

Kent Police Chief Constable Ian Learmonth Comments On Hacking

“It is impossible to turn on the television or open a newspaper at the moment without seeing the police service being accused of the most serious wrongdoing. Much of this criticism is lazy, ill-informed, and when you dig into the detail is just plain wrong.

The words 'police corruption' - the most heinous and dishonourable accusation that can be levelled against a police officer - are being bandied about with little concern for the facts. Clearly there are issues to be investigated around phone hacking, but this does not warrant some individuals and organisations attempting to tar 140,000 dedicated public servants with the same brush. To do so is offensive and irresponsible. Corruption is not prevalent in the police service, and I cannot allow any suggestion that it is to go unchallenged.

My view is well known on corruption - deal with it swiftly and decisively. We do not want people like that in the service, and Kent Police has an excellent record of identifying and dealing with that tiny proportion of officers who choose to disregard their Oath of Office and abuse the trust the public have given us. It is worth remembering that in virtually every instance corrupt officers are uncovered by the work of other police officers - we are the first people to take responsibility, and to hold and be held to account when corruption surfaces. Is there any other organisation that actively pursues corruption in the way the police service does?

The police service is still one of the most respected institutions and professions in British society, and rightly so. I see exemplary and selfless acts by Kent Police officers every day that show that sacred trust is justified. For example the officers who recently dived into a lake in perilous conditions to save the life of a motorist who had become trapped in her car; they rescued her and saved her life without a thought for their own safety. Or the two unarmed colleagues who only two weeks ago disarmed a man who took aim at them with a handgun. We are in the only job where your instinct is to run towards danger rather than away from it.

I do not want the current national issues around phone hacking to give a distorted picture of policing in Kent. Overall, crime has fallen again in the County over the last year, with significant reductions in crimes like burglary and criminal damage. This marks five years of sustained success in driving crime down. Kent is one of the safest places to live in the UK, despite the

challenge of having over 30 million visit and travel through the County each year going to and from Europe. Our work at Kent's ports and the Channel Tunnel helps keep the whole country safe from terrorism and is a major bulwark against illegal immigration and organised crime.

I would ask that the people of Kent do one thing - judge us on our results, their interactions with us day in and day out, and trust me and my officers to keep them safe, lock up criminals, and act with the highest standards of integrity.”

Ian Learmonth
Chief Constable
Kent Police
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