

## Devon and Cornwall Police and Crime Panel

24<sup>th</sup> November 2023

### COMMISSIONER'S UPDATE REPORT Safe, Resilient and Connected Communities

This is a report of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Alison Hernandez, drawing the Police and Crime Panel's attention to a number of matters that have arisen, or progress that has been made, since the last Panel meeting in September 2023.

#### 1. Police Enquiry Offices



When I started my programme of opening/reopening Police Enquiry Offices (PEOs) in 2020 there were nine open in the Devon and Cornwall Police area. This figure now stands at 18 and I intend it to rise to 26 by the end of the 2024-25 financial year. The programme continued on October 18 when councillors, police staff and officers reopened Devonport Police Station's Police Enquiry Office, which is now welcoming in the public for the first time since this building was completed in 2012. This building has never hosted a PEO before and was not one of those closed under austerity measures by the previous Commissioner. I have worked with local politicians including MP Luke Pollard to create this policing presence in a part of the city that was much affected by the tragic shootings in Keyham on August 12, 2021.

Initial reports from the force indicate that not only are the new PEOs attracting a good number of visitors, but the new staff in PEOs are successfully able to respond to 101 emails between customer visits, significantly reducing the average wait time for email contact. Looe PEO is next in line to open



on November 23; Okehampton, Honiton, Ilfracombe and Kingsbridge will be reopened on various dates before the next financial year. PEOs provide a vital space for the public to report crime and for victims to seek help and support.

## 2. Ten Devon and Cornwall children safeguarded in sixth round of Operation Scorpion

Operation Scorpion is a joint intervention by the five Police and Crime Commissioners and their respective police forces to send the clear message that the South West is No Place For Drugs. The recent sixth round of Operation Scorpion focused on so-called 'County Lines' drug dealing, which involves organised criminal gangs exploiting young and vulnerable residents to establish drug supplies networks. There were two phases of the operation. The first phase involved appealing to members of the public to spot the signs of county lines drug dealing, and the second phase, during a national week of county lines intensification work, involved operational enforcement activity by forces. In Devon and Cornwall 36 arrests were made, drugs worth more than £90,000 were seized, £54,800 worth of cash was seized and 10 children were safeguarded. Across the South West drugs worth more than £250,000 and £74,441 in cash was seized as well as property including cars, luxury watches and mobile phones. Much of the activity was made possible as a direct result of information supplied by the public. Operation Scorpion will continue to send the message to our communities and exploitative criminals will not be tolerated in our region.

## 3. National recognition and awards

### Prisoners Building Homes

I am delighted to announce that our Prisoners Building Homes (PBH) Programme won a prestigious national award at a ceremony in Westminster on September 26. This innovative scheme which sees prisoners gaining skills and helping solve the housing crisis by constructing affordable eco homes is backed by the South West Police and Crime Commissioners. The Government Property Awards recognise excellence and innovation in public-sector property management. The award was for innovative 'Collaboration' for bringing together public and private sector partners to unlock land and deliver affordable, high-quality, low carbon, sustainable modular homes nationally; while creating job opportunities for serving prisoners and prison leavers to enable them to turn their lives around and reduce the cycle of reoffending.



The ambitious programme started life in the South West, when prisoners at HMP Leyhill in Gloucestershire constructed the panels of an eco-home which were then assembled on site in Torbay with the assistance of an ex-offender. The programme comes under the auspices of the South West Reducing Reoffending Partnership and is supported by One Public Estate which is a partnership between the Office of Government Property in the Cabinet Office, the Local Government Association and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

By the end of 2023 the ambition is to have over 40 serving or recently released prisoners in full time employment either on day release or post-release; and another 40 employed by opening disused prison workshops. Nine prisons across the country will benefit from the programme, with plans under way to involve more. The programme is on track to deliver 82 homes across 12 sites, with further pipeline sites under review.

Programme Delivery Manager Sophie Baker (pictured above with Cabinet Office Regional Programme Manager Chris Watts and Director General & Government Chief Property Officer) said: “Being recognised for our work to build affordable homes, helping to solve our housing crisis and support those most in need, whilst developing future work opportunities to enable ex-offenders to turn their lives around is heartening. Working with all the different partners to make this happen has definitely been a collaboration worth pursuing.”

I am so pleased that this programme is gaining the recognition it deserves. If you are interested in supporting the Programme or have sites please contact: [sophie.baker@dc-pcc.gov.uk](mailto:sophie.baker@dc-pcc.gov.uk).

#### Operation Scorpion award



My office's Communications and Customer Engagement team won top prize in the 'issues and reputation management' field at the South of England and Channel Islands Chartered Institute of Public Relations. This campaign drew the link between so-called recreational drugs and the supply chain of exploitation and violence that lies behind them. It achieved significant national press and broadcast coverage. Judges said the campaign had: “A clear strategy, implemented with a very modest budget which demonstrated an understanding of media challenges, providing clear solutions, delivering solid outcomes and exceeded its own objectives.”

#### 4. Customer service

All customer feedback is valuable as it helps me to assess the overall performance of Devon and Cornwall Police. The correspondence which my office's customer contact team receives enables me to gain an understanding of the current issues members of the public are concerned about. Since the last Police and Crime Panel, data from August 25 to September 13, shows that conduct, road safety, antisocial behaviour, and service delays are themes which commonly arise within the customer contact arena. Queries or concerns regarding officer conduct are usually referred to the Devon and Cornwall Police Professional Standards Department as a complaint. Most of the correspondence received relating to firearms referencing the delays that are experienced when applying for a licence, certificate or renewal. In terms of queries and concerns relating to Police and Crime Plan priorities, road safety generated the most, followed by antisocial behaviour, violence and drugs. My office also received queries or concerns regarding problems with contacting the force, such as calls to 101 and 999. These mostly referenced the difficulties of the wait times. The frequency of correspondence regarding contact that my office receives has decreased significantly since the last Police and Crime Panel meeting. This decrease may be due to the new callback system that has been put in place within the contact centre, leading to more members of the public being satisfied with the service they have received. My team strives to resolve queries and concerns from the public at the first point of contact. By analysing correspondence trends I can commit to ensuring my priorities are aligned with the views of the public and scrutinise the force on areas which the public raise concerns over.

#### 5. Rural Crime Week



I was pleased to support the Devon and Cornwall Police Rural Crime Team during Rural Crime Awareness Week. I would like to recognise the outstanding work PC Martin Beck (pictured with me at Exeter Livestock Market) has done over a number of years to promote crime prevention approaches among residents of our rural counties. During the summer months Commissioners across the South West surveyed residents to gain a deeper understanding of rural crime, the impact it has on victims and their understanding of measures which could be taken to mitigate against it.

The survey was heavily promoted by my team with the result that Devon and Cornwall generated 473 responses.

The top five issues (of 29) respondents from Devon and Cornwall had experienced were:

1. Fly tipping (18%)
2. Sheep worrying/dog attacks (6%)
3. Heritage crime (6%)
4. Illegal hunting (5%)

A total of 61% of respondents from Devon and Cornwall who had experienced a rural crime said they had not reported it to police.

Much progress has been made by the Devon and Cornwall Police Rural Crime Team in terms of prevention, yet this survey tells me more needs to be done to encourage trust and confidence in policing across what is one of England and Wales's most rural forces.

## **6. Seeking views of residents of the police force area**

I am launching my annual survey to inform my decisions around investment priorities in policing and understand residents' views about their Force in the week beginning November 20. The information gathered during this exercise helps me have an informed negotiation with the Chief Constable when we set budgets and priorities for the following financial year. I am encouraging all members of the public to take a few minutes to participate in this important exercise by completing a questionnaire online or by calling my office.

## **7. Firearms licensing decoupling**

The decoupling of Firearms licensing from the current Alliance arrangements to two separate force departments is on track for completion by May 1, 2024. This follows a period of staff consultation which was finalised on the October 30.

Staff who had previously worked for Dorset Police prior to joining the Alliance Firearms Licensing team have now returned to the Dorset force.

In Devon and Cornwall, a new structure is being put in place to ensure the demands for firearms licensing are met. The force is ensuring existing Devon & Cornwall Police firearms licensing officers are provided with positions in the structure whilst also running a recruitment exercise to fill any vacancies. It is anticipated that the department will be fully staffed by Spring 2024 in readiness for May 2024 when the project to decouple firearms licensing for the two forces should be concluded. At this point the new DCP team will be fully independent of the Alliance.

Senior managers in both forces are operating a practical delivery plan which will be used in the intervening period to ensure that firearms licensing continues to be provided whilst the work of separating the joint function is completed.

## **8. Councillor advocates**

There are now 350 councillor advocates in my scheme to link neighbourhood policing teams to communities. The scheme which also provides valuable training and insight into current issues

invited Councillors to attend seminars on the Police and Crime Plan priorities of reducing violence (September 19) and antisocial behaviour (ASB) (November 21). The seminar on violence reduction focused on heard the long-term objective of reducing violent crime in the force area and Restorative Justice (RJ) provider Make Amends on the powers of RJ to help victims of crime cope and recover. The ASB seminar featured talks on how the policing team in Paignton are working with the local authority to invest money secured from the Safer Street's fund to improve the street scheme and from a former police officer whose work to reduce summer ASB in the Cornish resort of Polzeath has won many accolades. Councillor Advocates were also provided with communications materials as part of the sixth round of Operation Scorpion, which encouraged people to report signs of county lines drug dealing to the charity Crimestoppers.

## **9. Road Safety – Vision Zero South West**

### Road Safety Delivery Plan

At September's meeting of the Vision Zero South West board, participating members approved the partnership's Road Safety Delivery Plan (RSDP) for the next 12 months which included a whole host of innovative projects and meaningful initiatives to reduce road deaths.

Among the projects agreed, which will soon be available on the Vision Zero South West website, is investment to bring the Acusensus AI camera technology to Devon & Cornwall throughout 2024. This system, which you may have read about in the news, uses AI to detect mobile phone and seatbelt offences and has proved very effective during our trial periods.

The RSDP also outlines plans for a pedestrian training programme and targeted publicity campaign, provision of free cameras to local cyclists, a "Call For Ideas" community road safety grant scheme and a full communications and engagement plan to support all of our activities – including the expansion of our Emergency Service Road Safety Village across Devon, Cornwall, Plymouth and Torbay.

The partnership is also prioritising new interventions aimed at motorcyclists, including a state-of-the-art hazard perception simulator (the first of its kind in the UK) and the expansion of our behaviour change publicity campaign fronted by famous motorcyclist and TV presenter Henry Cole.

### Crimewatch Live

Vision Zero South West featured heavily in the October 9 edition of BBC One's Crimewatch Live. The show included a feature and live appearance from the Road Casualty Reduction team showcasing their work with the GCM YouTube channel and the local car community.

Also featured on the same show were the Force's Drone team who spoke about Op Cossett, our project which uses drones to identify sub-standard driving and motorbike riding from the air.

### Operation Snap

Devon & Cornwall Police's [Op Snap](#) continues to grow exponentially with this summer seeing a record number of submissions.

The online portal enables members of the public to quickly and easily upload video footage of sub-standard or illegal driving. The footage can be obtained from almost any device including dashcams, helmet cameras, mobile phones and even video doorbells.

This August was our strongest month since Op Snap was set up in 2019:

- 747 new submissions
- 418 (56%) subject to positive action by the police
- 246 Notices of Intended Prosecution (NOIP) generated
- 172 warnings issued

- A third of August's Op Snap submissions (244) were from cyclists
- 147 (60%) of the reports from cyclists received positive action from police

### Community Speedwatch

Community Speedwatch continues to grow with over 220 registered groups and almost 1,400 volunteers across Devon and Cornwall. This summer alone CSW groups monitored more than 48,000 vehicles travelling through their communities.

I would like to say a big thank you to all of the amazing volunteers who are helping to keep our roads and neighbourhoods safe.

## **10. Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB)**

### LCJB Planning Day

As Chair of the Devon and Cornwall Local Criminal Justice Board, I meet with the Strategic leaders from the local Criminal Justice Partnership annually to review activity and progress against key priorities and agree the key areas of focus for the next 12 months. This year's planning day took place on September 20 where we agreed the following five strategic priorities and for 2023/24:

1. **Support Victims and Witnesses** – through scrutinising cases to ensure compliance with the Victims Code of Practice; Preparing criminal justice systems and process in readiness for the implementation of the Victims and Prisoners Bill; and listening and learning from the experiences of victims of Rape and Serious Sexual Offences.
2. **Ensure Efficient and Effective Criminal Justice** – getting case file quality right at the first hearing - achieving efficiency in terms of quality and timeliness, ensuring justice is secured at the first available opportunity; and improving the timeliness in youth justice delivery to minimise any adverse system impact upon those within it and to better meet the needs of victims.
3. **Reduce Reoffending** – getting Out of Court Resolutions right through the scrutiny of cases; to understand the reducing re-offending landscape and tailor the Integrated Offender Management (IOM) strategy to meet local needs; and promote the use of Restorative Justice (RJ) to increase awareness and engagement.
4. **Address Disproportionality** – to review disproportionality data held across the CJS; and to address the issues of inequality relating to women on remand in Devon and Cornwall which compromise effective justice and seek to work in collaboration with key stakeholders to introduce creative solutions.
5. **Maximise Communications and Engagement** – through the development of a collective criminal justice newsletter; explore the possibility piloting a Local Criminal Justice Reporting Scheme to provide balanced reporting and raise public awareness and education of local criminal justice; and to produce an annual report to highlight progress against agreed actions and priorities.

I would also like to welcome the newly recruited a Cornwall Voluntary and Community Social Enterprise (VCSE) representative who will join the board in December working alongside the Devon representative to provide valuable insight and engagement to the Board.

### Victim Codes of Practice (VCoP)

I am pleased to share with you the ongoing work in relation to scrutinising cases to ensure compliance with the VCoP across the whole of the criminal justice system. The most recent scrutiny panel was held on July 25 with full partner agency engagement to view Domestic Abuse cases which reviewed the victims experience and compliance with the 12 rights and entitlements detailed within the code. The findings from this process goes on to inform policies and working practices

across the statutory agencies within the criminal justice system and provides an opportunity to identify and share good practice. The panel deemed that most cases were overall compliant with the Codes of Practice, with just one considered to not meet the required standard. The panel reviewed prosecution cases and considered that it would be worthwhile to next review cases which resulted in No Further Action (NFA) or an Out of Court Resolution (OoCR).

#### Out of Court Resolutions (OoCR)

I would also like to share with you the recent change in terminology which I welcome with regard to Out of Court Disposals. In line with the national direction, these will now be referred to as Out of Court Resolutions. The vision is that, in time, Out of Court Resolutions will be fully adopted and embedded as an effective, non-bureaucratic justice outcome.

The Local Criminal Justice Board also continues to oversee the scrutiny of Youth and Adult OoCRs through the detailed examination of cases by panel members who represent key stakeholders from across the Criminal Justice Partnership.

The panel met on September 6 and reviewed youth cases of sexual offences and a further panel was held on September 14 to review adult cases of stalking & harassment. The findings of these panels are currently out for consultation and will be shared with the Police who will provide a formal response which I look forward to sharing in due course.

I value the commitment and dedication from all the stakeholders involved in these panels, the findings of which inform the development of processes, training materials and cross agency working to improve standards as well as recognising dedicated and positive practice.

It is important that the public have confidence that Devon and Cornwall Police is using its powers legally, proportionately and consistently with policy and working practices with regard to OoCRs and that the Victims Code of Practice is complied with across the whole of the criminal justice partnership. It is also healthy for any organisation to pause and reflect on their practice and learn. These scrutiny panels meet three times a year focusing attention on areas of priority and publishing the findings through the OPCC website.

#### The development of a victims & witness interactive multimedia resource

I know that being a victim of crime is a frightening, upsetting and frustrating experience, and I am pleased to introduce a multimedia video resource which is aimed to assist victims and witnesses to navigate what can be a difficult and at times confusing landscape.

This innovation has been developed on behalf of the Local Criminal Justice Board in partnership with my office to help victims and witnesses understand every step of their criminal justice journey, from reporting a crime through to the conclusion of the case, and what that means to them. There is information about accessing victim services, as well as what happens if a case doesn't go to court, or if the perpetrator is under the age of 18.

Someone from each of our partner agencies directly involved in that area of work describes their part of the process in an [interactive online document](#) as well as signposting the user to useful links for contacting the right person and for further reading around each step.

## **11. Regional Activity**

Last month I chaired a regional strategic meeting, bringing together the five PCCs and five Chief Constables across the South West (Devon and Cornwall, Dorset, Avon and Somerset, Wiltshire and Gloucestershire). In this meeting we discussed shared opportunities and challenges for policing



across the region, and heard both strategic and tactical updates from the different police forces and shared regional services.

I have been extremely proud of the successes that we have collaboratively achieved by working in partnership across the five South West forces, in particular the collective impact that Operation Scorpion has demonstrated. The regional PCCs and Chief Constables have now agreed that our next collective priority will be to tackle rural crime, in particular focusing on the serious and organised acquisitive crime affecting our rural communities, as covered above. I look forward to providing the panel with further updates on this collective activity in due course.

## **12. His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection reports**

Since the last Police and Crime panel meeting HMICFRS have published three thematic inspection reports. The first examines homicide prevention and I can confirm that the Devon and Cornwall Police have made good progress towards the recommendations including ensuring sufficient death investigation analytics to help identify patterns and links between homicides, and ensuring that lessons can be learnt in quick time following homicides and serious violence incidents.

The second two reports formed part of HMICFRS' response to the Home Affairs Committee recommendations in [The Macpherson Report: Twenty-two Years On](#) and reviewed leadership and governance in policing for race related matters, and race disparity in police criminal justice decision making. Both reports highlighted the importance of police forces and government having access to accurate ethnicity and race disparity data in order to better understand, scrutinise and respond appropriately to racial disparity in policing. Devon and Cornwall Police are continuing to undertake significant work in this area to improve data collection and reporting, and as Chair of the Devon and Cornwall Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB) I can confirm that addressing disproportionality will be one of the LCJB's strategic priorities in 2024.

These reports can be all viewed in full on the [HMICFRS website](#). My formal response to these reports is published on my own [website](#).

## **13. Autumn statement**

The Autumn Statement is due on November 22, where it is anticipated that key messages regarding the funding for 2024/25 will be provided. Due to the publication deadline for papers to the panel a verbal will be provided at the meeting. The Autumn Statement will form the basis of the provisional settlement which is anticipated to be in the week commencing December 4. The 2024/25 financial year is the final year of the current three-year Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR).

## **14. Home Office draft Community Scrutiny Framework**

Community scrutiny is intended to increase the effectiveness of the police in tackling crime and antisocial behaviour by helping to build public trust and assure police legitimacy. Devon and Cornwall has led the way in community scrutiny activity, establishing an [independent community scrutiny panel](#) in 2020 to assess the force's use of stop and search and use of force. This October the Home Office launched their [draft framework](#) for PCCs and police forces on the implementation of community scrutiny panels alongside a consultation on this framework. The framework will not have a statutory basis but aims to provide some broad principles, enabling PCCs and police forces to deliver and measure effective community scrutiny, share and adopt best practice and improve and expand processes as they see fit. My office has responded to this consultation and I plan to

discuss our combined approach to community scrutiny in more detail with the Chief Constable when the framework is formally published.

## **15. HMICFRS PEEL update**

In 2021/22, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services conducted a PEEL inspection of Devon and Cornwall Police. PEEL stands for police efficiency, effectiveness and legitimacy. The inspection highlighted concerns about;

- the accuracy of crime recording
- the response to the public (specifically emergency and non-emergency call handling)
- the management of sexual and violent offenders.

The inspectorate placed the force in its enhanced monitoring stage, Engage, which provides additional support and oversight to the force through the Police Performance Oversight Group. I was pleased to accompany Acting Chief Constable Jim Colwell to Whitehall to attend the Police Performance Oversight Group in September to discuss the force improvement progress with His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS). The Acting Chief Constable was able to provide assurance and demonstrable improvement in all areas, and I am continuing to monitor progress alongside ongoing reviews by HMICFRS. I will further update the panel in the new year if HMICFRS amend their assessment.



**Alison Hernandez**

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

### **Contact for further information:**

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