

Communications & Engagement Strategy

2024 - 2029 *(update May 2026)*



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for Thames Valley

Introduction

This document provides a strategic framework for OPCC communications and engagement. It outlines the approach the Communications Team will take to raise the awareness of the role and work of the PCC and his office to ensure that policing performance and governance is visible, transparent and accountable to the public.

The strategy focuses on demonstrating the benefit and impact of the work of the PCC to maintain public confidence in policing and policing governance; from ensuring an effective and efficient police service that responds to the needs of communities to wider OPCC-led crime prevention partnership activity to improve community safety.

Since this strategy was originally published, the Government confirmed its intention to abolish Police and Crime Commissioners and their Offices by May 2028, as set out in the Policing Reform White Paper.

The focus over the remaining term of the PCC will be to continue to deliver effective policing governance and, on the priorities, set out in the Police and Crime Plan for the benefit of our communities. However, the forthcoming changes will impact our ongoing communications, and this strategy has been updated to acknowledge and reflect this changing landscape.

As PCCs transition to a new model of policing governance, the strategic aim for our communications will be to effectively engage, inform and assure stakeholders and the public on developments regarding transition to ensure we maintain trust in our scrutiny of policing and in our service delivery for our communities.

To achieve our aim and to take us through this transition period, a dedicated communications and engagement plan will be developed and implemented which will be audience led and responsive to our wide range of stakeholder's needs.



Legal Statutory duties

There are a number of duties under the terms of the **Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011** upon which communications and engagement plays a key role.

PCCs must:

- obtain the views of victims of crime in that area about matters concerning the policing of the area.
- prior to publishing a Police and Crime Plan, make arrangements to obtain the views of the people in that police area, and the views of the victims of crime in that area.
- make arrangements for obtaining, before the first precept for a financial year is issued, the views of the people in that police area, and the relevant ratepayers' representatives, on the proposals of the PCC for expenditure (including capital expenditure) in that financial year.

The PCC is also responsible for overseeing the extent to which the Chief Constable has fulfilled his statutory duties.

Chief Constables must:

- make arrangements for engaging with people in each neighbourhood in the police area, in order to obtain their views about crime and disorder and provide information about policing. Arrangements should include regular community beat meetings and other forms of engagement which allows all groups in an area to give their views on policing and hold their local police to account.

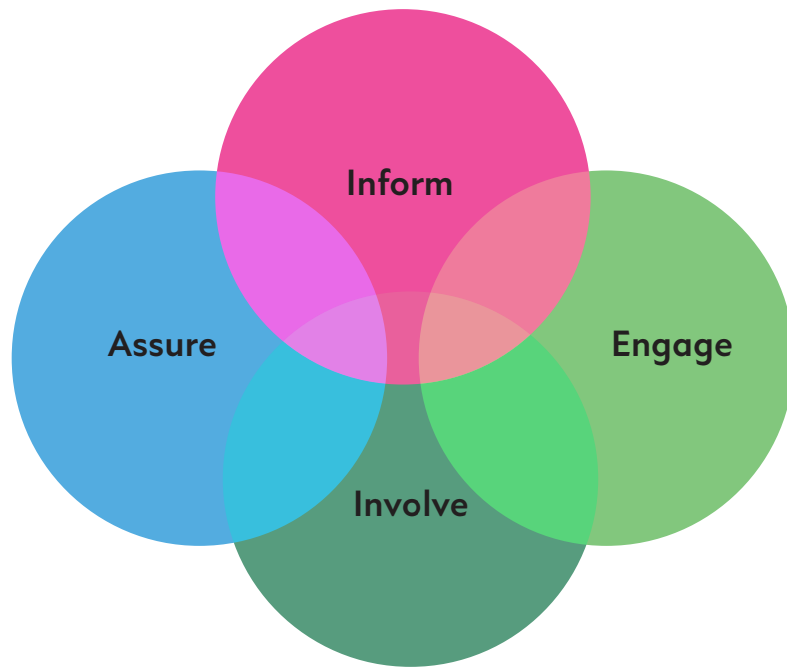
Public Sector Equality Duty – requires public authorities to have an adequate evidence base for their decision making, and engagement can assist with developing that evidence base. It is recommended that public authorities publish information about who they have engaged with.



Our Ambition

To increase the level of public and stakeholder awareness and understanding of the PCC, his role and the work of the office to build trust and confidence in policing.

Communication principles



Our communications and engagement will meet at least one of the following four objectives:

- ▶ **Inform:** increase understanding and reach across communities of the role and impact of the work of the PCC and his office.
- ▶ **Engage:** provide opportunities for the public and other stakeholders to engage with the PCC on issues that matter to them and to respond with any action taken to address them.
- ▶ **Involve:** involve stakeholders in decision making, helping to inform policy or scrutinise service delivery.
- ▶ **Assure:** communities that their police service's performance is being effectively scrutinised by the PCC, operating efficiently and delivering value for money. They are also assured by the PCC's actions to listen and address concerns most important to the them.

Our objectives

Communications and engagement objectives stem from the PCC's core responsibilities

1. Raise the profile of the PCC, the awareness of the work of the OPCC and communicate progress and outcomes of Police and Crime Plan priorities
2. Improve public visibility and awareness of the PCC's scrutiny and oversight of Thames Valley Police to help build trust and confidence
3. Raise awareness of OPCC partnership working and programme delivery, working with partners on effective communications to the public and other key stakeholders
4. Engage with audiences on statutory and non-statutory issues, highlighting the PCC's role as the voice of the public in policing to ensure that stakeholder views are represented as fully as possible
5. Increase awareness of the support available through Victims First and the PCC's wider advocacy and influence across the Criminal Justice System
6. Engage directly with the public and stakeholders on policing and crime issues affecting them or their communities
7. Inform, engage and assure stakeholders and the public on Police Reform to support the transition from PCCs to a new model of policing governance, ensuring accountability, transparency and confidence are maintained.



Our approach

Our overall approach will focus on the following areas:

Media engagement: we will improve media engagement; building strong relationships with journalists, we will seek editorial opportunities and improve monitoring and planning in order to engage media on the PCC's views.

Partner engagement and collaboration: we will improve OPCC engagement with key external stakeholders through consistent communications, briefings and meetings. This will include the implementation of a stakeholder engagement plan to influence and support the transition of PCCs to a new policing governance model in May 2028.

Public engagement: we will deliver statutory engagement on the Policing Precept and develop non-statutory engagement opportunities to support the delivery of the Police and Crime Plan, involving the PCC, CEO and other Senior Leaders in face-to-face engagement, meetings and events as needed. We will use surveys as necessary, seeking to collaborate with partners where possible on delivery and sharing of information. We will be transparent in our engagement with the aim of being as accessible as possible to communities, delivering clear objectives, feedback and outcomes for our activity.

Data and case studies: where possible we will use data, outcomes and case studies to demonstrate to the public and other stakeholders the impact and benefit of our work, and to increase the potential of media cut through.

Digital channels: we will adopt a 'picture and video led' approach on our social media channels, tailoring content for channels where appropriate and utilising paid for advertising to support activity. We will ensure our digital content is as accessible as possible to people with disabilities.

Issues and crisis communications: we will support the PCC and CEO in managing issues and crisis communications internally and with the media.

Thames Valley Police: we will work collaboratively with the force to optimise positive communications opportunities and engage openly with them on PCC responses to issues, crises and areas of scrutiny.

Internal communications: we will keep staff regularly updated about the organisation's work, any changes taking place and the success of their colleagues.

How we will deliver

1. Raise the profile of the PCC, awareness of the work of the OPCC and communicate progress and outcomes of Police and Crime Plan priorities

- Build relationships with regional and national journalists to raise the profile of the PCC. We will seek editorial opportunities and improve monitoring and planning in order to engage media on the PCC's views
- Ensure timely updates of Police and Crime Plan priorities to our stakeholders
- Communicate the PCC Annual Report to update stakeholders on progress made against the PCCs strategic priorities
- Create comms campaigns and support existing ones which support Police and Crime Plan priorities
- Support the PCC in work to lobby and influence decision makers, including government on policing and crime matters

2. Improve public visibility and awareness of the PCC's scrutiny and oversight of Thames Valley Police to help build trust and confidence

- Increase awareness of independent scrutiny and advisory panels and improve transparency and visibility of any resulting operational policing changes
- Link in with existing scrutiny and advisory groups and other networks within Thames Valley Police, to help in building relationships with communities, including under-represented communities
- Increase communications and visibility of the complaints process; how to make a complaint, the PCC's role and oversight of the process and the work and investment to deliver a more efficient service
- Improve visibility of police performance data to the public and other stakeholders

3. Raise awareness of OPCC partnership working and programme delivery, working with partners on effective communications to the public and other key stakeholders

- Develop strong relationships through regular briefings and meetings with partner organisations and key individuals of influence to help communicate joint working around community safety and crime prevention programme delivery
- Support communications of Systems Thinking; positioning the PCC at the forefront to bring together systems leaders across local government, the NHS and the criminal justice system
- Use a case study and data led approach to demonstrate the impact of crime prevention funding and partnership delivery in making communities safer
- Promote the PCC/TVP Community Fund to recognise and celebrate community partner organisations work in helping to prevent crime

4. Engage with audiences on statutory and non-statutory issues, highlighting the PCC's role as the voice of the public in policing to ensure that stakeholder views are represented as fully as possible

- Increase opportunities for communities, including under-represented communities, to engage with the PCC and have their say on policing and crime e.g. introduce in-person public meetings and online PCC surgeries and improved online contact form on the PCC website
- Communicate the delivery and outcomes of a trust and confidence survey with Thames Valley Police to gather representative views on policing
- Consult the public on the Policing Precept and communicate the budget setting process and outcome to demonstrate efficiencies
- Ensure intelligence gained from engagement and public contact is fed back to the PCC and used to shape OPCC plans and decisions, and that information on who has been engaged with is published according to the Equality Duty

5. Improve awareness of the support available through Victims First and the PCC's wider advocacy and influence across the Criminal Justice System

- Utilise digital channels to share crime prevention, information advice and to signpost people to support
- Support the Victims First team in being seen as a voice for victims; improving media engagement about PCC victims services, developing media spokespeople at the Victims First Hub as an authoritative voice
- Work with service providers on a data and case study led approach to communicate the impact and benefits of support for victims of crime
- Promote the PCC in our communications as an advocate and champion for victims, working with partners in victims services and across the criminal justice system to achieve common goals

6. Engage directly with the public and stakeholder on policing and crime issues affecting them or their communities

- Manage and respond to public and stakeholder correspondence in a professional and timely manner on behalf of the PCC, engaging with Thames Valley Police as necessary
- Direct any complaints or comments of dissatisfaction about Thames Valley Police to the Professional Standards Department for investigation and response
- Highlight significant themes, issues, or concerns from public and stakeholder contact to the PCC for potential escalation to Chief Constable for further scrutiny

7. Inform, engage and assure stakeholders and the public on Police Reform to support the transition from PCCs to a new model of policing governance, ensuring accountability, transparency and confidence are maintained.

- Support the PCC to raise awareness of the potential implications of the Government's Police Reform White Paper proposals and how Thames Valley communities may be affected
- Effectively utilise the views on Police Reform obtained from the PCC's public Trust and Confidence survey and other engagement to help influence national and local direction
- Engage and inform key statutory partners on the role and responsibilities of PCCs and the work of the OPCC to support effective local transition to a new model of police governance
- Develop and implement a communications and engagement plan to inform and assure stakeholders and the public on the new model of policing governance to ensure continued accountability, transparency and trust and confidence through the transition process



Our audiences

Public: residents and people who work in the Thames Valley including victims of crime

Policing national and local: including Thames Valley Police officers, staff and Special Constabulary, Police Federation, Superintendents Association, Staff Networks, National Police Chief's Council (NPCC), Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC), College of Policing (COP), Police and Crime Panel, Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC), His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies Fire Rescue Service (HMICFRS)

Public sector and private sector partners: including our Criminal Justice Partners, Victim Services, Violence Prevention Partnerships (VPP), Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs), Criminal Justice Board (LCJB), Unison, business communities, other representative groups including the Strategic Retail Crime Forum and Rural Crime Partnership, Fire and Rescue and partners in health and education

Political and civic national, regional and local including: Government, Home Office, MPs, Government Ministers, Civil Servants, Police and Crime Commissioners, Councillors, Lord Lieutenants and High Sheriffs

Charities and third sector, voluntary organisations, community and religious groups

Volunteers: Including Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs), scrutiny groups and panels and Community Speedwatch groups

OPCC staff



Evaluation

To understand the impact of our evaluation, we will look at both short term and long term metrics

Short-term metrics:

- Media coverage: measurement of reactive and proactive coverage, tone of media coverage, press release pick up rate
- Social media posts/campaigns: followers, impressions and engagement, spend on 'paid for advertising'
- Website usage and growth
- Newsletter engagement and growth
- Stakeholder event attendance
- Public, partner and colleague feedback
- Survey response rates and increased demographic representation of responses
- Engagement event attendance and demographic breakdown of participants
- Referrals (outside of the automatic victim data transfer from Thames Valley Police to Victims First services)
- Response times to public and other stakeholder communications

Long-term metrics:

- Trust and Confidence survey response trends
- Analysis of caseworker (PCC correspondence) trends/ sentiment/timeliness of responses
- Percentage of OPCC programmes with communications output

