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Update from Surrey Police Chief Constable Lynne Owens



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The tragic murder of PC David Phillips in Merseyside and the shooting (thankfully not fatal) of a Metropolitan Police detective earlier this month led me to reflect once more on the risks taken daily by police officers across the country in their dedication to keeping the public safe.

Here in Surrey, I read with great pride the many letters I receive from members of the public thanking our officers and staff for their efforts – the majority of which relate to protecting vulnerable people. The compassionate side of policing is perhaps the most under sold of our attributes but often the most valued. Recently, for example, these have included letters of thanks from the families of missing people, while another was from the best friend of a woman who was in the process of taking her own life and was saved by two officers.

Recognising our outstanding officers and staff for demonstrating the very highest levels of professionalism and courage is really important for me. At the most recent awards ceremony earlier this month, three constables received commendations for their bravery when disarming a man brandishing a large knife. They not only brought a potentially violent incident to a safe conclusion, but they also took the time to comfort the man's mother, who had witnessed the distressing scene, explain what was happening and reassure her that her son, who was suffering from a mental health issue, would get the help he desperately needed from the right people.

The very tangible positive impact officers make to the lives of people in Surrey is a very humbling aspect of leading the Force and serving the public.

Lynne Owens

Police Federation bravery award

Keeping on the same theme I thought I would share some timely news. This week saw two of our officers nominated for National Police Bravery Awards after putting their own safety on the line to stop a drink driver who was travelling the wrong way down the A3.

To avoid the car causing a potential head-on collision with oncoming traffic, the officers manoeuvred their police car into its path resulting in an impact with a combined speed of 80mph.

Despite being dazed from the crash the officers were able to then prevent any oncoming traffic

causing further collisions while also arresting the driver at the scene.

This kind of selfless courage typifies the attitude and approach of the vast majority of officers we have in this Force.

Behind closed doors

In last month's bulletin I introduced you to our Policing in Your Neighbourhood project, this is one part of our programme to build a policing model that deals with changing crime and demand. Equally it recognises we are doing that with growing financial restraint. This month I wanted to share with you more detail on what this actually means.

Crime is changing in Surrey, the number of what we are terming 'private crimes', those affecting often vulnerable people in person behind closed doors or online, has grown exponentially over the last decade. It is critical as a Force that we improve our capability and capacity to respond to these cases.

The reasons for the significant increase are numerous. High profile cases have empowered victims to speak up and we welcome this confidence as it is imperative that we target perpetrators. Last year alone Surrey received an increase of more than 900 reports of domestic violence. The nature of that crime and others that happen behind a closed door is that it is invisible to all but the victim. This is why we must adapt our resource and structures to enable us to respond and deliver the best service to those that need us most.

In addition, we're increasingly investigating crimes from previous years. Last year over 450 reported cases of serious sexual assault had occurred in history (rather than recently). The impact on victims are still as raw today, however these cases are more complex to investigate due to the passing of time. Our understanding of child sexual exploitation is developing too, and this needs a more sophisticated approach than crimes like stealing a car.

So, at Surrey Police we are changing and hopefully you can understand why we have to change further. We can evidence where our demand is and how we are meeting it. We have increased the number of officers in our Safeguarding teams, those who investigate crime against the most vulnerable and placed some of our most experienced investigators into those units. The result is that the positive outcomes are increasing, but the changes cannot happen overnight.

Emergency services collaboration

I've mentioned in previous updates how, in conjunction with Sussex Police, Surrey Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) and South East Coast Ambulance Service (SECAMB), we are exploring a range of options where working together can improve our service to the public, while reducing overall costs and providing better value for money. This is another part of our programme where I wanted to update you on the good progress we are making in several areas, including:

- Surrey Fire and Rescue is now responding to an average of 50 incidents a month where SECAMB needs help getting into a property – a role the police used to fulfil. This not only frees officers up for core policing tasks, but it also saves on boarding up costs as our SFRS colleagues have access to more specialist equipment which enables them to gain entry, often without causing damage.
 - SFRS colleagues are now able to work with us on searching for high risk missing people. Their thermal imaging equipment has the potential to be particularly useful should the south east regional police helicopter be unavailable. We are also working closely with the voluntary sector - in the shape of SURSAR (Surrey Search and Rescue) – which has so far assisted us with 60 high risk missing searches this year and which only a couple of months ago helped us to save the life of suicidal woman.
 - Work is underway on the development of a Multi Agency Information Transfer Technical
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Hub which will enable incidents to be transferred electronically between the emergency services, eliminating the need for time consuming phone calls. This is in its early stages of development and is a challenging piece of work because of the different systems currently in use by the organisations involved.

Our determination to work on our own and with others to provide the best possible service we can to the public of Surrey, despite the unrelenting financial cuts, is unstinting.

Tackling burglary

As the clocks go back and we have longer, darker evenings, burglaries historically have tended to increase. We are combating this with a three-week focus on reducing and detecting burglaries which started on 26 October. Throughout the three weeks there will be a programme of operational activity to target burglary suspects across the county. There will also be operational days of action across the county and a media campaign to encourage reporting of suspicious activity that could be linked to a burglary.

Operational successes

Despite all of the above, officers, staff and volunteers continue to work hard to keep you safe and pursue criminals. Here is a snapshot of some of the results that this has produced:

- Two days of action resulted in 26 people being arrested and charged for drugs related offences in the Woking, Guildford, Camberley and Haslemere areas, as well as outside the county in London, Hampshire and Thames Valley.
 - A child groomer who was quickly arrested by officers after a concerned parent raised the alarm has been jailed for a total of four years and eight months. A mother called the Force after she had seen a photo of her son on Facebook at Thorpe Park with a man she did not know. He was tracked down by officers while still in the park and arrested. His car was searched and a mobile phone and laptop were recovered which showed he had been using the internet to communicate with boys as young as 11 while pretending to be a teenage girl. During those conversations he incited them to engage in sexual activity which he recorded and shared with others online. Officers found in excess of 350 recordings showing young boys.
 - A man has been arrested in connection with an aggravated burglary which happened in Kingswood nearly a year ago, demonstrating our commitment to the relentless pursuit of criminals.
 - A man has been sentenced to seven months' imprisonment after pleading guilty to a string of thefts of DVDs from shops across the county.
 - Two men have been arrested following an armed robbery at a Co-operative store in Smallfield. Members of staff were threatened with what appeared to be firearms before tying them up and stealing cash.
 - Four warrants have been executed in the Reigate & Banstead and Tandridge areas, leading to the arrest of four men and two women on suspicion of drugs offences and possession of offensive weapons. Another man was also arrested on suspicion of immigration offences.
 - 52-year-old Russell Desmond has been given a Criminal Behaviour Order (CBO) banning him from the West Molesey area for two years. Desmond is part of a group of street drinkers in the area and is well known for his anti-social behaviour. We have worked hard with other agencies to put support mechanisms in place but this was either abused or not taken up, leaving no other option but a CBO.
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Key diary dates

Tandridge Crime Summit: 6.30 – 9pm, 3 November, District Council Offices, Oxted

Woking Crime Summit: 6.30 – 9pm, 12 November, HG Wells Conference and Events Centre, Woking

Child Sexual Exploitation Awareness Day: 1pm – 3pm and 6.30pm – 8.30pm, 30 November, Dorking Halls. For more details or to book a place visit www.surrey.police.uk/cse

Guildford Crime Summit: 2 December. Details TBC

For details of Neighbourhood Panel meetings, Police Surgeries and 'Meet the Beat' sessions in your neighbourhood, visit our [website](#)

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