

Dorset Police is developing its approach to neighbourhood policing, implementing the findings of a comprehensive three-year review to ensure that local communities remain at the centre of policing.

The review, which was carried out in conjunction with Portsmouth University, was the first in the country to use a wide range of techniques, including academic research methods, to assess the impact of neighbourhood policing. It proposed a sustainable model for neighbourhood policing to ensure Dorset Police can continue to deliver an efficient service to the public, whatever financial challenges lie ahead.

Professor Chris Lewis from the university, who was previously Head of Statistics at the Home Office, worked in partnership with the Force to undertake the research during 2013 and 2014, with recommendations made and implemented throughout 2015.

Research methods included: carrying out three e-surveys with 254 neighbourhood police officers and PCSOs, interviewing 18 sergeants and gathering independent quantitative observational data.

Seven hundred police activities were observed and recorded from 14 neighbourhood policing teams in six police stations. A total of 465 hours of activity were observed over sixty two researcher shifts, which created a large evidence-base of observations, crime data analysis and an overview of how well teams worked with the public and local partners.

The recommendations being implemented include revising the role profiles for all officers and police staff who work in neighbourhood policing teams, meaning that:

- Police Officers will focus on protecting high-risk or vulnerable victims, dealing with persistent and repeat offenders, and taking responsibility for the reduction and detection of crime.
- Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) will focus on engaging with local people, coordinating problem-solving by working with partner agencies and empowering the public to resolve issues themselves, for example, neighbourhood disputes.
- Sergeants will manage and supervise the neighbourhood policing teams (NPTs) and assist in prioritising the demands on their resources. They will be accountable for balancing limited resources against threat, risk and harm; ensuring the prevention, reduction and detection of crime within their community is a priority, whilst also ensuring that high levels of community engagement and collaboration with partners is sustained.
- Special Constables will be attached to NPTs; carrying out the same responsibilities as their full-time police office colleagues and utilising their full warranted powers, as they always have done.
- Civilian volunteers will be used to support the teams by undertaking administrative duties including updating databases, contacting local people to arrange events and updating people on the outcomes of issues dealt with by the team.
- A minimum of 22 new volunteers will be required within the new operating model, which equates to one volunteer per neighbourhood policing team.

Work is underway to help partner agencies and community groups understand how the police will work with them, so that ultimately people receive a policing service that meets their neighbourhood needs, with partners and community groups also assisting with issues that they can resolve.

The changes will also see Safer Neighbourhood Teams, a term that was specific to Dorset

and not immediately understood by all, renamed to Neighbourhood Policing Teams, as this is the nationally-recognised term and makes it clear that they are police teams.

Assistant Chief Constable David Lewis oversaw the review and its implementation. He said: "Neighbourhood policing is part of the fabric of Dorset Police. Local communities are at the core of what we do.

"The review signifies a commitment to these communities, while ensuring that neighbourhood policing can continue in an ever-changing financial landscape.

"The review was not commissioned to make savings and does not, in itself, recommend or require any staff losses. However, we have purposely introduced a model that is scalable and that should be robust enough to continue providing neighbourhood policing, if budget cuts are required in the future.

"The public should only see a minimal change, if any, to the day-to-day service they receive from Dorset Police, as local priorities set by communities will still be key objectives of local officers."

Dorset Police and Crime Commissioner, Martyn Underhill said: "Project Genesis has resulted from a thorough and in-depth piece of academic work, which has fully reviewed how Dorset Police delivers neighbourhood policing to its communities.

This is the most comprehensive review that Dorset Police has ever undertaken and I fully support the project.

"However, this project has been undertaken through a period of financial challenges and whilst I am committed to protecting neighbourhood policing, the Chancellor's Autumn statement later this month will give us more clarity on government funding.

"Further cuts could impact on every area of the Force, however, neighbourhood policing will always remain a key priority and this model of policing is scalable. I believe the project will enhance the role of policing in our communities, and by working alongside partner organisations will help to safeguard neighbourhood policing in our county."

Dorset Police

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