

## **Devon & Cornwall Police and Crime Panel 4<sup>th</sup> October 2024 Commissioner's Update Report**

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

In October I was delighted to be invited to visit the Isles of Scilly, where I met with the local neighbourhood policing team and representatives of the council.

I toured of the Isle of St Mary's with the police team and undertake a foot patrol with one of the local constables. I then met with the Leader of the Isles of Scilly Council, local councillors and members of the public in an interesting town hall event to hear about some of the unique policing and antisocial behaviour challenges experienced by our island communities. The next day I met with the harbour master and local fire service to hear how partners come together and innovate in our most remote areas. The police station was in good condition and I received very positive feedback about the local policing team.



## South West Business Crime Expo



I was pleased to sponsor the South West Business Crime Expo, along with UK Partners Against Crime which took place in Exeter in October. It was arranged to coincide with Safer Business Action Week. This new event brought together police leads, loss prevention and security experts, and business leaders- such as Business Improvement Districts/Business Crime and Retail Partnership managers and regional and national bodies within the hospitality, retail, and rural business sectors to discuss actions to reduce crimes.

The expo showcased some exciting new technologies and approaches to reducing crime. A presentation from Stamp Out Spiking highlighted the contribution nighttime economy businesses can make to prevent violent and acquisitive crime. Best practice in partnership working was shared, along with ideas on how retailers can manage problematic or unwelcome visitors to their premises.

### **New Legal Support to Tackle Antisocial Behaviour**

As part of my ongoing efforts to make our communities safer, I am particularly excited about the introduction of two new specialist legal roles focused on tackling antisocial behaviour (ASB). Funded by my office, these roles will provide valuable support to Exeter and Torquay's neighbourhood police officers, as well as the wider force to escalate appropriate legal remedies to tackle ASB, such as community protection warnings and notices, or pursuing civil injunctions and closure experts, these legal experts are here to ensure that our officers can take faster and more decisive action.

### **Hotspot Policing**

Hotspot policing is now being delivered in 13 towns and cities across Devon and Cornwall. Police and street marshals are working together to tackle antisocial

behaviour (ASB) and serious violence. From May to September 2024, 9,128 patrol hours have been carried out, resulting in attendance at 726 ASB incidents and 127 arrests. It's fantastic to see that these targeted patrols are having an impact, and the good news has been shared across 69 pieces of press coverage and two TV features on BBC Spotlight. In addition, over 60 social media posts on different platforms have helped to inform more people in our communities about the extra patrols.

My team recently undertook engagement events in Camborne, Plymouth, Newquay and Exeter to discuss hotspot policing, listen to concerns about antisocial behaviour and encourage reporting. It was fantastic to hear that residents and businesses have noticed an increased uniformed presence and felt reassured.

### **Street Focus Torquay**

I am pleased to report that efforts to improve Torquay town centre for residents and businesses are well underway through the Street Focus Torquay project as our multi-agency initiative aims to bring real, long-term change to the area and enhance community safety.

A key part of this work is hotspot policing which has already made a difference in tackling antisocial behaviour (ASB) and serious violence. From May to September, more than 600 extra hours of police patrols have been carried out with officers engaging with more than 1,800 members of the public. This has led to 57 intelligence submissions, attendance at 71 ASB incidents and 15 arrests.

In addition, the town centre officers, who have also been operational since May, have become a valuable asset. 5 officers, 2 funded by the hotspot policing grant, help to enforce the Public Spaces Protection Orders. This enables police and authorised officers to remove alcohol from street drinkers and direct individuals out of the town who are causing a nuisance or disorder. Between July and September, there were 32 Dispersal Notices served and 162 directions to surrender alcohol in Torquay.

Alongside them, street marshals have begun patrolling hotspot areas in partnership with police and town centre officers. With 3 people for hotspot policing, there will be an increased uniformed presence to deter and disrupt crime. Both residents and local businesses have reported feeling reassured by the extra patrols.

I would encourage members of the public to engage with officers during their patrols or visit the new mobile police station. This provides an opportunity to report crime, receive crime prevention advice, share information and be directed to support services. The mobile police station will be stationed at the following dates and locations:

- Friday 1 November, 1-3:30pm: nearby the Premier Store, Fleet Walk
- Saturday 9 November, 10am-2pm: Castle Circus
- Friday 22 November, 5-8pm: nearby the Green Ginger, Fleet Walk
- Friday 29 November, 10am-2pm: outside Primark, Union Street

As the festive season approaches, a new night bus service will help partygoers get home safely. I have funded this service as part of Street Focus Torquay, the service will run on Saturday nights from 2 November to 21 December, plus Friday 20 December and New Year's Eve. The bus service, operated by Stagecoach, will charge just £2 for a single journey. Running hourly from 12:30am, this service aims to reduce drink and drug-related incidents. Full timetables are available on the Stagecoach website [here](#), covering Torquay, Preston, Paignton and Brixham. It will be known as route 12. Our experience in the North Devon pilot showed that average of 220 passengers per night have used the bus and over 2100 in total. Feedback from CCTV operators in the towns have commented on how quickly the streets have emptied, thus reducing incidents and demand on front line officers.

A progress report of Street Focus Torquay partner activity was presented to Safer Torbay Community Safety Partnership on 31<sup>st</sup> October providing an overview of my convening role and activities and highlighting recommendations for future sustainability of the project.

### **Lift Legend**

Vision Zero South West is operating the Lift Legend scheme this December to help reduce drink-driving incidents during the festive season.

Drink-driving is one of the 'Fatal Five' causes of many fatal and serious collisions, with hundreds of people arrested for this offence in the South West each year.

We are working with pubs, clubs and restaurants throughout Devon & Cornwall to offer free soft drinks to designated drivers as a thank you for getting people home safely.

Around 200 venues are participating in the scheme this year – including both free houses and brewery chains across the region.

For more information – or to find your nearest participating venue – visit: [Lift Legend: Free soft drinks for designated drivers this Christmas - vision-zero](#)

As well as Lift Legend, Vision Zero South West is also supporting a series of Christmas and New Year night bus services in selected areas, as well as Devon & Cornwall Police's Op Limit which focus on enforcement of drink and drug driving during the festive season.

## Victim Services



One of my responsibilities is to provide services that help residents of Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly to recover from crime. This financial year I will spend £6 million supporting victims of crime either directly from my office or through my delivery partner Victim Support.

In 2022-23, more than 104,000 crimes were reported to Devon & Cornwall Police, and almost 30,000 victims were referred to support services in Devon and Cornwall. It is likely that the true number of victims is much higher, considering those who have not yet accessed support or feel unable to.

High-quality, specialist support is available to victims of any crime, through Devon & Cornwall Police's Victim Care Unit if you've reported to police, or through Victim Support who can help you whether or not you have reported a crime.

Last week, between deputy Commissioner Mark Kingscote and I, we visited Devon Rape Crisis and Victim Support, two of the organisations which are doing incredible work helping victims recover. He met with the team at Devon Rape Crisis, one of several services I fund which provide adult therapeutic services for people affected by sexual violence and abuse.

It was really inspiring to hear about how members of staff help survivors recover through a phased approach, from establishing a safe and trusting environment to developing coping techniques, processing trauma and rebuilding connections and resilience, and promoting growth.

Mark and I also joined Victim Support for their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations. This organisation provides our adult multi-crime and antisocial behaviour services. I was delighted to meet hard-working members of staff and volunteers providing support along with some service users who have benefitted from help.

Support is available not just immediately following a crime but also afterwards, including helping with the effect on the family and supporting the victim through the criminal justice system. A caseworker said often the most important thing was just being there for the victim, so they feel heard and validated.

One woman I spoke with said the service she has received from Victim Support following a sustained period of antisocial behaviour and harassment was invaluable and said just being believed and being listened to made an enormous difference in her ability to cope and move on.

My thanks again go to the amazing staff and volunteers who are making such a difference to people's lives. The impact of crime on an individual must never be underestimated, and it's vital that everyone has access to the help they need.

To get help from Victim Support visit [here](#) or call 08 08 16 89 111. You can contact Devon Rape Crisis [here](#), Or you can also get help from Victim Care Devon and Cornwall [here](#).

### **Trading Standards South West Awards**

It was my privilege to be asked to present the awards at Trading Standards South West as part of their annual conference during October.

There were many examples of outstanding work by trading standards officers, relating to animal health and welfare, counterfeit goods, fraud, underage sales of restricted products and complex food standards investigations.

These highly skilled officers work closely with policing colleagues both in their local communities but on wider more complex investigations with our Regional and Organised Crime Unit. These are people who everyday are protecting the public from unsafe and illegal practices which damage our local economy and are often gateway crimes into much more widespread criminality and organised crime.

I am proud to say that the winner of the partnership working award for the whole of the region was presented to a Police Community Support Officer in West Cornwall for his outstanding partnership working with Trading Standards and he is a real credit to this community.

Being a victim of a scam is significantly underreported in the UK, but it has serious consequences for individuals and businesses. National Trading Standards runs a scheme called Friends against Scams which aims to protect and prevent people falling victim to scams by empowering them. By signing up through its website [here](#) you can get access as an individual or a business to help protect yourself.

Emotional and practical support for victims of crime is also available through the victim services I commission, see [victimcare-dc.org](https://www.victimcare-dc.org) or call 01392 475900.

### **Prisoners Building Homes – New Opportunities for Growth**

On 29th October 2024 our Prisoners Building Homes programme was showcased to the new Prisoners Minister, the Right Honourable James Timpson. This was part of an event hosted by The Lord Bishop of Gloucester at the House of Lords to reflect on the reintegration of prisoner leavers by supporting them to find employment. Members of this panel will recall that this approach to reducing reoffending across the South West has received national attention previously and is changing the way in which the public sector works with private industry to providing meaningful skills and employment to those within the prison system. We are currently negotiating with the central government about a sustainable model for this programme of work to enable it to expand and reach more areas in England and we are hopefully that we will be able to secure additional funding to enable this work to take place shortly. It has been confirmed that we have received 1.2 million funding to spend in this financial year.

### **Introductory Session with Devon and Cornwall's Members of Parliament**

The OPCC delivered an introductory session for all our Members of Parliament a few weeks ago as a joint event with the Chief Constable and his team. As the majority of the MPs across our area are newly elected it was important for them to understand how policing works and the role in which the PCC and the OPCC plays in securing an effective and efficient police service. This was a welcome opportunity to reflect on recent successes as well as support MPs un understanding how policing works in the South West, how they can support their communities and where they can seek further support and advice. The event was attended by some MPs and their offices, and I look forward to working with them all over the coming months and years as they become more established.

### **Response to Super Complaint Recommendations - Commissioned Services**

In November 2022, the Suzy Lamplugh Trust submitted a super-complaint regarding the police response to stalking on behalf of the National Stalking Consortium.

The report contains recommendations for policing, including recommendations for PCCs and their equivalents. The OPCC have drafted a response relating to the commissioned services available for stalking victims and how these services work with the force to ensure the right support is in place.

In Devon and Cornwall, the OPCC funds an independent stalking advocate caseworker (ISAC) through the contracted victim support adult multi-crime service. Following a recent review of the victim care pathway we have identified improvements that can be made to our offer for stalking victims. A series of options are being explored to ensure the right specialist services have been commissioned to support stalking victims. This work is likely to be completed by January 2025 with the new arrangements in place later in the year.

As part of the review of commissioned services, my office and Devon & Cornwall Police are working together to plan how information can be shared and how collaborative working can be embedded between policing and services providing victim support to stalking victims. We are also exploring training opportunities to increase awareness of stalking across services and with our partners.

### **Police and Crime Plan Survey**

The 2025-29 Police and Crime Plan lays out the priorities of residents of the police force area and sets the strategic direction of policing and the services I commission to build safer communities. Producing a plan within a year of election is a commissioner's statutory responsibility, as is seeking views on that plan from residents of the relevant police force area.

A total of 606 residents of Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly took the time to review my draft plan and provide quantitative feedback on it. Most of those who completed the survey were strongly supportive of four draft plan priorities of tackling drugs and alcohol, antisocial behaviour, violence and theft. Qualitative research took place in the form of a focus group made up of councillors from urban, rural and coastal communities and via a free text submission box in the public-facing survey. Both qualitative and quantitative surveys demonstrated strong support for more visible and responsive policing. The views of those who took part in this exercise.

### **Youth Crime Survey**





Above – The Uniform and protective Services Course at Dutchy College

My Young Voices in Policing survey is aimed at understanding the challenges facing young residents of Devon and Cornwall in relation to crime and policing. I am pleased to report that, at the time of writing, almost 300 people aged 16 to 25 had taken part in this survey. The survey asks a series of questions around how safe the respondent feels in the force area, the level of confidence they have in police, what types of crime they have experienced and their levels of concern relating to alcohol and drugs. Young people were encouraged to complete the survey at a series of public engagement events including the Boardmasters festival and a tour of schools and colleges. Interim results are encouraging in some respects, with 71% of participants saying they feel safe or very safe here, however, more than three quarters of respondents said that they were concerned about levels of drug and alcohol use in their age groups. The survey can still be completed by young people [here](#).

### **The National Disorder in August & Two-Tier Policing**

Following the civil unrest that spread across the UK in August this year, I agreed with the Chief Constable that I would put in place a number of immediate oversight measures to ensure that the local policing response to the serious disorder in Plymouth was effective, proportionate and legitimate.

Following this, I asked my office to prepare a report on this matter, and also to review whether given the prominent use of the term, ‘two-tier policing’ was an issue.

The resultant insight report (which will be published on the OPCC website) concluded that in relation to the policing of protests and riots, there is no substantive evidence that two-tier policing existed in the local response to the disorder in Devon and Cornwall.

In addition to this, I am also proud to report that Devon & Cornwall Police’s response to the local disorder was recognised – both locally and nationally – as an exemplar of effective planning and policing, with both national commentators and local faith leaders praising our police for how they prepared for and responded to the violence.

I would like to place on record my thanks to the Acting Chief Constable for the way in which his officers and staff dealt with what was, an incredibly difficult, complex and at times physically dangerous challenge. Along with the Plymouth City Council and its officers and our community leaders, in my view this was outstanding team work.

### **Effective File Quality Scrutiny Inquiry**

My office’s scrutiny inquiry into effective criminal justice has now concluded. After a period of fact checking and the reviewing of feedback, the final report has now been finalised and has recently been published.

This inquiry was one of the most robust, deep-diving pieces of scrutiny that my office has ever undertaken and resulted in thirty-six recommendations being made, all of

them designed in some way to help the police and their partners improve the service that they are providing.

I would like to express my thanks and appreciation to everyone who took part in this piece of work, in particular the openness of the police and the leadership shown by the CPS, and I am delighted to report that work is already underway to develop a joint action plan that will lead, I am sure, to a better service being provided to victims of crime.

## **Local Criminal Justice Board**

Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB) came together for its planning day which was held on 25 September 2024. This saw the meeting of key decision makers from local criminal justice organisations to consider our collective focus over the next year to address cross cutting issues. It also gave us an opportunity to reflect on the some of the positive work from across the criminal justice partnership to bring offenders to justice and support victims and witnesses. As a result of our discussions, we have agreed that our priorities will continue to concentrate on ensuring we have an efficient and effective criminal justice system, that we work together to keep victims engaged to secure justice and to address disproportionality. We have collectively agreed to focus particularly on youth justice. I look forward to sharing with you our progress against these areas of collective focus alongside the delivery of our established partnership scrutiny panels which enable us to learn and develop.

## **Criminal Justice Scrutiny**

I remain committed to undertaking scrutiny across the criminal justice partnership for out of court resolutions and to assess quality of compliance with the victim codes of practice. I am pleased to report that panels are well supported by the criminal justice partnership with positive engagement from all key stakeholders. This supports my team to oversee one panel per month to understand what our agencies are doing to make a difference, how we work together to learn and improve and develop policy and practice. I ensure panels are themed to scrutiny cases of public interest such as focusing on shoplifting, violent offences, criminal damage and anti-social behaviour. Reports are published via the OPCC website

## **Criminal Justice and You**

In September I shared with you the further development of the 'Criminal Justice and You' interactive resource aimed at transforming the experience of victims and witnesses in the criminal justice system in Devon and Cornwall. Since then, we have further enhanced the resource to include sections specifically for victims of rape and serious sexual offences and the provision of information where the suspect is subject to bail conditions or has been released under investigation. Filming for these additions has just been completed to provide greater guidance for victims and witnesses. I am also pleased to report that the current social media campaigns on Facebook and TikTok are continuing to prove to be very successful attracting over 1000 views to the resource each month. I am proud to report that we have also been asked to share our work at the police communicators conference at the end of

November - a credit to those involved in the creation and development of this resource.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alison Hernandez', with a stylized, cursive script.

**Alison Hernandez**

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

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