

Hamilton Rentals – Responding Fast in a Crisis

Police and Crime
Commissioner's Office
successfully delivers vital
public services during the
COVID-19 pandemic

Hamilton's service of flexible laptop rental helped the PCC's executive team make the shift to remote working, with virtual collaboration tools that enabled them to work quickly with partners and initiate innovative services during lockdown and beyond.



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Background

Supporting victims and reducing offending

Tasked with making the police answerable to the communities they serve, Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) consult with members of the public and work alongside local and national criminal justice partners to address the crime and safety issues that matter to people the most.

In addition to creating the Police and Crime Plans that provide a strategic direction for their local police force, regional police forces, PCCs also bring together community safety and criminal justice partners to make sure that local priorities are joined up.

In Hampshire, the PCC is committed to enabling new ways of working to ensure that Hampshire, the Isle of Wight, Portsmouth, and Southampton are among the safest places to live, work and visit – and that everyone who lives there is empowered to realise their life opportunities.

In addition to being responsible for the provision of victim support services and funding crime prevention programmes, the Commissioner's office is on target to cut £2 million a year from the annual running costs of the region's police estate by 2021 – money that will be invested back into front-line policing.

The challenge

Initiating virtual working and collaboration at speed

When the COVID-19 pandemic first struck the UK, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) for Hampshire was determined to maintain 'business as usual' operations, despite the fact that its cross-functional team of personnel now had no option but to work from home.

"As we went into lockdown, my number one task was to get the senior management team up and running fast," explains Andy Saxton, IT Tech Delivery Manager at the OPCC for Hampshire.

"Having the ability to liaise with external partner agencies was a top priority for our chief executive. Alongside evaluating and responding to the impact on local police, court, prison, and probation processes, the OPCC needed to initiate specialist services for those in our communities who were affected the most by the crisis."

The shift from in-person collaboration and problem solving to embracing a remote engagement model was just part of the challenge. If people working in the OPCC were to get productive, and tackle issues fast, they would need laptops equipped with video conferencing and communication tools that would make it easy to work cohesively as an extended team.

"The disruption caused by the national lockdown meant that sourcing all the technology necessary to ensure everyone could work securely and effectively was not going to be an easy task," confirms Andy Saxton.



"I needed to innovate fast – and make all the right decisions when it came to sourcing the tools and platforms that would enable staff to operate effectively and efficiently. Having undertaken our standard consultation and procurement process, Hamilton Rentals were selected as the partner to help the OPCC move to the new way of working."

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The solution

Delivering mission critical technologies when it matters the most

With the whole of the UK's workforce now working from home, demand for laptops and other devices went through the roof.

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Fortunately, an initial telephone call with the team at Hamilton Rentals proved the first vital step on the journey to acquiring the technologies the OPCC team would need.

"Not only was Hamilton Rentals able to provide all the laptops we needed, they also took on handling all the software licensing on our behalf – which significantly minimised the administrative burden on me," continues Andy Saxton.

The laptops, all preloaded with Windows 10 and a range of applications that included Microsoft Teams, Adobe, and Microsoft Project, were delivered directly to Andy's home office. After configuring Microsoft's cloud-based Azure platform on each machine, devices were ready for delivery to individual users.

"My aim was to streamline and simplify everything for our people, ensuring everyone was confronted with familiar log-on credentials and all the apps they'd need were already set up and ready to go," explains Andy Saxton.

Working with a trusted partner proved critical for ensuring that the sudden shift to remote working capabilities happened quickly and without a hitch.

"Enabling a smarter way for people work was top of the to-do list. It was imperative we moved the work of the OPCC team into the digital space as smoothly as possible – giving staff the equipment and support they'd need to hit the ground running," says Andy Saxton.

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The outcomes

The OPCC has certainly had a real-life opportunity to prove the remote working model could be highly effective, despite the fast-moving environment that meant priorities and roles had to flex at a moment's notice.

The Commissioner's team was part of the multi-agency response to the virus. In addition to providing regular updates to local residents and launching public consultations during the crisis to capture the concerns of local communities, the OPCC also received regular briefings from the force about ongoing tensions and any incidents of hate crime.

"The productivity of the OPCC during the lockdown was impressive, thanks to being able to collaborate remotely with multiple agencies and have virtual 'face to face' meetings with senior leaders. For example, they were able to work in partnership with the Ministry of Justice to secure additional funding to assist services supporting victims of sexual or domestic abuse who have been impacted by the virus," confirms Andy Saxton.

In addition to being able to quickly to establish contact with all victim support agencies, the team was able to launch a number of fast-response initiatives as the crisis unfolded:

- Launched the COVID-19 Keeping Communities Safer Fund for grass root community initiatives to help people stay safe

- Created a COVID-19 Response Fund to support partners responding to emerging issues
- Linked with the HLOW Local Resilience Forum to provide a dedicated COVID-19 webpage containing essential information on victim support services, community support groups, and advice on scams and frauds
- Worked with the Chinese community to make hate crime reporting accessible
- Used social media to signpost domestic abuse helplines and mental health crisis services
- Worked with youth agencies to signpost support for young people
- Launched a Cyber Ambassador scheme to provide schools with a home learning programme of activities around Internet safety

"Armed with the virtual communication, file sharing, and collaboration tools they needed to work creatively and effectively with one another and with the wider partner base, the senior management team was able to make quick and timely decisions and respond quickly to deliver 'ready to go' outcomes," confirms Andy Saxton.

"Thanks to Hamilton's, I was able to access the standalone devices and platforms that we needed – and they were on hand as I had to learn and adapt our new virtual working environment at speed."

Why Hamilton Rentals?

Providing an easy solution to the challenge of sourcing high quality laptops for the duration of the lockdown and beyond, Hamilton Rentals made it easy for the OPCC to quickly rent all the assets it needed in a flexible way.

"Working in partnership with Hamilton's gives us the flexibility to rent what we need on a month by month basis. As well as being able to specify the operating system and applications each machine is pre-loaded with, Hamilton's ensures all machines are sanitised prior to dispatch and delivery. It's an end-to-end solution that includes final collection and data destruction once we return to the offices," explains Andy Saxton.

While the offices will be reopening in September, social distancing means that the OPCC personnel will be working on-site on a rota basis for the foreseeable future.

"The team at Hamilton's are incredibly accommodating when it comes to flexing our requirements – something that's essential in these uncertain times," continues Andy Saxton. **"They're also just a phone call away whenever I need to brainstorm ideas – and that has proved truly valuable."**

It was this 'can do' approach has seen Andy Saxton turn to Hamilton Rentals for help with addressing some infrastructure issues that could limit the capabilities of teams who are now heavily dependent on multimedia and digital collaboration tools.

"Hamilton's are now leading the delivery of a micro WiFi solution for our offices. This will give us an ultra-fast, secure and reliable service designed to cope with the bandwidth demands of video conferencing and other business-critical applications," concludes Andy Saxton.

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