

Introduction

Theft is one of the four priorities in my Police and Crime Plan, because of the serious impact it has on people and businesses who are targeted. A high-volume crime, it also contributes to other priority areas, with the profits from acquisitive crime often linked to drug and alcohol misuse, and shoplifting taking place alongside anti-social behaviour.

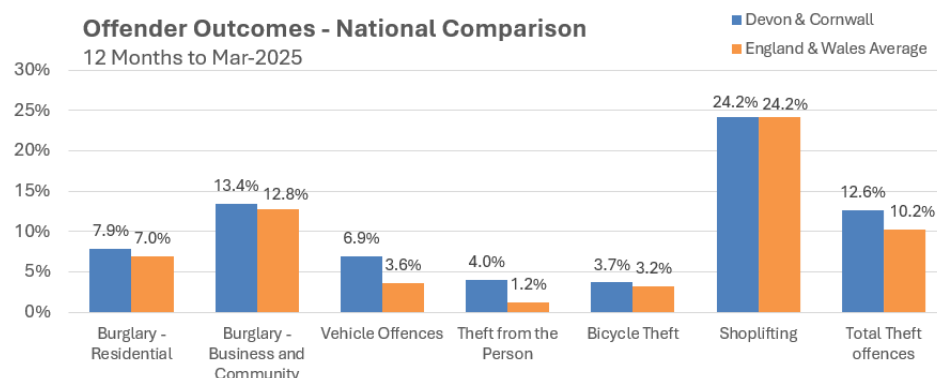
Whilst most theft offences take place without causing direct injury, if people – either at work in the retail sector or at home in domestic settings – encounter someone stealing from them, the threat of violence can be high. Knowledge that burglaries have taken place nearby can lead to a heightened fear of crime amongst the wider community.

Theft varies significantly across the peninsula; with theft from businesses and shoplifting affecting our town and city centres; the theft of vehicles, agricultural equipment and fuel having a significant impact in our rural communities; and residential burglaries making people feel unsafe in their homes.

A range of prevention partnerships and policing capabilities are required to effectively deter, investigate, and charge thieves who operate in these different contexts.

There were **29,629** theft offences reported to Devon and Cornwall Police in the 12 months to June 2025, a **6.5% increase** on the previous year. **This is driven by a 29.9% increase in reported shoplifting.** This masks **significant decreases in the number of burglaries of businesses and community premises (-9.3%), theft from the person (-10.9%) and vehicle theft (-18.7%).** The number of **residential burglaries has increased slightly (+1.8%).**

Offence Group	Crimes			Offender Outcome Rate		
	12 Months to Jun-25	Previous year	% Change	12 Months to Jun-25	Previous year	% pts. Change
Bicycle Theft	613	607	1.0%	3.3%	3.3%	0.0%
Burglary - Business and Community	1,437	1,584	-9.3%	13.0%	11.1%	1.9%
Burglary - Residential	2,346	2,304	1.8%	8.6%	6.6%	2.0%
Other Theft	9,469	9,382	0.9%	3.3%	2.8%	0.5%
Shoplifting	11,642	8,960	29.9%	23.5%	22.1%	1.4%
Theft from the Person	904	1,015	-10.9%	3.7%	3.8%	-0.1%
Vehicle Offences	3,218	3,956	-18.7%	6.4%	5.9%	0.5%
Total Theft Offences	29,629	27,808	6.5%	12.5%	10.3%	2.2%



Detection rates vary significantly, with some forms of theft typically going unnoticed for some time.

Devon and Cornwall Police's offender outcome rates are equal to or above the England and Wales average for every type of theft.

Tackling theft and shoplifting on our high streets

Commitment: Hold the Chief Constable to account for the way in which the force responds to retail crime and assaults on retail workers.

Shoplifting is consistently the most prevalent type of theft reported to the police, with **11,642 offences** reported to the police (**39% of all reported theft**) in the **12 months to June 2025**. There has been a **steep increase of 29.9%** in reports of shoplifting compared to the previous year.

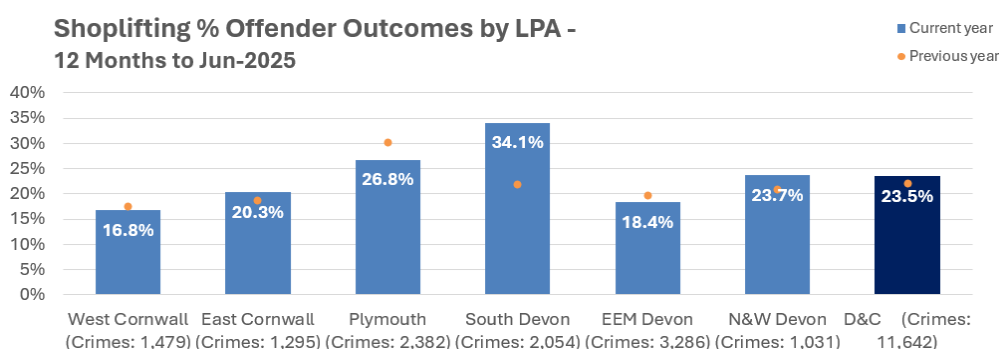
There have been several organisational changes that make it easier for retailers to share information with the police and focus police efforts on locations that are repeatedly targeted and prolific shoplifters. We know that many businesses suffer repeated losses, and that this can have a significant impact on both independent and chain retailers, ultimately affecting the viability and nature of our high streets.

Rebuilding confidence that the police will respond effectively to retail crime, improving the intelligence and evidence available, and ensuring the force have the capabilities to investigate effectively is core to the ambition of the Police and Crime Plan.

Shoplifting - by LPA	Crimes		
	12 Months to Jun-25	Previous year	% Change
West Cornwall	1,479	1,031	43.5%
East Cornwall	1,295	1,298	-0.2%
Plymouth	2,382	1,851	28.7%
South Devon	2,054	1,852	10.9%
Exeter, East & Mid Devon	3,286	2,050	60.3%
North & West Devon	1,031	768	34.2%
Total	11,642	8,960	29.9%

Offender outcomes for shoplifting in Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly overall are **in line with the national average (242%)**.

Strong partnerships between retailers, local authorities, the criminal justice system and the police can help improve this further.



The police sectors with the strongest offender outcome rates are:

1. Paignton & Brixham – **50.0%**
2. St Austell – **37.7%**
3. Plymouth South – **33.7%**
4. Torquay – **33.1%**
5. Barnstaple – **29.8%**

UK Partners Against Crime



UK PAC is a business crime reduction partnership that assists local businesses to gather and submit evidence, including CCTV footage, stills and witness statements. UKPAC then report crime to the police on behalf of their members, which helps free up police resources by providing evidence packs as part of the initial report.

The Commissioner initially funded UK PAC membership for businesses in **Torbay**; over the summer this has been expanded to **Liskeard, Saltash, Teignmouth, Torpoint, Looe, Bodmin and Barnstaple**, and the Commissioner has ringfenced funding to extend this across the peninsula.

“We feel safer and more confident in the knowledge that together we are making a difference.”

“In 12 years in the business, this is the first time I have felt truly supported by the Police and loss teams, it has saved me hundreds of hours in reporting time since it went live.”

Auror

Auror is a retail crime intelligence and loss prevention system, which enables larger retailers to work effectively with the police to tackle organised retail crime. It is particularly powerful at joining up intelligence that might previously have been spread across different parts of the country and not visible to the police.

Devon and Cornwall Police was the first UK force to adopt Auror Direct to Police reporting (October 2024). Retailers can send crime reports into the force contact centre, freeing up routes such as 101 for the public. There have been significant increases in charge rates from working more closely with larger retailers in this way.

Some key results from working closely with one major chain alone:

- **17 prison sentences for a combined total of 11.7 years, 3 compensation orders, 3 drugs rehabilitation orders and 2 criminal behaviour orders;**
- **2 organised criminals operating across 11 different police forces pleaded guilty** to conspiracy to steal and were sentenced to 2 years each;
- Data driven joint crime prevention interventions **prevented significant losses and led to arrests**

“It’s been hugely morale boosting for the team as it feels like both our company and the Police care about our high streets and towns.”

“It’s shown how much these people travel and been able to join them up.”

Improving CCTV infrastructure

CCTV evidence inside and outside of retail premises provides critical evidence in shoplifting charges.

The Commissioner is investing in improvements to help connect Force CCTV control rooms with local authority CCTV control rooms and is making funds available for Parish and Town Councils, and their equivalents, to bid for to improve local CCTV infrastructure.

Project Retail

In November 2024 the force piloted a small retail crime investigation team in **Plymouth**. This has fast tracked the way that prolific shoplifting offenders are processed when there is clear visual evidence and further investigation stages would not add value.

By rapidly moving offenders through the criminal justice system to sentencing, **the pilot led to a 25% reduction in shoplifting volume, increased offender outcome rates and helped free up police resources.**

Rural theft is prevented, reported and investigated

Commitment: Work with communities to help secure rural businesses, prevent theft and increase reporting when crimes occur.

Crime affecting rural communities has not always received the recognition and prioritisation from policing that it deserves, but **the Commissioner has championed the establishment of Devon and Cornwall Police's Rural Affairs team**. This is recognised as leading practice nationally.

Five dedicated officers provide specialist advice to frontline officers to enable them to investigate rural crime effectively and support the force to work more closely with rural communities and with partners.

More than 50% of all crime reported to Devon and Cornwall police in rural areas is theft, predominantly vehicle theft, agricultural equipment theft, and fuel theft.

The theft of heavy machinery is a considerable problem and is sometimes the result of organised crime. These thefts are often from farms, woodland and domestic rural locations as well as building sites, and range from sit-on mowers and quad bikes, up to very large plant and construction machinery.

We know that such losses can have a major impact on the day-to-day operations and economic viability of farms and other rural businesses, sometimes with devastating consequences for the farmers. Local communities are also affected, and we all feel the impact of rises in food prices and food scarcity.

The Rural Affairs Team have equipped frontline officers with the skills and confidence to stop and check heavy plant and agricultural machinery and have introduced systems that enable them to rapidly check ownership. The farming community have supported this initiative, with many choosing to display a STOP ME sticker which encourages police to intervene if the equipment is seen mobile during the nighttime.

The Rural Affairs team provide target hardening and crime prevention advice to rural communities. They promote **Farm Watch** and the **Farm No Cold Caller** scheme and share information about **marking property** and registering it on systems such as www.immobilise.com and TER (The Equipment Register).

Police and Crime Plan Priority: Theft

While some rural theft will be opportunistic, serious and organised criminals also target high value equipment and can repeatedly target the same or similar businesses with devastating impacts. The [Rural Crime Report 2024 - National Rural Crime Network](#) highlighted the need to strengthen the response to organised criminality.

Devon and Cornwall Police work closely with other law enforcement agencies to crack down on organised criminals who target our rural communities, and ensure local, regional, national and international specialist capabilities are used effectively to disrupt and investigate rural crime.

#Lucythefoal

A foal was stolen in Cornwall. The Rural Affairs Team launched a **social media campaign** including an appeal from Lucy’s owner, which reached over 1m followers. The issue touched the hearts of the equine community and led to a substantial response including **significant intelligence**.

The Rural Affairs team tracked the foal to Hertfordshire and in collaboration with local police **secured its recovery** and arrests were made.

The case is ongoing but illustrates the power of community intelligence combined with cross border work.

A rural church had a highly decorative wooden lectern in the shape of an eagle sawn off and removed.

An example of **rural heritage theft**, the Rural Affairs Team once again used the power of **social media combined with traditional methods** (house to house, witness interviews) to raise public awareness of the theft.

In response the offender abandoned the lectern in a highly visible location and its recovery was secured. Work is ongoing to secure an appropriate offender outcome.

Motor vehicles thefts are disrupted

Reports of vehicle thefts across Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly have decreased by 18.7% in the 12 months to June 2025. **Offender outcome rates are higher here than the national average** (6.9% compared to 3.6%).

The Police and Crime Plan focusses on ensuring the force has capability to tackle organised crime groups who target motor vehicles but also encourages the force to focus on repeat offenders who may be operating alone or in less organised ways.

The force actively monitors vehicle thefts to identify where there are signs of organised activity, for example if specific types of vehicles are being targeted or if the methods being used appear the same.

The force uses nationally agreed systems to define, develop and exchange intelligence about organised criminality with law enforcement partners to find the most impactful ways of disrupting harm. Outcomes may include prosecutions for a wide range of offences, using the powers of different partner agencies.

This activity can only be shared publicly once all investigative and criminal processes have completed. These are often lengthy, given the scale of offending and the number of offenders that can be involved.

Some offenders stealing vehicles are children or young people, either with the intent of joy riding and

Police and Crime Plan Priority: Theft

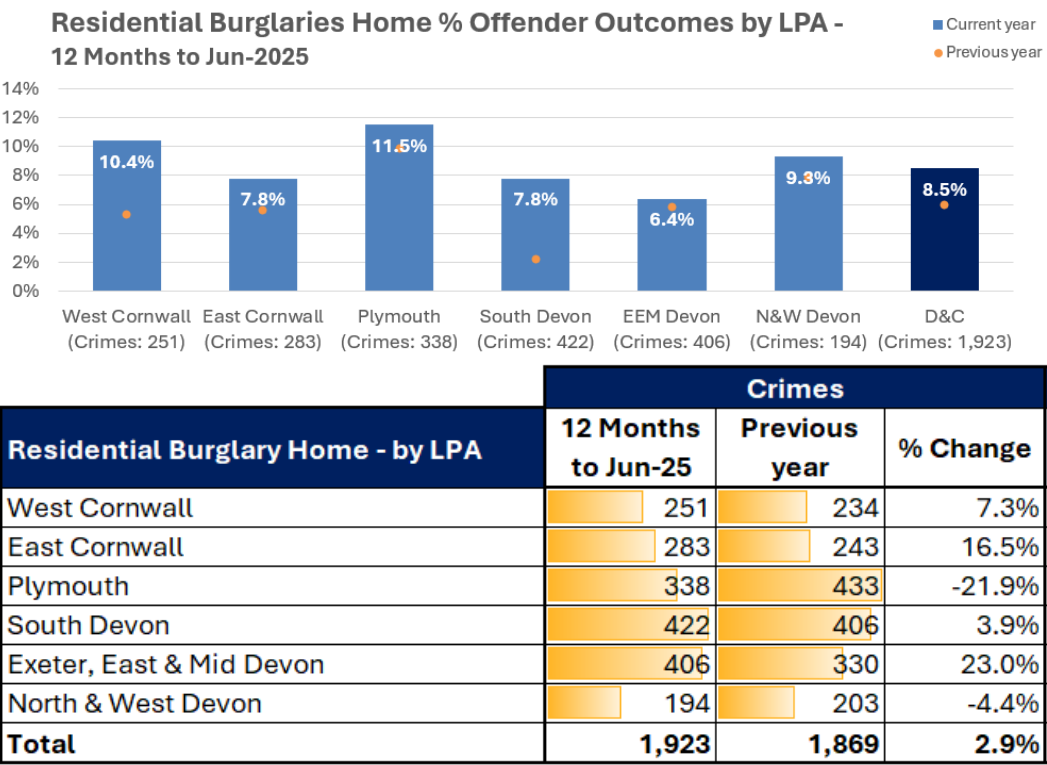
anti-social behaviour or because of the involvement of more serious criminality. This has been identified as an area of concern in some of our larger towns and cities. Through the forces Integrated Offender Management team, police are working closely with Probation and Youth Justice Services to divert young people, to help keep them safe and to reduce the impact of their offending.

Several factors from across the Police and Crime Plan will enhance the forces’ ability to deliver on this expectation, for example strengthening the value of Automatic Number Plate Recognition technology and other innovations to pursue criminals on our roads, and delivery of the Strategic Police Requirement.

Residential Burglaries

There were **1,923 Residential Burglaries in homes** reported to Devon & Cornwall Police in the 12 months to June 2025, a **2.9% increase** on the previous year.

Particularly prolific offenders can cause surges and (if they are disrupted) reductions in the areas they are operating. The offender outcome rate for residential burglary in Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly is **slightly higher than the national average (7.9% compared to 7.0%)**.



Attendance at Residential Burglaries

The National Police Chiefs Council have adopted a national commitment to attend **every residential burglary to gather best evidence**.

The force operating systems do not make this straightforward to monitor, as functions beyond response officers (such as forensic or investigation teams) may be best placed to attend.

The force can currently demonstrate attendance by response or patrol officers at **approximately 65% of residential burglaries in the 12 months to June 2025**. Actual attendance including all relevant resources is much higher but cannot yet be tracked.

This was explored in the August Commissioners Accountability Board, during which the Force committed to strengthen the ability to report on attendance.

Burglary Crime Prevention

The Commissioner has invested in **2,500 SmartTrace forensic marking kits which will be distributed free of charge to victims of dwelling burglary and their neighbours**. Neighbourhood Policing Teams provide these during follow up visits to offer reassurance, share crime prevention advice, and invite people to sign up to community messaging services.

Forensic marking makes stolen property traceable, deters offenders, and aids police to link recovered items back to victims. It makes it riskier for people to handle stolen goods, and harder for offenders to convert goods into profit.

Local community organisations invited to put forward proposals to prevent shoplifting and residential burglaries.

The Commissioner is investing up to £200k in projects put forward by local community organisations to help **prevent burglary and shoplifting**. Applications from community groups for funding up to **£5000 are open until the 8th October**.

In Devon, this is being administered by Devon Community Foundation who are reaching out to organizations already registered with them.

In Cornwall, organisations can apply through the Cornwall Community Foundation website here [Available grants | Cornwall Community Foundation](#).