

## Report to the Thames Valley Police & Crime Panel

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**Author:** Khalid Ahmed, Scrutiny  
Officer, Thames Valley Police  
& Crime Panel



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### Thames Valley Police fail to use new anti-stalking powers

<https://www.readingchronicle.co.uk/news/19374532.thames-valley-police-fail-use-new-anti-stalking-powers/>

Police have applied for “a number” of stalking prevention orders after an investigation revealed the service had not applied for any despite more than 1,000 stalking complaints from residents.

A probe by the BBC’s Shared Data Unit revealed Thames Valley Police failed to issue a single Stalking Prevention Order since the civil power was introduced in January 2020.

From April 2020 to December 2020, TVP recorded 1,681 stalking incidents. But in this time, the force failed to even apply for an SPO -- which imposes restrictions on suspected stalkers -- let alone grant one.

A spokesperson for Thames Valley Police said the service takes reports of stalking “extremely seriously” and is “committed to helping victims as well as preventing those who carry out this sort of offence”.

They added: “The use of Stalking Prevention Orders is just one of a number of tactics that officers can use when they are combatting this sort of offence.

“Since responding to the original FOI request, Thames Valley Police has applied for a number of SPOs, one of which has been granted, with a number of others currently being processed.”

Stalking Protection Orders (SPOs) are a new civil power available to police which impose restrictions on suspected stalkers. They are designed to make it easier to curb the behaviour of stalkers, with a lower burden of proof required than for a criminal conviction.

They usually remain in place for two years and can be used to ban people from certain locations, contacting the complainant, physically approaching the victim and more.

Since SPOs became available to police forces in England and Wales in January 2020, only 294 orders have been granted.

More than 55,000 stalking incidents have been recorded by police in the nine months to December 2020.

A spokesperson for the Home Office said officials will meet with police to discuss how effective police have been in issuing SPOs. They added: "A Home Office spokesperson said: "Stalking Protection Orders stop perpetrators in their tracks and prevent them contacting victims. We expect police forces to make full use of them.

"The Home Office and College of Policing have worked closely with forces to produce guidance on issuing them."

From 2015 to December 2020, 3,132 stalking incidents have been recorded in the Thames Valley area. Only 55 were recorded in 2015 but 1,681 were recorded in the eight months from April to December 2020. That's an increase of more than 2,900 per cent.

Despite ranking 15th from 42 police forces for number of stalking incidents recorded from April to December 2020, Thames Valley Police did not apply for a single SPO -- one of only four forces not to do so.

## **Thames Valley Police drops ERP system after spending £14m**

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-oxfordshire-58172502>

<https://www.computerweekly.com/news/252505459/Thames-Valley-Police-drop-ERP-system-after-spending-over-14mn>

Thames Valley Police (TVP) has spent £14.4m developing enterprise resource planning (ERP) software that it no longer plans to use.

The money was spent between 2016 and late 2020 as part of TVP's Equip programme, an ERP procurement and implementation partnership with Sussex and Surrey Police, both of which have bought the software and could still use it.

Between the three police forces, the Equip programme has cost a total of £36.6m so far and was set up to improve back-office systems.

According to a job advert posted by TVP for a project support officer for the programme, the IT system would deal with human resources, finance and payroll, recruitment, and duties management.

"This is a large-scale, business-critical programme covering six counties in England, with scope for a further 32 public sector organisations to procure the same selected solution over the course of the contract period," the advert said. "A new single-instance ERP is undoubtedly a key enabler to driving efficiencies within the back office as well as delivering significant operational benefits to front-line policing."

A framework agreement, which sets out the terms for subsequent contracts or agreements, published by Surrey Police, shows that the potential lifetime value of the

Equip project was £120m. The framework was exclusively awarded to accountancy firm KPMG, which was the only supplier allowed to bid on any opportunities put out via the agreement.

TVP's annual accounts for 2020-2021 said the force had been working with KPMG on the programme since 2016 and had spent £8.3m up to 2020 and a further £6.1m during 2020, bringing the total to £14.4m.

The force's former police and crime commissioner (PCC) Anthony Stansfeld said in September 2020 that its internal costs were "very considerable" and that he was "totally dissatisfied" with Equip's progress.

Sussex Police's annual accounts show it has spent £12.4m on the programme so far, while Surrey Police's show it has spent £9.5m.

In its accounts document, TVP added that, in December 2020, "the chief constables agreed that the ERP product developed by KPMG should be transferred to the three forces to mitigate against future financial risk".

Although TVP did not comment on the nature of the risk presented by keeping the system with KPMG, a joint statement issued to Computer Weekly from all three forces said that "approval was granted by the then three PCCs to transfer the ERP software, documentation and licensed assets" from KPMG.

It added: "Following closure of the tri-force Equip programme, a new Surrey and Sussex ERP programme has been set up to look at future ERP work. In Surrey Police and Sussex Police, the respective chief constables and PCCs are considering a range of options for use, development of Equip assets and/or additional ERP solutions for enhanced functionality.

"In Thames Valley, the chief constable and PCC are considering options for an ERP system through the Next Steps programme, and appropriate funding was included in the Medium-Term Financial Plan (2021/22 to 2024/25) to finance new activities, but the plan is to discontinue any further development of the Equip system as transferred."

## **Police failing to impose orders on men accused of abuse, watchdog finds**

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/aug/24/police-failing-to-impose-orders-on-men-accused-of-abuse-watchdog-finds>

## **Thames Valley Police to launch new fraud team as inspectors warn that UK forces treating it as 'low priority'**

<https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/19492044.thames-valley-police-launch-new-fraud-team-inspectors-warn-uk-forces-treating-low-priority/>

A centralised fraud team made up of 30 officers has been agreed in the wake of a review of how the force deals with the crime, Thames Valley Police said.

The news came as the HM Inspectorate of Constabulary warned that many fraud victims were still receiving a 'poor service' from the police and were being 'denied justice'.

In a new report, the watchdog said that fraud continued to be treated as a low priority by forces. Thames Valley was one of the forces inspected as part of the report, along with the south east regional organised crime unit.

They said a 'fundamental problem' was the difference between the amount of fraud reported to police and the resources given to it. A Thames Valley Police spokesman said it took fraud 'very seriously' and would always prioritise crimes that affect the most vulnerable.

"The Thames Valley Police Economic Crime Unit has recently collaborated with the South East Regional Organised Crime Unit to increase our capability in investigating and protecting victims of fraud," he said.

"Additionally, Thames Valley Police has carried out a full-service improvement review in respect of its response to fraud and because of this funding has been agreed for a new central fraud team consisting of over 30 officers which will be dedicated to the investigation of fraud.

"Thames Valley Police is also extremely active in fraud prevention and financial safeguarding through operation Signature, where we work closely with partners to reach out and educate people on how to protect themselves from fraud."

HM Inspector of Constabulary Matt Parr said: "The scale of fraud has not diminished – in fact it has increased during the pandemic – and it needs to become more of a priority for police forces.

"The police and other agencies should come together to prevent and protect the public from fraud, more officers should be working on it, and there should be more investigations into it. All this would lead to more victims receiving the service and the justice they are entitled to."

## **Additional £800,000 to fund youth intervention "teachable moment" programmes in Oxfordshire**

The Government has confirmed that a bid for an additional £800,000 to fund youth intervention programmes in Oxfordshire has been secured by the Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit.

The award was announced following the publication of the Government's "Beating Crime" plan, with £17m allocated to schemes nationally, drawn from the Serious Violence Fund which supports initiatives to tackle knife crime and youth violence.

The Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit had applied to the "Teachable Moments" grant scheme, which funds intervention initiatives built around the concept of teachable moments; points when a young person is more receptive to support to help them to change their behaviours and steer clear of crime. It will be used to create new "Navigator" roles, working across hospitals, police custody and in the wider community, providing support and signposting for young people at risk of being involved in violence.

The VRU will now work with the Safer Oxfordshire Partnership, which coordinates community safety activity across the county of Oxfordshire, to develop more detailed proposals as to how the funding will be used, including inviting local voluntary sector organisations to apply to deliver initiatives, via a VRU-led tendering process.

Teachable moment initiatives use a particular moment such as an admission to hospital, an arrest or being taken into police custody. These moments create a position where a person may be more reflective, considering what has led them to be admitted and can be more open to discussing how they could change their lives to be safer and more positive.

An example of such a scheme already in place is the VRU-funded Hospital Navigator programme, which launched recently at the Royal Berkshire Hospital in Reading and with a further four sites across the region launching in coming months. Hospital Navigators are trained volunteers, working within the Emergency Departments. When a young person is admitted in circumstances linked to risky behaviours, such as violence, drink, drugs or self-harm and mental health problems, their clinician can refer them to speak with a Navigator if they wish, who offers a listening ear and can help discuss the circumstances which led to their admission, offer support such as access to mentoring or signposts them to local services and help with employment and education.

## **Police and Crime Commissioner provides funding to reduce reoffending among domestic abuse perpetrators**

The Police and Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley has awarded £18,500 of funding to Thames Valley Police to work with first time domestic abuse perpetrators in order to reduce re-offending.

As part of this funding, Thames Valley Police will work with the Hampton Trust on their Cautioning and Relationship Abuse (CARA) project. The project is aimed at lower risk, alleged first time perpetrators who will attend two workshops between 4 and 5 weeks apart.

The workshops aim to give perpetrators an understanding of domestic abuse and the impact of their behaviour on others, including the victim and any children. Work is done on recognition of personal risk factors, management strategies and how to access other services that may be of benefit, such as substance misuse. The approach to perpetrators is based on extensive experience of the facilitators who are trained to deal with feelings of shame, anxiety, anger and remorse.

## **More than £980,000 awarded to support Thames Valley victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence**

Victims and survivors of sexual violence and domestic abuse will benefit from extra support thanks to £980,000 of Ministry of Justice funding awarded by the Police and Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley.

This money will fund third sector organisations, charitable and social enterprises and public bodies which provide support services to help victims of domestic abuse and/or sexual violence.

The funding encompasses:

- £422,072 awarded for a two-year period to six organisations for the recruitment and training of Independent Sexual Violence Advisers (ISVAs) and Independent Domestic Violence Advisers (IDVAs).
- £558,919 awarded as uplift funding to 22 organisations for one year: funding areas such as staff costs (including ISVA/IDVA provision and support workers), training, group work and counselling support.

Matthew Barber, Police and Crime Commissioner said “We have some exceptional organisations supporting victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence in the Thames Valley and I am delighted to be able to award this funding which will make a huge difference to them and ultimately the victims and survivors they work with. Increasing specialist service provision will give victims better access to much needed support to help them recover from the harm they’ve experienced.

“Some of the posts funded are dedicated to supporting particular groups who for a range of reasons can be less likely to access support such as men, disabled victims and victims within LGBTQ+ and BAMER communities. A focus of the ISVA/IDVA fund to increase tailored provision for these groups will, I hope, result in services being better resourced to meet victims’ specific needs”.

Recipients of the funding include:

- Oxfordshire Sexual Abuse and Rape Crisis Centre and MK-Act to develop IDVA provision to work with elderly and disabled clients
- LGBT+ organisation Support U to provide an ISVA/IDVA to work with LGBT+ victims across the Thames Valley
- Sunrise Multicultural Project to recruit an IDVA to work with BAMER communities and Reducing the Risk to develop training and engagement to encourage further BAMER clients to access support.
- Aylesbury Vale and Milton Keynes Sexual Assault and Abuse Support Service and Trust House Reading to develop ISVA and IDVA provision to support male victims with Mankind also funded to deliver support groups for male victims of domestic abuse.
- SAFE! to increase both ISVA and IDVA support for children aged 5 -18 who have experienced sexual or domestic abuse.

The Ministry of Justice funding has been awarded following a Needs Assessment carried out by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

This funding is in addition to the 2021/22 core Victims Services Grant of over £2.8m awarded to the PCC to support victims of crime across the Thames Valley.

<https://www.readingchronicle.co.uk/news/19461216.taxpayers-shell-17-million-fund-police/>

Council taxpayers in Thames Valley will have to shell out more than £17 million extra to pay for policing in Thames Valley this year, figures reveal.

Home Office data shows £212.8 million in funding for Thames Valley Police will come from council tax bills in 2021-22 – £17.2 million (9%) more than last year's £195.6 million.

A further £270.5 million will come from central government – up 7% compared to 2020-21.

Across England and Wales, a combined funding pot of £15.9 billion has been agreed for the current financial year – a 4.5% real terms rise since last year.

But the Police Federation of England and Wales wants to see a multi-year funding plan implemented to stop forces operating "hand to mouth" through yearly settlements.

This is the fifth consecutive year in which police funding has increased in real terms, following a decline between 2010-11 and 2016-17. It means funding is now only at a similar level to that seen in the year to March 2011.

## **How police worked to dismantle more than 50 drug lines in two years**

<https://www.itv.com/news/meridian/2021-08-23/how-police-worked-to-dismantle-more-than-50-drug-lines-in-two-years>

More than 50 drug lines operating in an area of Buckinghamshire have been dismantled by police over the last two years.

Since 2019, officers in Aylesbury Vale dismantled multiple lines operating in the area, 35 of them being county drug lines.

Thames Valley Police have seized over 10kg of drugs, amounting to a street value of nearly £400,000.

More than £300,000 of cash made through criminal means has also been recovered.

As a result of police work, drug dealers are now serving a combined total of more than 270 years in prison.

As of the release of the police footage, 39 people arrested are awaiting trial.

## **Thames Valley Police to target serious violent crime in hotspots**

<https://www.bucksfreepress.co.uk/news/19394389.thames-valley-police-target-serious-violent-crime-hotspots/>