

Other examples of coercive control include, depriving someone of basic needs, monitoring their time and activities, taking control over aspects of their everyday life such as where they can go or who they can see, humiliating, degrading or dehumanising someone, controlling their finances and making threats or intimidating behaviour.

In 2019 Victims First surveyed victims of coercive control across Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire and had 670 people respond who described 811 relationships. Some key findings included:

- A third of people who responded to our survey have been in more than one abusive relationship
- Half of the abusive relationships began when the victim was under the age of 25

- 45% of people who responded to our survey were in the abusive relationship for more than 10 years

The most common types of behaviour that victims faced was verbal abuse, isolation from friends and family and emotional abuse, including gaslighting (manipulating someone into doubting their sanity).

- 79% had experience verbal abuse, shouting and name calling
- 74% had experienced gaslighting or emotional abuse
- 71% had been isolated from their friends or family
- 62% had been victims of extreme jealousy or obsessive behaviour
- 53% had been manipulated into doing things they were uncomfortable with
- 51% had experienced their finances being controlled
- 48% had been threatened with violence to keep them controlled

### **Police watchdog warns 35,000 police staff 'not vetted properly'**

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-49847206>

### **Police officers raise concerns about 'biased' AI data**

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-49717378>

Police officers have raised concerns about using "biased" artificial-intelligence tools, a report commissioned by one of the UK government's advisory bodies reveals. The study warns such software may "amplify" prejudices, meaning some groups could become more likely to be stopped in the street and searched. It says officers also worry they could become over-reliant on automation. And it says clearer guidelines are needed for facial recognition's use.

Royal United Services Institute (Rusi) interviewed about 50 experts for its study, including senior police officers in England and Wales, as well as legal experts, academics and government officials. The work was commissioned by the Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation, which plans to draw up a code of practice covering the police's use of data analytics next year.

One of the key concerns expressed was about using existing police records to train machine-learning tools, since these might be skewed by the arresting officers' own prejudices. Human bias is then introduced into the datasets and bias is then generated in the outcomes of the application of those datasets.

An added factor, the report said, was people from disadvantaged backgrounds were more likely to use public services frequently. And this would generate more data about them, which in turn could make them more likely to be flagged as a risk. Matters could worsen over time, another officer said, when software was used to predict future crime hotspots.

The National Police Chiefs' Council has responded saying UK police always seek to strike a balance between keeping people safe and protecting their rights.

### **Voluntary and community organisations £106,733 from the Police Property Act Fund.**

Twenty two voluntary and community organisations were awarded £106,733 from the Police Property Act Fund. The Fund, 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 61 applications to the current funding round with 27 organisations successful in receiving funding of between £1,000 – £6,925 to support the PCC's Police and Crime Plan strategic priorities of Reducing Re-Offending and Serious Organised Crime and Terrorism.

The successful projects will receive funding to support a range of issues including domestic violence perpetrators, exploitation of vulnerable people, gangs and knife crime, offender management, public awareness and substance abuse.

### **Large-scale investment needed in developing police skills and attracting cyber-aware officers is vital**

<https://www.raconteur.net/technology/police-skills-cybercrime>

### **Home Secretary has signed an historic agreement to enable British law enforcement agencies to directly demand electronic data relating to terrorists, child sexual abusers and other serious criminals**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-and-us-sign-landmark-data-access-agreement>

### **Knife Crime**

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-49923129>

The rate of knife attacks in some regional towns and cities is higher than in many London boroughs. Overall, London remains the most dangerous part of England and Wales - but data, obtained from 34 of the 43 police forces, shows the rate of serious knife crime offences rising sharply in some areas outside London, and outstripping some of the city's boroughs in places like the city of Manchester, Slough, Liverpool and Blackpool.

Under Freedom of Information Law, the BBC asked all 43 regional police forces in England and Wales for details of serious knife crime in their area.

Serious knife crime is defined as any assault, robbery, threat to kill, murder, attempted murder or sexual offence involving a knife or sharp instrument.

Manchester, Liverpool, Slough and Nottingham are all in the top 25 most dangerous places in England and Wales for serious knife crime. In 2018, almost half of all suspects in serious knife crime offences in England and Wales, were aged 24 and under. Last year, 15% of knife crime suspects were female and, including those attacked in domestic abuse incidents, a quarter of victims of knife crime were women.

A Home Office spokesperson commented that "We are taking action to tackle the violent crime which has such a devastating impact on our communities.

"This includes supporting the police by recruiting 20,000 new police officers over the next three years, making it easier for them to use stop and search powers, and investing £10m in additional funding to allow forces to increase the number of officers carrying Tasers."

### **Knife Crime on the increase**

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-50080236>

### **School play about county lines drug dealing dangers**

<https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/17968807.school-play-county-lines-drug-dealing-dangers/>

The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for the Thames Valley has commissioned a theatre company to tour 130 schools across its region, including in Oxfordshire. More than 15,000 children will watch the performance during its 13-week tour, including Year 9 pupils at The Oxford Academy in Littlemore.

County lines dealing refers to big city drug gangs who expand into smaller towns and cities, often using violence to mark their new territory and recruiting vulnerable children to sell drugs. The performance highlights other important issues including grooming and child sexual exploitation.

Applied theatre specialists AlterEgo Creative Solutions Ltd are staging the production, named County Lines, having been supported by the PCC's Early Intervention Youth Fund.

The tour started in September and runs until December 13, and additional sessions are being held for youngsters not in education, parents and professionals.

The PCC has also funded someone called a 'fearless worker', who will deliver workshops in schools and youth venues on topics such as drugs and knife crime.

More than 500 professionals across the Thames Valley have already attended gang awareness training delivered by Reach Every Generation, with more sessions scheduled between now and Christmas. The County Lines play has already been seen by more than 100,000 thousand young people and thousands of professionals around the UK.

### **County-lines gangs fuelling child slavery rise**

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-50081696>

There has been an eightfold increase in the number of child victims of modern slavery referred by local councils in England for support. National Crime Agency figures reveal the number of children earmarked for help grew from 127 in 2014 to 1,152 last year - an increase of 807%.

Town hall bosses say the increase has been fuelled by the growing of issue "county-lines" drug gangs. Councils receive no specific funding for supporting such victims.

Under the Modern Slavery Act 2015, it is an offence to hold a person in a position of forced labour or facilitate their travel with the intention of exploiting them soon after. The act introduced

tougher sentences, and more help for people forced into labouring, domestic servitude, sex work or selling drugs.

County-lines drug gangs move young people around the country with the intention of forcing them to aid with the distribution of drugs for criminal gain.

The Local Government Association is warning the rapid increase in child referrals for modern slavery is adding to the already huge pressure on the services they provide for vulnerable children.

In one year alone, from 2017 to 2018, the number of child referrals grew 67%, and 92% of all referrals from councils related to children. At the same time, increases in adult victims are putting pressure on the already stretched adult social care system, the LGA says.

### **Hate crimes recorded by police up 10%**

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-50054915>

### **Crime Rising in affluent areas**

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-7594703/Crime-rising-four-times-faster-affluent-parts-Britain.html>

### **Computer Software Service Fraud**

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-50117796>

### **Super-complaint over handling of domestic abuse allegations made against officers**

<https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/stories/2019-10-20/police-face-super-complaint-over-officers-domestic-abuse-scandals>

Police forces in England and Wales are facing a super-complaint over their handling of domestic abuse allegations made against officers, after a Bureau investigation revealed that police employees were less likely to be convicted than members of the public.

A super-complaint is a new legal device brought in last year to help groups challenge endemic problems in policing.

### **Association of PCCs - making a difference prevention in focus. Addressing the root causes of crime - helping the vulnerable, children and young people move away from the risk factors that can lead to crime or victimisation.**

<https://www.apccs.police.uk/media/4679/pccs-making-a-difference-prevention-in-focus.pdf>

### **Thames Valley**

The Commissioner maintains a community safety budget of approximately £3million to support the delivery of Police and Crime Plan priorities. The majority of the budget is given in grants to

county and unitary councils in the Thames Valley area to commission services that help tackle drugs and crime, reduce re-offending and improve community safety. However, in 2018/19 the PCC used 10% to fund Thames Valley-wide and other priority service initiatives. Anthony Stansfeld said: "One recipient of funding was Berkshire Youth which was awarded £76,193 to expand its prevention programme to reduce the risk of exploitation of young people into gangs and knife crime.

The Mentored Moves Project was originally only operating in Bracknell, but funding has enabled its expansion into Newbury and Thatcham. Mentored Moves supports vulnerable young people, aged 11 to 18, who may be involved in gangs, or at risk of exploitation from them, often on the edge of County Lines drug trafficking. Some are known to the Youth Offending Team and police. Some engage in criminal damage to property. And many have a range of difficult life experiences; including bullying, troubled family relationships, unemployment or economic hardship.

The detached youth work is aimed at transitioning vulnerable young people off the street and into local youth activities, or other local provision. Youth workers engage with young people where young people gather. During the transition from street to club, young people receive one-to-one mentoring and support from selected, trained community volunteers. The volunteer mentor offers a 'trusted relationship' for the young person, who will receive mentoring support for up to one year. Once engaged in youth activities, young people have access to a range of personal development opportunities.

Mentored Moves will support 100 young people across Berkshire within its two-year funding period, aiming to make them feel more socially connected, skilled, independent and resilient. In its first nine months, youth workers have had over 500 contacts with young people:

### **Funding provides employment and housing support to ex-offenders across the Thames Valley**

<https://www.thamesvalley-pcc.gov.uk/news-and-events/thamesvalley-pcc-news/2019/10/funding-provides-employment-and-housing-support-to-ex-offenders-across-the-thames-valley/>

The PCC has awarded Aspire £154,000 to support its 'Through the Gate' programme to expand and provide additional employment support as well as housing support to ex-offenders across the Thames Valley. The employment charity and social enterprise has operated a 'Through the Gate' programme in Oxfordshire for four years and provides holistic support for both people in custody and ex-offenders in the community.

The £154,000 funding is for a one year period and forms part of the Police and Crime Commissioner's work to tackle re-offending, exploitation and violence. It has enabled Aspire to expand its 'Through the Gate' programme further into Buckinghamshire, providing ex-offenders with specialist employment support and links to employers in Milton Keynes and High Wycombe, and for the first time into Berkshire.

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. Referrals into the programme are made through bail hostels, probation

services and prisons (Bullington and Springhill prisons in Oxfordshire and Woodhill prison in Buckinghamshire).

Aspire has also recently benefitted from the Police Property Act Fund, supporting the delivery of three specialist Family Links parenting courses to ex-offenders. These courses are designed to support parents, who are ex-offenders, to manage their feelings and behaviour while becoming more positive and nurturing in relationships with their children.

### **CPS concern over huge drop in police disability hate crime cases**

<https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/cps-concern-over-huge-drop-in-police-disability-hate-crime-cases/>

### **New contracts for the provision of support for victims of crime in the Thames Valley**

Following a commissioning process conducted by the Office of the PCC, the charity Thames Valley Partnership will deliver a Specialist Service for Adult Victims while SAFE! have been awarded a further 3 year contract to provide services to young victims of crime across the Thames Valley beginning in April 2020.

The Adult Specialist Service will provide support to victims who have higher level, or longer term, needs. The support will be provided by specialist Independent Sexual Violence Advisers (ISVAs), Restorative Justice Practitioners, Exploitation Specialists and staff with other relevant specialist skills and knowledge.

Support will be tailored to meet victims' individual needs, regardless of the crime type they have experienced and could include trauma-informed interventions in individual or group settings, advocacy support including help to access mental health or drug and alcohol services, restorative justice conferencing, as well as practical and emotional support to navigate the criminal justice process.

Thames Valley Partnership will work closely with partner organisations Oxford Sexual Assault and Rape Crisis Centre (OSARCC) and Trusthouse Reading to deliver the service involving co-located teams; bringing professionals with different specialisms together.

As the existing service provider of the PCC's Young Victim's Service, SAFE! will continue to provide practical and emotional support to young victims from 5 to 18 years of age; implementing its Protective Behaviours model to equip young people with the tools they need to keep themselves safe. Thames Valley Partnership and SAFE! will also work closely together to provide a new model of family support. The value of both contracts is just over £4.5 million over the 3 year period; an increase of half a million compared to the previous contracts.