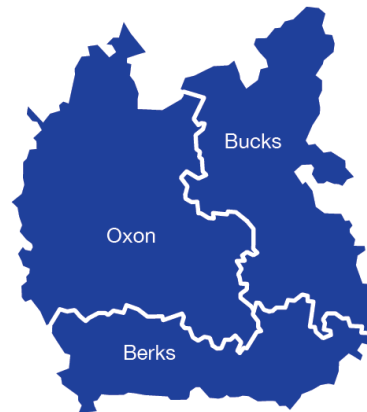


Report to the Thames Valley Police & Crime Panel

Title: Topical Issues

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Criminals and sexual predators allowed into police, says report

[BBC News](#)

Hundreds of police officers who should have failed vetting checks may be in the job in England and Wales, a damning report has found. The police watchdog looked at eight forces and found decisions on officers which were "questionable at best".

One officer convicted of domestic abuse and one accused of sexual assault were among those accepted.

Of 725 sample cases closely examined in the review, there were concerns about 131 officers cleared to serve in police forces - but the watchdog said the true total could be much higher.

The report also highlights misogyny and sexual misconduct, and was commissioned after the murder of Sarah Everard by a serving officer, which raised questions about police recruitment and vetting.

Former Home Secretary Priti Patel commissioned the report last year from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS). The authors questioned 11,000 officers and staff - and of the women who responded, "an alarming number alleged appalling behaviour by male colleagues", raising concerns about risks to people outside the police.

The survey found that most respondents thought their force's culture "discouraged prejudicial and improper behaviour", with men in general more positive about the culture.

But the report adds: "Despite these results, we found a culture where misogyny, sexism and predatory behaviour towards female police officers and staff and members of the public still exists."

Vetting is meant to be carried out when candidates apply to join or transfer to a police force and then every 10 years, or every seven for sensitive roles.

Instead, the review found officers passed despite having criminal records, being suspected of serious offences, having substantial debts or having family linked to organised crime.

The inspectors also found examples of police officers transferring between forces despite complaints or misconduct allegations.

Most officers were unaware they should report major life changes which trigger more vetting, such as divorce, financial trouble or a new partner.

Social media checks are increasingly important but comments made online by some of the 131 highlighted candidates were found to be discriminatory, inflammatory or extremist.

During the pandemic, a move to online recruiting meant some people became police officers without face-to-face interviews. Currently, the report says, forces are under enormous pressure to recruit more people.

Cuts to public spending brought in by the Conservative-led government since 2010, combined with experienced officers leaving, mean an extra 50,000 recruits are needed. The government promises 20,000 new recruits by March - so far 15,000 have joined.

Thames Valley Police pledges to take 'action' on representation

https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-62808107?at_medium=RSS&at_campaign=KARANGA

Thames Valley Police has said it is determined to take "real action" to make it more representative of the population it serves.

Thames Valley Police (TVP) serves about 2.4m people, of which 15.4% is from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) groups.

But 6.5% of its officers are from BAME groups and they have been consistently underrepresented.

TVP said it is "committed to improving the trust" the groups have in it.

The proportion of BAME officers in promoted positions across the force, which serves Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire, is even lower at 6%.

The force said it has drafted a localised Race Action Plan and progress tracker to "enhance the experiences of all ethnically diverse colleagues".

A study published by TVP last month - but undertaken in 2019 - showed 48% of BAME officers questioned said they felt institutional racism was still present within the police service generally. Another 37% disagreed.

Fewer knife crime offenders sent to prison in Thames Valley despite rise in offences

<https://uk.news.yahoo.com/fewer-knife-crime-offenders-sent-100221003.html>

Fewer knife crime offenders in Thames Valley were sentenced to prison last year, figures reveal.

Anti-knife crime charity the Ben Kinsella Trust said it is "extremely worrying" to see fewer criminals being sent to prison across England and Wales, despite a rise in knife crime.

Ministry of Justice figures show that 545 knife and offensive weapon offenders were cautioned or convicted in Thames Valley in the year to March – with just 122 (22 per cent) resulting in immediate custody.

This was down from 26 per cent in 2020-21, and from 29 per cent in 2019-20, before the coronavirus pandemic.

Last year, 19 per cent of offences resulted in a caution, 26 per cent in a community sentence, 24 per cent in a suspended sentence and 10 per cent in another form of disposal.

Across England and Wales, the proportion of offenders receiving an immediate custodial sentence for a knife and offensive weapon offence fell from 36 per cent in 2019-20, to just 29 per cent last year.

This comes despite a 2015 policy of "two strikes and you're out" – where repeat offenders would face a minimum six-month prison sentence for carrying a knife.

The MoJ figures also show that 19,555 knife crime offences nationwide resulted in a caution or conviction in 2021-22 – which is still below pre-pandemic levels, but a 5 per cent rise on the previous year.

As a result, the rate of offences rose from 35 per 100,000 people to 37 year-on-year.

MoJ statisticians said the latest figures are impacted by the effects of the pandemic – including the impact of lockdowns, changes to court arrangements, the re-opening of courts and the types of cases which were prioritised.

In the Thames Valley, the rate of knife offences was 29 per 100,000 people last year – up from 26 in 2020-21.

Meanwhile, the average custodial sentence length for offenders nationally rose slightly to 7.5 months in 2021-22.

The Government said the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act ensures the most serious and violent offenders will spend longer behind bars.

And it said new Home Office measures will mean police can conduct more stop and searches for dangerous weapons, while Serious Violence Reduction Orders will allow them to target adults previously convicted for knife or other offensive weapon crimes.

Thames Valley Police safeguard potential modern slavery victims in Europe wide operation

<https://www.readingchronicle.co.uk/news/22569582.thames-valley-police-safeguard-potential-modern-slavery-victims-europe-wide-operation/>

Police in England and Wales pledge to attend every home burglary

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-63139443>

Oxford hate crime incidents increase for another year

<https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/22564641.oxford-hate-crime-incidents-increase-another-year/>

Hate crimes and incidents in Oxford have increased year-on-year for the last three years, with a near seven per cent rise in reported incidents from last year.

A hate crime is defined as 'any criminal offence which is perceived by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by hostility or prejudice based on a person's race or perceived race; religion or perceived religion; sexual orientation or perceived sexual orientation; disability or perceived disability and any crime motivated by hostility or prejudice against a person who is transgender or perceived to be transgender.'

The latest 12-month rolling data released by Thames Valley Police, it shows that between September 2021 To August 2022 there were 738 reported hate crime incidents in the city.

This number was up by 47 on the same period the previous year (691) and up 206 on the year before that (532).

Within these numbers, the largest rise was seen in Transphobic Incidents - Non-Crime Occurrence where there was a 133 per cent increase – up to 14 incidents in 2022/23 from 6 in 2021/22.

This was in-line with a 86 per cent increase in Transphobic Incidents - Recorded Crime which rose from 7 in 2020/21 to 15 in 2021/22 and then 28 in 2022/23.

Alongside this, there was also a large increase in Religious Incidents- Recorded Crime which saw a 42 per cent uptick from 16 in 2020/21 to 19 in 2021/22 and then 27 in 2022/23.

Thames Valley Police boss promises 'significant increase in staff' to boost poor 101 wait times

<https://www.msn.com/en-gb/money/other/thames-valley-police-boss-promises-significant-increase-in-staff-to-boost-poor-101-wait-times/ar-AA12sKSy>

Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner will consider delving into financial reserves to solve worsening response times to 101 calls. Dialling 101 enables the public to contact the police in non-emergency situations but waiting times to get through to a call handler in Thames Valley, the region that covers Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Berkshire, have rocketed since June 2021.

Having hovered either side of the two-minute mark before that, pick-up times reported at Thames Valley's Performance and Management meeting were under a minute for four months in a row until July 2021. Despite some fluctuations, the waits have typically increased, spiking at 9.6 minutes in September 2022 to date. More than a third – 34 per cent – of callers had waited 10 minutes or more in September up to the publication of the report, another figure that has typically increased month by month having been at zero in June 2021.

Thames Valley Police Knife Crime figures

<https://www.readingchronicle.co.uk/news/22613676.thames-valley-police-knife-crime-jail-figures/>

High-tech drones used to disrupt hare coursing in Thames Valley

<https://www.fwi.co.uk/news/crime/high-tech-drones-aim-to-disrupt-hare-coursing-in-thames-valley>

Operation Deter will adopt zero-tolerance approach to knives

The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) and Thames Valley Police launched Operation Deter in Milton Keynes, which has recently expanded into Aylesbury.

The initiative, driven by Police & Crime Commissioner Matthew Barber, focused on prosecution, intervention and prevention. It launched in Milton Keynes, where there is particular community concern about knife crime after a number of tragic incidents earlier this year.

Although year on year, knife-enabled crime is down in Milton Keynes and across the Thames Valley Police area, Operation Deter's main objective is to make better use of charging and remanding offenders aged over 18 to court, ensuring that a robust message is sent to anyone found in possession of a knife.

One month after the launch of Operation Deter, Thames Valley Police released figures for charges and convictions in Milton Keynes. Results show a significant increase in charge and remand decisions compared with the previous month as the force seeks to adopt a tougher new approach to tackling knife crime.

Through a more proactive approach, Thames Valley Police recorded 57 knife-enabled crimes in Milton Keynes with 22 people charged, 16 of those remanded, and 25 bailed with conditions while investigations continue.

Additional £4.4m of funding secured to support victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence

The OPCC has secured over £1.4 million per annum of funding over the next three years to support victims across Thames Valley.

This funding will be used to create new services where there is not currently any specialist support, such as a new stalking service, as well as providing increased support where there is currently a large area of demand.

It will also be utilised to create new specialist support for people with protected characteristics who are often under-represented in services (e.g. BAME communities, LGBT+ people and older people).

Police & Crime Commissioners award funding to dog section officers across Hampshire and Thames Valley

The PCCs for Thames Valley and for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, have awarded more than £48,000 to fund lifesaving first aid equipment.

As well as frequently working in some of the most rural and isolated areas, dog handlers will often be the first on the scene of calls and therefore in a position to provide potentially lifesaving support to those in need.

This funding will provide dog handlers with a variety of lifesaving first aid equipment including defibrillators, airway management equipment and the ability to deal with catastrophic bleeds.

Over £1.67m of funding secured for Safer Streets across the Thames Valley

The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner has secured over £1.67 million for initiatives to tackle violence against women and girls (VAWG) and anti-social behaviour.

Thames Valley was successful in all four bids that were submitted to receive a portion of national funding, with over £1.67m secured for activity across six local authority areas; Reading, Windsor and Maidenhead, Wokingham, Bracknell Forest, Cherwell and Milton Keynes.

This funding will be used for a range of interventions to tackle VAWG including: physical improvements to the built environment to provide safer routes, partnership working with higher education and the delivery of schools-based programmes to educate young people and empower them to identify and reject VAWG behaviours.

Milton Keynes takes a stand against violence in month of action

Thames Valley Police, the Police & Crime Commissioner for the Thames Valley, Milton Keynes Council and MK Dons are calling on the community to join them in a month of action against violent crime at the end of this year.

The month of action in December aims to bring together schools and parents, voluntary sector organisations, places of worship, community groups, local venues and businesses to work alongside statutory partners for Milton Keynes to take a stand together against violence in all forms.

To mark the month of action, Milton Keynes will host the National Monument Against Violence and Aggression, outside Stadium MK. Also known as the 'Knife Angel', the monument is a 27ft sculpture, made from approximately 100,000 bladed weapons collected in knife amnesty bins during police operations across the country.

PCC announces trauma-informed approach to reducing reoffending

Prison staff and practitioners across Thames Valley are set to benefit from a series of trauma-informed training sessions, as part of RESTART Thames Valley.

RESTART Thames Valley is a year-long pilot programme supporting people leaving prison, including women and those on short term sentences, which will incorporate a number of elements including:

- Dedicated support to help people find work and a stable home
- Training for frontline staff across a range of organisations.
- Improving access to local support groups to help people rebuild their families.

As part of the pilot project, national trainer's aneemo and No One Left Out have successfully bid to run a series of trauma and psychologically-informed workshops, with a particular focus on reducing reoffending. A variety of practitioners, including those from prisons and probation, charitable organisations and local authorities, will benefit from a range of options including in-person, remote sessions and access to an accredited video-based online training course.

Claire Ritchie, Director of No One Left Out, said: "Our role is to build on the good practice and expertise already happening in the Thames Valley. To foster staff confidence and psychological safety when taking a trauma informed approach, to maintain their emotional health and well-being."

The aim of these training sessions is for services across Thames Valley to both understand and adopt a trauma-informed approach when working with individuals they come into contact with.

Search & Rescue teams awarded £30,000 of funding

The Police & Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley has awarded funding to Search and Rescue Teams across the Thames Valley.

The funding, which has been awarded through the PCC's Community Fund, will be split across the five Lowland Search and Rescue Teams based in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire.