

Police confidence - Your feedback

Last issue I asked for feedback as to why Hillingdon Police have one of the lowest public confidence levels in London. Having communicated in face-to-face conversations, newsletters, emails and social media I have reviewed your feedback and can report the following (it's wordy, sorry):

Visibility and Engagement

YOU SAID: You don't see enough police on the beat. I have no silver bullet solution that would make you all completely happy. I have to balance the emergency needs of a very large borough against slow foot patrol. Our response teams will always be in vehicles. This is the only practical way to have officers available to respond to emergencies as they develop.

I agree there is more that can be done by our Safer Neighbourhood Teams to be seen on patrol everywhere in the borough. To be honest, it's not an efficient use of their time if their main role is to catch villains, but you and I probably agree that their role is more than that - it is about being the friendly face of the local police, there to stop and have a chat and make you feel safer. **WE DID:** I have changed the way Safer Neighbourhood Teams are allowed to patrol. Gone are the unmarked cars, and in are the bikes and size 10 boots. They are not going to be on every street corner, but I aim to make them more visible than they are now.

YOU SAID: That just being visible was not enough. Two coppers engrossed in conversation and not acknowledging the community is not reassuring. I agree. We are not paid to gossip with each other.

WE DID: My officers have been reminded of their need to engage. To say hello. To smile. If you get a grin and a hello, please respond in kind and let the officers know you appreciate that small piece of engagement.

WE DID: I am also telling the Safer Neighbourhood Teams to be more visible in dealing with issues that I know matter to a lot of you. They will be focusing on speeding, drivers on phones and dangerous driving near schools to name a few. And they will be ensuring they do it in a more visible way.

Apathetic police response to your call

YOU SAID: The real test in police confidence came when someone needed to call police. You felt that some officers were not that keen on fixing the problem. As a result you felt local issues had got worse over time. **WE DID:** Local issues are important to us and we want to make you feel safe in your home and community. Your local police teams are dealing with those concerns and we try to publicise successes so you know we have taken action. If you do suffer local problems, please let your local team know about it. Long term problems aren't fixed after one call to 101 and asking the local team to deal is often a better way to get a lasting solution, and means you are always dealing with the same police officer.

YOU SAID: We don't keep you informed when you make the effort to call us. **WE DID:** Our officers now call you back once they have dealt with the call wherever possible. If you report something suspicious, we will attend and sort it out. Then we will give you a call to reassure you of the outcome.

101 wait times

YOU SAID: you were waiting on hold when ringing 101 and hanging up after lengthy delays.

After 3-years of steady decline in 101 call volume, there has now been a six month reversal. In July call volume peaked at 285,000. 999 calls have also increased in line with a National trend. As a result answering times have increased. **WE DID:** I have spoken to the inspector in charge of resourcing the call handling centres. Internal moves have been made to try to alleviate the problem in the short term as well as additional staff being moved from other departments across London. At this moment there is an ongoing recruitment campaign so that the right number of staff are in place long term. This will see an uplift by January.

The Met is looking at ways to make it easier for you to contact us in non-emergency situations. **WE DID:** Trials of reporting incidents and crimes via Twitter have taken place and online platforms are also being examined to see if they can feasibly be used as a method of reporting incidents. These changes won't happen overnight but the issue is known and we are looking to 21st Century solutions.

Social media and email communication

YOU SAID: Our FB posts were praised for their honesty, particularly when we put our hands up when a mistake was made. **WE DID:** Our posts will be continue to be frank and if we get it wrong, we won't hide from that learning.

YOU SAID: FB was not the best forum to post full newsletters to. Point taken. **WE DID:** Newsletters will return to email delivery and distribution to local libraries. Any relevant content will be broken down into consumable pieces if suitable for FB.

YOU SAID: Superficial posts on Twitter were not engaging. **WE DID:** I am happy to report I fully agree and had already taken steps to reduce our 22 Twitter accounts down to 6 more relevant ones where the tweets will be more meaningful.

YOU SAID: If we promise weekly communication from each Safer Neighbourhood Team then keep that promise. I completely agree. **WE DID:** My

officers have been reminded of the importance of regular engagement and those areas currently not receiving emails will soon see that change. If you are not on an email contact list you can read all the newsletters on the following FB group which re-posts them all (need to join to view) – CRIME AWARENESS FOR ALL OF HILLINGDON BOROUGH.

YOU SAID: Keep the SNT web pages up-to-date. **WE DID:** We need to do better. Out of date ward promises, old photos – not good enough and it looks unprofessional. As one feedback said, there is no point in me advertising the web page if it isn't fit for purpose. All web pages have been reviewed and are in the process of being updated by the team sergeants. Our IT is clunky and it may take a week or two, but please let me and your local team know if you spot an out of date page in the future.

Reasonable expectations

I also received a lot of positive feedback. Thank you. We always appreciate it. **YOU SAID:** That some people have unreasonable expectations and some will never be happy. True, but I have to keep trying. **WE DID:** I promise to make every effort to address these main issues. We won't get it right or perfect every time and whilst I know I won't solve our confidence issues overnight with a few promises and plans, I hope you accept that as well as keeping you safe we are also trying to make you feel safer.

To close, I would like to share two Facebook posts that I read recently. It is inevitable that feedback will focus on the negative but let's not lose sight that we do get it right too. **T/Chief Insp Rob Bryan**

