



ASSAULT VICTIMS: GREATER SUPPORT

A FRESH look at how Sexual Offences Trained Officers (SOTOs) support victims and gather early evidence is spearheading the force's drive to secure more convictions.

The move may appear timely as media reports raise concern about a reduction in successful rape convictions, but the work by Essex Police has in fact been ongoing for months as part of wider review of all major crime division policies.

Director of Investigations, Det Supt Simon Coxall, who is the professional head of the review, explained: "SOTOs have always been key to the way we gather the best evidence from victims and provide palliative care in the lead up to trial.

"In this respect Essex Police has a good record, but experience has highlighted gaps in our coverage and a need for a more robust and resilient approach to the management of these specialist resources; it's simply about taking a professional approach to criminal investigation."

It is also widely reported nationally that levels of sex offences are on the increase and reasons are undoubtedly being sought. Society may well hold some of the answers.

by **Kim Perks**

"There is an increasing night-time economy now," says Det Supt Coxall, "which does involve the consumption of alcohol, and which does escalate the number of occasions where vulnerable people can be exposed to the predatory attacks of those criminals who are calculated about the commission of such offences."

On a more positive note some of the increase in reports is due to the support offered by the police service and the growing confidence in victims to seek help.

Det Supt Coxall said: "I have no doubt that any increase is partly the result of the police service having improved its approach to such offences over recent years leading to a greater willingness on the part of victims, despite the harrowing circumstances, to come forward and to sustain their support for a prosecution."

Part of that support is to ensure all victims receive equal treatment without judgement. The policy itself, in terms of how SOTOs are deployed, what their role is and how they undertake that role draws on the best of national best practice.

"What the policy does over and above that," said Det Supt Simon Coxall, "is clearly identifies that the professional responsibility for how the officers go about their deployments falls to myself and, more closely, is managed by a team of SOTO coordinators who are senior detectives spread across Essex Police."

Continued on page 3



● Photograph - James Fletcher, East Anglian Daily Times.

Hunt law whips up new tension

The government's Hunting Act came into force in February, marking major changes for hunts in Essex. Special Operations Chief Insp Tim Stokes looks at how we'll police it - see centre pages.



Pension options spelt out

ON two recent resettlement courses there have been requests for a re-do of a précis on the Police Pension Scheme.

The regulations are very complicated and it would not be possible to cover every possible circumstance but this column will give the basic outline.

All police pensions are paid as a proportion of average pensionable pay (APP).

The proportion is decided by several factors. An ordinary pension is paid to an officer with 25 years' reckonable police service or more (but less than 30 years). For each of the first 20 years of service, an officer earns a pension of one 60th of their APP. Each year after 20 earns them two 60ths more of their APP, so that an Officer with 25 years' service has 20 plus ten 60ths, which entitles them to a half-pay pension.

An officer can retire with 25 years service and take their pension immediately if they have

reached 50, or if they have attained 30 years service. If an officer with 25 years' service retires but is aged, for example, 48 years, their pension is not paid until they reach the age of 50. If an officer resigns with 24 years service, their pension is frozen until they are 60.

It follows then that an officer who has served 26 years will achieve a pension of 32 60ths, 27 years will earn 34 60ths and so on, to a maximum of 40 60ths for 30 years or more service.

Limits

An officer who is required to retire on age limit will be allowed to take a pension related to their service at that age. If they have 29 years' service, they get a pension of 38 60ths.

The age limit for constables and sergeants is 55, 60 for inspectors and above and 65 for Chief Officers.

Under certain circumstances, officers of lower ranks may obtain extensions of the age limit from 55 onwards on a 12-monthly basis, which may add entitlement to pension, but not beyond 60.

An officer required to retire on ill-health grounds receives a

pension enhanced beyond his actual years of service. Some basic rules govern these enhancements. They are that service from 5 to 10 years reckons as double; ten years plus to 13 years counts as 20 years; 14 years and above attracts an additional seven years - an extra seven 60ths of APP.

The normal double reckoning after 20 years continues and the seven 60ths enhancement is applied after double reckoning has been taken into account.

All enhancement is subject to the qualification that reckonable service aggregated with the enhancement must not exceed what could have been earned by the officer to the age of compulsory retirement.

For the purpose of calculating the officer's entitlement to pension, the following definitions are necessary.

APP is normally the amount of pay received in the last year of service, excluding overtime and allowances. For those whose pay declines towards the end of service APP is taken as pay in the best of the last three years.

Reckonable Service is the length of service which counts for

police pension and it may include service 'transferred' from other employments. There is a comprehensive list of 'other employments' who have agreed to pay a transfer fee into the Police Pension Scheme for service to be reckonable.

Commutation

There are two ways in which police pensions may be commuted to achieve a lump sum advance or a portion of expected pension entitlement. The first is where an officer voluntarily retires having completed 25 or more years, but before attaining 30 years' service, other than where he retires on age or ill-health. In this case, the lump sum is calculated as three 80ths of APP for each year of service for the first 20 years, plus a further three 80ths for each six months over 20 years.

The second method is where an officer has completed 30 years or attained age limit or retired on an ill-health pension. Under these circumstances, an officer can commute up to a quarter of their annual pension. For each £100 of pension they give up, they receive a capital sum according to their

age next birthday. These capital sums range from £1,500 for men and £1,725 for women aged 50 and under, to £1,300 for men and £1,500 for women aged 60. In both methods of calculating commutation, there is a reduction in pension each year to purchase the lump sum.

Index linking is only applied to the pension still in payment at age 55 years. Retirement pension is treated as earned income and is taxed accordingly. The lump sum is tax free but, if invested, any interest is treated as unearned income. Once taken, commutation cannot be restored to pensions.

The decision to commute is a personal one related to your needs and ambitions. There are no hard and fast rules. Each officer must make their own decision whether to use the facility or not.

You may indicate your wishes to commute within 2 months prior to retirement and not later than 6 months after retirement.

Think about it carefully.

The new pension scheme for recruits starting in April 2006 will be a different formula. Existing Officers, in post prior to April 2006, will be protected under the old scheme.

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A helping hand for growing families

EXPECTANT mothers across the force are being encouraged to utilise the support and benefits of the Essex Police Maternity Network (EPMN) which celebrates its 13th anniversary this year.

In 2004, almost 75 officers and police staff took advantage of the EPMN's benefits, with the network wanting to continue ensuring the right support remains available to those who are planning to start a family or even extend their current one.

The EPMN was formed in 1992 by Insp Chris Bainbridge who discovered worrying evidence that pregnant staff sometimes faced negative or even hostile reactions from their bosses, when announcing their pregnancy or desire to return to work after giving birth.

Essex was the first force to win national acclaim from the Home Office for its pioneering efforts to help its staff combine babies with the beat.



EPMN chairwoman, Sgt Nicky Norris, is looking forward to the forthcoming year which is due to see a change in maternity legislation.

"This is a potentially interesting, yet challenging year for the network as we intend to expand our remit by providing support to women and men, in relation to miscarriage, infant death, fertility problems and adoption issues," said Sgt Norris. "Most people aren't aware that the network has helped formulate a number of family-friendly policies. We are currently asking the force to look into the feasibility of a childcare

voucher scheme although this is at a very early stage."

The EPMN exists not only for the benefit of expectant parents, but also for the organisation as they have addressed a number of issues which could have resulted in legal action being taken against the force.

Clare Lukey had been an officer for five years at Tendring Division before she fell pregnant and later gave birth to Harry.

"I had heard about the network through my divisional co-ordinator," said the 29-year-old from Clacton. "I've had lots of information concerning my rights, flexible working patterns, pay and time off. The network has supported me throughout the past year."

The EPMN homepage can be found under the HR Department website on the intranet.

If you are interested in becoming a co-ordinator or would like more information, please contact Sgt Norris at Ongar Police Station on 01279 621888.

Victim care

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Ultimately the success in terms of conviction rates is influenced by a number of factors which is why every effort needs to be made to ensure that the best possible evidence is captured.

"That's why it is important to engage at the earliest opportunity," said Det Supt Coxall, "and to provide appropriate support to both victims and families. These offences sadly leave their mark for a long period of time. We have a moral responsibility to support victims of crime not just in the reporting of the crime and the prosecution, but in their longer term recovery. We also have a professional responsibility to use one of the best methods to prevent this crime that there is, and that is locking up the people who commit it.

"The changes to the policy which supports this is the result of continuous improvement. As with all policies we are not the sole arbiters of the best way of going about things, so we are open to learning all the time. We want to learn from the victims that we deal with, the community at large and our successes through the criminal justice system."

Pensions plans afoot

ALL police staff will be affected by proposals for a new Local Government Pension Scheme due to be introduced in April 2008.

Women will have to work longer under the proposed changes with an across the board retirement age of 65, with reduced benefits for any member taking early retirement, except on ill-health grounds.

Other proposed changes would mean that the average employee contribution rate will rise by two per cent although the pension entitlement will be higher than at present.

Staff will have the option to exchange part of their annual pension for a lump sum but lower any pension provided.

Pension provision is to be extended to include unmarried partners and children.

Proposals also affect the death in service grant and any benefits paid on ill health or redundancy.

Changes already made to the scheme have recognised that people are living longer and, the government want to encourage people to work longer.

Arrangements have already been established to allow the various stakeholders to come together to provide discussion and comment on the consultation material.

Police staff will be notified about any proposed changes to their pension scheme in due course.

Detections on the up

A PILOT unit offering investigation advice and support to officers is showing clear signs of success through cases which are securing large numbers of sanctioned detections.

The Investigative Support Unit (ISU) was launched in Harlow on January 10 using existing experienced staff in conjunction with resources from Crime Division and Corporate Support.

It is on hand to assist officers with all elements of investigations including case action plans.

by Kim Perks

In many cases, for example due to the reluctance of a victim to pursue a case, an offence is recorded as detected but not prosecuted. A sanctioned detection is a positive means of justice, such as a caution or fixed penalty notice, which can often be used in these circumstances.

One shoplifter in Harlow, for instance, was also expecting a long stretch for assault. Dc Jean Seager, from the ISU, and Pc Paul Wells explained to the shoplifter the benefits of clearing up any outstanding offences which the court would then take into consideration when sentencing for the assault. The suspect went on to admit 60 offences.

In a second scenario, a good arrest by constables Andy Molyneux and Mark Caswell-Chappell led to the

detention of a man responsible for a nationwide fraud scam. Again, with the assistance of the ISU, the man co-operated at interview admitting to about 80 offences.

That's not to say that other divisions aren't playing their part in increasing sanctioned detections.

In Thurrock, for instance, where there is a particular car crime problem, a prisoner was charged with five car thefts and had a further 45 taken into consideration. The result was secured by the good investigative work of constables Danny Carter and Greig Avery which included cross border liaison with the Metropolitan Police.

Rayleigh cleared up 23 till snatch offences, 12 of which were committed in Basildon and Thurrock. Basildon has shown the benefits of using other problem-solving partners to achieve

sanctioned detections. Youth offending teams played a key role in the case of a juvenile, when a strong interview led to the suspect naming three other individuals involved in burglaries and 32 sanctioned detections.

The hard work on divisions has seen the force sanctioned detection rate go from strength to strength. In October it stood at 20.3 per cent for all crime and by January had risen to 25.3 per cent. The area which saw the biggest improvement was violent crime. In the 12 months to April last year the sanctioned detection rate was 27 per cent but in the 12 months to this January Essex Police recorded 40 per cent.

Det Supt Graeme Bull said: "We must keep our foot on the pedal with this. Our targets are being set now and they are all in terms of sanctioned detections."

Driving home the message



● Road policing Chief Insp Tom Diment joined by Essex County Council deputy cabinet member for highways, Cllr Susan Flack.

Photograph: Essex Enquirer

A 25ft road safety message was projected on to a giant screen in Chelmsford as Essex Police joined forces with Essex County Council and the licensing trade to stop young drivers speeding.

At the launch of the For My Girlfriend campaign on Valentine's Day, Edwards bar in Chelmsford was brimming with red roses, each with a sealed envelope bearing the words 'For My Valentine'.

However, the card inside was a stark reminder of the tragedy that can result from fast driving.

Each conveyed the message: "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to kill you. I was driving too fast". Also in the envelope was a photo of a crashed car. Edwards and other nightclubs, pubs and restaurants in the area distributed the cards to appropriate customers.

Hitting them where it hurts

NEARLY half a million pounds has been confiscated by the force since the introduction of the Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA) in 2003.

By the second anniversary of the law's implementation in February, the Economic Crime Unit had been successful in obtaining confiscation orders totalling £450,100 against criminals convicted of drug trafficking and acquisitive crimes.

Of that figure, £157,180 was confiscated under POCA and several more cases await hearings at Crown Court.

As well as confiscation

orders, the law gives police powers to seize cash where it is reasonable to suspect it has been obtained through, or will be used for, unlawful activity. With a 100 per cent hit rate in this arena, the unit has successfully dealt with the seizure and forfeiture of money totalling £72,535.

A further nine seizure cases are being investigated by the Brentwood-based team, which could see another £245,360 taken away from criminals.

A/Det Sgt Philip Bridge said: "POCA is a powerful piece of legislation designed

to take the profit out of crime and hit the criminal where it hurts.

"However, its effectiveness can be increased by investing in more trained investigators to undertake work in this area, and ensuring all officers are aware of how to use it.

"The Economic Crime Unit is available to provide advice and assistance in these areas and should be considered when planning operations or initiatives."

From 2006, police will be able to keep half of all money seized, to recycle into fighting crime.

Can you solve a problem?

AS the force continues the development of its problem-solving style of policing, officers and staff are being encouraged to make the most of the database and team which have been set up to help them get to grips with the approach.

The team, based at HQ Community Safety, will be made up of two Pcs and a member of police staff led by an inspector and sergeant. They will liaise with divisions to promote and embed problem solving among staff.

Divisions already have a divisional champion at command team level and problem solving co-ordinators who are there to assist with problem solving work.

With some divisions like Thurrock having already booked the team in for training sessions, Problem Solving Team member Pc Karen Brimson is urging others not to get left behind.

"Without a doubt this is the way forward, and it really works," said Pc Brimson. "We accept it's a new way of thinking for some people, but a little bit of thought will show that many people

already problem-solve but don't recognise it."

Good examples of problem solving include Operation Chicken Run, an offensive against thieves, dealers and anti-social residents in Jaywick.

Pc Brimson said: "Problem solving is not a short-term fix. It will take a while to kick in and we need to help people through that initial period."

In the meantime, Pc Brimson is looking for another Pc to work alongside her with a knowledge of problem solving. The role will involve giving presentations and training to divisions.

The policing style has already been integrated into courses at EPTC. A further aid has been the introduction of a county wide problem solving database. Everyone across the force will have access to the database, which holds details of methods used to tackle different problems around the county. The database will also mean the SARA process of problem solving - Scanning, Analysis, Response, Assessment - will become entirely electronic rather than carried out on paper.

A site for sore eyes

THE force's website will be getting a facelift this spring to make the already award-winning design even more appealing to the public.

First launched in 1998, the site has seen its popularity steadily rise and now hosts 900,000 visitors each year.

A new feature, Newsline, was launched in 2003, giving the public and media news stories about Essex Police on

demand.

Internet Web Developer, Steven Pollard, said: "Requirements of a modern website have changed since we first launched www.essex.police.uk.

"As well as a much improved look and feel, the site will be more accessible and interactive for the public, allowing them to find popular content quickly and easily."

Law Letters

HAVE YOUR SAY: Write to Kim Perks, Law Letters, Press Office, Police HQ, PO Box 2, Springfield, Chelmsford, Essex CM2 6DA.
Letters and emails must include full name and home town. We reserve the right to edit letters.

Memory of Tom lives on

FROM time to time organisations produce characters and Essex Police has had its share.

I would like to share my experiences of one such character, Tom Pinch.

Tom became a constable in the early 1930s, stationed at Chelmsford.

He was a keen wrestler and boxer and soon proved his worth at the end of licensing hours and anywhere else public order problems were likely.

When he was off duty in the evenings he became a frequent visitor to the Corn Exchange and it was not long before the organisers enlisted him if a booked contestant became unavailable, and so his reputation grew.

He took punishment but enjoyed the involvement and the audience enjoyed the process.

It is fair to comment that Tom was not over keen on paper work and so, as was

then the custom, never sought the Chief Constable's permission to marry.

After some years in lodgings and working in the town, he was posted to headquarters, where his fitness and expertise were used by the training department on a part-time basis as he took physical training and self defence for a succession of recruits and later police cadets.

Like most instructors he had a particular and oft repeated phrase which was to the effect that he liked to help out "if you see my point".

About once a month Tom would act as a role player as an unconscious road accident victim and would happily lie down in front of a car for the afternoon while a succession of trainees dealt with the incident.

Usually he would wake mid-afternoon for a cup of tea. He was always glad to help out.

Training for Tom was not a full-time employment and so he could be seen in his blue overalls moving furniture, files or tidying the front lawn and occasionally even helped with the central heating system.

In fact Tom had so many jobs and with so

much variety that, if he was missing from one role, it seemed to be assumed that he must have been busy elsewhere.

Tom was very much his own boss.

On his transfer to headquarters he had taken up residence at the end of a corridor in what was then the single men's quarters in the old stable block.

Suffice to say his room was full of character and personal property.

He was known to carry the engine from his small car into the room in order to strip it down.

Cleaners despaired but Tom knew the repair or work was done properly and all the bits scattered about the room eventually went back to be refitted to the vehicle.

He appeared in a vest and dark trousers as the PT instructor.

On one occasion there was to be a royal visit to the area.

When all the officers paraded, someone noticed an immaculate senior constable in best uniform and white gloves.

Tom had volunteered and presented

himself as he felt he wanted to help out in case there was some additional need or someone had failed to arrive.

"One extra is better than one short if you see my point."

Eventually it was recognised that Tom was fast approaching his 30 years service and he did submit the written request to retire.

The day came and Tom went and so a character departed without most knowing where he had gone.

Shortly, Tom, in blue overalls, could be seen tidying the car park or garden of a pub just outside Chelmsford.

He was around late in the evening in case there was any trouble and would help out by clearing a few glasses or bottles.

If asked he would say that he had a room at the pub and that he was enjoying his retirement.

If he was asked further he would add that he had married the landlady so it had all worked out very well, "if you see my point".

**Bill Gray
Battle**

Capital always had a powerful allure

I STARTED my police career with Essex in 1964, serving at Tilbury, Chadwell St Mary and Grays before transferring to the Metropolitan Police.

As a result of my new-found wealth in the Metropolitan Police as a uniformed officer, which included additional income in paid voluntary duty, mostly fortnightly, covering home football games at the Upton Park ground of West Ham, I was able to purchase my first house almost two years to the day of my transfer.

I am not submitting this letter from a local boy makes good point of view but to illustrate the fact that the transfer

exodus of Essex officers to the Met of those times really did make a difference to one's pocket.

If you had an arrest on night duty, you remained on duty until court time, your tired eyes being relieved by the thought of next month's pay advice slip net income box being suitably enhanced.

Additionally if your weekly leave (rest day) was cancelled without notice, as was often the case, countless riches were in store for you in next month's pay packet.

**Mike Hughes
Goring on Thames**

What do modern police stand for?

I AM sure readers must have noticed whilst browsing The Law in recent times the growth of various departments and systems that have developed within the force, all of which seem to be given an abbreviated title.

In the last copy I counted at least 30 different abbreviations and am aware of numerous others in previous editions. How do people remember these abbreviations?

No doubt there is a book at each divisional HQ, the size of War and Peace, known as the book to decipher abbreviations, or the BTDA.

**Keith Wheatcroft
Dunmow**

A day to celebrate

THE High Ongar Royal British Legion is holding a VE VJ Celebration on June 5 at 2 pm.

The 50-strong Royal British Legion Brentwood Junior Band will lead a parade from Ongar Railway station, where there will be a static display of historic military vehicles, to the Two Brewers.

The parade will then be transported to High Ongar in vintage buses, military vehicles and farm trailers.

There a march past will be viewed by Mr George Courtauld, Vice-Lord Lieutenant of Essex.

There will be a short church service and wreath laying at the War Memorial.

The day of celebration will end with a music concert.

We would like members of Essex Police to attend and, if at all possible, be in a uniform of the period.

If anyone owns a police vehicle of the time we would also very much like to hear from them.

Please contact me on 01277 363206 or d.berwin@bt.com if you would like to join us.

**Derek Berwin
High Ongar**

Gone . . . but not forgotten



Brian John 'Bill' Bishop - Essex Police.

Served from August 11, 1966. Died August 27, 1984.

ACTING Sgt Brian 'Bill' Bishop was born on July 24, 1947 and joined the former Essex Constabulary as a 15-year-old cadet.

Whilst a cadet the dog handlers gave him the nickname of 'Bill', due to his hair being "a bit thin on top but long and wavy at the back", reminding them of 'Wild Bill' Hickock.

Bill Bishop was attested as Police Constable 389 on August 11, 1966, and was posted to Colchester. Two years later he joined the Dog Section as a handler. In 1975 he joined the Force Support Unit and subsequently became a firearms instructor. At 6ft 7ins tall he was known as The Gentle Giant.

On Wednesday August 22, 1984, with other officers, he was called to Central Avenue, Frinton, near the seafront. This call followed on from reports that earlier in the day a man had robbed two post offices, in Walton and Frinton. It was also known that he had hidden his haul of several thousand pounds alongside a railway embankment. The wanted man had held up the Post Office staff with a sawn-off shotgun and forced them to hand

over money before escaping on a motor cycle.

Following the first raid he had been stopped and questioned by police as he fitted the description of the wanted man. He was then taken to his mother's house as she lived nearby. She gave him an alibi and said that he had been at home all afternoon. He was then released to commit the second raid. Meanwhile, police had kept watch on the site where the cash had been hidden. Finally the robber approached carrying what appeared to be just a carrier bag.

Bill Bishop shouted at him: "Armed Police. Stop!" at which the robber lifted the carrier bag, which concealed a gun, and shot him in the head. Sgt Mervyn Fairweather was shot in the groin. Another colleague then fired at the gunman, hitting him in the back and side. Bill Bishop died five days later in St Bartholomew's Hospital in London. A 35-year-old Brentwood man was arrested at the scene but, because of injuries he had sustained, he was detained under guard in Colchester hospital and later charged with murder.

On Friday 19th July 1985 he appeared at Norwich Crown Court, sitting in a wheelchair

as he was paralysed from the waist down. He was charged with Bill Bishop's murder and the attempted murder of Sgt Fairweather. He denied both charges. The jury found him guilty of Bill Bishop's murder. They found him not guilty of attempting to murder Police Sergeant Fairweather, but guilty of wounding him. He was sentenced to life imprisonment and the judge commented that he would have recommended a minimum of twenty years in jail had his injuries not reduced his danger to society.

Mr Justice Boreham also praised the bravery of the officers who had been with Bill Bishop when confronted by the robber and went on to say: "I only wish Bill Bishop was here to hear the commendation."

For details of all those featured in the Essex Police Roll of Honour visit the Memorial Trust website at www.essex.police.uk. If you have any information you feel could be added to the website then please write by email to memorialtrust@essex.pnn.police.uk or write to the Memorial Trust at police headquarters.

Listening to voice of Essex youth

YOUNG people across the county, Essex police officers and staff and other professionals from our partner agencies are preparing to meet at this year's Essex Police Youth Conference.

This year's event will be held on April 12 and 13 at Ford Technical Centre, Dunton.

The event's keynote speech will be from Earl Howe, the House of Lords Shadow Spokesman for Health.

Sally Dowler, mother of murdered Millie Dowler and founder of Milly's Fund will be among those from across the country who will be presenting their ideas to improve services and support available to young people.

The PEPYS team, who are organising the conference, are also looking forward to hearing from young people with their views and ideas.

Many members of the PEPYS Youth Forum will be appearing at the event to offer their personal perspectives and experiences to the debate.

They have highlighted that they want to look at perceptions of young people and how these can be improved.

In addition there will be an important debate on future police involvement in Essex schools.

Addition to the family

THE first consignment of staff from police partner agencies are to be granted "targeted police powers" this month.

Under the Police Reform Act 2002, police forces can give a stamp of approval to organisations who they work in partnership with.

The Community Safety Accreditation Scheme (CSAS) enables employers from these partner agencies to help their local police eradicate anti-social behaviour from streets and other public places by use of delegated powers.

Employees from Colchester Borough Council, Basildon General Hospital and the Vehicle Operator Services Agency (VOSA) will be the first in the county to be entrusted with these new powers.

Essex Police's CSAS Manger, Jay Smith said: "Although their main role is to educate people about quality of life issues, they can now resort to using those extended police powers when education fails. The more people there are working towards the same goal means there's more eyes and ears on the streets."

Encouraged by an ACTION snapshot

STAFF across the force feel empowered to take responsibility for doing a good job, the ACTION survey has revealed.

93 per cent of those who responded to the questionnaire – both officers and police staff – said they believe Essex Police gives them the freedom to take personal responsibility for how they perform their roles.

Results show individuals are clear about their personal goals and that they feel generally supported by their line managers, with nearly four out of five saying

they were confident that their manager backed them in the decisions they made.

More than 90 per cent of staff felt clear about what they had to do to achieve high standards in their work, but half that figure said they did not feel supported by the organisation at large.

The 17-question survey was sent to all staff, in a bid to assess how much work needs to be done to ensure that the leadership principles of ACTION become a way of life for the force. An impressive 2,600 questionnaires were returned – around half of the workforce. Of those, 1300 were police officers, 900 police staff and the remainder were anonymous.

While more than three-quarters of those who responded felt their

managers also helped them to provide a quality service to the public, a significant number of police officers – 43 per cent – felt they could not provide the level of service their customers required. For police staff, this figure was only 18 per cent.

Chief Constable David Stevens said: "The response rate to this survey is really outstanding and shows the impact that the ACTION leadership programme has already had.

"This gives a strong message that our staff firmly believe in delivering high standards and in taking personal responsibility for achieving these. We'll be looking in more detail at those areas where the survey indicates we have more work to do."

Full details of responses can be viewed on the ACTION website.

Are you up to fun day challenge?



YOU may be just the sort of person the 4 x 4 Fun Day committee is looking for.

If you can make numerous cups of tea while dancing to the "birdie" song or know the words to the "Wheels on the bus", or if you have a 4 x 4 driving permit or can cook a mean BBQ then read on. A multitude of talents will be needed to make the ninth Essex Police 4 x 4 Fun Day a memorable day out for children aged between five and 16 who have a wide range of special needs and their siblings.

The annual event, to be held at Marsh Farm, South Woodham Ferrers, is only possible through the support given by those working for the organisation who help make the day special, and the continued backing of local businesses.

Contact Michele France if you know of a child that would benefit from the day, before the closing date of April 18. Anyone from the force who would like to help on the day can also contact Michele on ext 55115.

Surgeon system overhauled

A NEW dedicated network of force medical examiners (FMEs) will be introduced over the next few months aimed at providing a quicker service to divisions.

Essex Medical Forensic Services, which is headed by a former FME, signed up to provide the service on March 1, and should be in place across the county by June.

The move comes after years of the present system of police surgeons, which has grown with no formal structure over the years and places responsibility on each division to arrange its own cover.

Police surgeons are used by the force to certify deaths or examine prisoners in custody, as well as victims of sexual offences. However, in recent years doctors in Essex have had to juggle

many commitments, meaning police issues often take a back seat.

The increased pressure on divisions of not having GPs available when they were needed has led to the tendering of the FME service after work carried out by contracts officer Liana Hines and custody manager, Chief Insp Chris Macintosh.

Chief Insp Macintosh said: "The big difference will be that the company will work with a combination of doctors and paramedics, because the law and the NHS has changed so that more healthcare practitioners can now do work previously undertaken only by doctors.

"It should be a quicker service, and it will certainly be a dedicated service staffed by people interested in being involved in the work we do."

The new company - which is already operating in Harlow - will provide each custody suite with a dedicated phone line direct to a doctor on call, who can assess the situation and either give advice over the phone or send out a paramedic.

In a complicated case such as a sudden deaths and sexual offences, or if the officer feels the need for a police surgeon to attend, then they will do so.

Already, more than 20 other forces are interested in the way the new system is being arranged.

Chief Insp Macintosh said: "It's with a degree of sadness that we will be losing a number of good doctors who have balanced the needs of their own patients with the needs of Essex Police for several years to support us."

Arrests in soccer job enquiry

A NUMBER of football hooligans have been banned from attending matches following a series of successful dawn raids by officers in Colchester.

Seven arrests were carried out in connection with a football-related disturbance at London's Euston railway station in January after the game involving Milton Keynes Dons and Colchester United FC in Buckinghamshire.

A total of 17 football banning orders have so far been issued to football hooligans purporting to support Colchester United FC, and no incidents of public disorder have been experienced at home games this season.

Officers have been successful in combating organised football violence at both Layer Road and in nearby areas, including Colchester town centre.

Community Policing Team Inspector Tony Dale said: "Colchester United FC is a family-orientated club which undertakes much work in the community and supports crime reduction initiatives. Unfortunately, a determined group of individuals persist in attaching themselves to the club and engaging in anti-social, violent behaviour as well as carrying out criminal acts when attending away games."

Data is in safe hands

WITH around 80 per cent of the workforce now trained in information security, the force is well on its way to fulfilling its policy on how data is handled.

The Force Information Security Policy (FISP) is aimed at ensuring Essex Police adheres to standards of care with information set out in the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) Community Security Policy.

The policy gives staff responsibility to report all breaches of security, deal with information appropriately and operate a clear desk policy wherever practical. Alongside these, computer based training packages were developed last year, called For Your Eyes Only, and Handle With Care. More than 4,000 staff have completed the training.

Information security auditor, Lee Scott, said: "It's encouraging that so many staff have taken their responsibility under the policy seriously. Information security is vital to any organisation such as ours, and we would urge staff who have not yet completed their training to do so as soon as possible."

Force aiming to ride out a new storm

THE possibility of a ban on hunting with hounds was first mooted in 1997 as part of the manifesto which would see New Labour sweep to victory in a landslide general election.

In that manifesto, the party promised a free vote in Parliament on whether such hunting should be banned.

Eight years later, after countless votes and eventual over-ruling of the House of Lords, that possibility has become reality. The eyes of the nation's media fall once more on the police service and how it will enforce the government's legislation.

Put simply, the Hunting Act prohibits the deliberate hunting with a pack of hounds, but makes exemptions whereby dogs may still be used for certain activities. Hunters can still use hounds to 'flush' an animal from cover before shooting it. They can hunt a rat but not a mouse.

At the last count there were over 200 registered hound packs in the UK, and 50,000 registered riders. Opposition and outrage to the new law is fierce, as are the views of anti-hunt protesters eager to see the legislation put into action.

The Countryside Alliance has claimed that a recent poll showed that 77 per cent of the public thought the Hunting would be "confusing and difficult to police".

The pressure group's chief executive, Simon Hart, said: "Legislation which is rejected by every single person it is meant to affect and which can never be properly policed simply cannot stand the test of time. This cannot and will not work."

Meanwhile, the League Against Cruel Sports claims that on February 19 – the first day of the ban – they collected video evidence showing at least six breaches of the law. What is known is that on that first Saturday around 100 foxes were killed across the UK. Most were shot after being flushed although some were reportedly killed after being picked up "unintentionally" by hunts.

So how can Essex Police enforce the law with the apparent intricacies that the Hunting Act holds? By keeping on doing what we've always done well, says the force's Special Operations Chief Inspector, Tim Stokes.

"This legislation has been coming for a while, and we've put measures in place to inform our people about the changes through

our intranet site and a new operational order written around the act," said Chief Insp Stokes.

"We've been working with the training centre to incorporate relevant information into training, and all operations managers have had the national guidelines and local protocols.

"In terms of how we handle hunts, little will change. We have always had a duty to protect life and property. Now we'll also need to explain to people about what's happening at a hunt and whether it's legal."

The force's policy on policing hunts will be the same one that has stood it in good stead for some time, says Chief Insp Stokes.

"We made the decision long ago to try to have local officers deal with local issues, so that our people know the area and the people involved. Supporting them we have a reserve available of public order trained officers, in case of any problems. That's worked well for the last 15 years, and that's why it's still our policy."

Bedding in

The first weekend of the ban presented no real problems in Essex, which hosted five mounted hunts and one foot hunt. Around 2,000 pro-hunt supporters were met with less than 20 protesters, and police received no allegations of illegal hunting.

However, Chief Insp Stokes is quite prepared for the new legislation to be cloudy in some ways in the first stages of its implementation.

"There has to be a settling down period where we see how the act affects hunting," he said. "With any new legislation, you can be getting new stated cases decades after the original law is passed.

"We will get people contacting us saying that illegal hunting is going on when it may not be, because what you can do legally looks similar to what you can't. But when it comes to the law itself, it's quite specific on the different activities and what makes them legal or not."

Ironically, despite policing hunts being an intense job in Essex over the years, in the last year that has diminished. The force had rewritten its policy last year with the intention of withdrawing policing from it altogether



Feature by **Ben Pennington**

●Centre - officers monitor the activities of a hunt at Little Waltham. Above right - anti-hunt protesters are kept under a watchful eye by local officers and spotters.



Photos: James Fletcher, East Anglian Daily Times

"We won't ignore hunting with hounds, but as a force our priorities are clear"

because there were so few problems. But things are becoming more pronounced again.

"Whenever you have two very opposite groups – no matter how law-abiding they are on a day-to-day basis – come Saturday afternoon you can expect trouble," said Chief Insp Stokes. With three years under his belt in his current job, he is under no illusions about the difficulties officers face in gathering evidence of illegal hunting.

"We will look at a range of evidence-gathering options, from eye-witness accounts and video and photo evidence, to investigating earth-filling or the admissions of huntsmen," he said.

Chief Insp Stokes met with hunt masters in January, where the force's strategy and stance was presented to them, resulting in assurances from them that hunts would stay within the law. Meeting with saboteurs is not as easy, as they are formed into less cohesive groups. Each local protest group works on its own local aims, offering advice on sabotaging hunts through websites such as the one advertising the work of Suffolk and Essex Sabs. In amongst the two sides, Essex Police must remain impartial as ever.

"If we get information and intelligence that a hunt or hunting contravening the Hunting Act



●Chief Insp Tim Stokes

is taking place, then we will police that proactively," said Chief Insp Stokes. "But in the absence of any anticipated disorder or specific intelligence that illegal hunting has occurred there will be no police presence at the event.

"Contravening the act is a summary-only offence. We certainly won't ignore hunting with hounds, but as a force our priorities are clear around tackling issues such as violent crime and burglary."

Support groups such as the Countryside Alliance have vowed to continue the fight against the ban in the courts, despite one failed attempt in February. In the meantime, it's business as usual for Essex Police.

Another great benefit of your Federation membership

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As a Police Federation member, it's only sensible to be fully aware of all the benefits of membership. One of which is The Police Federation Personal Loan Scheme, which has been especially arranged with you in mind, in association with Hamilton Direct Bank.

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Bike death fine for business

A WATER company has been successfully prosecuted after a motorcyclist died when he crashed at temporary road works.

At the point where 21-year-old Samuel Berrill came off his bike police investigators discovered a three inch drop in the road where an excavation had been poorly filled in. They went on to discover over 20 breaches of the New Road and Street Works Act 1991 including poor signage and lighting and insufficiently protected excavations.

Although an inquest recorded a verdict of accidental death Essex Police worked with Essex County Council to secure a prosecution against Three Valleys Water who were refurbishing water mains.

The company pleaded guilty and were fined £1,700 and ordered to pay over £3,000 in costs.

A Special weekend

SPECIALS were out in force on streets across the county last month in support of National Special Constabulary Weekend.

The main thrust across the county involved high visibility patrols in conjunction with their regular colleagues dealing with anti-social behaviour whilst trying to attract new recruits to swell their numbers.

Specials Commandant George Cook said: "I wish to thank the numerous Special Officers across the county who spent many hours on duty, often during very cold and inclement weather, in support of the campaign.

"My thanks also go to the family and friends of all the Specials on duty for their continued support and understanding."

Specials in Basildon ran Operation Bentham, the division's long running initiative against cruisers who frequent local sites to use their vehicles in an illegal or anti-social manner.

Basildon Specials are now trained to use the force's automated number plate recognition technology.

Divisional Officer, Scott McCabe said: "Specials in Basildon take on a wide range of roles and Operation Bentham shows the variety of work specials can expect when they join the volunteer constabulary."

There are currently over 380 members of the Essex Special Constabulary who provided over 80,000 hours of police duty last year, and the force is still looking to boost its numbers.

New seatbelts plea to drivers

AN apparent disregard for the law has prompted Essex Police to launch a countywide campaign to encourage motorists and passengers to belt up in their vehicles.

The move, which is being supported by Essex County Council, comes after an initiative in the Colchester area late last year revealed that there are still people ignoring this simple procedure that can save lives.

During November alone 530 drivers and passengers from the Colchester and Tendring areas were stopped by Stanway Road

Policing officers, spoken to and fined.

Drivers have a responsibility not only to themselves but their passengers as well and should ensure that everyone is belted up. Adult passengers, whether sitting in the front or rear, can be the recipient of a fixed penalty notice. Parents should also heed the warning as when children are not properly secured it is an offence for which the driver is responsible.

Chief Inspector Tom Diment of the Essex Police Mobile Support Department (MSD) said: "The campaign in November highlighted that there is still a disregard for this law and it is of great concern to us that people are still putting their own lives, and the lives of others, at risk. By putting this message out countywide we hope to encourage more people to think again. It takes seconds to belt up

but could make the difference between life and death."

All six road policing units around Essex will be utilising every opportunity during March to both spread the word and enforce the law by way of non-endorsable £30 fixed penalty notices.

Cabinet Minister for Highways and Transportation, Councillor Rodney Bass (Con. Tollesbury), said: "A simple thing such as putting on your seatbelt when you get into the car can save your life. Yet in many accidents we see across the county people still are not wearing their seatbelt. We hope that this joint campaign with Essex Police will have a real impact on the behaviour of drivers and passengers, and help us to keep the number of casualties down. A small change can save your life, so always remember to wear your seatbelt."

Authority earns people accolade



● Essex Police Authority chief executive Doug Hayton with the certificate.

ESSEX Police Authority has achieved Investors in People status.

The Investors in People Standard (IIP) is internationally recognised and is awarded for delivering business improvement through people.

The IIP Standard is based on commitment, planning, action and evaluation.

An organisation must achieve a high standard in all of these areas when seeking recognition.

The formal IIP assessment took place in January 2005 and Essex Police Authority has now been officially recognised as an "Investor in People."

A report to the authority from the independent assessor said: "The very

strong performance management process ensures that staff are aware of the aims of the organisation and of their individual contributions.

"Managers and senior members are viewed as supportive and approachable for both training and development and personal issues."

Chief Executive of Essex Police Authority, Doug Hayton, said: "We are delighted to have received such recognition especially as we are continuing to establish ourselves as an independent organisation in our own right.

"We will continue to strive for the very best from our staff and hope to build on this success now and in the future."

More Tsunami work ahead

DESPITE the lull in the media interest, the force continues to take the lead in the region as part of Operation Bracknell – the police response to the Asian earthquake disaster – and is co-ordinating police investigations into UK citizens still missing or unidentified.

The force originally set up an incident room to deal with Essex inquiries initiated from the Metropolitan Police Casualty Bureau, but is now

carrying out a wider role as Essex has been established as the regional lead force for liaison with the Police National Co-ordinating Centre in London.

Leading this police response is Assistant Chief Constable Liam Briggingshaw who is keen to reassure the county's residents that the force is doing everything possible to support those affected by the tragic events.

"This is a unique operation

for the force because of the global nature of the events and the continuing uncertainty about what we may be dealing with in the weeks and months ahead," said ACC Briggingshaw. "More information is coming in all the time about people who are missing or have yet to be identified so it is likely that our contribution in support of the national and international arrangements will continue for some months."

Details concerning anyone from the east Anglian region reported as missing are being sent to Essex who then forward inquiries to the relevant force (Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Suffolk, Norfolk or Hertfordshire) who put the necessary care mechanisms in place.

Mr Briggingshaw added: "The circumstances are often difficult, with officers having to obtain DNA samples from next of kin and dental records of the missing person."

Overdose response revised

A NEW deal has been struck with the Ambulance Service in a move to reduce the number of drug-related deaths in the county.

The new protocol has been drawn up in acknowledgement that many drug users who overdose will be with others who may be reluctant to call an ambulance in case police arrive too.

Users who are present when someone overdose fear the possible consequences for them of police involvement. Some may call 999, while some may spend vital time clearing away illegal drugs and paraphernalia before calling. In some cases they may leave the scene and not call at all.

In those cases, the chances of reversing the effects of an overdose decline rapidly.

The agreement with the Essex Ambulance Service means that from now, they will not contact police unless there is a death, evidence of harm to vulnerable people, the crew is at risk or a victim reports a crime.

FIR will assess information provided from calls, and contact the Ambulance Service to provide initial attendance unless police are specifically requested.

Where ambulance staff deem it appropriate that police attend regardless of the criteria, the force will provide as rapid a response as possible.

Keeping an eye on the drinkers

EVIDENCE collated by police forces around binge drinking will be used to direct government efforts to tackle the problem, the Home Office says.

Home Officer Minister Hazel Blears, speaking at the unveiling of a consultation document on ways to address the issue, applauded police work in town centres over the festive period and outlined possible next steps.

Among the proposals is the prospect of recovering costs of policing disorder from bars and pubs, and a possible 'three strikes and you're out' system where anyone with three tickets or convictions for drink-related disorder would be subject to a 'drink banning order'.

Ms Blears said: "The proposals outlined go hand in hand with our drive against anti-social behaviour, making our communities safer places to live and work."

The proposals come in the wake of the Licensing Act, which contains the possibility of 24-hour drinking.

Another string to your bow

Some like it hot

NOW in its 15th year, the British Police Symphony Orchestra (BPSO) is looking for new talent to boost the ranks.

They currently have vacancies for violin, viola and double bass players to join over 80 playing members drawn from across the UK police service, including serving or retired police officers and staff.

The orchestra meets about once a month for rehearsal weekends at various police headquarters and training establishments across the country and performs about four or five concerts a year.

It ends each season with a Last Night of the Proms Spectacular concert at the Symphony Hall, in Birmingham.

Their next engagement will be in Exeter in May performing in support of Dream-a-way, a local charity providing holidays for terminally ill and disabled children.

Further information on the orchestra can be found at www.bpsos.org.uk, or if you think you might be interested in joining then please send an email to info@bpsos.org.uk.

Something for everyone

THE best seats in the house are on offer for a dizzying spectacle of sights and sounds for the forthcoming Classic Spectacular at the Royal Albert Hall this month.

If dance is more your scene then the new musical Billy Elliott is available in June.

And it's certainly not too early to think about Christmas as the Cologne Christmas Market trip is selling-out fast.

Information about HQ Sports and Social Club trips can be found on the EPSA web site and bookings can be made by email to HQ Sports and Social Club or on extension 50666.

Sports news in brief

GARETH Ingram and Lee Ward have been selected to represent the National PSUK Men's Hockey team.

The duo will take part in an Inter Services Triangular at HMS Temeraire, Portsmouth this month.

This year's Croker Cup Sea Angling Tournament will be held on March 17. The venue for the competition will be Two Tree Island, Leigh, at 7.30 am.

WHERE else would you find a tap dancing police officer, a Cruella da Ville-style vamp with bright red hair styled into a fan of spikes and a Lord High Executioner, all thrown together in a sizzling sunset location of East (Down town Harlem) meets West (Japan)?

Well, those who saw the recent production of *Hot Mikado* will know the answer to this as appreciative audiences enjoyed the rip-roaring production performed by Essex Police Musical Society (EPMS) in February at headquarters.

Jenny Hillyard, of EPMS, said: "We would like to offer our warm thanks to those who supported us and for the immensely positive feedback we have had.

"We are delighted to say we have again won new friends and supporters with another successful production and that our months of hard work paid off in a triumphant show week."

The hilarious 1940s-style updating of the Gilbert and Sullivan classic was a show new to the society and to many of the audience, but the story and characters are the same as the original *Mikado*.



●Simon Brett and Shelley Barkway star as Nanki-Poo and Yum-Yum in *Hot Mikado*.

Most of the words of the songs remained the same, but were given a new life in the style of blues, swing and hot gospel with the popular song *Three Little Maids* turned into an Andrew

Sisters' show stopper. In addition to these, there were still firm favourites such as *Got It On The List* and *Tit-wil-low*.

The show had both cast and audience tapping their feet from start to finish with a score that, as the name suggests, was really hot. The lively script and music were echoed in the bright set and costumes with the men dressed in colourful zoot-suits and the ladies in bright 40s-style dresses. The singing was complimented by dance numbers throughout the show, including a *pas de deux* in *Braid the Raven Hair*, together with a tap routine in the show stopping number *Let the Punishment fit the Crime*.

A cast of 23 brought the production to life under the watchful eye of director and choreographer Pam Corrie and musical director Jim Dougal. The complex harmonies, which made this the most difficult show the society has attempted to date, were taught by a very patient and talented chorus master, James Lovelock. During rehearsals, the cast were always impressed by his ability to sing all six parts of the harmonies from bass to soprano – although not at the same time!

EPMS hope you will make a note in your diaries for their Summer Show which will be performed at the Assembly Hall on Thursday July 28 to 30 at 7.30pm.

If you would like further information on the society; would like to be added to our mailing list or are thinking of joining – either treading the boards or as a much valued member of the backstage team – please contact Jenny Hillyard on ext. 50335.

Chelmsford jump cue for trophies

CHELMSFORD'S makeshift team upset the odds in this year's Croker Cup snooker and billiards tournament by ousting Braintree's seasoned champions.

The Chelmsford side – made up of Alan Gooden, John Ross, Mick Pitcher, Neil Marshall and Matt Maunton – was put together with two days'

by Ben Pennington

notice prior to the event.

Such was the level of experience in the team that its members required an ad hoc training session in the rules of billiards from the reigning champions before the competition started.

However, the favour was not repaid as Chelmsford went on to win both the

snooker and billiards tournaments.

A delighted Alan Gooden said: "It was a fantastic result from a team put together 48 hours before the competition.

"I want to say a big thank you to the Braintree team for their assistance in helping us prepare for what turned out to be a memorable victory."

Peter Orpe, captain of the Braintree team which has claimed both trophies since 1999, offered his congratulations to the new champions.

"It seems the loss of Braintree's snooker table has had an adverse effect on our form, but congratulations must go to the Chelmsford team for their efforts," he said.

Essex athletes run out winners

ESSEX was victorious for the first time since 2000, making it their third Cross Country League Championship win in 25 years.

The team enjoyed a successful end to the 2004/05 South East/Eastern Police Cross Country League with an incredible 25 competitors making the journey to More Park, Maidstone, Kent.

Russ Welch has shown great potential for a number of seasons and came good when it mattered, winning his third race in a row and claiming his first individual men's title and, already assured of the V45 prize, Mick Bond led the rest of

the team to victory.

Derek Walker and Alex Webb completed the scoring on this occasion, but acknowledged the contribution of the absent Andy Jopson and all of the Essex competitors who have turned out during the winter.

Third place was secured by the veterans with Mick Bond joined by John Mackenzie, Chris Lacey, Paul Fieldsend and ever present Steve King.

Despite a fantastic effort to close the gap on Hants, the Essex ladies had to settle for second. Rachel Crosby and Lucy Bradley led the way in the final race but success was due to the consistent efforts of

Lisa Bolton, Amanda Pollard and Pauline Bowers, the latter rewarded with 3rd place in the ladies' veteran category. The contribution from the injured Kathryn Southall also deserves praise.

Having secured the league the men will be hoping to complete the double at the regional championships at Ampthill, Bedfordshire on March 16, whilst the ladies will be aiming to take the top spot.

The team will be spurred on by support and transport will be available from headquarters training centre at 11 30 am on March 16.

Runners required

A CRIME-fighting charity is looking for police officers and staff to raise cash through taking part in the Great North Run.

The run will be held on September 18 and is the biggest race in Britain.

Crimestoppers is hoping for fundraising volunteers to take on the course, which runs from Newcastle to South Shields over 13 miles.

Participants would be asked to pay a registration fee of £40 and pledge to raise at least £300 for Crimestoppers.

For more information about the run go to www.greatrun.org and for information on taking part for Crimestoppers email Janine.ferrie@crimestoppers-uk.org.

Jump for charity

HIGH flyers are wanted to abseil for the Helen Rollason Cancer Care Centre Appeal.

Participants must be over the age of 16, have a head for heights and the stamina to climb the dozens of steps up the 110ft high Church Langley water tower. And that's all before you abseil from the top!

The event is staged every year at the tower in the Harlow countryside.

It is organised by the Rotary Club of Harlow Tye and this year will take place on May 1.

A registration fee of £30 is payable to cover insurance costs and expenses, including having professionals on hand to make sure participants are safe.

Once the fee is paid the rest is up to you.

Just enjoy the experience and know that many people and their supporters who are living with cancer will benefit from your courage and generosity on the day.

To register for the event call Rachel Vipond at the Helen Rollason Cancer Centre Appeal on 01245 513084.

Singing from the rooftops

WITHAM Amateur Operatic Society will be performing *Fiddler on the Roof* this spring.

The group will take to the stage at the Public Hall in Witham from April 25 to April 30.

Anyone who would like tickets for the event can contact Dc Mick Dunion via email or on extension 20024.

Teaching the perils of roads

TEENAGERS preparing to take to the roads were put through their paces in a series of educational workshops showing the dangers that face drivers.

Road Runner was coordinated by Chelmsford Borough Council with the support of Essex Police and ran for four days educating nearly 250 students aged 16 to 18.

While Essex Police raised awareness of drink and drugs and risk consequence, such as stopping distances, the Driving Standards provided the youngsters with information about the driving test. Alan's School of Motoring gave them a chance to test drive a car and Trading Standards demonstrated how a car which might look perfectly reasonable could in fact be a cut and shut (a car made up of two different vehicles). Each day was rounded off with fire and ambulance crews reconstructing a crash scene and rescue.

Dennis Saunders of Essex Police Traffic Management said: "A significantly large number of crashes on the county's roads involve young people, many of whom are killed or seriously injured. Road Runner is an excellent example of how different agencies can come together and positively educate youngsters with a powerful message."

Teamwork gets results

A TEAM approach to tackling local issues with partners is paying dividends for Chelmsford division.

Officers have been utilising the force's problem solving approach recently to deal with issues concerning local residents.

Among those concerns has been use of Riverside Retail Park by local youths and motorists racing each other.

Chelmsford Community Safety organised Problem Solving meetings with the local council and the owners of the retail park, deciding on a range of solutions from speed humps to a six-month dispersal order.

Community Safety Sgt Jo Byrne said: "We've used SARA to focus everyone's efforts on solving problems for good."

"We're now doing surveys of residents and all seem to be very positive about the partnership work, and appear to be a lot happier. There are certainly less calls in the area now."

Call to get tough on the careless

A MOTHER from Billericay has joined road policing officers in welcoming new government proposals which would see motorists who cause fatal crashes due to careless driving jailed for up to five years.

The measure is intended to close a loophole in the law that allows people who are not charged with causing death by dangerous driving to escape with a fine if someone dies in an accident.

Likewise, those drivers who kill without having a licence or

by Nishan Wijeratne

who are disqualified face similar punishment if Home Office plans outlined in a consultation paper make the statutory books.

Last year, 104 people were killed on the county's roads, with 15 drivers either prosecuted or facing prosecution for causing the death of another road user by dangerous driving.

Dee Green's 15-year-old son Charlie was killed in a crash in Billericay in November 2003 when the driver of the car, in which he was a passenger, lost control and struck a wall. Mark Fay, 18, pleaded guilty to careless driving in December 2004 and was fined £300 and disqualified for two years.

"My son was killed by a reckless

driver who had no thought or consideration for the manner in which he was driving on the night in question," said the 45-year-old. "According to current law, my son's life was only worth £300 - some people have got that in their wallet. Its a travesty.

"I would welcome any change in legislation that would punish people for their poor driving and help alleviate some of the suffering of anguished parents such as myself. However, the bottom line is that no amount of jail time will ever compensate for the loss of a loved one."

At present, the maximum jail term anyone can face for causing death by dangerous driving is 14 years, with only a maximum fine of £2,500 the punishment for those charged with careless driving even if someone is killed.

Basildon's divisional commander, Chief Supt Peter Sheldrake, is a fervent campaigner for a change in the law.

He said: "At present, the courts are only able fine careless drivers who kill. If you were chatting away on your mobile and not looking where you were going, or eating a sandwich at the time and you kill somebody, it is very hard for the person whose family member is dead to be told you were just being careless or thoughtless. The law in relation to dangerous driving is now so complex as to be very ineffective."

A Home Office spokesperson said: "We want to look at the pattern of offending behaviour that has caused these offences and fashion the punishments more accurately to that behaviour."

The consultation will end in May.

Criminals on the scrapheap



A MURKY, dank car breakers yard in Rettendon near Chelmsford was the location for the execution of warrants for a major operation involving police, Customs and Excise, Environment Agency and local authorities.

Officers from the Metropolitan Police Car Squad, supported by Essex officers, descended on the Moreland's Industrial estate last month to make 17 arrests.

It was the culmination of a seven month intelligence and evidence gathering operation

into a large team of car breakers who were handling stolen vehicles and shipping the parts to Nigeria. Older cars, especially Mercedes, had gone missing from London boroughs and police believed they had been stolen to order.

Approximately 150 stolen vehicles were identified with men arrested on of suspicion of handling stolen cars and money laundering. The owner of the industrial units has also been charged to close the estate by the local authority.

Bus scheme to tackle nuisance

YOUNG people in Thurrock could soon have their own place to socialise and receive support thanks to a new initiative involving a bus and a charity.

The Bar 'n' Bus scheme will launch in the next few weeks after Grays Community Policing Team Sgt Debbie Fordham persuaded the charity to bring the initiative to the area.

The scheme sees a double decker bus placed in problem areas. The bus will contain entertainment for young people - such as games consoles - as well as offering support services such as counselling. Funding totalling £20,000 was secured for the Thurrock project, which bought a bus and the goodwill of a local bus company who agreed to house it.

It will be used in areas where issues like criminal damage and anti-social behaviour impact significantly on the local community.

In Grays, it will start its tour in the Blackshots and Crammavill Street areas.

Sgt Fordham said: "While it's difficult to measure the impact of this idea, in other areas young people have taken ownership of the bus and been proud that it's their place to go."

"Hopefully it will give kids somewhere to meet where they realise people do care, and that they are valued."

The bus will be staffed by local people. At present there are enough volunteers to use the bus for one night a week, and the team are hoping to encourage more people to offer their time.

Video loses to DVD

THE passage of time has claimed its latest victim in the fight against crime - video tape.

With the advent of DVD technology, offering quicker and easier-to-use copies of evidential film, video will be consigned to the bin by the force's Technical Support

Unit (TSU) as of next month.

From the start of April, all output from TSU will be on DVD unless it is impossible to provide it in that format. Although TSU will continue to handle the many different types of source material, all copies will be on disc only.

