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Collaboration

Kent and Essex Collaboration

Essex Police began collaborating with Kent Police in 2007 and the Kent/Essex Collaboration Team was formed.

Much has already been achieved to date and both organisations are committed to identifying further ways in which collaboration can help to provide better policing services for the citizens of Kent and Essex.

This collaboration agreement does not preclude either force from pursuing other collaborative options, either within their respective regions or with other partners.



The journey so far

In January 2007, the police authority chairs and Chief Constables of both Essex Police and Kent Police met to discuss the potential for collaboration and, three months later, the first joint police authority meeting was held, at which the decision was made to pursue 'full collaboration on Operational Functions and Support Services, whilst maintaining operational independence'.

Since then, the collaboration programme has achieved a number of successes, including the sharing of air support and marine services and the formation of a pioneering joint IT Directorate – the first of its kind in England and Wales - which is developing a comprehensive IT infrastructure to support both forces.

This will enable police officers and staff from both counties to work cohesively and more efficiently.

In 2010, together, we also created one of the largest joint serious and organised crime units in the UK – the Kent and Essex Serious Crime Directorate (SCD).

It consists of six key departments dedicated to tackling serious and organised criminality across both counties, including the investigation of murders and serious sexual assaults and the targeting of organised criminal groups, drug dealers and burglars.

This encompasses areas such as HR, Finance, Transport Services, Property Services, [Procurement Services](#) and business services centres.

In September 2012, a [Section 22A Agreement](#) was formally approved for the newly-established Support Services Directorate.

The main aim of collaboration is for both counties to benefit from an improved policing service through

- ▶ more effective and efficient use of resources – including police officers and staff, buildings and vehicles etc
- ▶ achieving better value for money.

Governance for the collaboration programme is provided by a Joint Statutory Committee – comprising chairs, vice-chairs and Performance Committee chairs of both police authorities, supported by the chief executives and treasurers of both police authorities and the chief constables of both forces.

Through our collaboration with Kent, we want to use our resources more effectively and put more officers on the front line, something the public always tell us they want.

Useful Links

Other pages on our site:

- ▶ Procurement Services
- ▶ Section 23/22A collaboration agreements

Collaboration news:

- ▶ Five new police dogs for Kent and Essex
- ▶ Essex Police to benefit from IT collaboration
- ▶ New head for Kent and Essex Serious Crime Directorate
- ▶ New head of Transport Services for Kent and Essex
- ▶ Essex and Kent Police work together to improve safety on the water
- ▶ New Serious Crime Directorate for Kent and Essex
- ▶ Collaboration agreements signed
- ▶ Essex and Kent police authorities win value for money award
- ▶ Procurement Services award

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This joint working – the Serious Crime and IT directorates – was formalised on September 30, 2010, when both forces and police authorities signed [Section 23 Agreements](#) confirming the terms under which they will collaborate. An earlier agreement, covering the provision by Essex Police of air support services to Kent Police, was in place from April 1, 2008, to September 30, 2012, when the National Police Air Service began.

Since the creation of the Kent/Essex Collaboration Programme in 2007, other significant benefits to both forces from collaborative working include the establishment of several Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) – covering such areas as specialist search, firearms intervention teams and specialist vehicles.

And reviews are carried out to identify areas where our business can be performed differently in order to provide significant improvements and/or alternatives to our service delivery and also areas where efficiencies can be made.

There have been significant financial benefits. By the end of the 2011/12 financial year, approximately £20.5million cost savings had been identified across both forces, of which approximately £9.5million had been realised.

One of the collaboration programme's strategic objectives is to deliver a further £12million savings to both forces by 2015 through joint working, in addition to enhancing their Protective Services capabilities, increasing resilience and reducing risk.

Collaboration is proving that large savings can be made but, more importantly, that our service to the public can be improved.

Athena

A national framework agreement* has been signed by Essex Police Authority for a new 'one-stop' IT system which will help police to identify criminals more quickly and cut crime.

Not only will Project Athena improve front-line policing, it will save police forces time and money, helping to improve the service they provide to the public.

Project Athena is the largest-ever collaborative police IT project** and will be delivered by Northgate Public Services.

The seven 'early adopters' – Essex, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire, Kent, Norfolk and Suffolk – will be paying a total of £32million during the lifetime of the agreement but the costs to each force will drop as and when more forces come on board.

Essex Chief Constable Jim Barker-McCardle said: "The collaboration and the technology that underpins this initiative will significantly improve the lives of people in the communities we serve.

"We will be better able to investigate crime, support victims and reduce threat and harm to vulnerable people.

"Athena is a key tool in the fight against crime, ensuring that we see the complete picture relating to our offenders. Information will be linked as soon as records are created, thus a full picture of a person or location will rapidly be built up and can be viewed across all forces using the system."

Essex Police Authority chairman Anthony Jackson said: "Essex Police Authority is proud of the important part played by the Essex and Kent IT team and the collaboration and support of the six other founding police authorities in bringing into being this powerful tool in the fight against crime.

"That it brings not only improved performance but also at a significantly lower cost sets a benchmark for the future and should fuel the nationwide interest of other forces to join the Athena network."

Until now, police forces have largely managed data on offenders, suspects, victims and incidents on different systems at a local level. This made it a challenge to share information quickly with other forces.

Athena, however, will be a single IT system managing police investigations, intelligence and defendants (both custody and case preparation) across all member forces, giving front-line police officers and staff in those forces access to more detailed and up-to-date information, while reducing bureaucracy. This will help them to build comprehensive 'pictures', both of suspects and of crime and incident patterns, more swiftly.

Officers and staff at each phase of the criminal justice process – from report



to court – will be able to view all records for the suspect from each member force and from all other stages of the process. This will mean that a suspect arrested for crimes committed in any of the Athena force areas can be dealt with for all offences in one custody suite without the need for the suspect to be transferred between each force and processed for crimes committed exclusively in that force area.

Time will be saved after a suspect is arrested, as those officers working in custody and preparing cases will automatically have access to all the intelligence already held about a suspect.

And, in line with recommendations of the 2004 Bichard*** Inquiry, the new system will let each force share a much wider set of operational police data with officers and staff in other forces. Historically, such day-to-day police information has been shared between local forces upon request, which is both time-consuming and results in delays.

Ian Blackhurst, Executive Director of Northgate Public Services, commented: "This project is a huge step forward in policing and is a signal that forces are embracing collaboration in order to work more effectively together and in doing so reduce administrative costs.

"We will use our understanding of UK policing to deliver a safe and secure system that transforms police operations. It will result in vastly improved services to the public, at a significantly lower overall cost, which is great news in these times of austerity."

Athena is due to be received by Essex Police towards the end of 2012, and the force will be the first to go 'online' in 2013. The system will be managed centrally, in partnership with Northgate, helping to save forces money by reducing the need for ongoing management of multiple IT systems.

Athena is supported by the National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA) as part of the national strategy for police IT (ISIS)****. NPIA chief executive Chief Constable Nick Gargan said: "The NPIA has been very happy to support the collaborative work undertaken by the forces involved in Project Athena as part of the Information Systems Improvement Strategy.

"When Athena comes to fruition, we will see front-line officers who are able to make better use of better information. The 'Athena forces' have done exactly what everyone agrees needs to happen but which is sometimes stubbornly difficult to achieve."

Athena will replace up to ten existing police IT systems in each force, all of which cost money to maintain and upgrade and will eventually require replacing. The money the 'early adopters' are spending will be significantly less than that they would have to spend on replacing each individual existing IT system.

The agreement can be used by any other police authority or law enforcement agency in the UK – several others have already expressed an interest, further reducing opportunities for criminals to operate across geographic boundaries.

About Project Athena

Project Athena is a joint police project to which seven police forces have signed up so far. The forces currently signed up to this project are Essex, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire, Kent, Suffolk and Norfolk.

About Northgate Public Services

Northgate Public Services is a leading supplier of software and services to public services. Northgate's customers include 98% of local authorities and 100% of police forces and it has systems in use at every NHS hospital. Northgate works with customers to improve services for local people using technology, service redesign and outsourcing. Northgate Public Services is part of the Northgate Information Solutions group, which currently employs more than 12,000 staff and operates in 46 countries across five continents. The original company was founded in 1969. Northgate Information Solutions is privately-owned.

References

* Framework agreement: a framework is an agreement with suppliers to establish terms governing contracts that may be awarded during the life of the agreement. In other words, it is a general term for agreements that set out terms and conditions for making specific purchases.

** outside of a nationally-driven IT project

*** <http://www.londonscb.gov.uk/library/>

**** ISIS: The Information Systems Improvement Strategy is a reform programme for the police service which views IT as an enabler for business change. It will release savings, delivering operational improvements across policing and into the wider criminal justice system, and is founded upon the consensus that police ICT can be delivered in a more consistent and affordable manner. It is approved by both the National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA) and the [Association of Chief Police Officers \(ACPO\)](#).

Other collaboration

Both Essex Police and Kent Police are engaged in collaboration, where beneficial, with other forces and other partners:

- ▶ Essex with the Eastern Region police forces – Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Suffolk and Norfolk. This includes participation in the Regional Asset Recovery Team, the Counter Terrorism Intelligence Unit, Eastern Regional Special Operations Unit, Disaster Victim Identification and Casualty Bureau, along with mutual aid support.
- ▶ Kent with the South East Region police forces – Surrey, Sussex, Hampshire and Thames Valley
- ▶ Essex in collaboration with Essex County Fire and Rescue Service, including property sharing at appropriate locations across Essex, thereby releasing capital and reducing building maintenance costs. Initiatives are in place at Brightlingsea, Tiptree, Wivenhoe and West Mersea, where the local neighbourhood policing teams share fire station premises. Other sites are being assessed for partnership opportunities.
- ▶ Kent in collaboration with Kent Fire and Rescue Service for the provision of emergency control room premises

The rationale for collaboration with other partners, whether jointly as Kent/Essex or as individual forces, remains the same.

The opportunity of working collaboratively will be used to make efficiency savings, meet budget reductions, enhance resilience, improve capability or increase our Protective Services capability to protect the public.

