

Operation Hampshire – strategic prevention of assaults on police officers and staff

Using strategic meetings and working groups to address issues of assaults and hate towards police officers and staff.

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Key details

Does it work?	Untested – new or innovative
Focus	Prevention Organisational
Topic	Criminal justice Diversity and inclusion Ethics and values Leadership, development and learning Operational policing Violence (other) Violence against women and girls
Organisation	Merseyside Police
HMICFRS report	PEEL 2023–25 Police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy: An inspection of Merseyside Police
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Key details

Email address	8172@merseyside.police.uk
Region	North West
Partners	Police Criminal justice (includes prisons, probation services)
Stage of practice	The practice is implemented.
Start date	January 2020
Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	Victims Workforce

Aim

The aim is to prevent assaults and hate crime against police officers and staff in line with the national Operation Hampshire programme.

Within Merseyside police, the aim is to support police officers and staff affected by these crimes.

Intended outcome

The intended outcomes of Operation Hampshire are to:

- reduce the number of assaults and hate crime against police officers and staff
- increase the awareness of the types of crimes against police officers and staff
- encourage police officers and staff to report these types of crime

Description

Merseyside Police initially implemented an assault scrutiny panel. This was held quarterly and chaired by the assistant chief constable (ACC) of People Services. The meeting used data of assaults and hate crimes against officers to look at ways to address the issue. It was held at strategic level and saw representation from all heads of departments along with tactical leads for assaults and hate crime. There was also representation from unions, the Police Federation and Professional Standards.

The data originated from the crime management system and OSHENS (incident reporting management system). The data revealed that the workforce had repeat victims and locations. For example, a significant number of crimes were committed in custody suites and therefore, reviews of custody practices and the custody environment were conducted. The behaviours of officers and staff were also observed by protected training officers, and themes were fed back to improve personal safety training.

Thematic inspections were commissioned by the panel to look at repeat victims and were compared with data from Professional Standards. The data also looked at outcomes and reasons for discontinuation to address shortcomings in statements or evidence gathering.

The force engaged early with the national Operation Hampshire lead who provided face-to face training to supervisors. Content of the training included a peer review of the force's performance.

Police covenant meeting

As part of reviewing the force's performance, a police covenant meeting was established to review the assaults and hate crimes towards police officers and staff. All departments are invited to the meeting and the initiative is supported by the Police Federation, staff associations, and force networks.

During the meetings, data around assaults and hate is considered, including victim demographics, locations and whether they are repeat victims. The intention of reviewing the data is to improve the experience of the workforce, by identifying and mitigating risk. Discussions around mitigating risks can include providing new operational equipment and risk assessing patrol areas. Each meeting agenda is designed to be flexible to consider the most recent data and discuss force priorities.

The meeting is held quarterly, and the minutes are fed back into the force's main strategic meeting. At the last meeting, a decision was made to make the Operation Hampshire e-Learning package mandatory, to raise awareness within Merseyside Police.

Assault scrutiny

A tactical working group was set up for assault scrutiny. This is attended by inspectors, chief inspectors and equivalent members of staff. Within the working group, tactical details are discussed and a three-month plan is reported to the strategic police covenant meeting, covering what happened in the last quarter, plans for the next quarter, benefits, and challenges. The police covenant board will then agree plans for the next quarter.

The tactical working group delivered a survey to gather information on how to reduce assaults and hate crimes in the force. Focus groups have been held with both victims and non-victims of assault and hate crime to understand their experience and understanding of the initiative. This was conducted by the force's corporate support and development performance, analysis, and evaluation team to provide a degree of independence.

Support across the force

A supervisor pledge was introduced in 2024 to ensure that supervisors are providing the right support to their team. A new video and poster campaign is in development to highlight this pledge, which will inform officers and staff what to expect from the organisation.

A dedicated intranet site has been set up to signpost staff to available support and dedicated contacts within the force, including examples of victim personal statements and the supervisor pledge. The chief constable is responsible for preparing victim impact statements for hate or assault victims.

Overall impact

Following the policy decision to make the national e-learning package mandatory, 3,799 officers and staff have since completed the training. With this data, the force has confidence that there is a good knowledge of the operation in force. This has encouraged more visits to the internal intranet site and increased the number of people contacting the force single points of contact.

There are regular features in the force magazine ‘Mersey Talk’ and a poster campaign has been launched to increase awareness for victims and supervisors.

Anecdotal feedback suggests that officers and staff feel better supported, and the presence of federation and union representatives in meetings offers crucial support. The force is committed to reducing crime and achieving better criminal justice outcomes as part of their immediate and long-term goals.

The national lead visited the force in November 2024 to conduct a focus group with victims as an independent peer review. Highlights of the focus group included:

- General awareness of Operation Hampshire
- Post-assault supervision and aftercare
- Criminal justice and victim care
- Leadership, prevention and risk management
- General feedback, concerns and opportunities

The focus group identified opportunities around post assault investigation, awareness of the initiative, and risk management. These themes will be explored moving forward to establish if further enhancements can be made to Operation Hampshire.

Learning

- Early involvement of the force communications team has been vital to improving awareness.
- A force intranet page has provided a repository for advice, useful contacts and guidance videos.

Involvement of all strands and departments in the strategic meetings is key to ensure buy in across the force, driving action and overcoming barriers. For example, the estates and finance teams have provided valuable input to the environmental and equipment discussions. In addition, the training academy have been valuable partners in the provision of quality assurance through observations and in ensuring patterns are addressed during training inputs.

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