



WILTSHIRE POLICE

Police and Crime Commissioner,
Philip Wilkinson.

Chief Constable Catherine Roper
Police Headquarters
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DEVIZES
Wiltshire
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15 September 2023.

Dear Police and Crime Commissioner, Philip Wilkinson,

I would like to start this letter today by sharing with you the results of our summer focus on road safety.

Over recent months, we have sadly seen an increase in people killed and seriously injured on our roads. Under our Safer Public Spaces priority, we have been working hard over the summer months to raise awareness of road safety issues, alongside increased enforcement on our roads to tackle this serious issue. We have focused on what are known as the 'fatal five' offences of speeding, drink and drug driving, using a mobile phone when driving, not wearing a seatbelt and careless and dangerous driving, and is part of our wider commitment to 'Keeping Wiltshire Safe'.

During this period, officers from my Roads Policing Team have issued 2,788 notices for motoring offences. We have seen increased high profile patrolling of our roads and hotspots by our Community Policing Teams, Community Speed Enforcement Officers have visited 264 locations around Swindon & Wiltshire, awareness raising events have taken place highlighting the dangers of unsafe driving, we have issued increased proactive communications and media messaging, and we have had some incredible supporting activity from our Community Speed Watch volunteers through their activity in local towns and villages. These amazing volunteers held 397 different community speed-watch sessions across the county, issuing over 3,000 educational letters. In addition, our Special Constabulary Road Safety Unit have played an enormous part too - carrying out enforcement at 85 speed check locations - stopping 239 vehicles - with 43 drivers reported speeding, 36 drivers reported using mobile phones, 43 fines issued for seatbelt offences, 27 drink/drug tests conducted – with 10 arrests made, and 3 drivers reported for careless driving. I am so very grateful for their support.

In addition, in conjunction with Highways England, the Roads Policing Team have also conducted [Operation Tramline](#) on the M4 on nine occasions during August, detecting 129 offences of drivers operating their vehicles unsafely. I am hugely appreciative of the work of my officers, staff, volunteers and community volunteers in this vitally important area. We know that one death or serious injury is one too many on our roads.

Whilst we may have had an increased focus over the summer on road safety I can assure you, and our communities, that my teams will continue to prioritise road safety in our county and seek to robustly target and hold to account those who fail to drive safely putting theirs, and others, lives at risk and causing unimaginable harm to innocent victims.

Keeping Wiltshire Safe

In addition to the enforcement activity described, we have also seen cases brought to justice. This week has seen the sentencing of a man for 28 months and 20 months (to run concurrently) after causing a three-vehicle collision when overtaking unsafely on the A4 between Chippenham and Calne which hospitalised two families. In addition, Wiltshire Police have successfully prosecuted a female following a serious collision which left three young men with serious injuries before fleeing the scene. She has been sentenced to four years and four months imprisonment, alongside a disqualification from driving for six years.

I wanted to use this letter to address some recent concerns raised by our communities regarding our Control Room and response to calls. Wiltshire is a safe county to live in. However, at the current time, if you call our Control Room to ask for our help, then you are sometimes waiting for longer than is acceptable for us to answer. I am truly sorry for this. I have dedicated additional leadership and team resources to tackle this issue, and we are also focusing on an improvement plan to ensure that the communities in Wiltshire have the service from us that they deserve. I will provide regular updates about this – and I look forward to welcoming the newest intake of Control Room Operators joining us later this month, who will make an immediate difference.

One aspect of the Control Room service is how we respond to silent 999 calls. Earlier this year, we raised with our communities that we were experiencing a significant increase in these calls – with every one of them quite properly requiring time and attention to make sure that the caller is safe and to check whether they need our help. Over the last week, we have seen a significant increase in these silent calls again. This is not the reason for the wider service challenges, however may I ask our communities again that if they do accidentally call us, then they speak with us and let us know that they are safe and well, and that they called us by accident. We fully understand that misdialing happens – but please let us know if this is the case.

Today, we have seen the publication, by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Service (HMICFRS), of the re-inspection of Wiltshire Police relating to the way we manage child protection issues - [the report can be found here](#). The initial inspection of the Force in 2022 found that we needed to make fundamental changes in order to improve some areas of our child protection practices.

We were re-inspected earlier this year and their report today finds that a number of improvements have been made relating to enhanced training around vulnerability specifically relating to children, investment into our Child Abuse Investigation Teams, and improved audit and inspection across investigations relating to child protection issues.

However, the report also highlights we need to do more in relation to the way we respond to missing children and domestic abuse incidents involving children. The impact of domestic abuse on children can be devastating, and the vulnerability of children who go missing from home or care can be significant. As National Policing Lead for Children and Young People, I am determined that these improvements will be made. I have asked my teams, led by Assistant Chief Constable Deb Smith, to ensure immediate and increased focus on the further improvements we need to make. It is crucial we get this right – the safety and protection of vulnerable children is paramount.

On a different note, last week my Chief Officer Team and I had the pleasure of spending some time with our first and second line leaders to discuss key operational issues and reinforce my expectations about professionalism and standards. Over the coming months, I will also be speaking face to face with over 1,400 officers and staff across the Force area where I will be reiterating these important messages. These events are essential for the ongoing improvement journey for Wiltshire Police. Not only can I hear first-hand experiences and views from my teams across the organisation, but it's also an opportunity for me as Chief Constable to provide absolute clarity on our priorities of Safer Public Spaces, Burglary and Violence, and my expectations of each and every member of the Force to ensure Wiltshire Police has the very highest standards and levels of professionalism in our service to the public.

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Recently, we have identified a number of occasions where the behaviours and actions of a small number of my officers and staff have been unacceptable. I want to reassure our communities that through our misconduct processes, we are dealing with this robustly.

One of my most privileged elements of my role is spending time with our communities, and in recent weeks I have had the pleasure of attending a number of Area Boards across the county, alongside your good self. The overall feedback is that our communities have seen a noticeable uplift in visibility – which I commit to continuing. The road safety activity has also been noticed and welcomed, and Wiltshire Police will continue to be visible and proactive on our roads. The most significant disappointment was our Control Room. I am grateful for the honest and constructive feedback from across the county, and I once again commit to improvements in this service and I will provide you with regular updates. I look forward to attending many more of these events over the coming weeks.

Finally, on Monday, I am attending the next meeting of the Police Performance Oversight Group, where I will present to the HMICFRS and other policing bodies our current progress against the recommendations in the 2022 PEEL report which placed us into Engage. This is an extremely important meeting, and I will provide an update to yourself and our communities shortly after – both in terms of steps forward in improvement and where we need to focus our efforts more.

Kindest regards to you,



Catherine Roper

Chief Constable, Wiltshire Police