

MARCH/APRIL 2015 NEWSLETTER

Doors open for new local service for Kent's victims of crime



A new centre in Kent helping and supporting victims of crime has begun operating, following the responsibility for commissioning victim services being given to Police and Crime Commissioners.

In Kent, the Police and Crime Commissioner has opened Compass House – in Tufton Street, Ashford – which brings together staff from the Victim Support charity and Kent Police's Witness Care Unit who have been working together to deliver an improved service since 1 April.

Already, contact is being made with hundreds of victims of crime every day, from those affected by car theft and criminal damage to victims of domestic violence and rape.

Compass House also boasts support and counselling rooms where volunteers can arrange to meet victims face-to-face as well as video suites to enable witnesses who do not feel able to attend court to give evidence. Victims of more crime types are being helped and it is estimated that an additional 14,000 people will receive the support they need every year.

The money for the service, tailored to meet local needs in Kent, has come directly from the Ministry of Justice and has not come out of the policing budget for the county.

Mrs Barnes said: 'Already I'm hearing about witnesses who would not have felt able to give evidence at court without these facilities and, for me, that is the greatest measure of the project's success. Victims and witnesses living in Kent have even been able to give evidence to courts elsewhere in the country, sparing them the time and possible distress of attending a court closer to where the crime took place.'

'Crime affects everyone differently so it is only right that every victim can get the support that is right is right for them. The Chief Constable and I have a shared vision for policing in the county where victims and witnesses are put at the heart of all we do, and Compass House will ensure exactly that happens.'

Compass House will be officially launched in **summer 2015**.

Volunteers wanted to monitor welfare of detainees in Police custody

The PCC is looking for volunteers to join Kent's team of well-respected Independent Custody Visitors to make unannounced visits to police stations across the county, checking that detainees receive their rights and are held in conditions that are up to standard.

Once trained, ICVs visit custody suites in pairs every month, reporting their findings to the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Mrs Barnes said: 'Independent Custody Visitors play a really important role and are a vital source of information to reassure me that Kent Police is meeting its high standards.'

'It's a great display of citizenship that they give up their own time to ensure the welfare of others and this is another way ordinary people can get involved and gain a real insight into local policing – our volunteers are our unsung heroes.'

Find out more about the ICV Scheme and how to apply at www.kent-pcc.gov.uk/icv

Commissioner unveils updated Police and Crime Plan

Kent's Police and Crime Commissioner has launched an updated version of her Police and Crime Plan, reflecting the views of local communities.

The plan – which sets out the Commissioner's vision and priorities for policing and community safety in the county – is updated each year to ensure it represents the views of local people in light of changing policing priorities.

Whilst retaining visible, community policing remains at the heart of the plan, the updated version places a greater emphasis on partnership working.

New priorities include protecting vulnerable children from sexual exploitation – for which the Commissioner has allocated an extra £600,000 over the next three years – and engaging with young people by adopting some recommendations from the former Youth Commissioner.

Read the refreshed Police and Crime Plan at www.kent-pcc.gov.uk/plan

Young victims of crime get extra support services

The Kent Police and Crime Commissioner has allocated extra funding to a Kent-based charity to provide trauma counselling to children and young people who have been victims of crime.

Rubicon Cares – a local charity established in 2006 – provides free trauma counselling to victims across Kent and Medway, and aims to reduce the emotional and psychological effects of being a victim of any type of crime.

The grant – of £30,000 – will fund trauma counsellors in Thanet, Shepway, Ashford and Gravesend as well as additional counsellors specifically for young people across Kent and Medway.

The money has come from the Commissioner's Specialist Victim Services Fund, set up in a move to better meet the needs of the people of Kent after responsibility for commissioning victims' services came from the Ministry of Justice to Police and Crime Commissioners in October last year.

Following a visit to Rubicon Cares, Mrs Barnes said: 'I am absolutely determined to make sure that if you have the misfortune of becoming a victim of crime in Kent you will have access to the best possible support services available.

'There is a real need to enhance support for vulnerable victims of crime – particularly children and young people – and I was overwhelmed by the fantastic work that they do at Rubicon Cares. I'm delighted to be able to give this additional funding to them and I know it will make a real difference.'

Sandie Turner, Chief Executive Officer of Rubicon Cares, said: 'The money we received from the Police and Crime Commissioner has made a huge difference to our work.

'We have been able to expand our services into other areas of Kent, something we just would not have been able to do without this extra funding.'

Commissioner helps secure £3million extra funding for Kent Police

Extra funding totalling £3million has been secured for Kent Police from the Home Office Police Innovation Fund, thanks to bids made by the Office of the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner, Ann Barnes.

The £50million fund – which was set up to improve policing and deliver further efficiency by encouraging collaboration and innovative thinking – invites bids from police forces across England and Wales.

£1.5million has been awarded directly to Kent for three projects, including a 7-day-a-week virtual remand court and collaborative police procurement, as well as a project to fight international internet paedophilia.

This project will see Kent Police work in conjunction with the Child Exploitation Online Protection Centre (CEOP), National Crime Agency (NCA) and the University of Liverpool to develop innovative tools to protect children and deal with online child sexual exploitation – an area which the force have been leading in for the last seven years.

In addition to these bids, another £1.5million has been secured for projects to run collaboratively with Essex Police and other forces, including an IT system that will save police time and money.

Speaking about the successful bids, Mrs Barnes said: 'Although this fund is not new money, but has come from the national police grant, I'm absolutely delighted that Kent is going to receive this share of funds from the Home Office. It will make a huge difference at a time when there are further deep cuts to police funding on the horizon.

'It's a priority in my Police and Crime Plan for the force to use innovative technology to cut crime and catch criminals and these successful bids will help to do exactly that.'

Thousands of Kent children get lessons in staying safe online



Over 23,000 Kent children have benefitted from e-safety lessons delivered by three Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) funded by the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner, Ann Barnes.

The officers have received training endorsed by the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) and work full time delivering the inputs on how to keep safe online to 10 and 11 year olds around the county.

Since beginning in March 2014, 346 inputs were delivered in the first twelve months, engaging with a total of 23,286 children. In

addition, 77 inputs were delivered to parents.

Following a recent training session with the PCSOs, Mrs Barnes said: 'Our young people do face a whole host of issues and dangers online, and we all have a duty to do what we can to help them find a way to stay safe.

'But, often parents are not in a position to spell out the dangers if they are not 'tech savvy' – I certainly know my little grandson is for more comfortable with today's technology than I am!

'So I'm thrilled that such a huge number of children in our county have been on the receiving end of these valuable inputs from the PCSOs, giving them the knowledge and tools they need to enjoy all the huge benefits the internet can bring without putting themselves in harm's way.

'Such is the importance of this work; I have made sure the funding is in place for this vital work to continue this year.'