

Parkside Police Station



A new automated public free phone system is set to help free up hard-pressed front desk staff at Britain's busiest police stations.

Helping front desk staff focus on priorities

The recently launched Community Free Phone Help-Point is designed to liberate front desk staff at busy police stations from having to deal with frequent non-police inquiries from visiting members of the public. Cambridgeshire Constabulary have pioneered the first of the new help-points with a prototype unit at the entrance to the force's busiest police station in Cambridge city centre.

Badged and branded in Cambridgeshire Constabulary's own livery, their 'Community Help-Point' telephone unit enables the many people visiting Cambridge's Parkside police station each day with inquiries which are not within the police's responsibility to be able to call free and direct through to 80 organisations and support services.

Promoting Neighbourhood Policing

Cambridge Constabulary's Community Help-Point has also become as their first high-visibility, easy-to-use Neighbourhood Policing contact facility, with half the 80 pre-programmed direct-dial lines devoted to Neighbourhood Policing support services. The success of the first Community Help-Point has prompted an examination into the possibility of installing more Help-Points in busy Post Offices, supermarkets, shopping malls and community centres.

“Like having an extra member of staff working 24/7”

Cambridgeshire’s divisional Business Manager Tricia Shillings, based at Parkside police station, said: “It’s like having another member of staff working 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The Help-Point has removed our front desk team’s time-consuming task of having to repeatedly give out other organisations’ telephone numbers to the steady stream of people who come in inquiring about non-police matters.

“We get lots of inquiries every day which need to be referred to one or more of our many partner organisations, whether social services, housing associations, health services or any of the host of others. Being a tourist hotspot, we even get visitors coming in to the station to ask which B&B we recommend!”

“Now our front desk staff can direct many of these visitors over to our free HelpPoint at the front door, where they can then call direct to whoever they really need to speak with. The HelpPoint is not just a valuable extra service to the public, but it helps free up our own front desk staff to deal more quickly with real police business.”

Fast, free contact with up to 80 organisations and services

Organisations which can be contacted direct and free of charge through Cambridge police station’s Community HelpPoint include:

- * hospitals
- * social services departments
- * Government organisations
- * health services
- * welfare agencies
- * bus, rail and other travel information
- * vehicle breakdown services
- * colleges and education organisations
- * counselling services
- * advice centres
- * other emergency services

Ben Clarke Infopoint’s Project Manager, said: “Following the success of the first Help-Point at Cambridge police station we are now making the system available to the other 62 forces. A police force can choose which organisations they want to be contactable from each of their own Community Help-Points. We then set it all up for them, and install and maintain the system.”

“Helping achieve goals to improve public access”

The Community Help-Point system in use by Cambridgeshire Constabulary is now being made available to other police forces throughout the UK. Similar systems have already been operational in many of Britain’s largest hospitals for nearly ten years.