

# Surveillance hub is key to cutting crime



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## [Medway News](#)

WE'VE got it covered. That's the message from Vikram Sahdev the man in charge of Medway's CCTV suite which has 456 cameras honing in on key spots in the Towns.

During the recent night of disorder, mirroring the riots throughout London and the UK, the hub housed in an annexe of the old Civic Centre played an integral part in catching offenders.



The team at the control centre use their newly-updated system to track the movements and catch culprits red-handed on screen.

With a hotline to police headquarters the hub led to 10 arrests within hours of the trail of criminal damage being committed.

A total of 1,300 arrests are made a year as a result of information received from the hub and newly-appointed Superintendent Rachel Adams was impressed when she paid her first visit to the control centre in the wake of the disturbances.

## Appendix C

Supt Adams said: "What it did was give us an early indication of what was happening and we were able to make arrests quickly.

"It also meant we could dismiss the misinformation coming from social media and deploy officers in the vulnerable areas."

The centre was set up under one roof in 1998 when Medway Council was made a unitary authority with just 32 black and white cameras.

Over the years the service has evolved into a state-of-the-art security operation manned 24 hours a day and 365 days of the year.

Last July Medway came to an agreement with Swale Council to take over its CCTV operation as part of its long term ambition for Medway to become a regional hub.

There are now 86 cameras monitoring the streets of Sittingbourne, Sheerness and Faversham.

The specialist engineers are currently fine tuning a system of 21 cameras being installed in the Medway Tunnel which is due to go live next month.

Head of council's business development, Vikram Sahdev, said: "Up to now if there has been an incident we have had to take action manually. Now we can close it [the tunnel] electronically from here. We are very proud of our technical expertise."

The team often focus on Rochester High Street with its large concentration of licensed premises.

One, whom we agreed not to name, said: "Friday and Saturday night can be like a war zone in Rochester. We have had up to 15 incidents in a night. With our direct line to the police it is quite satisfying seeing how quickly we can react and get results."

The service is also used to link up staff at clubs and pubs and shoplifting crime in the High Street is significantly down since more versatile cameras have been installed.

The Lifeline scheme also monitors about 3,250 alarms supporting around 4,000 vulnerable older people in their homes and in sheltered schemes.

It monitors the external cameras at Medway Maritime Hospital and the NHS healthy living centres throughout Medway.

Councillor Mike O'Brien, portfolio holder for community safety and enforcement, said the demand for CCTV is ever increasing, adding: "Every public meeting I attend, it's always what people want, particularly outside schools."

Responding to the claim the number of cameras is "Big Brotherish" he replied: "If you are a law-abiding citizen, you have nothing to fear."