

From: Matthew Scott, Kent Police and Crime Commissioner
To: Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel
Subject: Crime statistics update
Date: 21 November 2019



Introduction:

1. As outlined in the [Safer in Kent](#) Plan, fighting crime and anti-social behaviour are issues that residents and local communities care deeply about. The Commissioner expects Kent Police to have the right resources with the right skills to investigate, and where possible, bring to justice those who harm individuals and businesses.
2. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) is the UK's largest independent producer of official statistics and via the Home Office, it receives crime data from each of the 43 police forces in England and Wales.
3. Further to previous reports submitted to the Panel, this paper provides:
 - an overview of the published ONS recorded crime and outcomes data for the 12 months to June 2019 (published 17 October 2019);
 - a more recent update using Kent Police's internal unpublished data to September 2019; and
 - an outline of how the Commissioner, in discharging his statutory responsibilities, effectively holds the Chief Constable to account.
4. The Commissioner is grateful to Kent Police for its assistance with this paper. Should Members have any questions relating to operational matters, they should be directed to their local District Commander.

Background:

5. In August 2018, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) informed Kent Police they would be conducting a re-inspection of Crime Data Integrity. The findings - [Kent Police: Crime Data Integrity re-inspection 2018](#) - were published on 15 January 2019.
6. HMICFRS graded the Force 'Outstanding', estimating that 96.6% of reported crimes were recorded. Of 39 forces inspected to date, this remains the highest percentage, with only four other forces achieving an 'Outstanding' grade.
7. In comparison to the previous inspection, HMICFRS estimated the improved level of accuracy had resulted in the Force recording an additional 25,400 crimes for the year covered by the audit period. As a result, substantially more victims had their crimes recorded, received an improved service and were offered additional support by Victim Support and the other services commissioned by the Commissioner.
8. Further to updates from the Chief Constable at the quarterly Performance and Delivery Board, the Commissioner is reassured that the high levels of recording accuracy are being maintained. In addition, HMICFRS continues to monitor progress, and Kent Police, as with all police forces, may be subject to a further unannounced crime data integrity inspection at any time.

Recorded Crime:

9. In the 12 month period to the end of June 2019, compared to the previous 12 month period, there was an overall increase in victim based crime in Kent of 5.0% (8,002 more crimes recorded).
10. This was primarily due to an 8.9% increase in violent crime, and predominantly an increase in violence against the person (VAP) offences. VAP accounts for nearly 90% of violent crime and contains 30 Home Office crime codes which can be broadly categorised as violence without injury, violence with injury and stalking and harassment.
11. Violence without injury saw an increase of 4.4% (1,532 more offences) and stalking and harassment an increase of 29.3% (4,851 more offences).

12. The increase in stalking and harassment can be contextualised in part by the Force's focus on early victim identification and intervention. The Force is currently piloting a new risk assessment matrix in support of early identification and this is underpinned by increased training for officers.
13. There were some reductions in recorded crime, including burglary and rape offences. Burglary, which is made up of residential offences and business and community offences saw a reduction of 0.2%, equating to 50 less properties been targeted in the 12 month period. Similarly, in relation to rape there was a reduction in recorded offences of 7.5%, equating to 188 less victims in the 12 month period.
14. Drug offences and possession of weapon offences increased by 10.5% (300 more offences) and 12.3% (151 more offences) respectively in the 12 month period. The increases are primarily the result of these offences being proactively targeted and subsequently recorded as they are generally discovered by police officers, who are now utilising stop and search powers as well as other legislative powers more effectively.
15. All of the above crime types are discussed in detail each month at the Force Performance Management Committee chaired by the Deputy Chief Constable where senior officers are held to account.

Crime Outcomes:

16. The Home Office introduced the outcomes framework in April 2013. Since then it has developed to cover a broader range of outcome types for police forces to use. Whilst every crime will eventually have an outcome, this may take some time; those under active investigation will not have an outcome assigned to them.
17. In the 12 month period to the end of June 2019, the charge rate for all crime in Kent was 5.4%, a reduction of 2.1 percentage points on the previous 12 month period.
18. In relation to victim based crime, charges reduced by 26.1% (2,900 less than the previous 12 month period), and the charge rate was 5.0%.
19. Violence against the person saw the greatest reduction in volume of charges, down 27.9% (1,499 less). In other areas of victim based crime, charges also decreased for shoplifting offences (671 less), stalking and harassment (273 less) and public order (326 less).
20. When a suspect is identified for an offence, officers will seek to bring about the best outcome for the victim. A charge is only one of 22 different outcomes available to officers when concluding an investigation and there are supervisory reviews of each investigation prior to its conclusion to ensure the most appropriate outcome has been utilised.
21. There are a number of reasons why a suspect may not be charged, and the best outcome is not always a prosecution. Aligned to the Safer in Kent Plan, the Force is committed to ensuring victims are at the heart of everything it does and that their wishes, which may include not supporting a prosecution, are taken into account.
22. Other reasons why a suspect may not be prosecuted include:
 - Being below the age of criminal responsibility;
 - The victim, witness or suspect being too ill to give evidence; and
 - Insufficient evidence to prove the suspect committed the offence.
23. For out of court (formal) outcomes, Kent's rate was below the national average at 2.3% compared to 4.1%; this includes Caution, Taken into Consideration, Community Resolution, Penalty Notice for Disorder and Formal Warning for Cannabis.
24. For those offences where the prosecution was prevented or considered not in the public interest, at 1.2% Kent was just below the national average of 1.3%.

Crime Performance to September 2019:

25. Based on more recent internal (unpublished) Kent Police data for the 12 month period to September 2019, a number of crime types have seen a decrease compared to the previous 12 month period.
26. All crime decreased by 3.0%, or 5,948 offences, from 197,356 recorded offences to 191,408. In terms of victim based crime, there was a 0.4% decrease (613 less offences), with the Force recording a total of 165,394 crimes, compared to 166,007 in the 12 month period to September 2018.
27. Overall, burglary offences decreased by 0.2%, with burglary residential decreasing by 0.4% and burglary business and community by 0.1%. Burglary is considered a high harm impact crime, with offences reviewed daily on each Division. Burglary is also one of a number of crimes referred to as Control Strategy offences, and thereby receives a priority policing response from the Force.
28. In light of the additional officer recruitment, the Force introduced the Chief Constable's Crime Squad in February 2019; a dedicated team of experienced investigators who deal with linked offences of burglary and other similar crime types. The Crime Squad consists of 32 officers and is divided into three investigative teams, located on each of the three Divisions. It has oversight from, and reports to, the Deputy Chief Constable and has the flexibility to respond to increasing crime trends, such as burglary and other similar crime types. Targeting those criminals who pose the greatest threat, risk and harm, the Crime Squad has had a significant impact and to date have arrested over 220 suspects, executed over 60 warrants and remanded into custody over 160 prolific criminals. In eight months, the team have obtained 750 positive outcomes for victims of crime.
29. Robbery increased by 11.9% (208 more offences), from 1,751 to 1,959. Robbery is a crime type to which the Force deploys dedicated officers; offences are generally investigated by experienced detectives from Criminal Investigation Departments in conjunction with colleagues from district based Community Safety Units who proactively patrol targeted areas.
30. With 11,581 recorded offences, vehicle crime increased by 6.6% (719 more offences than the previous 12 month period). This increase was due to 575 more recorded theft of motor vehicle offences and 144 more theft from motor vehicle offences.
31. Other crime types to experience reductions include criminal damage which decreased by 4.2% (or 953 less offences), and theft of pedal cycle offences which decreased by 17.9% or 339 offences.
32. Although drug offences and possession of weapon offences increased by 11.6% (341 offences) and 10.9% (141 offences) respectively, this can be accounted for. These offences are typically discovered by police following stop searches and planned operations carried out to tackle Control Strategy related offences.
33. The Force has a dedicated response to tackling serious violent knife crime and the operation has been very successful in providing a targeted response. The operation was introduced in May 2019 after the Force received funding from the Home Office and resources are being deployed in areas which pose the greatest threat, risk and harm.
34. Combining proactive multi agency initiatives and weapon amnesties, it has however contributed to the increase in drug and possession of weapon offences. The success of the operation in making the county a much safer place cannot be under-estimated though, with:
 - 1,255 suspects arrested;
 - 310 warrants executed;
 - almost 1,400 stop and searches conducted;
 - £1.2m cash seized; and
 - 724 weapons removed from the streets.

35. Rape offences have been a Force priority for the last two years, with a focus on ensuring victims receive dedicated support during the investigation and through the court process. In support of this, the Force recently introduced dedicated Sexual Offence Liaison Officers (SOLOs) to provide first class victim care. The SOLOs work alongside specialist investigators in the dedicated Rape Investigation Teams, who in turn work extremely closely with specialist CPS lawyers, under the guidance and oversight of a dedicated Rape and Serious Sexual Offences Detective Inspector.
36. In relation to domestic abuse, there were 34,765 offences recorded in the 12 month period to end of September 2019 and this volume, combined with more accurate crime recording has led to the percentage of charges decreasing from 9.0% to 5.0%. The volume of charges has decreased by 1,312. Officers are now much more focussed on safeguarding victims, particularly those members of the public who are more vulnerable than others. Many victims contact the police with no intention of supporting a prosecution, however they make contact and are signposted to a network of support services. There have been 34,765 offences of domestic abuse recorded over the 12 month period to September 2019, and in 22,067 cases (63.5%) the victim decided not to support a prosecution.
37. A large proportion of the increase in domestic abuse is due to the recording of multiple crimes linked to a single incident; this provides a better reflection of the extent of offences committed against a victim to enable the appropriate assessment of any safeguarding requirements for victims and witnesses as well as providing investigative opportunities. This is in line with the better recording processes identified by HMICFRS through the crime data integrity re-inspection.
38. All cases of domestic abuse are treated seriously. The Force is investing in more officers to work within the Vulnerability Investigation Teams to be able to investigate such offences, and thus ensure it can continue to provide a first class policing service to victims and witnesses.
39. Despite the policing challenges faced by the Force, the above demonstrates how it is responding. The Force is determined to continue to provide a first class policing service putting victims and witnesses first, reflecting the priorities in the Safer in Kent Plan and in line with the Chief Constable and Commissioner's Mission, Vision, Values and Priorities.

Holding to account:

40. Within the [Safer in Kent](#) Plan, the Commissioner makes it clear that progress will not be judged on stipulated numerical targets, but will instead consider other feedback, including HMICFRS reports and other independent publications.
41. Notwithstanding that fact, the Office of the Commissioner horizon-scans for future external-facing publications such as the [ONS Crime in England and Wales Statistical Bulletins](#) and provides the Commissioner with a summary of key data. This supports the Commissioner in his local capacity, and also informs his contribution to the national picture as Association of Police and Crime Commissioners' (APCC) lead for performance. In this role, he frequently makes [statements on behalf of the APCC](#).
42. One of the principle ways the Commissioner holds the Chief Constable to account is through the quarterly Performance and Delivery Board.
43. Open to Panel Members and the public, on a non-participating basis, the meeting is chaired by the Commissioner and papers are submitted by the Force in advance and published [here](#). The Chief Constable is required to attend the meeting in order to present and discuss the papers, and answer questions about delivery of the Safer in Kent Plan and policing generally in the county.
44. The Commissioner has, and will also continue to hold the Chief Constable to account via their regular 1:1 meetings which are held in the Office of the Commissioner, and allow discussion of a wide variety of subjects, including significant operational matters and delivery of the Safer in Kent Plan.
45. In addition, the Chief Executive attends the quarterly Force Performance Management Committee where the Deputy Chief Constable rigorously challenges performance internally.