

Basic Information

Region (Check Region):

South of England and Channel Islands

Category:

28. In-House PR Team of the Year

Entry Information

Entrant company name:

Sussex Police

Entry title:

Sussex Police Media & Communications Department

Entry

Number of employees within the PR team and annual PR budget:

26 employees including Media, Social Media, Account Management, Digital and Creative. Annual budget £1.39m (£1.32m pay)

Business objectives and analysis of team performance against budget over the last two years:

The Media & Communications Department (M&CD) seeks to “deliver an outstanding, informed and effective communications service that builds trust and confidence, internally and externally, in Sussex Police” with four objectives:

- Engage and involve our partners and communities in effectively preventing and detecting crime, catching criminals and keeping people safe
- Engage and inspire our people to build pride in Sussex Police and deliver an outstanding police service
- Consistently identify and mitigate significant risk to employee, stakeholder and public confidence in Sussex Police
- Deliver an agile, trusted and best in class communications service.

Between 2019 and 2020*, we delivered the following:

- 12,894 media enquiries, 9,688 social posts, 3,477 news releases - including 2,113 public appeals of which 31%/average directly led to a positive operational outcome: person found/safeguarded; a criminal caught or community information police could act on.
- Handled 291,691 in-bound comments on force social media accounts.
- Provided support to 34 homicides, 550 road traffic collisions, 657 missing person, 198 rape and sexual offence and 126 wanted criminal investigations.

- Delivered a 24/7 major incident communications response with Surrey Police to COVID-19, engaging 10k employees and 3.5m residents.
 - Delivered 70 internal, change and public awareness campaigns, to support business objectives.
 - Increased reach on Force social media channels, up 9% on Facebook (2.9M first half of 2019 to 3.2M first half of 2020) and doubled on Twitter (439K first half of 2019 to 890K first half of 2020).
 - Restructured to provide a 24/7 modern communications service and extend office hours to include weekends.
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A brief overview of business / team strategy:

Sussex Police's priorities are set out in the Force Management Statement and Police and Crime Plan.

A summary of commitment to CPD and professionalism:

- Head of department gaining Chartered PR status in September 2019; providing learning and mentoring to national network of police communicators
 - Membership and training by account management of the Institute of Consultation
 - Membership and training by all employees of Association of Police Communicators including: media law, responding to a terror attack, policing legitimacy, personal resilience, digital and technical skills.
 - Refreshing our evaluation to align with the AMEC Barcelona Principle's 3.0
 - Regular in-house CPD include introduction of all-staff "lunch and learn" sessions
 - Acceptance of two members of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff to bespoke development programmes.
 - Delivery of 280 hours/pa of training to the business in media handling, crisis communications and social media best practice.
 - 2021 Gold Winner of CIPR National Excellence Award for Public Sector Campaign of the Year.
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A summary of recent outstanding achievements:

We are leading the way in improving public access to services via social media: In 2020, we successfully embedded social media into our policing contact centre, offering the public a multi-channel 24/7 contact service. Private messaging has enabled the public to report incidents and intelligence directly through social media for the first time. In 2019, we shared 6,808 posts on our 12 district accounts; in 2020 that was up to 8,190 including 97 videos.

We have developed a process for crisis communication to provide early warning and informing to the public where danger exists:

In April 2021, we issued a public warning message within 3 minutes of confirmed reports of a gunman at a local college. The prompt messaging enabled us to ensure this matter was thoroughly and safely concluded, with no fatalities and two minor injuries.

We regularly engage with key media to improve mutual understanding and outcomes: We have introduced informal media round-tables to discuss challenging issues including:

Covid response, policing protests, police misconduct.

We supported a change in leadership with refreshed branding and corporate narrative including the rolling out of assets across the estate and a new film to explain, excite and engage our workforce, stakeholder and the public.

We have transformed our service to meet today's challenges: In April 2021, the department implemented a new operating model, increasing resilience and introducing extended hours. The team achieved this against a 30% vacancy rate.

Our work had led directly to crimes being solved and vulnerable people protected:

- Our appeal generated information which directly led to the arrest, charge and conviction in 2020 of Cristian Sabou, 28, of Dej, Romania, for the unsolved murder of Valerie Graves in Bosham, West Sussex, in 2013.
- Two missing ten year old children were found within 20 minutes when a local dog walker saw our targeted Facebook appeal.

The team cares for each other: Members have initiated a series of well-being events including 'Virtual Cuppas' to combat isolation during lock-down, regular 'wellbeing walks' and successful charity challenges.

A summary of a campaign you are particularly proud of, including details of the brief, objectives, strategy, tactics, outputs, outcomes and budget:

We produced a campaign in Sussex aimed at young people to reduce and prevent knife-related violence.

Objectives:

- Targeted information to 11-18 year olds about knife related offences and the consequences.
- Provide advice on knife related concerns.
- Equip officers/staff to effectively communicate with the public about knife crime.

Strategy

Informed by opinion research with young people, using non-police branded materials, targeting key stakeholders using trusted partners for message delivery.

Tactical Delivery

- Powerful assets to drive messages to young people
- Partners as campaign advocates
- Advertising in hotspot areas
- Engagement Van liveried with staff/officers imagery.
- Created a short film showing the personal, legal and physical impact of carrying a knife.
- Media package
- Messaging and postcards to parents/carers.
- Created a consequences card game.

Evaluation and impact

- 297 hours of Home Office funding resulted in 43 arrests, 64 deployments, 696 weapons seized and 245 intelligence logs.
- 10.1% reduction in people using knives from 1127 offences in 2019 to 1013 offences in 2020
- Engagement with 14,475 young people in schools and 588 people under 25 at roadshows.

- Fearless unique page visits 2020 Q3 increased by 30%. Reports increased by 25% Q3.
- 50% reports increase for possession of knives made to Crimestoppers in October 2020 from October 2019.
- 20 social media posts, 1294 clicks throughs with 1,956,608 reach.
- Media features on BBC Radio Sussex, BBC SE Today and online in various local papers
- Out of home media saw 946,840 views across two weeks.

Supporting Information

Additional supporting information (images, artwork, clippings and other media):

Provided
