Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire

Tackling Business Crime Together

Foreword



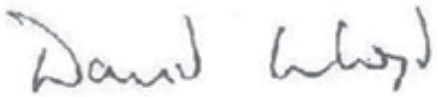
Crime can have a devastating impact on businesses; it wastes working time, leads to financial losses and, most significantly, affects staff health and wellbeing.

Businesses based in Hertfordshire are vital for the prosperity of the county – and so the consequences of business crime affect us all. It forms a significant part of the crime landscape. In 2014/15, crimes against businesses accounted for a fifth of all recorded crime across Hertfordshire.

The title of my Police and Crime Plan is 'Everybody's Business (2015-2020)'. It is not a catchy title - it is a fundamental statement of my belief that we all have a part to play in the prevention and reduction of crime.

This concept has influenced the central vision of this strategy; to strengthen the relationships between business and the police, improve understanding of Hertfordshire business crime and for businesses to play their part in protecting the community, with a longer-term ambition of prevention of business crime.

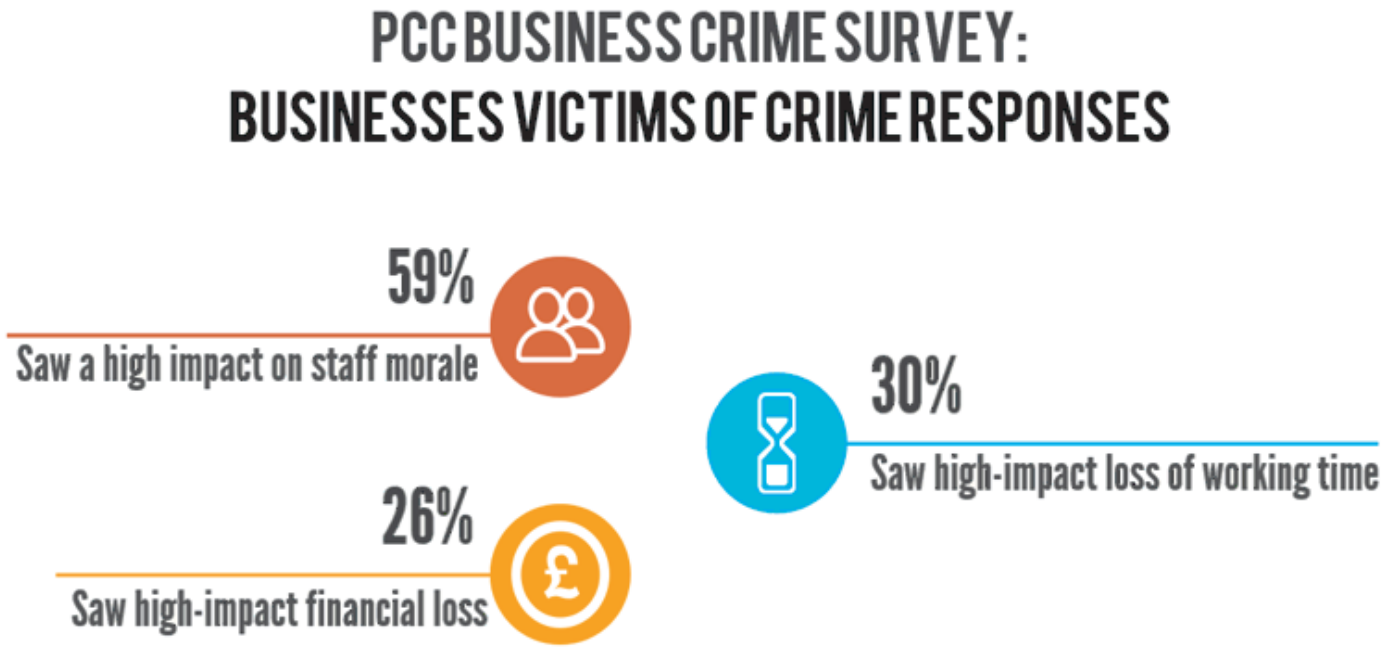
Business crime can range from complex online fraud to criminal damage and shoplifting. Different business sectors can be affected in very different ways. It is only through working in partnership that we will have the capacity to deal with this multi-faceted threat.



David Lloyd
Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire

Overview

Business crimes currently account for 21.6% of recorded crime in Hertfordshire [1]. The findings of our 2014 survey of local businesses, confirmed in subsequent interviews with key business groups, underscored the impact these crimes can have on individual businesses.



Due to changes in national recording practices and definitions, comparable recorded business crime statistics are available for only the past two years, which makes it difficult to analyse long-term trends. These figures have dropped over the past two years, from 11,451 in 2013/14 to 11,248 in 2014/15 [2]. However, the Federation of Small Business estimates at least six in ten crimes against business go unreported [3]. It is imperative that the police and local partners build on the successes being made in tackling business crime, and take action where local and national research has identified room for improvement.

[1] Hertfordshire Constabulary, recorded crime figures
[2] Hertfordshire Constabulary, recorded crime figures
[3] Federation of Small Businesses, 'Guidance for Police and Crime Commissioners', 2012

Protect in Partnership

Nationally, the proportion of businesses that have had contact with the police about crime problems or crime prevention (not including reporting crime) dropped significantly between 2012 and 2014 [4]. However, interviews with key business groups have told us this does not ring true for a majority of businesses in Hertfordshire. We will look to build on existing relationships across the county to set new standards of collaboration, with both business and police taking responsibility to work together to tackle business crime. The Constabulary's Preventative Policing Strategy sets out partnership work as a strategic objective, and specifically refers to maintaining and strengthening relationships with the private sector [5]. We want to engage with business to learn from their industries how best to employ crime reduction and prevention methods.



Support business partnership groups

The Business Sense chapter of the Police and Crime Plan 'Everybody's Business (2015-2020)' identifies a strong foundation for partnership working with business to build on. Successful business partnerships exist across the county, including Business Against Crime (BAC) groups in St Albans and Watford. Numerous watches, including BusinessWatch, ShopWatch and FarmWatch, seek to make their area or sector safer. These models provide businesses with opportunities to shape local crime priorities and play an active role in community safety.

The PCC and the police will continue to support the existing business crime reduction groups through on-going police participation and intelligence sharing, and work with local businesses to increase coverage, as well as continuing to drive participation of Business Watches and other business-related watches.

Encourage reporting for intelligence purposes

More representative reporting of business crime is vital for the police to able to plan effectively and respond intelligently to business crime trends. The police, the PCC and partners will use developing relationships with businesses to encourage reporting of business crime. This will include investigating different ways of making reporting possible in instances where a business might not usually want to report a crime, such as when their reputation is at stake, or they do not consider the crime to be notable for police purposes.

[4] Home Office, '2014 Commercial Victimisation Survey',
[5] Hertfordshire Constabulary, 'Preventative Policing Strategy 2015 – 2018'

Drive forward Employer Supported Policing

The Police and Crime Plan puts forward Employer Supported Policing as an opportunity for businesses to play their part in protecting the local area whilst supporting the recruitment of Special Constables and other volunteers. Employer Supported Policing involves organisations releasing employees to volunteer as Special Constables, or other policing volunteers, who bring local business knowledge and skills to the police force. In return, volunteers develop transferable skills, such as effective communication, problem solving and resilience, forge strong links with local officers and develop an understanding of crime reduction and prevention. The current Hertfordshire scheme will be revitalised and expanded with a fresh offer for organisations.







Inform and Support

Four national business groups identified that a two-way exchange of intelligence and information is crucial to tackling business crime [6]. These findings were also evident in the Hertfordshire survey, where information and advice emerged as one of the most important ways the police could improve their performance.

We will continue to take action to ensure that community safety partners are informed and act on what the business community want from them, but it is equally important that the police and partners keep businesses informed on actions they can take to prevent themselves becoming a victim of crime, and the support a business can access if it does become a victim of crime.



Intelligence-led development of guidance and advice

Hertfordshire Constabulary already has a series of crime reduction advice available to help business avoid becoming victims of crime. The Constabulary will seek to build on this work, developing resources and signposting businesses to guidance and support from beyond the county where appropriate. Prioritisation will be shaped by police intelligence and by the feedback given by local businesses.

The police will continue to work with expert partners, such as Get Safe Online, Cifas and HMRC, to ensure businesses receive the highest standard of professional advice in especially complex areas like fraud and cybercrime.

The style of delivery of advice and guidance is also important. The Constabulary will seek to deliver the information in the way that local businesses find most useful, including delivering plans that sharpen the targeting of information that members of business watches receive through the OWL (Online Watch Link) system.

Victim support

Support for business victims is good in Hertfordshire - 80% of businesses surveyed said there was sufficient support available to enable victims to recover – but there is more to do. The PCC now has responsibility for the provision of victim services in Hertfordshire and has set about extending and improving them. The Police and Crime Plan puts victims at the centre of the criminal justice system, and this includes business victims where this is the right route for the business. However, it is recognised that businesses will prefer different kinds of support in different circumstances, and this support will not always involve the criminal justice system.

The introduction of the Community Remedy in Hertfordshire marked a significant milestone in giving a voice to victims of low-level crimes. Through the Community Remedy, a victim can select a 'remedy' from a suitable list of options - for example, that the offender makes them financial reparation, or that the offender accepts a referral to a support service. It is proposed that Community Remedy be made available to businesses for low-level crimes to give them a say in how things are put right.

[6] British Retail Consortium, Association of Corner Shops, Federation of Small Businesses, British Chambers of Commerce, 'Tackling Business Crime Together', 2014

Following the launch of the countywide Restorative Justice Strategy, we will continue working in partnership with the University of Hertfordshire to deliver a Restorative Justice Strategy that seeks to give businesses the same opportunities to access Restorative Justice as other victims of crime.

It is also recognised that some crimes against businesses may be motivated by the association of a business with specific protected characteristics, such as religion, gender or disability. Where this is the case, tailored victim support will be available for the needs of affected businesses.

Impact statements for business

In the Business Sense chapter of the Police and Crime plan, the PCC demonstrates a commitment to understanding the devastating effect crime can have on business. Part of this commitment is a pledge to introduce impact statements for businesses, which give businesses the opportunity to set out the impact that a crime has had on them through a statement read out in court, which is then taken into account in sentencing. Businesses in Hertfordshire affected by crime will be made aware by police that they are entitled to make impact statement for their business, and the Crown Prosecution Service has an obligation to bring appropriate statements to the attention of the court. The process of giving an impact victim statement will be tailored to meet business victim needs.

Build on Progress

Four major business groups recommend that PCC consultation with businesses forms the basis of strategic planning and priority setting for tackling business crime [7]. Whereas police intelligence and long-term planning must also influence business crime strategy, the views of businesses will continue to play a significant role.

Independent Business Advisory Group

To help achieve this, as outlined in the Police and Crime Plan, we will set up a countywide Independent Business Advisory Group (IBAG). Its role will be to:

- Help the PCC scrutinise the progress of this strategy
- Act as a continued critical friend on the police response to business crime
- Provide a link between the business community and the police

We will ensure the IBAG structure suits members, links to current governance and shares information and ideas with existing regional and local groups.

Continued engagement



The PCC will continue to work with businesses across Hertfordshire to understand the issues of concern to the business community. Through working with Hertfordshire Chamber of Commerce, the Institute of Directors, the Local Enterprise Partnership, and individual businesses through District Days and rural Barn meetings, the PCC will ensure that the information acted on is up-to-date, and in doing so, help reassess priority areas and invite vital feedback and suggestions on police performance around business crime.

Focused Community Safety Partnerships

Many Hertfordshire Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs), a group of organisations that work together to improve community safety, already have a clear focus on the most problematic kinds of business crime in their area. To ensure this focus is maintained, each CSP will consider (or continue to consider) locally relevant business crime as part of their annual strategic assessment and longer-term strategies.

Finally, it will be important to ensure that the lessons from successful local work – and lessons from initiatives that have not worked - are shared across the county to develop the evidence base. We are developing an online portal to help CSPs share information and learning, and the IBAG is likely to become a useful mechanism for sharing with the broader business community.

[7] British Retail Consortium, Association of Corner Shops, Federation of Small Businesses, British Chambers of Commerce, 'Tackling Business Crime Together', 2014