



**BY EMAIL ONLY**

Telephone: 01772 533587  
Email: [commissioner@lancashire-pcc.gov.uk](mailto:commissioner@lancashire-pcc.gov.uk)  
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Dear colleagues,

**Review of Lancashire Constabulary's Front Counter Provision**

Lancashire Constabulary has recently undertaken a review of its front counters to ensure they remain fit for purpose and are providing value for money for Lancashire residents as the way the public engages with the police continues to change.

To be clear, the review does NOT involve changes to the way local areas are policed nor will it result in police stations closing.

A full and detailed analysis has shown that some front counters are visited by as few as three people a day with as little as seven per cent of staff time utilised on core policing activity.

So therefore with reluctance the Constabulary is proposing to reduce the number of counters that are open to the public from 23 to 13 and I am writing to you outlining the plans.

A yellow telephone will still be in place at all police stations across the county for use by the public to get in touch with police, even if there is no front counter. If these proposals go ahead, they will only come into force from 2018.

**Rationale**

Public use of front counters has been in decline for a number of years with more people preferring telephone and online services to report crimes to police.

The front counters themselves provide a range of services such as lost and found property, access to the station for contractors, surgery appointments, police bail and access to custody suites by solicitors for example.

The review has shown a mixed picture of usage of the current 23 front counters with usage as low as three visits per day at the quietest counter.

Clearly the current position is not sustainable at a time when there is so much pressure on our budgets and other services such as front line policing and the contact centre which deals with 2400 calls a day.



So on the basis of the evidence, the review has proposed to close ten counters, additional capital investment in other methods of engagement such as telephone and online crime reporting and to reduce the opening hours of the remaining 13 front counters.

In addition, there are proposed changes to opening times which will ensure the front counters provide better value for money. The proposals will lead to a reduction in staffing numbers but, the Constabulary is keen to minimise the amount of compulsory redundancies and has been liaising with unions and staff.

You can view all the details in this summary business case on my website [here](#).

### **Savings and investments in other services**

The Government suggestion that it has maintained funding for police since 2015 is just not true. Here in Lancashire we have actually lost £3.5m per annum in Government funding since 2015 and we are continuing to face additional cost pressures. We estimate that we need to deliver £20m of additional savings from the police budget by 2020 on top of the £72m already cut and the changes to front counters will deliver £1.4m of the savings needed.

But we recognise the ability to have access to the police is important for the public. By way of reassurance, investment has been made in Samsung devices which are being used by police officers to engage directly with members of the public on the ground. Further investment in IT systems is also taking place that will significantly enhance online reporting by improving internal processes.

Demand for police services through 101 and 999 continues to rise and cases are becoming increasingly demanding and complex which often means extra resources are needed to deal with them and recruitment has taken place to our contact centre to ensure it meets capacity. On a typical day, the police currently deal with 2,400 calls to 101 or 999. Improvements are being introduced to improve efficiency and performance and ensure that more calls can be dealt with.

### **Getting in touch with police**

In relation to the proposed changes we want to stress that the public will continue to have access to their local policing team on the telephone and online and they can also report a crimes online via the police website. We know from our research this is something people in Lancashire want to see more of.

For local alerts the Constabulary uses an online alert system called [In the Know](#) which has around 33,000 subscribers. Locally many people engage with the police on social media with

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the force profiles currently being followed by 625,000 account holders across Twitter and Facebook.

Lancashire Police updated their website recently and when the public log on they can get news and information relevant to their local area thanks to the use of special software that detects their location.

Additionally, further investment is taking place in online reporting and a new and improved online facility is due to go live later this year. Residents can already fill out crime reports and even upload evidence such as photographs and other information to send it straight to investigating officers. New case tracking software will also to be introduced next year so that people can easily keep track of their case online.

In terms of future capacity for front counters, the remaining 13 enquiry desks have sufficient capacity to be able to meet the work that must take place in person such as responding to police bail for example.

Staff and unions have been engaged throughout the process and following stakeholder engagement, formal consultation on staff changes will begin.

For more information and frequently asked questions on the changes and how they may impact on the public please refer to the PCC website [here](#).

No one wants to make decisions to close or reduce any service to the public, but we are very clear that savings need to be made and without these changes to front counters, further cuts will need to be made to police office numbers which is something we are doing our best to avoid.

If you wish to make representations on the front counter proposals then please send them to [commissioner@lancashire-pcc.gov.uk](mailto:commissioner@lancashire-pcc.gov.uk) by 21 July, 2017 with FRONT COUNTER REVIEW in the content box.

We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

**Clive Grunshaw**  
**Police & Crime Commissioner for Lancashire**