



NW NEWS

West Kent

Watchout

The Voice of the West Kent Neighbourhood Watch Association

Issue 55

"Security through awareness"

Spring 2021

Your co-ordinator is:.....

Tel No.

More than 850 years in prison sentences secured by single Kent Police team

Armed burglars, knife-point robbers and reckless car thieves have been sentenced to more than 850 years imprisonment, thanks to a single Kent Police team.

The Chief Constable's Crime Squad is in its second year of operation, having been set up to proactively target high harm offenders who indiscriminately target proactively members of the public and law-abiding businesses.

Since its inception in February 2019, the team's investigations have resulted in offenders being jailed for a combined total of 866 years. In the past year alone, 489 years in prison sentences were imposed.

Detective Inspector Darren Reynolds, who leads the team, said: "Our focus is to go after offenders who cause huge amounts of harm within our communities – people who think nothing of breaking into a victim's home or using violence to steal money and valuable items.

"As the results show, we're making the county a very difficult place for such offenders to operate in. Numerous people who considered themselves to be well-organised and sophisticated have been removed from the streets and are unable to cause further damage.

"Not only do these results make the county a safer place, they also demonstrate the excellent service we are providing to victims of crime who are always the most important person in any case we deal with."

The Crime Squad was set up in February 2019 and has teams based across the county.

It consists of detectives and police constables who work together to identify patterns of offending and target offenders before they reoffend.

In addition to securing the prison sentences, it has received authority to issue 1,890 charges and made 610 arrests. Of these, 830 charges and 295 arrests were made in the past year.

Among the more noteworthy cases in the past 12 months is the imprisonment of a prolific burglary gang who, between them, were responsible for a series of offences committed across Maidstone, Whitstable, Canterbury, Tonbridge, Medway and Sevenoaks. They were jailed for a combined total of 23 years.

A knife-point robber who stole more than £10,500 from amusement centres in Gillingham, Romford and Welling was also imprisoned for seven years. Thanks to the Crime Squad's expertise, he was detained two days after the Gillingham offence took place despite previously evading capture for incidents that took place outside of the county in mid-2019.

Elsewhere in Medway, the team was able to recover quickly a car that had been stolen from a home in Twydall. The offender intentionally travelled from outside of the county to commit the offence but was brought into custody within minutes of the offence taking place. He is now serving a three-and-a-half year sentence.

In the West of Kent, four men who posed as police officers to enter a gated home in Ide Hill, before stealing from the occupants, were jailed for 12 years between them.

Although burglary and robbery are the backbone of what the team deals with, the expertise of its officers has also led to them investigating two men who were suspected of non-recent sexual offences. Between them, they were jailed for 19 years.

The team also secured four-and-a-half years' imprisonment for a woman who stole from 14 shops across Whitstable, Dover, Canterbury, Maidstone and Gillingham. She used a series of sophisticated distraction techniques to deceive staff, before stealing mobile phones and jewellery worth more than £100,000.

DI Reynolds added: "Each day we are gathering new information on offenders

and using every available power to ensure they are targeted.

"We're working with neighbouring police forces and specialist units within Kent Police; we're taking to the streets in plain-clothes and we're obtaining warrants to go after offenders in their own homes.

"I am quite confident the service we provide to the people of Kent is only going to get better over the next 12 months."

Kent Police Communications Office.

How to join in a NhW Scheme

If you wish to join a NhW scheme, first check if there is a scheme running in your area, if there is do ask if you can join.

If there is not a scheme running, maybe you would like to set up a scheme yourself with a good neighbour or friend.

NhW schemes have been proven to reduce crime in 79% of cases. Our overall aim is to bring neighbours together to create strong friendly, active communities where crime and anti social behaviour are less likely to happen. We believe everyone has the right to feel safe where they live.

The West Kent Neighbourhood Watch Committee works closely with Kent Police, who have always supported us in every way possible.

To sign up please contact Peter Rolington, Chairman or Julie Walker, Kent Police volunteer.

Our email addresses are shown on the back of this newsletter.

British Transport Police

Text 61016 to report non-emergency incidents on trains or the tube. Dial 0800 405040 to give more information. A 999 call is guaranteed a quick response. For Crimestoppers dial 0800 555 111.

Dogs could join the fight against COVID-19

Medical Detection Dogs is looking into whether man's best friend could play a role in preventing the spread of Coronavirus.

The charity has spent years successfully researching the science behind dogs' sense of smell and believes that dogs could detect the disease. It has always adopted a rigorous, scientific approach to its work, and produced more than a dozen peer reviewed research papers which support its belief that each disease has its own unique odour.

Medical Detection Dogs will be working in partnership with the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) and Durham University, bringing together the team which recently collaborated to prove successfully that dogs can be trained to detect malaria.

Together they have started preparations to intensively train dogs so they could be ready in 6 weeks to help provide a rapid, non-invasive diagnosis towards the tail end of the epidemic, and approached government about how dogs can play a role in the fight against the disease.

Dogs searching for COVID-19 would be trained in the same way as those dogs the charity has already trained to detect diseases like cancer, Parkinson's and bacterial infections – by sniffing samples in the charity's training room and indicating when they have found it. They are also able to detect subtle changes in temperature of the skin, so could potentially tell if someone has a fever.

Once trained, dogs could also be used to identify travellers entering the country infected with the virus or be deployed in other public spaces.

Dr Claire Guest, CEO and Co-Founder of Medical Detection Dogs, says: "In principle, we're sure that dogs could detect COVID-19. We are now looking into how we can safely catch the odour of the virus from patients and present it to the dogs.

"The aim is that dogs will be able to screen anyone, including those who are asymptomatic and tell us whether they need to be tested. This would be fast, effective and non-invasive and make sure the limited NHS testing resources are only used where they are really needed."

Professor James Logan, Head of Department of Disease Control at The London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, and Director of ARCTEC, said: "Our previous work demonstrated that dogs can detect odours from humans with a malaria infection with extremely high

accuracy – above the World Health Organisation standards for a diagnostic.

"We know that other respiratory diseases, like COVID-19, change our body odour so there is a very high chance that dogs will be able to detect it. This new diagnostic tool could revolutionise our response to COVID-19 in the short term, but particularly in the months to come, and could be profoundly impactful."

Professor Steve Lindsay at Durham University says: "If the research is successful, we could use COVID-19 detection dogs at airports at the end of the epidemic to identify rapidly people carrying the virus. This would help prevent the re-emergence of the disease after we have brought the present epidemic under control."

MEDIA ENQUIRIES

For more information, images or to arrange an interview please contact Gemma Butlin at Medical Detection Dogs on 07967 818 558 or at gemma.butlin@medical-detectiondogs.org.uk.

Medical Detection Dogs is the world leader in training dogs to detect the odour of human disease. It is at the forefront of the research into the fight against cancer and other life-threatening diseases including Parkinson's disease, malaria and bacterial infections.

The charity's Bio Detection Dogs are trained to find the odour of diseases, such as cancer, in samples such as urine and swabs. Its Medical Alert Assistance Dogs are trained to detect minute changes in an individual's personal odour triggered by their disease and alert them to an impending medical event. Medical Detection Dogs receives no government funding for the work they do and rely entirely on the generosity of donations from the public and charitable trusts.

For more information visit www.medicaldetectiondogs.org.uk

Follow on Twitter: @MedDetectDogs and Facebook: @Medical Detection Dogs



Our thanks go to Medical Detection Dogs for this item. The work they are doing is amazing. Hopefully it will help to detect and stop the spread of this Coronavirus.

When you go away

Hopefully now lockdown is easing somewhat, some of us maybe able to go on holiday for a welcome break after the awful year we have all had. Here are a few helpful tips.

1. Make sure your premises are secured every time you leave, even if only for a short time.
2. Make sure your house alarm, if you have one, is set.
3. Put lights on a timer switch to make your house look occupied. You can also get timer switches for radios.
4. Ask your neighbour to push any mail through your letterbox and to take any deliveries in for you. Cancel milk, papers and any other deliveries you may have.
5. If you have a driveway ask a neighbour to park their car on it, so passers-by assume someone is at home.
6. If you have a close friend or relative nearby with a key, do ask them to pop in and draw your curtains in the evening and back in the morning. Don't leave your curtains drawn during the day.
7. Best not to display your home address on the outside of your luggage.
8. Most importantly, don't publish your absence on the internet. Status updates, comments and photos on social media can give away the fact that you are out of your home for an extended period.

Keep safe and enjoy your holiday.

Advice on safeguarding your catalytic converter

There are a number of steps vehicle owners can take to reduce their chances of being targeted.

This includes contacting the manufacturer of their car as many companies sell clamps and security cages that are known to deter thieves.

It is also possible to security-mark and register the metal shell of the converter so that it can be returned to its rightful owner if it is stolen and later recovered.

Further advice includes parking your vehicle in a garage or a busy, well-lit area. If feasible, homeowners can also give consideration to installing good quality CCTV cameras.

Information from Kent Police Corporate Communications.

Fraud warning about calls from cloned police numbers

Detectives are warning residents to beware of bank card scams where criminals attempt to trick victims by cloning police phone numbers.

Those responsible are not actually calling from a police station but change their caller ID to make it appear like they are – a process known as ‘spoofing’.

Over the past three weeks Kent Police has received at least six reports of this nature from residents living in parts of Gravesend and Maidstone.

A number of potential victims were contacted by someone claiming to be from Holborn police station, in London. The suspect would claim the victims’ bank card had been used fraudulently and attempt to obtain their account details.

In one instance, a person was contacted by someone claiming to be from South Wales Police. The victim received several calls with phone numbers appearing to match the local force, as well as other agencies including the Home Office and HM Treasury.

She was told her identity had been stolen and advised of steps to safeguard her money, which included transferring funds from her account to an alternative account.

The victim was warned not to tell anyone and even threatened with arrest if she failed to comply. More than £60,000 is reported to have been stolen in separate transactions.

Detective Constable Fiona Dalzell of the Kent and Essex Serious Crime Directorate, said: “It is important to remember that a police officer will never ask you to pay money over the phone or try and obtain any of your bank details.

“Never give out your personal information in response to an incoming call or rely upon the caller ID as the sole means of identification – especially if the caller is asking you to do something that will affect you financially.

“If you receive a suspicious call, hang up the phone and call a trusted number, such as a family member or friend, from a different phone, or wait at least five minutes to ensure the line has cleared. This will ensure you are not still talking to the same fraudster or an accomplice.

“Contact your bank immediately if you think you may have been scammed and also report the incident to Action Fraud.

“Remember the ABC rule to help protect yourself and others against fraud – never Assume it’s police, never Believe it’s police and always Confirm by taking their details and ringing back via 101.”

Increase of dog thefts in Kent

There are reports from Kent Police on the increase of dog theft or attempted thefts in Kent over the past week.

Cases have increased by 33% in the South East since 2018 – with 163 incidents reported within the last year. Demand for dogs have skyrocketed in lockdown and prices have soared as a result.

Organised crime is exploiting this situation by smuggling puppies from abroad and stealing dogs across the UK. Dog thefts are now at an all-time high, with puppies stolen for an immediate resale and adult dogs being taken for forced breeding on puppy farms.

What to do:

- Keep your dogs safe by following these simple steps;
- Safe – secure your property and garden;
- Spottable – Keep your dogs in sight and train them to return to you;
- Searchable – Know what steps to take if they go missing’
- Read more from Dogs Trust on keeping your pet safe.

Report any information about a stolen dog or suspicious behaviour to Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111 or call the Police on 101.

Please warn family members, friends and neighbours.

Spring crime prevention

As spring approaches the number of shed break-ins can increase. Items such as lawnmowers, bicycles, golf clubs, fishing tackle and power tools can all be kept insecurely in sheds and these can all be easy pickings for thieves to target. The tips below can help to prevent you from becoming a victim of this crime.

- Install a shed alarm, with a notice displayed to warn thieves that it is not worth the effort of breaking in. The alarms are easy to install and can be purchased at most DIY stores;

- Make sure the door is securely locked at all times;
- Ensure all valuable property is marked with your postcode. Post coding property makes your belongings very unattractive to a thief by making items easily identifiable and difficult to sell;
- Lock up pedal cycles. Use bike locks and chain them inside to other large items or to the shed;
- Keep a record of the make, model and ID numbers of bicycles and all other equipment and take photographs

of unusual items. You can use www.immobilise.com to record your items. This is free to use and helps the Police to identify owners of recovered property;

- Check your household insurance policy to ensure that the value of things stored inside is covered by your contents policy;
- Watch out for scams relating to people asking for money for gardening work. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is! You shouldn’t feel pressured into accepting any work you don’t think you need.

By Alison Finch Community Safety Partnership.

Personal safety when out and about

When on foot please be aware of your surroundings. Keep to well lit areas whenever possible and try to avoid routes that include underpasses, quiet alleyways wooded or deserted areas. Keep valuables out of sight. Be careful if you decide to take out your phone, mp3 player or wallet in public. If you are wearing your music player this will make it more difficult to hear

someone approaching you. Just put the device into one of your ears. Try to avoid chatting or texting on your phone when walking alone, as this could distract you from noticing potential danger approaching. Spread your valuables around – keys in one pocket, phone in bag, money in trouser pockets. Consider using a personal safety alarm to carry with you when out and about.

Spring issue of the newsletter

Sorry folks due to the difficult times we are in at the present time, there will be no hard copies of this newsletter sent out. Please forward it to all you members via e-mail.

Campaign launched to help support victims of modern slavery

Supporting victims of modern slavery at the earliest opportunity is the focus of a new Kent Police campaign launched in partnership with Crimestoppers UK.

A total of 379 victims were identified in Kent between 1 April 2020 and 7 March 2021, with exploitation taking various forms including sexual, by forced labour, domestic servitude or by committing criminal acts such as drug dealing on behalf of others.

Modern slavery can affect people from all walks of life and is not limited to non-UK residents, with 118 of the Kent victims being British. A further 33 victims were Chinese, 30 were Sudanese and 27 Albanian.

Over the next several weeks Kent Police will be running a marketing and social media campaign in partnership with Crimestoppers UK aimed at raising awareness of modern slavery and helping members of the public to spot the signs that somebody may be being exploited.

In addition to information and advice posted on the Kent Police and Crimestoppers websites, messages will also be shared through organisations including Neighbourhood Watch, parish and town councils and local chambers of commerce.

Leaflets will also be printed in a variety of languages and distributed in those communities where modern slavery and human trafficking offences are most prevalent.

Detective Chief Inspector Steve McLean of the Kent and Essex Serious Crime Directorate said: "Modern slavery is one of the fastest growing international crimes and is present in cities, towns and villages across the UK. It is therefore very important that we all know what signs to look out for, as we may very well be living next door to or visiting the same places as someone who needs our help.

"Victims of modern slavery often live in poor conditions and may be too scared to come forward or report their experiences to the police, usually because they are being controlled by someone through mental or physical abuse or the threat of violence to them and their families.

"We therefore rely heavily on members of the public to report their concerns to us so that we can take action to safeguard victims and target the criminals responsible. Just last month we arrested 12 people after carrying out warrants at addresses in Canterbury and London linked to the exploitation of migrant sex workers, and we will continue to investigate any reports we receive

to ensure victims of all forms of modern slavery are offered a way out of the severe hardship they find themselves in."

Signs that someone might be a victim of modern slavery include:

- Showing signs of injury, abuse and malnourishment;
- Looking unkempt, often in the same clothing and having poor hygiene;
- Appearing to be under the control and influence of others;
- Living in cramped, dirty, overcrowded accommodation;
- Having no access to or control of their passport or identity documents;
- Appearing scared, avoiding eye contact, and being untrusting;
- Allowing others to speak for them when addressed directly, rather than speaking for themselves;
- Being collected very early/returned late at night on a regular basis;
- Having inappropriate clothing for the work they are performing/lack of safety equipment;
- Being isolated from the local community and their family;
- Travelling only with other workers.

If you suspect someone may be a victim of modern slavery or if you are a victim yourself then you can report it to Kent Police at www.kent.police.uk/report or by calling 101. If you are in immediate danger please call 999.

You can also call the Modern Slavery Helpline on 08000 121 700 or Crimestoppers on 0800 55511 or by completing the online form at www.crimestoppers-uk.org.

You can also contact organisations including Stop the Traffik Kent, Porchlight and the Salvation Army South East, all of whom work with Kent Police to support victims of modern slavery

e-watch.co

There have been problems recently with members not receiving e-watch's twice weekly reports.

If you are experiencing problems receiving e-watch updates, please remember that past issues can be found on the e-watch.co website at [:e-watch.co/updates.php](http://e-watch.co/updates.php)

by Peter Rolington.

Who's Who On The Executive Committee?

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e-mail: michael.laidlow@kent.police.uk

Peter Brown

Jennifer Woodgate

Cedric Read

Other Useful Numbers

Tonbridge & Malling Crime Reduction Unit

– Tel: 01732 844522

Tunbridge Wells Crime Reduction Unit

– Tel: 01892 526121

West Kent Special Branch – Tel: 07528 989208

UK Border Agency – Tel: 08435 047198

Kent Trading Standards – Tel: 03454 040506

Sevenoaks Community Safety Partnership

– Tel: 01732 227000

community.safety@sevenoaks.gov.uk

Tonbridge & Malling Community Safety Partnership

– Tel: 01732 844522 msp@tmbc.gov.uk

Tunbridge Wells Community Safety Partnership

– Tel: 01892 526121

communitysafety@tunbridgewells.gov.uk

If you wish to contact a member of the West Kent Neighbourhood Watch Executive Committee, please write to them at:

**c/o: Tonbridge Police Station,
Neighbourhood Watch Office,
Floor 2, 1 Pembury Road,
Tonbridge, Kent TN9 2HS.**

**STAY SAFE DURING THIS
DIFFICULT TIME!
KEEP TO SOCIAL
DISTANCING.**



Make a note

When contacting the Police in West Kent

Emergency only 999

Kent Police 101

Is for reporting non-urgent crime, suspicious incidents
or to contact your Neighbourhood Policing Team.
Calls cost just 16p from landlines or mobiles.