

Report to the Thames Valley Police & Crime Panel

Title: Topical Issues

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Police forces ordered to check existing staff in same way they vet recruits

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-64319133>

All police forces will be asked to check staff against national databases to identify if anyone "slipped through the net", the Home Office says.

It follows the case of David Carrick who admitted dozens of rape and sexual offences as a Met Police officer.

The National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) will ask forces to check current staff recruited before tougher vetting of recruits was introduced in 2006.

The College of Policing will also be asked to strengthen vetting procedures.

The current guidelines for checking applicants when they join a police force were set in 2006 and require a series of background checks that look at everything from past convictions, behaviour of family and friends, or financial problems that may leave an applicant open to corruption.

The College of Policing introduced the national guidelines to ensure all forces in England, Wales and Northern Ireland were checking new recruits in the same way.

Then in 2019 the police watchdog, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services, gave all forces in those three nations a deadline of July 2020 to retrospectively vet all their officers and staff to those 2006 guidelines, no matter how long they had been serving.

That deadline passed and in 2021, the BBC's File on Four programme checked with the forces whether it had been complied with - and revealed that a quarter had not met the deadline.

Now two-and-a-half years on from the deadline, it is not clear how many forces have still to complete the checks. The Home Office has yet to reveal how many background checks are missing at this stage, but has been approached by the BBC for a comment.

Officials will look at decision-making at police disciplinary hearings, as well as checking forces have the power they need to take action against rogue officers. The review is expected to be completed within four months.

More than 1,800 police officers recruited as part of Governments' pledge to boost numbers by 20,000 have already quit

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-11585523/More-1-800-police-officers-recruited-Tory-pledge-boost-numbers-QUIT.html>

More than 1,800 police officers recruited as part of the Tory manifesto pledge to boost numbers have already quit, it has emerged. Ahead of the 2019 general election, former prime minister Boris Johnson promised to recruit 20,000 new police officers.

A deadline of March next year has been set for the Government to reach that target under the Police Uplift Programme.

Latest figures show 15,343 additional officers have so far been recruited in England and Wales - which is 77 per cent of the target with three months left to go. But data obtained via Freedom of Information requests by the i newspaper revealed at least 1,837 of those officers who joined under the scheme have already voluntarily resigned.

It was suggested the true figure is likely to be much higher, as 19 of the 43 forces in England and Wales failed to provide data, including London's Metropolitan Police.

Greater Manchester Police lost 206 recruits, West Midlands Police lost 173, Thames Valley Police lost 160, Surrey Police lost 129 and Hampshire Police lost 124.

There has been criticism of the phasing out of traditional entry routes and the new requirement for recruits to complete an apprenticeship, a degree or a diploma while undertaking on-the-job training.

The Home Office insisted the retention of police officers was a 'priority' and said that voluntary resignation rates, at 2.5 per cent, were low compared to other sectors. A survey of almost 3,500 police recruits showed job satisfaction at 90 per cent among those who joined as part of the Police Uplift Programme, while 81 per cent said they intended to continue as police officers for the rest of their working lives.

Thames Valley Police officers should be paid more, Chief Constable says

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-oxfordshire-64080367>

In a Christmas message, Chief Constable John Campbell revealed the force had attended more than 168,000 incidents in the past year. He told the BBC his staff had the same grievances as other agencies but that police do not strike and never will.

Police salaries rely on the government and independently-assessed police pay awards.

More than 28,000 people were arrested by Thames Valley Police in 2022, and 5,700 missing people have been found. More than 1,500 of its officers were involved in the policing operation on the day of Queen Elizabeth II's funeral.

"I think policing deserves more money for the work that they do, both police officers and police staff," Mr Campbell said.

"Like all the other agencies we would make a cogent and strong bid to say that salaries have reduced and aren't in line with inflation, that's across public sector.

"But of course there's pressures on public sector spending and budgets so we recognise that as well, but do I think that police officers are paid enough for what they do? Absolutely not."

There have been more than 1,200 assaults on Thames Valley Police officers in 2022.

Mr Campbell said: "Those are people who don't deserve to be assaulted.

"In policing we acknowledge there's a risk of physical violence and assault but we should never accept it."

A Home Office spokesperson said: "Our police do an incredible job on the frontline, often in the most difficult of circumstances. We are ensuring police forces have the resources they need to keep our communities safe.

"That's why we've increased the police funding settlement by more than £1bn this year, providing up to £16.9bn for the policing system.

"We continue to back our police, including by recruiting 15,343 additional officers and putting in place the Police Covenant to support officers, staff, volunteers and their families."

The force is expecting a busy period over Christmas and New Year and has reminded people that 101 and an online service are both available to report non-emergency incidents.

Impact of Cost of Living crisis on Police Officers

<https://www.policeprofessional.com/news/more-than-80-per-cent-of-thames-valley-police-officers-worse-off-financially-than-five-years-ago/>

Thames Valley Police has become the first force to gain trailblazer status in its adoption of the Police Race Action Plan

<https://www.miltonkeynes.co.uk/news/crime/thames-valley-police-becomes-first-force-to-gain-trailblazer-status-for-race-inequality-action-plan-3957199>

Thames Valley Police has become the first force to gain trailblazer status in its adoption of the Police Race Action Plan. Police forces across the country have adopted a new process to improve the relationship between officers and Black people.

'Dangerously low' number of police officers struggling to keep Milton Keynes safe.

<https://www.miltonkeynes.co.uk/news/crime/worried-whistleblower-cop-claims-there-is-dangerously-low-number-of-police-officers-in-milton-keynes-3985507>

A worried Police Officer has spoken out about the 'dangerously low' number of police officers struggling to keep Milton Keynes safe. A whistleblower police officer, who cannot be identified for their own protection, said at times there are only two or three response officers available to cover the entire city.

Sometimes the situation is so bad that officers have to be "borrowed" from neighbouring areas in the Thames Valley force, they said.

The whistleblower explained how various duties take up the time of the 18 response officers on shift. These duties include dealing with a prisoner in custody, where on one average MK shift there will be four or five such prisoners handed over, the officer said.

A further two officers are taken up with telephone appointments, while another two are often working on missing person cases, of which there is a "constant high volume" in MK.

On top of this, the officer says there is usually at least one cop on paperwork to complete enquiries from their workload of jobs.

The officer said, "With all the above taken into consideration, on the average shift in Milton Keynes I am disappointed to tell you that at the start of the shift there is normally about eight officers for the whole of Milton Keynes," the officer claims.

"As shifts progress and officers become committed at jobs and make arrests etc this number drops and we often have only two to three officers covering the city.

"On my shift approximately half the officers have not completed their three-week blue light driving course, which dramatically hits response times."

The officer describes Milton Keynes as the busiest Local Policing Area (LPA) in Thames Valley, often holding the same amount of un-resourced jobs as Oxford, High Wycombe, Slough and Aylesbury combined.

"An interesting fact is that Milton Keynes has around 10% of the TVP population but carries 25% to 30% of the force's workload," the officer said.

In response to the officer's comments, Thames Valley Police Chief Superintendent Michael Loebenberg said: "We're sorry to hear this from our officer; we know policing is challenging and making things better for our teams is an absolute priority for the force.

"We can reassure our communities that we have minimum staffing levels and strict processes that tell us when to bring in officers from other policing areas, and from other departments, to support.

"In addition to this, over the last three years the force has continued to recruit more officers and these are making their way into local areas, including Milton Keynes." He added: "Frontline officers face a range of demands in the very nature of being the first line of response to incidents and this includes interviewing suspects in custody and carrying out

enquiries to find missing people. As well as our frontline teams, such as the one this officer works in, there are hundreds of other officers also working 24-7 in our Roads Policing, Armed Response, and Proactive and Neighbourhood Teams. Many more detectives are also working around the clock to investigate a wide range of different crimes.

“Our frontline officers face many demands and we will continue to support them and be proud of how they rise to the many challenges they face.”

£100,000 available to community groups to help prevent crime across Thames Valley (16 January 2023)

The Community Fund, jointly managed by the PCC and the Chief Constable, helps to prevent crime and keep communities safe. Money for the scheme is created from the proceeds from the sale of items seized from criminals that cannot be returned to their rightful owners.

The PCC said: “I’m pleased to announce the first round of this year’s Community Fund is now open for applications. This is a great opportunity to support community and voluntary groups in reducing crime.

“We’re fortunate to have such an active community across the Thames Valley, playing a significant role in helping to tackle local issues around crime prevention and supporting vulnerable groups.

“I have been fortunate to visit some of the groups we’ve supported in the past, who have benefited from the funding provided to support their communities and help prevent crime across the Thames Valley.

“I look forward to receiving applications which focus on a range of areas within my Police and Criminal Justice Plan including crime prevention, modern crimes such as cybercrime and fraud, and reducing re-offending.”

Organisations from across the Thames Valley can apply for grants for projects that support one or more of the PCC’s ‘Police and Criminal Justice Plan’ priorities:

- Strong Local Policing (preventing crime & protecting communities)
- Fighting Serious Organised Crime (protecting vulnerable people)
- Fighting Fraud & Cybercrime (fighting modern crimes)
- Improving the Criminal Justice System (reducing re-offending)
- Tackling illegal encampments (reducing the impact of encampments)

Chief Constable John Campbell, said: “Using money generated from the sale of items seized from criminals that cannot be returned to their rightful owners is a great way of funding worthy projects and other work across the Thames Valley.

“This funding will play a big part in helping voluntary and community groups across the Thames Valley. It will allow them to continue to run projects that play such a big role in preventing crime and protecting our communities.

“As ever, we are particularly keen to receive bids for this money from organisations that support our priority areas.”

The closing date for this round of applications is 4pm on Monday 6th February and applications will be considered jointly by the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and the Chief Constable.

Thames Valley Police & Crime Panel: Speeding enforcement defended
<https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/23150511.thames-valley-police-crime-panel-speeding-enforcement-defended/>

New plans to widen police powers for disruptive protests
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-64282962>

Thames Valley communities asked for their views on policing and crime (16/11/2022)

The Police and Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley is pleased to launch an anonymous online survey providing residents with an opportunity to share their views and experiences of policing and crime.

The survey asks for your views about how safe you feel in your local area, your experience of both crime and the police as well as questions on the future funding of policing.

Launching the survey, Matthew Barber (Police & Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley) said: "Part of my role is to ensure there is a clear focus on the priorities that matter most to the public. I want to gain a real understanding of how crime is affecting communities, whether it is direct experiences of crime or issues that may be causing you concern in your local area. I also want to hear your feedback, whether good or bad, on policing; what the police are doing well and areas you think could be improved.

"To help me build up a picture across the Thames Valley, the survey will be available on my website all year round. It will provide an ongoing mechanism for people to share their views and keep me informed. Whether or not you have directly experienced a crime, I would encourage you to use the survey to share your feedback and tell me what is important to you. Your views will help shape the future of policing in the Thames Valley."

Results from the survey will be shared regularly on our website, social media and other communication channels.

If you are a resident of the Thames Valley, please complete the survey by visiting our website. If you are able to re-share our social media posts, to ensure the survey is shared as widely as possible, that would be great.

Police and Crime Commissioner announces strategy to improve the safety of women and girls

Ahead of White Ribbon Day, Matthew Barber has today (22/11) announced a Thames Valley-wide strategy aimed at improving the lives of women and girls.

Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) has been brought into sharp focus by recent tragic and high profile cases. This strategy sets out the role we can all play in ending VAWG as part of a coordinated partnership response in the Thames Valley.

Announcing the strategy, Matthew said: “Today’s strategy launch highlights the positive work my office is leading on across the Thames Valley in improving the lives of women and girls.

“The risks to both women and girls in our communities can take many different forms, from domestic abuse to public place harassment, stalking to sexual violence. Therefore, it is important that a variety of responses are in place to ensure the Thames Valley is a safer place for all women and girls.

“In response to this, I am pleased to be supporting a range of initiatives to make our streets safer. This includes the development of schools-based programmes to focus on the safety of women and girls, and additional activity focused on street harassment, stalking, sexual assault, rape and predatory behaviour.

“I am committed to improving the safety of women and girls across the Thames Valley through the key priorities set out within my Police & Criminal Justice Plan.”

As part of the strategy, the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner has set a number of key priorities and objectives including:

- Creating clear pathways of support
- Commissioning quality victims’ services and effective interventions
- Delivering a system wide approach to improve the safety of women and girls
- Ensuring the voices of women and girls are heard
- Holding police and criminal justice agencies to account

This strategy will be delivered alongside Thames Valley Police, Local Authorities and in partnership with a variety of specialist organisations whose work will ensure the Thames Valley is a safer place for women and girls.

Young people in Milton Keynes invited to rap, speak or write about knife crime (30 November 2022)

Rap and spoken word competition launched as part of Milton Keynes’ Month of Action Against Violence

Police and Crime Commissioner Matthew Barber has launched a competition, ‘The Knife Sentence’, to raise awareness of the impact of knife crime on individuals and communities and give young people the opportunity to express their feelings against violence.

The competition invites anyone aged 11 – 25 to submit their own Knife Sentence; a short rap, spoken word performance or written lyrics about how they feel about knife crime and violence in Milton Keynes. It forms part of the activity that is taking place during December’s Month of Action Against Violence, which will also see the hosting of the National Monument Against Violence and Aggression, also known as the Knife Angel, outside MK Stadium.

Police and Crime Commissioner, Matthew Barber, said: “The competition is about engaging young people on the issue of knife crime; how they feel about it and how it affects them.

“Violence, and in particular knife crime, is a real concern amongst communities in Milton Keynes. The purpose of the Month of Action and the presence of the Knife Angel is to bring statutory organisations and the community together to open up discussions about how we can work together to tackle it.

“Some young people may find it a difficult subject to talk about. I hope the competition provides a way for young people to open up and get involved in the conversation.”

Entries will be judged across three age group categories by Thames Valley music group Readipop who are supporting the competition.

Winners could be heard on Spotify, win a MK Dons match day experience as well as a chance to record their own music at a session with Readipop.

Police and Crime Commissioner review aims to improve support for victims of crime across Thames Valley (Press Release 4 January 2023)

Matthew Barber, Police & Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley, has today (4/1) published findings of his internal review into the provision of victim’s services across Thames Valley

The review, which was compiled by the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner (OPCC) in May 2022, was conducted to evaluate existing OPCC funded victims services to ensure they continue to meet victim’s needs. Outcomes from the review will help to provide a framework for future commissioning of victim services, with new contracts due to begin in April 2024.

Matthew said: “I want victims to have access to the best possible support which is why we continually strive to improve our provision in the Thames Valley.

“The current landscape is very different to the one that existed when we commissioned our current victim’s services which is what has driven this review. Challenges of the pandemic have meant that services have had to evolve and over time, victims needs have changed. Many services have also come under strain during this time due to increased demand for support, especially in the areas of domestic abuse and sexual violence.

“The review has enabled the collation of data and insights and alongside the voices of victims, will help us understand where and how services can be developed to provide better outcomes. Its recommendations will help improve existing provision as well as inform our future commissioning.”

As part of the review, the OPCC sought the views of victims through a Victims Survey. The survey, which took place between March and April 2022, received over 900 responses with the majority of people having been victims of theft or burglary.

Following the review, a number of key recommendations were identified including:

- Work with current providers to implement service improvement measures
- Introduce a range of engagement mechanisms to ensure the victim’s voice is central to all work undertaken by the OPCC
- Ensure future commissioned services have the ability to flex and grow
- Move to an automatic victim referral mechanism from Thames Valley Police

Outcomes from the victims services review will be embedded into the delivery of support for victims, ensuring that they continue to receive the best support available across Thames Valley.