

## Report to the Thames Valley Police & Crime Panel

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**Title:** Topical Issues

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### Thames Valley Police 'appalled' by death of George Floyd but asks public to keep social distancing

<https://www.getreading.co.uk/news/reading-berkshire-news/thames-valley-police-appalled-death-18359551>

Bosses at Thames Valley Police have joined forces across the UK to stand with those appalled by the death of George Floyd in the US. A joint statement has asked that people maintain social distancing and keep Coronavirus in mind.

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/jun/09/katy-bourne-police-crime-commissioner-solidarity-protesting-racism-black-lives-matter>

### Bid to defuse tensions as Black Lives Matter protests escalate

[https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/08/london-mayor-seeks-defuse-tensions-ahead-more-blm-protests?CMP=share\\_btn\\_link](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/08/london-mayor-seeks-defuse-tensions-ahead-more-blm-protests?CMP=share_btn_link)

### What Powers did the Police have with Covid 19 (June 2020)

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/explainers-52106843>

### More than 30 arrested in Thames Valley Police crackdown on online child sexual abuse

<https://www.itv.com/news/meridian/2020-06-08/more-than-30-arrested-in-thames-valley-police-crackdown-on-online-child-sexual-abuse/>

### Thames Valley Police record number of sex crimes against Children

<https://www.getreading.co.uk/news/reading-berkshire-news/concerning-record-number-sex-crimes-17635506>

A record number of child sex abuse crimes have been reported to Thames Valley Police.

There were 2,052 reports made to the force about sexual crimes against children in the 12 months to June 2019 – the highest number since records began in 2002. The figure has more than doubled in the last six years alone, rising by nearly 120 per cent from 952 cases in the year to June 2013. There were 1,955 such crimes recorded in the year to June 2018.

The crimes include rape, sexual assault, sexual exploitation and grooming of children under the age of 16. Four in every five victims were girls. The increase may be due to an actual rise in abuse, but it may also be linked to more victims feeling able to come forward, and better recording practices by police.

## **National Targets for Reducing Crime to be Reintroduced**

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-51645526>

### **Domestic abuse**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/enhanced-domestic-abuse-bill-introduced-to-parliament>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-51709638>

Domestic violence offenders in England and Wales could face compulsory lie-detector tests when released from prison under proposed new laws. Those deemed at high risk of re-offending will be given regular polygraph tests to find out if they have breached release conditions.

The long-awaited Domestic Violence Bill will also specify that controlling a victim's finances can count as abuse.

Alleged abusers will also be banned from cross-examining victims in court.

Lie-detector tests - which work by measuring changes in heart rate, blood pressure, respiratory rate and sweat - are not 100% accurate.

But the Home Office said it was already using the tests to monitor high-risk sex offenders and had found them to be 89% accurate.

If the Domestic Abuse Bill passes, a three-year pilot will be carried out on domestic abusers which are deemed at high-risk of causing serious harm. If successful, the scheme will be rolled out nationwide.

Around 300 offenders will take a lie detector test three months after their release and every six months after that, according to the Home Office. Those who fail the test will not be returned to prison - but they may be jailed if they refuse to take the test or attempt to "trick" it, the Home Office added. They can also be returned to prison if the tests show "their risk has escalated to level whereby they can no longer be safely managed in the community".

Information gathered from failed lie-detector tests is routinely shared with the police who use it to carry out further investigations.

Campaigners say action to help the nearly two million victims of domestic abuse in the UK each year, two thirds of whom are women, is long overdue.

There will also be a ban on perpetrators cross-examining their victims during family court proceedings and a legal duty on councils to find safe accommodation for domestic abuse victims and their children.

Charity Women's Aid said this could be a "life-saving" move, but only if it was accompanied by guaranteed funding for specialist women's services - including for "marginalised" groups in society, which it estimates will cost about £173m a year.

While welcoming many of the initiatives, children's charities warned that some families with children risked "falling through the cracks in support".

The legislation will also enshrine a new definition of domestic abuse in law that recognises economic abuse - when a perpetrator controls a victim's finances - as a specific type of the crime.

Court protection orders banning perpetrators from contacting a victim or forcing them to take part in alcohol or drug treatment programmes may also be introduced.

Support for migrant domestic abuse victims will also be reviewed, while ministers will consider what more can be done to stop the so-called "rough sex" defence being used by perpetrators in court.

## **Homicide rise linked to fall in police numbers, Home Office says**

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-51754289>

The fall in police numbers is "likely" to be a "contributory factor" in the rise in murder and manslaughter cases since 2014, an official study suggests.

Police numbers in England and Wales fell by 21,000 from 2010-18 - and community support officers by 6,000. And the rate of murders and manslaughters soared by 39% in the three years to March 2018.

Evidence suggests "more police officers means fewer homicides... if all else is equal", the Home Office report says. But the study also highlights increases in drugs- and terror-related cases as key reasons for the rise.

Clear-up rates for most crimes, notably robbery, have fallen sharply in England and Wales since 2014 and the 80-page report suggests the rise in homicides could also be due to violent incidents that escalate or offenders progressing from less serious crimes.

- Number of suspects charged by police hits new low
- Gang murder investigations blocked by 'wall of silence'

The report says: "There has been much speculation about the role of declining police resources in the recent rise in homicide. "Given the lack of robust UK-based studies, this review cannot add much to that debate. "However, if the elasticities from the robust US studies are transferrable to the UK context, then police numbers are likely to be a contributory factor, rather than the driving factor."

The government is promising to hire an extra 20,000 police officers by 2023, at a cost of £1.1bn. There are currently 123,171 police officers in England and Wales, down from 143,000 in 2010.