

## **PERFORMANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY MEETING**

**DATE:** 17 September 2021

**LOCATION:** Office of the Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner, Sackville House, Lewes

**PRESENT:** Police & Crime Commissioner – Katy Bourne (KB)  
Chief Finance Officer – Iain McCulloch (IMcC)  
Deputy Chief Constable – Julia Chapman (JC)  
Temporary Assistant Chief Constable – Fiona MacPherson (FMacP)  
  
Correspondence and Admin Officer – Elliot Saunders (webcasting)  
Head of Performance – Graham Kane (minutes)

## **INVESTMENT AREAS FOLLOWING PRECEPT INCREASE**

**In January this year, I was given public support to increase the policing part of the Council Tax for 2021/22. The additional investment means that by 2023 there will be 250 more police officers, 100 extra Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and 50 additional specialist police staff than there were in March 2018 – a total increase of 400 individuals.**

- A. Can you provide me with a progress update about how the additional funds have been used to date?**  
**B. Operation Uplift – the Government campaign to recruit 20,000 new police officers by March 2022 – will fund a further 121 police officers in Sussex. How is this recruitment progressing?**  
**C. Are you confident that all individuals will be in post before 31 March 2022?**  
**D. What challenges have you experienced with the recruitment and training of new officers, staff and PCSOs this year? And how have you overcome those?**  
**E. How many trainers does the Force have? And are these numbers sufficient to ensure that new police officer recruits [and those substantive officers now out of their probationary periods] can be trained in the full range of skills, tools and powers required to perform their duties efficiently and effectively in Sussex?**

*JC began by recognising the additional investment that was provided to Sussex Police following the decision taken by KB to increase the precept in 2021/22. This additional funding has enabled the Force to make investments in technology, as well as resources, to reflect better the ongoing changes to crime and criminality.*

*In addition to the 100 extra PCSOs and 50 more specialist police staff already recruited in recent years, further recruitment and activity is planned throughout the remainder of the financial year and will take place on a staged basis as per the below:*

### **Strengthen local policing, tackle crime and prevent harm**

- ✓ *An additional four Police Constable will be recruited to provide an uplift to the Rural Crime Team [these individuals will commence in post from October 2021].*
- ✓ *A new Public Engagement Tool is currently being procured which will improve the online presence of the Force and enable officers to engage with and provide updates to local communities [in response to local priorities and policing activity].*
- ✓ *Improvements have been made to the investigative capacity and capability of the Force through the recruitment of an additional 15 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) police staff investigator posts [with greater skills and investigative qualifications]. A further 25 FTE investigator posts will be recruited to later in 2021/22.*
- ✓ *An additional 25 FTE statement takers have been recruited to assist investigations.*
- ✓ *The capacity of the Force Contact Command and Control Department (FCCCD) has been maintained through the recruitment of a further 9.50 FTE individuals to ensure that call handling performance [to both 999 and 101] remains consistent.*

Relentless disruption of serious and organised crime

- ✓ A new Digital Investigation Support Unit will be created [in autumn 2021] comprising advanced practitioners in internet, intelligence and investigation. The Unit will consist of five police officers and three FTE digital media investigators.
- ✓ Operation Centurion – the Sussex Police response to tackle county lines drug trafficking, criminality and exploitation – has been strengthened through the recruitment of two individuals [a Police Sergeant and police staff researcher]. A further two Police Constables will be recruited into the team in October 2021.
- ✓ An additional two Police Sergeants will be recruited to provide an uplift to the Anti-Corruption Unit [within the Professional Standards Department] to ensure that officers and staff continue to demonstrate the highest standards of professional behaviour.

Support Victims and Safeguard the Vulnerable

- ✓ A further four police officers have been recruited into the Public Confidence Team [bringing valuable operational policing experience] to respond to complaints and resolve efficiently and effectively any issues reported [reducing the impact on frontline resources].
- ✓ Investment has been made into an Improving Volume Crime Demand project to develop further the Force response to volume crime. A Project Manager has been recruited to lead this project and redesign the model used by the Force, seeking to improve the allocation of resources and investigation of crimes, including theft and assaults [with minor or no injury].
- ✓ Improvements have been made to the functionality of the victim survey, including the first upload of SMS [text message] questions. This approach has received a 30% response rate to date and seeks to understand better public confidence by providing contextual data.

In 2020/21, Sussex Police recruited an additional 129 police officers as part of Operation Uplift. This was supplemented by a further 50 officers funded by an increase to the police precept and all 179 officers were recruited into the Force by 31 March 2021.

**The Deputy Chief Constable confirmed that Sussex Police is on track to recruit an additional 121 police officers in Sussex – as part of Operation Uplift – across 2021/22.** Sussex Police will achieve this net increase by recruiting 240 new officers across the financial year to ensure that the anticipated natural attrition throughout the year [by individuals resigning, retiring or transferring to other police force areas] will not have any impact on the net increase planned.

The Force has already recruited 25 of these police officers [in June 2021], with three further intakes of 72, 76 and 76 officers planned for September 2021, January 2022 and March 2022 respectively. KB was reassured to note that all these officers will be in post by 31 March 2022 [EDIT: The Operation Uplift recruitment will also include an additional six officers for the South East Regional Organised Crime Unit].

It was highlighted that the past 18 months have presented the Force with additional challenges in respect of recruitment and training [both in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the supplementary demands of Operation Uplift]. Throughout this period, Sussex Police has continued to attract, recruit and train a significant number of new police officers, staff and PCSOs to achieve the targets set, with adaptations made to processes and procedures to ensure that these requirements were met. The contributions of the Attraction and Recruitment Team and the Learning & Professional Development Department [within the Human Resources Department] were both recognised and praised by the Deputy Chief Constable.

*JC recognised that the time it has taken to progress some of the applications for new police officers has resulted in individuals withdrawing from the process. National changes to officer entry requirements [introduced prior to the pandemic] also stipulate that applicants must now have a driving license before they join a police force. However, the cancellation and reduced programme of driving tests [in response to COVID-19] has made it difficult for individuals to obtain these licences and created a backlog which has resulted in delayed [or unconfirmed] start dates for some candidates in Sussex.*

*It was highlighted that both the national assessment centre for police constables [previously delivered at the College of Policing in Ryton, Coventry] and Sussex Police adapted and amended processes to conduct virtual interviews online, rather than face-to-face, to ensure that the procedure maintained its integrity and remained COVID-compliant. Amendments were also made to the pre-employment checks, including the fitness testing, health checks and biometric vetting, to improve the efficiency of the individual processes, although it was highlighted that no pre-employment checks were missed as part of any revisions made. It was also emphasised that at no point were the standards reduced by the Force to deliver the increased levels of recruitment required for police officers, staff and PCSOs during this time.*

*The easing and removal of the restrictions [this summer] has enabled more of the recruitment and training processes to return to "normal" with increased personal interactions and minor revisions made to existing adaptations to maximise the ongoing safety of all concerned. The Force has also been able to recommence its local recruitment campaigns to target under-represented communities and demographics in the delivery of its Attraction Strategy [in partnership with the Positive Action Team].*

*The Deputy Chief Constable explained that Sussex Police has adapted most of the training provided to the police workforce to deliver this through virtual learning. Where this is not possible and face-to-face training is still required, reductions have been made to the number of individuals present in any classroom which has increased the number of sessions required and impacted the timetable required to accommodate this.*

*It was highlighted that the number of trainers in post to ensure that new police officer, staff and PCSO recruits are trained in the full range of skills, tools and powers required to perform their duties remains an ongoing consideration for Sussex Police on the strategic risk register. The Force has mitigated against this backlog by prioritising the most important training – including police officer safety training and driver training [both initial and annual refresher training].*

*Sussex Police has also maintained a particular focus on initial driver training, with additional training courses created and delivered, and extensions made to the permits already issued [as permitted by the College of Policing]. KB was pleased to understand that the Force is making progress in terms of reducing its training backlog and agreed to keep this area under review.*

**ACTION: KB agreed to look at the training figures for Sussex Police at the next Performance & Accountability Meeting on 22 October 2021.**

## **NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING**

**In May and June, my office completed the latest tranche of 32 online focus groups involving 71 town and parish councils throughout Sussex to discuss police engagement with local communities, contact with Neighbourhood Policing Teams and the quality of information fed back to local communities by the police.**

**A. What is the remit of the Neighbourhood Policing Teams in Sussex? How do these teams engage with local communities? And how do you measure the effectiveness of neighbourhood policing in Sussex?**

**B. What are 'Local Engagement Plans'? How will these plans be used by the Force to identify and address the specific needs of local communities throughout Sussex? And what impact are these plans anticipated to have?**

**C. How do you intend to improve police visibility within local communities? And how will any improvements in this area be communicated to local communities and local representatives?**

*The Deputy Chief Constable explained that Sussex Police has adopted the neighbourhood policing guidelines developed by the College of Policing in 2018. These include:*

- *a flow of vital community intelligence on a range of issues, from neighbourhood to national security.*
- *promoting community safety and feelings of safety.*
- *prevention of crime, disorder and antisocial behaviour.*
- *protecting the vulnerable and reducing repeat demands.*
- *the opportunity to create resilient communities less reliant on police support.*
- *the legitimacy necessary to enable policing by consent.*

*The remit of the Neighbourhood Policing Teams (NPTs) in Sussex is to contribute towards creating strong and effective communities by working in partnership with residents, businesses and other partner agencies.*

*The Force has previously introduced a named PCSO for each geographical area in Sussex and smaller, more dedicated areas, for them to patrol. The NPTs [including the PCSOs] engage with local communities through the visible foot patrols they undertake, during the responses to calls for service and as part of their patrol plans. This approach enables the teams to understand better the local areas [and the different communities who live and work there], document and engage with key stakeholders and locations, and to work with schools, colleges and other educational establishments.*

*This model is also recognised to provide police officers and PCSOs with increased knowledge about the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for the areas they are responsible for to maximise community engagement and to understand and address public and policing priorities identified locally. Targeted police activity is delivered by the NPTs in communities through preventative directed patrols and regular visits to properties that have been 'cuckooed' to disrupt organised crime and to safeguard the vulnerable adults within the properties [EDIT: Cuckooing is a term used to describe the action of organised crime groups, gangs or other drug dealers taking over the property of a vulnerable adult with the sole purpose of using it as a local base to supply drugs from].*

*The NPTs will also attend [the relevant agenda items at] district and parish council meetings [either in person or online], participate in Community Safety Partnership (CSP), Joint Action Group (JAG) and Independent Advisory Group (IAG) meetings and attend other community events coordinated by the District Engagement Officers. All this activity and engagement is supported by a proactive social media presence on Facebook and Twitter to share information and provide members of the public with updates about local policing activity.*

*JC explained that each policing district in Sussex has a 'Local Engagement Plan' which includes information and intelligence received from the local community to ensure that priorities are determined relevant to each individual area. This work is undertaken as part of the patrol plans [described above] and is used to generate a community profile document which contains an overview of the local community, any known risks or tensions, vulnerable groups, and community priorities. This profile is used to inform decisions and direct local policing activity on each of the districts to ensure that "the right police resources are in the right place at the right time."*

*The Deputy Chief Constable recognised the importance that members of the public place on police visibility in local communities and explained that this needs to be balanced against the information and intelligence received by the Force [about crime, incidents and 'hotspot' locations] to maximise the effectiveness of the policing response provided to deter offending, catch criminals and improve community safety.*

*Sussex Police has developed a two-way information sharing platform – In the Know – which provides members of the public with information and alerts [from reliable sources] about what is happening in their local areas [in terms of recorded crime, crime prevention advice, appeals for witness and news].*

*The Force is currently developing and enhancing this tool further by building on the previous version and tailoring the responses provided to the specific interests of the individual subscribers. This approach seeks to maximise the online policing presence provided in Sussex [by targeting different and/or harder to reach communities through more localised, individual and bespoke responses] and complements the physical policing presence already being delivered in local communities. The revised elements of the platform are currently being procured and are anticipated to be in place by November 2021.*

*Further information about the 'In the Know' service can be viewed on the Sussex Police website through the following link: <https://www.sussex.police.uk/advice/advice-and-information/wsi/watch-schemes-initiatives/sus/in-the-know/>*

## **HMICFRS – A REVIEW OF FRAUD: TIME TO CHOOSE**

**Last month [5 August], Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) published the findings from ‘A review of fraud: Time to choose’ report which found that “too many victims of fraud are still receiving a poor service from the police and are denied justice.”**

- A. How have you reflected on the findings from this report?**
- B. What impact did the pandemic have on the number of fraud offences recorded?**
- C. What are Sussex Police doing to tackle fraud? And what are the key challenges for the Force in this area?**
- D. How many reports of fraud were disseminated to Sussex Police by the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau (NFIB) during 2020/21? How does this compare to the year before?**
- E. What do you attribute this increase/decrease to?**
- F. Of those reports received, how many outcomes remain outstanding? And how many of those outcomes are more than a year old?**
- G. What does the timeliness of the outcomes provided back to the NFIB look like in Sussex? If a delay exists, what is this delay attributed to?**
- H. How is Operation Signature being used to improve the prevention, response and enforcement capabilities of the Force?**
- I. The report highlighted that only 10 of the previous 16 HMICFRS recommendations had been implemented. What is the position in Sussex?**

*FMacP began by recognising the significant impact that fraud can have on victims and explaining that reports of fraud now represent nearly 40% of all recorded crime – an increasing area of concern for all police force areas nationally.*

*It was emphasised that the publication of this latest report has provided Sussex Police with an opportunity to review, reflect and test the Force response in this area, building on the improvements that have already been delivered locally following the release of the first HMICFRS report in 2018. This has included examining how the response provided in Sussex can be developed further by enhancing the pursue and protect capabilities and improving the ability of the Force to achieve more positive outcomes for victims.*

*KB was reassured to understand that reports of fraud have now returned to “normal” levels after registering an increase during the pandemic, with notable increases in both investment fraud and romance fraud. It was highlighted that Sussex Police receive approximately 800 reports [of fraud] each month, and that this increased to more than 1,200 reports in February and March 2021, as criminals adapted their behaviours and criminality through different platforms in response to the national restrictions on movement in place.*

*Action Fraud is the national reporting centre for fraud and the most appropriate body for individuals to report any experiences of scams, fraud or cybercrime in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. This centralised approach enables a national position to be developed to understand better the number of reported offences and whether any trends or patterns exist. The NFIB then triage and assess each of the reports received before referring these to the relevant police force area(s) for investigation and response locally.*

*It was highlighted that fraud investigations can vary significantly in terms of complexity and that some offences are able to be dealt with faster than others through the criminal justice system. Sussex Police received 131 reports from the NFIB during 2020/21 that required an investigation because actionable intelligence to pursue the offenders was identified. Of the 131 reports investigated by the Force, 96 [73%] have been completed [with 10 of these subsequently cancelled], with a further four [3%] reports filed this month and 31 [24%] reports remaining active [at a high-level] and not yet returned.*

Operation Signature is the Sussex Police campaign to identify and support vulnerable victims of fraud. The Force is constantly seeking to develop and improve this process, focussing on prevention, response, and enforcement in line with emerging fraud types and different safeguarding and disruption opportunities. Operation Signature has also been recognised as "best practice" nationally and adopted by the other police force areas in England and Wales. Further information about Operation Signature can be viewed on the Sussex Police website through the following link:

<https://www.sussex.police.uk/advice/advice-and-information/wsi/watch-schemes-initiatives/os/operation-signature/>

The Temporary Assistant Chief Constable explained that Sussex Police is working with the financial sector, partner agencies and volunteers to improve opportunities to respond, prevent and enforce fraud offences as part of Operation Signature. Examples of this activity include:

- ✓ **Banking Protocol** – an initiative through which banking staff can alert the police to suspected scams or highlight any unusual or large transactions being made in person, over the telephone or online through internet banking. The scheme has already prevented more than £1.6 million from being lost to fraudsters this year, with 172 vulnerable victims identified [and safeguarded] and 10 individuals arrested.
- ✓ **trueCall** – Sussex Police has installed more than 300 trueCall telephone blocking devices in the homes of those most vulnerable to telephone fraud. The devices allow individuals to screen all calls received through their telephone number and to block any numbers that are not recognised. The trueCall devices also record the numbers that are blocked which can then be used by analysts to identify the numbers used most frequently that require further investigation. It is estimated that more than 225,000 calls have been blocked by these devices to date.
- ✓ **Vulnerable Fraud Caseworkers** – provide enhanced support to medium and high-risk victims of fraud. The caseworkers offer emotional support, practical guidance and advice about how to identify the signs of future fraudulent activity. This support has also recently been extended to include a peer support group specifically for victims of romance fraud.
- ✓ **Volunteer Fraud Prevention Programme** – this programme has been developed to provide a preventative response to victims [and businesses] who experience fraud but are not identified to be vulnerable for the purposes of Operation Signature. This approach also means that all victims of fraud in Sussex can receive a response, with practical fraud prevention and online safety advice, signposting and access to local support services provided.

FMacP provided KB with assurances that Sussex Police is reviewing each of the revised recommendations and areas for improvement identified within the inspection report and that each item recognised to be relevant for Chief Constables would be addressed by the Force within the timescales provided by HMICFRS. In addition, an audit has been commissioned by the Police Effectiveness, Efficiency and Legitimacy (PEEL) Board to understand better Force compliance with the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime in respect of victims of fraud.

The Temporary Assistant Chief Constable concluded by encouraging members of the public who have either been a victim of fraud themselves [or who know a family member or friend who has] to contact Sussex Police and report this. If the fraud is currently occurring, Sussex Police should be contacted by telephone to 101 or by email to [101@sussex.pnn.police.uk](mailto:101@sussex.pnn.police.uk). If the fraud has already taken place, individuals should contact Action Fraud to report this. Further information about Action Fraud can be viewed through the following link: <https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/>

**ACTION: KB requested a copy of the audit around Force compliance with the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime in respect of victims of fraud.**

## **STALKING**

**There were 2,447 stalking crimes recorded by Sussex Police across rolling year period to 30 June 2021. This represented an increase of 320 crimes [+15%] compared to the 2,127 crimes recorded across the same period a year earlier.**

**A. Sussex Police secured the first Stalking Protection Order (SPO) in England and Wales on 20 January 2020. How many SPOs have been applied for and secured in Sussex since then?**

**B. What impact has the introduction of SPOs had on victims of stalking? And how are SPOs being used to support the work of Sussex Police in this area?**

**C. Are SPOs being considered and used in all applicable circumstances to support the Force in the management of perpetrators?**

**D. What training has been provided to officers in respect of SPOs to ensure that these are always applied for in the most appropriate circumstances and that they can be effectively managed?**

**E. How is the Force balancing the demands of safeguarding, protecting and maintaining regular contact with victims alongside managing perpetrators who have received SPOs?**

**F. What do the arrest and solved rates look like for stalking? How do these rates compare to previous years? And what is the Force doing to improve its response in this important area?**

*JC explained that the increase in the number of stalking offences recorded in Sussex was attributed to greater public awareness, improved police recognition [of offending behaviour] and accurate crime recording.*

*It was highlighted that a SPO is a civil order that can be applied for to prohibit a perpetrator from doing anything described or to require them to do anything described in the order [positive requirements]. Sussex Police has made 62 applications for SPOs [from January 2020 to date], with 28 full orders [45%] and 10 interim orders [16%] granted and a further five cases [8%] awaiting a court listing within the next four weeks. KB was pleased to note that the Force has secured more SPOs than any other police force area [excluding the Metropolitan Police Service].*

*The Deputy Chief Constable confirmed that the introduction of SPOs has had a significant impact on victims by assisting them to understand and identify stalking behaviours and the measures that now exist to protect them even if a criminal case cannot be pursued. This approach also replicates the additional protection and safeguarding that Domestic Violence Protection Orders have brought for victims of domestic abuse.*

*As well as prohibitive behaviours, SPOs can have positive requirements which allow the police service to better protect victims of stalking by identifying, responding [to] and addressing specific stalking behaviours to reduce persistence, recurrence and any escalating risk that may lead to more serious offending. For example, a perpetrator can be directed to attend a Cognitive Obsessive Behavioural Intervention programme as part of the SPO.*

*It was highlighted that Sussex Police has created guidance for officers and staff to ensure that every SPO has a standard set of conditions to ensure that a basic level of management is achieved. These conditions are tailored to the individual circumstances for each victim, with the potential to add further prohibitions [subject to court approval] dependent on the risk posed by the perpetrator.*

*JC reminded KB that SPOs are not appropriate in all circumstances but confirmed that these will always be considered and assessed by the Force in the first instance. Other civil options are also available to Sussex Police to safeguard individuals, including Non-Molestation Orders, bail conditions [secured by a criminal conviction] and/or reconciliation [where the offending behaviour ceases].*

*Once a SPO is granted by the court, it is sent to the Violence and Sexual Offences Register (ViSOR) team to manage the offender [and the offending behaviour] whilst simultaneously providing support to victim. It was emphasised that advocates – such as Veritas Justice – are utilised in this process to provide support, advocacy and advice to individuals affected by stalking.*

*Sussex Police monitor and scrutinise the arrest, search [at the home addresses of those undertaking the stalking activity] and solved rates for stalking offences at the PEEL Board and through a quarterly scrutiny panel [with external providers] to maximise opportunities to solve stalking offences and to bring more offenders to justice.*

*The Force has also used these platforms to understand better where improvements in performance could be realised, including a specific focus around investigations discontinued for evidential difficulties: outcome 15 [suspect identified; victim supports action; evidential difficulties exist] or outcome 16 [suspect identified; victim does not support further action]. Sussex Police will continue to look at the legitimacy of the evidential difficulties highlighted by officers, the appropriateness of using either of these outcomes, and whether anything further could have been completed [from the perspective of the Crown Prosecution Service].*

*JC confirmed that the solved rate for stalking offences in Sussex was 11.1% across the rolling year period to 31 August 2021, although it was recognised that the arrest rate for these offences had reduced over the past 18 months. KB stated that she would like to see an improvement in this area and would continue to monitor performance closely.*

*The Deputy Chief Constable confirmed that all frontline police officers and staff must complete mandated specialist training around stalking. This training package [originally delivered face-to-face] was moved online during the pandemic and has since been separated into multiple smaller modules to enable individuals to complete these as part of their allocated time for continued professional development.*

*A question sheet [with follow up advice] has also been produced [by Public Protection] for the call handlers to use in the FCCCD to assist them with the early identification of stalking offences and/or offending behaviour, and to provide immediate guidance and advice before any reports received are tasked to the most appropriate team for investigation. This question sheet was shared with the police forces in the South East region and, following positive feedback, is now recognised to be "best practice" nationally.*

*Sussex Police has also been part of Stalking Screening Tool pilot [with Surrey Police and Cheshire Constabulary] to assist frontline officers with recognising stalking behaviour at an early stage. The tool highlights indicators of risk and provides officers with advice and guidance to deliver an immediate safeguarding response. This pilot is in its final stages of evaluation and, subject to any amendments, should shortly be rolled out nationally.*

## **FORENSICS**

**Forensic science is used by police forces to provide scientific information to support them in the investigation of crimes.**

- A. What changes in demand do you anticipate for the forensic capacity and capability of Sussex Police?**
- B. What challenges does Sussex Police face in forensic investigations?**
- C. How much is spent by the Force on forensics? Is this sufficient? And how does this compare to other police force areas?**
- D. Why do investigations become delayed by forensics? What causes these delays? And what proportion of these delays are attributed to forensics?**
- E. Where there are delays in forensic returns, how does Sussex Police ensure that victims are kept updated? And how is performance in this area monitored?**
- F. Can you provide me with a summary of the types of investigations that may be impacted by forensic delays?**
- G. How timely is the Force at making forensic submissions? Is there any delay? And how is the effectiveness of Force performance in this area measured?**
- H. What provision of forensic services are outsourced in Sussex?**

*FMacP confirmed that forensic science covers both digital forensics and forensic investigations. Digital forensics is evidence held within digital equipment [including mobile phones, tablets and laptops] and forensic investigations relate to more traditional methods such as fingerprints, Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA) and blood analysis.*

*It was highlighted that there has been a significant increase in the demand for digital forensic services which continues to impact on resources and technology. This increased demand is related to a proliferation of devices with increased storage capabilities and is contributing towards greater numbers of examination requests [with lengthening download times and more complex viewing requirements]. Additional changes to guidelines, legislation and data handling compliance in this area have also been introduced to protect better victims, witnesses and suspects. This increased demand and the changes introduced are recognised to be a challenge for all police force areas in England and Wales.*

*Sussex Police use a three-tier structure to deliver digital forensic examinations in Sussex. The level of investigation undertaken in each case is prioritised by the informed consent of a victim which is determined by the individual Digital Processing Notice (DPN) created for each case which sets out the parameters for the investigation [EDIT: The DPN provides a framework for the digital examination of devices from victims and witnesses and ensures that a proportionate response is provided].*

- ✓ *Tier 1 is used for standard DPNs and includes generic examinations of mobile telephones, such as 'all telephone calls' or 'all SMS [text] messages'. This examination will usually be undertaken on the same day by the local policing division to minimise the disruption caused to victims.*
- ✓ *Tier 2 is used for urgent DPNs where the examinations are more precise or relate to specific applications [WhatsApp, for example] and are undertaken by the in-house Digital Forensics Team. In these cases, a timescale of 48-hours is quoted to the victim [in case of technical difficulties], although the phone is often received, examined and returned on the same day.*
- ✓ *Tier 3 is used for the more complex DPNs – where there is a large amount of data on a device or hardware – and involves sending these items away to an external provider for specialist analysis. The average turnaround time for these requests is 19 days [from submission to closed case] and is delivered against a service level agreement of 30 days. In these instances, an individual will be offered a replacement mobile phone to ensure that they have a means of communication during this time.*

*To manage the response to these changes, Sussex Police has introduced a formal Digital Forensics Transformation Programme to oversee investment in the areas of technology, demand [prioritisation] and resource alignment as part of an aspiration to deliver a more efficient and effective digital forensics capability throughout the Force.*

*The Sussex Police budget for forensic investigations is approximately £7.2 million each year. The Force budget in this area is anticipated to be relative to those budgets for other similar sized areas in England and Wales, although it was highlighted that each police force is different with variables in terms of delivery models, police officer and staff numbers and salary costs. Sussex Police is also part of a regional forum in the South East which looks at the collective forensic processes used to ensure that the Force is working in a consistent manner to deliver value for money.*

*Temporary Assistant Chief Constable MacPherson confirmed that there are many reasons why an investigation may be delayed by digital forensics. This can be caused by the increased complexity of mobile and digital devices [including the type, size and levels of encryption], logistics [including the completion of DPNs and transportation of the device(s) to an appropriate examiner] and the physical task of reviewing all the material contained within thoroughly [where this is substantial in its nature].*

*Some of the work to examine mobile phones is carried out by secondary skilled investigators based on each of the three policing divisions and delays in this area can be caused by competing priorities and resilience amongst those teams. As highlighted on page 2, the Force is currently in the process of creating a Digital Investigation Support Unit [in autumn 2021] comprising advanced practitioners in internet, intelligence and investigation. The Unit will consist of five police officers and three FTE digital media investigators and is anticipated to improve the capacity and capability of the wider Digital Forensics Team to undertake examinations of the large volumes of mobile phones, decrease the workload for the policing divisions and to significantly reduce the delays to victims and witnesses.*

*FMacP confirmed that vulnerability crimes [and the needs and vulnerabilities of the individuals involved] are prioritised by the Force in respect of digital forensics. This includes a specific commitment not to leave victims of rape and serious sexual offences without their mobile phones for more than 24 hours and the provision of temporary replacement phones in the interim period. The importance of balancing the need to thoroughly interrogate electronic devices with the privacy of victims was also recognised. It was explained that investigating officers should seek to manage the expectations of victims by providing them with approximate timescales for when their devices will be returned to them [as set out above].*

*Sussex Police work towards the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime, with progress updates delivered according to the agreement defined within the victim contract [including preferred contact type and frequency of the updates provided]. Performance and compliance with these contracts are an area that is monitored and scrutinised by first line supervisors. The Force also monitors supervisory dashboards [which highlight any missing or overdue victim contracts] and the information collated through victim satisfaction surveys.*

*FMacP confirmed that volume crimes are the most common type of investigations that may be impacted by any delays to forensics and explained that work remains ongoing to improve the ability of the Digital Forensics Team to view, analyse and download material from devices more efficiently and effectively. The Force is also looking at the creation of additional cloud-based storage to increase capacity further still in this area. KB requested a list of different crime types that have been delayed by forensic investigations.*

*Temporary Assistant Chief Constable MacPherson confirmed that the following specialist scientific services are outsourced to accredited forensic service suppliers:*

- *DNA extraction and profiling.*
- *Major and volume crime casework.*
- *Biological casework [relating to sexual offences].*
- *Ballistics and firearms classification.*
- *Drug analysis and toxicology [including road traffic offences].*
- *Specialist forensic examinations [including entomology, blood pattern distribution, odontology and pathology].*

**ACTION: KB would like to discuss the forensic capacity and capability of the South East region at the next South East Regional Police & Crime Commissioner and Chief Constable meeting on 2 December 2021.**

**ACTION: KB requested a list of different crime types that have been delayed by forensic investigations.**

**NEXT UP:**

The next PAM is on Friday, 22 October 2021 at 13:00. Further information can be viewed on my website through the following link:

[www.sussex-pcc.gov.uk/get-involved/watch-live/](http://www.sussex-pcc.gov.uk/get-involved/watch-live/)