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Update from Surrey Police Chief Constable Lynne Owens



Issue 31: January 2015

Happy New Year! I welcomed in the New Year in the company of dog handler PC Grant May and his dog on patrol in the north of the county. It was a busy, but enjoyable night working alongside impressively professional officers on the streets.

Lynne Owens

Dealing with mental health crises

While out on patrol on New Year's Eve I saw at first hand the impact that responding to those experiencing a mental health crisis has on policing. The sheer volume of these and other 'concern for safety' calls and the time it takes to respond to them accounted for about 20% of the demand on our officers' time that night.

Of course, this is not just a New Year's Eve issue – during 2014, 440 people were detained by us under section 136 of the Mental Health Act – more than one person a day.

The ambulance service is responsible nationally for dealing with physical health emergencies, but there is no one agency that currently has responsibility to respond and provide the right care to people with mental health emergencies. What is clear though, is that the police service should not be the prime agency dealing with this because a police cell is absolutely not the right place for someone in crisis.

As budgets for the whole public sector are cut back gaps such as this become more apparent. It is inevitable that cuts will have operational consequences and I think this leads to the really fundamental question of what exactly are the police here to do? This has to be considered against a need to recognise the changing nature of crime. Child and domestic abuse and crimes committed online are all areas that need investment.

I personally feel that reductions in public financing need to be considered in the round. Agency by agency top slicing means we are shrinking apart rather than together which creates gaps in the service we provide to the public. There also needs to be a public debate about what the role of police is and the implications of us picking up their core demand.

I have been devoting a great deal of time to this issue during January, participating in numerous media interviews in an attempt to help the public understand how the demands on us have

changed and to spark a debate about policing priorities, as well as calling for broader public sector reform so that the police are not always the automatic fall back for mental health emergencies.

The College of Policing are looking nationally at understanding the demands placed on the police service. Their initial findings have just been published and I attach their infographic which sheds some light on the debate in a manner which I hope you find helpful.

Terrorist attacks and the current threat level

Our thoughts continue to be with Parisians as they come to terms with the shocking terrorist attacks earlier this month.

The attacks are a stark reminder of the need for continued vigilance. The UK threat level from international terrorism remains at Severe, which means an attack is highly likely. Please ensure that all staff in your organisation, your communities and families are aware that they should be alert, but not alarmed by the current threat level and should continue to be vigilant about their own personal safety and the safety of others as they go about their daily business.

We know some communities are feeling particularly vulnerable due to the targeted nature of the attacks in France and would encourage anyone experiencing any form of hate crime or concerns to report it to us. To read an update from Assistant Commissioner Mark Rowley, National Policing Lead for Counter-terrorism, about some of the steps that are being taken following the attacks in Paris and elsewhere, visit <http://news.acpo.police.uk/releases/counter-terrorism-security-update>.

Any suspicious activity should be reported to the police on 999 or via the anti-terrorist hotline 0800 789 321. Locally of course we are working closely with our Jewish communities and responding to the specific threat to the policing community.

Mobile technology frees up officer time

One way we are trying to create capacity is by working more smartly. Our front line officers are able to spend more time out on patrol thanks to the introduction of new technology in the form of mobile devices/smart phones.

Officers are using the new mobile devices to search and update various databases on the move, issue tickets, input victim and witness statements and complete other forms electronically. This means there is no need for them to call in for information or return to the station to input data, resulting in a saving of around an hour a day per officer – time they can spend out on the streets serving the public. Our Contact Centre staff also have more time to deal with calls from the public instead of answering calls from officers.

In addition, we are benefitting from considerable savings as we no longer need to pay for reams of paper forms, plus efficiency is improved because the new devices eliminate the need to re-key data.

Looking further into the future we expect these devices to play an important part in giving us the flexibility to respond efficiently and effectively to changes in demand and legislation. Whilst technology means more crime has online links, this is a brilliant example of where it brings us benefits as well.

Child Sexual Exploitation awareness event planned

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a major child protection issue across the UK. Hidden from view and often going unnoticed, vulnerable young girls and boys are groomed and then sexually abused. A national CSE awareness day will launch on Wednesday, 18 March to promote the warning signs of CSE, increase reporting and signpost ways in which victims can access help.

In support of the national awareness day we are hosting two events in Woking aimed at local businesses and parents to raise awareness of the issues:

- Chelsea's Choice – a play featuring a victim's experience of CSE, and
- Safe and Sound – parents of CSE victims talk about their experience.

I'd really encourage you and your staff to attend and help be part of the eyes and ears of our communities who can assist us to protect children at risk.

For more information and to book a place, visit www.surrey.police.uk/cse.

Joint Surrey/Sussex drink-drive campaign scores successes

Community intelligence was a key part of our first joint Surrey/Sussex drink-drive campaign which ran throughout December to tackle the annual spike in drink-driving associated with the festive season.

In Surrey 106 arrests were made, with 65 drivers charged with offences. Our Roads Policing officers undertook dedicated patrols actively looking for offenders, while teams also responded to tip-offs from members of the public who saw people getting into a car to drive when they knew they had been drinking or taking drugs.

Thanks to all of you who promoted and supported this drive to keep the roads safe and don't worry, it won't stop there - we'll still be out patrolling the roads and tackling unsafe driving throughout the year.

Operational Successes

Aside from the great results on the drink-drive front, we've had a successful month in other areas, including:

- A driver has been handed a six year prison sentence for dangerous driving and driving without a licence following a collision with a motorcycle which left the rider and his pillion with life changing injuries. The driver was also disqualified from driving for five years.
 - Two teenagers have been put behind bars for 10 months for multiple theft offences. The charges covered 40 offences committed in the Epsom and Ewell areas between March and May last year, and a further 28 offences committed in the Metropolitan Police area. The offences included theft of and from vehicles and thefts from garages and sheds.
 - A burglar who left his fingerprints at the scene of his crime in Farnham and hid the stolen jewellery in his toilet cistern has been jailed for four years. Officers on patrol as part of the Force's anti-burglary campaign stopped the man having recognised him as wanted. He initially gave false details, but the arresting officers used a roadside fingerprint reader which matched his prints to those at the scenes of his crimes.
 - A fraudster has been sent to prison for seven years after he conned his victims out of £1.8m to fund a lavish lifestyle. David Gale offered fake shares in a betting company, which he promised were risk free. However, his victims – of which there were more than 30 – were left short of thousands of pounds each.
 - A 25-year-old Weybridge man has been given a Criminal Behaviour Order and four prohibitions for his anti-social behaviour in Staines. The two-year CBO excludes him from a section of the town and acting in an anti-social manner, including drinking alcohol in a public place.
 - In another anti-social behaviour case, a Closure Order has been obtained on a Guildford property after numerous complaints from local residents about persistent nuisance and
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noise. The order is in place until 29 March 2015 and anyone seen entering the property will be arrested and liable to a fine or custodial sentence for breaching the Order.

Key diary dates

- **Surrey Heath Crime Summit:** Thursday, 12 February, 6.30 for 7pm, Camberley Theatre
- **Waverley Crime Summit:** Thursday, 26 February, 6.30 for 7pm, Borough Hall, Godalming
- **Woking Crime Summit:** Thursday, 12 March, H.G. Wells Centre, Woking. Time tbc
- **Chelsea's Choice:** Wednesday, 18 March, H.G. Wells Centre, Woking, 10am-noon and 1-3pm
- **Mole Valley Crime Summit:** Thursday, 19 March, Dorking Halls. Time tbc

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

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