



Devon and Cornwall Police and Crime Panel

25th September 2020

CONTINUING TO DELIVER AN EFFECTIVE POLICING AND CRIME SERVICE TO THE PUBLIC THROUGHOUT COVID 19 (PART 2)

In early July 2020 the Police and Crime Panel received a report from the Police and Crime Commissioner on the activity of the Commissioner and her Office specifically in relation to the COVID 19 Pandemic. This update report provides details of the activity during the period June to Sept 2020.

During the COVID 19 pandemic there has never been a more important and challenging time to ensure that our communities remain **safe, resilient and connected**. Despite the COVID challenges Devon and Cornwall Police have become the safest place from crime in the country this year.

The Commissioner's **Police and Crime Plan** strategic intentions remain valid and have been applied to the devastating impact and consequences of the pandemic as it relates to policing, crime and community safety. Working with partners across Devon and Cornwall, Criminal Justice and Policing, and supporting the Chief Constable, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner's team have adapted to meet the needs of victims, offenders, wider communities and policing to ensure that Devon and Cornwall remains best placed to protect our communities. It has also focused on ensuring the resilience and recovery of Devon and Cornwall Police.

The **Commissioner's focus** has remained as:

1. Enabling the Chief Constable to access sufficient resources to respond to the emergency;
2. Supporting the Chief Constable to work in partnership to protect the public locally, regionally and nationally;
3. Ensuring, on behalf of the public, that the police respond in ways that are necessary, sufficient, proportionate and ethical (holding to account);
4. Facilitating effective partnership working among agencies and groups working in community safety, violence reduction and criminal justice;
5. Commissioning and co-commissioning new services, particularly for victims of crime, and providing grants for policing and crime reduction purposes;
6. Ensuring the organisational health of Devon and Cornwall Police, so that it not only responds to the national emergency effectively, but recovers and returns to normality as quickly as possible;



7. Ensure that the public receive a proportionate response to business as usual crimes and requests for service throughout the current emergency.
During this period the Commissioner and her office have supported the police as they move through the transition phase to a return to a more business as usual approach. Likewise the OPCC are transitioning to a new way of working with a wider focus than just the pandemic response.

Police and Crime Plan Priority: Connecting communities and policing - the Local Policing Promise (Accessible, Responsive, Informative and Supportive)

The police continue to enforce, where necessary the powers to restrict movement and issue fixed penalty notices. Policing has always been by the consent of the public and this continues to be the approach adopted by the Chief Constable. In July 2020 the Police received additional powers to enforce the wearing of face coverings in retail premises. The approach of 4Es (Engage, Explain, Encourage, Enforce) was deployed as with previous powers.

Further changes to the coronavirus regulations came into force on Monday 14 September 2020, which set out the '**rule of six**' and its exemptions and guidance material has been provided nationally to police officers and staff to reflect the changes.

The new regulations reduce the size of gatherings from 30 to a maximum of six people, and will apply to settings indoors and outdoors, including in private homes, with a limited number of exemptions, such as education and work settings.

Devon and Cornwall Police will continue to use the approach of engage, explain, encourage and, only as a last resort, enforce.

Existing good practice has continued, including:

- Regular dialogue with **MPs and their offices continues**. The Commissioner convenes a fortnightly briefing with MPs and the Chief Constable. These meetings provided an opportunity for a two-way dialogue to keep all apprised of policing style, new police powers and local challenges around the unlocking of previous restrictions and any new enforcement powers.
- Regular national call with **Ministers** to discuss emerging issues in policing and criminal justice and to feedback any areas of concern.
- The Commissioner continues to be an active participant as part of the **Cornwall Leadership Board, One Plymouth and Torbay Together** and has representatives in the Cornwall Recovery processes.
- A regular email cascade to all participants in the **PCCs Councillor Advocate scheme** about local issues and emerging crimes e.g. fraud, Domestic Abuse, sources of help and support in localities etc. along with the opportunity to ask questions to be answered publicly via the audio blog or Facebook live. The number of Councillor Advocates has increased to above 200 in recent months.

- The weekly podcast continues to update the public on key issues and provide feedback on frequently asked questions and concerns
- **Supporting** wider economic activity
- In partnership with other regional Commissioners it has been agreed that the South West will set up a regional cyber resilience centres as part of nationwide approach to supporting businesses from cyber-crime. This is funded by the Home Office in partnership with key businesses in the South West.
- The ***Independent Custody Visiting Scheme*** (ICV) forms part of the Commissioner's scrutiny and assurance arrangements. This is a statutory scheme involving volunteers who visit police stations unannounced to check on the treatment and welfare of those held in police custody.
With the reduction to COVID Alert Level 3 the ICV scheme resumed face to face activity, with limitations. The interventions are now a mixture of **physical** and **virtual** visits. Each custody suite will receive at least one of each type per month per suite and appropriate health and safety has been agreed to minimise risk of potential infection to volunteers, officers, staff and detainees.

Police and Crime Plan Priority: Preventing and deterring crime

Throughout the crisis, ***business as usual policing has continued***. In some areas the police have had to prioritise service delivery based on threat, risk and harm and this resulted in different approaches and tactics deployed to provide services to the public. For example the Contact and Resolution Centre enhanced the triage of reported incidents based on the threat, harm and risk assessment. Incidents assessed to be of low risk were dealt with over the phone rather than deploying a resource. Between March 23rd and end August 2020 the IRC resolved over 2500 logs by telephone through advice, signposting to other agencies or submitting intelligence. Over the busy summer, with June and July seeing a 27% increase in routine and vulnerable logs on the same period last year this approach has assisted in prioritising demand. In August, the team resolved 43.5% of all issues that were sent for triage. That's 509 fewer requiring a physical deployment in one month alone.

The Commissioner welcomed a Parliamentary debate on the challenges faced by frontline officers in the peninsula and called on the Government to ensure that the Force receives a good share of extra officers planned through Operation Uplift so that it can cope with the impact of tourism. The debate was led by St Austell and Newquay MP Steve Double to the Policing Minister, Kit Malthouse MP and included interventions by local MPs: Selaine Saxby MP, Simon Jupp MP and Anthony Magnall MP.

The Minister paid tribute to the work of the force in dealing with the problems posed by an influx of visitors and the coronavirus epidemic and confirmed the intention to announce the next round of allocations from the national uplift programme later this month. He also gave personal thanks to Devon and Cornwall's Deputy Chief Constable Paul Netherton for his national leadership in co-ordinating local responses to the pandemic through the network of Local Resilience Forums.

Investment to reduce crime and antisocial behaviour

The PCC invested additional resources to tackle crime and antisocial behaviour in 20 key summer locations across the two counties ahead of the easing of coronavirus restrictions and a summer surge in visitors. The funding allocated via Community Safety Partnership's has been spent on street marshals, CCTV, assisting volunteer schemes like Street Pastors and the provision of temporary toilets. The new measures have complemented the wider summer policing investment made by the Commissioner in the 2020/21 budget.

The 20 locations, which were identified by operational policing leads within Devon and Cornwall Police, are: Exmouth seafront and Orcombe Point, Exeter Quay, Exeter Cathedral, Bideford Quay, Woolacombe Beach, Croyde Bay, Torquay seafronts, Paignton seafronts, Newton Abbot, Teignmouth waterfront, Brixham Waterfront and Harbour, Towan Beach and waterfront (Newquay), Fistral Beach (Newquay), St Ives Waterfront, Lemon Quay (Truro), Perran Sands (Perranporth), Penzance waterfront, Bude waterfront, Plymouth Hoe and Plymouth Barbican. The PCC has visited all the funded locations with respective community leaders throughout the summer.

This investment was welcomed by North Devon MP Selaine Saxby in a House of Commons debate. She highlighted the additional funding the commissioner had provided to help deal with post lockdown antisocial behaviour and asked Home Secretary Priti Patel to join her in welcoming the £500,000 commitment made by Commissioner Hernandez.

The Commissioner was also approached by Dartmoor National Park Authority to re-purpose funding which the Commissioner had already given to them for business crime interventions to expand the marshal scheme to Belever and other high risk unauthorised encampment sites on Dartmoor. This was agreed and implemented in early August.

The Commissioner's wider investment of £400,000 to support the policing response to the summer surge has been used flexibly to help address new emerging ASB hotspots in the latter stages of the summer, with the allocation of additional resources through that funding to each Local Policing Area to enable targeted deployment of additional police resources into those areas.

This approach has now been taken up nationally with the government announcing COVID marshals in September 2020.

Bluelight Services Commitment

As it has been more difficult to fully deliver on our ambitions for the Bluelight Fund during COVID, the Commissioner has decided to consolidate existing schemes. This has included the extension of the Community Responder Scheme in South Devon for a further year until January 2022 which secures the Firefighter/Special Constables in seven of our towns Honiton, Newton Abbot, Crediton, Okehampton, Dartmouth, Cullompton and Totnes.

The Tri-Service Safety Officers are also being recruited to fill vacancies with discussions underway with SWAST for further expansion.

Other collaborations are also in the pilot phase including the Mental Health response car in Devon and the Domestic Abuse car in Cornwall.

The police have partnered with experts from First Light in Cornwall and Plymouth Domestic Abuse Services (PDAS). A dedicated unmarked vehicle will see an independent domestic violence advisor (IDVA) (Plymouth) or a specialist domestic abuse support worker (Cornwall) and a plain clothes police officer deployed together to any domestic abuse incident.

This is delivering an immediate response to incidents of domestic abuse at the most critical point providing the best support to the victim, whilst at the same time enabling officers to gather quality evidence of offences and to provide a thorough risk assessment. The unmarked car works between 4pm and 2am on Friday and Saturday. There is one based in Newquay and the other is based at Charles Cross police station in Plymouth city centre.

A similar approach is being taken to mental health. Since July three mental health Joint Response Units have been set up in partnership with the social enterprise Livewell South West and the Devon Partnership NHS Trust. These are operating in Plymouth, Torbay and Exeter.

Each car is crewed by a police officer and a mental health practitioner and means that those on the front line have direct access to NHS patient data, meaning they can make much more informed decisions when a request for service comes in. Real time access to police and NHS systems has led to better informed decisions and more appropriate courses of action taken at the scene.

Investment in High Crime Areas

The OPCC also retained its commitment to drawing in national funding to support communities in Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly and worked with Plymouth City Council and partners to prepare and submit a PCC sponsored bid to the Home Office Safer Streets Fund for 2020/21 which was successful in July 2020. A total of £546,781 has been made available through the fund to reduce acquisitive crime in North Stonehouse

The funding will give residents access to additional security measures such as extra CCTV cover, improved home security, neighbourhood watch schemes, additional street lighting and crime prevention advice. It will also support the community to develop public spaces in the area. The commissioner's office worked with residents, the neighbourhood policing team, Plymouth City Council and the Plymouth Community Safety Partnership, Safer Plymouth, to put the bid together to support greater connectivity. Project delivery will run until 31st March 2021 and is being jointly managed by Plymouth City Council and the OPCC.

Effective and targeted communication and engagement

Effective and targeted communication and engagement with communities has been vital in the OPCC response to COVID 19. This has been both bespoke messaging around

emerging crime trends, as well as promoting the national messaging around social distancing, limiting travel and protecting the vulnerable in our society. In partnership with other public sector bodies in Devon, the PCC has developed a free newspaper which has been delivered to targeted households across Devon with updates from all services to ensure that residents with limited internet access have the most up to date information during the pandemic. Downloadable resources have been made available to businesses to support the wearing of face masks as well as the exemptions which apply.

Police and Crime Plan Priority: Protecting people who are at risk of abuse or who are vulnerable

We have continued to work to provide safe places for people to seek support, utilising new technologies and regular dialogue with our service providers. We continue to support victims and support is available to any victim of crime, including domestic abuse. We have started our planned exploration of alternative service delivery models with our providers to ensure that we remain focused on harm reduction.

The OPCC continue to fund **Crimestoppers and DACCWA** to ensure that there are a variety of routes open to report crime and protection communities. Devon and Cornwall Community Watch Association (DaCCWA) has connected with almost 300 new communities since the beginning of Covid-19 as residents look to support each other during lockdown.

The OPCC has been working hard **to ensure that the Commissioner's commissioned services continue to operate and support vulnerable people** when they need them. Specific new services commissioned or co-commissioned by the Commissioner are:

- Access to Victim Support 24/7 online and by telephone
- Operation Encompass Teacher's Helpline
- Providing funding to Devon Community Foundation and Cornwall Community Foundation to their COVID Emergency Funds

Additional investments in Sexual Violence services

The OPCC has been successful in receiving new funding of £57,000 for Independent Domestic Violence Advisors from the Ministry of Justice which was aimed at recruiting Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (IDVAS) in order to increase the number of victims of rape and sexual assaults who support prosecutions. It will also provide for a specialist multiple and complex needs ISVA to support victims of rape and sexual assault across Devon and Cornwall and the funding will last for 18 months, alongside the 24 month post for a Men and Boys ISVA awarded in the first round.

The OPCC has been working hard to ensure that existing victim services remain robust and accessible to those who need it and may not be in a secure environment. We continue to work across agency, which has been so important over the last few months

and have broken down barriers and collaborated in ways which would not have been possible previously. This has included anticipating demand for services as the pandemic has evolved and improving opportunities for people to talk, share and listen. We have continued to operate a **regular cascade with the Victim Care Network** to ensure that contingencies are in place to minimise the impact on victims of crime. In addition the Commissioning team within the OPCC have begun a series of monthly webinars to offer providers a space to discuss challenges of working during the pandemic. These webinars are informal lunchtime sessions aimed at giving the space to connect with other providers and gather some learning from each other and/or guest speakers.

Additional support for service providers

Since the pandemic started the OPCC and its partners have worked tirelessly to manage the crisis. With the lockdown now easing and organisations and communities beginning to adjust to our new 'normal' society, we have a moment in time to pause and reflect on what we have learnt since March 2020 and if that experience could/should shape our future thinking as strategic commissioners. This pause is even more timely as in 2021 the office of the police and crime commissioner will be re-commissioning services to support those who have experienced crime. This activity will mark a substantial strategic, tactical and cultural change in how those services, which the police and crime commissioner directly commissions, are delivered.

The OPCC facilitated an **on line event** with service providers to:

- capture what commissioners of these services have learnt during the pandemic (about themselves as professionals, about how they work, about their commissioning relationships, about those they commission, about the opportunities, about the challenges, about the really challenging things that they may not be comfortable to say etc)
- to assess how commissioners' respond to feedback about pandemic learning from the staff within these services
- to explore what a joint vision of a future whole system approach to preventing and responding to domestic abuse and sexual violence, could be
- to seek the views of commissioners about what opportunities and challenges they foresee in relation to our organisation's new commissioning direction and how that might impact on the whole system

Application for additional funding for Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Programmes

The Home Office has now opened applications for bids to work with domestic abuse perpetrators. The funding is open to local services and **must be submitted via PCCs** by mid-September.

There are two pots of funding one (£1.1m) is specifically for those areas looking to implement Drive in their local area. The other, (£5m) pot of funding, is for a range of perpetrator interventions – focused on building the evidence base and addressing

known issues in relation to domestic abuse offending. This is a real opportunity to help with preventing crime because it is targeted at the perpetrators behaviour and means there will be greater help for those who want and need to change.

Police and Crime Plan Priority: Supporting victims/witnesses and helping victims to get justice

The unprecedented social distancing requirements have changed the way in which our communities live and work and with it there was an anticipated greater risk for those who are vulnerable, victims of crime and for those who were part way through a criminal justice process, either as a victim/complainant or a suspect/defendant. The Commissioner has been supporting community and voluntary sector organisations to ensure that they can continue to offer vital services through new and innovative approaches to protect those who find themselves in distress.

Regular contact with Criminal Justice Partners has been essential in understanding the complex landscape for criminal justice components. **Devon and Cornwall's Criminal Justice Board (LCJB)** is made up of those key partners who work in the criminal justice system e.g. the police, Crown Prosecution Service, courts, prisons, probation services, local Judges, Youth Offending Teams, etc. Criminal Justice partners have provided excellent commitment and support to the Commissioner through:

Investment in **Virtual Remand Courts** into police custody has continued. There is an ongoing cost to policing from this way of working and discussions are ongoing nationally to determine its longevity.

The Commissioner remains concerned about the backlog in the **criminal justice system** and has lobbied throughout for greater transparency and accountability for criminal justice to ensure that victims and witnesses get swift access to justice. "Nightingale Courts" are now a consideration but the Commissioner remains concerned about the transparency of the plans and the long term impact on victims, witnesses and those accused of crime. This has included working with fellow Commissioners to highlight the need for greater action to unlock capacity, supporting MPs from across Devon and Cornwall to raise these issues with Ministers and participating in the current Justice Select Committee inquiry into court capacity during COVID 19.

In the first quarter of 2020/21 the **Victim Care website** received more than 29,000 hits. 4249 victims received direct support from the Victim Care Unit, with 529 receiving additional specialist support from the Victim Care Network. Of which 62 were referred to restorative justice services.

Impact of the pandemic on criminal justice

The Commissioner is working nationally to understand the long term impacts of the pandemic on crime and criminal justice. The OPCC is one of a few nationally working with Crest Advisory services to understand how **Covid-19 is impacting the criminal justice system**. Although it is still unclear which reforms may be accelerated or hindered, it seems certain that the post-COVID criminal justice system will look very

different to what went before - there can be no return to business as usual. This project has the potential to benefit agencies across the criminal justice system as they seek to manage the current crisis and move forward with lasting positive changes beyond the COVID-19 crisis.

As the impact of the COVID-19 virus grows, every agency within the CJS is forced to re-allocate resources in order to adapt to social distancing measures, doing so whilst demand changes. Practitioners and policymakers are (understandably) focused on getting through the next few weeks/ months, but the current crisis will raise fundamental questions about whether the system itself requires serious re-design. This is partly because of the sheer size of the backlogs that will have built up over the preceding months (e.g. CPS investigations, court cases, remand), but it is also because CJS agencies will have been forced by the current crisis to adopt different ways of working, which may ultimately drive different behaviours and public appetite.

The current crisis may therefore prove to be a once-in-a-generation opportunity to consider what a more intelligent justice system can look like and where there are opportunities for different ways of working whilst retaining the support of the general public. The work is being delivered at no cost to the OPCC.

Since March 2020, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner has facilitated more than £1.4Million of additional investment into Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly to protect those most at risk. This has included £400k for the Safer Summer Scheme, £546k for Safer Streets in Plymouth, £57k for Independent Sexual Violence Advisors and £438k to support the voluntary and community sector during the pandemic.

Police and Crime Plan Priority: Getting the best out of the police

Impact of the pandemic on domestic abuse

OPCC and Devon and Cornwall Police are one of only four areas participating in a **Deep Dive into Domestic Abuse** with the commissioned by the Prime Ministers central team with the Home Office lead officer on Domestic Abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG).

The purpose of the deep dives is to address the following questions:

1. What is the impact of Covid-19 restrictions on domestic and honour-based abuse cases reported to the police? This would involve a number of sub-questions, such as:
 - a. Are there any changes in the volumes of different types of domestic abuse or honour-based abuse? (e.g. intimate partner vs family, physical, financial, control and coercion, etc)
 - b. Are there any changes in the characteristics of DA victims and offenders? (demographics, repeat vs new perpetrators/victims)
 - c. Are there any changes in how domestic abuse is being reported to the police? (e.g. the source of reporting, time taken to report)

2. What is the impact of Covid-19 restrictions on the police response to domestic abuse?
3. What is the evidence on good practice schemes for effective partnership responses to policing domestic abuse, and how can this be understood within a Covid-19 context?

Through working in partnership with police as well as with other government departments, support services and academics, the aim is to provide initial recommendations on how the national response to domestic abuse can be adapted in order to meet the demands of the Covid-19 situation.

Police and Crime Commissioner Leadership

The Commissioner continues to provide leadership through:

- Oversight on ***new legislative powers*** at Joint Leadership Board (JLB) with the Chief Constable
- OPCC CEO Participation at ***Force Performance Board***.
- ***JLB and Resources Board*** continued to meet throughout COVID 19
- Oversight of the relationship that the Force has with local communities whilst the police have extra powers to deal with members of the public
- Oversight of service provision and reprioritisation at times of reduced staffing ensuring that resources re allocated to greatest risks, threats and harm
- ***OPCC representation in delivery cells such as HR, Recovery and Summer Policing*** to ensure that the Force is supported to recover as soon as practicable but also to ensure that innovative practices, in particular around remote and agile working, are retained and mainstreamed where appropriate.
- ***Oversight of Op Uplift and continuing recruitment processes*** e.g. support to the training of new officers in a new online format
- Supporting the Chief Constable's decision to ***train student officers*** to provide support within Force Contact Centre which answers 999 and 101 calls
- Regular ***welfare checks with Chief Constable and Senior Team*** to ensure welfare issues identified early and adequate support over time in place
- Speaking at ***police officer passing out parades*** of which the first face to face one occurred on the 25th August.

Estates Management

Estate management by the OPCC has had to adapt to ensure that the significant estate across Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly remains fit for purpose, adequately maintained and compliant. There has been additional focus on:

- ***Oversight of accessible PPE to police officers***, staff and those for whom the police have a duty of care and the OPCC making leading the arrangements for the

continuation of supply, storage, distribution and disposal of PPE for the foreseeable future.

- **Barnstaple Police Station relocation.** During lockdown approval for the station, to be opened at the former Barum Auto Parts building at Seven Brethren in Barnstaple, was granted by North Devon Council's planning committee. The Seven Brethren site is owned by North Devon Council and will be an operational patrol base and custodial facility with desk space for up to 154 staff, allowing for short term growth. Staff will be relocated to an office at Roundswell as there was not quite enough space for policing functions to transfer from the old police station. In total the project represents a £2m investment in the force estate.
- Implementing **COVID-secure workplaces** across the entire police estate to facilitate the return to work of staff in key areas and the phased return to work of the entire workforce;
- Identifying and implementing a **long term storage solution for PPE** at Middlemoor and facilitating the grant claims for medical grade PPE. Following their commitment to reimburse all medical grade PPE, the Home Office issued a request on 3rd August 2020 for details of all PPE purchased to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. The claim totalled £777k of which £701k related to medical grade PPE, and £76k non-medical grade. Whilst non-medical grade PPE is currently out of the scope of this reimbursement process, details were requested in order to inform further discussion which are ongoing around these costs.

The Road to Recovery

The continuing impact of COVID will remain with us for the foreseeable future. The OPCC team continue to work primarily from home, with arrangements for staff via a rota to work from the main Exeter office, which has been at the forefront nationally by remaining open throughout.

The Commissioner and the OPCC team are actively working to support local authority and criminal justice recovery groups and are actively seeking opportunities to add value and provide data to support local decision making.

At a virtual award ceremony convened by the Gold Commander for the Pandemic, ACC Glen Mayhew on behalf of Devon and Cornwall Police in September 2020, numerous members of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner were nominated for their roles to date in responding to the pandemic. Hannah Hart (LCJB Manager) as part of the team delivering the Virtual Court and Dr Davina Cull (Commissioning, Partnerships and Criminal Justice Manager) for Leadership were overall winners.

The landscape continues to change as the pandemic continues. Areas of the Commissioner's focus such as road safety and 101 waiting times have been under significant pressure throughout the summer, with 236 people killed and seriously injured on our roads since mid-March. The latest figures for August 2020 show 999 call demand remains at record levels with a 13 per cent increase in calls on the same period in 2019 – averaging almost 1,000 per day and rising to 1,200 during busy days and

weekends. During August 24 and 25, the force received 2,039 emergency calls and this impacts on 101 call handling. These areas have implications for our communities and will receive additional focus by the Commissioner during the next period.

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