

999 calls must be a priority for the police service

Community policing is a 'luxury' when the service should focus on answering urgent calls from the public, according to Paul Kelly, chairman of Manchester Police Federation.

Officers at the Manchester Federation open meeting, held last month, debated how the introduction of neighbourhood policing teams has impacted on response policing.

Mr Kelly told the meeting an effective response was one of the most important services the police could provide. Michael Todd, chief constable of Greater Manchester Police, admitted they do not have enough officers to provide response and neighbourhood teams.

Mr Kelly said: "There is one thing we must have - and that is an effective response. If one of these jobs is delayed and no response is available that is one too many."

The force has split teams into 24/7 response dealing with 999 calls and neighbourhood policing teams but Mr Todd concedes the balance in some areas is 'not quite right'. "We have to review this. In the main, they have not got enough officers on response. As soon as we start saying that we need to take some officers from neighbourhood policing teams we are going to have complaints from the local population."

Mr Todd said that 'it's a real challenge' but added 'I want us to get up to the [police] numbers we had a couple of years ago'. He added: "At the moment there are about 7,900 officers, we had gone up to 8,000. We have now got those officers and we do not want to go down to 7,900."

Jan Berry, chairman of the Police Federation, said: "If we do not respond to these calls properly and in the right times, an awful lot of damage can be done.

"When officers are coming on response teams they have a stack of jobs waiting before they go on patrol and they know they will not get through them."

Targets mean officers are criminalising ordinary people

Officers are criminalising middle England and becoming like 'robots' because of government targets, according to a meeting of Manchester Police Federation.

Police officers told the open meeting, held last month in Manchester, that the drive to chase sanction detections meant arrests were simply being made to hit administrative targets.

A sanction detection is defined as those where an offender has been charged, cautioned, reported for summons, reprimanded, where the offence has been taken into consideration or a fixed penalty notice has been issued for a notifiable offence.

But one officer said that police officers were leaving in their droves because they were sick of being 'robots, ticking boxes'.

Paul Kelly, chairman of the Manchester Police Federation, asked: "Why are we criminalising a small number of relatively minor players [in relation to drugs] while we are ignoring the main players?"

He explained that officers spending hours, weeks and months to target the bigger drug dealers meant they would still only get one tick in the box in relation to sanction detections.

He added that the targets meant officers are now pushed to criminalise people who would not normally fall into that arena and that they were skewing the way officers had to deal with crime.

"We are criminalising middle England, how can it be right to have performance indicators for traffic officers to stop someone using a mobile phone but stopping a disqualified driver doesn't count. That is the problem if you have a league table."

Michael Todd: neighbourhood policing is a real challenge



Photography: Greater Manchester Police

Paul Kelly: targets are criminalising ordinary people



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