



Rewarding Role

When the charity CrimeStoppers offered a £200,000 reward for information leading to the conviction of those responsible for the murder of nine-year-old Olivia Pratt-Korbel in Liverpool, it was the biggest reward in its history. Carol Jenkins talks to Director of Operations and former homicide SIO Mick Duthie about the valuable service it offers to help police solve and prevent crime.

The CrimeStoppers hotline number 0800 555 111 has been a familiar sight on buildings, public transport and in police stations in the UK for the past 35 years. The rationale behind the charity is truly unique in that it enables members of the public to pass on information relating to crime anonymously and independently of the police.

It came to the attention of the world's media in September when it offered its biggest-ever reward of £200,000 for information relating to the senseless fatal shooting of nine-year-old Olivia Pratt-Korbel in Liverpool. Tragic Olivia was shot and killed when a gunman chased another man into her house. The killing sent shockwaves across the world.

CrimeStoppers founder and Chair, Lord Ashcroft, had previously put up £50,000 and the reward was increased by both Lord Ashcroft and a private donor. Due to the fact the case is about to come to

trial, CrimeStoppers' Director of Operations Mick Duthie is limited as to what he can say, but he did confirm that it 'attracted significant interest' within the community in Merseyside.

This is just one example of the rewards that are offered to the public by CrimeStoppers each year. The charity also offers rewards of up to £1,000 through its local committees and larger 'enhanced' rewards of up to £20,000 via the national charity for the most serious of crimes.

The service receives more than 600,000 calls and online contacts from the public every year and passes approximately 190,000 high-quality 'pieces of information' to the police and other law enforcement agencies.

Even though the number of anonymous contacts from the public to CrimeStoppers is at an all-time high, awareness among investigators about the

valuable role it can play in providing information for crimes ranging from drugs and drink-driving to rape and murder is often limited.

The Investigator spoke to CrimeStoppers Director of Operations Mick Duthie about the valuable role CrimeStoppers plays in supporting police and law enforcement in both the investigation and prevention of crime.

Mick has worked at the charity for the past three years following a distinguished career in the Met Police where he finished as Head of its Homicide Command. Prior to joining homicide command, he enjoyed a varied and diverse 30-year career that took him all over London in various roles from walking the beat, dealing with football violence to restructuring the force's sexual offences command.

He remembers as an SIO just how important witness information can be to an investigation. 'As an SIO you have forensic evidence and digital evidence and all these aspects now available to you, but unless you get the support of the community to provide the key information then it becomes difficult to pull it all together. Witness information is the glue that holds the investigation together,' he explains.

'As an SIO, you want to have the biggest tool box possible and we can offer that with our rewards and the valuable intelligence we are given.' He points out that it's a common misunderstanding that SIOs can only approach CrimeStoppers for help or to set up a reward if they have exhausted all other lines of inquiry. An SIO can approach CrimeStoppers at any point in an investigation for help.

If an SIO wants CrimeStoppers to offer an enhanced reward for information, they can contact the charity by emailing hello@crimestoppers-uk.org. Mick has the role of approving the rewards and he admits that he doesn't often turn a request down.

Rewards are paid anonymously to members of the public who provide crucial information that has a major impact on an investigation.

'We will only pay out a reward if the force or the investigator comes back to us and says that the

information was crucial and has allowed them to charge and convict somebody,' says Mick.

He admits that few people actually ask for rewards and that most phone or give information anonymously online to CrimeStoppers out of public duty.

Mick explains that members of the public can either call the UK Contact Centre to pass on what they know or via the charity's website at www.crimestoppers-uk.org.

'It's important to stress that the reporting process is truly anonymous. We spend a lot of time and money making sure our telephony and IT infrastructures are truly anonymous,' says Mick.

'The fact that the service is truly anonymous – meaning that no personal details are ever asked for or stored - and that we are truly independent of the police, means you get good quality information.'

When a member of the public makes a report to CrimeStoppers, they can if they would like, ask for a reward. If the reward becomes payable then this is paid anonymously through the banking system via a unique reward code they are given. Even though the CrimeStoppers service guarantees everyone who contacts them stays anonymous, the public can choose if they want to answer questions from the police about their information through the secure "Keeping in Contact" system.

This process is entirely optional but has become more popular over the years and does lead to better information coming to investigators. CrimeStoppers has a team of highly-trained Contact Centre staff who have the skills to build a rapport with callers to get the best quality information they can while still guaranteeing anonymity.

If they think the information is of value to the police, they will pass it on to the relevant FIB to be



Mick Duthie

actioned by the force or other law enforcement organisations. The charity works with the NCA and ROCUs as well as individual forces.

It offers on average 35 enhanced rewards a year and the numbers are increasing. Mick wants to reassure SIOs and other investigators that if they ask CrimeStoppers to put up a reward that the force won't be bombarded with information that it doesn't have the resources to action.

'We will lead the communications and manage the reporting. If we get information that we think will assist the investigation then we pass it onto the force as quickly as we can,' he explains.

If an SIO applies for a reward for a crime, then it can usually be approved within a couple of days. As well as providing key crime information and rewards, CrimeStoppers also offer a number of other services to the police at no cost.

It has a "Most Wanted" area of its website, where investigators can upload and then remove when completed, information about a particular criminal and appeal for further information regarding their whereabouts. This is well-used by some forces to great success.

CrimeStoppers also has a network of regional managers who work closely with forces to run local and regional targeted campaigns across force areas, in crime hotspots or even down to local neighborhoods.

'If a force has an intelligence gap in an area of crime, then we will can run a campaign for you,' says Mick.

'It could be on a particular crime type or even a general awareness campaign that we can support by using things such as leaflets, advertising on the back of buses, in toilet facilities at busy venues and through social media.

'Our social media presence is really important, and we always track its impact before, during and after a campaign.'

CrimeStoppers has a small team of analysts who can map trends and hotspots and provide anonymous data to forces.



The charity also runs a separate service called youth section called "Fearless" that works with young people showing them they have an option to report crime anonymously without going to the police. It also gives advice via Fearless.org to help them make informed choices to avoid getting into crime.

Looking to the future, Mick sees it as central to his role and to the future success of CrimeStoppers to maintain public trust and to also better reach communities in more deprived areas who don't have confidence in the police but may be willing to pass on what they know via his charity.

He is committed to improving the quality of the information CrimeStoppers passes on to the police and wants to streamline the process of getting material to forces and other law enforcement organisations. He also wants to encourage more feedback from forces to assess how valuable the information they pass on has been to an individual investigation.

'We want SIOs and investigators to know that CrimeStoppers is more than just a phone number and that it can serve as a valuable resource and support system to enable them to get the best information about a crime that they can and achieve the best outcome.'

If you are an investigator and want to contact CrimeStoppers you can email: hello@crimestoppers-uk.org.

CrimeStoppers.

0800 555 111

100% anonymous. Always.