

Press release: Home Office funds new video enabled justice programme

- the £11 million Video Enabled Justice (VEJ) initiative will be piloted across London and the South East
- Sussex Police figures show a police officer can spend over 5 hours away from work for each court appearance
- As well as saving valuable police time waiting for court proceedings the pilot will create facilities for vulnerable victims to give evidence away from court and assist key witnesses who are unable to travel

The VEJ project, led by Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner Katy Bourne, will use a network of high-tech video links in police stations and other buildings so officers can give evidence direct to courts, without the need to travel.

Further work will also be done on using the network for vulnerable victims to give evidence remotely or for key witnesses, unable to travel to court, to participate.

The Minister for Policing and the Fire Service, Nick Hurd, will today (Monday) announce the funding in a speech to the Police Superintendents Association Conference, as part of a £60 million package for police reform and digitisation projects from the Police Transformation Fund (PTF).

Minister for Policing and the Fire Service, Nick Hurd, said:

We must embrace digital policing, push forward with vital reforms and transform forces so that we can take on the challenges of policing in the years to come.

Crimes traditionally measured by the independent Crime Survey for England and Wales are down by more than a third since 2010, but we know that crime is changing.

That means we must be ambitious in our improvements and Police Transformation projects, such as Video Enabled Justice, are exactly the type of endeavour that will maximise frontline police time and mean police can better respond to the evolving challenges of public safety

The £11m awarded for VEJ builds on an earlier project trialled in Sussex, funded through the PTF's predecessor, the Police Innovation Fund. If successful, the scheme, which will be piloted across London and the South East, could be rolled out nationally in the future.

Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner and Chair of the Sussex Criminal Justice Board, Katy Bourne, said:

I welcome this ground breaking investment from the Home Office.

The Criminal Justice Partners I have worked with on this bid all want to provide the best possible experience for victims and witnesses to give evidence.

This funding will allow us to embed Video Enabled Justice across the system and will deliver greater flexibility and access to court time, saving police officers and witnesses up to 5 hours waiting for court slots, and not requiring police to drive some defendants across the county for a 5 minute hearing.

I want to improve access to justice for everyone. We know giving evidence by video works, so now we have to scale it up as part of the policing and criminal justice transformation agenda.

As well as the £11 million funding for Video Enabled Justice, awards made by the Home Office from the Police Transformation Fund include:

- £6 million to Cheshire, Essex, Hampshire, Gloucestershire and Merseyside forces, over the next three years, for the reform of digital policing
- £23 million has been granted over the next three years for a suite of measures which will provide the NCA, Regional Organised Crime Units, and police forces with new capabilities to detect, monitor and disrupt organised crime groups
- £12 million allocated over the next three years to North Yorkshire, Derbyshire, Wiltshire, Northumbria and the Metropolitan police forces for their proposals in local policing. This will provide an innovative approach to engaging with the community, using sport to reduce youth offending and transforming volunteering in the police to ensure that the community has a greater say in how their areas are kept safe
- £600,000, over the next two years, to Avon and Somerset and Essex to drive greater collaboration between police and fire, whether that is through greater collaboration or a transfer of fire governance

Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service have also worked closely with the Sussex Criminal Justice Board on this initiative, and will continue to work closely with them in the development and delivery

From 2015 under a rolling programme, HMCTS has installed and upgraded video links across England and Wales. In 2016 to 2017, we enabled 137,495 cases to be heard via video link, a 10% increase from 2015 to 2016, and there are now 215 witness links in Magistrates Courts and 285 witness links in the Crown Courts. These are all able to connect to any courtroom with a video link in England and Wales.

We have also added 20 remote witness links located away from court buildings across the HMCTS regions (with at least one in each region) ensuring our most vulnerable witnesses have access to this special measure.

The Police Transformation Fund (PTF) has already awarded more than £132 million to police-led projects including bids commissioned by the Police

Reform and Transformation Board. These include important work tackling modern slavery, investing in digitisation and expanding the graduate recruitment scheme, Police Now. In July, the Home Secretary awarded £7.5million over three years to pilot and, if it is successful, fund a dedicated National Police Welfare Service to help provide enhanced welfare support for police officers and staff.

Set up as part of the spending review in 2015, the fund, which is police-led through the Police Reform and Transformation Board, allocates extra investment to continue the job of reform and shape policing for the future. Police and Crime Commissioners and Chief Constable representatives sit on the Board alongside senior leaders in policing, with the final decisions on bids made by the Home Secretary.

A full list of projects awarded funding in the latest round of Police Transformation Funding will be published on the [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) website.