

## Operation BLUNT launched to combat knife crime

A major police operation to tackle knife crime and reduce the number of people who routinely carry knives on the streets is underway in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire.

As part of Operation Blunt, officers across the Force are using search arches - similar to the metal detectors used for security at airports - outside clubs and pubs and at school gates, shopping centres and transport hubs.

Slough Grammar School was the venue for the launch of Operation Blunt last November. Since then the search arches have been used at a Banbury club and at pubs and clubs in Henley. Two Buckinghamshire schools have also taken part in the initiative. Officers and prisoners have visited Mandeville School in Aylesbury to talk to pupils about the consequences of carrying knives. Cottesloe School in Wing also set aside time for pupils to hear from Richard Taylor, the father of murdered south London schoolboy Damilola Taylor. Operation Blunt is supported by the Damilola Taylor Trust which runs the national "Respect your life, not a knife" campaign.



## Excessive drinking tackled

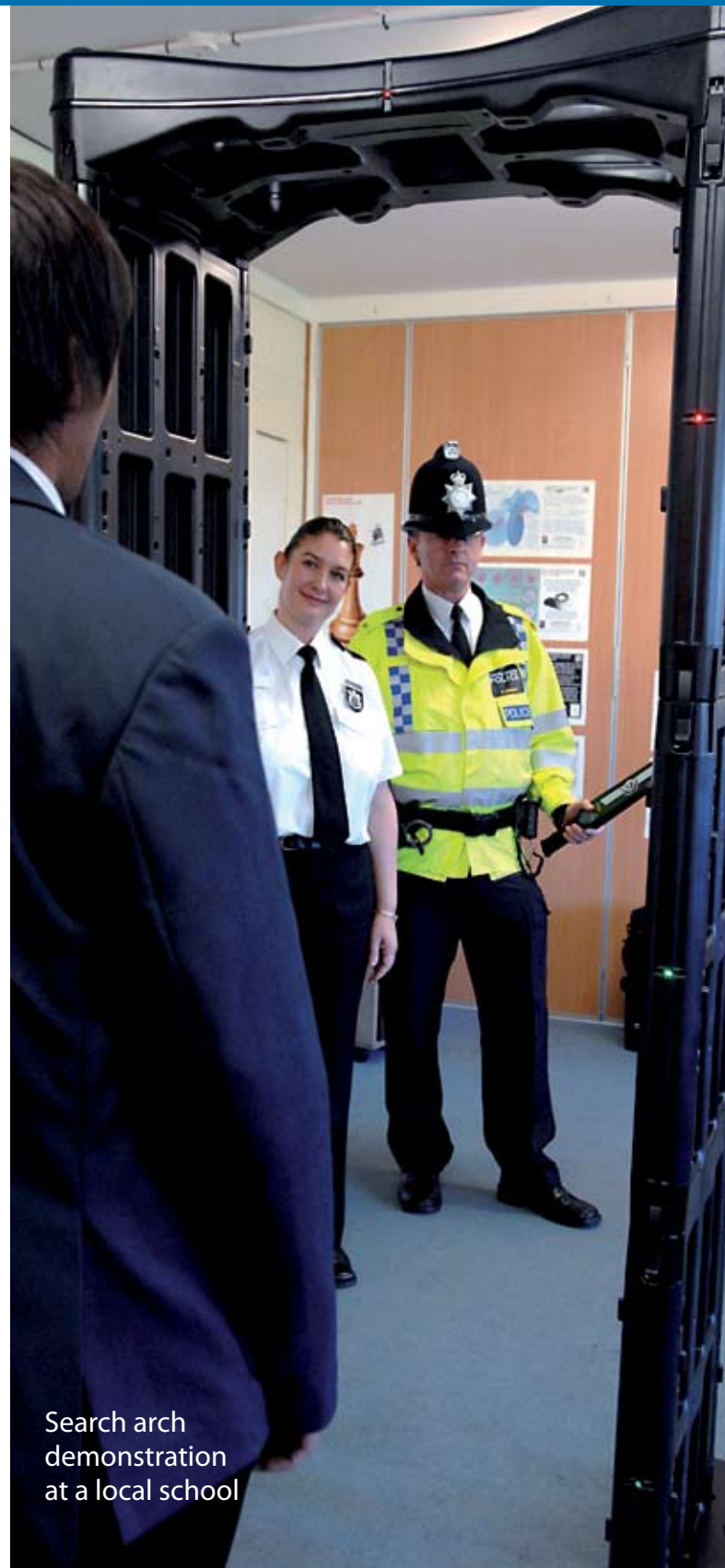
Thames Valley Police has joined forces with Hampshire Constabulary and NHS South Central to run a year-long campaign aimed at reducing under age and excessive drinking.



As well as police enforcement activity, the campaign includes education initiatives to raise awareness of the dangers of alcohol and get the message across that the consequences of irresponsible drinking are far-reaching.

People who sell alcohol to under 18s are being targeted in the first part of the campaign, with police getting tough with adults caught supplying those who are under age.

Thames Valley recorded a 33 per cent increase in the number of offenders and suspects for alcohol-related offences last year.



Search arch demonstration at a local school

## Thames Valley Chief Constable and Deputy formally appointed



SARA THORNTON

**Sara Thornton became Thames Valley Police's Chief Constable on 1 April this year, after 15 months acting in the role. And on May 4, Alex Marshall, who was the acting Deputy Chief Constable, was confirmed in the role.**

**Sara's** policing career began with the Metropolitan Police in 1986. She joined Thames Valley in November 2000 as an Assistant Chief Constable and was awarded the Queen's Police Medal in June last year.

**Alex** has been with the Force since 2004 having previously worked at the Home Office, Cambridgeshire Police and the Metropolitan Police.



ALEX MARSHALL



# PCSOs take to the streets

**There are now more than 280 Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) working in Thames Valley and the Force hopes there will be around 400 by the end of the summer.**

The vast majority are employed in local communities as part of neighbourhood policing teams. Assistant Chief Constable Nick Gargan said: "PCSOs have made a very significant difference to policing across the Thames Valley. They spend most of their time out and about providing a reassuring presence and tackling low level crime and anti-social behaviour issues.

"This has helped to improve the quality of life for local residents in several areas, and it means police officers are freed up to deal with more serious crimes."

### PCSOs in Thames Valley CAN:

- Seize alcohol and tobacco from young people
- Seize vehicles being used to cause alarm, or remove abandoned vehicles
- Issue fixed penalty notices to people who cycle on pavements
- Disperse groups and take young people home if they are acting in an anti-social manner where there is a dispersal order in force
- Demand the names and addresses of people acting in an anti-social manner.

### PCSOs in Thames Valley CANNOT:

- Make arrests
- Interview suspects
- Engage in high risk activities
- Investigate road traffic collisions.

## Real cold case review team

A team has been set up dedicated to reinvestigating unsolved serious crimes, some from as long ago as the 1950s. The Dedicated Review Team was launched in March with a brief to look at unsolved homicides spanning a 50 year period in the Thames Valley area. The team is also looking at unsolved serious sexual assaults from the 1980s to the present.

Officers are liaising closely with forensic scientists to see if the latest scientific techniques, such as DNA, can be applied to old cases.

Detective Superintendent Barry Halliday, who leads the Dedicated Review Team said: "These tragic crimes are made so much

more difficult for the victims and relatives when the family has to cope with the fact that the case is unsolved.

"Our first task was to decide which cases should be re-examined first, but I can assure all those affected by unsolved serious crimes that each and every one of these cases will be looked at and the team will personally visit victims and families when their cases are being investigated.

"Even 50 years ago officers were forensically aware and kept evidence found at crime scenes. We hope to use the evidence obtained then and apply modern scientific processes in the hope of getting a result."



## GPA set up

**Thames Valley Police has launched its own Gay Police Association.**

Its aim is to support lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender staff; tackle and reduce homophobic behaviour in the workplace; to be a critical friend for the Force; provide operational support for officers dealing with homophobic incidents and help the Force engage with the gay community.

## DID YOU KNOW?

>> **Thames Valley Police is responsible for policing the largest stretch of motorway in Britain - 196 miles. The sections of the M4, M40 and M25 within the Force area are some of the busiest motorways in Europe.**

## DID YOU KNOW?

>> **On average, every year 36 young people are killed and more than 300 seriously injured on the roads of Thames Valley.**

# Young drivers targeted

**Young drivers and passengers have been targeted as part of a hard-hitting campaign aimed at reducing the number of road accidents involving young people.**

In the last five years, 181 people aged between 16 and 24 were killed and 1,500 seriously injured on the roads in Thames Valley.

To help tackle the problem the police joined forces with the ambulance and fire services, hospital staff and road safety officers from local councils to put on a show to make young drivers and passengers aware of the risks on the road.

Safe Drive Stay Alive is a film and theatre event which explores the circumstances that can lead to a crash on the road and the consequences that follow. More than 10,000 young people attended the event at venues in Oxford, Wycombe, Reading and Milton Keynes.

Supt Mick Doyle, Head of Roads Policing, said: "The show was hard-hitting and impactful and, judging by the reaction of the young people afterwards, did make them think more about their own driving.

"We felt it was a very successful event and we plan to hold more shows this November, hopefully reaching even more young people than we did last year.

"We want to do everything we can to reduce the number of families that have to go through the grief of losing a son, daughter, brother or sister in a road crash."



## Dodgy motorists – beware!

**Vehicles used in a crime are much more likely to be picked up by police following the Force's decision to double its network of Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras earlier this year.**

The cameras read the number plates of passing vehicles and these are fed through various databases. Officers can then see whether the vehicle has been used in a crime, whether it is taxed and insured and if it is being driven by a disqualified driver.

Most criminals rely on vehicles to commit crime and ANPR makes it far more difficult for them to do so without being detected.

There are currently around 60 static site ANPR cameras located around Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire.

These enable around 500,000 vehicle registration numbers to be captured every day.

## BACK TO CLASS FOR DRIVERS CAUGHT USING MOBILES



Motorists caught using a hand-held mobile phone while driving in Thames Valley are being offered a unique opportunity to attend a "call divert" workshop rather than being fined and getting points on their licence.

Since February the penalty for being caught driving or supervising a learner while using a mobile is a £60 fine and three penalty points. Thames Valley Police is the only Force in the country offering guilty drivers an alternative – a place at an education workshop aimed at changing their attitude. The aim is to educate drivers about the real dangers of making a mobile phone call when driving, and raising awareness among drivers that it is not only illegal but a significant cause of accidents. The interactive workshop costs £74 and lasts one and a half hours.





## CRIME PERFORMANCE

**Overall crime in Thames Valley increased by nearly 5% in 2006/07 compared to the previous year. Vehicle crime (thefts of vehicles and theft from vehicles) continued to fall for the third successive year.**

During the past year we have improved our reporting arrangements for victims of domestic violence to encourage more victims to report incidents to us. In this regard we have been successful as the number of reported incidents has increased significantly. This has contributed to an increase in violent offences which rose by 15%. However, most of the increased reporting relates to less serious violence where the victim did not suffer any physical injury.

The other major factor which influences the increase in violent crime is public order offences which include street brawls, often fuelled by excessive drinking.

Offences involving serious violence, where there was injury to the victim, have fallen by 6% compared to the previous year. Serious violence involving injuries which relate to domestic violence have fallen by 20% during the same period.

Thames Valley Police has recently launched a major campaign to tackle alcohol related crime. This year the Force is concentrating on reducing violent crime, robbery, vehicle crime and household burglary.

## What DID we do last year?

- We rolled out neighbourhood policing in 170 neighbourhoods so local communities could have their own team of officers to deal with local issues
- We launched a major crackdown on class A drugs as a result of which a number of crack houses were closed down and a significant number of offenders given long prison sentences
- We set up special units in Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes to co-ordinate and investigate domestic violence, child abuse, missing persons and serious sexual assaults as well as manage registered sex offenders
- We have introduced new computer systems which enable us to get people to court more efficiently and improve our ability to manage and share information with key partners
- Witness Care Units were established in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire to improve the quality of service given to witnesses of crime
- We recruited another 107 Police Community Support Officers towards the 06/07 target of 417, providing police officers with more support to provide you with an improved service.

## What WILL we do this year?

- Complete the roll out of neighbourhood policing across Thames Valley by introducing it into a further 95 neighbourhoods.
- Increase the number of officers dedicated to dealing with serious, organised and cross border crime, and the threat of terrorism
- Improve the way we make use of our staff to ensure you get a good service 24 hours a day
- Recruit more volunteers and Special Constables to support the work of officers
- Develop better relations with the business community
- Increase the amount of illegally gained money and assets we seize from criminals.

