Devon and Cornwall Police and Crime Panel

c/o Plymouth City Council Democratic Support Floor 3, Ballard House West Hoe Road Plymouth PLI 3BJ

Please ask for Jake Metcalfe T 01752 668000 E democraticservices@plymouth.gov.uk www.plymouth.gov.uk/democracy Published:





DEVON AND CORNWALL POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

Friday 21 November 2025 10.30 am Council House

Members:

Councillor Haydon, Chair Councillor Chopak, Vice Chair

Councillors Ashton, Czapiewski, Ewings, German, Hackett, Hodgetts, Leaver, Lodge, Loudoun, Palethorpe, Penberthy, Rodgers, Thomas, Towill, Tyerman, Wright, Caroline Jones (Independent Member for Cornwall) and Barry Jones (Independent Member for Devon).

Members are invited to attend the above meeting to consider the items of business overleaf.

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Tracey Lee Chief Executive

Devon and Cornwall Police and Crime Panel

I. Apologies

To receive apologies for non-attendance submitted by Members.

2. Minutes (Pages I - I0)

To sign and confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 12 September 2025.

3. Declarations of Interest

Members will be asked to make any declaration of interest in respect of items on this agenda.

4. Public Questions

To receive questions from (and provide answers to) members of the public that are relevant to the panel's functions.

Questions should be no longer than 100 words and sent to Democratic Support, Plymouth City Council, Floor 3, Ballard House, West Hoe Road, Plymouth, PLI 3BJ or democraticservices@plymouth.gov.uk

Questions must be received at least 5 complete working days before the meeting.

| 5. | Police and Crime Commissioner's Update Report: | (Pages II - 30) |
|-----|--|----------------------|
| 6. | Community Cohesion: | (Pages 31 - 40) |
| 7. | Firearms Briefing Note: | (Pages 41 - 88) |
| 8. | Police and Crime Commissioner's Performance Report: | (Pages 89 - 122) |
| 9. | Non-criminal Complaints Against the Police and Crime Commissioner: | (Pages 123 - 124) |
| 10. | Action Log: | (Pages 125 - 134) |
| 11. | Work Programme: | (Pages 135 - 138) |

Devon and Cornwall Police and Crime Panel

Friday 12 September 2025

PRESENT:

Councillor Haydon, in the Chair.

Councillor Chopak, Vice Chair.

Councillors Ashton, Czapiewski, Hodgetts, Leaver, Lodge, Loudoun, Palethorpe, Penberthy, Thomas, Towill, Tyerman, Wright and Barry Jones (Independent Member for Devon).

Apologies for absence: Councillors Ewings, German, Hackett, Rodgers and Caroline Jones (Independent Member for Cornwall).

Also in attendance: Alison Hernandez (Police and Crime Commissioner), Frances Hughes (CEO, OPCC), Nicola Allen (Treasurer, OPCC) and Jake Metcalfe (Democratic Advisor).

The meeting started at 10.30 am and finished at 12.22 pm.

Note: At a future meeting, the Panel will consider the accuracy of these draft minutes, so they may be subject to change. Please check the minutes of that meeting to confirm whether these minutes have been amended.

30. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting that took place on 25 July 2025 were <u>agreed</u> as a true and accurate record.

31. **Declarations of Interest**

| Name | Minute Number | Reason | Interest |
|-------------------|---------------|-----------------|----------|
| Councillor Ashton | All | Daughter was | Personal |
| | | employed by | |
| | | Devon and | |
| | | Cornwall Police | |

32. Public Questions

There were no public questions.

33. Contact Services Update

Alison Hernandez (Police and Crime Commissioner) presented the report to the Panel and highlighted the following key points:

a) Thanked the Panel for maintaining oversight of the contact function within Devon and Cornwall Police, noting that performance had improved significantly and that continued scrutiny was essential to sustain progress;

- b) Acknowledged the leadership of Assistant Chief Constable Nikki Leaper, senior police staff Lucy Bailey, and Head of Public Contact Dan Thurood, crediting their efforts and investment for the improvements achieved;
- c) Devon and Cornwall Police had moved from 35th to 19th place nationally in the Government's 999 call handling league table. The ranking was based on standardised measurements from the moment a caller dialled 999, rather than when the call was received by the force. Performance fluctuated monthly, with the force occasionally ranking as high as first or third;
- d) The 101 non-emergency line had seen an 11.8% increase in call volume compared to the previous year. The abandonment rate had dropped from 60% to approximately 11%. The Commissioner had set a target of 5% in line with His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary";
- e) A call-back function was introduced in September 2023, allowing callers to receive a return call during busy periods. This had proven successful in maintaining public confidence and reducing wait times;
- f) A pilot for direct video contact with domestic abuse victims was underway, aiming to provide immediate reassurance and support;
- g) The Commissioner stated that the target for answering 101 calls was 10 minutes, which was being approached with consistency. Although the force had previously aimed for five minutes, the Commissioner considered this overly ambitious and reaffirmed her accountability target of 90% of calls answered within 10 minutes.
- h) Police inquiry offices reopened over the past three years had been well received by communities. Further reopenings were under consideration, including a confirmed office in Exmouth and a potential site in Launceston;

In response to questions raised it was reported that:

- i) Panel members commended the improvements and suggested that a formal message of congratulations be sent to the contact services team. It was noted that maintaining standards would be essential going forward;
- j) Concerns were raised about future capacity, referencing Heinrich's safety triangle and the potential for system overload due to increased public confidence and reporting. The Commissioner responded that while the police could be overwhelmed if all incidents were reported, systems such as UK Partners Against Crime (UK PAC) helped filter and manage intelligence effectively. The Commissioner encouraged wider adoption of UK PAC, including by businesses and community groups;
- k) The Panel discussed the need for improved public communications to counter alarm over rising crime rates, which were partly due to increased reporting and enforcement. It was suggested that the Commissioner's office develop a communications strategy to provide context and reassurance to the public;

- I) The feasibility of the force's internal target of 75% of 101 calls answered within five minutes was questioned. The Commissioner reiterated her focus on the 90% within 10 minutes target and noted that performance fluctuated due to resource constraints;
- m) The importance of public communications was emphasised, with suggestions to promote visits to contact centres to build public confidence and bust myths around contact delays;
- n) Concerns were raised about the usability of the 101 online reporting system, particularly for community organisations. The Commissioner explained that the system was nationally standardised and acknowledged its limitations. She encouraged organisations to join UK PAC, which was free for charities and voluntary groups and supported reporting of antisocial behaviour and other non-retail issues;
- o) The Panel discussed the perception of police response and community safety, particularly in relation to hate crimes and vulnerable groups. The Commissioner confirmed that such incidents should be prioritised and encouraged members to report any failures in police response. She outlined efforts to redeploy officers to frontline roles and neighbourhood policing, including the recruitment of 49 additional Police Community Support Officers;
- p) The Panel raised the potential role of artificial intelligence (AI) in improving 101 services. The Commissioner stated that while national discussions were ongoing, no formal proposals had yet been submitted for investment in AI. She emphasised the need for careful governance, particularly regarding disproportionality and live facial recognition.
- q) A request was made for the Commissioner to write to all major political parties in the region to promote tolerance and reduce community tensions. The Commissioner responded that while she supported the sentiment, she believed elected members had a key role to play in fostering community cohesion.

Actions:

- 1. That the Panel send a formal thank you letter to the contact services team.
- 2. That the Commissioner's office develop and implement a communications strategy to promote improvements in contact services.

34. Estates Strategy

Alison Hernandez (Police and Crime Commissioner), presented the report to the Panel and highlighted the following key points:

a) The Commissioner provided an overview of the police estate, noting that policing received no capital funding from central government. All capital investment was therefore funded through revenue or borrowing. The estate comprised of 146 buildings valued at approximately £178 million, including police stations (some with front desks and custody suites), offices, and covert locations;

- b) The Commissioner highlighted that His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services had recently published a report emphasising the lack of capital funding and the challenges this posed to meeting government ambitions for policing infrastructure;
- c) The Commissioner confirmed that there were 26 public inquiry facilities, with plans to increase this to 27;

In response to questions raised it was reported that:

- d) The condition of the Charles Cross police station and custody suite in Plymouth. The Commissioner responded that while the building was functional and fit for purpose, investment was planned for the custody suite, which would require temporary closure. She acknowledged the building's age but noted that other sites, such as Newquay and Torquay, were in a worse condition;
- e) The Commissioner expressed openness to exploring joint ventures or alternative funding models, such as One Public Estate, but reiterated that significant investment was not currently feasible without external support;
- f) The Panel discussed the importance of maintaining police visibility in city centres and the challenges posed by relocating stations to out-of-town sites;
- g) It was noted that Plymouth's summer tourism placed additional pressure on police estates, particularly during peak periods;
- h) The Panel raised the omission of reference to Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service's estate consultation and Homes England's master planning work with Plymouth City Council. The Commissioner confirmed that her office was engaged with the One Public Estate programme in Devon and had ongoing discussions with other public sector partners, including the NHS. She acknowledged the need for clearer integration of these initiatives in future reports;
- j) The Commissioner confirmed that a £26 million capital programme was in place, funded through policing budgets and borrowing. Maintenance was included within this programme and detailed in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy presented at the February budget meeting;
- k) The Commissioner stated that she hoped future national policing reforms would include capital funding, though no commitments had yet been made;
- I) The Panel discussed the temporary police station in North Devon, which had received positive feedback from the community. The Commissioner welcomed the suggestion of exploring a more permanent solution and expressed interest in further discussions:
- m) Concerns were raised about staffing shortages in custody suites, which sometimes led to closures despite building compliance. The Commissioner confirmed that a report on custody operating models and costs was due in late 2025 and would include staffing and welfare issues. She noted that Devon and Cornwall

Police operated six custody suites due to geographic challenges and that staffing, healthcare provision, legal aid, and appropriate adult services all presented ongoing difficulties;

- n) The Commissioner confirmed that she would be willing to bring the custody report back to the Panel once available;
- o) The Panel discussed the importance of community hubs and mobile police stations in maintaining police presence and public confidence. The Commissioner praised the success of the Penzance Safe and Well Hub and confirmed that two mobile police station vehicles had been purchased. A delivery plan for their deployment was being developed and would be shared with Panel members.

Actions:

- I. That future estates reports include explicit reference to One Public Estate, Homes England master planning, and other public sector estate initiatives.
- 2. That the custody report be brought back to a future meeting of the Panel and would include detailed analysis of staffing, welfare, and detainee rights.
- 3. That the Commissioner explore opportunities for permanent solutions to temporary estate arrangements where community feedback is positive.
- 4. Commissioner to re-engage with Cornwall's estates coordination and ensure integration with wider public sector regeneration initiatives.

35. Police and Crime Plan 2025-29 Performance Report

Alison Hernandez (Police and Crime Commissioner) presented the report to the Panel and highlighted the following key points:

- a) The Commissioner introduced the performance report with the focus of this report in relation to crime trends and thematic issues arising from the Police and Crime Plan 2025–2029;
- b) There was an overall increase in crime across Devon and Cornwall, particularly in violence against the person (rising from 26.4 to 28.7 per 1,000 people) and theft offences, largely driven by shoplifting. The Commissioner emphasised the importance of effective Community Safety Partnerships and offered support where local authority engagement was lacking;
- c) A disruption workshop on violence against women and girls had been held at Exeter Racecourse, bringing together partners to generate innovative ideas focused on disrupting perpetrators rather than placing further responsibility on victims. While some promising ideas emerged, the Commissioner acknowledged that more impactful solutions were still required. A follow-up plan was being developed by the Chief Executive of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC), with a view to involving voluntary sector partners and funders;

- d) The Commissioner welcomed an increase in recorded drug offences, interpreting this as a positive indicator of proactive police activity, particularly through Operation Scorpion;
- e) Antisocial behaviour (ASB) remained a concern. Although Devon and Cornwall recorded lower ASB rates than the national average, the Commissioner noted that the data only reflected police-handled incidents and did not capture the full extent of ASB experienced by communities. She highlighted the lack of a clear reporting pathway and the need for improved coordination;
- f) The Commissioner expressed concern over the repeat victimisation rate, which had risen to approximately 46.9%. She clarified that this figure included businesses, particularly large retailers repeatedly targeted by shoplifters. A breakdown of this data was being prepared for the next report;
- g) Panel members requested that Most Similar Force (MSF) comparisons be included alongside national averages in future reports. The Commissioner agreed and explained that improved crime recording practices had contributed to the rise in recorded crime. She also noted that Devon and Cornwall often experienced delayed crime trends compared to national patterns;
- h) The Commissioner identified domestic abuse as the most concerning crime trend, stating that the long-term increase could no longer be attributed solely to improved reporting confidence. She reiterated the need for disruption-focused strategies;
- i) The Commissioner confirmed that a thematic report on ASB would be brought to a future meeting. She also clarified that drug rehabilitation services were commissioned by local authorities through public health and that current referral systems lacked the prioritisation seen in previous years. The OPCC was considering whether to withdraw top-up funding and commission services directly;
- j) The Panel discussed the importance of publishing ASB data to encourage reporting and improve public understanding. The Commissioner advised that Community Safety Partnerships were best placed to provide a comprehensive view by combining police and council data;
- k) Concerns were raised about antisocial vehicle use and the short-term nature of hotspot policing interventions. The Commissioner clarified that hotspot policing was intended to be a year-long initiative and was now in its second year. She acknowledged the need for sustained interventions and shared updates on the development of a noise camera, which had reached a near-purchasable stage and could be a valuable tool for addressing vehicle-related ASB;
- I) The Commissioner outlined her intention to explore early intervention strategies for young people involved in antisocial driving, including education and support through the youth justice system;

In response to questions raised it was reported that:

- m) The challenge of addressing group behaviours, such as large groups of motorcyclists causing disruption, and the need to consider collective impact rather than individual offences:
- n) The Commissioner confirmed that her office was working to elevate and coordinate men's groups (e.g. Band of Brothers, Man Down) to support cultural change and challenge misogynistic attitudes, particularly among young people. She emphasised the importance of positive male role models in schools;
- o) The Panel raised concerns about the rise in illegal tobacco and vape sales, particularly in Torbay. The Commissioner noted that this issue was being addressed through a national operation involving the National Crime Agency and Trading Standards. She encouraged local monitoring through Community Safety Partnerships;
- p) The Commissioner confirmed that rural crime and theft, including tool and equipment theft from tradespeople, would be addressed in future thematic reports. She was committed to seeking disaggregated rural data for inclusion in those reports;
- q) A 1% decrease in public confidence in policing was noted. The Commissioner stated that while the drop was not alarming, it was important to maintain high confidence levels. She attributed confidence issues to poor victim experiences and emphasised the Chief Constable's focus on frontline visibility, improved investigations, and the uplift in Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) as key strategies;
- r) The Commissioner acknowledged that national policing issues, particularly those involving the Metropolitan Police, could negatively affect local perceptions. However, she praised the strong partnership working in Devon and Cornwall, particularly in response to recent civil disorder in Plymouth.

Actions:

- 1. Commissioner to include MSF comparisons in future performance reports.
- 2. Commissioner to explore inclusion of rural crime statistics in thematic reports.
- 3. Commissioner to share updates on the deployment and cost of the noise camera.
- 4. Commissioner to consider commissioning drug rehabilitation services directly if current arrangements remained unclear.
- 5. That the OPCC ensure future reports clearly distinguish between types of repeat victimisation.
- 6. That the Commissioner continue to support and expand partnership work on antisocial behaviour, including long-term hotspot policing and youth interventions.

7. That the Commissioner explore further opportunities to improve public confidence through visibility, victim support, and community engagement.

36. Police and Crime Commissioner's Update Report

Alison Hernandez (Police and Crime Commissioner) presented the item to the Panel and highlighted the following key points:

- a) The Commissioner highlighted the Safer Streets Summer Focus initiative, noting that although it did not come with funding, it had provided a valuable opportunity to showcase the work being done by Devon and Cornwall Police to keep communities safe over the summer period. The process of reporting to government, while bureaucratic, had helped increase visibility of local policing efforts;
- b) The Panel noted the positive development that Devon and Cornwall Police had been removed from His Majesty's Inspectorate's 'engaged' status. The Commissioner also confirmed that the Chief Constable had agreed to extend his tenure by an additional year, providing welcome stability to the force;
- c) The Commissioner praised the Councillor Advocate Scheme, acknowledging previous communication issues but emphasising its growing value. Seminars and shared good practice had proven beneficial, and scrutiny at the Commissioner's Accountability Board had identified inconsistencies in police support for councillors across the region. Improvements were expected following this review;
- d) The Panel raised concerns about the rigidity of the Home Office formula used to determine street marshal deployment. It was suggested that flexibility should be introduced to allow marshals to operate in potential hotspots where data was lacking. The Commissioner clarified that her office only part-funded street marshals, with local authorities funding the majority. The hotspot policing formula required presence for 15 minutes twice daily, leaving scope for broader use by local authorities. Devon and Cornwall were recognised as exemplars in delivering the Community Safety Accreditation Scheme, and the Commissioner was working on a film to showcase the range of accredited personnel;
- e) In response to questions about the redeployment of officers to frontline roles, the Commissioner assured the Panel that strategic risk assessments were being undertaken. The Force Management Statement, required annually by His Majesty's Inspectorate, evaluated departmental demand, resource allocation, and performance. These assessments informed the strategic risk register and guided decisions on resource reallocation. An example was provided regarding firearms licensing, where the Chief Constable was considering the risk of removing officers from that department;
- f) The Panel discussed the Commissioner's Accountability Board and proposed that independent members of the Panel attend to enhance feedback and understanding. The Commissioner explained that attendance required vetting and that discussions were not suitable for the public domain. She noted that improvements had been

made to the assurance statements, including more detailed explanations of her assessments;

- g) The Commissioner confirmed that Devon and Cornwall managed approximately 27,000 firearms licences, following the separation from Dorset. Although recent fee increases had been implemented, they only covered 43% of departmental costs. The Commissioner stated that national discussions were ongoing regarding further fee adjustments, and the government appeared open to change. The Panel requested to be kept informed and supported the idea of writing to MPs to advocate for full cost recovery. The Commissioner offered to draft a letter with relevant facts and figures for Panel members to use;
- h) The Panel welcomed Plymouth's participation in the Councillor Advocate Scheme and raised questions about support for victims of sexual violence. The Commissioner confirmed that a five-year contract was being finalised to stabilise funding for adult and child sexual violence services. Contributions were being made by NHS England and the Integrated Care Board, but voluntary sector organisations remained financially vulnerable. The Commissioner emphasised the importance of disruption strategies and expressed concern about the limited support available for children, noting that the only Sexual Assault Referral Centre for children was located in Exeter. The new contract aimed to improve support, but further work was required;
- i) The Commissioner confirmed that a violence profile report would be presented at the next Panel meeting, which would include updates on sexual violence support services.

Actions:

- 1. Commissioner's office to draft a letter for Panel members to send to MPs advocating for full cost recovery of firearms licensing.
- 2. That the Panel be kept informed of progress on firearms licensing fee reform and support efforts to achieve full cost recovery.
- 3. That the Panel receive regular updates on the development and implementation of sexual violence support services, particularly for children.

37. Non-Criminal Complaints against the Police and Crime Commissioner

Frances Hughes (Monitoring Officer, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner) presented the report to the Panel and highlighted the following key points:

- a) There had been a drafting error in the report, noting that the total number of complaints had been incorrectly calculated due to the removal of a line referencing figures from the previous panel. It was clarified that the correct total reflected the two complaints previously reported;
- b) There had been 15 complaints received since the last panel meeting. Of those, 14 related to a single incident concerning comments made by the Commissioner about on-going investigations in Cornwall. The remaining

complaint pertained to an interview the Commissioner gave regarding cannabis;

c) Inquiries into both matters had resulted in drafted responses, which had been signed off by the Chair. Those responses had been circulated to Panel members prior to the meeting and there were no further actions required on either complaint.

The Panel agreed to note the report.

38. **Action Log**

The panel <u>agreed</u> to add an additional action which was:

a) To undertake a tour of the Middlemoor facility, including the custody suite ahead of upcoming decisions on investment.

The Panel agreed to note the action log.

39. Work Programme

Members of the Panel added the following to the work programme:

1. Community cohesion and civil unrest in the November agenda, reflecting concerns raised by members and the public. The item would look to provide public reassurance given current events. There were emerging issues across the region, including tensions involving both far-left and far-right groups, disputes over flags, and the distinction between nationalism and patriotism. Hate crime was no longer included in the Commissioners Police and Crime Plan but it was important to understand the Commissioners priorities and her approach to the current and growing community cohesion and civil unrest. The item was not only operational but strategic for the police, and it was important for communities feeling threatened or vulnerable to understand that the Panel was taking these concerns seriously.

The Panel <u>agreed</u> to note the work programme.



Devon & Cornwall Police and Crime Panel

Commissioner's Update Report: November 2025

Safe, Resilient and Connected Communities, Where Everyone Plays Their Part

The data included in this report covers the period from September 4, 2025, to November 6, 2025, unless otherwise stated.

1. Devon & Cornwall Police

1.1 Op Resolve: Strengthening the frontline

The Chief Constable James Vaughan QPM's plan to strengthen frontline policing is making good progress. In September Mr Vaughan set a deadline to improve frontline resilience by restoring patrol (previously known as response) design numbers by December 31, 2025. In other words, making sure the force is consistently able to fill all its patrol officer shifts.

In October the Deputy Chief Constable Jim Colwell announced plans to redeploy to patrol some officers who had been serving in specialist teams, as part of the so-called Operation Resolve strategy which is making this strengthening of the frontline possible.

When briefing officers and staff Mr Colwell said this had not been an easy decision, but that he was determined to move people and posts into patrol to strengthen the frontline.

The Rank Review previously announced by the Chief Constable is also part of Op Resolve. This has the aim of putting an extra sixty constables on the frontline by April 2026.

The force is also in the process of recruiting an extra one hundred police officers and PSCOs in neighbourhood policing roles as part of the Government's aim to increase community focused policing.

1.2 Custody review

As part of my Commissioner's Accountability Board process I have had discussions about a temporary closure of Torquay custody and although this is decision for the Chief Constable I have sought further assurance on the engagement and evaluation proposals.

This is part of a wider review of the custody model across the force, and it is a requirement of mine that any changes result in improvements to the safety of detainees and an increase in the wellbeing and performance of staff and officers.

In parallel to this my office has undertaken a scrutiny review of custody. The findings from the review will be used by my office to inform our decisions about future investment of taxpayers' money and to ensure buildings comply with safety regulations.

At the time of writing no final decision has been made.



1.3 Force Family Day

A third highly successful Force Family Day took place on September 20, 2025, at the Royal Cornwall Showground. Around 1,000 attendees joined the event, which provided an opportunity for police officers, staff, and their families to come together to celebrate their contribution to policing, enjoy family activities, and learn more about the wide range of roles across the force.

The event was supported for the first time by several sponsors, whose involvement not only helped offset costs but also enhanced the programme with additional attractions and interactive displays. Despite challenging weather conditions, the day was well attended and received extremely positive feedback from those who took part.



1.4 Outcome of court case (Trivet) against the Commissioner

On September 24, 2025, David Trivett appeared at Poole Magistrates' Court, where he entered a guilty plea to an offence of harassment without violence against me. The offence related to repeated unwanted correspondence and the sending out inappropriate material to me over a sustained period.

The court imposed a 12-week custodial sentence, to commence from time already served, and issued a five-year restraining order prohibiting all contact with me. A copy of the restraining order has been received by my office.

1.5 Priority Based Budgeting (PBB) process

As part of achieving the savings required in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy the force have recently undertaken a PBB process covering most of the alliance functions with Dorset Police.

PBB is a recognised process in achieving budget savings. The process has three stages:

- First An assessment of the service areas within a function along with a detailed description and the resources involved for the service area.
- Second A review of the demand/productivity data to look at potential savings and costs.
- Third a strategic decision around the service level required.

The results of the first phase are being assessed with level of savings achieved being significant.

The force will be undertaking a second phase of this process in early 2026 looking more closely at Devon and Cornwall functions.

1.6 National Police Memorial Day

On Sunday, September 28, 2025, policing colleagues across the United Kingdom came together to mark National Police Memorial Day, an important occasion dedicated to honouring officers who have lose their lives in the line of duty.

Chief Constable James Vaughan QPM represented Devon & Cornwall Police and the national service in Coventry, joining families, serving officers, staff and representatives from force nationwide.



I attended the commemorative service at Middlemoor Police Headquarters on September 30 where wreaths were laid to honour fallen colleagues from across our force area.

The day provided a poignant opportunity to reflect on the courage, commitment and professionalism of those who serve, and to reaffirm our collective dedication to upholding their legacy. The memorial is also a reminder of the values that underpin policing – duty, integrity and compassion, and the importance of supporting the families and loved ones of those who have lost their lives in service.

A Remembrance Day service was also held in Exeter on Sunday, November 9 where a wreath was laid from my office to honour members of the armed forces who have lost their lives in service of their country.

2. Police and Crime Plan Priority: Antisocial behaviour

2.1 Hotspot policing: A visible presence where antisocial behaviour occurs

Hotspot policing continues to form a core part of the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee, supporting the Commissioner's priorities to enhance visibility, public safety and community confidence. The initiative focuses on reducing antisocial behaviour, serious violence and knife crime across 15 identified town and city-centre hotspots within Devon and Cornwall, with funding of £1million from the Home Office and a further £300,000 invested by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.



The Hotspot Policing launch in Bideford

The 15 town and city locations benefiting from hotspot policing patrols for 2025-26 are:

Barnstaple, Bideford, Bodmin, Camborne, Exeter, Exmouth, Newquay, Newton Abbot, Paignton, Penzance, Plymouth, St Austell, Tiverton, Torquay and Truro.

Delivery since April 2025 has been informed by evidence-based practice in collaboration with the Cambridge Centre for Evidence-Based Policing to test and refine hotspot methodology across three case-study towns. The approach has been further strengthened through full Community Safety Accreditation Scheme (CSAS) accreditation for all Street Marshal providers and close partnership working with local authorities and Business Improvement Districts to coordinate visibility and response.

Between April and October 2025, more than 4,200 hours of additional police foot patrols and 3,800 hours of Street Marshal patrols were delivered. This activity resulted in 123 arrests, 181 stop and searches, 139 recoveries or seizures, 1,162 antisocial behaviour incidents attended and 1,227 intelligence submissions.

A new Hotspot Intelligence Dashboard and mobile application, developed jointly with Dorset Police, has been introduced to improve analysis, deployment tracking, and sustainability planning. Officers and partners have also benefited from a training and quality assurance webinar led by Debbie Simpson from the Cambridge Centre for Evidence-Based Policing.



Early feedback from residents, businesses and partners indicated improved perceptions of safety and visibility, with initial signs of reduced antisocial behaviour and serious violence in several hotspot areas.

Next steps include an analytical review of patrol and crime data to assess the correlation between deployment and outcomes, the co-production of a Hotspot Policing 101 training video, the development of CSAS guidance booklets for Street Marshals and the public, and completion of a comprehensive evaluation and sustainability business case to secure the continuation of hotspot policing beyond the current Home Office funding period.

A video about the hotspot policing project tackling graffiti in Exeter city centre can be watched on this link.

2.2 Safer Streets Summer

September marked the conclusion of Devon and Cornwall Police's Safer Streets Summer activity, consolidating three months of targeted engagement, problem-solving, and visible policing across key town and city centres, which are often repeat locations from antisocial behaviour and crime, including violence against women and girls.

Building on the momentum from July and August, the focus in September shifted towards sustaining safer public spaces through prevention, education, and long-term deterrence. Efforts were underpinned by multi-agency collaboration, the expansion of innovative prevention measures, and enhanced community involvement, aligning strongly with the Home Office's Safer Streets priorities of visibility, partnership, and prevention.

Over the course of the Safer Streets Summer initiative Devon & Cornwall Police combined enforcement, prevention, and partnership work through more than 3,500 hours of hotspot patrols, plus extensive engagement with schools, businesses and community groups. My office has also funded street marshals to enhance the hotspot policing offer, with all marshals now accredited at all locations under the Community Safety Accreditation Scheme (CSAS).

Following on from this summer initiative my office will be supporting a Winter of Action in town centres from December 1 to January 31 to sustain the momentum of the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee and the Government's Plan for Change. This will deliver on shared priorities of tackling retail crime; street crime and antisocial behaviour; and improving safety in the nighttime economy and tackling violence against women and girls.

2.3 Street Focus

Street Focus is a partnership initiative led by my office in collaboration with Devon & Cornwall Police, local authorities and other partners to improve safety and address issues such as antisocial behaviour in town and city centres.

In **Torquay**, my office worked with partners including Torbay Council and the police to support a programme of community events and engagement designed to revitalise the town centre and strengthen local pride. One of the key activities was an Arts and Heritage festival *This is My Circus*, which took place from October 17 to 19 in Castle Circus.

The festival aimed to transform underused spaces into hubs of creativity and participation, bringing together residents, artists and local organisations. A highlight of the event was the creation of a new mural on the side of the Castle pub, designed and painted by local artist Szabotage with participants from Leonard Stocks homeless hostel, St Magdalene's Church and Endeavour House. The project



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has been praised for its contribution to improving the appearance and vibrancy of the area and for strengthening links between community partners.

In **Camborne**, my office has followed up the initial visit made in August with a successful two-day Street Focus launch event on October 27 and 28. Partners and stakeholders shared examples of positive progress in improving safety in the town centre and my office shared its learning from the Torquay project. The visit also provided an opportunity to identify how my office could support the next phase of activity through youth engagement and community partnership. Discussions have already been initiated with Cornwall College Group, Cornwall Youth Services and Cornwall Council colleagues responsible for children in care, exploring opportunities for meaningful involvement of young people in local improvement initiatives.



The launch of the Street Focus project in Camborne

I am really pleased that my office has recently been shortlisted for a national ASB award for the Street Focus Torquay work in the Best Project category. The awards ceremony hosted by Resolve UK will take place on February 26 in Nottingham.

2.4 Night Bus

The Saturday night bus routes funded by my office have continued to operate successfully throughout the summer and into the autumn period. Since the start of the service in May 2024, a total of 6 routes have been active across Devon, 2 in Torbay, 2 in Plymouth and one in Cornwall.

Between May 31 and October 25, the service carried 10,547 passengers; an average of 529 per Saturday night across all routes. Numbers for Devon indicate that if the same rate continues, more than 16,000 passengers will have used the services by the end of the year.

The Newquay night bus, which ran from May 24 to September 6, completed 16 Saturday nights of service, carrying 745 passengers; an average of 53 per night.

| Area | Route | Passenger numbers up to 18 October |
|------------|---------------|------------------------------------|
| Torbay | Torquay | 1186 |
| (2 routes) | St Marychurch | 842 |
| Plymouth | Tavistock | 1051 |
| (2 routes) | Saltash | 1109 |
| Exeter | Cullompton | 937 |

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| (4 routes) | Crediton | 797 |
|-------------|------------|--------|
| | Dawlish | 534 |
| | Exmouth | 987 |
| North Devon | Ilfracombe | 1326 |
| (2 routes) | Bideford | 1778 |
| Cornwall | | |
| (1 route) | Newquay | 745 |
| | TOTAL | 11,292 |

The **Plymouth Purple Flag** accreditation scheme has highlighted the night bus as a key contributor to ensuring a safe and well-managed evening and night-time economy in the city. In addition, the **Bideford night bus** and one of the **Torbay routes** are expected to become commercially viable from next year, with Stagecoach indicating its intention to fund these routes independently.

2.5 Isles of Scilly visit

In September members of my office went to the **Isles of Scilly** to spend time with the local neighbourhood policing team and listen directly to islanders about their public safety experience.

Feedback from residents on St Mary's underlined the importance of visibility and local relationships, and officers were praised for their approachability and willingness to engage with the community.

During the visit my team also met with Safer Scilly, the multi-agency partnership tasked with improving

safety on the islands. Discussions focused on the potential of using antisocial behaviour escalation tools and ways to strengthen public safety communication across the community.

My office has produced a video showcasing the visit which can be viewed here.



2.6 Councillor advocate seminar: Community safety

In September, I hosted a Councillor Advocate seminar on community safety, bringing together elected representatives, police colleagues and local partners to share updates on crime prevention initiatives and opportunities for collaboration across Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

The event opened with an update on the UK Partners Against Crime (UKPAC) business crime reduction initiative, which at the time of the event had more than 80 participating businesses and more than 4,000 sites engaged across the region. Delegates heard how the system enables retailers to share intelligence, report incidents and track repeat offenders more efficiently through a central digital platform.



The Commissioner and Chief Constable Vaughan at the Councillor Advocate seminar held in September

A presentation from Machaela O'Brien, legal advisor at Devon & Cornwall Police, provided insight into the use of enforcement powers available to address persistent antisocial behaviour. From September 2024 to September 2025, the force has secured 31 closure orders (including extensions), three youth civil injunctions, six civil injunction breach prosecutions, and five child abduction warning notices, in addition to advising on more than 40 Community Protection Warnings and Notices. These outcomes demonstrate the impact of targeted legal interventions in supporting communities affected by repeat nuisance and disorder.

Further updates were delivered by my office on the Street Focus initiative, highlighting how the Torquay project has provided a blueprint for coordinated partnership working to tackle antisocial behaviour and improve the environment in the town centre.

The seminar also covered an overview of my Commissioner's Community Grants, which provide small annual awards to voluntary and community sector organisations delivering place-based projects aligned to Police and Crime Plan priorities. Two funding streams were available (£200,000 for the Commissioner's Community Grants Fund and £115,300 from the Police Property Act Fund) and focused on prevention and reduction of burglary and shoplifting, including work addressing underlying causes such as antisocial behaviour and substance misuse. Both funding schemes have since closed, decision panels have been arranged for early December with successful bidders being notified by 8 December.

The seminar closed with a presentation from Chief Constable James Vaughan QPM, who gave an update on the hotspot policing project, action taken by the force to tackle retail crime and shoplifting, and outcomes of the June Operation Scorpion regional drugs intensification.

My next seminar is on the topics of drugs and alcohol and is being held in Plymouth on December 3.

2.7 CCTV improvements scheme launched September 2025

In September 2025, my office launched a new initiative to support councils to enhance their CCTV schemes to strengthen community safety and help the police identify offenders more effectively. CCTV plays an important role in both deterring crime and providing vital evidence to bring offenders to justice, particularly in areas that experience persistent antisocial behaviour or repeat offending.



This initiative directly supports my Police and Crime Plan priorities of tackling antisocial behaviour, drugs and alcohol, serious violence and theft. It is designed to help local communities take proactive steps to address these issues by improving surveillance coverage and supporting local problemsolving activity. The additional CCTV provision will not only enhance police capability to investigate and prevent crime but also provide reassurance to residents and businesses.

Over 60 parish and town councils (and their equivalents) and voluntary sector organisations applied to install or upgrade their CCTV infrastructure. The total fund available is £125,000, with a maximum of £10,000 per application to support equipment and infrastructure costs. Applicants will be notified of the outcome of the decision-making panel in early December. There are clearly further opportunities to strengthen CCTV infrastructure beyond that which this fund will be able to deliver.

2.8 Antisocial vehicle noise cameras

Devon & Cornwall Police is developing a pilot of an Automatic Numberplate Recognition camera which, if successful, could totally revolutionise the response to persistent antisocial vehicle noise. I am supportive of the police working with councils to identify locations which would most benefit from the use of this technology to identify the most appropriate legislation for enforcement.

Advances in technology are already being used by Devon & Cornwall Police and the Vision Zero South West partnership to improve road safety including the world's first pilot of artificial intelligence camera systems designed to identify impaired drivers on the roads.

3. Police and Crime Plan Priority: Serious Violence

3.3 Disrupting violence against women and girls

Following the Disrupting Violence Against Women and Girls event I hosted in the summer, my office continues to explore opportunities to take forward initiatives that will explore new and radical ways of tackling this problematic and often criminal behaviour. Members of the public also contributed a range of suggestions through our public disruptive ideas survey.

Suggestions included a hard-hitting perpetrator awareness campaign, bystander training initiatives and development of a male network to concepts for online material and tools to support healthier relationships among young people. Other proposals included the development of new digital resources such as the Walking in Their Shoes empathy app, a Stalking Journal app, and an enhanced Holly Gazzard Extra safety app.

At a strategic level, long term, secure and diverse funding sources for organisations that provide incredible services to victims, and work with perpetrators to prevent escalating behaviour or reoffending emerged as a clear priority.

My office is now collating information on existing funding opportunities for victims, prevention and reoffending services across Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. We will host an online session for voluntary and community sector providers to support their access to external funding streams. Devon and Cornwall are one of the first Police and Crime Commissioner areas to provide this form of assistance, recognising the financial pressures faced by organisations delivering vital work to prevent violence and support recovery.

Another key area we are exploring is convening and amplifying the voices of male allies and strengthening the way in which the men of Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly play the part they must in resetting male behaviour. We have several organisations that provide mentoring and intervention services, and widespread interest from men who are keen to play a more active role in



disrupting harmful behaviour, without diverting funding away from victim support services. The High Sherriff of Cornwall, Geraint Richards MVO, has already started to take this forward by convening a conversation on strengthening male allyship and healthy relationships within Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. My office is supporting this work and looking to extend allyship activity across Devon.

3.4 Sexual violence contracts

My office has recently reprocured new sexual violence services to improve access, coordination and outcomes for children and adults who are victims of sexual violence across Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly in partnership with the following organisations:

- Cornwall Council,
- Plymouth City Council,
- Torbay Council,
- Devon County Council
- NHS England
- Devon & Cornwall ICB Cluster
- Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner

The new contracts represent a significant step forward in delivering more consistent, equitable and accessible services across the peninsula.

Four new contracts have now been awarded, providing services that cover **Devon, Cornwall, Plymouth and Torbay**. They will provide a clearer, coordinated support offer within each local authority area, ensuring that victims and survivors are able to access the help they need quickly and effectively. The approach also strengthens alignment between referral and assessment processes, helping to reduce waiting times and remove unnecessary duplication between agencies.

3.5 Serious Violence Duty

As Police and Crime Commissioner, I have a convening role within the Serious Violence Duty, working closely with local authorities, other named parties and Community Safety Partnerships to coordinate activity that prevents and reduces the impact of serious violence. This statutory duty focuses on a wide range of behaviours identified through local evidence and need, encompassing harm against the person, sexual violence, substance misuse, domestic abuse, and issues arising within the night-time economy.

Across Devon and Cornwall, projects have been funded that support the prevention of serious violence through early years intervention, targeted work with families, and education-based programmes. During the second quarter of this year, these initiatives collectively reached:

- 1,579 children
- 70 adults
- 170 professionals

This has helped to strengthen awareness, build resilience, and reduce vulnerability.

My office is convening the specified authority duty leaders to work with Crest Advisory, who will provide consultancy support to develop clear standards for partnership roles and to strengthen cross-sector collaboration. The first workshop under this programme will take place on November 1, 2025, and will include participation from representatives from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Devon & Cornwall Police, Youth Justice Services, Community Safety Partnerships, Probation, and Fire and Rescue Services.



3.6 Westcountry Women Awards

This year's Westcountry Women's Awards saw an exceptional level of nominations in the Combating Violence Against Women and Girls category, which I am proud to sponsor for a fourth year. A record number of outstanding woman were put forward, underscoring the strength and commitment of individuals across Devon, Cornwall and the wider region working to make communities safer.

The finalists were announced at a celebratory afternoon tea at Powderham Castle near Exeter and will be joined by other nominees at the Grand Final Gala Dinner on November 2 in Plymouth, where the winner of the VAWG award will be revealed.



The finalists of the Westcountry Women Awards 2025 at Powderham Castle

The four finalists in the category each bring remarkable experience and dedication:

- Sue Penna (Brixham) has spent nearly three decades in the VAWG sector and founded the trauma-informed social enterprise Rock Pool, delivering training and recovery tools that have reached thousands of practitioners nationally.
- **Rebecca Hewitt (Teignbridge)** has driven major funding for youth- and community-facing projects, including securing more than £300,000 for interventions to keep young people safe and challenge culture change around misogyny.
- Lucy Rhodes (Devon) has developed *Is This Ok?* a specialist programme addressing harmful sexual behaviour among young people, with a strong evidence-informed approach and real-world impact in schools and town-centre environments.
- Mel Sevieri (Plymouth) is a survivor-advocate who, despite living with chronic illness, has
 campaigned tirelessly, raised funds for women's charities and revived public demonstrations
 such as Reclaim the Night march to raise awareness of VAWG.

I was also pleased to see two members of my office's staff among the finalists for other award categories. My Chief Executive Officer **Frances Hughes** is a finalist for the Director of the Year award, and Southwest Regional Specialist Programme Delivery Manager **Sophie Baker** is a finalist in the Women in Construction award for her work on the Prisoners Building Homes project.

3.7 Reducing harm on our roads

The Vision Zero South West partnership continues to deliver a comprehensive programme of road safety activity based on evidence, education and enforcement. The partnership's work is centred on reducing the number of deaths and serious injuries on the roads across Devon and Cornwall by 2030, with a focus on vulnerable road users and repeat collision sites identified through detailed data analysis.

At its September meeting, the Vision Zero South West Governance Board approved three new projects to be added to the road safety delivery plan:

- **Walkability**, is a child pedestrian training scheme that will be delivered to around 9,000 primary school pupils in Devon over the next two years.
- **Biker Down**, is a five-year funding programme designed to deliver motorcycle safety training to approximately 1,600 bikers across the region.



 Heads Up AI camera system will continue to utilise cutting-edge technology to identify seatbelt and mobile phone offences, addressing two of the Fatal Five common causes of collisions. So far, the portable system has identified more than 10,000 of these dangerous offences across the force area.

Several ongoing education and prevention projects area also being supported through the partnership.

Vision Zero South West has also supported national charity Brake's Road Safety Week, which took place from November 16 to 22. The theme of the week was Safer Vehicles and included messaging on maintenance, use of car seats, motorcycle checks and general road safety. A road safety engagement event was hosted at Falmouth University, Op Close Pass, a horse safety operation, took place in Hemyock, Devon, and Two Learn 2 Live events took place in Torquay and Exeter.

Learn 2 Live, a theatre-based road safety education programme aimed at young people aged 16 to 19, has recommenced for 2025-26. Each year between 12,000 and 14,000 students across the force area participate in the initiative, which uses real-life testimonies from emergency service personnel and collision survivors to reinforce key safety messages.

Work has also begun on a pilot project in **Plymouth** focused on improving pedestrian safety. The pilot will test new design approaches and data-led interventions, with a full launch planned for spring 2026.

The partnership is also expanding its campaign activity to address other high-risk road user groups, including older drivers and younger motorists. Initiatives include promoting seatbelt use, encouraging safer driving behaviours and extending the Lift Legend designated driver scheme to reduce drink-driving incidents during the festive period.

For more information about the partnership's road safety strategy, visit the Vision Zero South West website: Documents | Vision Zero South West

4. Police and Crime Plan Priority: Drugs & Alcohol

The next Councillor Advocate seminar will take place in Plymouth on December 3, 2025, and will focus on the theme of Drugs and Alcohol, reflecting one of the core priorities in my Police and Crime Plan. The event will bring together councillors, partner agencies and service providers to share updates on current initiatives and explore best practice.

The agenda will feature a series of presentations showcasing innovative local approaches to prevention, enforcement, treatment and community resilience.

Tess Dawe will present on the work of the Penzance Safe and Well Hub, highlighting its success in supporting vulnerable individuals through a partnership model that combines police, health and voluntary sector expertise. A presentation on the Plymouth Peer-to-Peer Naloxone Champion Programme will give an insight into the lifesaving opioid overdose intervention, and there will be an update on the Buvidal pilot in Torquay, outlining progress from this innovative opioid dependence treatment model.

Plymouth Argyle Community Trust will share its diversionary work with young people, there will be an update on Vision Zero South West's Lift Legend designated driver scheme, and regional ACC Andy Hill will provide a briefing on the Operation Scorpion regional drugs intensification.



5. Priority: Theft

5.1 Tackling shoplifting with business crime reporting partnerships

Retail crime and persistent shoplifting continue to present challenges for local businesses and communities across Devon and Cornwall. To help address this, my office has funded the business crime reduction partnership UK Partners Against Crime (UKPAC) which provides retailers with a secure digital platform to report, share and track offenders in real time. The system enables faster communication between businesses and the police, improving the efficiency of investigations and supporting the identification and prosecution of prolific offenders.

Further investment of £170,000 from my office has been committed to support the wider rollout of UKPAC across the force area. To date, more than 200 businesses have joined the scheme, including several major national retailers such as Superdrug, Spar, Matalan, B&M and the Fraser Group (which includes Sports Direct, House of Fraser, Evans Cycles and Jack Wills).

The partnership is already achieving positive outcomes, with five prosecutions secured against repeat offenders, including custodial sentences and compensation orders. These results demonstrate the value of collaborative working between businesses, the police and the wider

criminal justice system to tackle shoplifting and reduce the impact of retail crime on local economies.

Representatives from my office also attended the Riviera Connect business expo in **Torquay**, supporting UKPAC in promoting the partnership to businesses from Torbay and the wider area.

As part of Safer Action Business (SaBA) week, (November 10-17), engagement is taking place with local businesses in **Torquay and Paignton** on November 13, including an evening session to launch UKPAC in **Newton Abbot.** This will further strengthen engagement with local businesses, an opportunity to increase member sign-ups and



The OPCC supported UKPAC at the Riviera Connect Business Expo in Torquay

provide practical support to those affected by business-related crime.

The week coincides with the launch of Devon, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Business Crime Reduction Partnership (BCRP) to offer a more collaborative and effective approach to reducing retail crime through a shared intelligence platform linking to neighbouring areas, access to regional analysis and police support for prolific offenders, and a stronger collective voice when engaging with large retail members and national partners.

Also, during this week, the Plymouth Against Retail Crime (PARC) initiative, funded by my office and supported by **Plymouth** City Council and Safer Plymouth, is being rolled out. This business-led crime reduction scheme is a great example of collaborative working and helps police build robust cases ready for prosecution, especially around prolific repeat offenders.



6. Strengthening the criminal justice system

6.1 LCJB planning day

As chair of the Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB) I convened the annual planning day meeting at Buckfast Abbey Conference Centre on September 25, 2025.

The event brought together senior leaders from across the criminal justice partnership to review progress against our 2024-25 priorities and to agree collective focus areas for the year ahead.

The partnership reflected on significant progress made over the past 12 months, including improvements in the quality of case files submitted to the Crown Prosecution Service and enhanced collaboration between agencies in



The Commissioner with Chief Constable Vaughan and criminal justice partners at the LCJB planning day

responding to complex and high-profile incidents such as the disorder in August 2024. Despite these positive developments, partners recognised there is still more to do to improve timeliness in youth justice cases and ensure that victims receive a consistently high standard of service across all stages of the system.

Over the next 12 months, the board will continue to develop workstreams that support out-of-court resolutions for appropriate cases and to strengthen the targeting of repeat prolific offenders. A key strand of this work will involve exploring alternative approaches to intensive supervision courts and identifying system-wide improvements to better support women within the criminal justice process.

This collaborative approach remains central to ensuring that Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly deliver a more effective and coordinated criminal justice system. I look forward to working with our partners in these priority areas and reporting back on the outcomes achieved over the coming year.

6.2 Presenting at the National Police Chief's Council Out of Court Resolution Conference

As joint national Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) lead for Criminal Justice, I was invited to speak at the National Out of Court Resolution Conference, hosted by the National Police Chiefs' Council.

The event provided an opportunity to highlight the work being undertaken by Devon & Cornwall Police in developing and delivering innovative approaches to Out of Court Resolutions.

During my presentation, I shared our local experience in establishing the Deferred



The Commissioner presenting at the NPCC National Out of Court Resolution Conference

Prosecution Scheme and the positive outcomes it has achieved for individuals who meet the eligibility criteria. I also outlined the expansion of this work through the introduction of a Deferred



Charge option, enabling more tailored interventions for those willing to engage with rehabilitative pathways.

The conference also allowed me to showcase the *Criminal Justice and You* resource, which provides clear information to victims about what to expect when an offender received an Out of Court Resolution. I emphasised the importance of scrutiny in maintaining public confidence and explained how this is achieved locally through the LCJB and strong partnership engagement in Devon and Cornwall.

6.3 Criminal justice scrutiny

Scrutiny remains a key mechanism for ensuring accountability, transparency and improvement across the criminal justice system. Through scrutiny panels chaired by my office, partners collectively assess performance, compliance with national standards and the effectiveness of local practice.

Panels are held each month to review compliance with the Victims' Code of Practice (VCoP) and the use of Out of Court Resolutions (OoCRs). These sessions bring together representatives from policing, probation, youth justice, the Crown Prosecution Service and victim support services to identify learning and drive continuous improvement.

During the last quarter, a VCoP scrutiny panel examined cases of stalking and harassment, which also formed the theme for the OoCR scrutiny panel for adult cases in October. Both panels highlighted valuable areas of learning for the force and for the wider criminal justice partnership. In addition, a dedicated child OoCR panel was convened to review child sexual offence cases. Findings from all reports will be discussed at the next quarterly LCJB meeting on December 4, 2025, after which the full reports will be published on my website here for public transparency.

Additional scrutiny panels are scheduled for November and December, focusing on drug offences for child cases involving OoCRs and on compliance with the Victims' Code of Practice in relation to assaults on emergency workers. These reviews ensure that partners remain focused on delivering consistent, fair and victim-centred outcomes across all parts of the criminal justice system.

This collaborative approach to scrutiny continues to be well supported by stakeholders across the partnership and represents a model of constructive engagement. Through this work, agencies are collectively strengthening consistency, raising standards and improving outcomes for victims.

7. Partnerships

7.1 Prisoners Building Homes

The Prisoners Building Homes (PBH) programme continues to grow rapidly across the country, supported through initial investment from the five South West regional Police and Crime Commissioners and, more recently, funding from a further six PCCs alongside the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. The initiative provides a unique opportunity to equip serving prisoners with construction skills while delivering much-needed affordable homes for local communities.

In Devon, there are currently two active PBH sites that can be shared in the public domain. The first, at **Somerlea in Willand**, is a seven-unit development of two-storey modular homes on land owned by Mid Devon District Council. The scheme is being delivered in partnership with housebuilder ZedPods, and modular installation is due to commence this month, with completion expected by March 2026. This project demonstrates the potential of the programme to deliver high-quality,



sustainable homes while supporting rehabilitation through skills development and employment pathways.

The second site, at **Watery Lane in Tiverton**, is a ten-unit development also being delivered by Mid Devon District Council in collaboration with ZedPods. Planning approval is in place and site preparation work is now under way, with a completion date to be confirmed in the coming months.

In addition to these Devon projects, discussions have recently taken place with the **Council of the Isles of Scilly** to explore potential opportunities for the PBH model to support housing delivery on the islands. The council faces significant challenges in meeting housing need sue to the high cost of materials and transportation from the mainland, and the PBH team is assessing how the programme's modular approach could help address these barriers.

The continued expansion of the PBH programme illustrates the value of partnership working between criminal justice agencies, local authorities and the construction sector in delivering both social and rehabilitative outcomes.

The scheme has also been shortlisted for the Programme of the Year Award at the Civil Service Awards 2025 for the benefits it brings to prisoners, local communities, government, and the housing sector.

7.2 Operation Ragwort

Operation Ragwort continues to play an important role in tackling rural crime and supporting safer, more resilient rural communities across Devon and Cornwall. The operation brings together police officers with partners from the Driving Vehicle Standards Agency, Trading Standards, and local authorities to target offences linked to vehicle use, waste crime and organised theft affecting the rural economy.

In September, the force deployed pioneering drone technology to identify vehicles potentially involved in organised theft or the illegal movement of farm equipment. More than 200 vehicles were stopped and checked during the day of action, with officers identifying one vehicle with an expired MOT, one tachograph offence, one construction and use offence, and two commercial vehicles exceeding the weight limit.

As part of the engagement element of the operation, officers visited local agricultural suppliers to provide crime prevention advice and raise awareness of emerging trends in rural offending. These visits also offered an opportunity to reinforce links with the farming community and promote simple measures to prevent equipment theft and improve site security.

Operation Ragwort remains an example of effective multi-agency working, combining enforcement, education and technology to reduce harm and protect rural communities across the peninsula.

7.3 Youth justice

I continue to provide funding to the Youth Justice Services (YJS) within local authorities across Devon and Cornwall, which play a vital role in preventing and reducing offending and reoffending among children and young people, including cases linked to serious violence. My office works closely with the Youth Justice Services as active members of their strategic boards, supporting them to deliver best practice and to ensure that the needs of children in the justice system are fully represented.

Additional partnership work between my office and the YJS network includes supporting operational delivery, improving victim services, and sharing learning materials. We continue to ensure

collaboration across the region through multi-agency reviews of serious cases, identifying key lessons to help prevent similar incidents in the future. This ongoing joint approach strengthens early intervention and helps to divert young people away from offending behaviour, promoting better long-term outcomes for individuals and communities alike.

7.4 Victim Support

In 2024-25, a decision was made to conclude the external contract with Victim Support, and to bring elements of the service delivery back in-house to my office. This transition forms part of a broader strategy to strengthen local victim care provision and ensure the delivery of consistently high-quality support services across Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

The move to bring aspects of the service back under direct OPCC management allows for greater flexibility, improved oversight and closer alignment with Police and Crime Plan priorities. It also ensures that future commissioning decisions are better informed by local need and by direct engagement with victims and support providers.

8. Holding the police to account

8.1 Commissioner's Accountability Board

Holding our police to account on behalf of the people of Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly is my core responsibility.

I do this in several ways, including chairing the Commissioner's Accountability Board (CAB). This allows me to select specific areas of policing activity and performance to scrutinise in detail, requiring the Chief Constable and his team to explain current performance, and any plans for improvements.

A statement is then published on my office's website here, https://devonandcornwall-pcc.gov.uk/commissioners-accountability-board describing the levels of assurance along with the agenda and attendance at each Board.

Since the last panel meeting, I have reviewed the force's delivery of the Serious Violence Police and Crime Plan priority, their use of the Community Safety Accredited Scheme (CSAS), and their ongoing review of custody via CAB.

I remain absolutely committed to ensuring that Devon & Cornwall Police deliver a service to our communities as effectively and efficiently as is possible and will continue to not only scrutinise and challenge robustly, but also to celebrate and champion whenever appropriate.

8.2 Gross misconduct hearings

My office continues to support the running of police officer misconduct hearings. Between July and September 2025, we supported 6 hearings to outcome, 4 of which led to the subsequent dismissal of a police officer.

We also supported a further 4 hearings; 1 of which was withdrawn, and 3 which were adjourned. Outcomes of misconduct hearings can be found on this link.

My continued thanks go to the Independent Panel Members and Legally Qualified People employed by my office to support these hearings. It is with their hard work and dedication we ensure that only the right people work in policing.



8.3 Police complaint reviews

As Police and Crime Commissioner I have a statutory responsibility to undertake police complaint reviews. Where a member of the public is dissatisfied with the outcome of a complaint they receive from Devon & Cornwall Police, they can apply to my office for an independent review.

In Quarter 2, July to Sept 2025, we received 43 requests to undertake police complaint reviews. During this period, 28 requests were concluded to outcome, including 20 valid complaint reviews. Of these valid reviews, 35% were upheld, meaning my Complaint Review Officers deemed the police's original handling of the complaint was not reasonable or proportionate.

As a result of the upheld complaints, 11 recommendations were issued to the police. These included requesting further enquiries to be undertaken, provision of additional outcome letters to complainants where appropriate, issuing apologies, and providing supplementary information and explanations. This ensures that complainants have a clear understanding of the decisions reached and that the police are held accountable for delivering proportionate and fair complaint handling.

8.4 Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs)

As Police and Crime Commissioner, I have a statutory duty to operate an Independent Custody Visiting (ICV) scheme. This scheme relies on trained volunteers who make unannounced visits to police custody centres to check on the welfare of detainees and ensure their rights and entitlements are being respected. These visits provide independent assurance that custody facilities are operating safely and appropriately.

During quarter 2 2025-26, covering the period July 1 to September 30, a total of 33 visits were undertaken and 106 detainees visited across Devon and Cornwall, with no significant issues raised.

My team have recently run a successful recruitment process for the ICV scheme. The role advert was promoted on social media and shared with partners and universities, resulting in a high number of excellent candidates.

Following an interview process, 15 new ICVs have been appointed (subject to vetting) which doubles our current number of volunteers and will increase the number of visits that ICVs can make to each suite, ensuring robust scrutiny and providing greater assurance to both myself as Commissioner and the public, that detainees rights and entitlements are being met.

Following vetting and training, it is expected that we will have our full cohort of ICVs in place by February 2026.

8.5 Responding to HMICFRS inspection reports

I have a statutory responsibility to respond to all reports published by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) that include recommendations or are otherwise relevant to Devon & Cornwall Police.

Since the last panel meeting, five inspection reports have been published which fall into this category. Two of these reports are joint criminal justice inspection reports, and one is HMICFRS Sir Andy Cooke QPM DL's annual assessment of policing:

- Joint case building by the police and Crown Prosecution Service: final report
- How effectively do the police record crime?
- State of Policing: The Annual Assessment of Policing in England and Wales 2024–25



- The effectiveness of diverting children from the criminal justice system: meeting needs, ensuring safety, and preventing reoffending
- Inspection of the effectiveness of police and law enforcement bodies' response to group-based child sexual exploitation: A progress report

The responses to these reports, including the action taken or planned by the force in relation to the recommendations, are publicly available at https://www.devonandcornwall-pcc.gov.uk

9. New police leadership commission

In October 2025, the Home Office announced the establishment of a new National Police Leadership Commission, created to strengthen strategic leadership and professional development across policing in England and Wales. The Commission will play a key role in supporting the government's police reform agenda, with a White Paper due to be published later this year, and will provide advice to ministers on leadership standards, succession planning, and the skills required for the next generation of senior officers.

While the aims of the Commission are welcomed, I have raised concerns regarding the absence of Police and Crime Commissioners from its membership. As PCCs are the statutory employers of Chief Constables and hold responsibility for their appointment, appraisal and, where necessary, removal, it is vital that Commissioners voice are represented in any national forum shaping police leadership to ensure recommendations are grounded in operational experience and democratic accountability.

I, along with other Police and Crime Commissioners, are being consulted on our insights and expertise to identify best practice and learning and I welcome the opportunity to engage with this process.

10. Police funding settlement

The Autumn Statement is expected on November 26, 2025, where it is hoped that further detail will be available around the 2026-27 Police Settlement along with indicative figures for the remaining two years of the Comprehensive Spending Review period.

The detail of the provisional settlement for Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly is expected in the latter half of December with the final date likely to be December 17, 2025. This will provided details of the provisional settlement of core grant along with any specific grant details.

All members of the Police and Crime Panel are invited to an online briefing from the OPCC Chief Executive and Treasurer about the implications for the precept on January 8, 2026, at 5pm.



11. Annual report

The annual report which sets out the work of my office in 2024-25 has now been finalised and formally published on my office's website. The report provides a detailed account of progress made against the priorities of the previous Police and Crime Plan, highlighting achievements across community safety, victim services, and organisational performance.

In preparing the report, my office explored options for producing both an easy-read and a youth-focused version to improve accessibility and engagement. However, the additional design and production costs were found to be prohibitive within existing budgets.

However, this year the report is available in an improved digital format, offering interactive navigation to help the reader easily find the required information. It includes a links to a range of video content to provide further detail on work undertaken by the office.

The annual report is published on the OPCC website here https://bit.ly/3Lk9t5D.



Alison Hernandez

Police and Crime Commissioner for Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly

Contact for further information:

Bridget Batchelor

Communications and Public Engagement Manager

Bridget.batchelor@devonandcornwall.pnn.police.uk

Report prepared on November 12, 2025.





Devon and Cornwall Police and Crime Panel 21st November 2025

OFFICE OF THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER Briefing note: Community cohesion

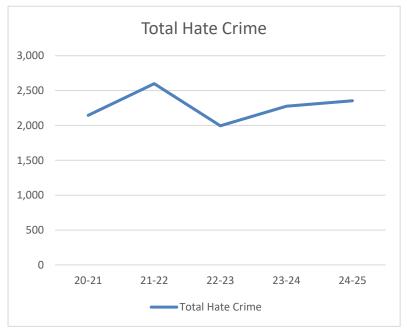
1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Community tensions have a significant impact on the wellbeing of individuals and communities, and public authorities must work together to address these tensions, promote cohesion and ensure that everyone living and working in our communities feels safe and connected.
- 1.2 Our society is becoming more polarised. Both locally and across the country, communities have experienced an increase in tension. In August 2024, widespread unrest and violent disorder broke out in many towns and cities across the county, including in Plymouth, following the traumatic murders of three young girls in Southport in July of that year.
- 1.3 Organised demonstrations over the summer from anti-immigration and far right groups, anti-fascist counter demonstrations, pro-Palestinian groups, transgender rights groups, gender-critical groups, and others, along with the displaying of and the response to St George's Cross and Union flags in public places has brought into sharp focus the tensions, and surfaced underlying divisions present in our communities. Yearly increases in hate crime have been reported both locally and nationally, and the terrorist attack on a synagogue in Manchester last month resulting in the tragic loss of two lives, has increased feelings of fear and uncertainty amongst many communities.
- 1.4 Local authorities have a significant role to play in tackling inequalities, building resilient communities and preventing extremism and hate crime. Through the Localism Act 2011, local authorities are afforded a general power of competence which empowers them to promote community cohesion by undertaking projects and activities to improve their area's social, economic, or environmental well-being, without needing to find a specific law for each action. The Commissioner works alongside leaders in local government as do the police, to support this endeavour.
- 1.5 As well as upholding the law, preventing crime and pursuing justice, police forces have a key role in protecting and reassuring communities. Police and Crime Commissioners can use their convening role to bring community safety and criminal justice partners together to ensure that work in this area is joined up.
- 1.6 Devon and Cornwall have a long track record of welcoming refugees and those who are fleeing conflict and seeking asylum and is proud to do so.



2.0 Hate Crime

- 2.1 In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the agreed definition of a hate crime is any criminal offence which is perceived by the victim or any other person to be motivated by hostility or prejudice towards a person's:
 - race or perceived race
 - religion or perceived religion
 - sexual orientation or perceived sexual orientation
 - disability or perceived disability
 - transgender identity or perceived transgender identity
- 2.2 Devon and Cornwall Police also recognise and record crimes motivated by hostility or prejudice towards a person's sex or gender as hate crimes. Crimes motivated by other forms of hostility or prejudice (i.e. age, alternative subcultures etc) can also be recorded as hate crime.
- 2.3 Hate crime accounts for approximately 2%¹ of all recorded crime in Devon and Cornwall. In Devon and Cornwall there were 1,995 hate crimes recorded by the force in the 12 months to August 2023. In the 12 months to August 2024 there were 2,276 hate crimes recorded, an increase of 14.1%. In the 12 months to August 2025 2,354 hate crimes were recorded, a further increase of 3.4% when compared to the previous year. A five-year comparison, from the beginning of September 2020 to the end of August 2025 is shown in the graph and table below.



(Source: Devon and Cornwall Police)



¹ Devon and Cornwall Police recorded crime, 12 months to August 2025

| Years | Total Hate Crime | % Change | |
|--------------------|------------------|----------|--------|
| 20-21 | 2,146 | | |
| 21-22 | 2,599 | 1 | 21.1% |
| 22-23 | 1,995 | | -23.2% |
| 23-24 | 2,276 | 1 | 14.1% |
| 24-25 | 2,354 | • | 3.4% |
| Grand Total | 11,370 | | |

(Source: Devon and Cornwall Police)

- 2.4 The most frequently recorded hate crime offence type is 'racial related' hate crimes and this offence type saw an increase of 9.4% or 114 crimes when comparing 12 months to August 2024 to 12 months to August 2025. Significant percentage increases were also seen in hate crime offence types 'religion or belief related' (+13.1% or 21 crimes) and 'disability related' (+10.6% or 37 crimes) when comparing the same period.
- 2.5 Hate crime is widely understood to be vastly under reported nationally. The reasons for this are complex and wide ranging but this is likely impacted by reduced public trust and confidence in policing and in other statutory bodies by many communities, as well as victims fears of repercussions of reporting. Recent increases seen in police recorded hate crime may reflect a real increase in hate crime occurring, but increases could also reflect increased reporting.
- 2.6 Whilst Devon and Cornwall Police has seen a recent increase in recorded hate crime, the force has also seen increases in total recorded crime. Recorded crime increased by 5.6% when comparing the 12 months to June 2025 with the 12 months to June 2024.

3.0 What are Devon and Cornwall Police doing to address community tensions, and how are they working with local authorities?

3.1 Devon and Cornwall Police continue to work with communities, local authorities and wider partners to promote community cohesion and tackle community tensions.

Community engagement and support

3.2 The force's diverse communities' engagement officers work across Devon and Cornwall with the aim of breaking down barriers and building trust, confidence and understanding with communities who are often marginalised and with those who have historically lacked confidence in policing. Engagement officers work with communities to build relationships and provide trusted points of contact for communities who might otherwise disengage from policing. Engagement officers regularly attend advocacy groups, prayers at places of worship, and multiple cultural and religious events throughout the year, maintaining a visible presence and source



of support to communities, partners and other stakeholders.

- 3.3 Building relationships and connections in this way means that engagement officers can identify risks and tensions within communities at the earliest opportunity, often enabling them to prevent the escalation of tensions and harm. Engagement officers are also able to work with communities to promote a better understanding of hate crime and encourage reporting, including through third party reporting methods, which can be used by victims who do not have the confidence to report to police directly.
- 3.4 These long term, trusted relationships with communities enable engagement officers to reach out to communities and stakeholders following national and international events, such as the terrorist attack on a synagogue in Manchester in October. Engagement officers were able to reach out to the Jewish community, visit places of worship and provide a message of reassurance and support, whilst simultaneously reaching out to the Muslim community, where there were also safety concerns within the community.

Protests and demonstrations

- 3.5 In the planning for and management of protests and demonstrations, the police must balance the rights of groups and individuals to have their voice heard effectively, with the rights of local businesses and residents who can experience excessive disruption and sometimes threats to safety. If police reasonably believe that a protest may lead to serious public disorder, damage to property or serious disruption to the community, police forces have powers available to impose conditions on protests and demonstrations, including controlling the route, and limiting the duration and location of protests.
- 3.6 In advance of demonstrations, Devon and Cornwall Police undertake significant tactical planning, engagement with event organisers, key stakeholders and community leaders, including local councillors, to ensure that the force is in the best position possible to deliver their core responsibilities of the protection of life and property, the prevention of crime and bringing offenders to justice and preserving order to maintain the King's peace.
- 3.7 The two opposing protests which took place in Exeter on 25th October 2025 brought around 850 people into the city centre. Similar protests in Plymouth took place on 26th October with around 200 people present. The significant planning, which included conditions being imposed on both protest groups, extensive engagement with event organisers and a proportionate police presence at both locations on the day, resulted in minor disruption to the community and very little disorder, with only one arrest being made.
- 3.8 Over the last few months the force has managed several anti-immigration protests and counter protests outside the Hampton by Hilton hotel in Exeter, which is



currently being used by the Home Office to house asylum seekers. A dedicated neighbourhood officer has been embedded at the location providing community liaison and engagement since the hotel has been housing asylum seekers. When tensions surrounding the hotel increased and demonstrations began, the force brought specialist protest liaison teams to work alongside neighbourhood team, manage demonstrations and ensure the safety of participants, occupants and hotel staff. Neighbourhood teams continue to work closely with the hotel and the wider community to effectively manage remaining tensions.

Flying and painting of St George's cross and Union flags

- 3.9 Over the summer, both locally and nationally there has been an increase of St George's cross and Union flags being attached to street furniture and painted onto the road network.
- 3.10 Whilst Devon and Cornwall Police have received some reports related to flags, the role of the police in addressing these flags is limited. It is an offence under the Highways Act 1980, to affix items to lampposts or other structures on the highway without the consent of the highway authority, without reasonable excuse. It is also an offence under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to display a national flag (which is considered to be an advertisement) without the permission of the owner of the site it is on. The local authority has primary responsibility for enforcing both pieces of legislation and it is up to local authorities to decide how to deal with flags affixed to lampposts. The police will only remove a flag if there is a clear and evident risk to public safety or criminal damage, such as obstructing a view on a highway.
- 3.11 There is a role for policing where a local authority or other person makes a report to the police in relation to the affixing of flags to street furniture or the painting of the road network, where the police will seek to identify if any other substantive criminal offences (e.g. criminal damage, public order offences) have been committed, and record and investigate these as appropriate.

Tackling hate crime

- 3.12 Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) were introduced under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and bring together local partners (including police, fire and rescue authorities, local authorities, health partners and the probation service) to formulate and implement strategies to tackle crime, disorder and antisocial behaviour in their communities. All CSPs across Devon and Cornwall have a focus on hate crime, which includes prevention, promoting recording and improving community cohesion and feelings of safety.
- 3.13 Hate crime awareness week began on 11th October this year. This national week of action is held each year to encourage communities affected by hate crime, local authorities, police forces and other key partners to work together to tackle local hate crime issues. During this week the force promoted its Zero Tolerance to Hate Crime campaign through the local press and social media. The force also used



internal communications to ask officers and staff to use the week as a platform to engage with communities and to encourage victims and witnesses to report hate offences and remind officers and staff of the relevant policies and guidance available for hate crime, including guidance on recording hate crimes against officers and staff.

- 3.14 To ensure the police provide appropriate responses to hate crime and to enable organisational learning, the force holds hate crime scrutiny panels, where a sample of hate crime cases are reviewed, as well as hate crime reference groups, which examine the force's performance around hate crime. Both these groups include representation from the force's independent advisors, and they provide scrutiny, feedback and assurance to the force on the response to hate crime.
- 3.15 When victims of hate crime report to the police, over two thirds of victims are satisfied with the service that they receive. For the 12 months to August 2025, 69% of hate crime victims surveyed said that, when taking the whole experience into account, they were either fairly satisfied (14%), very satisfied (21%) or completely satisfied (35%). This victim satisfaction rate is in line with satisfaction rates for all crime which were also 69% for the same period.

4.0 What is the Commissioner doing to address community tensions in Devon and Cornwall?

4.1 The Commissioner's <u>Police and Crime Plan</u> aims to create safe, resilient, connected communities, where everyone plays their part to reduce crime. The Commissioner and her office continue to undertake a significant amount of activity in partnership with the force, local authorities, criminal justice partners and community leaders to better understand community tensions and promote community cohesion.

Working with local authorities and criminal justice partners

- 4.2 As Chair of the Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB) the Commissioner brings criminal justice partners together to provide oversight and promote collaboration across the system. This is not yet a statutory partnership and is run on goodwill only.
- 4.3 The role that this partnership played in mitigating the impacts of disorder last summer is recognised by the Local Government Association in their forthcoming guidance on social cohesion, with a best practice case study describing our local partnership response:



In August 2024, Devon and Cornwall experienced significant public disorder, particularly in Plymouth. The violence, racism, and criminal damage that occurred prompted a swift and unified response from the Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB). Recognising the importance of a coordinated approach, the LCJB convened an extraordinary meeting of strategic leaders across the criminal justice system. This led to the publication of an open letter to the community, condemning the violence and reaffirming support for lawful protest while rejecting criminal behaviour.

The incident highlighted the value of having an established strategic network capable of rapid mobilisation and response. The LCJB's actions were later recognised as best practice nationally.

- 4.4 Within 72 hours of the Plymouth riot occurring, four men were arrested, charged, convicted and imprisoned for taking part, sending a clear message to the public that this kind of criminal behaviour would not be tolerated in Devon and Cornwall. In total, 24 people were charged, with 23 people sentenced 16 of these receiving custodial sentences.
- 4.5 The Commissioner also offered funding to Plymouth City Council following the riots to provide a restorative justice approach for the city, but this was not taken up.
- 4.6 'Addressing disproportionality' across the criminal justice system has been a priority for the LCJB since 2024. Work to deliver this priority includes commissioning a programme of work to identify gaps in data collection with the criminal justice system. The LCJB have agreed an action to understand the wider community impact following the disorder in Plymouth in summer 2024. Plymouth City Council have also commissioned a piece of work to understand the community impact and tensions, and the LCJB will receive and review the findings of this, which will inform the LCJB's own action in this area.
- 4.7 CCTV plays an important part in keeping communities safe and helping the force identify offenders. To support wider community safety the PCC has agreed the necessary investment to connect both Plymouth City Council and Exeter City Council CCTV infrastructure to Devon and Cornwall Police control rooms and Silver (tactical) rooms. This will give the police the ability to view live CCTV footage during critical incidents such as riots and civil unrest.
- 4.8 The Commissioner has also made available funding for parish, town councils and their equivalents and voluntary sector organisations to apply for funding to support investment in their CCTV infrastructure. Over 60 applications were made against a total funding pot of £125,000, (with a maximum of £10,000 per applicant). Applicants will be notified of the result early in December.



Supporting communities and victims

- 4.9 The OPCC contributes funding to support victims of crime, including hate crime. These services support everyone including people who have protected characteristics. People with lived experience or have similar backgrounds to those receiving the services are available to help. This means that the providers of these services can have a deeper understanding of victims' needs, build trust with victims and provide tailored support.
- 4.10 The Commissioner continues to invest in schemes and services which divert young people away from crime and antisocial behaviour, prevent criminal exploitation, and provide young people with the support they need to succeed and contribute positively to their community. The OPCC has invested £30,000 this year to match fund the Exeter City Community Trust's new programme for 11 to 18-year-olds called Change Our Path (COP) which hopes to tackle and reduce youth offending and help engage young people who are not thriving in school. A similar scheme to help prevent criminal exploitation of young people through mentoring and activities is also being provided through Plymouth Argyle. It covers the Torbay area and is part-funded by the OPCC though a grant of £30,000.
- 4.11 The OPCC also commissions an antisocial behaviour outreach service across Devon and Cornwall. The service provides targeted youth work to support young people who are involved in antisocial behaviour or at risk of becoming involved in crime, to build resilience and prevent harmful or criminal behaviour.

Holding the Chief Constable to account

- 4.13 As part of her holding to account role, the Commissioner meets regularly with the Chief Constable and continues to be fully appraised of all major events, demonstrations and other incidents affecting community cohesion. The police play an important role in supplying the facts to locally elected members in order to enable localised interventions online to stop incorrect rumours spreading.
- 4.14 In 2023 the Commissioner published the findings of her scrutiny inquiry which examined hate crime prevalence and the policing response in Devon and Cornwall. The Commissioner concluded that the police were working hard to tackle hate crime and provide a good service to the public, noting however that hate crime continues to be under reported and that issues such as lack of trust and confidence in policing were contributing to underreporting. Hate crime prevalence continues to be monitored and reviewed by the Commissioner's office.
- 4.15 Following the riots in Plymouth in summer 2024, the Commissioner's office published an insight report which considered the appropriateness of the policing response to the riots and any evidence of a 'two-tier' policing approach. The report concluded that in relation to the local policing of protests, civil unrest and riots, there was no substantive evidence that two-tier policing existed in the policing response to the disorder that occurred. The Commissioner's office produced this report in



advance of the Government's scrutiny. The report can be found here: <u>Two-tier-policing-OPCC-insight-report-2024-FINAL1.pdf</u>

Briefing note end

Contact for further information:

Vicky CHURCH

Accountability and Standards Officer
Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Devon and Cornwall

opcc@dc-pcc.gov.uk

Report prepared on 12th November 2025





Devon and Cornwall Police and Crime Panel 21st November 2025

OFFICE OF THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER Briefing note: Changes to statutory guidance on firearms licensing

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Devon and Cornwall Police's Firearms and Explosives Licensing Unit (FELU) is responsible for ensuring safe and lawful use of firearms across our force area. The department manages firearm licence applications, renewals, and enquiries from members of the public.
- 1.2 In August 2025, the government amended its statutory guidance for firearms licensing. These changes included strengthening the requirements made of referees, increased consideration of an applicant's history of domestic abuse, dishonesty and integrity, and increased police powers to refuse or revoke certificates.
- 1.3 This briefing note provides a response to the following three questions:
 - i. What is the status of Devon and Cornwall Police's firearms licensing waiting lists?
 - ii. What are the new statutory guidelines?
 - iii. What are the financial implications of the guidelines? If there is a shortfall, how is this being addressed?

2.0 What is the status of Devon and Cornwall Police's firearms licensing waiting lists?

- 2.1 The backlog of historic firearms applications has been dealt with.
- 2.2 In the 12 months to October 2025, a total of 7,679 applications (grants and renewals) were received by the FELU. Of this total, 86% were processed within the national target of 112 days, with the average time taken 71 days.
- 2.3 There is variation in processing times between grants and renewals. Renewals of pre-existing firearms licenses saw 88% completed in 112 days in the 12 months to August 2025. The granting of new firearms licenses to new applicants saw 55% processed in 112 days in the same timeframe.

3.0 What are the new statutory guidelines?

3.1 The new statutory guidance was published in August 2025 and covers the processes and criteria for assessing suitability to possess firearms (and to be a Registered Firearms Dealer). It is intended to assist Police Chief Officers in carrying out appropriate, proportionate and consistent checks and assessments so as to come to an informed decision.



- 3.2 The 2025 guidance has 71 changes from the previous 2023 guidance. The new guidance strengthens checks and matters relating to:
 - Suitability
 - Continuous assessment
 - Record keeping
 - Duration of certificates and registrations
- 3.3 The revised Home Office firearms licensing guidance is attached at appendix A.
- 4.0 What are the financial implications of the guidelines? If there is a shortfall, how is this being addressed?
- 4.1 At this time the police have identified a small number of direct financial implications including a subscription cost for national mandatory training at £36,000 per annum. The requirements for strengthening the checks and review of applicants will impact the time taken to process licence applications. Given the short period of time since implementation of the new guidance it has not yet been possible to fully assess the impact of these changes.

Briefing note end

Contact for further information:

Jonathan BACK

Head of Performance and Scrutiny
Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Devon and Cornwall opcc@dc-pcc.gov.uk
Report prepared on 11th November 2025





FIREARMS LICENSING:

Statutory Guidance for Chief Officers of Police

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. The inspection of police firearms licensing by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services in 2014-2015 highlighted the need for more consistency in the application of firearms licensing law by police forces and recommended that existing Home Office guidance be put on a statutory footing. This was supported by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland in its March 2018 inspection of firearms licensing. The Government subsequently introduced a power for the Secretary of State to issue statutory guidance to chief officers of police through an amendment to the Firearms Act 1968 ('the 1968 Act') made by the Policing and Crime Act 2017.
- 1.2. The Policing and Crime Act 2017 inserted section 55A into the 1968 Act, allowing the Secretary of State to issue guidance to chief officers of police as to the exercise of their functions under, or in connection with, the 1968 Act. Chief officers of police in England, Wales and Scotland must have regard to such guidance. This means that the Statutory Guidance must be taken into account, and if there is a decision to depart from it, there must be clear reasons to justify that departure on a case-by-case basis. This is important in order to achieve the consistency in police licensing practice which underpins the introduction of the Statutory Guidance for Chief Officers of Police on firearms licensing. This version of the Statutory Guidance, which comes into effect on 1 August 2025 replaces all previous versions.

Purpose

- 1.3. The guidance covers the processes and criteria for assessing suitability to possess firearms¹ and to be a Registered Firearms Dealer ("RFD"). It is intended to assist chief officers in carrying out appropriate, proportionate and consistent checks and assessments in order to come to an informed decision.
- 1.4. Under section 44(3A) of the 1968 Act, the court (or sheriff in Scotland) hearing an appeal against a police firearms licensing decision must have regard to any guidance issued under section 55A that is relevant to the appeal.
- 1.5. The guidance is to be applied to all applications received, and licensing decisions made, on or after its publication, including reviews of suitability of existing certificate holders and RFDs.
- 1.6. This guidance sits alongside the non-statutory Home Office guide on firearms licensing law and the College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice (APP) on firearms licensing. Whilst there is no legal duty to follow the Home Office guide or the College of Policing APP, these are provided to assist chief officers in interpreting the law and setting operational practices respectively.
- 1.7. To assist the police in complying with the Statutory Guidance, there is a mandatory national training course on firearms licensing that is provided by the College of Policing for police forces in England and Wales, and which complements and

¹ The term "firearms" is generally used in this document to refer to all lethal barrelled weapons, including shotguns, unless a distinction is required, for example, to distinguish issues to do with firearms certificates as against shotgun certificates.

references this guidance as well as the College's Authorised Professional Practice (APP).

- 1.8. This guidance does not apply to the licensing of air weapons in Scotland.
- 1.9. Police checks and assessments for licences administered by the Home Office or the Scottish Government are subject to direct oversight by those bodies on a case-by-case basis and do not come under this guidance. However, knowledge of the principles and processes that apply to firearm and shotgun certificates and the certification of RFDs will inform the consideration of licences administered by the Home Office or the Scottish Government and should provide the framework for the police in carrying out the appropriate checks and assessments.

2. Suitability checks

- 2.1 This chapter sets out the checks that chief officers should complete to assess whether a person can be permitted to possess firearms without danger to public safety or to the peace. The checks apply to the grant or renewal of a shotgun or firearm certificate, or for certification as an RFD.
- 2.2 The guidance sets out the standards which must be applied to ensure a thorough and consistent approach to assessing the risk to public safety.

Background checks

- 2.3 Background checks are to be completed for every applicant who applies for either grant or renewal of a certificate or certification, unless checks were carried out within the last six months as part of continuous monitoring of existing certificate holders and where no concerns have come to light previously.²
- 2.4 All applicants should be checked against the widest relevant databases to gather conviction, intelligence and counter terrorism data. If such checks reveal any concerns as to suitability, the police will need to consider what further investigative action should be taken.
- 2.5 Where the applicant is a UK national and is known to have been resident outside the UK for a significant period (more than six consecutive months) a background check (criminal records check or equivalent) in the relevant country or countries should be completed. If not provided in English, an official translation should be obtained at the expense of the applicant.
- 2.6 Where the applicant is a foreign national, a background check (criminal records check or equivalent) should also be completed in the applicant's home country. The applicant should be required to provide a background check (such as a police certificate or equivalent) from their country of nationality and any other country where they have lived. This will be at the applicant's expense, including an official translation into English.
- 2.7 Where no background check is available, whether for a foreign national or a UK national with a significant period of residence abroad, the application should normally be refused, unless there are exceptional circumstances. Exceptional circumstances may include, for example, long-term residence in the UK and/or in the British armed forces (for example, fifteen years or more) combined with the absence of any of the factors set out in paragraphs 3.9 to 3.12 of this guidance.
- 2.8 For foreign nationals and UK nationals with periods of residency abroad, the available background check may not be a criminal records check. For example, it may be a police certificate. In these cases, chief officers must determine the weight to be given to the document.
- 2.9 Where the applicant has been resident in another force area for a significant period (more than six consecutive months) a check against local intelligence records for that

² The term "certificate holder" is generally used in this document to include RFDs.

- force should be completed, although the final decision on the application must be taken by the chief officer in the force area in which the applicant currently resides.
- 2.10 Any previous applications in the last 10 years, including those made in another force area, must be checked for any relevant information or recorded concerns.
- 2.11 If an applicant's period of residency abroad or in another force area has been subject to a previous check, it does not need to be conducted again. It is essential that this check is recorded on the relevant licensing system.
- 2.12 Any other background checks deemed necessary (such as those set out at paragraphs 2.55 2.64 below) must also be completed.
- 2.13 If any new information comes to light as a result of background checks, for example if the applicant's circumstances have changed materially since the original grant or last renewal, or if they are otherwise considered higher risk, for example due to relevant information about behaviour or a medical condition, it is likely that more extensive enquiries will be necessary than if none of the above apply.
- 2.14 All records found relating to the applicant should be recorded on the application file. This will include instances where the applicant is a victim, witness or associate rather than a suspect. Assessing the relevance and weight of any records found is covered in Chapter 3 of this guidance.

Home visits and inspections

- 2.15 A home visit must always be carried out before granting a certificate to a first-time applicant and, afterwards, further visits may be carried at the discretion of the police.
- 2.16 The home visit must include an interview³ to discuss all issues relevant to suitability as set out in this guidance and must include inspection of security arrangements. The police should always interview the applicant's partner and other members of the household during the home visit unless there is a strong reason for not doing so. Where there are considered to be such strong reasons, the position should be agreed with the relevant manager, and properly recorded. Such interviews are crucial in providing the police with a more comprehensive picture of both the applicant and other household members' circumstances, including in relation to domestic circumstances or possible mental wellbeing issues, in order to assist in undertaking a comprehensive assessment of suitability. The interview with the applicant's partner and other members of the household must be undertaken separately from the interview with the applicant, and without the applicant being present, and any disclosure which leads to a decision to refuse (or revoke) a certificate should be carefully communicated so as to minimise to the greatest extent possible the risk to the partner or other household member. If there is the possibility or evidence of domestic abuse (see paragraphs 2.57 to 2.64 below), or other wellbeing concerns, wider enquiries and investigations must take place.

³ 'Interview' in this context does not mean an interview as defined by Section 11 of Code C of the Police and Criminal Evidence Codes of Practice. It should be taken to mean a discussion with the applicant, household member or other person.

- 2.17 As indicated above, the home visit must include an inspection of the arrangements for the secure storage of firearms and shotguns when not in use. It is a condition of the issue of a firearm or shotgun certificate that they must be stored securely in order to prevent, so far as is reasonably practicable, access to the guns by any unauthorised persons. The certificate should not be granted where there is any concern or doubt about the adequacy of the security arrangements or the applicant's ability or willingness to keep their firearms or shotguns secure at all times. Guidelines on security are set out in the Firearms Security Handbook⁴.
- 2.18 Home visits and inspections should be considered at the renewal of a certificate. If, following an application for renewal, it is determined that an inspection of security arrangements and other aspects of the home visit are not required (see paragraphs 2.69 and 2.70 below) an interview, if required, can be completed by an online video call or over the telephone although a home visit is preferable. The police may ask the applicant to supplement such a remote interview with further evidence, such as photos or videos, submitted by the applicant electronically.
- 2.19 RFD applicants must also be subject to an interview and inspection of their place or places of business and any place where firearms are to be kept. An inspection must take place at both grant and renewal, regardless of the level of risk assessment. Guidance on RFD inspections is covered in the Annex to this guidance.
- 2.20 Home visits in connection with grant and renewal applications should always be made by prior appointment and take place at a mutually convenient time.

Referees

- 2.21 Applicants for both firearm and shotgun certificates are required to provide the names of two referees. Referees may be of any background, but must meet the following criteria:
 - (i) resident in Great Britain;
 - (ii) have known the applicant personally for at least two years. The general expectation is that the referees will have known the applicant for the most recent two years and that they have had a reasonable degree of contact with the applicant during that period;
 - (iii) be of good character⁵;
 - (iv) is not a member of the applicant's family⁶; and
 - (v) is not a serving police officer; a police employee; a Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC); a member of staff of a PCC; a member of, or a member of staff of, the Scottish Police Authority; or a Registered Firearms Dealer.
- 2.22 Information from referees is an important part of information gathering in order to undertake a full assessment of suitability. The police should exercise professional

⁴ Current version available at Firearms Security Handbook 2020

⁵ The police must carry out some background checks on the referee in order to determine his/her character.

⁶ 'Family' is taken to mean the following: wife, husband, mother, father, son, daughter, sister, brother, aunt, uncle, grandparent and in-laws or step relations as above. Cousins are not regarded as immediate family, but co-habiting or civil partners or partners in a same-sex marriage should be considered as 'family' for these purposes and should not be accepted.

curiosity and judgement when considering the applicant's choice of referees; including police checks to confirm the suitability of those put forward. If the police consider that a referee is unsatisfactory, the applicant should be invited to put forward an alternative person (or persons). If an applicant has changed referees between an application for the grant of a certificate and a renewal application five years later, or between subsequent renewals, the reason behind this change should be explored to ensure that there is a good or satisfactory reason for the change and that there is nothing of concern behind the change.

- 2.23 Before granting a certificate to a first-time applicant, both of the applicant's referees must be contacted. Referees must be contacted by telephone, by an online video call or by a home visit, depending on the risk assessment. The police should ask the referees about any matter that they consider to be relevant to the applicant's suitability to possess firearms.
- 2.24 Referees must also be provided in support of an application for renewal. At that point, chief officers should determine whether it is necessary to contact referees, but the assumption should always be that referees will be contacted unless there are specific good reasons why this is not necessary. As noted above, particular attention should be paid in cases where the referees have changed since the original application. While there are many good reasons why a different referee or referees are provided at renewal (e.g. because of a move of location, change of circumstance, the death of an original referee etc) the police should be prepared to look into the reasons why the referees have changed, and to look more critically at the renewal application if the change of referee(s) is possibly linked to broader issues that might be a concern, and which might affect suitability to hold a firearm.
- 2.25 When contacting referees, the police must enquire about any matter relating to the applicant's suitability to possess firearms. There is no definitive set of questions to be asked, as the firearms enquiry officer must ask whatever they consider to be appropriate to the application and suitability to possess firearms. Referees must be asked if they know of any reason that might be relevant to the decision on whether the individual should be granted a certificate or their ability to possess and use a gun safely. The emphasis of the check with the referee will be in terms of the applicant's character and background, and what the applicant is like as an individual. Referees must also be asked if they understand their responsibilities as a referee, are aware of the guidance for referees which sets out those responsibilities, and confirm that they know who to contact should they have any concerns regarding the applicant's suitability in the future. Referees should be aware that, if granted, applicants will have access to firearms over the next five years and, if necessary, during that time they should always contact the police if they have any concerns about the licence holder.

Information about medical suitability

2.26 It is the responsibility of the applicant to obtain information about their medical suitability from their General Practitioner (GP) or another suitably qualified doctor

⁷ Further information can be found in the Guide for Referees which forms part of the application form for the grant or renewal of a firearm and/or shotgun certificate (Form 201).

- registered with the General Medical Council (GMC)⁸. The medical proforma included as part of the firearm application must be used for this purpose. The completed medical proforma must be forwarded to the police firearms licensing department dealing with their application. When the medical information is being provided to the police by a doctor from a private company, the doctor must first receive the applicant's medical information direct from the GP practice and not via the applicant.
- 2.27 Chief officers must consider information provided by a suitably qualified GMC-registered doctor for every person who applies for either the grant or renewal of a firearm or shotgun certificate, or to be registered as a firearms dealer, to assess any issues regarding medical suitability. However, this may not be required for an RFD who is already a firearm certificate holder because any relevant medical information will have already been considered as part of the firearms licensing application. If an applicant does not have a GP in the UK, they will not be able to fulfil the criteria to be issued with a firearm or shotgun certificate⁹.
- 2.28 In July 2019, the Home Office, the National Police Chiefs Council and the British Medical Association agreed a Memorandum of Understanding which sets out the respective roles and responsibilities of police and doctors regarding the medical assessment of firearms applicants and the ongoing monitoring of those in possession of a firearms certificate¹⁰. In Scotland similar arrangements are set out in a joint letter from the Chief Medical Officer and Police Scotland, dated 25 January 2022¹¹. These agreements are clear that the responsibility for deciding whether or not to grant or renew a firearm or shotgun certificate is entirely a matter for the Chief Officer of Police. In carrying out this function it is appropriate for the police to consider wider evidence relating to suitability, including medical evidence. Information provided by the applicant's GP or another suitably qualified doctor will help to inform the police decision, but it does not alter the principle and fact that the decision whether or not to grant is made solely by the police.

Information sharing between the GP and the police

- 2.29 The application form requires the applicant to declare any relevant medical conditions. The police may approach the applicant's GP to obtain relevant medical information, both during the application process and at any time during the validity of the certificate, once granted, if there are concerns about the applicant's continued fitness to possess firearms safely.
- 2.30 Doctors owe a duty of confidentiality to their patients, but they also have a wider duty to protect and promote the health of patients and the public¹². Where a firearms applicant or certificate holder may pose a risk to themselves and/or others, including

⁸ The term 'suitably qualified GMC-registered doctor' is used in this document to refer to a doctor with a full, specialist or GP (rather than provisional) GMC registration and a licence to practise (including where this doctor is providing this service for a private company).

⁹ Military personnel who are posted abroad and have an MoD GP may still be regarded as resident in the UK for licensing purposes.

¹⁰ MOU between BMA, HO and Police re medical applicants (England & Wales)

¹¹ Chief Medical Officer - final version - SGHD-CMO(2022) 5 - Guidance for Information Sharing Requirement between Police and General Practitioners (GPs) and Registered.

¹² GMC. Confidentiality: good practice in handling patient information (2017). Para 60 GMC Guidance for Doctors - confidentiality and good practice in handling patient information

in circumstances where the GP may be aware of instances of domestic abuse, the GP should, depending on the individual circumstances, share relevant information with the police on the following grounds:

- with the individual's consent;
- on public interest grounds; or
- in some circumstances, if it is legally required.

Detailed information on the potential grounds for disclosing information by GPs can be found in the GMC's guidance on confidentiality at www.gmc-uk.org. The GMC is the regulator for doctors.

Medical information required by the police

- 2.31 When a person applies for a firearm or shotgun certificate or to be registered as a firearms dealer, the applicant will ask their GP, or a suitably qualified GMC-registered doctor, to provide information to the police which will confirm whether or not the applicant is or has been diagnosed or treated for any relevant medical condition which could affect their ability to possess a firearm safely. A medical proforma to be used for this purpose is part of the firearms application form and should be detached by the applicant and passed by them to the doctor for completion. This process is also to be used for the renewal of certificates.
- 2.32 The doctor should provide information based on a check of the applicant's full medical history. If there is a gap in the history supplied by the doctor, for example if the record from birth is not provided, the police should make a judgement as to whether the history provided is sufficient to make a decision as to suitability. If there are gaps in the medical record of a foreign national while they were resident abroad, the police will expect the applicant to have made all reasonable efforts to provide their medical history before they consider the application, taking into account the merits of the case as a whole.

Role of doctors in firearms licensing

- 2.33 Doctors provide medical information to assist the police in their firearms licensing function and to protect public safety. They should not be asked to give general access to an applicant's medical record as this may result in doctors being in breach of the Data Protection Act 2018. Nor should they be asked to either endorse or oppose firearm or shotgun applications. Responsibility for the decision about whether a person is suitable to be granted a certificate lies with the police, not the doctor.
- 2.34 The medical proforma invites the doctor either to send the medical information direct to the relevant police firearms licensing department by secured NHS email or by post, or to return the completed medical proforma to the applicant to enable him or her to send it to the police along with their application form. An application for a certificate received by the police must not be granted without such medical information. If medical information is not provided, the police should inform the applicant that the application cannot be progressed in the absence of the required information from the doctor and will be refused. The police may contact the applicant, or the doctor

directly, to request missing medical information before making such a refusal, at the chief officer's discretion.

Relevant medical conditions

- 2.35 Medical conditions that could be relevant include:
 - (i) Acute Stress Reaction or an acute reaction to the stress caused by a trauma, including post-traumatic stress disorder;
 - (ii) suicidal thoughts or self-harm or harm to others;
 - (iii) depression or anxiety;
 - (iv) dementia;
 - (v) mania, bipolar disorder or a psychotic illness;
 - (vi) a personality disorder;
 - (vii) a neurological condition: for example, Multiple Sclerosis, Parkinson's or Huntington's diseases, or epilepsy;
 - (viii) alcohol or drug abuse; and
 - (ix) any other mental or physical condition, or combination of conditions, which may affect the safe possession of firearms or shotguns.
- 2.36 The list above is not intended to be exhaustive. Doctors should consider any mental, physical or neuro-developmental condition which may affect the individual's safe possession of a firearm or shotgun, whether now or in the future. See also paragraphs 3.40 to 3.42 of this guidance relating to the provisions of the Mental Health Act 1983 and/or the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003.

Payment of a fee

2.37 Whether or not the doctor requests that a fee be paid by the applicant before responding to the request to supply information to the police and, if so, the level of that fee, are matters between the applicant and the doctor. It is not an issue that the police should become involved in.

Requesting medical information from a GMC-registered doctor other than the applicant's own GP

- 2.38 The supply of relevant medical information from a doctor who has access to the applicant's medical record is necessary to determine the level of risk to public safety arising from the grant of a certificate. The certificate must not be granted or renewed if this information is not provided.
- 2.39 An applicant may, if they wish, approach a suitably qualified GMC-registered doctor, other than their GP, to supply the relevant medical information to the police firearms licensing department.

- 2.40 Where the doctor indicates that there are relevant medical issues and the police require further medical information in order to consider the application, the police may, at the chief officer's discretion, contact the doctor directly to discuss the application or seek further clarification. If necessary, the police should ask the applicant to contact the doctor to obtain further information, such as a medical report, about these issues. Any fee required by the doctor at this stage is a matter between the doctor and the applicant. If, having received further information, the police still have concerns about any of the medical information given or wish to obtain a more detailed report, they may request this from the doctor, the applicant's GP or, if appropriate, from a relevant specialist. The police should meet the costs associated with the provision of this additional report.
- 2.41 If the applicant has declared a relevant medical condition on the application form the police may ask the applicant to obtain and pay for, if required, a medical report to assist with their consideration of medical suitability. If a further medical report is subsequently required by the police to assist with consideration of the application, the police will pay for this.

The role of Local Medical Committees

- 2.42 Good working relationships between the police and local GPs will help to ensure effective information sharing arrangements. This may include communication about the importance of information supplied by GP practices to independent doctors who have been asked to provide essential medical information for an application.
- 2.43 Engagement with the Local Medical Committee can help to secure a consistent set of arrangements in place across a local area. For example, if all parties are in agreement to developments or innovations that help to speed up application processes without compromising public safety, this is likely to be acceptable, provided that any variations from the processes described in this guidance are delivered on a voluntary basis, and that the procedures described here are adhered to if any concerns are expressed by the applicant.

Firearms reminder on the patient's medical record

- 2.44 The medical proforma asks the applicant's GP to place a 'firearm application made' marker on the patient record so that the GP is able to notify the police if a new relevant medical condition arises after the proforma has been sent, but before the police have made a decision on the application.
- 2.45 When a firearm or shotgun certificate is granted or renewed or a person is registered as a firearms dealer, the police must contact the applicant's GP to ask them to place a firearms marker on the applicant's medical record to indicate that they have been issued with a firearm certificate, so that a 'firearms held' marker can replace the 'application made' marker. The police must also advise the GP in all cases when an application is refused, revoked, cancelled or expires, so that the firearm marker can be removed. The request from the police to the GP can be sent by email.
- 2.46 The purpose of having a marker on the medical record is to provide a reminder to the GP that they may need to notify the police if a person begins to suffer from a relevant

- medical condition, or a relevant condition worsens significantly, specifically when this may affect the person's ability to possess a firearm safely.
- 2.47 The 'firearms held' marker remains on the patient record for five years. It is vital therefore that the police advise the GP of a certificate renewal as well as on first grant. This is added to the patient's record by the GP on a best endeavours basis, to reduce the risk that such relevant developments or changes are not reported to the police, which could endanger the certificate holder, members of his or her family, or the wider public.
- 2.48 Where the proforma has been provided by an independent doctor instead of the applicant's GP, the police must ensure that the request to place the firearms marker following grant is sent to the applicant's GP, and not to the independent doctor. This is because only the GP will have access to the GP IT patient record to place the firearm marker.
- 2.49 There is no requirement for GPs to monitor or assess a patient who currently holds a firearm certificate, but they should consider notifying the police if they become aware that relevant aspects of a certificate holder's circumstances have changed that mean they may no longer be safe to hold a firearms certificate. Doctors owe a duty of confidentiality to their patients, but they also have a wider duty to protect and promote the health of patients and the public¹³. This is set out in the Memorandum of Understanding agreed between the Home Office, police and the British Medical Association in July 2019. Full consideration must be given to the security of the patient record once the marker has been applied.
- 2.50 Detailed information on the grounds for disclosing information can be found in the GMC's guidance on confidentiality at www.gmc-uk.org. It is open to a GP to approach the police at any time in order to pass on information of possible concern about an individual, whether a patient or not, who possesses firearms or is applying to do so.

Revocation, cancellation, expiry (without renewal) or refusal

2.51 The police must inform the GP within one month if a certificate is revoked or cancelled, if it expires and is not renewed, or if the application is refused. The GP can then remove the firearm marker from the patient's record.

Social media checks

2.52 Chief officers should consider whether to conduct an open-source check of the applicant's social media presence and activity. The purpose of this is to establish whether the applicant is openly and repeatedly expressing views, or sympathising with views, which may suggest that their access to firearms would be inappropriate or unsafe. Police forces must respect the individual's right to freedom of speech, but if there is any indication of a possible propensity to violence, illegality or emotional volatility, these should be considered by the police when considering whether the applicant is fit to hold a firearms certificate.

¹³ GMC. Confidentiality: good practice in handling patient information (2017). Para 60: <u>GMC Guidance for Doctors - confidentiality and good practice in handling patient information</u>

- 2.53 This check is intended to identify those who set out such views on open-source social media, and it may not capture those who are posting on social media more covertly, whether anonymously or under a pseudonym or on closed sites. Where there is a suspicion, through force intelligence or other sources for example, of such conduct online, chief officers should consider whether it is appropriate to conduct a more thorough investigation of the applicant's online activity.
- 2.54 If a more in-depth investigation into an applicant's social media activity is required which looks behind privacy settings, this could amount to activity regulated by the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000, Investigatory Powers (Scotland) Act 2000 or similar legislation and will need to meet the requirements set out there for authorisation.

Additional checks

- 2.55 Chief officers should carry out additional, non-routine, checks if, following the initial enquiries above, they believe them to be necessary to assess suitability fully. This might be, for example, where there have been allegations of violent behaviour or domestic abuse, including non-physical forms of abuse such as controlling and coercive behaviour by the applicant, or where there has been a failure to disclose a relevant medical condition. Factors that merit the carrying out of additional checks will depend on the circumstances of each individual case. Police forces are responsible for determining when additional checks should be undertaken.
- 2.56 More generally, these checks may include, but are not limited to:
 - checks with other agencies, such as health professionals other than the GP, social services, probation services or multi-agency groups;
 - (ii) checks with other licensing or regulatory bodies or Government enforcement agencies;
 - (iii) a drug or alcohol test;
 - (iv) credit or other financial checks;
 - (v) information obtained from open source social media;
 - (vi) interviews with individuals other than the applicant or their referees, for example, partners, ex-partners or representatives of shooting clubs attended by the applicant;
 - (vii) background checks on partners or other individuals living at, or with unsupervised access to, the applicant's address; and
 - (viii) checks where there is an indication of domestic abuse, as set out in paragraphs 2.57 to 2.64 below.

Additional checks by the police relating to domestic abuse

2.57 Evidence of domestic abuse is one of the most serious factors that should be taken into consideration in assessing an application. A statutory definition of domestic abuse, as set out in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 ("the 2021 Act"), incorporates a

range of abuses beyond physical violence and sets out that behaviour is abusive if it consists of any of the following: (a) physical or sexual abuse; (b) violent or threatening behaviour; (c) controlling or coercive behaviour; (d) economic abuse; (e) psychological, emotional or other abuse, It does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct¹⁴.

- 2.58 The police should perform their risk assessments based on the statutory definitions set out in sections 1 to 3 of the 2021 Act¹⁵. Statutory guidance to support understanding and implementation of the Act was published in July 2022¹⁶. Officers should have regard to both the 2021 Act and the guidance when exercising their functions. The definition of domestic abuse is in two parts. The first part deals with the relationship between the abuser and the abused. The second part defines what constitutes abusive behaviour. Both the person who is carrying out the behaviour and the person to whom the behaviour is directed towards must be aged 16 or over and they must be "personally connected" (as defined in section 2 of the 2021 Act). This ensures that different types of relationships are captured, including ex-partners and family members. The definition captures a range of different abusive behaviours, including physical, emotional and economic abuse and coercive and controlling behaviour. The statutory guidance, which supports the 2021 Act, provides further details on the different types of abuse and abusive behaviours that sit within those categories¹⁷.
- 2.59 The police will need to be satisfied that anybody who has perpetrated domestic abuse is not issued with, or retains, a firearms certificate, and officers must follow-up on any intelligence or reasonable suspicion that this could be the case. The firearms licensing manager will need to make an assessment of the risk, taking into account the nature of any previous history, when this occurred and the potential for a lawfully held firearm to be used in a domestic abuse situation. Where there is any information indicating that this may be a possibility or a risk, the police must:
 - (i) conduct an interview with the applicant's current partner and/or other family or household members of the applicant or their partner ensuring the safety of the possible victim is paramount at all times and appropriate risk planning has been undertaken. Given that domestic abuse may be hidden, interviews with the applicant's partner and other family members should routinely take place in all cases as set out in paragraph 2.16 above, as part of the required

¹⁴ The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to: psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional abuse. Controlling behaviour is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour. Coercive behaviour is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim. The Police Scotland definition of domestic abuse is as follows: Any form of physical, verbal, sexual, psychological or financial abuse which might amount to criminal conduct and which takes place within the context of a relationship. The relationship will be between partners (married, co-habiting, civil partnership or otherwise) or ex-partners. The abuse can be committed in the home or elsewhere, including online.

Domestic abuse is a devolved matter in Scotland and dealt with under the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018. Disclosure Scheme for Domestic Abuse Scotland - Police Scotland and Domestic Abuse - Safer.scot

¹⁶ Domestic Abuse Act 2021 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

¹⁷ Domestic Abuse Act 2021

- home visit, to help satisfy the police that there are no concerns around abusive behaviour:
- (ii) ensure that a Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment is completed to inform of any immediate risk, threats or any safeguarding that may be necessary; and
- (iii) talk with any previous partners, or anyone else who may have useful information, where known and proportionate. These conversations must not be in the presence of the applicant. Police should be mindful, however, of the potential for malicious allegations to be made in such cases.
- 2.60 Care must be taken to consider every case on its merits. The interviews referred to above need to be conducted with sensitivity, and officers should take into account that a victim of domestic abuse may be unable to speak openly with the police for fear of further violence or reprisals. Information provided during interview must be treated as confidential.
- 2.61 Firearms licensing team members must have received adequate training so that they are aware of the indicators of domestic abuse, how to support victims, make referrals for support to the appropriate persons or teams to ensure appropriate safeguarding has taken place. In England and Wales, they must be aware of the College of Policing's guidance in handling domestic abuse cases:

 https://www.college.police.uk/app/major-investigation-and-public-protection/domestic-abuse while in Scotland they need to be aware of the guidance set out in Police Scotland's Domestic Abuse Standard Operating Procedure and Toolkit: Marac toolkit for police SafeLives.
- 2.62 Firearms Licensing Teams should be aware that there may be a need to take active steps to protect an applicant's partner, family member or ex-partner from reprisals. This is particularly important in the event that the person is interviewed in connection with the application and provides information which leads to a refusal or revocation.
- 2.63 An applicant's partner or family member is not required to give approval for the issue of the firearms certificate, and this should be made clear to them. However, a request from a partner or family member that the applicant should not hold a certificate should be taken into account. The responsibility lies with the police to make the decision based on all the evidence available.
- 2.64 In domestic abuse cases, checks should include checks with multi-agency partners such as a multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC), a multi-agency tracking and co-ordination (MATAC), a multi-agency public protection arrangement (MAPPA), safeguarding hubs, and proactive police system checks for civil protective orders such as Non-Molestation Orders, Stalking Protection Orders, Domestic Violence Protection Notices and Orders and Restraining Orders. There is an opportunity to work closely and take advice from domestic abuse practitioners if appropriate. Further checks with other acquaintances may be made if considered necessary.

Registered Firearms Dealers: servants

- 2.65 Applicants for registration as a firearms dealer are required (by Form 116) to provide details of all servants who, by virtue of section 8(1) of the Firearms Act 1968, are or will be authorised to possess, purchase or acquire firearms and ammunition in the ordinary course of the applicant's business. RFDs are also required to provide details of servants if notifying the police of an additional place of business (Form 116A).
- 2.66 The police should complete background checks and any other checks deemed necessary for each servant. Medical checks are not required for RFD servants in all cases, although the police may request medical information if specific concerns arise regarding a particular person. Such requests must respect the medical confidentiality of the RFD servant and the information must not be disclosed further (including to the RFD).
- 2.67 If the police have reason to believe that the employment of a particular person poses a threat to public safety, they should take steps, in compliance with data protection legislation, to inform the RFD, in general terms, that there is a concern and the reason for their concern.
- 2.68 It is for the RFD to make the final decision on suitability of servants. However, exercising due diligence over employees should be taken into account when assessing the RFD's suitability. Failing to act on a police recommendation about a servant without good reason will tend to show that the RFD is unsuitable. In England and Wales, in line with the Common Law Disclosure Scheme, the police should disclose, in writing to the RFD, information regarding an individual in order to enable the employer to consider risk mitigation measures in respect of employment or work done in a voluntary capacity by them¹⁸. In Scotland, this is covered by the Information Sharing Standard Operating Procedure¹⁹.

Checks at renewal

- 2.69 Background checks and medical checks apply to renewals as they do to grants. Medical information from a suitably qualified GMC-registered doctor should be provided on application for renewal. Beyond this, it is a matter for chief officers to consider whether any additional checks are necessary (see paragraphs 2.55 and 2.56) but, in doing so, the primary consideration must be public safety.
- 2.70 Chief officers should consider applications for renewal on a case-by-case basis. In considering whether there is a need for additional checks, the chief officer may wish to take into account the following factors:
 - (i) certificate held for at least two cycles (10 years);
 - (ii) not coming to police attention adversely;
 - (iii) no concerns regarding firearms matters such as discrepancies in serial numbers;

¹⁸ Further guidance is available on the Common Law Police Disclosure web page on Gov.uk at the following link: Common Law Police Disclosure

¹⁹ Further guidance is available at: <u>Information sharing (Scotland)</u>

- (iv) no calls of an adverse nature to address, including in relation to suspected domestic abuse;
- (v) no intelligence suggesting criminality or other adverse concerns on behalf of the certificate holder or associates;
- (vi) recent contact with GP and no concerns raised and no failure to disclose a relevant medical condition; and
- (vii) no concerns raised by referees, partners, ex-partners, family members or anyone else, always being mindful of the potential for malicious allegations.
- 2.71 In light of the above considerations, the chief officer may make a judgement as to whether interviews with any of those listed in paragraph 2.70(vii) are required and, if so, whether these should be conducted in-person or by an online video call or over the telephone.

Disclosure and Data Protection

2.72 Chief officers should ensure that information about applicants, servants, or other individuals subject to checks is processed in accordance with the provisions of data protection legislation and the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002.

3. Assessing suitability

A: General principles

- 3.1 The tests for the grant, renewal or revocation of a firearm or shotgun certificate under the 1968 Act are set out at the end of this Chapter. The primary consideration should always be whether the applicant can be permitted to possess a lethal-barrelled weapon without posing any danger to public safety or to the peace.
- 3.2 All the suitability criteria set out in this Chapter apply equally to firearm and shotgun certificates, to RFDs and to decisions over grant, renewal and revocation. There are some additional requirements for RFDs relating to business need, premises and practices, which are covered in the Annex.
- 3.3 Each case should be subject to a risk assessment, considering all the available information in line with the factors for consideration set out in this Chapter. The chief officer must additionally be satisfied that the applicant has good reason for possessing firearms. General guidelines on good reason are included in the non-statutory Home Office guide on firearms licensing law²⁰.
- 3.4 Where an applicant or certificate holder moves to a different police force area during the period of police assessment, the police force where the person currently resides is responsible for the decision to issue or refuse the certificate. There must be good liaison and communication between all forces who have been involved in the assessment and the sharing of relevant information in relation to the person's suitability.
- 3.5 In limited circumstances, the law requires automatic refusal or grant (see paragraphs 3.49 and 3.50). There are also some factors, set out in paragraphs 3.28 to 3.30, that are sufficiently serious that their presence will usually result in refusal unless strong positive evidence is available to mitigate the risk.

Danger to public safety or the peace

- 3.6 A danger to public safety or the peace exists if the applicant's ownership of the firearm could result in harm to self or others or disturb good order in public. This harm or disturbance could result from the applicant's own conduct or from the conduct of others. Firearms can also be used to threaten or intimidate within a wider pattern of controlling behaviour, including in relation to domestic abuse, and this risk should be considered when assessing suitability.
- 3.7 The applicant need not have been involved in any physical violence to be considered unsuitable. Abusive behaviour, a lack of self-control, recklessness, disregard for the law in other areas, or a reasonable likelihood that the firearm could be accessed by another individual who is unsuitable, is more than likely to suggest that the applicant's ownership of the firearm could result in a danger to public safety or to the peace and will normally suggest that the application be refused. Any link to terrorism or proscribed groups or organisations or organised crime will mean the applicant is unsuitable and the application must be refused.

²⁰ Guide on Firearms Licensing Law, available at: <u>Guide on Firearms Licensing Law</u>

3.8 Given the potential for loss of life or serious injury arising from the misuse of firearms and shotguns, the chief officer should weigh up the risks of granting or renewing a certificate or registration very carefully whenever there is evidence or a suggestion that the applicant could pose a danger to public safety or the to the peace. Similar considerations apply to revocation or to the return of seized firearms. Where there is a risk of misuse, the chief officer should be prepared to exercise their power to seize the firearms or shotguns and revoke the certificate (section 30A and 30C of the Firearms Act 1968) or RFD registration (section 38 of the Firearms Act 1968) to mitigate the risk to public safety and the peace.

B: Factors to be taken into account

- 3.9 The chief officer should, when assessing the grant, renewal, or revocation of a firearm or shotgun certificate or RFD registration, ensure that all the available information that may be relevant to the case is considered. The factors listed below will form the foundation for the chief officer's decision in relation to whether a danger to public safety or the peace exists. The list is not exhaustive, and the police may use their knowledge of the individual case to identify other relevant information. It is acknowledged that all the information will not be available in every case, particularly where the initial checks in Chapter 2 have not indicated any need for more detailed enquiries.
- 3.10 The previous criminal, or allegedly criminal, behaviour of an applicant may indicate a future or ongoing risk to public safety or to the peace should they be permitted to possess a firearm. Information that may be relevant in indicating criminal or possible criminal behaviour will include, but is not limited to:
 - (i) previous convictions, cautions, reprimands, fixed penalty notices and any other disposal including out of court disposals, for any offence (including speeding but not including parking offences); in particular, any criminal sanction for violent and abusive offences, including coercive and controlling behaviour, which indicate a risk to public safety must be taken into account, including where the threshold for the statutory prohibition in section 21 of the Firearms Act 1968 is not met;
 - (ii) all overseas convictions and disposals should be taken into account. While an overseas conviction and custodial sentence will not contribute to consideration of the statutory prohibition on possession of firearms and ammunition provided for by section 21 of the Firearms Act 1968, the police should consider the circumstances and nature of any such conviction and disposal in assessing suitability;
 - (iii) arrests, police call-outs and bind-overs;
 - (iv) any civil orders the applicant has been subject to, for example Domestic Violence Protection Notices (DVPN) or Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPO) or their Scottish equivalents, and compliance with those orders²¹;
 - (v) evidence relating to criminal proceedings that resulted in an acquittal;

²¹ Based on the existing offences which will be replaced as the provisions of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 are implemented.

- (vi) evidence, including intelligence, of any criminal behaviour where no charges, conviction or other disposal resulted; and
- (vii) safeguarding assessments, including domestic abuse, stalking and honourbased violence (DASH) assessments or those made by multi-agency safeguarding hubs²².
- 3.11 Other information that may be suggestive of the existence of a danger to the public safety or the peace includes, but is not limited to:
 - (i) associations with known criminals or suspected criminals, including members of gangs or organised crime groups, or associations with terrorist or proscribed groups or organisations; or aggressive, abusive or anti-social behaviour or incitement to hatred against particular groups categorised by, for example, race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, age or religion;
 - evidence of dishonesty or any other information which raises questions about the person's integrity, for example, where they are found to have been deliberately dishonest or to have knowingly or recklessly made a false statement;
 - (iii) evidence of threatening or abusive behaviour;
 - (iv) evidence of anti-social behaviour;
 - (v) evidence of reckless behaviour, lack of self-control or restraint, or disregard for the safety of others;
 - (vi) indications that the individual will not handle the firearm responsibly;
 - (vii) insufficiently secure storage arrangements;
 - (viii) relationship difficulties or other domestic turmoil;
 - (ix) unmanaged debts, financial pressures, abnormal financial activity, or unexplained sources of income;
 - (x) relevant medical conditions including alcohol and drug abuse (see section D below);
 - (xi) previous non-compliance with a firearm certificate or other types of licences held; and
 - (xii) any of the above factors in relation to a person other than the certificate holder living at, or with unsupervised access to, the address or addresses.
- 3.12 In addition to the factors above, chief officers should consider any positive evidence supporting the application, for example, evidence of rehabilitation, change in circumstances, good character or a history of responsible ownership of firearms.

C: Assessment

²² In Scotland the term 'protection' is used rather than 'safeguarding.'

- 3.13 In assessing whether or not the available information indicates a danger to the public safety or to the peace, the chief officer must assess:
 - (i) the strength of the evidence;
 - (ii) the length of time since the incident took place (and the behaviour in the intervening period);
 - (iii) whether it is an isolated incident or part of a pattern of behaviour; and
 - (iv) the level of seriousness (see sections on "most serious and "other serious" factors below).
- 3.14 In certain circumstances (see paragraphs 3.49 and 3.50), the law requires automatic grant, refusal or revocation, without any further consideration.

Strength of evidence

- 3.15 More weight will always be attached to a conviction where the evidence has been tested in court or after a disposal where there has been an admission of guilt. However, behaviour that has not resulted in a criminal sanction will still be a key part of any consideration about suitability. This may be particularly important in offence types such as domestic abuse where reporting rates are low.
- 3.16 Where information has not resulted in a conviction, chief officers should consider the credibility of the information, recognising the potential for malicious, but unfounded, allegations being made about the applicant. The applicant should be given the opportunity to comment on information about them which has not been tested by the courts, unless doing so may compromise an ongoing investigation, give rise to a risk of retribution, disclose confidential information about an individual other than the applicant, or reveal the identity of someone who has given information in confidence.
- 3.17 Where the evidence concerning an allegation or conduct is sufficient to reach a conclusion on the balance of probabilities as to whether it is true or the conduct occurred, then the balance of probabilities test should be applied. In other words, the chief officer should consider whether an allegation about the applicant or their conduct is more likely than not to be true. Chief officers should however think critically about the reliability of the source where an allegation is made against an applicant, including whether the source has any motivation to discredit the applicant.
- 3.18 In determining the weight to be given concerning an allegation or conduct of the applicant in the risk assessment, the chief officer should first investigate the facts to enable them to make findings on the truthfulness of the allegation or conduct. If, as may be the case, despite such efforts the police are unable to make such a finding, they should investigate and/or consider the facts available to make findings as to the surrounding circumstances of the allegation or conduct which may point to behaviour which is relevant to the assessment of risk.
- 3.19 In circumstances where the information falls below the balance of probabilities threshold, but the allegation or conduct of the applicant causes sufficient concern about the risk, the available information should still be treated as relevant to the assessment of risk. However, chief officers should be mindful that the weight to be

attached to an allegation or conduct by an applicant in the risk assessment is subject to the constraints of public law.

Balance of probabilities when testing information in the assessment of risk: summary

In most instances, where the evidence before the police is sufficient to reach a conclusion on the balance of probabilities, this should be the test that is applied.

It is, however, important that the police consider <u>all</u> the available evidence and information when assessing suitability. There will be circumstances where, despite the best efforts of the police, the evidence before them is insufficient to reach a conclusion on the balance of probabilities. In such circumstances, the police should not disregard such evidence but, in the interests of public safety, should weigh it alongside all the other information available to them, in reaching their decision on suitability when assessing risk.

Length of time

- 3.20 As a general rule the weight that should be assigned to past incidents or behaviour will diminish over time if there have been no further occurrences. However, this will depend on the nature and seriousness of the behaviour. A single serious incident in the past may be enough to demonstrate an ongoing danger to public safety in certain cases.
- 3.21 The age of the applicant at the time should also be considered. Less weight may be assigned if the applicant was under the age of 18 at the time of the incident.

Pattern of behaviour

- 3.22 Information or allegations relating to a pattern of behaviour should be assigned more weight than a single incident of the same type, particularly if the pattern shows escalation.
- 3.23 Chief officers will need to consider whether past behaviour has been linked to a trigger factor, such as alcohol use or the end of a relationship. The re-emergence of that trigger factor may indicate a higher risk, even if there is no ongoing pattern of behaviour.
- 3.24 When considering all the circumstances of the case, several relatively minor factors may cumulatively indicate a danger to public safety. For example, evidence of domestic instability in combination with financial or alcohol issues or a relatively minor example of reckless behaviour might indicate a volatile environment and provide sufficient reason to believe there is a danger to public safety, even if one factor alone would not.
- 3.25 A past conviction for a single relatively minor offence, for example a motoring offence, would not in itself be sufficient grounds for refusing an application.

Relevance

- 3.26 Chief officers should assess how relevant the information is to the applicant's ability to possess firearms without danger to public safety or the peace, bearing in mind the tests set out in paragraphs 3.9 and 3.12 above.
- 3.27 For example, evidence of or information about dishonesty or bribery is likely to be particularly serious in relation to an RFD applicant's ability to trade without danger to public safety or to the peace.

Most serious factors

- 3.28 There are some factors which, if the chief officer, having considered all the available information, reasonably believes to be present in an application, pose such a serious risk that the possession of firearms must only be allowed in exceptional circumstances.
- 3.29 Each application must be assessed on a case-by-case basis. However, evidence of behaviour or offences in any of the following categories, while not an exhaustive list, must mean that the application is refused or certificate revoked unless exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated:
 - (i) affiliation or involvement in terrorism or proscribed groups or organisations; or aggressive, abusive or anti-social behaviour or incitement to hatred against particular groups categorised by, for example, race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, age or religion;
 - (ii) affiliation with a serious organised crime group, or other involvement in serious organised crime;
 - (iii) affiliation with a gang, or other involvement in gang activities;
 - (iv) domestic abuse;
 - (v) any other violence or credible threats of violence;
 - (vi) robbery or burglary;
 - (vii) criminal use of firearms or other offensive weapons;
 - (viii) sexual offences.
- 3.30 Evidence of any of the above in relation to a family member or associate who lives at the address or has unsupervised access to the address should be considered, as it will tend to suggest that an application should be refused or the certificate revoked.
- 3.31 Where evidence falls short of the balance of probabilities, it should be considered alongside other factors as part of the overall assessment of suitability.

Exceptional circumstances

3.32 Exceptional circumstances may be demonstrated if the applicant can provide positive evidence that they no longer pose a risk: for example, evidence of rehabilitation, change of circumstances, a long period of stability and law-abiding behaviour and evidence of good character.

3.33 There may be rare cases where a certificate is not refused or revoked despite the presence of one of the factors in paragraph 3.29 above because an ongoing investigation could be compromised as a result. These decisions are a matter for the chief officer.

Other serious factors

- 3.34 In addition to the most serious factors above, evidence of any of the following, although not exhaustive, will tend to demonstrate a potential danger to public safety or to the peace:
 - (i) any criminal offence that can be dealt with only on indictment;
 - (ii) a series of convictions, cautions, fixed penalty notices or other disposals, when one on its own would not be sufficient to justify refusal or revocation;
 - (iii) deliberate failure to declare relevant convictions or medical conditions, regardless of whether the certificate would have been refused if the appropriate declaration had been made:
 - (iv) failure to comply with firearms licensing requirements (in Scotland, including those relating to air weapons);
 - (v) alcohol or drug abuse which could result in impairment of judgement or loss of self-control;
 - (vi) relevant medical conditions, based on a case-by case assessment (see paragraphs 3.37 - 3.42);
 - (vii) aggressive, abusive or anti-social behaviour of a nature that is likely to lead to harm, or fear of harm, in others;
 - (ix) any history of serious incidents involving firearms, or a careless approach to the handling of other dangerous items;
 - (x) behaviour indicating recklessness, loss of self-control or lack of regard for public safety or to the peace, for example, drink driving; and
 - (xi) any of the above in relation to a family member or associate who lives at the address or has unsupervised access to the address.
- 3.35 Chief officers are encouraged to think critically about whether these factors demonstrate that an applicant would pose a danger to public safety considered as part of the general assessment.
- 3.36 There may be circumstances in which the applicant may possess firearms without danger to public safety or to the peace, particularly if the incident occurred well in the past. Having considered all the facts of the case, the chief officer will need to consider whether any mitigating factors or positive evidence reduces the danger to public safety or the peace.

D: Assessment of medical suitability

3.37 Relevant medical conditions are set out in Chapter 2 of this guidance.

- 3.38 Chief officers should reach their own conclusions where possible as to the significance of the medical information supplied based on their own knowledge and experience. While they may wish to seek advice from the force medical officer or an independent approved medical practitioner in cases where the medical information supplied is difficult to understand, or where its significance in terms of the possession of firearms is unclear, they should not consult specialists or consultants unnecessarily.
- 3.39 The fact that a person has received treatment for certain illnesses or conditions does not make them automatically unsuitable to possess a firearm. It is one of the factors to be considered with all other evidence relating to the applicant's character and history. In such cases, account should be taken of the most recent medical information, and particular attention should be paid to whether this suggests to the police that the applicant's condition impacts on their suitability to possess a firearm including where the condition is liable to recur or fluctuate or is unstable.

Mental health

- 3.40 Particular attention should be given to anyone who has previously been subject to a hospital order, guardianship order or restriction order under the provisions of Part 3 of the Mental Health Act 1983 following the commission of offences. It is important for officers to examine the nature of the offences and the length of the order in these situations. The Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003 contains provisions covering similar situations.
- 3.41 The police should take into account any situations where applicants have been detained under the civil powers in Part 2 of the Mental Health Act 1983 where it is necessary for the health and safety of the person or for the protection of other people. The Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003 contains provisions covering similar situations.
- 3.42 In all cases, the final decision as to the applicant's fitness, whether on medical or other grounds, should be taken by the properly authorised officer in the usual way.

E: Good reason

- 3.43 Guidance on good reason is provided in the non-statutory Home Office guide on firearms licensing law²³.
- 3.44 Whilst the law allows for a firearm certificate to be revoked on the grounds that the original good reason for possessing a firearm no longer exists, a shotgun certificate may not be similarly revoked.

F: Outcome of assessment and final decision

3.45 If the chief officer decides it is likely that the applicant cannot possess firearms without danger to public safety or the peace, they should consider, in relation to the firearms concerned, whether any conditions can be applied which would mitigate that danger. Possible conditions are listed at Appendix 3 of the non-statutory Home Office guide, although chief officers of police may impose other conditions appropriate to individual circumstances which they consider to be proportionate and

²³ Guide on Firearms Licensing Law, available at: <u>Guide on Firearms Licensing Law</u>

- necessary. Where conditions are added, these should be set out clearly so that there can be no misunderstandings about their meaning. If no conditions can be found to mitigate the danger, the certificate should be refused or revoked.
- 3.46 Where information is sufficient to indicate a danger to public safety or to the peace, it will not usually be justified to reach a different outcome because of the impact on the individual's employment prospects, although a wider range of conditions may be applicable.
- 3.47 In relation to firearm certificates (but not shotgun certificates) there is an additional criterion of "fit to be entrusted with a firearm". Furthermore, a firearm certificate can be revoked where the chief officer has reason to believe that the holder "is of intemperate habits or unsound mind or otherwise unfitted to be entrusted with a firearm". There may, therefore, be limited circumstances where there is no danger to public safety or the peace, but the applicant is considered otherwise unfit to possess the firearm. In most cases, however, it is likely that evidence of unfitness, intemperate habits or unsound mind will have formed part of the assessment of danger to public safety or to the peace.
- 3.48 Decisions should be authorised at an appropriate level of seniority (see paragraphs 3.52 and 3.53 below) and in all cases the applicant must be notified of the reasons in the case of a refusal or revocation with as much detail given of the reasons for the decision as is possible to reasonably provide.

Automatic refusal and revocation (prohibited persons)

3.49 Section 21 of the 1968 Act prescribes when individuals are automatically prohibited from possessing firearms or ammunition, including antiques. The prohibited list is replicated at the end of this Chapter. An application from any prohibited person must be refused. If any existing certificate holder becomes a prohibited person, their certificate must be revoked.

Automatic grant (section 5 authority holders)

- 3.50 Under section 31(1) of the 1968 Act, a chief officer has no discretion to refuse a firearm certificate in respect of prohibited weapons or ammunition for which a valid authority exists issued by the Secretary of State or Scottish Ministers. Similarly, under section 34(3) of that Act, a chief officer may not refuse to register an RFD on the basis that they may cause a danger to public safety or to the peace where a section 5 authority has been obtained from the Secretary of State or Scottish Ministers.
- 3.51 Any concerns about applicants who hold an authority issued by the Secretary of State or Scottish Ministers should be notified to the Home Office or the Scottish Government as soon as possible to enable a review of the authority.

Authorising decisions

- 3.52 All decisions should include a full and documented assessment of all the evidence available and reasons for the final decision.
- 3.53 Chief officers must ensure high risk decisions relating to firearm and shotgun certificates and RFDs are approved, as a minimum, by the firearms licensing

manager. The firearms licensing manager should seek additional support if required with significantly complex high risk cases from a more senior manager and/ or from an officer or member of staff with particular subject matter expertise. High risk decisions are those where applicants are allowed to possess firearms when:

- (i) an application for a firearms certificate or RFD status is made following a previous refusal or revocation or surrender, including by another force;
- (ii) the applicant has been assessed as suitable, based on all the facts of the case, when there is evidence of any of the most serious or serious factors under paragraphs 3.28 to 3.36; or
- (iii) a decision is made not to revoke a certificate following a review of suitability triggered by evidence of any of the factors under paragraphs 3.28 to 3.36. This includes cases where firearms have been seized to allow such enquiries to be completed and a decision is made to return those firearms. Where firearms are surrendered or seized, the firearm or shotgun certificate must also be provided to police.

Serving and former police officers or employees

3.54 Where the applicant or certificate holder is a serving or former police officer or employee, chief officers should ensure that both the handling of the application and the decision are overseen by a senior manager. Should a complaint or conflict of interest arise, or any evidence in relation to the factors set out in paragraphs 3.28 to 3.36, the matter should be referred to the Professional Standards Department for its advice.

Reasons for refusal or revocation

3.55 Chief officers must inform applicants, including RFDs, of each of the contributing factors in their decision to refuse or revoke a certificate, setting out the reasons clearly with reference to the evidence involved, whilst being mindful of the need to minimise to the greatest extent possible any possible risk to the partner or other household member of the applicant (see paragraph 2.16 above). It may therefore be justified for the police to withhold some or all of the factors if they can demonstrate that disclosure would present a genuine risk, for example, to an ongoing investigation, if there is a risk of retribution, if the reason involves confidential information about an individual other than the applicant, or if disclosing the reason may reveal the identity of someone who has given information in confidence.

Appeals and the treatment of sensitive information

3.56 In the event of an appeal, the chief officer might consider an application for public interest immunity to avoid compromising an investigation or intelligence source. The High Court of England and Wales has ruled [in R (on the Application of the Metropolitan Police) v. Crown Court at Kingston and Scott, 2023] that a Closed Material Procedure (CMP) may be used in a firearms appeal, but only where it is 'critical for the fair disposal of a firearms appeal'. This means that in some cases, subject to a successful application for Public Interest Immunity, sensitive information or intelligence does not have to be disclosed to the appellant at appeal. This may be relevant where there is information or intelligence relating to domestic abuse,

terrorism, ongoing criminal investigations or other sensitive matters. It remains the position that as much information as possible should be disclosed to the appellant and non-disclosure must be justified in the particular case. As the Court said in Scott, 'the existence of the CMP jurisdiction in such cases emphatically does not mean that such a procedure should become the norm'.

3.57 Annex 2 to the Scott judgment (<u>High Court Judgment Template</u> (<u>nationalarchives.gov.uk</u>) sets out the recommended procedure for appeals where an application is made for Closed Material Procedure.

STATUTORY TESTS FOR FIREARM AND SHOTGUN CERTIFICATES

1. Firearms

Grant:

Section 27(1) of the 1968 Act:

A firearm certificate shall be granted where the chief officer of police is satisfied:

- (a) that the applicant is fit to be entrusted with a firearm to which section 1 of this Act applies and is not a person prohibited by this Act from possessing such a firearm;
- (b) that he has a good reason for having in his possession, or for purchasing or acquiring, the firearm or ammunition in respect of which the application is made; and
- (c) that in all the circumstances the applicant can be permitted to have the firearm or ammunition in his possession without danger to the public safety or to the peace.

Revocation:

Section 30A(2) of the 1968 Act:

The [firearm] certificate may be revoked if the chief officer of police has reason to believe:

- (a) that the holder is of intemperate habits or unsound mind or is otherwise unfitted to be entrusted with a firearm; or
- (b) that the holder can no longer be permitted to have a firearm or ammunition to which the certificate relates in his possession without danger to the public safety or to the peace.

2. Shotguns

Grant:

Section 28(1) of the 1968 Act:

Subject to subsection (1A) below, a shotgun certificate shall be granted or, as the case may be, renewed by the chief officer of police if he is satisfied that the applicant can be permitted to possess a shotgun without danger to the public safety or to the peace.

- (1A) No such certificate shall be granted or renewed if the chief officer of police--
- (a) has reason to believe that the applicant is prohibited by this Act from possessing a shotgun; or
- (b) is satisfied that the applicant does not have a good reason for possessing, purchasing or acquiring one.

Revocation:

Section 30C(1) of the 1968 Act:

A shotgun certificate may be revoked by the chief officer of police for the area in which the holder resides if he is satisfied that the holder is prohibited by this Act from possessing a shotgun or cannot be permitted to possess a shotgun without danger to the public safety or to the peace.

PROHIBITED PERSONS UNDER THE FIREARMS ACT

Section 21 of the 1968 Act (extract):

- (1) A person who has been sentenced to custody for life or to preventive detention, or to imprisonment or to corrective training for a term of three years or more or to youth custody or detention in a young offender institution for such a term, or who has been sentenced to be detained for such a term in a young offenders institution in Scotland, shall not at any time have a firearm or ammunition in his possession.
- (2) A person who has been sentenced to imprisonment for a term of three months or more but less than three years or to youth custody or detention in a young offender institution for such a term, or who has been sentenced to be detained for such a term in a detention centre or in a young offenders institution in Scotland or who has been subject to a secure training order or a detention and training order, shall not at any time before the expiration of the period of five years from the date of his release have a firearm or ammunition in his possession.
- (2A) For the purposes of subsection (2) above, "the date of his release" means--
- a) in the case of a person sentenced to imprisonment with an order under section 47(1) of the Criminal Law Act 1977 (prison sentence partly served and partly suspended), the date on which he completes service of so much of the sentence as was by that order required to be served in prison;
- (b) in the case of a person who has been subject to a secure training order—
 - (i) the date on which he is released from detention under the order;
 - (ii) the date on which he is released from detention ordered under section 4 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994; or
 - (iii) the date halfway through the total period specified by the court in making the order, whichever is the later;
- (c) in the case of a person who has been subject to a detention and training order—
 - (i) the date on which he is released from detention under the order;
 - (ii) the date on which he is released from detention ordered under section 104 of the Powers of Criminal Courts (Sentencing) Act 2000; or

(iii) the date of the half-way point of the term of the order, whichever is the later;

[2B has been repealed]

(2C) Where —

- (a) a person has been sentenced to imprisonment for a term of three months or more, and
- (b) the sentence is suspended under section 189 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003,

the person shall not have a firearm or ammunition in his possession at any time during the period of five years beginning with the second day after the date on which the sentence is passed.

(3) A person who—

- (a) is the holder of a licence issued under section 53 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 or section 57 of the Children and Young Persons (Scotland) Act 1937 (which sections provide for the detention of children and young persons convicted of serious crime, but enable them to be discharged on licence by the Secretary of State); or
- (b) is subject to a recognizance to keep the peace or to be of good behaviour, a condition of which is that he shall not possess, use or carry a firearm, or is subject to a community order containing a requirement that he shall not possess, use or carry a firearm; or
- (c) has, in Scotland, been ordained to find caution a condition of which is that he shall not possess, use or carry a firearm;

shall not, at any time during which he holds the licence or is so subject or has been so ordained, have a firearm or ammunition in his possession.

(3ZA) In subsection (3)(b) above, "community order" means—

- (a) a community order within the meaning of Part 12 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003, or a youth rehabilitation order within the meaning of Part 1 of the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008, made in England and Wales, or
- (b) a community payback order under section 227A of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995 (c 46).
- (3A) Where by section 19 of the Firearms Act (Northern Ireland) 1969, or by any other enactment for the time being in force in Northern Ireland and corresponding to this section, a person is prohibited in Northern Ireland from having a firearm or ammunition in his possession, he shall also be so prohibited in Great Britain at any time when to have it in his possession in Northern Ireland would be a contravention of the said section 19 or corresponding enactment.

4. Continuous assessment

- 4.1 In addition to the checks at grant and renewal set out in Chapter 2 and, in relation to RFDs, in the Annex to this guidance, chief officers must ensure that processes are in place to allow continuous assessment of suitability to possess firearms or to be an RFD between grant and renewal throughout the lifetime of the certificate or RFD registration.
- 4.2 These processes should consist of either:
 - (i) ensuring other parts of the force, including command and control and domestic abuse (or public protection) units, MARAC, MATAC, MAPPA and other multiagency structures, systematically and routinely notify the firearms licensing department as soon as possible of any new intelligence or incidents involving certificate holders or RFDs, whether by automated processes or manually; or
 - (ii) the firearms licensing department completing cross-checks of certificate holders and RFDs against all relevant local and national databases and intelligence systems on a regular basis.
- 4.3 These processes will help to determine whether there are any changes in circumstances or other factors that may make continued access to firearms inappropriate, because of a higher risk to public safety. As described in Chapter 2, any new information, including intelligence or medical concerns, that could increase the level of risk associated with a certificate holder or RFD should trigger a review of suitability following the principles set out in Chapter 3. In particular, any proceedings or sanctions for an offence including violence by a certificate holder must trigger an immediate review of continuing suitability, as this may indicate a risk to public safety. Where there has been an out of court disposal involving a certificate holder, the police must consider the circumstances of the offence when reviewing the certificate holder's ongoing suitability to possess firearms.
- 4.4 If any new information or intelligence is received relating to domestic abuse, violent conduct, or any of the other most serious matters as described in Chapter 3, or any incident that results in the surrender or seizure of firearms, a full review of the certificate holder's or RFD's suitability (and not merely the most recent incident) must immediately take place. If a certificate holder is involved in a violent or abusive offence or there is an allegation of domestic abuse, consideration should be given to interviewing the certificate holder's partner, ex-partner, family or household members in confidence about their relationship with the certificate holder and any domestic issues or other concerns they may have, including any recent changes in the certificate holder's mental health or life circumstances. New information or intelligence about other serious matters should also result in an immediate review at the chief officer's discretion (noting the requirements of paragraph 2.16, above).
- 4.5 Information about a certificate holder's or RFD's suitability may also be provided by members of the public known to the certificate holder or RFD, either directly to the force or its firearms licensing unit. All such reports must be investigated and recorded on the case file. If the evidence suggests a risk to public safety or the peace, a review of the continued suitability of the certificate holder or RFD must then take place following the principles set out in Chapter 3. Reports made confidentially

- should be treated as intelligence (whilst being aware of the potential for malicious allegations) and steps taken to ensure any inquiries or subsequent court proceedings do not reveal the source of the information.
- 4.6 Where there is evidence that a certificate holder or RFD presents a higher risk but is not considered to meet the threshold for refusal or revocation, home visits or inspections, interviews or other follow-up enquiries are justified so as to check on the certificate holder's continuing suitability.

Unannounced visits

- 4.7 In the case of certificate holders, the police should undertake an unannounced visit or inspection where it is judged necessary to do so, based on specific intelligence in light of a particular threat, or risk of harm. It is not expected that the police will undertake unannounced visits or inspections at an unsociable hour unless there is a justified and specific requirement to do so on the grounds of crime prevention or public safety concerns, and the police consider that this action is both justified and proportionate. If domestic abuse is known or suspected, a multi-agency risk assessment and safety plan may be necessary to mitigate and manage the ongoing risk, including how to communicate with household members, partners or expartners.
- 4.8 The police have powers to seize firearms, shotguns and ammunition where they consider there is an immediate threat to life. Where the police consider there is no immediate threat to life, a power of entry subject to obtaining a warrant is available to the police. While this is an important power, it will not be necessary in all cases where an inspection or home visit is required. The police officers must supply the certificate holder with relevant identification details. It is expected that responsible certificate holders will co-operate with reasonable requests to inspect security arrangements or other aspects of suitability, and failure to do so may be taken into account when police consider suitability to possess the firearms. To mitigate any misunderstanding on the part of the certificate holder, the police must provide a clear and reasoned explanation to the certificate holder at the time of the visit.
- 4.9 RFDs' premises should be visited from time to time to inspect stock in hand and/or the register. Dealers are required by section 40(4) of the 1968 Act to permit such inspections by police officers or civilian officers, authorised in writing by the chief officer of police. Such written authorisation must be produced on demand.

Surrender or seizure of firearms or shotguns

4.10 Where a chief officer has serious concerns about a certificate holder's continued access to firearms, prompt action must be taken to ensure no preventable harm is caused to public safety. This may involve the certificate holder being invited to surrender their firearms voluntarily pending a review of their continued suitability. The police have powers to seize firearms, shotguns and ammunition where there is an immediate threat to life, but there is no specific power for the police to enter property and to seize firearms, shotguns or ammunition where there was a justification for reviewing suitability to hold a firearm certificate. In such circumstances, the police will normally need to rely on either a voluntary surrender by the certificate holder or by seeking a warrant from a Magistrate (or Sheriff in Scotland) under section 46 of the Firearms Act 1968.

- 4.11 When firearms are surrendered or seized, ammunition and the certificate must also be seized and stored securely and safely by the police or by a Registered Firearms Dealer. A properly itemised record and photograph must be provided in all cases detailing the firearms, accessories and ammunition removed.
- 4.12 Following surrender or seizure of firearms, a full review must be carried out as soon as is practicable following the principles set out in Chapter 3, and the certificate holder must be advised of the result of the review as soon as possible. The certificate holder must be kept informed of the progress of the review at frequent and regular intervals recognising, for example, that in some cases the firearms may be required for the certificate holder's work. Particular care must be taken to ensure that firearms are not returned where this may create any risk to public safety. Should the review conclude that there is no danger to public safety or the peace, the firearms, ammunition and certificates must be returned promptly, subject to the relevant authorisation.

5. Record keeping

- 5.1 Chief officers should record the following on the relevant national firearms licensing database:
 - (i) the nominal details of all applicants and certificate holders and the status of those certificates including firearms possessed;
 - (ii) any information relevant to the suitability of the applicant, including intelligence and allegations or concerns raised even if not proven;
 - (iii) the reasons for each grant/renewal decision, whether approval or refusal;
 - (iv) details of any review of suitability, including the reasons for the review and its outcome;
 - (v) details of any appeal, including the outcome;
 - (vi) details of storage of firearms;
 - (vii) dates of visits and inspections, and types of inspection (including RFD inspections);
 - (viii) whether a medical marker has been added by the GP (if known);
 - (ix) whether the certificate holder is an officer, former officer, or police staff or former police staff (if known);
 - (x) the outcome of any checks relating to periods of residence abroad;
 - (xi) details of the applicant's GP and referees; and
 - (xii) any other information the chief officer considers useful.
- 5.2 Records should not be deleted due to the applicant moving to another force area.
- 5.3 Records of applicants and certificate holders on the relevant national firearms licensing database should be kept up to date at all times, so that accurate information on possession of firearms is available to local police via the PNC.
- 5.4 For RFDs, in the event of a variation of a condition, removal from the register or surrender of a dealer's certificate of registration, an appropriate notification should be sent to all other forces.

6. Duration of certificates and registrations

6.1 Firearm and shotgun certificates last for five years (unless they are revoked). An RFD's registration continues in force for a period of three years from the grant of registration.

Renewals

6.2 The onus for making a timely application for the renewal of a certificate, or for a new registration as an RFD, rests with the holder. Chief officers should issue reminders to holders sufficiently far in advance to allow the renewal process to be completed before the original certificate or registration expires. 16 weeks or more should suffice. Certificate holders should submit a photocopy (signed and dated) of their certificate for the purposes of renewal and retain the expiring certificate in order to be able to buy ammunition. When applications for renewals are received not less than eight weeks before the certificate's expiry date, the police should make every effort to decide the application before the expiry date is reached, provided there are no suitability issues.

No application received

6.3 Where a certificate holder or RFD fails to submit a renewal application, enquiries must be made prior to the date of expiry of the certificate or registration to confirm that the holder has suitable arrangements to dispose of their firearms and ammunition by the time that the relevant certificate or registration expires (though a shotgun certificate holder is not required to lodge their cartridges). The police must make further enquiries as a priority once the certificate or registration has expired to confirm that the holder is no longer in possession of the firearms or ammunition to which their certificate or registration related. It is of paramount importance that the police satisfy themselves that nobody retains possession of any firearms or ammunition if they no longer have a valid certificate or registration. The police should consider whether a visit to the former certificate holder's home or any other premises where they formerly kept their firearms or ammunition would be appropriate in all the circumstances.

Limited automatic extension of certificates

6.4 The chief officer should normally make a decision on an application for renewal before the expiry of the certificate or registration, provided that the application has been made at least 8 weeks before the date of the expiry of the certificate. In the case of firearms and shotguns, where an application for renewal has been made at least 8 weeks before the date of the expiry of the certificate, and the police have not been able to make a decision on the application by the date of expiry, a limited extension of the certificate automatically comes into effect. The extension begins from the original expiry date of the certificate for a period of 8 weeks or until the police decide the application, whichever occurs first. This extension period allows the police a further period in which to decide the application. This is a statutory extension provided by section 28B of the Firearms Act 1968 and is intended to provide a safety net for applicants in exceptional circumstances where the police are unable to process and decide a case before the original expiry date of the applicant's certificate. During this period of extension the applicant will remain entitled to

- possess, purchase and acquire firearms and ammunition as per the conditions of the original certificate. Chief officers should facilitate this extended entitlement by ensuring that the applicant is provided with a letter or other clear evidence that the certificate benefits from the automatic statutory extension. (A suitable letter is provided on the National Firearms Licensing Management System (or SHOGUN in Scotland)).
- 6.5 The chief officer must always endeavour to make a timely decision on an application that benefits from the extended 8 week period <u>before</u> expiry of the extension period. A failure to do so will leave the applicant without a lawful basis for the possession of their firearms or shotguns and associated ammunition. Should such circumstances arise, the police should work with the applicant to make the necessary arrangements for the safe, legal storage of their property until such time as the application is decided, or the police may consider the issue of a temporary permit, issued in accordance with section 7 of the Firearms Act 1968 (see below).

Section 7 police permit

- 6.6 Section 7 of the Firearms Act 1968 allows chief officers to issue a temporary permit to allow for the lawful possession of a firearm and ammunition in accordance with the terms that are set out in the permit. These permits may be used to allow a certificate holder to continue to possess their firearms and ammunition where their certificate is about to expire and an application for renewal has been received. This can apply to circumstances both where an application has been received more or less than 8 weeks before expiry. These permits should not be used routinely to benefit applicants who do not submit timely renewal applications e.g. less than 8 weeks, unless in exceptional circumstances. Temporary permits should not be issued to those who are uncooperative with the police while consideration is being given to their application.
- 6.7 The police must be satisfied that the issue of a section 7 police permit does not give rise to any public safety risk, which can normally only be determined after full consideration of their renewal application. Therefore, section 7 permits issued to provide more time to consider a renewal application should only be on an exceptional basis and where unavoidable. Police are encouraged prior to issuing the temporary permit to check if there are other options, for example in cases of bereavement of a certificate holder, whether they go to another licence holder or RFD. Where required, temporary permits should be supplied with an end date no longer than is reasonable to cover the expected period of processing and should not be issued if no renewal application has been received.
- 6.8 Chief officers should also avoid routinely using temporary permits as a means of managing licensing caseloads within their force.
- 6.9 Chief Officers should ensure that their firearms licensing departments are sufficiently resourced to enable effective processing of applications, to avoid the need to rely routinely on the use of section 7 permits.
- 6.10 While it is the case that some police forces have made significant use of section 7 permits in the past to help manage certificate renewal backlogs with large numbers of

people subject to these permits, this practice must now be avoided as it conflicts with the principle of maintaining efficient and effective licensing arrangements.

6.11 Certificate holders must not be asked to rely on an expired certificate or registration. It is unlawful for them to do so.

Annex:

Additional checks and assessments for Registered Firearms Dealers (RFDs)

Inspections

- A.1 In addition to the checks in Chapter 2, a formal inspection of all the RFD's business premises where firearms could be held should take place for all RFD applicants on grant and renewal.
- A.2 During the three-year period of registration, further formal inspections or ad hoc liaison visits should take place, on average, at least once per year. Special attention must be given to the inspection of dealerships that involve prohibited firearms and the manufacture of firearms. These should be visited more regularly to ensure security and that all relevant conditions are complied with.
- A.3 The Firearms & Explosives Officer Network of the National Crime Agency conducts firearms import, export and supply chain activity including assurance visits to firearms trade. These are conducted as individual enquiries or on a risk-assessed basis. Where possible, police and the National Crime Agency should, in order to minimise interference with legal trade and to avoid duplication, coordinate visits where possible.
- A.4 The inspection at grant or renewal should include, but is not limited to:
 - (i) interviews that assess the applicant's suitability (see Chapter 3);
 - (ii) interviews that assess the applicant's expertise (see paragraph A.6);
 - (iii) ascertaining those employees that have access to firearms ('servants') and assessing due diligence practices relating to employees or other individuals associated with the business who have access to the firearms, or involvement in activities relating to the firearms (see paragraph A.7);
 - (iv) ascertaining the nature of the business, including its background, its customers and suppliers;
 - (v) ascertaining the financial stability of the business;
 - (vi) assessing compliance of business practices with the law and with licensing conditions:
 - (vii) inspection of the premises, to include security arrangements and discussion of any previous thefts;
 - (viii) a full stock take (in the case of large dealerships, extensive dip samples can be used); and
 - (ix) inspection of record keeping, to include a check of transactions (see paragraphs A.11 A.14).

- A.5 If the initial inspection reveals cause for concern, it may be necessary to carry out additional enquiries and/or to challenge the dealer's account. Such causes for concern include, but are not limited to:
 - (i) inability to produce records for stock (firearms and ammunition);
 - (ii) a lack of systems for the management of firearms or ammunition stored at the registered premises;
 - (iii) firearms and/or ammunition being stored in such a way so as to make it difficult to account for them in the dealership's records;
 - (iv) a lack of systems in place to control unauthorised access to firearms or ammunition; and
 - (v) a lack of audit procedures for the accounting of component parts.

Expertise

A.6 A reasonable level of experience and knowledge of firearms will be needed for a RFD to carry on business as a firearms dealer without danger to public safety or to the peace. RFDs should be able to demonstrate a basic knowledge of any firearms legislation relating to their particular sphere of business. If, for example, they are running a retail outlet, it is reasonable to expect them to know of the scope of the Gun Barrel Proof Acts, which relate to the sale of firearms, and of the ages at which they may sell or let on hire firearms or ammunition. The assessment may best be conducted as a series of questions in a structured, planned interview.

Servants – notification and due diligence

A.7 As set out in paragraph 2.65 above, RFDs are required to provide details of their servants on application. Failing to notify the police of the existence of any relevant servants, to take reasonable steps to check the suitability of such servants or to act on a police recommendation about a servant without good reason may indicate a danger to public safety or the peace, even if the servant concerned is no longer employed. In England and Wales, in line with the Common Law Disclosure Scheme, police should disclose, in writing to the RFD, information regarding an individual in order to enable the employer to consider risk mitigation measures in respect of employment or work done in a voluntary capacity by them²⁴. In Scotland, this is covered by the Information Sharing – Standard Operating Procedure²⁵. In such matters firearms licensing teams should seek the advice of their legal advisors.

Premises

- A.8 Each place of business at which the applicant proposes to carry on business as a dealer must be entered in the register of dealers.
- A.9 An RFD who wishes to open an additional place of business within the same police area must furnish the prescribed particulars as set out in the notification form at Part II of Schedule 5 to the Firearms Rules 1998. Provided there is no question of refusing or revoking the registration of the dealer, a chief officer may refuse to enter

²⁴ Further guidance is available on the Common Law Police Disclosure web page on Gov.uk at the following link: Common Law Police Disclosure

²⁵ Further guidance is available at Information Sharing (Scotland)

- particular premises in, or remove them from, the register only on the grounds that it is a place in which the person cannot carry on business as a firearms dealer without danger to public safety or to the peace.
- A.10 Where dealers have places of business in more than one area, they must be registered by the chief officers of each. Chief officers should consult each other in cases of this kind; the conditions of registration should be appropriate to each premises but need not be the same in each police area.

Checking transactions

- A.11 A random sample of entries should be selected from the register for verification purposes. The number selected should be relative to the level of business being conducted, but should include:
 - (i) sale or transfer of a firearm to a certificate holder within the police force area;
 - (ii) sale or transfer of a firearm to an RFD within the police force area;
 - (iii) sale or transfer of a firearm to a certificate holder outside the police force area; and
 - (iv) sale or transfer of a firearm to an RFD outside the police force area.
- A.12 The total number of transactions conducted by the dealer since the date of the previous inspection should also be recorded in order that the chief officer can satisfy themselves that this is consistent with the stated intentions of the dealer.
- A.13 RFDs may be expected to either refuse sale, or report to the police, any transactions about which they have concerns, whether relating to the suitability of the buyer or the intended use of the firearm. Failure to do so when a concern was clearly evident should be treated as a most serious factor (see paragraphs 3.28 and 3.30 above).
- A.14 Chief officers should provide advice on detecting and reporting suspicious transactions.

Assessing applications

- A.15 Chief officers should reject an application to register if they are satisfied that the applicant cannot be permitted to carry on business as a firearms dealer without danger to public safety or to the peace. "Business need" is described below (see paragraphs A.21 A.26). Automatic grant and refusal are set out in paragraphs 3.49 to 3.51.
- A.16 In considering an application to be entered on the register of firearms dealers, chief officers should assess the named applicants. This assessment should be conducted in the same manner as an assessment as set out in Chapter 3 in order to assess whether registration would result in a risk to public safety or the peace. In addition, there are issues specific to trade or business involving firearms that will be relevant to assessing any risk to public safety. These include, but are not limited to, the matters at paragraphs A.6 to A.10.
- A.17 The police should identify the relevant factors on the basis of their knowledge of the case and assess the weight to be assigned to each, according to the strength of

evidence, length of time, pattern and seriousness (see Chapter 3). Chief officers will need to consider whether the general suitability factors, together with more specific matters, are collectively of sufficient weight to demonstrate that the applicant cannot be permitted to carry on business without danger to public safety or the peace. In addition to the public safety tests, chief officers will need to be satisfied of the RFD's business need (see below). This assessment will take into account the size and staffing of the business. These issues could also be relevant to public safety, given the potential vulnerability associated with small businesses, sole traders, and businesses operating from domestic premises.

- A.18 If the chief officer decides it is likely that the applicant cannot be permitted to carry on business without danger to public safety or the peace, they should consider whether any conditions can be applied which would mitigate that danger before making a decision to refuse (see paragraphs A.27 A.30).
- A.19 An application to be entered on the register may be subject to automatic refusal under section 34 of the 1968 Act if the applicant has been subject to a court order made under section 45, following conviction of a relevant offence. This is in addition to the prohibition on granting a firearms certificate to a person prohibited under the Act from possessing a firearm, and section 21 of the 1968 Act, which makes it an offence for a prohibited person to be in possession of a firearm.
- A.20 The final decision on RFDs is subject to the guidance regarding the appropriate level of authorisation and the provision of reasons for refusal set out in paragraphs 3.52 to 3.53.

Business need

- A.21 Section 34(1A) of the 1968 Act provides that the chief officer may refuse an application to be placed on the register if not satisfied that the applicant will engage in business as a dealer in firearms to a substantial extent or as an essential part of another trade, business or profession. 'Substantial' does not necessarily imply volume but should indicate a serious and genuine intention to engage in business. Each case must be decided on its merits.
- A.22 It is not intended that registration should be withheld because the turnover is comparatively small on account of a specialist service or a service directed at an exclusive section of the market. However, the dealer provisions should <u>not</u> be used to facilitate private collections of firearms and shotguns. Nor should they be used by a dealer to provide a service to friends and associates only, rather than to the general public or the gun trade or other trades which may involve firearms.
- A.23 A person who needs to purchase, possess or transfer firearms and ammunition as an essential part of another trade, business or profession should be registered as a dealer regardless of the extent of their transactions in firearms. Such applicants might include manufacturers of associated equipment or businesses engaged in research and development, journalism or research into firearms. In the latter cases, some documentary evidence will be required.

New applicants

- A.24 Factors which should be taken into account before reaching a conclusion about business likely to be conducted include, but are not limited to, the size and location of premises for conducting the business proposed and the extent of any other business activities being carried on. The applicant should be able to show that they will be providing a service to the public or to the gun trade or other trades which may involve firearms or ammunition.
- A.25 The chief officer should normally expect to be provided with a business plan, indicating the nature of the business, which will assist the licensing staff to assess the proposed extent of trading or whether dealing in firearms will be an essential part of another business. Where a business plan is not appropriate, for example, in the case of applicants not intending to deal in firearms or ammunition for their principal livelihood and therefore less likely to 'engage in business as a firearms dealer to a substantial extent', the chief officer will want to review other available evidence regarding business need.

Existing applicants

A.26 In respect of applications from existing dealers, it should be sufficient to reach a conclusion on the basis of transactions during the previous period of registration with particular regard to any trade in the recent past and any business plan for the future. A small number of transactions may be indicative of the business type (for example, a dealer specialising in older, heritage firearms, or in high value items) and should not in itself suggest that the business activity is not legitimate. The substantial extent test is therefore to be applied on a relative, rather than an absolute, basis in the context of the business under consideration.

Conditions of Registration

- A.27 A chief officer may impose, vary or revoke conditions subject to which registration is to have effect. In most cases it should only be necessary to impose the standard condition (i) (shown in Appendix 6 to the non-statutory Home Office Guide²⁶). Other discretionary conditions are set out in Part 4 of the Firearms Security Handbook²⁷. Before reaching a final decision on which, if any, additional conditions should be imposed on a registration, the matter should be discussed with the RFD to ensure that the proposed conditions, whilst being practical and effective, will not place an undue burden on the dealer.
- A.28 Any such conditions must be specified in the certificate of registration. Where a condition is imposed, varied or revoked during the currency of a certificate, the chief officer must give the dealer notice in writing, giving particulars. A chief officer, having given that notice, may recall the certificate of registration within 21 days for the purpose of amending it. This period of notice will allow time for any representations to be made to chief officers.
- A.29 Conditions should be used to ensure that an RFD takes reasonable precautions for the safekeeping of their firearms and ammunition. Crime prevention officers, in

²⁶ Guide on Firearms Licensing Law, available at: Guide on Firearms Licensing Law

²⁷ Firearms Security Handbook, available at: <u>Firearms Security Handbook 2020</u>

consultation with their firearms departments, must consider carefully the level of security required in the light of the circumstances of each case. Circumstances may vary between one district and another and between one dealer or premises and another. Much will depend on the degree of risk and the steps that it is practicable to take. Such a condition must not be used to arbitrarily restrict the nature of the business concerned. (Security requirements for dealers trading only in air weapons should normally be equivalent to level 1 from the Firearms Security Handbook 2020.)

A.30 Where a person deals only in one type of weapon or in a restricted range of weapons at the time of the application, it may be appropriate to include a condition to the effect that any change in the nature of the business should be notified without delay to the chief officer of police, so that further safekeeping restrictions may, if necessary, be imposed. Such a condition should not be used to arbitrarily restrict the nature of the business concerned.

STATUTORY TESTS FOR REGISTERED FIREARMS DEALERS (RFDs)

RFD (grant)

Section 34 of the 1968 Act:

- (1) The chief officer of police shall not register an applicant as a firearms dealer if he is prohibited to be so registered by order of a court in Great Britain made under section 45 of this Act, or by order of a court in Northern Ireland under section 8(5) of the Firearms Act 1920 or any enactment of the Parliament of Northern Ireland amending or substituted for that section.
- (1A) The chief officer of police may refuse to register an applicant unless he is satisfied that the applicant will engage in business as a firearms dealer to a substantial extent or as an essential part of another trade, business or profession.
- (2) Subject to subsection (3) below, the chief officer of police may refuse to register an applicant, if he is satisfied that the applicant cannot be permitted to carry on business as a firearms dealer without danger to the public safety or to the peace.
- (3) In the case of a person for the time being authorised by the Secretary of State under section 5 of this Act to manufacture, sell or transfer prohibited weapons or ammunition, the chief officer of police shall not refuse to enter his name in the register on the grounds that he cannot be permitted to carry on business as a firearms dealer without danger to the public safety or to the peace.
- (4) The chief officer of police, if he is satisfied that a place of business notified to him under section 33(3) of this Act by an applicant for registration is a place at which the person cannot be permitted to carry on business as a firearms dealer without danger to the public safety or to the peace, may refuse to enter that place of business in the register.

Conditions of registration

Section 36 of the 1968 Act

- (1) The chief officer of police may at any time impose conditions subject to which the registration of a person as a firearms dealer is to have effect and may at any time, of his own motion or on the application of the dealer, vary or revoke any such condition.
- (2) The chief officer of police shall specify the conditions for the time being in force under this section in the certificate of registration granted to the firearms dealer and, where any such condition is imposed, varied or revoked during the currency of the certificate of registration, the chief officer of police--
 - (a) shall give to the dealer notice in writing of the condition or variation (giving particulars) or of the revocation, as the case may be; and
 - (b) may by that notice require the dealer to deliver up to him his certificate of registration within twenty-one days from the date of the notice, for the purpose of amending the certificate.
- (3) A person aggrieved by the imposition or variation of, or refusal to vary or revoke, any condition of a firearms dealer's registration may in accordance with section 44 of this Act appeal against the imposition, variation or refusal.

RFD (Removal from register of dealer's name or place of business)

Section 38 of the 1968 Act

- (1) If the chief officer of police, after giving reasonable notice to a person whose name is on the register, is satisfied that the person--
 - (a) is no longer carrying on business as a firearms dealer; or
 - (b) has ceased to have a place of business in the area; or
 - (c) cannot be permitted to continue to carry on business as a firearms dealer without danger to the public safety or to the peace,

he shall (subject to this section) cause the name of that person to be removed from the register.

- (2) In the case of a person for the time being authorised by [the Secretary of State] under section 5 of this Act to manufacture, sell or transfer prohibited weapons or ammunition, the chief officer of police shall not remove his name from the register on the ground that he cannot be permitted to continue to carry on business as a firearms dealer without danger to the public safety or to the peace.
- (3) If the chief officer of police is satisfied that a person registered as a firearms dealer has failed to comply with any of the conditions of registration in force under section 36 of this Act, he may remove from the register either that person's name or any place of business of his to which the condition relates.
- (4) If the chief officer of police is satisfied that a place entered in the register as a person's place of business is one at which that person cannot be permitted to carry on business as a firearms dealer without danger to the public safety or to the peace, he may remove that place from the register.
- (5) The chief officer of police shall cause the name of a person to be removed from the register if the person so desires.
- (6) If a person for the time being registered fails to comply with any requirement of section 33(5) of this Act, the chief officer of police shall by notice in writing require him to comply with that requirement and, if the person fails to do so within twenty-one days from the date of the notice or within such further time as the chief officer may in special circumstances allow, shall cause his name to be removed from the register.
- (7) A person aggrieved by the removal of his name from the register, or by the removal from the register of a place of business of his, may in accordance with section 44 of this Act appeal against the removal.
- (8) Where the chief officer of police causes the name of a firearms dealer to be removed from the register, he shall by notice in writing require the dealer to surrender his certificate of registration [and the register of transactions kept by him under section 40 of this Act] [(or, if the register is kept by means of a computer, a copy of the information comprised in that register in a visible and legible form)]; and it is an offence for the dealer to fail to do so within twenty-one days from the date of the notice:

Provided that, if an appeal is brought against the removal, this subsection shall not apply to that removal unless the appeal is abandoned or dismissed and shall then apply with the substitution, for the reference to the date of the notice, of a reference to the date on which the appeal was abandoned or dismissed.

Devon and Cornwall Police and Crime Panel 21st November 2025

OFFICE OF THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER'S REPORT: Police & Crime Plan Performance Monitoring

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This paper outlines how the Commissioner will monitor performance and measure the progress of the Police & Crime Plan 2025-29 which was launched in January 2025.
- 1.2. The Police and Crime Plan 2025-29 sets out the Commissioner's vision for safe, resilient and connected communities where everyone plays their part to reduce crime. A key focus of the Plan is on improving your policing and crime services by continuing to hold the Chief Constable to account on the improvement of contact services, investigations, public confidence and HMICFRS judgements. The Plan also sets out the Commissioner's four priorities of antisocial behaviour (ASB), drugs and alcohol, serious violence and theft, and how these will be tackled across our towns and city centres, in our countryside and coastal areas, on our roads, and in our homes and neighbourhoods.

2. Improving your policing and crime services

2.1. The Commissioner has developed a number of performance metrics to enable her to continue to hold the Chief Constable to account on improving policing and crime services, and to monitor crime levels. The Commissioner has set the Chief Constable performance targets (where appropriate) and developed a suite of other indicators which will be monitored to assess performance.

| Crime | Office for National Statistics (ONS) crime rate (based on total recorded crime) ONS crime rate violence against the person ONS crime rate drug offences ONS crime rate theft offences ASB incident rate to align with ONS reporting period (data to be provided by from D&C police) |
|-----------------------------|--|
| | I expect to see |
| Contact | 90% of 999 calls answered within 10 seconds 90% of 191 calls answered within 10 minutes Fewer reports made to the Commissioner regarding Police Enquiry Offices that have closed before advertised opening times in the quarter |
| Investigations | 95% of crime to be recorded accurately (CDI compliance) Increase percentage of positive outcomes |
| Public confidence | Increase percentage who agree that the police would treat you with respect Increase the percentage that say the police would treat you fairly Increase overall percentage in confidence in police Increase percentage of victim satisfaction (based on priority victims) Reduce the number of repeat victims |
| HMICFRS* PEEL judgements | No service standards judged as inadequate by HMICFRS* Force to be removed from the 'engage' status of enhanced monitoring |
| | *His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire & Rescue Service |

The latest crime and ASB data, performance judgements and progress against targets are provided in the attached reports, which will be regularly presented to the Police and Crime Panel.



- **2.2 Crime Summary (Appendix A):** This section of the report provides the Panel with the most recent crime data for offences most closely aligned with the Commissioner's four priority areas, as well as total crime. The majority of the data presented is from the latest Office for National Statistics (ONS) release, as this is verified data which allows for comparisons and benchmarking with national, regional and our most similar force areas. Antisocial behaviour incidents are not published as part of the ONS release and therefore ASB incident data recorded by Devon and Cornwall Police is used to monitor this area.
- 2.3. The crime summary presents the most recently available ONS data at the time of publication of this report (12 months to June 2025), alongside ASB incident data for the same period, benchmarked against the previous year to allow for comparison.
- **2.4. Police Performance Scorecard and Report (Appendix B):** This section of the report provides the panel with the most recent data and analysis for the Commissioner's performance measures relating to 'improvement of your police and crime services', covering contact, investigations, public confidence and HMICFRS judgements.
- 2.5. For some of these measures the Commissioner has set a target for acceptable performance, to be achieved over the duration of the Police and Crime Plan. These are:
 - 90% of 999 calls answered within 10 seconds
 - 90% of 101 calls answered within 10 minutes
 - Lower than a 5% abandonment rate for 101 calls
 - 95% of crime to be recorded accurately
 - Devon and Cornwall Police to be removed from HMICFRS' 'enhanced' stage of performance monitoring
 - Devon and Cornwall Police to have no service areas graded as 'inadequate' by HMICFRS
- 2.6. A simple approach to monitoring performance has been taken with performance being assessed as either having <u>met</u> the Commissioner's target or <u>not yet met</u> the Commissioner's target, with supporting analysis provided in the report.
- 2.7. For measures where the Commissioner does not consider that a hard target is appropriate, a baseline has been set, and performance is assessed against that baseline. These measures are:
 - Fewer reports made to the Commissioner regarding Police Enquiry Offices that have closed before advertised opening times
 - Increase percentage of positive outcomes+ rate
 - Increase the percentage (%) of the public that agree "taking everything into account, I have confidence in the police in this area"
 - Increase the percentage (%) of the public that agree "the police would treat you with respect if you had contact with them for any reason"



- Increase the percentage (%) of the public that agree "the police treat everyone fairly, regardless of who they are"
- Increase the percentage (%) of priority victims satisfied with the service they receive by Devon and Cornwall Police
- Reduce the rate of repeat victimisation
- 2.8. For these measures, the direction of travel against the baseline is displayed, along with an indication of performance improvement or performance deterioration and supporting analysis in the report.
- 2.9. For most measures, the baseline of the 12 months to March 2024 has been set to monitor progress against the Police and Crime Plan (where available) as it most closely aligns with the beginning of the Commissioner's current term of office.
- 2.10. The report also identifies where the Commissioner has assessed that additional scrutiny is required in an area upon her review of the latest performance data or trend.
- 2.11. The Commissioner's preference is to use independently gathered or verified data and information to inform her performance assessment. However, there are some areas where this is either not available, not reported regularly enough, or not reliable enough. One example of this is the public confidence survey data, where the sample size for the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) is currently too small (following a pause in surveying during the Covid-19 pandemic) to be considered statistically significant. As such, the Commissioner is currently monitoring and reporting on the results of the force commissioned public survey. However, the Commissioner will keep this under review and consider reverting to reporting on the CSEW survey data when sample sizes are reliable enough.

3. Update on police performance measures since the last Panel meeting

- 3.1. Due to the short timeframe since the last Panel meeting the following Police and Crime Plan measures have not been updated:
 - 2.1 Target: 95% of crime to be recorded accurately (Crime Data Integrity CDI)
 - 3.1 Increase the percentage (%) of the public that agree "taking everything into account, I have confidence in the police in this area".
 - 3.2 Increase the percentage (%) of the public that agree "the police would treat you with respect if you had contact with them for any reason".
 - 3.3 Increase the percentage (%) of the public that agree "the police treat everyone fairly, regardless of who they are".

The next HMICFRS PEEL inspection report is expected in 2026, so performance against the following measures will remain unchanged until that time. As reported to the Panel in September, Devon and Cornwall Police have been removed from



HMICFRS's 'Engage' stage of monitoring so have now met the target for this measure.

- 4.1 Target: Devon and Cornwall Police to be removed from 'enhanced' stage of performance.
- 4.2 Target: Devon and Cornwall Police to have no service areas graded as 'inadequate.

Since the last performance report presented to the Panel in September 2025 the Commissioner's judgements have changed for the following performance measure:

One monitoring measure has changed. Although the increase is small, priority victim satisfaction has increased by 1% since the last meeting, from 68% to 69% of victims being satisfied with the overall service they receive from Devon and Cornwall Police. This reflects a stable trend compared to the baseline period, where victim satisfaction was as at 69%, taking the direction of travel arrow to 'stable' from a 'downward' trend.

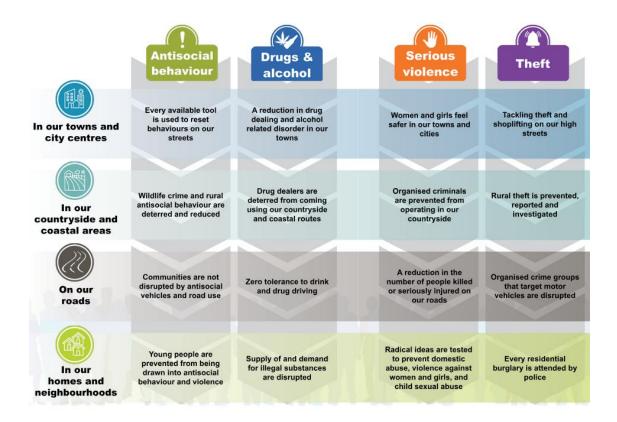
Requires additional scrutiny:

• The Commissioner indicated that repeat victimisation required additional scrutiny at the last Panel meeting, and this remains the case. The latest data indicates that 49.1% of victims identified by Devon and Cornwall Police are repeat victims (12 months to September 2025). This shows a stable position since the last panel meeting but is 2.2% higher than the baseline period (12 months to March 2024). Repeat victimisation will be examined in more detail at a future Commissioner's Accountability Board meeting.

4. Police and Crime Plan Priority – Serious violence (Appendix C)

- 4.1. The Police and Crime Plan sets out the Commissioner's four priorities of antisocial behaviour (ASB), drugs and alcohol, serious violence and theft, and how these will be tackled across our towns and city centres, in our countryside and coastal areas, on our roads, and in our homes and neighbourhoods.
- 4.2. The Commissioner encourages the Chief Constable and partners to focus their resources on repeat offenders, repeat crime locations and repeat victims to help keep communities safe.





- 4.3. It was noted in the July 2025 meeting that the Commissioner will bring an additional performance report to each Panel meeting which will focus on one of the four Police and Crime Plan priorities. This report will provide detail of what action is being undertaken by Devon and Cornwall Police in response to the priority set out in the plan, alongside data and other evidence which is indicative of progress.
- 4.4. The second Police and Crime Plan priority report covers serious violence. Progress on the remaining Police and Crime Plan priorities; antisocial behaviour and drugs and alcohol will be presented to the Panel in 2026.

Contact for further information Vicky Church

Accountability and Standards Officer
Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Devon and Cornwall
opcc@dc-pcc.gov.uk

Report prepared on 12th November 2025





Police and Crime Plan Summary

Police recorded crime in Devon and Cornwall

12 months to June 2025 compared with the 12 months to June 2024



PCC
Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner
Devon and Cornwall

Police recorded crime

| Increasing | 1 |
|------------|----------|
| Decreasing | 1 |
| No change | → |

Police recorded crime can be influenced by changes in recording practices, data recording accuracy, the introduction of new offences and policy changes that impact types of offending (such as the targeting of drug dealers, or COVID-19 and lockdown restrictions).

| Crime measure | Recorded crime 12 months to June 2024 | Recorded crime 12 months to June 2025 | % change | Number change | Crime rate 12 months to June 2024 | Crime rate 12 months to June 2025 | Direction of travel |
|---|--|--|----------|------------------|--|--|---------------------|
| Total crime (rate per 1,000 people) | | | | | | | |
| | 114,774 | 121,216 | 5.6% | 6,442 | 63.0 | 65.9 | 1 |
| Violence against the person (rate per 1,000 | | | | | | | |
| people) | | | | | | | 1 |
| | 50,392 | 52,772 | 4.7% | 2,380 | 27.7 | 28.7 | _ |
| Drug offences (rate per 1,000 people) | | | | | | | • |
| | 4,297 | 4,756 | 10.7% | 459 | 2.4 | 2.6 | |
| Theft offences (rate per 1,000 people) | | | | | | | |
| | 27,452 | 29,231 | 6.5% | 1,779 | 15.1 | 15.9 | |
| ASB incidents recorded by the police (rate | | | | | | | |
| per 1,000 people) | | | | | | | |
| | 24,061 | 25,502 | 6.0% | 1,441 | 13.2 | 13.9 | - |

| Most similar force group average crime rate 12 months to June 2025 | | | |
|--|------|--|--|
| | 61.5 | | |
| | 25.7 | | |
| | 2.0 | | |
| | 16.6 | | |
| | N/a | | |

| England & Wales average crime rate 12 months to June 2025 | | | |
|---|--|--|--|
| 87.2 | | | |
| | | | |
| 31.9 | | | |
| 3.4 | | | |
| 29.2 | | | |
| | | | |
| 16.3 | | | |

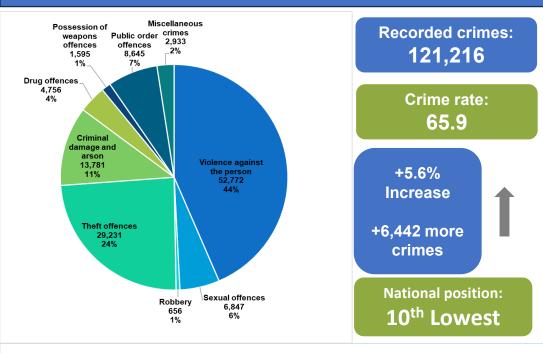
^{*}all crime rates throughout this summary are expressed per 1,000 people and include the residential population only

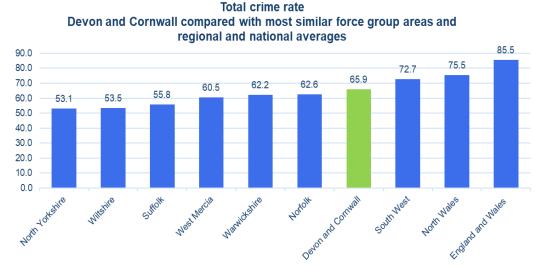
^{*} publicly available police recorded ASB data is not available for most similar force group areas and the South West region for the 12 months to June 2025.



Total recorded crime 12 months to June 2025

(*excluding fraud offences)





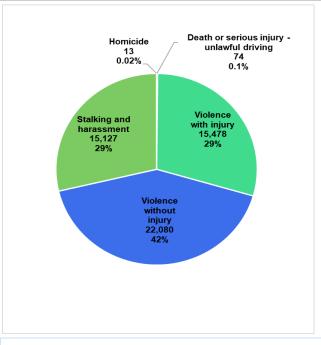
- In the 12 months to June 2025, 121,216 crimes were recorded in Devon and Cornwall (D&C). This represents a 5.6% increase in crime (+6,442) compared with the 12 months to June 2024. The crime rate per 1,000 people has increased from 63.0 crimes per 1,000 people to 65.9 crimes per 1,000 people.
- The majority of crime has occurred within urban areas across Devon and Cornwall (72%), and 26% has occurred in rural areas (26%)*.
- D&C's total recorded crime rate continues to remain significantly lower than the England and Wales average of 85.5 crimes per 1,000 people and below the South-West regional average of 72.7 crimes per 1,000 people.
- The increase in total crime in D&C is inconsistent with the national trend where there has been a 1.5% decrease over the same period. D&C and Wiltshire are the only areas within their most similar force (MSF) group to have seen an increase in total crime in the 12 months to June 2025 compared with the year prior.
- Increases in shoplifting (+30.4%, +2,695); stalking and harassment (+10.8%, +1,477); violence without injury offences (+6.1%, +1,274); sexual offences (+14.6%, +872); public order offences (+8.6%, +681); criminal damage and arson (+3.8%, +510); and drug offences (+10.7%, +459) are the main contributore to the increase in total crime across the force area.
- Over the past year, D&C police have focused on improving crime recording and improving the public's ability to contact the police. This is evident from improvements in crime recording compliance, opening of public enquiry offices, and significant improvements with the 101 non-emergency service. These are likely to be contributory factors to the apparent increase in recorded crime.
- Violence against the person offences and theft offences account for the highest offence types across D&C.
 Violence against the person accounts for 44% (52,772 crimes) of recorded crime and theft offences account for 24% (29,231) of recorded crime.
- D&C has the second highest crime rate within its MSF group behind that of North Wales.

Definitions: Total recorded crime covers all notifiable crimes that Devon and Cornwall Police have recorded and are required to report to the Home Office. Notifiable crimes range from violence offences; sexual offences; theft offences; criminal damage and arson offences; drug offences; possession of weapons offences; public order offences and other miscellaneous crimes against society (covering a range of offences where there are no direct individual victims).

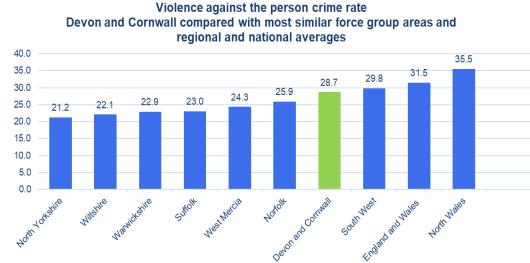
* 3% of recorded crime has no urban/rural classification assigned.



Violence against the person 12 months to June 2025



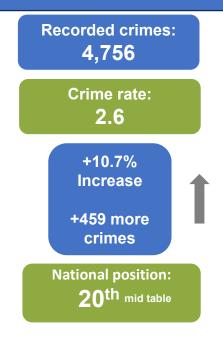


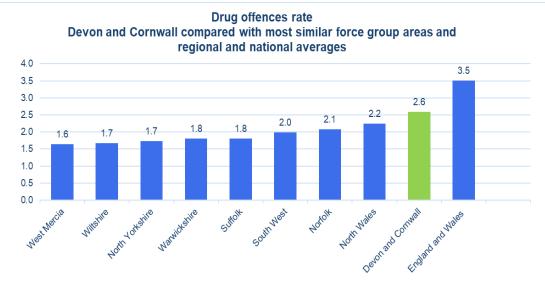


- Violence against the person includes the following offence categories: homicide; violence with injury; violence without injury; stalking and harassment; death or serious injury caused by unlawful driving.
- Violence with injury include a variety of offences which range in seriousness including offences such as actual bodily harm (ABH); grievous bodily harm (GBH) and attempted murder.
- Violence without injury include offences such as common assault where there is no injury, or injuries
 are not serious; harassment, kidnapping and threats to kill. Violence without injury offences account for
 the highest category of violent crime.
- In the 12 months to June 2025, 52,772 violent crimes were recorded in Devon and Cornwall (D&C). This represents a 4.7% (+2,380) increase compared with the 12 months to June 2024. The violent crime rate per 1,000 people has increased from 27.7 crimes per 1,000 people to 28.7 crimes per 1,000 people.
- D&C's violent crime rate is lower than the England and Wales average of 31.5 crimes per 1,000 people and below the South-West regional average of 29.8 crimes per 1,000 people. Compared to D&C's MSF group, D&C has the second highest violent crime rate, behind North Wales.
- D&C is one of only two areas within its MSF group to have seen an increase in violent crime in the months to June 2025 compared with the year prior (+4.7%). Wiltshire also saw an increase of 4.4% to
- The increase in violent crime across D&C is inconsistent with the national trend, where there has been a 1.9% decrease over the 12 months to June 2025. However, the increase in D&C is consistent with the regional trend, with the South-West seeing a 3.7% increase in violence over the same period.
- Increases in stalking and harassment offences (+10.8%, +1,477) and violence without injury offences (+6.1%, +1,274) are the main contributors to the increase in violent crime in D&C. Improved crime recording is likely to be contributing to some of the increase.
- There were 13 homicides in the year to June 2025, up by 2 when compared to previous 12 months.



Drug offences 12 months to June 2025

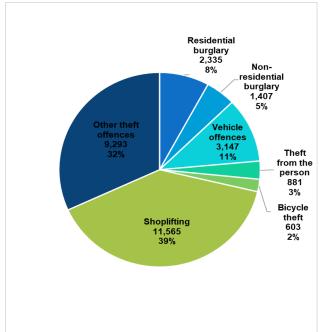




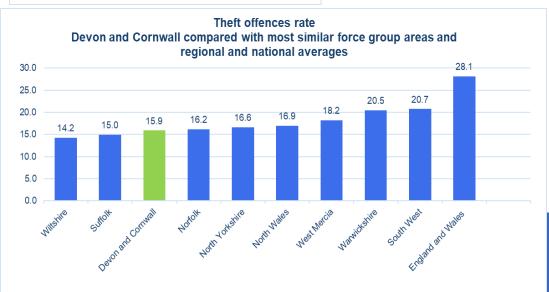
- Drug offences include both drug possession and trafficking. Drug trafficking encompasses a wide range of activity, including the selling, transporting, and/or importing of illegal drugs.
- In the 12 months to June 2025, 4,756 drug offences were recorded in Devon and Cornwall (D&C). This represents a 10.7% (+459) increase compared to the previous year.
- The rate of drug offences per 1000 population has increased from 2.4 crimes per 1,000 people to 2.6. D&C's drug offences rate is 20th nationally out of 43 police forces.
- Devon and Cornwall's drug offences rate is lower than the England and Wales average of 3.5 crimes per 1,000 people but above the South-West regional average of 2.0 crimes per 1,000 people. age
- Compared to D&C's MSF group, D&C has the highest drug offences rate.
- 99 Increases in drug offences are a product of targeted policing operations to disrupt drug dealers. During the last Operation Scorpion intensification week (June 2025), the force seized 76.6kg of illegal drugs at an estimated street value of approximately £3.3 million.
- Having a higher drug offences rate per 1,000 people reflects the positive outcomes which have resulted from targeted police activity as tackling drug crime continues to be a priority for the Commissioner and Devon and Cornwall Police.



Theft offences 12 months to June 2025







- Theft offences cover the following offence categories: burglary (residential and non-residential); vehicle offences; theft from the person; bicycle theft; shoplifting; and all other theft offences.
- Shoplifting offences (11,565 crimes) and other theft offences (9,293 crimes) account for the highest proportion of theft offences recorded.
- In the 12 months to June 2025, 29,231 theft offences were recorded in Devon and Cornwall (D&C).
 This represents a 6.5% (+1,779) increase compared with the 12 months to June 2024. The rate of theft offences per 1,000 people has increased from 15.1 crimes per 1,000 people to 15.9 crimes per 1,000 people. This in inconsistent with the national trend, where there has been a decrease of 3.6% over the same period.
- D&C is one of only two areas within its MSF group to have seen an increase in theft offences in the 12 months to June 2025 compared with the year prior (+6.5%). Norfolk also saw an increase of 4.4%.
- Across the whole South-West region theft offences have also been increasing. In the 12 months to June 2025, the South-West saw a 1.9% increase in theft crime.
- The increase in theft across D&C is largely due to an increase in reported shoplifting offences, rising to 11,565 crimes, or an increase of +2,695 offences when compared to the previous year (12 months to June 2024).
- Despite the increase in crime, D&C's theft offences rate continues to remain significantly lower than the England and Wales average of 28.1 crimes per 1,000 people and below the South-West regional average of 20.7 crimes per 1,000 people. Compared to D&C's MSF group, D&C has the third lowest theft offences rate.
- The increase in theft offences may be linked to the cost-of-living crisis. D&C Police have also sought to improve public confidence to report crime by being more visible in communities and hotspot policing areas. The Commissioner has recently funded a year-long pilot for a free 12-month subscription to the UK Partners Against Crime (UKPAC) Business Crime Reduction Solution to provide a quicker and easier way for businesses across Torbay to report issues such as shoplifting, theft and ASB. Following the success of the pilot, additional funding has been secured for Liskeard, Saltash, Torpoint, Looe, Bodmin and Barnstaple.



Page

Antisocial behaviour (ASB) incidents 12 months to June 2025

ASB incidents recorded by D&C Police: 25,502

+6.0%
Increase

+1,441
additional
ASB
incidents

D&C ASB incident rate: 13.9

England & Wales ASB incident rate: 16.2

- ASB data for Devon and Cornwall (D&C) does not form part of the ONS release of police recorded crime so direct comparisons with D&C's MSF group are not provided.
- ASB incident data has been provided by Devon and Cornwall Police and covers only those incidents
 which have been recorded by the police and does not include local authority data. Local authorities
 will also hold data on ASB which is not captured by the police, especially around noise complaints, or
 environmental concerns.
- In the 12 months to June 2025, 25,502 ASB incidents were recorded by Devon and Cornwall Police. This represents a +6.0% increase compared with the 12 months to June 2024, equating to an additional 1,441 incidents.
- The number of police recorded ASB incidents nationally remained similar to levels last year at 1 million incidents. This figure includes those incidents recorded by the British Transport Police.
- The ASB rate per 1,000 people in D&C has increased from 13.2 incidents per 1,000 people to 13.9 crimes per 1,000 people. The rate of ASB is 1.2x lower than the national average of 16.2 incidents per 1,000 people.
- Trends in ASB incidents recorded by the police need to be interpreted with caution as those experiencing the negative impacts from antisocial behaviour don't always report it to the police. For this reason, trends in ASB should be considered alongside other local intelligence and the feedback the Commissioner receives from the public. ASB is one of the main issues reported to the Commissioner by the public, and when asked as part of the Commissioner's public survey is often identified as a top priority and one of the policing issues that most needs addressing in their communities.
- Estimates from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) for the year ending June 2025 showed that nationally 37% of people had experienced or witnessed some type of antisocial behaviour. There was no statistically significant change from the previous year (36%).

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Police Performance Scorecard



| | Has met the Commissioner's target |
|----------|---|
| | Has not yet met the Commissioner's target |
| | Not applicable |
| + | Indicative of performance improvement |
| 1 | Indicative of performance deterioration |
| • | No change in performance |
| | Additional scrutiny to be applied by the Commissioner |

The Commissioner has set targets for acceptable performance for some of the measures, below, to be achieved over the duration of the Police and Crime Plan 2025-29.

| Seeline Deseline | Additional scrutiny to be applied by th | e Commissione | er | | | |
|--|---|-----------------|----------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Baseline details: Fower reports made to the Commissioner about early PEO closures: Quarter 1 2024/25 – 1th April 2024 to 30th June 2024 1.1 Target: 90% of 999 calls answered within 10 90% 94.7% 90% 88.1% 90% 88.1% 90% 88.1% 90% 88.1% 90% 88.1% 90% 88.1% 90% 88.1% 90% 88.1% 90% 88.1% 90% 88.1% 90% 88.1% 90% 88.1% 90% 88.1% 90% 88.1% 90% 88.1% 90% 88.1% 90% 88.1% 90% 88.1% 90% 90% 90% 90% 90% 90% 90% 90% 90% 90 | Performance measure | or baseline | data | of travel compared with | against | |
| Tever reports made to the Commissioner about early PEO closures: Quarter 1 2024/25 – 1" April 2024 to 30" June 2024 11 Target: 90% of 101 calls answered within 10 | | 1. CON | TACT | | | |
| 1.1 Target: 90% of 999 calls answered within 10 seconds. 1.2 Target: 90% of 101 calls answered within 10 minutes. 1.3 Target: Lower than a 5% 101 call abandonment rate 1.4 Fewer reports made to the Commissioner regarding Police Enquiry Offices that have closed before advertised opening times 2. INVESTIGATIONS Baseline details: Positive outcomes+ measure: 12 months to March 2024 2.2 Increase percentage of positive outcomes+ rate. 11.3% 13.4 | | | | | | |
| seconds. 1.2 Target: 90% of 101 calls answered within 10 minutes. 1.3 Target: Lower than a 5% 101 call abandonment rate 1.4 Fewer reports made to the Commissioner regarding Police Enquiry Offices that have closed before advertised opening times 2. INVESTIGATIONS Baseline details: Positive outcomes+ measure: 12 months to March 2024 2.1 Target: 95% of crime to be recorded accurately. (Crime Data Integrity - CDI) 2.2 Increase percentage of positive outcomes+ rate. 3. PUBLIC CONFIDENCE Baseline details: 9. 91.5% 3. PUBLIC CONFIDENCE Baseline details: 9. 91.5% 3. PUBLIC CONFIDENCE Baseline details: 9. 91.5% 3. PUBLIC CONFIDENCE Baseline details: 9. 11.3% 3. PUBLIC CONFIDENCE Baseline details: 7. 11.3% 3. Increase the percentage (%) of the public that agree "taking everything into account, I have confidence in the police in this area: 7. 7.0% 7. 1.0% 7. | | it early PEO cl | osures: Quarte | r 1 2024/25 – | 1 st April 2024 t | o 30 th June 2024 |
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Police and Crime Commissioner's Performance Report

1. Contact

1.1 Target: 90% of 999 calls answered within 10 seconds.

The latest data indicates that Devon and Cornwall Police has met the Commissioner's target of answering 90% of emergency calls within 10 seconds.

In the 12 months to September 2025, **94.7%** of 999 calls were answered within the service standard of 10 seconds and the average¹ wait time for calls to be answered was 5 seconds.

| 1.2 Target: 90% of 101 calls answered within 10 minutes. | • |
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The latest data indicates that performance has not yet reached the Commissioner's target of answering 90% of 101 calls within 10 minutes.

In the 12 months to September 2025, **88.1%** of 101 calls were answered within 10 minutes. During this period, the average wait time to speak to a contact officer dealing with 101 calls was 3 minutes and 44 seconds. This is a decrease of 5 minutes and 47 seconds compared with last year when the average wait time was 9 minutes and 31 seconds (12 months to September 2024).

Although performance has not yet met the Commissioner's target, the Commissioner is content that sustained improvements in the 101 service continue to be evident. Call waiting times have reduced significantly over the past 2 years and the Commissioner's target was achieved during early 2025, with 90% of 101 calls answered in 10 minutes during January (95.3%), March (90.6%) and April (90.9%).

Wait times for the 101 service may fluctuate in periods of high demand, particularly in the Summer when 101 calls tend to increase. Between May and August 2025, the number of 101 calls answered has increased and the proportion of calls answered within 10 minutes has decreased. During this period, monthly performance has been consistently above 80%.

The Commissioner is receiving fewer complaints from the public following improvement to the 101 service. During 2023/24, the Commissioner received 42 pieces of correspondence regarding 101 wait times. In the following year (2024/25), just 4 pieces of correspondence were received (-38) and so far in 2025/26, the Commissioner has received just 2 pieces of correspondence; both sent in the month of July.

The Commissioner is content that sustained long-term performance of the 101 service continues to be evident and that answering 90% of calls within 10 minutes remains an achievable target.

¹ Mean

1.3 Target: Lower than a 5% 101 call abandonment rate.



During periods of high demand, members of the public can experience longer wait times and therefore abandon their call. Many callers will phone back when they have more time but there is concern that some callers will be discouraged by this initial experience and decide not to report their crime or incident to the police.

The national principles and guidance as set out in the 2020 Contact Management Strategy states that forces with a switchboard (like in Devon and Cornwall) should aim to have an abandonment rate lower than 5 percent. This is also the standard expected by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS).

The latest data indicates that Devon and Cornwall Police have not yet met the Commissioner's target of an abandonment rate of lower than 5%.

In the 12 months to September 2025, **11.3%** of 101 calls were abandoned and there is no reported change in performance since the last Police and Crime Panel meeting. ² Although the target for this measure has not yet been achieved, the Commissioner is encouraged by the improvements to date. The rate of 101 abandoned calls has improved significantly over the last two years – decreasing from 61.4% of calls abandoned in the 12 months to September 2023.

Maintaining lower rates of abandoned calls can be challenging during periods of high demand, particularly over the summer months. Monthly performance data shows a fluctuating trend, with lower rates of abandoned calls during the months of January, February, March, and April 2025 (6.1%, 10.6%, 9.9% and 9.6% respectively) and higher rates of abandoned calls during May, June, July, August, and September 2025 (14.7%, 13.4%, 13.9%, 15.1% and 12.1% respectively).

The Commissioner remains content that improved long-term performance has been sustained and that the 5% target remains achievable.

1.4 Fewer reports made to the Commissioner regarding Police Enquiry Offices that have closed before advertised opening times



Police enquiry offices (PEOs) allow members of the public to have access to walk-in services where they can speak to trained staff who can help with crime reporting, crime prevention advice and help with accessing victim services. Over the past five years, the Commissioner has supported the opening of an additional 17 PEOs, taking publicly available front desks to 26 across the force area.

During early 2024/25, the Commissioner received four reports from the public of PEOs closing early, who as a result were unable to speak to the police as planned. In response to these reports, Devon and Cornwall Police were contacted to understand the reasons for early closure so a response could be provided to the complainant. Reasons given for early closure included staffing issues, and in a couple of instances, the opening hours had been advertised incorrectly.

Devon and Cornwall Police's website now provides details of all PEO opening times, which advises the public to arrive at least an hour before closing³.

² 25th of July 2025

³ A list of Police Enquiry Offices (PEOs) | Devon & Cornwall Police

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In the first quarter of 2025/26, covering the period 1st April to 30th June 2025, the Commissioner received **no** reports of PEOs closing before the force's advertised closing time. In the second quarter of 2025/26, covering the period the 1st July to the 30th of September 2025, the Commissioner has continued to receive **no** reports. This is a positive downward trend which the Commissioner will continue to monitor.

2. Investigations

2.1 Target: 95% of crime to be recorded accurately - Crime data integrity (CDI)



This measure has not been updated since the Police and Crime Panel meeting in September⁴ as updated audit results are not yet available. The Commissioner will provide an update on this measure at the next panel meeting in January 2026.

Devon and Cornwall Police conduct regular audits of crime data integrity (CDI) to ensure crimes which have been reported have been recorded accurately and are compliant with Home Office Crime Recording Rules.

It is important that crimes are recorded accurately so that the police can take the right action for each victim of crime and that they have access to support services.

The latest CDI results show that the Commissioner's target of 95% has not yet been met. The force's CDI audit results as of May – July 2025 show that **91.5%**⁵ of all reported crime has been recorded accurately. This is a stable trend compared to the 12 months prior, where compliance was at 92.2%, and a small improvement on performance reported at the last panel meeting, where compliance was at 89.7% (April – June 2025).

Although the 95% target has not yet been achieved, the Commissioner is partly assured that Devon and Cornwall Police are taking the necessary steps to improve crime recording and is encouraged that HMICFRS' latest judgment of crime recording has moved from 'inadequate' to 'requires improvement' based on their own audit and assessment. The Commissioner will continue to monitor performance in crime data integrity closely.

2.2 Direction of travel measure: Increase percentage of 'positive offender outcomes+' rate.



Positive offender outcomes+ indicate that an effective response has been made to a criminal offence following a police investigation.

The offender outcomes+ definition covers offences which have resulted in an offender being:

- Charged / summonsed to court.
- Receiving an out of court resolution (OoCR) (informal/ formal): An out of court resolution
 can be issued by the police without the need for an offender to go to court. Resolutions can
 include setting the offender some conditions, such as rehabilitation to prevent future

⁴ 12th of September 2025

⁵ Crime recording compliance estimate. D&C Police use the same methodology as HMICFRS to calculate their crime recording compliance rate.

- offending, making up for damages or harm caused, or paying court costs. Resolutions are usually issued in cases where an offence is considered to be less harmful.
- Offences taken into consideration (TICs): TICs are offences for which the offender has not been prosecuted but for which they admit to committing and ask the court to take into consideration when sentencing for the offence(s) for which they have been prosecuted.
- Diversionary, educational or intervention activity: A police outcome that can be used when
 the police have decided that no prosecution action will be taken in the case, but the
 offender participates in some form of diversionary activity to prevent future offending. This
 outcome is often used for children and young people providing an opportunity to prevent
 criminalisation, address the offending behaviour and provide support.

The measure of 'positive offender outcomes+ rate' consists of the number of positive offender outcomes+ for investigations finalised in the year (which can relate to crimes committed in any year) as a percentage of crimes recorded during the year.

In the 12 months to September 2025, the offender outcome+ rate was **13.4**% (equating to 16,682 positive offender outcomes+). This is a 2.1% increase in positive outcomes compared with the baseline period 12 months to March 2024.

The latest data that allows for national comparison covers the 12 months to March 2025. At that time, Devon and Cornwall's outcome+ rate was 13.8%. When compared to the 7 forces in its Most Similar Force Group⁶, Devon and Cornwall had the 2nd lowest outcome+ rate. When compared to other police forces in England and Wales, Devon and Cornwall's performance was consistent with the national average, at 13.9%.

The Commissioner is encouraged to see an increase in the positive outcomes+ rate compared with the baseline period (12 months to March 2024 – 11.3%) and since the last national publication of offender outcome data (12 months to December 2024 – 13.1%). The Commissioner recognises that in comparison to other force areas performance in Devon and Cornwall could be improved and the Commissioner will continue to monitor this area closely.

3. Public Confidence

3.1 Direction of travel measure: Increase the percentage (%) of the public that agree "taking everything into account, I have confidence in the police in this area".



This measure has not been updated since the last Police and Crime Panel meeting in September⁷ as updated survey results are not yet available. The Commissioner will provide the latest survey results at the next panel meeting in January 2026.

Public confidence is at the heart of policing. Without the public's confidence, crime may go unreported, intelligence may be missed, and public safety could be compromised.

Devon and Cornwall Police commission a research provider⁸ to survey the public on their

⁶ Most Similar Force Groups (MSGFs) are based on geographic and socio-economic factors as defined by the Home Office. Devon and Cornwall's MSFG includes Norfolk, North Yorkshire, Suffolk, North Wales, West Mercia, Wiltshire and Warwickshire.

⁷ 12th of September 2025

⁸ SMSR Ltd

confidence in policing. The survey has around 2,000 respondents which are representative of the force area.

In the 12 months to August 2025, **77%** of the public agreed that taking everything into account, they had confidence in the police in Devon and Cornwall. This indicates a stable trend in public confidence compared with the baseline period 12 months to March 2024 (77%).

3.2 Direction of travel measure: Increase the percentage (%) of the public that agree "the police would treat you with respect if you had contact with them for any reason".



This measure has not been updated since the last Police and Crime Panel meeting in September as updated survey results are not yet available. The Commissioner will provide the latest survey results at the next panel meeting in January 2026.

The police ask several supplementary questions related to the public's views of policing, including whether they believe the police would treat them with respect. In the 12 months to August 2025, **92%** of the public agreed that police in Devon and Cornwall would treat you with respect if you had contact with them for any reason. Whilst no change in public opinion was evident since the baseline period or the last panel meeting⁹, the results remain positive with over 90% of survey respondents agreeing with this statement.

3.3 Direction of travel measure: Increase the percentage (%) of the public that agree "the police treat everyone fairly, regardless of who they are".



This measure has not been updated since the last Police and Crime Panel meeting in September as updated survey results are not yet available. The Commissioner will provide the latest survey results at the next panel meeting in January 2026.

Fairness and equality are features of good policing and measured as part of the force's public survey. In the 12 months to August 2025, **76%** of the public agreed that police in Devon and Cornwall would treat everyone fairly, regardless of who they are. This was 2% lower than the baseline period, the 12 months to March 2024 (78%) and shows no change since the last panel meeting.¹⁰

Although there was a slight decrease in the proportion of survey respondents who agreed that 'the police treat everyone fairly regardless of who they are', the Commissioner is mindful that 17% of survey respondents either didn't know or neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement and only a small proportion of survey respondents (7%) disagreed or strongly disagreed.

As the activity to deliver on the priorities of the Police and Crime Plan progresses, the Commissioner would anticipate an increase in the proportion of survey respondents who agree with this statement.

⁹ 25th July 2025 – performance was reported at 92% for the 12 months to May 2025

¹⁰ 25th July 2025 – performance was reported at 76% for the 12 months to May 2025

3.4 Direction of travel measure: Increase the percentage (%) of priority victims that are satisfied with the service received by Devon and Cornwall Police.



Related to people's confidence in policing is how satisfied victims feel with the service they have received from the police. This is especially important for priority victims, including those who are victims of the most serious crimes (domestic abuse, hate crime, sexual offences, and attempted murder) or those who are persistently targeted, vulnerable or intimidated.

The surveying of victims of crime is mandated by the Home Office (HO). The HO guidance states that victim satisfaction surveys are designed to take account of the experience of victims, not just at the initial stage of police action, but in subsequent activity; and provide information about victim experience which can be actioned by forces to improve service delivery.

Devon and Cornwall Police undertake satisfaction surveys with victims of crime. This includes questions about several different areas of their experience, including their treatment by police, speed of contact, and progress of investigation. The latest survey results covering the 12 months to September 2025, show that **69%** of priority victims¹¹ were satisfied with the overall service they received from Devon and Cornwall Police. This indicates a stable trend in victim satisfaction compared with the baseline period 12 months to August 2024 (69%) and a slight increase of 1% in the level of victim satisfaction since the last panel meeting¹².

Whilst over two thirds of victims have expressed satisfaction with the service received, the Commissioner would like to see higher levels - as were evident in 2021¹³ when the overall victim satisfaction rate was 77%. The Commissioner is committed to ensuring that victims are at the heart of policing and will continue to monitor this area of performance.

3.5 Reduce the rate of repeat victims



Commissioner's scrutiny assessment:

A 'repeat victim' is a victim who has been subjected to any offence more than once within a 12-month period. This may include victims who have experienced the same or similar offences two or more times within 12 months, or victims who have experienced completely different offence types.

This measure captures both individuals and organisations who have experienced repeat victimisation. In the 12 months to September 2025, the repeat victimisation rate for individuals and organisations was **49.1%**. This is 2.2% higher compared with the baseline period of the 12 months to March 2024 (46.9%) and a stable position since the last panel meeting.

The Police and Crime Panel have requested that the Commissioner distinguishes between individual and organisation repeat victimisation in addition to providing the overall repeat victimisation rate. In the 12 months to September 2025, 38% of individuals were repeat victims of crime. During the same period, 85.1% of organisations were repeat victims of crime.

Whilst police identification of repeat victims can provide increased opportunity for safeguarding, the fact that some people are being repeatedly victimised is not acceptable. Since the Commissioner's monitoring of this measure, repeat victimisation has remained higher than levels seen last year. The Commissioner has therefore assessed that performance in this area requires an additional level of scrutiny and will request that the Chief Constable reports on this at a future

¹¹ Victims who meet specific criteria that warrant a more immediate and enhanced level of support and communication from the police based on severity of crime and the victim's vulnerability

¹² 25th July 2025 – performance was reported at 68% for the 12 months to May 2025

^{13 12} months to December 2021

4. HMICFRS judgements

4.1 Target: Devon and Cornwall Police to be removed from the 'enhanced' stage of performance monitoring.



This measure has not been updated since the last Police and Crime Panel meeting in September.¹⁴ The next HMICFRS PEEL inspection report is expected in 2026, and so performance against this target will remain unchanged until that time.

In October 2022, His Majesty's Inspectorate of the Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) made the decision to move Devon and Cornwall Police into an 'enhanced' level of monitoring know as 'Engage', due to:

- A deterioration in the force's crime recording.
- Concerns with the force's management of emergency and non-emergency calls.
- Concerns with the force's management of registered sexual and violent offenders.

In February 2024, a further cause for concern was identified by HMICFRS relating to the force's management of investigations. This further consolidated the Inspectorates view that Devon and Cornwall Police should be placed into the 'Engage' stage of monitoring.

'Engage' is a tool deployed by HMICFRS that provides additional support and scrutiny to police forces to encourage improvement. Whilst under the enhanced level of monitoring, HMICFRS require the Chief Constable to report formally on the force's progress in each area at Police Performance Oversight Group (PPOG) meetings.

Over the past two and half years Devon and Cornwall Police has made improvements in crime recording, call handling, crime investigations, and the management of sexual and violent offenders.

The Commissioner is pleased to report that on the 30th July 2025, HMICFRS' Chief Inspector Sir Andy Cooke QPM DL removed the force from 'Engage' following a number of improvements in the identified areas, including:

- How the force governs and oversees its control room, with continued improvement in its non-emergency 101 call abandonment rate
- The forces effective management of sexual offenders, which is in line with national guidance
- How the force records crime, with increased confidence in frontline officers' understanding of the principles of crime recording; and
- · An increased use of investigative plans and supervisory reviews by officers and staff

Whilst HMICFRS have closed causes of concern related to the management of emergency and non-emergency calls, and the management of violent and sexual offenders, two concerns remain 'open' relating to crime recording and investigations. This means that the force must demonstrate

¹⁴ 12th of September 2025

continued improvement in these areas before the Inspectorate is content that they are demonstrating good performance.

The Commissioner is proud of the progress made by the force so far under the leadership of Chief Constable James Vaughan QPM and recognises the commitment made by officers and staff to enhance the quality of service provided to the public and remove the force from 'Engage'. The Commissioner looks forward to continued improvement over the coming months.

4.2 Target: Devon and Cornwall Police to have no service areas graded as 'inadequate'.



This measure has not been updated since the last Police and Crime Plan meeting in September.¹⁵ The next HMICFRS PEEL inspection report is expected in 2026, and so performance against this target will remain unchanged until that time.

The removal of the force from 'Engage' is separate to the process undertaken by HMICFRS' that grades service areas of the force. HMICFRS' PEEL¹⁶ inspections occur every 2-3 years and result in gradings for the force in several service areas, including crime prevention, contact with the public, and protection of vulnerable people. The force can be scored in several ways, ranging from 'inadequate' to 'outstanding'.

Devon and Cornwall Police's last PEEL inspection was in February 2023 and therefore there has been no update on this measure since the last Panel meeting in July 2025.

In February 2023, HMICFRS' PEEL inspection of Devon and Cornwall Police graded three service areas as 'inadequate':

- crime recording;
- responding to the public, and;
- the management of offenders and suspects.

In July 2024, following significant focus and investment from the force, HMICFRS' PEEL inspection regraded crime recording, and the management of offenders and suspects as 'requires improvement'. However, responding to the public remained graded as 'inadequate', in addition to a new 'inadequate' grading for investigating crime.

Therefore, with 2 areas graded as 'inadequate', the force is not yet reaching their performance targets in this area, and the Commissioner continues to mark this performance area as not yet within target.

^{15 12}th of September 2025

¹⁶ Police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy (PEEL)

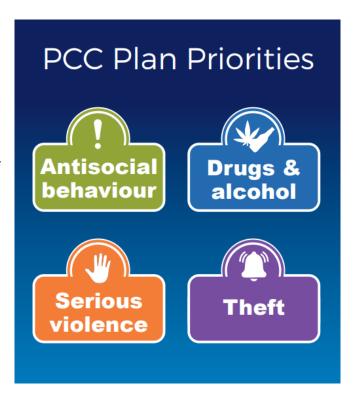


Devon and Cornwall Police and Crime Panel 21st November 2025

OFFICE OF THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER'S REPORT Police and Crime Plan Priority: Serious Violence

1. Introduction

1.1 The Commissioner's Police and Crime plan focusses on four main priorities: antisocial behaviour (ASB), serious violence, drugs and alcohol and theft. This report describes activity undertaken by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) and Devon and Cornwall Police to deliver the priority area of serious violence, specifically tackling concerns in our towns and city centres, in our countryside and coastal areas, on our roads and in our homes and neighbourhoods. The report also describes how the force and the Commissioner are delivering this priority through a focus on repeat victims, repeat offenders and repeat locations, and work with partners to prevent serious violence and support the delivery of the serious violence duty.



2. Background

- 2.1 In her Police and Crime Plan, the Commissioner has adopted a broad definition of serious violence, including violence against women and girls (VAWG), domestic abuse, sexual and physical violence, organised crime and deaths and serious injuries on our roads. In the 12 months to September 2025, Devon and Cornwall Police recorded:
 - 31,696 VAWG offences
 - 24,668 domestic abuse offences
 - 15,602 violence with injury offences
 - 7,169 sexual offences
 - 1,194 offences related to child exploitation



- 587 people killed or seriously injured on our roads¹
- 152 offences related to modern slavery
- 2.2 The key aims of the Police and Crime Plan's serious violence priority are:
 - Women and girls feel safer in our towns and cities
 - Organised criminals are prevented from operating in our countryside
 - A reduction in the number of people killed or seriously injured on our roads
 - Radical ideas are tested to prevent domestic abuse, violence against women and girls, and child sexual abuse.
- 2.3 The Chief Constable has developed a delivery plan which sets out the prioritised activity for which Devon and Cornwall Police will focus its resources, activity and development in 2025-26 in line with the Commissioner's Police and Crime Plan priorities.





2.4 The Commissioner reviewed the force's progress in delivering the Police and Crime Plan priority of serious violence at the October Commissioner's Accountability Board. The Commissioner was assured by the Chief Constable's plans for ongoing



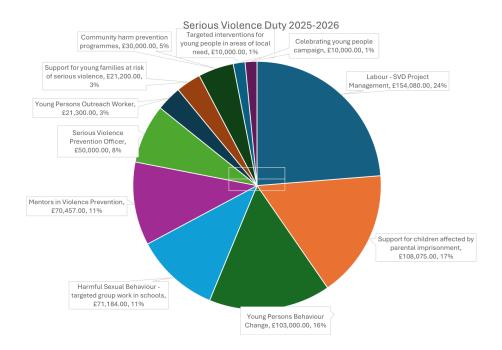
¹ Data is accurate as of 02/10/25. Figures can change as data is updated to reflect updates to casualties' injuries and may be over-represented whilst data is reviewed.

delivery of the priority of serious violence, and her statement of assurance for this area, along with all other topics considered for assurance at the Board can be viewed on the OPCC's website.

3. Working with partners to prevent serious violence

- 3.1 The Serious Violence Prevention Programme was established as a four-year commitment between the OPCC and the Chief Constable. Over this period, the programme generated significant learning around the approaches required to prevent serious violence, despite Devon and Cornwall not being formally recognised as a Violence Reduction Unit area.
- 3.2 Through a shared strategic needs assessment and defined theory of change the programme primarily focused on interventions for individuals under the age of 25, developing and sharing needs assessments, and testing a range of preventative approaches in partnership with local agencies to address issues within communities. At the time of inception, there was no dedicated policing capacity for serious violence prevention, no statutory mandate for partners to work in this area, and no national Serious Violence Duty.
- 3.3 Whilst the Serious Violence Prevention Programme has now ended, considerable learning and legacy work been embedded into the current Police and Crime Plan, and into the force's operational activity. This includes:
 - The establishment of a homicide reduction officer within Devon and Cornwall Police
 - Capacity within the OPCC to support a focus on youth justice with oversight from the Local Criminal Justice Board
 - Scoping a high harm perpetrator approach within Devon and Cornwall Police
- 3.4 The Serious Violence Duty came into effect from January 2023 and requires councils and local services to work together to share information and target interventions to prevent and reduce serious violence. This requirement includes identifying the kinds of serious violence that occur in the area, the causes of that violence, and to prepare and implement a strategy for preventing, and reducing serious violence in the area.
- 3.5 The Serious Violence Duty is currently accompanied by funding of £657,361 which is allocated to Community Safety Partnerships by the OPCC across the peninsula to address serious violence according to their local Strategic Needs Assessments (SNAs). A range of projects are being funded to support the prevention of serious violence, in line with the priorities of the Police and Crime Plan. The Serious Violence Duty funding stipulates that £154,080 must be spent on labour costs and the chart below outlines how the CSP's have allocated this funding:





- 3.6 The OPCC has a convening role in the Serious Violence Duty and is the accountable body for the Serious Violence Grant, reporting back to the Home Office on a quarterly basis on the financial expenditure alongside the overview and impact of these projects. The OPCC has retained a resource within the office to support this.
- 3.7 It is currently unclear whether (although considered unlikely) the Serious Violence Duty funding will be re-issued in 2026-27 as the refresh of the Serious Violence Duty statutory guidance is on hold whilst the learning from the Young Futures Panels pilot and the Landscape Review nationally is considered. This places potential additional pressure to work creatively together to ensure all organisations can meet their responsibilities under the statutory Serious Violence Duty through existing budgets.
- 3.8 The Home Office has announced that they have commissioned Crest Advisory to develop clear standards for partner roles and to strengthen partnership approaches under the Serious Violence Duty. Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly are one of six areas nationally that are involved in shaping this work. The OPCC is convening local partners to engage with this review.



4. Police and Crime Plan aim: Women and girls feel safer in our towns and cities



- 4.1 The presence of CCTV can increase the sense of safety for women and girls and deter perpetrators. The Commissioner has recently announced £125,000 in new funding for 2025/26 to expand or improve town and parish council (and their equivalents) CCTV infrastructure, building on earlier Safer Streets investments across the region. This funding supports long-term situational prevention and intelligence gathering, reinforcing the legacy of the summer initiative.
- 4.2 Over 60 councils and voluntary organisations applied for a share of this investment, highlighting there are opportunities for improvement for partners to consider, beyond that which this funding can deliver. The Commissioner's office is currently reviewing applications for funding with the intention of announcing results early in December.
- 4.3 Devon and Cornwall Police have launched several campaigns which support the aim of women and girls feeling safer in our towns and cities. Project Nighteye is a campaign to specifically target male perpetrators of sexual violence in the evening and night-time economy. The project aims to make public spaces safer for women and girls and deter crime. The force has created two animated videos to raise awareness around behaviours of concern and provide signposting to methods of reporting.
- 4.4 A campaign was launched in line with university 'freshers week', which focused on reporting inappropriate sexual behaviours and non-contact sexual offending. In addition, the force launched a cyber stalking campaign in December 2024, with the aim of raising awareness of these types of crimes amongst the public, and to remind officers and staff of the relevant policies and guidance available for them when identifying, recording and investigation these crimes.
- 4.5 The force is now also using enhanced analytical capabilities to better understand the nature of crimes locally, such rape, other serious sexual offences and stalking. These strategic profiles also give the force further information about both victim and offender demographics, and how the force responds to these offences, to inform prevention work and any necessary improvements to the police response.
- 5. Police and Crime Plan aim: Organised criminals are prevented from operating in our countryside
- 5.1 The Commissioner is the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) national lead for serious and organised crime (SOC) and the national lead



for criminal justice. Devon and Cornwall police remain the National Police Chief Council lead for modern slavery and organised immigration crime (MSOIC). For nearly ten years, the Commissioner has overseen additional home office funding to support the police service nationally to strengthen their response to modern slavery, and more recently OIC. All these elements focus on the coordination of reducing pervasive crimes across our communities particularly where crime may be hidden in countryside and coastal areas.

5.2 In recognition of the impact of crime on farming and rural communities, the Commissioner has a regular dialogue with the National Farmers Union (NFU) and the British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC) and previously chaired a meeting with leads from the NFU and with communities to hear first-hand about problems facing farmers such as livestock attacks, livestock theft and farm plant and machinery theft.



5.3 According to the latest NFU Mutual Rural Crime Report, the estimated cost of rural crime in the UK was £44.1 million last year. Around £7 million of the loss is attributed to agricultural vehicle theft, including £2.7 million worth of quad bikes and all-terrain vehicles and £1.5 million worth of tractors. Operation Ragwort is an annual, regional operation which sees forces working together to target rural crime, including organised criminal gangs responsible for farm machinery and equipment theft. In September, Devon and Cornwall Police's rural affairs team led Operation Ragwort which involved more than 90 officers and other personnel from Devon and Cornwall Police and partner agencies including the Driving Vehicle Standards Agency, Trading Standards, an industry expert in forensic recovery, the Environment Agency and the National Construction and Agricultural Theft Team, as well as officers from Avon and Somerset, Dorset, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire.

5.4 Working with the force's drone team, officers carried out high-visibility patrols and stop-checks on popular routes in Devon, looking for signs of any stolen equipment, plant or livestock, and for vehicles associated with potential environmental waste crime such as fly tipping. More than 200 vehicles were stopped and checked, resulting in officers identifying a vehicle with an expired MOT, two commercial vehicles exceeding the weight limit and two other offences. Officers were also based at local agricultural supply stores to engage with rural communities, raising awareness about trends in rural crime and prevention measures as part of a two-pronged approach to the day of action.

5.5 The force's intelligence directorate has produced serious and organised crime local profiles for each BCU (Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, Plymouth, South Devon and North, East and West Devon). These local profiles have identified intelligence regarding violence linked to drugs. Between July and August 2025, the force



recorded 579 disruptions, the majority of which relate to drugs, cybercrime, child sexual abuse, and organised immigration crime.

6. Police and Crime Plan aim: A reduction in people killed and seriously injured on our roads

- 6.1 Vision Zero South West has committed to halving the number of people killed and seriously injured (KSI) by 2030. KSI figures have continued to fall year-on-year for the past three years, but there is still more work to do. There is a continued focus on vulnerable road user groups and education around the 'Fatal 5' causes of collisions.
- 6.2 This year Vision Zero has continued to fund and promote motorcycle training schemes for all ages and launched a targeted behaviour change campaign for motorcyclists which reached over two million people over the summer months. Work is also underway on a campaign targeting older drivers and their families and working on a pedestrian safety pilot project in the Mutley Plain area of Plymouth. The Learn2Live education programme continues to give lifesaving advice to thousands of new young drivers throughout the region.



- 6.3 The Vision Zero intelligence team have produced problem profiles covering high harm routes and hotspot locations. A lead responsible officer is assigned to each and a problem-solving plan then implemented, which brings partners together to tackle the issues identified. Intelligence and incident logs are also monitored to identify dangerous, disqualified or impaired drivers and this information is then shared with frontline policing teams for awareness and targeting.
- 6.4 ANPR markers also provide the opportunity to quickly identify and react when targets are located on the roads. Stop checks and disruptions occur daily, helping to ensure offenders are prosecuted and taken off the roads. The Acusensus AI camera systems usage has been expanded to prevent seatbelt and mobile phone offences, which have a direct correlation to the risk of death and serious injury in the event of a collision.
- 6.5 Vision Zero has engaged the public with road safety messaging which has reached over 3.8 million people, worked in partnership with council and emergency service colleagues to host Road Safety Villages at county shows in Devon and Cornwall, and launched a new website, complete with targeted road safety advice and downloadable resources for community messaging.



6.6 A pioneering programme to support the families of road safety victims has been commissioned via the OPCC for the last three years and is currently being evaluated.

7. Police and Crime Plan aim: Radical ideas are tested to prevent domestic abuse, violence against women and girls, and sexual abuse



7.1 In July, the Commissioner hosted a groundbreaking one-day workshop in Exeter, inviting around 100 frontline professionals to contribute to radical ideas aimed at disrupting VAWG (violence against women and girls). The workshop engaged a broad coalition of stakeholders, including police officers, council representatives, charities, victim services and policy makers.

- 7.2 Many ideas have been captured and are being evaluated by my office to be translated into actionable interventions alongside identifying opportunities for scaling across the region.
- 7.3 A month-long survey was also shared publicly by my office to maximise the opportunity to collate radical ideas and engage the voice of communities in this work.
- 7.4 A follow-up meeting is now being planned this autumn to further engage with partners to help link them up to funding opportunities and start developing the most transformative ideas to create much-needed change.
- 7.5 The OPCC commissions and funds a range of services with the aim of preventing crime and reoffending. This includes providing funding for A Band of Brothers which works with young men who are at risk of offending. It provides weekly one-on-one mentoring sessions for men aged 18 to 25 who have had traumatic childhoods that have led to then being involved in the criminal justice system or put them at increased risk of doing so. Those sessions help to make well-rounded individuals who may have never had good role models in their lives, and they are taught how to develop good and healthy relationships, including with current or future partners.
- 7.6 The OPCC works with partners to prevent criminal exploitation of young people through funding of programmes including Exeter City Football Club's Changing Our Path service, and Plymouth Argyles young person's mentoring and activities programme.



- 7.7 In Plymouth the force is running a multi-agency tasking and coordination (MATAC) pilot with the aim of reducing domestic abuse offending, alongside a rape and serious sexual offences disruption panel pilot to target and disrupt perpetrators of domestic abuse, rape and serious sexual offences.
- 7.8 The force is working hard to identify the most vulnerable repeat victims and ensure they are safeguarded and supported. The force's strategic performance board conducted a deep dive review of repeat victimisation in October and as a result the force plan to develop a repeat victim problem profile to enable further understanding in this area and improve the force's overall response.
- 7.9 The force has been piloting rapid video response which uses video calling to connect to domestic abuse victims at the point of initial report. This has the benefit of engaging the victim instantly, in cases where a police resource is not required for initial attendance at a scene. The pilot has now concluded, and the force is planning, where appropriate, to make use of video response more widely, to support early victim engagement, safeguarding and to minimise the risk of attrition. To ensure that the most vulnerable victims of domestic abuse receive an appropriate response form the police, the rapid video response pilot has been run alongside a priority domestic abuse vulnerable call logs pilot, which identifies the most vulnerable victims and ensures they are prioritised for an in-person response.
- 7.10 The force has seen a significant increase in demand for Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme requests. In the last 12 months the volume of applications has increased by 65% compared to the previous year. Across the last six months, the average number of applications received per month is 252. The force is monitoring disclosures to ensure an improved and consistent service is provided in line with statutory guidance.
- 7.11 The force has undertaken a series of self-assessments related to the national Soteria model for rape and serious sexual offences to review progress and ensure activity is in line with best practice. In November, the national Soteria team will visit the force to discuss progress and recommendations for ongoing improvements, which will be incorporated into the force's own Soteria transformation plan.

Contact for further information Vicky Church

Accountability and Standards Officer
Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Devon and Cornwall

opcc@dc-pcc.gov.uk
Report prepared on 11th November 2025





DEVON AND CORNWALL POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

21st November 2025

COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER RECEIVED UNDER THE POLICE REFORM AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY ACT

- 1. The table below provides the number of complaints received and handled against the Commissioner since the 3rd September 2025. This report covers the period up to 28th October 2025.
- 2. No formal complaints were received against the Commissioner in this reporting period.
- 3. Since January 2025, all seventeen complaints received have been resolved, with responses being sent to the complainants.

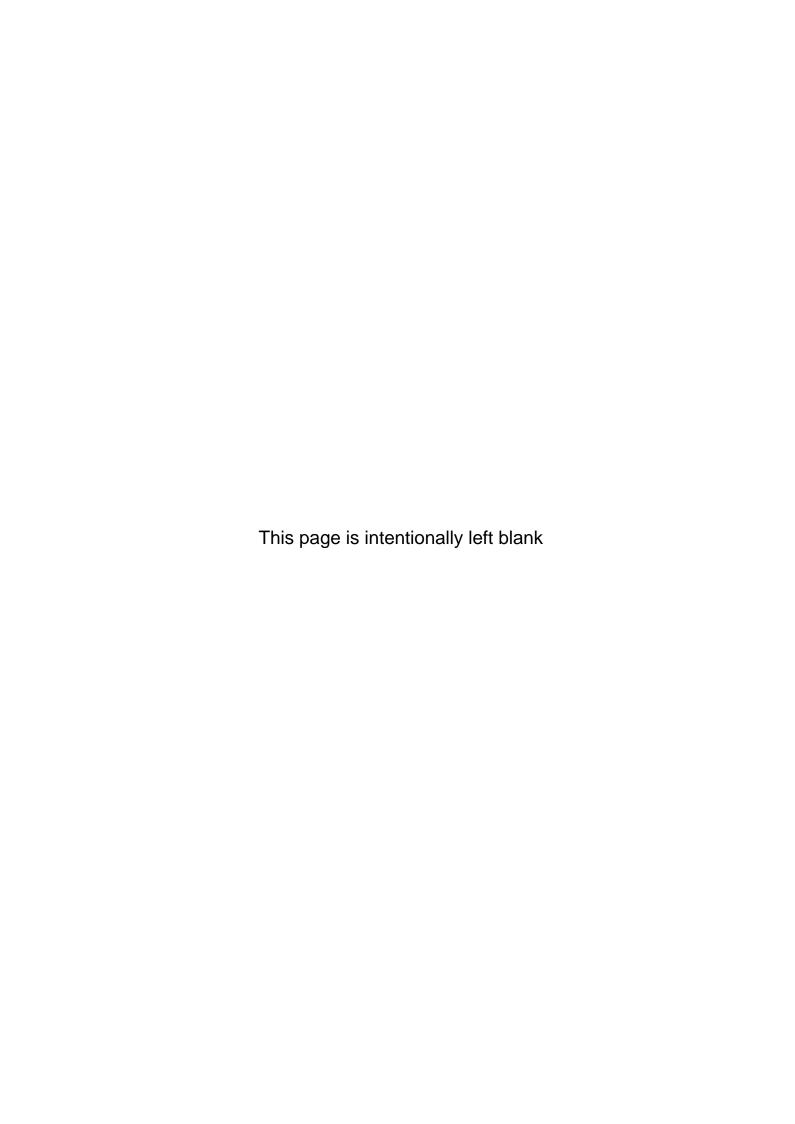
| Dates | Complaints received | Number of Complaints recorded | Number of Complaints unrecorded | Total | Complaints forwarded to the IOPC by the OPCC | Complaints resolved |
|--|---------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------|---|------------------------|
| 3 rd September 2025 - 28 th October 2025 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Contact for further information:

OPCC@dc-pcc.gov.uk

Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Devon and Cornwall Report prepared on the 28th October 2025





| Number | Minute No. | Resolution | Target Date, Officer Responsible and Progress |
|--------|--|--|---|
| 2. | Public Engagement and Contact 4 October 2024 | Commissioner to release positive communications to ensure the public are confident in using the 101 call line. | Due Date: ASAP Person Responsible: Alison Hernandez Progress: This work is on-going and communications would be released by the OPCC. Action now closed |
| 4. | The Commissioner's actions in response to a decision by the panel at its 19 July 2024 meeting. 22 November 2024 | Chair and Vice Chair, in consultation with the host authority and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner ensure an agreed, clear process for future appointments was agreed at the next meeting of the Panel. | Due Date: ASAP Person Responsible: Chair/Vice-chair/OPCC/Jake Metcalfe Progress: Action complete. |
| 5. | Commissioners update report: 25 July 2025 | Commissioner to acknowledge other partners within the update report. | Due Date: September 2025 Person Responsible: Commissioner Progress: Action complete. |
| 6. | Commissioners update report: 25 July 2025 | Commissioner to ensure good practice is within the next update report. | Due Date: September 2025 Person Responsible: Commissioner Progress: Action complete. |

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Agenda Item 10

| 7. | Commissioners update report: 25 July 2025 | Commissioner to attend Launceston with Cllr Chopak in relation to a Policy enquiry office. | Due Date: September 2025 Person Responsible: Commissioner Progress: Action complete. |
|-----|---|--|---|
| 8. | Commissioners update report: 25 July 2025 | The Commissioner would share the draft plan around the delivery of Safer Streets to the Panel. | Due Date: November 2025 Person Responsible: Commissioner Progress: |
| 9. | Commissioners update report: 25 July 2025 | The Commissioner would link in with ward councillors when she was putting in initiatives for their particular wards. | Person Responsible: Commissioner Progress: Action noted by the Commissioner and would action when appropriate. Action is closed. |
| 10. | Draft Annual Report 25 July 2025 | The Commissioner would share any open letters written with councillors of the Panel. | Person Responsible: Commissioner Progress: Action noted by the Commissioner and would action when appropriate. Action closed. |

| 11. | Draft Annual Report | The Commissioner would have discussions with Exeter City Council around the Safe Bus and whether this | Due Date: September 2025 |
|-----|---------------------|---|--|
| | 25 July 2025 | initiative could happen there. | Person Responsible: Commissioner |
| | | | Progress: The Commissioner has had discussions with Exeter City Council, no solution has been found to date. Action closed. |
| 12. | Draft Annual Report | The Commissioner to correct the statement within the annual report in which it states the safe bus runs every | Due Date: September 2025 |
| | 25 July 2025 | Saturday as this was factually incorrect and the bus ran on differing days depending on events. | Person Responsible: Commissioner |
| | | on directing days depending on events. | Progress: Action complete. |
| | | | |
| 13. | Draft Annual Report | The Commissioner would ensure there was a narrative around the staffing figures dropping in 2025 from 2024 | Due Date: September 2025 |
| | 25 July 2025 | figures. | Person Responsible: Commissioner |
| | | | Progress: Action complete. |
| | | | |
| 14. | Draft Annual Report | The Commissioner would copy in Cllr Loudoun when | Due Date: ASAP |
| | 25 July 2025 | discussing buildings in Exmouth for Police Enquiry offices. | Person Responsible: Commissioner |
| | | | Progress: Action completed, however no substantive update. |

| 15. | Draft Annual Report 25 July 2025 | The Draft Annual Plan should have an accessible version for members of the public. | Due Date: November 2025 Person Responsible: Commissioner Progress: This is under consideration. |
|-----|--|---|---|
| 16 | Draft Annual Report 25 July 2025 | The work of the Vision Zero Partnership needed to be more granular so members of the public understood the good work going on in relation to road safety. | Due Date: September 2025 Person Responsible: Commissioner Progress: Upper Tier Councillors were represented on the Vision Zero Board and can feedback to local areas. Communications on the work of Vision Zero is regularly communicated via their website, social media, Youtube and press releases. Action closed. |
| 17. | Draft Annual Report 25 July 2025 | The Commissioner to create a young people's version of the annual report which could sent into schools for PSHE work. | Due Date: November 2025 Person Responsible: Commissioner Progress: Under consideration. |
| 18. | Cost and Functions of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner 25 July 2025 | The Commissioner would have discussions with the relevant councils when sending out information in relation to Council Tax. | Due Date: Early 2026 Person Responsible: Commissioner Progress: Action noted. |

| 19. | Cost and Functions of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner | The Commissioner was requested to inform the Panel how her office would get back to its expenditure target of 0.65% as part of setting the next budget. | Person Responsible: Commissioner Progress: The Commissioner will endeavour to include this within the 2026/27 budget report. |
|-----|--|---|---|
| 20. | Performance Papers 25 July 2025 | Presentation on what crime data integrity looked like and the types of processes that they went through for recording crime. | Person Responsible: Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner Progress: The Commissioner is awaiting confirmation from the Police and Crime Panel as to when they would like this to be brought to the meeting, as per the work programme. |
| 21. | Contact Services Update 12 September 2025 | That the Panel send a formal thank you letter to the contact services team. | Person Responsible: Jake Metcalfe Progress: Complete. Letter sent to the Chief Constable for the attention of the contact services team on 11 November 2025. |
| 22. | Contact Services Update 12 September 2025 | That the Commissioner's office develop and implement a communications strategy to promote improvements in contact services. | Person Responsible: Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner Progress: Work was on-going and action requested to be closed. |

| 23. | Estates Strategy 12 September 2025 | Commissioner to share the mobile police station delivery plan with Panel members once finalised. | Person Responsible: Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner Progress: The Commissioner is awaiting confirmation from the Police and Crime Panel as to |
|-----|------------------------------------|---|--|
| | | | when they would like this to be brought to the meeting, as per the work programme. |
| 24 | Estates Strategy | Commissioner to re-engage with Cornwall's estates coordination and ensure integration with wider public | Due Date: |
| | 12 September 2025 | sector regeneration initiatives. | Person Responsible: Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner |
| | | | Progress: The Commissioner noted this action and recommended the actions closure. |
| 25. | Estates Strategy | That a further custody report come back to the Panel and would include detailed analysis of staffing, welfare, | Due Date: November 2025 |
| | 12 September 2025 | detainee rights, reference to the one public estate, Homes England Master plan and other public sector initiatives; | Person Responsible: Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner |
| | | | Progress: This has been added to the work programme and therefore this action has been completed. |
| 26. | Estates Strategy | That the Commissioner explore opportunities for permanent solutions to temporary estate arrangements | Due Date: |
| | 12 September 2025 | where community feedback was positive. | Person Responsible: Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner |
| | | | Progress: This has been noted by the Commissioner. |

| 27. | Police and Crime Plan 2025 – 29 Performance Report 12 September 2025 | Commissioner to include Most Similar Force comparisons in future performance reports. | Person Responsible: Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner Progress: Action complete. |
|-----|---|--|---|
| 28 | Police and Crime Plan 2025 – 29 Performance Report 12 September 2025 | Commissioner to explore inclusion of rural crime statistics in thematic reports. | Due Date: November 2025 Person Responsible: Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner Progress: This is included in the crime summary as part of the performance report. Action closed. |
| 29. | Police and Crime Plan 2025 – 29 Performance Report 12 September 2025 | Commissioner to share updates on the deployment and cost of the noise camera. | Person Responsible: Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner Progress: This action is ongoing. The deployment of the noise camera is on a trial basis, and no substantive update is available at this time. |
| 30. | Police and Crime Plan 2025 – 29 Performance Report 12 September 2025 | Commissioner to consider commissioning drug rehabilitation services directly if current arrangements remain unclear. | Person Responsible: Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner Progress: The Commissioner notes this action. This will be considered as part of 2026/27 investment plans. |

| 31. | Police and Crime Plan 2025 – 29 Performance Report 12 September 2025 | That the OPCC ensure future reports clearly distinguish between types of repeat victimisation. | Due Date: Person Responsible: Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner Progress: This is included in the performance reports, action closed. |
|-----|--|--|--|
| 32. | Police and Crime Plan 2025 – 29 Performance Report 12 September 2025 | That the Commissioner continue to support and expand partnership work on antisocial behaviour, including long-term hotspot policing and youth interventions. | Person Responsible: Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner Progress: The work was ongoing as part of Hotspot policing engagement and therefore action completed. |
| 33. | Police and Crime Plan 2025 – 29 Performance Report 12 September 2025 | That the Commissioner explore further opportunities to improve public confidence through visibility, victim support, and community engagement. | Person Responsible: Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner Progress: This work is ongoing and integrated into our business as usual operations. Action requested to be closed. |
| 34 | Police and Crime Commissioner's Update Report 12 September 2025 | Commissioner's office to draft a letter for Panel members to send to MP advocating for full cost recovery of firearms licensing. | Person Responsible: Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner Progress: The Commissioner's office will undertake this activity following the Police and Crime Panel's review of the Firearms Briefing Note in Nov-25. |

| 35. | Police and Crime Commissioner's Update Report 12 September 2025 | That the Panel be kept informed of progress on firearms licensing fee reform and support efforts to achieve full cost recovery. | Person Responsible: Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner Progress: This has been noted by the Commissioner and will be considered when relevant. Action recommended for closure. |
|-----|--|--|--|
| 36 | Police and Crime Commissioner's Update Report 12 September 2025 | That the Panel receive regular updates on the development and implementation of sexual violence support services, particularly for children. | Due Date: Person Responsible: Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner Progress: This is included within the Commissioners update report. Action closed. |
| 37. | Action Log 12 September 2025 | To undertake a tour of the Middlemoor facility, including the custody suite ahead of upcoming decisions on investment. | Person Responsible: Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner Progress: Date arranged for 12 December 2025. |

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Devon and Cornwall Police and Crime Panel Work Programme 2025 – 26

Please note that the work programme is a 'live' document and subject to change at short notice.

| Date of Meeting | Agenda item | Action |
|--------------------|---|--|
| | Election of a Chair and Vice Chair | |
| 25 July 2025 | Police and Crime Commissioners Update | Standing Item |
| 2023 | Draft Annual Report 2024/25 | |
| | Cost & Functions of the OPCC | |
| | Police and Crime Plan Scorecard | Standing Item |
| | Non-Criminal Complaints against the Police and Crime Commissioner | Standing Item |
| 12 September | Contact Services Update | Update request from the meeting that took place on 04 October |
| 2025 | Estates Strategy and Custody Suite Developments | Outline current progress of the estates strategy and custody suite developments as requested in July 2025. |
| | Police and Crime Plan Scorecard | Standing Item |
| | Police and Crime Commissioners Update | Standing Item |
| | Non-Criminal Complaints against the Police and Crime Commissioner | Standing Item |
| 21 | Community Cohesion | |
| November 2025 | Firearms Licensing | |
| | Police and Crime Plan Scorecard | Standing Item |
| | Police and Crime Commissioners Update | Standing Item |
| | Non-Criminal Complaints against the Police and Crime Commissioner | Standing Item |
| 30 January 2026 | Precept | |
| 2020 | Police and Crime Plan Scorecard | Standing Item |
| | Police and Crime Commissioners Update | Standing Item |
| | Non-Criminal Complaints against the Police and Crime Commissioner | Standing Item |

| Date of Meeting | Agenda item | Action |
|------------------------|---------------------------|--------|
| 13 February 2026 | Only if Precept is vetoed | |

Future Items

| Agenda items to be scheduled | Action |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Equality Objectives | What is the Commissioners Equalities objectives, are they being achieved? |
| Rural Affairs and Wildlife Crime | The Commissioner would work with Rural Crime teams, Tri Service Safety Officers and Rural crime prevention groups to tackle wildlife crime. |
| Police Complaints | |
| Neighbourhood Community Policing | Is the force on track to deliver? What are the cost pressures? |
| Crime Reporting | Is the force good at logging and investigating crime. |
| | Are the public confident in doing this? |
| Councillor Advocate Best Practice | To close the loop from that forum into the Police and Crime Panel. |
| Drug use | |
| Rural and urban ASB | |
| Items to be monitored | |
| The Commissioners Scrutiny | For the Panel to hear about the Commissioners scrutiny from her sessions |

