# To Catch a Bike Thief - not easy in Surrey

Epsom and Ewell Liberal Democrat parliamentary candidate and former Royal Military Police officer **Helen Maguire** has revealed that 991 bike theft cases in Surrey were closed in 2022 without a suspect being identified – 91.9% of total reported cases.



Meanwhile, only nine bike thefts reported in Surrey last year resulted in a suspect being charged or summonsed – just 0.8% of the total 1098 cases recorded.

Mrs Maguire claimed these figures showed the Government was effectively 'decriminalising' bike theft. She went on to say "This is letting criminals off the hook for the robbery of thousands of pounds worth of property".

She is calling for a return to proper community policing, where officers are visible and trusted and given time to focus on tackling local crime. She said, "The number of PCSOs has fallen in Surrey to just 69 by the end of March – down from 136 PCSOs just over a year ago in February 2022. It's worse in Epsom and Ewell where we should have eight and now have half of that number.

"Theft is such a personal and terrible crime. To see so many go unsolved in Surrey is a poor reflection on this government's record of reducing crime. We need to see a return to proper community policing, making our streets safer and ending this free-for-all for criminals."

In response a spokesperson for Surrey Police stated: "We appreciate how distressing it is to be a victim of any theft and our efforts remain ongoing to tackle bicycle theft as robustly as we can. We are also continuing to raise awareness of steps which can be taken to prevent these thefts from occurring in the first place by ensuring effective prevention measures are in place. More advice on protecting your bicycle can be found on our web site https://www.surrey.police.uk/cp/crime-prevention/keeping-vehicles-safe/how-safe-is-your-bike/

"In some cases, there may not be enough intelligence or positive lines of enquiry for police to act on. This does not mean that a crime is closed indefinitely or that intelligence or information is ignored. This information will be collated and monitored to identify emerging crime hotspots and any trends or patterns.

"The public can also help in the pursuit of offenders by reporting suspicious activity, and also by reporting to the police those selling stolen property or those involved in burglary offences via 101, by webchat on our website https://surrey.police.uk/ online https://www.surrey.police.uk/tua/tell-us-about/cor/tell-us-about-existing-case-report or anonymously via the independent charity Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

Residents are also able to upload video footage and images in relation to any suspicious activity through the use of a public CCTV submission portal here: https://surrey.police.uk/suspiciousactivityportal"

In response to Ms Maguire's statements about PCSOs Surrey Police stated: "We know how important a visible police team with local knowledge is to residents in each of our boroughs. A trusted, knowledgeable, and proactive local policing presence is just as important to us, and PCSOs are a valued and integral part of that. We are currently actively recruiting to increase our PCSO establishment level. If you wish to apply to join Surrey Police as a PCSO, you can apply here: https://www.surrey.police.uk/police-forces/surrey-police/areas/careers/pcso/

"There are currently three full-time PCSOs and one part-time PCSO in Epsom and Ewell. The borough also has one rural PCSO who deals with rural matters."

Related reports:

Ex MPC, now Epsom PPC, tackles Surrey PCs Police maintain order at Epsom Derby Festival

Image: cycles in Waterloo Road Epsom CC http://www.epsomcyclists.org.uk/parking/

# **Brawling Bowling Club reprieved**

The "level of violence and hostility" during a mass brawl inside a Surrey bowling club was unlike anything a serving police officer had ever experienced before, they have claimed.

A fight involving about 30 people erupted at the **Old Dean Bowls Club in Camberley** last April with officers arriving to scenes of people having their eyes gouged, women knocked on conscious, men slumped in corners with life threatening head wounds and shattered glass all over bloodied carpets.

The officers were called out at 10.55pm and could hear "screams, shouts and smashing glasses coming from the building". The details came from Surrey Police officer witness statements read as part of a Tuesday, July 5, Surrey Heath Borough Council licensing sub committee review into the club.

One said that as they got out of their cars they saw "around five people have been running from the building or sat down nearby crying or with injuries. A woman has been holding another female up partially as I have walked towards the door, she has shouted 'you need to go in there now'.

"A male has said something similar next to another female in a vehicle shouting 'don't go, you'll be lambs to the slaughter'." The officer added: "The level of violence and hostility upon entry was something I have never experienced before."

Another officer said they were warned by a female who "genuinely seemed concerned" they would be vastly outnumbered, that it was "f\*g carnage in there".

The sub-committee had already seen a lengthy clip of CCTV footage of what the police called an "utterly disgraceful scene". The committee was hearing evidence brought by **Surrey Police** recommending the club lost its licence. Others argued it should be give a reprieve as it played an important role in the community – particularly as a bowls club but also in more wider terms.

**Trefor Hogg**, Surrey County Councillor for Camberley East said at the meeting revenue concerns pushed the club to host more events and that without the bar takings the club would find it difficult to remain open. He said the club, the town's only secular meeting place, played a critical role in the community – which he described as an area of deprivation.

The venue, he said, is used for NHS sessions and job fairs as well as by Surrey Heath Borough Council for consultations.

Cllr **Shaun Garrett** Councillor, Conservative group leader at Surrey Heath, said, there was "no getting around the incident" – that the brawl failed the the four pillars of licensing; prevention of crime and disorder, public safety, prevention of public nuisance and protecting children. But he argued that the club was a "really important community space". He said: "If the licence was revoked for even a short period of time the club would fold and once it's shut it will never open again."

The committee also heard that the club's chairperson had since resigned and replaced with a new board that would put in strict rules to prevent any repetition of the night. The club also runs as a private members bar that hosts functions. The committee heard many functions were increasingly attended by non-members.

Licence hold **Chris Turner**, acknowledged the failings of the club and pledged to make changes to it's rules, including appointing new officers to run the club, bar staff training and apply for personal licences for at least two of the committee members.

After a break to discuss the evidence committee chairperson, Councillor **Valerie White**, said the panel would: "Suspend the licence for a minimum of 28 days so that the mandatory steps can be taken and the club reopened with trained staff and new policies in place all proposals as per the club's submissions...with the following amendments and additions."

She said the club would need to have two members gain certification in order to carry out risk assessments for any functions held and to act as door supervisors if needed.

A signing-in book is to be used at all times to keep record of those attending functions, members and non-members, and that the club joins and becomes an active member of the pub-watch scheme.

Any children must be accompanied by an adult and no children under 12 after 9pm are allowed in the club. All staff who serve alcohol are to be trained every six months with written records kept.

A spokesperson for Surrey Police said they were called out to the Old Dean Bowling Club in Camberley on Friday, April 14 at around 10.50pm following reports of 30 people fighting.

A 32-year-old man, a 29-year-old woman, a 33-year-old man and a 38-year-old man were all arrested on suspicion of violent disorder. All have been bailed while the investigation continues.

## Derby disrupter doesn't quite go down

Ben Newman ran onto the Epsom racecourse seconds after the starter gates opened on the 3rd June 2023 Derby flat-race. Though the horses were still out of sight by the time several security and police officers dragged him off in front of the Grandstand, his act was prosecuted as a public nuisance.

Appearing in custody before Recorder David Ockelton at Guildford Crown Court he was sentenced today (6th July).

The court heard from Wendy Cottee prosecuting that it was only the swift action of security and police that ensured the race itself proceeded undisturbed. Nevertheless, it was clear from video and audio footage that many members of the public were "seriously annoyed". She also told the court that Newman had sent an appeal on social media calling for a large number of sympathisers of "Animals Rising" to join him in his protest. An appeal the Judge commented had not been successful.

Defending Mr Nick Goss said that Newman was passionate and well intentioned. He did not intend to create danger but only to protest. His time in custody since 3rd June had been a "salutary lesson" and caused him to reflect on his actions.

Newman has been arrested over the last year in connection with various sporting events and was on bail with a condition not to attend public sporting events on 3rd June. Mr Goss stated that none of these investigations had led to any criminal charges.

The Judge said to Newman "The proud liberties of our constitution have limits - you went beyond those limits. There was a clear danger to police and security. You could not predict how long it would take them to remove you."

"The offence is serious with a maximum of 10 years. However, I will make the sentence as short as possible. It will be 18 weeks and it will be suspended for 2 years."

The court ordered Newman to undertake 80 hours community service and to pay costs of £1800 and a victim surcharge of £126.

# Ex MPC, now Epsom PPC, tackles Surrey PCs

**Epsom and Ewell** Liberal Democrat prospective parliamentary candidate and former Royal Military Police officer, **Helen Maguire**, is pushing Government to spend more on policing in Surrey given the "dire" state of policing in the County.

Using figures culled from various public sources by the LibDems, Ms Maguire points to the 1,412 burglaries that went unattended in Surrey last year, as another example ".... of the Conservative Government suggesting it is tough on crime with the facts telling a different story".

Figures uncovered by her Party show that of the 2,768 burglaries reported in Surrey, the police only arrived at the scene in 1356 instances – accounting for just 48.99% of cases. The number of unsolved burglaries in Surrey also soared, with 2195 cases being closed without a suspect even identified. This is equivalent to 79.3% of all cases.

The Liberal Democrats are calling for a new "Burglary Response Guarantee," which would create a guarantee that all domestic burglaries are attended by the police and properly investigated.

This will require a return to proper community policing, the LibDems urge – where officers are visible, trusted, and have the time and resources needed to focus on solving crime. Yet since 2015, Ms Maguire claims, the Conservatives have taken over 4,000 Police Community Support Officers off the streets, while they look set to have broken their key promise of having recruited an extra 20,000 police officers by the end of March 2023.

"The number of PCSOs has fallen to just 69 by the end of March – down from 136 PCSOs just over a year ago in February 2022. It's worse in **Epsom and Ewell** where we should have 8 and now have half of that number. That's hardly a good track record for a (Tory) Party which makes out to be supportive of policing! Hardly surprising then that so many burglaries in our community are

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not being attended by police officers. No family should be denied justice after suffering the distress and trauma of being burgled", said Ms Maguire.

"Car theft is also a scourge across the county with a staggering 79.2% of car thefts going unsolved last year with just 5.3% resulting in a charge or summons. Lib Dem analysis, based on the latest Home Office statistics on crime outcomes, showed that a grand total of 1503 car theft cases in Surrey were closed in 2022 without a suspect even being identified – equivalent to 4 car thefts going unsolved every day.

"The priorities of this government are clearly not on our public services with our police officers, like the NHS, being starved of resources. In such a dire situation, enough is enough – we need a change of regime – one that puts the focus on our communities, on law and order, and the health and wealth of our people," said Helen Maquire.

"Many families across Surrey now feel unsafe in their own homes, because this Conservative government has left our police forces overstretched and under-resourced. It means far too many victims are being denied justice and far too many criminals are getting away with it.

"Meanwhile, it has been revealed that the Surrey Police budget for 2022/23 was underspent by at least £7.9 million, enough to pay for the entire 5.1% council tax increase imposed by the Police and Chief Commissioner Lisa Townsend for 2023/24."

### Surrey Police responded to Ms Maguire's claims:

Exclusive to the Epsom and Ewell Times a spokesperson for Surrey Police rebuts the LibDem candidate's claims:

"We are committed to deploying officers to all home burglaries. We recognise how invasive and traumatic it can be to be a victim of burglary, and this is why we are already investing significant resources in preventing and tackling these offences, alongside providing the appropriate support and advice to victims.

Each of our three divisions in Surrey has its own proactive team that reviews all burglaries in that division. These teams monitor ongoing burglary trends and patterns, identify hot spot areas and target prolific and repeat offenders and organised crime networks to ensure that patrols are directed in a targeted and most effective way.

Changes to how burglaries are classified, which were introduced on 1 April 2023, will enable officers to give a greater focus on home burglaries and help to meet the NPCC pledge of attending all home burglaries.

Burglary offences had previously been divided into two categories of "residential" and "business and community". A residential burglary previously included sheds, garages, outhouses and summer houses, as well as the dwelling itself.

The changes will mean that residential burglaries are split into two categories – residential burglary of a home and residential burglary of an unconnected building. All sheds, outhouses and garages with no connecting door to the home will be classed as unconnected buildings.

Our figures show that we have solved 81 more offences than the previous 12 months and so far have had 125 less offences (106 less offences between April 2023 and today v April 2022 and June 14/06/22).

Work also remains ongoing to prevent burglaries from occurring in the first place by ensuring effective prevention measures are in place. Many of the residential burglaries reported are shed or garage break-ins and we continue to run awareness-raising campaigns in our local communities to remind homeowners of the steps they can take to avoid becoming a victim.

More advice on protecting your home/outbuildings from burglary can be found on our web site https://www.surrey.police.uk/cp/crime-prevention/protect-home-crime/

In some cases, there may not be enough intelligence or positive lines of enquiry for police to act on. This does not mean that a crime is closed indefinitely or that intelligence or information is ignored. This information will be collated and monitored to identify emerging crime hotspots and any trends or patterns.

If an investigation is closed, and we then receive information to link an offender at a later date we will always pursue this to seek closure for victims.

The public can also help in the pursuit of offenders by reporting suspicious activity, and also by reporting to the police those selling stolen property or those involved in burglary offences via 101, by webchat on our website https://surrey.police.uk/online and https://www.surrey.police.uk/tua/tell-us-about/cor/tell-us-about-existing-case-report/ or anonymously via the independent charity Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

Residents are also able to upload video footage and images that they think could assist our burglary investigations through the use of a public CCTV submission portal https://surrey.police.uk/suspiciousactivityportal "

And on the claims about reductions in PCSOs the police spokesperson continued:

"In 2022, to contribute to savings across the force, we reduced the number of Police Community Support Officers in Surrey Police to 96, 22 posts fewer than our previous staffing level of 118 full-time equivalent PCSOs. This reduction did not involve redundancies and achieving this staffing level did not result in a reduction in overall numbers in our Safer Neighbourhood Teams; we maintain a strong blended mix of police officers and PCSOs in these key frontline posts in every borough.

In September 2022, Surrey Police employed 88 PCSOs. This is lower than our desired number of PCSOs, so it is inaccurate to say that 35 PCSO roles have been cut by the Force. We are actively recruiting to bring our establishment level back up to 96.

We know how important a visible police team with local knowledge is to residents in each of our boroughs. A trusted, knowledgeable, and proactive local policing presence is just as important to us, and PCSOs are a valued and integral part of that."

Adding to the local force's rebuttal Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey **Lisa Townsend** said: "The suggestion that policing in the county is in a 'dire' state is once again entirely misleading – the reality is that Surrey Police is now the biggest it has ever been.

"The Force has not only met but exceeded its target for extra officers under the government's programme to increase numbers by 20,000 across the country. An extra 395 police officers have been added to the ranks since 2019 – this is 136 more than the target set by government for Surrey which is fantastic news for residents.

"Last year, in order to help achieve its savings target - Surrey Police made an operational decision to temporarily halt the recruitment of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs). "These posts were replaced with new warranted officers and there were no redundancies or loss of numbers to Surrey Police's frontline teams.

"PCSOs continue to play a crucial role in policing our communities – recruitment has been reopened and the Force are seeking applications right now. We expect their numbers to back to the previous levels within three years.

"Over the last year, Surrey Police have achieved an increase in the number of residential burglaries solved and have since coupled this with a commitment to attend all reported house burglaries in Surrey. The outcome rate for residential burglary in Surrey remains above the national average.

"I'm proud that Surrey is the safest county in the south east, and the fourth safest county in the country."

What is your experience of policing in Epsom and Ewell? Write to us at Epsom and Ewell Times. Via the contact page or by email to admin@epsomandewelltimes.com

## Not insulated against prosecution

47 activists who caused chaos on the Surrey stretch of the M25 in the autumn of 2021 have been convicted of a variety of offences following a lengthy and complex investigation.

Officers have worked tirelessly to bring those responsible to justice following the direct-action protests, which took place between J6 and 14 of the M25 on Monday 13 September 2021, between J8 and 10 on Wednesday 15 September 2021, at J9 on Friday 17 September 2021 and between J9 and 10 on Tuesday 21 September 2021.

Numerous arrests were made at each of the protests, including 35 arrests on 13 September, 35 on 15 September, 33 arrests on 17 September and 24 arrests on 21 September.

Of these, 54 people were charged with 133 offences, with 47 subsequently found guilty following a series of hearings and trials which have taken place over the last few months.

The activists were convicted of a variety of offences, including wilful obstruction of a highway and criminal damage.

Chief Superintendent Jerry Westerman, who was in charge of policing the activity, said: "Not only did the action taken by the Insulate Britain activists over the four days cause significant delays and disruption to our road network, it also endangered the lives of our officers and staff and other motorway users, as well as the activists themselves.

"The tactics used by these activists, which included running out in front of oncoming traffic and lying down in the carriageway, escalated rapidly and was unprecedented in any of the protest activity we had seen previously.

"We will always seek to facilitate peaceful protest but committing criminal offences and taking part in activity which puts lives at risk cannot be condoned. That is why we took swift and robust action to ensure that these activists were removed from the road and detained as quickly as possible to enable us to reopen the affected sections of motorway as soon as we could."

Ch Sup Westerman continued: "We have continued to see this type of direct action in Surrey, with the motorway protests last year and more recently, the activity at the **Epsom Derby Festival** last weekend and these investigations remain ongoing.

"More recently we have seen the introduction of new legislation under the Public Order Act 2023 which gives us a wider range of options to deal with these activists. The protests in 2021 were carried out before this legislation was enforced but we did everything possible to ensure that the offenders were dealt with robustly and brought before the courts."

Ch Supt Westerman added: "I would like to thank those motorists affected by the disruption for their patience and understanding, as well as our colleagues in other forces and partner agencies for their support.

"The work to investigate and bring these offenders to justice is a lengthy and complex process and I would like to thank the team involved for their diligence and determination in seeing this through to its successful conclusion."

Related reports:

Police maintain order at Epsom Derby Festival

Image: BBC

## Police maintain order at Epsom Derby Festival

**Surrey Police** successfully carried out one of its biggest policing operations at the **Epsom Derby** Festival at the weekend (2 and 3 June).

The event, which took place at Epsom Downs Racecourse, began with Ladies Day on Friday, 2 June, followed by the Derby Day on Saturday, 3 June. The two-day event saw tens of thousands of attendees across the two days, as well as millions of spectators watching from around the globe.

Officers and staff from Surrey Police and Sussex Police were involved in the large-scale operation, with planning having taken place throughout the year to ensure that we were able to help keep the public safe.

Specialist teams worked to support officers on the ground, including firearms, intelligence and drone operators.

A total of 39 arrests were made over the course of the two days. Thirty-one of these arrests were made in connection with planned criminal activity at the Epsom Derby Festival, including two women who were quickly detained moments before they were able to get onto the track. Thirty have since been released on bail pending further enquiries.

Ben Newman, 32, of Homerton High Street in Hackney, has been charged with causing public nuisance. He has been remanded and is due to appear at Guildford Magistrates' Court tomorrow (Monday, 5 June).

Chief Superintendent **Clive Davies**, who was in charge of the policing operation for the Epsom Derby, said: "Each year we look forward to keeping the public safe at one of Surrey's biggest events. In our 24th year of policing the Epsom Derby, we are pleased to say we were able to do just that.

"I am incredibly proud of every single officer, staff member and volunteer who worked in the run-up to the event and at the event itself. They played a vital role in protecting the public and preventing and responding to criminality.

"We absolutely support people's rights to peacefully protest, but we differentiate between this and unacceptable criminal behaviour.

"We were one of a number of organisations involved in planning and implementation of this multi-agency operation, and I would like to thank the event organisers and our partner agencies for their support and commitment to delivering a safe event."

(Surrey Police press release ends)

The BBC reported:

"A man was seen being bundled to the floor by police and security guards during the opening seconds of the prestigious race. He was quickly removed from the course while being jeered by spectators. The race was unaffected.

The protest went ahead despite the **Jockey Club**, which runs the event, being granted a court injunction prohibiting the group **Animal Rising** from disrupting it. The group had publicly threatened to stop the main race going ahead, saying it wanted to raise awareness about animal rights.

Mr Newman was one of 31 people arrested in connection with the planned protests, including 12 on the racecourse grounds and 19 during a pre-emptive operation in the hours before it began.

Surrey Police said two women were arrested after being "quickly detained moments before they were able to get on to the track".

Mr Newman is the only protester to face a charge so far. The remaining 30 people have been released on bail pending further inquiries, police said."

# The Cost of Surrey's Crime Commissioner: "It's criminal"?

The Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey Police was elected in May 2021 on a turnout of Surrey voters of 38%. That was 5% higher than the national average but the election coincided with Surrey County Council's election in all the County's 81 single-member seats.

The Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner is Conservative **Lisa Townsend**. Her office explains her role: "Your Commissioner is responsible for overseeing the work of Surrey Police, holding the Chief Constable to account on your behalf, and funding key services that strengthen community safety and support victims."

The Liberal Democrats are calling for the abolition of this post after uncovering the cost of running the office. They state the post has cost £3.2 million since 2019. And claim: "Since 2021, the Surrey Commissioner, Lisa Townsend, has had three staff members to run her office social media feeds. The Commissioner has increased the office costs since being elected by £180,000 - the equivalent to seven community police officers. Since the Commissioner was elected, Surrey has also seen a fall in community officer numbers (39)."

This compares with an annual budget for Surrey Police of about £250 million and its employment of approximately 2153 officers.

#### Julie Morris Leader of the Liberal Democrat group on Epsom & Ewell Borough Council told The Times:

"I have never understood the purpose of Police Commissioners. Political appointees have no place in solving crime. My experience is that many crimes considered small and personal are unworthy of being given Police attention. These can cause a great deal of emotional distress and are simply neither followed up nor are they treated seriously. Putting resources back into those categories of crime will help grow confidence in the Police."

Top Image is a **mock up** by Epsom and Ewell Times of Surrey's Police and Crime Commissioner Lisa Townsend holding two mobile phones.

**Lisa Townsend** responded to the **Epsom and Ewell Times** and said: "Surrey Police now has more frontline officers than ever before. It will be officially announced this week that the Force has not only met but exceeded its target for extra officers under the government's programme to increase numbers by 20,000 across the country. That means more than 300 extra police officers will have joined the ranks since 2019. This is great news for residents and I believe the new recruits will help to make the Force the strongest it has been in a generation.

"Last year, Surrey Police made an operational decision to temporarily halt the recruitment of Police Community Support Officers which was identified as one way of helping the Force meet its savings target. There were no 'drastic cuts' – these posts were replaced with new warranted officers and there were no redundancies or loss of numbers to Surrey Police's frontline teams. We expect PCSOs to be back to the current numbers within the next three years and I am pleased to say that recruitment for this important role has been reopened and the Force are actively seeking applications right now.

"As far as my office budget is concerned, it is important to stress that is accounts for just 0.5% of the total policing budget for which I am responsible.

"When I was elected as Commissioner in 2021, there were only three PCC teams in the entire country that were smaller than we had in Surrey. I would be failing in my elected duty if I did not make sure it is properly equipped to effectively carry out all the responsibilities and growing demands of the PCC role.

"There was a small increase in my budget last year that added posts where we were at our weakest or least resilient which included one extra post in our communications team. I do not employ three people to 'run our office social media feeds' - the communications team fulfil a number of crucial roles on our wider engagement with the Surrey public across the county.

"My office is also responsible for commissioning vital services across our county that provide life-changing support for a variety of people across Surrey including survivors of domestic abuse and sexual violence. In addition to our existing funding streams, over the last two years our commissioning team have worked tirelessly in managing to secure mpre than £4m in government funding for a range of projects in Surrey. This money will help provide key services helping some of the most vulnerable in our society as well as local projects, such as the Safer Streets initiative, that are making a real difference to our communities."

**Alex Coley** - who has been chairing Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's Community and Wellbeing Committee and was reelected on 4th May for the RA in Ruxley Ward responded: "I attended the Police and Crime Panel on 18th April and was surprised to learn that the Surrey Police Group is showing both a capital underspend and a revenue underspend for this financial year. Several million pounds of surplus funds. In February the PCC decided to increase the share of Council Tax by 5.07%. This is a percentage increase greater than all 11 districts and boroughs in Surrey, even greater than the increase from the county council. I have to wonder why, given the multi-million pound surplus. How will this money be used?

Perhaps funds are not being effectively committed to policing priorities? The PCC is now half way through a four year plan in which the flagship policy is the prevention of violence against women and girls. A crucial policy for policing nationwide. However, it was revealed in February that Surrey Police have the worst rape charge rate in England and Wales. Furthermore, the PEEL report in June last year, by HMICFRS the policing inspectorate, showed a grading of Requires Improvement for suspect and offender management, with specific issues discovered in the management of sex offenders."

"It's criminal" is a well known expression denoting waste and has not been used here to suggest any criminal act.

# Surrey Police secretly recorded public's calls with officers

You probably knew 999 calls are recorded but did you know your conversations with individual Surrey Police Officers were being secretly recorded without you knowing? Surrey Police has escaped a fine for its mass breach of privacy and has received a serious reprimand from the UK's data authority. The Information Commissioner Office issued yesterday the press release below.

**The Information Commissioner's Office** (ICO) has issued a reprimand to Surrey Police following the rollout of an app that recorded phone conversations and unlawfully captured personal data.

In June 2020, the ICO became aware that staff members across both police forces had access to an app that recorded all incoming and outgoing phone calls. 1,015 staff members downloaded the app onto their work mobile phones and more than **200,000 recordings** of phone conversations, likely with victims, witnesses, and perpetrators of suspected crimes, were automatically saved.

The ICO considered it highly likely that the app captured a large variety of personal data during these calls and it considered that the processing of some of this data was unfair and unlawful. Police officers that downloaded the app were unaware that all calls would be recorded, and people were not informed that their conversations with officers were being recorded.

The app was first made available in 2016 and was originally intended to be used as recording software by a small number of specific officers, but Surrey Police and Sussex Police chose to make the app available for all staff to download. The app has now been withdrawn from use and the recordings, other than those considered to be evidential material, have been destroyed.

The ICO has applied its revised public sector approach to this case – instead of issuing a £1m fine to both Surrey Police and Sussex Police, they have each received a formal reprimand. The ICO's approach aims to reduce the impact of fines on those accessing public services and to encourage greater data protection compliance from public authorities to prevent harms from occurring in the first place.



"Sussex Police and Surrey Police failed to use people's personal data lawfully by recording hundreds of thousands of phone calls without their knowledge. People have the right to expect that when they speak to a police officer, the information they disclose is handled responsibly. We can only estimate the huge amount of personal data collected during these conversations, including highly sensitive information relating to suspected crimes.

"The reprimand reflects the use of the ICO's wider powers towards the public sector as large fines could lead to reduced budgets for the provision of vital services. This case highlights why the ICO is pursuing a different approach, as fining Surrey Police and Sussex Police risks impacting the victims of crime in the area once again.

"This case should be a lesson learned to any organisation planning to introduce an app, product or service that uses people's personal data. Organisations must consider people's data protection rights and implement data protection principles from the very start."

- Stephen Bonner, ICO Deputy Commissioner - Regulatory Supervision

### Recommendations

The ICO recommended that Surrey Police and Sussex Police should take action to ensure their compliance with data protection law, including:

- Deployment of any new apps should consider data protection at the very beginning and document the process. A specific team should consider the method and means of data processing, with remedial action taken to ensure processing is compliant with current data protection legislation prior to the app being deployed.
- Instruction and data protection guidance should be issued to staff in respect of the use of any apps, with officers required to confirm that issued guidance has been read and understood.
- Review existing policies and procedures to ensure that adequate consideration has been given to data subject rights during the processing of personal data and special category data.
- Review the content of data protection training, particularly in respect of law enforcement processing.

The ICO has asked Surrey Police and Sussex Police to provide details of actions taken to address these recommendations within three months of the reprimand being issued.

## Surrey joining up to tackle violence against women

A new countywide, partnership strategy has been agreed to boost the county's collective efforts to end Violence Against Women and Girls in Surrey. Work will now commence with partners across Surrey on an action plan to support work over the next three-years

The Surrey Partnership VAWG Strategy was developed with the County's key partners, including survivors and communities, specialist service provision, police, education and health, to build upon the extensive work already in progress to end VAWG, such as our Safer Streets initiative. The response will address VAWG across four pillars: Prepare, Prevent, Protect and Pursue. These pillars underpin four key objectives: prevent violence against women and girls, support victims and survivors, hold perpetrators to account and partnership working.

The strategy frames all crime types we know to disproportionally affect women and girls, such as domestic abuse, sexual offences, and 'honour' based abuse, under the framework of tackling violence against women and girls.

It goes wider to include educating children on respectful relationships, tackling sexism in the office, and harassment and intimidation of women and girls in Surrey's communities. The County recognise that VAWG impacts LGBTQ+, minoritised communities and children and adults with care and support needs in different ways, and the authority will look to collaborate with specialist service provision to ensure an intersectional approach to supporting all survivors, and work to break down additional barriers.

Harnessing the experiences and knowledge of all partners across the County's multi-agency network, the strategy will set out its shared vision, principles, and commitments. The governance framework will ensure accountability and enable effective implementation of action plans by their partners.

Informed by the lived experience of women and girls within Surrey, the work of the partnership will help to empower survivors, help them to feel safe and be safe, hold perpetrators to account and bring them to justice.

**Joanna Killian**, Chief Executive Surrey County Council said: "With the launch of our new county wide partnership VAWG strategy we strive to end violence against women and girls in Surrey. The safety of women and girls within our communities is a top priority for us, and we must ensure that they have opportunities to flourish without fear for their safety. For too long abuse, violence, and harmful attitudes towards women and girls has been allowed to thrive, this stops with us. This partnership strategy ensures collective action to tackle all forms of VAWG within Surrey, and we hope to be a beacon of best practice for other counties across the UK. Together, with our residents, specialist services, partners, and the expertise of women and girls, we will achieve our collective goal."

### You could re-train to reform offenders

People in **Surrey** are being urged to consider job opportunities in the Probation Service as HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) launches a recruitment drive in the area.

The new roles are open to a wide range of applicants, from those starting out to those with wider life or work experience. The roles are ideal for those looking for a rewarding career where they can both motivate and inspire others to change for the better, and build safer places to live.

HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) is already seeing people moving in to the sector from retail and hospitality with many recent new joiners also quitting office jobs for a more rewarding role in the service. The campaign hopes to inspire others to consider making the switch.

The number of people working in probation in Surrey and across Kent and Sussex has increased in the last twelve months. Currently there are 1,043 people\* working in Probation Service roles and in 2022 the region welcomed 213 new joiners. Some have come forward to support the recruitment campaign and encourage other people to consider roles like theirs.

Jordan Hayes-Hussey, aged 25, is a case administrator from Godalming, Surrey. Jordan was working in marketing after completing a communication and media degree when he decided to change career and join the Probation Service. Jordan says:

"I joined the Probation Service because I wanted a role where I could work with people from different backgrounds, make a difference through my work and have opportunities to progress. It can be a fast-paced working environment but every day is different and it's a really rewarding job.

You'll need good communication skills, determination and an open mind to succeed but you'll get training and support from a wider team as part of the role. If you're interested in building new skills and working in a role that positively contributes to society I'd recommend applying."

Amber Boyle, aged 24 is a probation services officer from Staines, Surrey. Amber completed a law degree and joined the Probation Service after working in the courts. Amber says:

"I decided to join the Probation Service after witnessing the positive impact probation staff had on offenders' lives. I started working as a court case administrator and then applied internally to be a probation services officer. I find the role really rewarding and enjoy being able to give people the tools they need to improve their lives and get back on track.

The job, like any role, has its challenges and you need to be authentic and able to adapt your communication skills to suit the people you're working with, but it's a really worthwhile endeavour and you'll be given the training and flexibility you need."

Probation Service staff support offenders on their rehabilitation journey, helping them to make better life choices and reducing the chances they will re-offend.

HMPPS is looking to fill a number of roles including probation services officers, case administrators and trainee probation officers. The Probation Service works with over 230,000 people on probation serving community sentences and individuals who are pre or post-release from prison. Roles within the service help to support their rehabilitation and protect the public.

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2022 data on the diversity of the Probation Service shows a 1% increase to 17% in the number of Probation Service staff from an ethnically diverse background compared to 16% in 2020. HMPPS is continuing to build on this work to attract a wave of recruits who are even more representative of the community they serve.

All roles are challenging and rewarding, with great training, support and opportunities for progression. Specific roles currently include:

**Case administrators** play a key role, using their great organisational and communication skills to support their probation colleagues and help offenders turn their lives around. Eligibility requirements for the role include strong communication skills (verbal and written) and good IT and keyboard skills.

**Probation services officers** undertake the full range of work with offenders before and after sentence, and in the community – including, assessments, sentencing and managing people throughout their probation period. Eligibility requirements for the role include a minimum C-grade GCSEs or equivalent, or relevant work experience including sufficient writing skills

Applications to become a case administrator or probation services officer are open now: https://probationjobs.co.uk/

Through the trainee probation officer programme, candidates will gain a level 6 equivalent professional qualification upon completion, along with a competitive salary and generous leave. When you start your training, you'll be a probation services officer, learning whilst earning on the job and studying to gain your fully funded Professional Qualification in Probation (PQiP). Eligibility requirements for the role include a Level 5 qualification, or above, such as an honours degree, a foundation degree or a diploma of higher education. Register your interest now: https://www.traintobeaprobationofficer.com/apply/