

PEEL 2021/22

Police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy

An inspection of Devon and Cornwall Police

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Overall summary

Our judgments

Our inspection assessed how good Devon and Cornwall Police is in 10 areas of policing. We make graded judgments in 9 of these 10 as follows:

Outstanding	Good	Adequate	Requires improvement	Inadequate
	Preventing crime	Treatment of the public	Investigating crime	Recording data about crime
	Developing a positive workplace	Protecting vulnerable people	Good use of resources	Responding to the public
				Managing offenders

We also inspected how effective a service Devon and Cornwall Police gives to [victims](#) of crime. We don't make a graded judgment in this overall area.

We set out our detailed findings about things the force is doing well and where the force should improve in the rest of this report.

Data in this report

For more information, please [view this report on our website](#) and select the 'About the data' section.

Important changes to PEEL

In 2014, we introduced our police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy (PEEL) inspections, which assess the performance of all 43 police forces in England and Wales. Since then, we have been continuously adapting our approach and during the past year we have seen the most significant changes yet.

We now use a more [intelligence](#)-led, continual assessment approach, rather than the annual [PEEL inspections](#) we used in previous years. For instance, we have integrated our rolling crime data integrity inspections into these PEEL assessments. Our PEEL victim service assessment also includes a crime data integrity element in at least every other assessment. We have also changed our approach to graded judgments.

We now assess forces against the characteristics of good performance, set out in the [PEEL Assessment Framework 2021/22](#), and we more clearly link our judgments to [causes of concern](#) and areas for improvement. We have also expanded our previous four-tier system of judgments to five tiers. As a result, we can state more precisely where we consider improvement is needed and highlight more effectively the best ways of doing things.

However, these changes mean that it isn't possible to make direct comparisons between the grades awarded in this round of PEEL inspections with those from previous years. A reduction in grade, particularly from good to adequate, doesn't necessarily mean that there has been a reduction in performance, unless we say so in the report.

HM Inspector's observations

I have concerns about the performance of Devon and Cornwall Police in keeping people safe and reducing crime. In particular, I have serious concerns about the accuracy of its crime recording, its response to the public, and its management of sexual and violent offenders. In view of these findings, I have been in regular contact with the chief constable, as I do not underestimate how much improvement is needed.

These are the findings I consider most important from our assessments of the force over the last year.

The force's crime recording has deteriorated since our last inspection

The force doesn't always record crimes against vulnerable victims, particularly violent or behavioural crimes, and [anti-social behaviour](#). It also needs to record [domestic abuse](#) related crimes better. It should improve its auditing and oversight to help with this. Failure to record a crime often results in victims not being properly safeguarded and no investigation taking place.

The force isn't providing an effective response to the public

The force doesn't answer, or respond to, emergency or non-emergency calls within adequate time frames, and too many members of the public abandon their calls. Failure to answer or attend calls quickly can result in missed investigative opportunities and a loss of public confidence.

Repeat and vulnerable callers aren't always identified, and callers aren't always given the appropriate advice on preservation of evidence or crime prevention. This may affect the level of service provided, lead to a loss of evidence and mean that opportunities to prevent further crimes being committed against that person are missed.

The force is unable to adequately manage registered sexual and violent offenders

The force hasn't been able to promptly assess or manage the risks posed by registered sexual and violent offenders. Doing so will allow the force to better understand any escalating risk and whether it needs to take any action to manage the risk.

The force works well with other organisations to prioritise the prevention and deterrence of crime

We found good examples of evidence-based problem solving and early intervention being used to tackle enduring force-wide and local threats to communities. Police and local organisations co-operate closely to determine and tackle shared priorities, which helps develop a shared understanding of needs and builds resilience and cohesion.

Members of the workforce are well supported to do their jobs

Despite the challenges presented by COVID-19, the G7 summit and high seasonal demand, the workforce have shown that they are resilient, engaged and positive about their work and have trust and confidence in their leaders. This is underpinned by an inclusive people strategy that focuses on cultural awareness, well-being, recruitment, development and retention.

Devon and Cornwall Police has told me how it intends to make improvements in the areas we have identified. This should be included in its strategic planning and organisational management. We will work closely with the force over the coming months to monitor its progress against these important and necessary changes.

My report sets out the more detailed findings of this inspection.



Wendy Williams

HM Inspector of Constabulary

Reducing crime assessment

We have identified seven themes underpinning a force's ability to reduce crime effectively which, taken together, allow an assessment of the extent to which the force is doing all it can to reduce crime. This is a narrative assessment, as police recorded crime figures can be affected by variations and changes in recording policy and practice, making it difficult to make comparisons over time.

Devon and Cornwall Police has the capability and processes it needs to access and analyse crime trends across geographical areas and decide which crimes to prioritise for reduction measures. But recording and finalising crimes must be more accurate and more timely. This will give the force a better understanding of crime levels and outcomes, and of the measures needed to control risks. The force does apply problem-solving principles and preventive tactics by working closely with its communities and other relevant local organisations, and on force-wide initiatives to reduce crimes such as violence against women and girls.

Other factors contributing to the force's ability to reduce crime are:

- The force's strategic approach to crime prevention, which focuses on evidence-based and early intervention, along with other relevant organisations such as businesses, health and social care, to reduce the likelihood of vulnerable suspects reoffending and being offended against.
- Effective community support using methods of working with people that help build trust, so the public gets involved in volunteering schemes and shares information.

I am pleased that the force is addressing the right areas of policing to reduce crime.

But the following areas may negatively affect the force's ability to reduce crime:

- Investigations need to be more timely and thorough. The force needs to improve so that it can gain a better understanding of outcomes and the reasons why victims withdraw their support.
- Repeat victims are often not identified at initial point of contact. The force could reduce offending through a more timely response and better evaluation of the effectiveness of measures to reduce crime.

- The force's identification and assessment of risk to [vulnerable people](#) at initial point of contact can be improved. It also needs to answer and respond to calls more quickly and better manage the risks posed by the most dangerous offenders.
- Performance management that considers capability and capacity can be strengthened across all areas to make sure all opportunities to reduce crime are maximised.
- The force understands its crime demand but doesn't have sufficient understanding of the capability and capacity of its workforce and assets to always respond effectively in all areas to support the reduction of crime.

Until the force gains a better understanding of its capacity and capability so that it can improve the way it responds to calls, and manages offenders and investigations, it will not be able to reduce crime effectively.

Providing a service to the victims of crime

Victim service assessment

This section describes our assessment of the service Devon and Cornwall Police provides to victims. This is from the point of reporting a crime and throughout the investigation. As part of this assessment, we reviewed 90 case files.

When the police close a case of a reported crime, it will be assigned what is referred to as an 'outcome type'. This describes the reason for closing it.

We also reviewed 20 cases each when the following outcome types were used:

- A suspect was identified, and the victim supported police action, but evidential difficulties prevented further action ([outcome 15](#)).
- A suspect was identified, but there were evidential difficulties, and the victim didn't support or withdrew their support for police action ([outcome 16](#)).
- A suspect was not identified, and the investigation was closed (outcome 18).

While this assessment is ungraded, it influences graded judgments in the other areas we have inspected.

The force needs to improve the time it takes to answer emergency and non-emergency calls, and to assess the vulnerability of victims when calls are answered

When a victim contacts the police, it is important that their call is answered quickly and that the right information is recorded accurately on police systems. The caller should be spoken to in a professional manner. The information should be assessed, taking into consideration threat, harm, risk and vulnerability. And the victim should get appropriate [safeguarding](#) advice.

The force needs to improve the time it takes to answer both emergency and non-emergency calls. When calls are answered, the victim's vulnerability isn't always assessed using a structured process. Repeat victims aren't always identified, which means this information isn't taken into account when considering the response the victim should have. Also, not all victims are being given crime prevention advice or advice on the preservation of evidence. This may result in the loss of evidence that would support an investigation and the opportunity to prevent further crimes against the victim.

The force doesn't always respond to calls for service promptly

A force should aim to respond to calls for service within its published time frames, on the basis of the level of prioritisation given to the call. It should change call priority only if the original prioritisation is deemed inappropriate, or if further information suggests a change is needed. The response should take into consideration risk and victim vulnerability, including information obtained after the call.

Attendance was sometimes outside recognised force timescales. Victims weren't always informed of the delay and their expectations weren't met. This may cause victims to lose confidence and disengage. When call priorities were changed, this was found to be appropriate.

The force's crime recording is inadequate when it comes to making sure victims receive an appropriate level of service

The force's crime recording should be trustworthy. It should be effective at recording reported crime in line with national standards and have effective systems and processes, supported by its leadership and culture.

The force needs to improve how effective its crime recording processes are to make sure that all crimes reported to it are recorded correctly and without delay.

We set out more details about the force's crime recording in the crime data integrity section below.

The force makes sure that investigations are allocated to staff with suitable levels of experience

All forces and constabularies should have a policy to make sure investigations are allocated to suitably trained officers or [staff](#). Its policy should also establish when a crime isn't to be investigated further and should be applied consistently. The victim of the crime should be kept informed of who is dealing with their case. They should also be fully informed over the decision to close the investigation.

The arrangements for allocating recorded crimes for investigation were in accordance with the force policy, and crimes were allocated to the most appropriate department for further investigation. But victims weren't always told that the crime they had reported wouldn't be investigated further.

Investigations aren't always effective, and victims aren't always updated on the progress of their investigation

Police forces should investigate reported crimes quickly, proportionately and thoroughly. Victims should be kept updated about the investigation, and the force should have effective governance arrangements in place to make sure investigation standards are high.

We found that investigations weren't always supervised effectively. This meant that some investigations weren't thorough. Victims are potentially being let down and offenders aren't being brought to justice. Victims weren't always kept updated throughout investigations. Victims are more likely to have confidence in a police investigation when they receive regular updates. A thorough investigation increases the chance of perpetrators being identified and a positive outcome for the victim.

In most cases, victim personal statements were taken, which gives victims the opportunity to describe how the crime has affected their lives. When victims withdrew support for an investigation, the force considered taking the case forward without the victim's support – this is an important method of safeguarding the victim and preventing further offences from being committed.

Under the [Code of Practice for Victims of Crime](#), there is a requirement to conduct a needs assessment at an early stage to determine whether victims need additional support. The force usually carried out this assessment, and the request for additional support was recorded.

The force isn't always using the appropriate outcome, consulting victims, or getting an auditable record of the victim's wishes

The force should make sure it follows national guidance and rules for deciding the outcome type of each report of crime. In deciding the outcome type, the force should consider the nature of the crime, the offender and the victim. And the force should show the necessary leadership and culture to make sure outcome types are used appropriately.

When a suspect has been identified and the victim supports police action, but evidential difficulties prevent further action, the victim should be informed of the decision to close the investigation. Victims weren't always told about the decision to take no further action and to close the investigation. The force also used this outcome incorrectly on several occasions.

When a suspect has been identified but the victim doesn't support, or withdraws their support for, police action, an auditable record should be obtained from the victim confirming their decision. This will allow the investigation to be closed. Evidence of the victim's decision was absent in some cases reviewed. This represents a risk that victims' wishes may not be fully represented and considered before the investigation is closed.

When an investigation has been completed and no suspect has been identified, the victim should be informed of the decision to close the investigation. Not all victims were told about the decision to take no further investigative action.

Crime data integrity

Inadequate

Devon and Cornwall Police is inadequate at recording crime.

Cause of concern

Devon and Cornwall Police is too often failing to record reports of violent crime, particularly behavioural crimes ([harassment](#), [stalking](#), controlling and coercive behaviour), domestic abuse and anti-social behaviour.

Recommendations

- Devon and Cornwall Police should immediately:
 - take steps to identify and address gaps in its systems and processes for identifying and recording all reports made by victims of crimes, giving particular attention to behavioural crimes, other domestic abuse related violent crime and anti-social behaviour.
- Within three months, Devon and Cornwall Police should:
 - provide specific training for all supervisors, officers and staff who work in crime recording roles; this training should include the crime recording requirements for violent crimes, including behavioural crimes, domestic abuse and anti-social behaviour; and
 - have effective governance and oversight to fully understand its crime recording performance and ensure its crime recording is audited take on a regular basis.

We estimate that Devon and Cornwall Police is recording 84.0 percent (with a confidence interval of +/- 3.0 percent) of all reported crime (excluding fraud). We estimate this means the force didn't record over 18,900 crimes during the year covered by our inspection.

Its performance is worse for offences of violence against the person. We estimate 80.3 percent (with a confidence interval of +/- 4.5 percent) of violent offences are being recorded. This is a statistically significant deterioration compared with the findings from our 2017 inspection, where we found 93.4 percent (with a confidence interval of +/- 3.0 percent) of violent crime had been recorded.

Over half of the unrecorded crimes we reviewed were [domestic abuse](#) related cases.

We also reviewed 50 anti-social behaviour incidents and found 23 crimes should have been recorded, but the force recorded only 3. Failure to record a crime can result in a victim not being properly safeguarded, no investigation taking place or people living in fear in their own homes while being victimised by neighbours and the local community.

The force carries out limited crime recording audits and, as a result, isn't able to accurately estimate its crime recording compliance or give timely warning of changes. A recent force audit had correctly identified falls in crime recording accuracy but hadn't properly assessed the extent of these falls. This meant that senior leaders weren't aware of the areas that required improvement, or the extent of improvement required, and hadn't put measures in place to do this. By carrying out regular audits, the force will be able to determine where crimes aren't being recorded and take action to record the crime, addressing the reason for the crimes being missed.

Areas for improvement

The force needs to improve the accuracy of recording crimes and incidents of rape

The force doesn't always accurately record reported incidents of rape (N100s) and crimes of rape. We reviewed 50 reports of rape, of which 3 were recorded as N100s and 2 as other crimes. Two N100s weren't recorded. The force should improve its recording practices to make sure that victims of rape receive the appropriate level of service from the police.

The force needs to improve the recording of equality data

The force's data for victims of crime shows that age and gender are well recorded, ethnicity is less well recorded and other [protected characteristics](#) aren't well recorded. The force should be collecting this information to understand the extent to which each protected group is affected by crime, how this differs from those without the protected characteristics, and whether a different response is needed for these victims.

Main findings

In this section, we set out our main findings that relate to how well the force records crime.

The force is recording sexual offences other than rape appropriately

We estimate that the force is recording 95.4 percent (with a confidence interval of +/- 3.8 percent) of sexual offences. This is broadly unchanged compared with the findings from our 2017 inspection, where we found 94.4 percent (with a confidence interval of +/- 2.5 percent) of sexual offences had been recorded. This is positive.

The force doesn't always record crimes against children

The force doesn't always record crimes against children. Some of the crimes missed were crimes of a serious nature, such as sexual assault and inciting children to engage in sexual activity. Failure to record these crimes can result in offenders not being identified and brought to justice.

Engaging with and treating the public with fairness and respect

Adequate

Devon and Cornwall Police is adequate at treating people fairly and with respect.

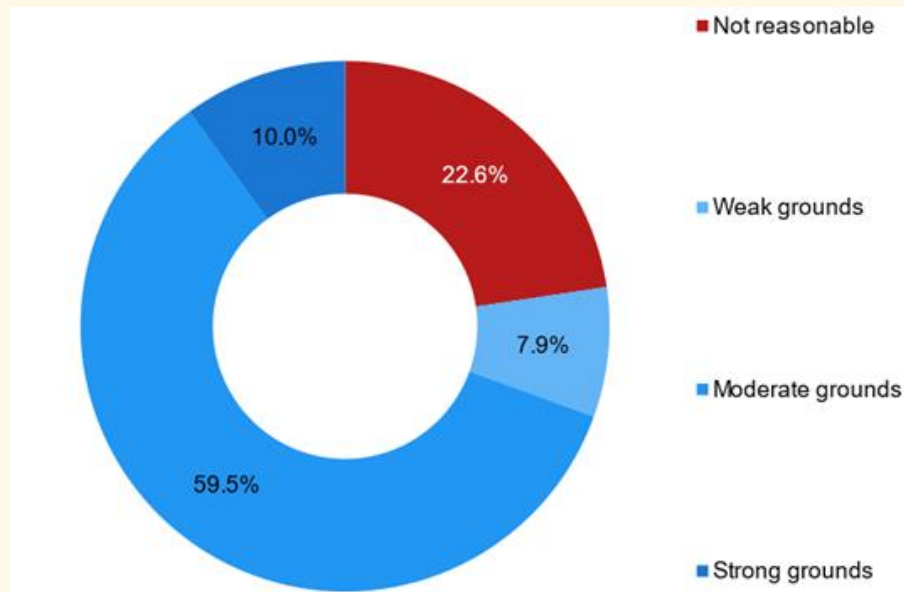
Areas for improvement

The force should train officers and supervisors more on reasonable grounds for stop and search

We found that officers don't record their grounds for using [stop and search powers](#) well enough. If these grounds aren't recorded properly, there won't be enough information for the person who was searched to be able to understand whether they have been treated lawfully and fairly.

During our inspection, we reviewed 190 stop and search records from 1 January to 31 December 2021. Based on this sample, we estimate that 77.4 percent (with a confidence interval of +/- 5.8 percent) of all stop and searches by the force during this period had reasonable grounds recorded. This is a low rate of stop and searches with reasonable grounds. It is broadly unchanged compared with the findings from our previous review of records from 2019, where we found 85.2 percent (with a confidence interval of +/- 4.2 percent) of stop and searches had reasonable grounds. Of the records we reviewed for stop and searches on people from ethnic minorities, 8 of 10 had reasonable grounds recorded.

Figure 1: Proportion of reviewed stop and search cases with reasonable grounds, Devon and Cornwall, 2021



We found there had been no force-wide training since 2018, apart from that for new officers. The force has provided limited interim refresher training, and it plans to complete all force-wide training by spring 2023. Officers must be confident and skilled in knowing when stop and search is appropriate and how to record the grounds used. Supervisors are expected to review completed records, but there can be significant delay before this is done. This means any associated review of [body-worn video \(BWV\)](#) that can be used to aid understanding and learning may not have been retained. The force should ensure that as part of their training, officers and supervisors are taught what constitutes reasonable grounds for stop and search and how to accurately record them. Supervisors should review stop and search records promptly and effectively to make sure this is done.

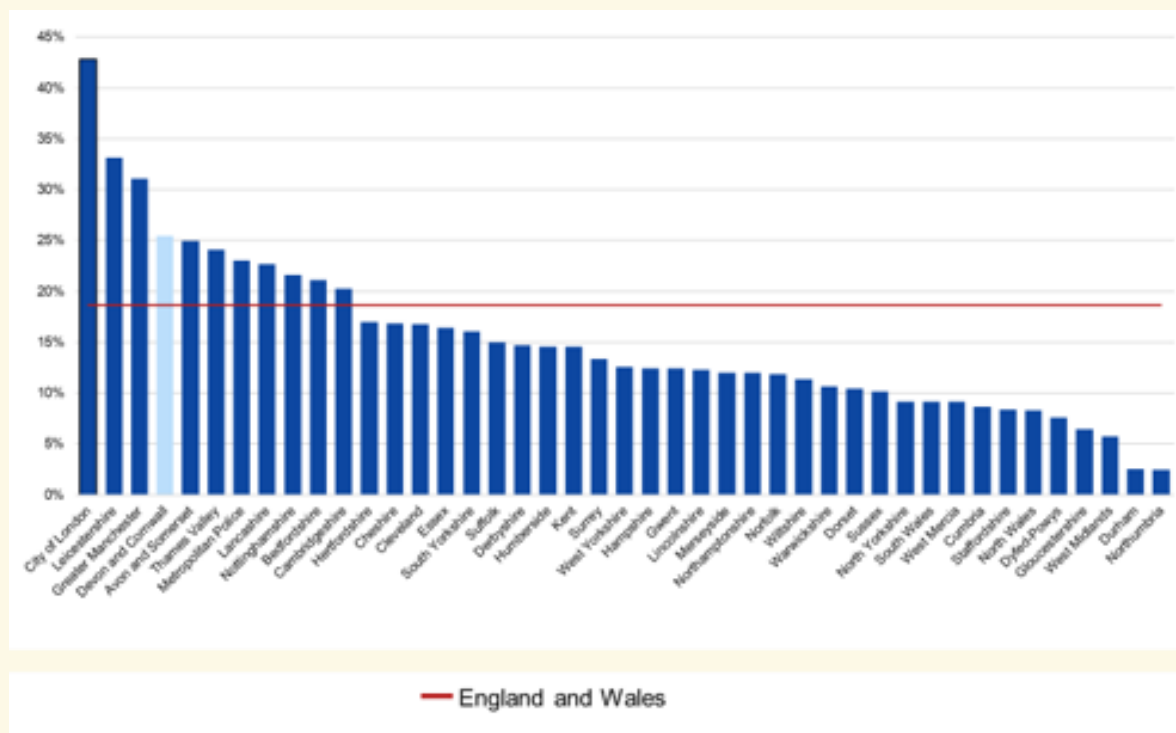
Officers should record all details of stop and search and use of force accurately so that internal and external monitoring forums have a full picture of any trends and disparities

We found that stop and search and use of force forms sometimes have gender, ethnicity and names of subjects missing or inaccurately recorded. Officers should ask subjects to define their own ethnicity. Where this is refused, the officer-defined field on the form should be completed.

However, in the year ending 31 March 2021, 25.5 percent of stop and searches by Devon and Cornwall Police under Section 1 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE) and Section 23 of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 (MDA) recorded the ethnicity as unknown. This is compared with 18.6 percent for all forces in England and Wales.

Our evidence suggests there is a lack of confidence among officers and insufficient understanding of why this is important. This should be included in training. An absence of reliable data means internal monitoring and external scrutiny panels can't confidently identify trends, and makes effective comparison with other forces more difficult.

Figure 2: Proportion of Section 1 PACE and Section 23 MDA person stop and searches with an unknown ethnicity across forces in England and Wales in the year ending 31 March 2021



Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to treating people fairly and with respect.

The force engages with its communities to understand and respond to what matters to them

The force takes an inclusive, appropriately tailored approach to working with the public. An equality, diversity and human rights strategic group reviews engagement approaches with external bodies, and a public confidence and engagement strategy communicates the importance of connected communities. It is evident that the workforce considers the needs of the whole community, including those who traditionally interact with the police less often.

Officers and staff seek views through a range of formal and informal channels, including listening groups where people from ethnic minority communities can share their experiences and encourage change. Advisory groups and community partners work closely with local officers to share information and reinforce the understanding of their needs.

As part of its public confidence and engagement strategy the force actively seeks views from its local communities to identify problems and gather intelligence, making effective use of an extensive 'citizens in policing' network. Volunteers of all ages and backgrounds use a range of skills to work with their communities to tackle the issues that are important to them.

The force takes steps to address any obstacles to engagement through its diverse communities teams. Trained officers will identify emerging communities that it should be working with and will make sure plans are in place to tackle any threats that have been identified. Officers regularly attend engagement events and support force and national initiatives – for example, through involving disabled people, those subject to hate crime or people displaced from their countries.

The force understands why, and how, to treat the public with fairness and respect

Since our last inspection, the force has thoroughly promoted the importance of treating people fairly – for example, by providing training on bias and unfair behaviour. This includes tracking recruits' behaviour at regular intervals to see if attitudes change over time and, if so, why.

Senior leaders regularly communicate outcomes of misconduct hearings to the workforce and the public to promote awareness of required standards of behaviour. This visible leadership supports a wider strategy to better understand and shape positive cultures in the workforce. In 2020, an external company completed a detailed cultural audit of the force. Subsequently, three-day leadership workshops and training have been provided for all leaders. This has helped leaders to understand workforce culture and influence positive behaviour in their teams. Other initiatives, such as 'bystander' training and 'call it out' campaigns, give officers the confidence to challenge inappropriate behaviour and to make sure the public and workforce are treated fairly and respectfully. Members of the workforce we spoke with felt comfortable doing this and believed they would be well supported.

All operational officers are expected to use BWV, and we found this direction was well understood by staff. This improves the force's knowledge of how well stop and search and use of force powers are used. An app has recently been developed to better assess how regularly it is being used. BWV is increasingly reviewed in internal and external legitimacy panels. A community panel had previously expressed frustration about the incomplete availability of BWV, but there is now a better service and rigorous efforts are made to make sure that relevant samples of footage from BWV are available to panel members.

Officers understand how to use force fairly and appropriately

Officers receive appropriate training in use of force, including specialist equipment such as taser and [incapacitant sprays](#). Records are well maintained and monitored. Officers are given refresher training dates far enough in advance to avoid training lapses that may affect their operational ability.

The training emphasises the importance of verbal communication and encourages de-escalation before force is considered. Our fieldwork identified that officers complete their training, and data indicates that records are being created when force is used, in accordance with national guidance.

The force understands and improves the way stop and search and use of force powers are used

There are established force-level internal monitoring processes for police use of powers. These are complemented by local legitimacy panels. We identified that review of BWV was taking place for both stop and search and use of force at the strategic and local level meetings. There was evidence that relevant and wide-ranging data is considered to determine trends and disparities.

However, the force is making further refinements that will support its efforts to achieve complete transparency. If panel members and communities are to be reassured those powers are being used fairly, it is especially important that all data provided is accurate, complete and easily interpreted.

The force acts on scrutiny and challenge from an external independent panel to improve officers' use of force and stop and search powers

An independent community panel considers the way officers use stop and search and use of force powers, and the force acts on the scrutiny and challenge it provides.

An independent chair from an ethnic minority background and trained representatives from different ethnic minority backgrounds, genders and ages review the BWV footage of officers' use of their powers when dealing with members of the public. Their collated feedback is given to the force legitimacy board and to individual officers to help with learning. Officers are invited to respond and account for their actions, and give further context.

A separate scrutiny subgroup and advisory groups in different force areas also review the force's use of these powers. Colleagues from the local authority are invited to internal monitoring meetings, and the force has a separate independent panel that reviews the way officers interact and use their powers with those in mental health crisis.

Preventing crime and anti-social behaviour

Good

Devon and Cornwall Police is good at prevention and deterrence.

Area for improvement

The force should promote and improve the use and recording of local problem-solving plans and sharing of best practice

We found that neighbourhood officers and staff weren't consistently using structured problem-solving plans. We found some knowledge gaps, with problem-solving activities not always recorded or easy to find on force systems. This makes it harder for supervisors to review officers' activities and to evaluate and share good practice.

Despite some good evidence that specialist problem solvers apply evidence-based models to develop plans to tackle enduring force-wide and local threats to communities, our fieldwork found that some neighbourhood officers didn't understand how to access their services or establish or share tactics that have been successful. This specialist resource can provide valuable support, but the services they offer should be better promoted so that they can be used more effectively.

Main findings

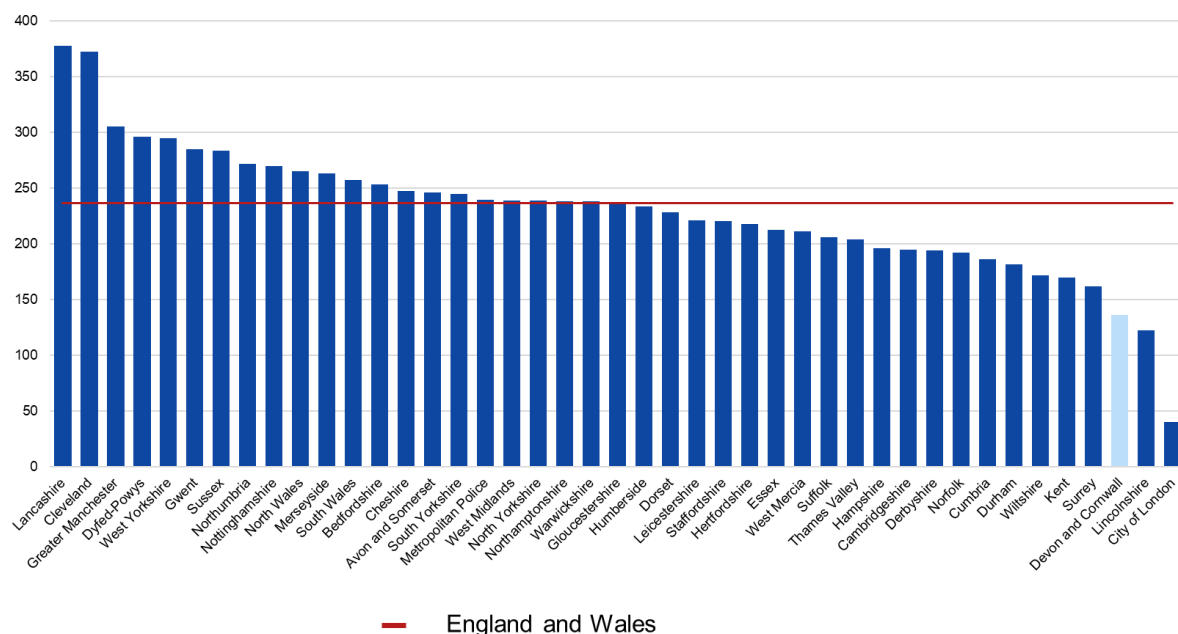
In this section we set out our main findings that relate to prevention and deterrence.

The force prioritises the prevention of crime, anti-social behaviour and vulnerability

Devon and Cornwall is one of the safest places to live in England and Wales. In the year ending 31 March 2022, the force recorded 136 incidents per 1,000 population. This was the third lowest number of recorded incidents per 1,000 population across all forces in England and Wales and compares to the rate across England and Wales of 236 incidents per 1,000 population.

In the same year, Devon and Cornwall had a crime severity score of 11.1 compared to an average score across all forces in England and Wales of 14.6. This means people in Devon and Cornwall experience less crime on average than other force areas and/or experience crimes with lower levels of harm compared to other force areas.

Figure 3: Incidents recorded on the command and control system per 1,000 population across all forces in England and Wales in the year ending 31 March 2022



The force focuses on the nationally recognised [College of Policing](#) pillars of engagement, intervention and problem solving to prioritise the prevention of crime, anti-social behaviour and vulnerability. Force-level and local governance arrangements ensure priorities that have been agreed by the force and [police and crime commissioner](#) are co-ordinated and tackled effectively. For example, a serious violence prevention programme takes into account victims, offenders, and locations where crime takes place when considering measures to tackle particular problems.

Arrangements are in place for partners such as the local authority, health and social services and the third sector to help set priorities, and it is evident that the needs of vulnerable people are prioritised. A connectivity and confidence board chaired by a [senior officer](#), continuing investment in the numbers of neighbourhood officers and shared preventative schemes (such as ‘safer streets, safer towns’ and ‘we are with you’) show the importance the force and communities place on this method of policing.

The force understands the strengths and needs of local communities and works with them to help build resilience and cohesion

The force has a mature understanding of the needs of its communities. Shared problems are identified and tackled through strategic partnerships, key community contacts and local intervention meetings. The force uses an effective and visible neighbourhood policing model that includes beat managers, community support officers, community safety accredited wardens and diverse community teams. They work with other bodies such as health, housing, charities and education departments to determine emerging threats and tackle priorities. In addition, volunteer advocate groups establish where successful action has led to reductions in offending and encourage similar activity and resources to be used in other areas. One example is the use of road accident reduction teams. Empowering local people to develop and share their understanding of community needs builds resilience and cohesion.

The force analyses data to understand high-demand locations, offenders and vulnerable groups

The force identifies areas of high demand and threats to vulnerable people. We found good examples of analysis to identify high-demand locations, and of individuals who regularly needed the services of the police due to their vulnerability or offending. Each policing area focuses on problems that are identified through analysis of force data. Officers we spoke to described how they could request [problem profiles](#) and tailored analysis to better understand emerging threats. Agreements are in place for partners to share information and they can submit intelligence directly to force computer systems. A force-wide online alert scheme also allows the public to share information about suspicious activity or crimes that have occurred.

Partner organisations that work with the police attend meetings where activities are directed, and they review progress against plans. This happens at intelligence sharing meetings to counter serious crime and at localised tactical intervention meetings. Neighbourhood officers, social services and education departments contribute to multi-agency [child](#) exploitation meetings and [missing persons](#) meetings where information is shared and interventions are planned to protect vulnerable children. It was encouraging to see that some partners and neighbourhood officers are based in each other's buildings where they regularly share information to understand and tackle problems. We saw this with anti-social behaviour co-ordinators, rural rangers and colleagues from the local authority. Sharing information between organisations allows the force to respond more effectively to community priorities.

The force uses evidence-based methods to support its prevention approach

Where the force identifies areas of high demand, it is increasingly employing evidence-based problem-solving approaches to reduce these threats. For example, high crime locations are identified and are subject to ongoing 'hot spots policing' with patrols taking place at relevant times so that officers can provide visible deterrence and prevention advice. Similarly, the force works with social services and health teams to identify individuals who repeatedly call on their services. Problem-solving plans are used to address their often complex needs or repeat offending. These interventions are being evaluated so the force is better able to understand what is effective in reducing demand, and the cost benefits of multi-agency support plans.

The force has invested in a team of specialist problem solvers. They work closely with other academic organisations and project teams to determine national best practice and help develop force-wide initiatives. They are developing and promoting a 'whole system' [public health approach](#) – for example, when tackling [serious and organised crime](#), and violence against women and girls. Members of the public, community leads and organisations that work in partnership with the police are closely involved in this. Encouraging participation from all sections of society will make communities more resilient and may reduce the demands on police officers and staff.

Specialist problem solvers have reviewed completed plans to determine how well they are used and to raise awareness of effective interventions. This review included recommendations to reinforce their use and make sure neighbourhood teams understand and accept them. This is something the force should continue to promote.

The force works in partnership with a wide range of other organisations in problem solving, crime prevention and early intervention activity

The force works with different organisations on early intervention and problem-solving activity. For example, Designing Out Crime Officers work with the local authority to provide 'secure by design' initiatives. TikTok is used for messaging and intelligence gathering, and 'batch' messaging is used to target those involved in [county lines](#) drugs use, warning participants about the dangers and signposting users to drug treatment services. Partners help create these messages to make sure that the language is appropriate to the reader.

The force addresses vulnerability and anti-social behaviour. [Torbay Together](#) is a good example of the police, businesses, charities and statutory agencies jointly identifying sources of funding, and acting on plans to tackle the complex needs of homeless and vulnerable people. In Exeter, a 'wet space' scheme has been introduced with professional support available for those with alcohol dependency. Having a controlled space with expert support on hand means risks of harm and offending can be more easily mitigated. Both police and partners we spoke with were positive about these important relationships.

The force manages its neighbourhood resources as effectively as possible

[Neighbourhood policing teams](#) can sometimes be used to supplement police teams that respond to emergency and priority calls. This happens particularly in summer, when Devon and Cornwall Police experience a rise in demand for their services. The force is mindful of the impact that taking neighbourhood officers away from their core role has on community priorities and has allocated additional officers over successive years as part of the police uplift programme. In the year ending 31 March 2022, Devon and Cornwall Police spent 9.9 percent of its budget on neighbourhood policing. This is a normal value compared to other forces.

Resource management processes and summer policing plans are in place to monitor and maintain levels of policing. The force has also completed analysis to identify which activities their officers and staff are engaged in, and how often they are used to respond to emergency calls. External bodies praised the force for maintaining a community presence even during their busiest periods.

The force should further develop the role and profile of neighbourhood officers

The force should continue to reinforce the importance of neighbourhood policing. The force has an annual neighbourhood conference, provides some training in problem solving and has used an external charity to provide anti-social behaviour training. There are also some supplementary packages that focus on vulnerable people, county lines drug dealing and talks from other organisations that the police work with (who may use different powers and problem-solving approaches). But the force should build on professionalising the role with more formal induction training. This will give new starters a clear understanding of their role from the outset.

We found some good examples where the force rewards officers, staff and particularly volunteers who make effective contributions, but some officers reported that they would also like to see leaders beyond their immediate managers more often. Increased visibility of leaders will make neighbourhood teams feel more valued and likely to remain engaged in crime prevention and deterrence activities for their communities.

Responding to the public

Inadequate

Devon and Cornwall Police is inadequate at responding to the public.

Areas for improvement

The force should improve the time it takes to answer emergency and non-emergency calls for service and reduce its abandonment rate

On 31 May 2022, the Home Office published data on 999 call answering times. Call answering time is the time taken for a call to be transferred to a force, and the time taken by that force to answer it. In England and Wales, forces should aim to answer 90 percent of these calls within 10 seconds. We have used this data to assess how quickly forces answer 999 calls. We do acknowledge, however, that this data has only been published recently. As such we recognise that forces may need time to consider any differences between the data published by the Home Office and their own.

When a victim contacts the police, it is important that their call is answered quickly. When the force was inspected in 2019, we identified that it needed to improve its call handling performance. During our 2022 inspection, we found this performance had declined.

The force doesn't always answer 999 calls in published target times. Between 1 November 2021 and 31 August 2022, the force answered 66.7 percent of 999 calls within 10 seconds – below the target of 90 percent in 10 seconds. Performance was worse in summer, with 59.3 percent of calls in August 2022 answered within 10 seconds. The force has plans to manage high volumes of calls in the summer months, but they haven't proved sufficient. There remains a reliance on overtime and using staff from other roles. Failure to answer emergency calls quickly can result in missed investigative opportunities and a loss of public confidence.

The force has also not been able to answer non-emergency [\(101\)](#) calls promptly, despite overall reductions in the number of these calls. People who need a service from the police can be left waiting for over an hour for their call to be answered. As a result, many callers abandon their call. The national standard for abandonment rates for a force with a switchboard, such as Devon and Cornwall Police, is 5 percent. The force told us that in the year ending April 2022, the abandonment rate for higher priority 101 calls was 46 percent, and 75 percent for lower priority 101 calls.

The force doesn't currently know whether repeated calls from the same person are being abandoned, or the nature of the call. Some callers are reverting to 999 services, which affects the answer times for that service and makes it less efficient and effective.

The force acknowledges it needs to make substantial, sustainable improvements. As an interim measure it recently introduced a triage process. This allows staff to answer callers promptly, better identify [vulnerable people](#), prioritise their needs and give details of wait times and alternative methods of reporting. The force told us this had reduced the numbers of people returned to a queue, and there had been some overall improvement in the number of calls being abandoned. A call back service is being introduced but has been subject to delays. When implemented it should give the force more detail on callers' needs and offer calls at a preferred time.

The force has received additional funding, some of which will be used to boost the staff available to deal with non-emergency calls. This should reduce pressures on emergency call handlers and lead to overall improvements.

The force should make sure that details of repeat and vulnerable callers are recorded

Call handlers don't always complete checks to find out if callers are repeat victims. In our victim service assessment, repeat victims were only identified in 46 of 71 cases we reviewed. The force doesn't always record that a victim is vulnerable when it is appropriate to do so. This was the case in 47 of 74 cases we reviewed. Failing to identify repeat or vulnerable callers means the force doesn't always properly understand the risk to the victim. This may affect the level of response the caller receives. The introduction of updated record management systems will improve information and menus available to call handlers.

The force needs to make sure that call takers give appropriate advice on crime prevention and the preservation of evidence

As part of our victim service assessment we identified that advice given by call handlers regarding the preservation of evidence was only provided in 21 of 37 cases we reviewed. Crime prevention advice was given in 31 of 39 applicable cases. The force does provide training for its staff and a process adherence team conducts reviews to see if expected standards are reached. But staff shortages and high turnover can mean there aren't always sufficiently trained or experienced staff with the time to consistently consider all the needs of victims. This potentially leads to a loss of evidence that could support an investigation, and a missed opportunity to prevent further crimes against the victim. This is particularly important when there may be delays in officers attending.

The force should respond to calls for service within its published time frames based on the prioritisation given to the call. Where delays occur, a reason should be recorded and victims updated

Response officers aren't able to attend calls within the timescales the force has set. This is the case for their categories of emergency, priority and more routine calls, where the force determines it is necessary for an officer to attend.

We found calls are correctly prioritised, but several factors affect timeliness – such as the volume of calls compared with the officers available, availability of serviceable vehicles and trained drivers, and the fact that the force serves a rural area where officers sometimes have to travel a long distance to attend calls. There are some delays in attending emergency and priority calls. We found that due to these delays, the ['golden hour' principles](#) of immediately following up evidential lines of enquiry and the gathering or preservation of forensic evidence aren't always completed as well as they should be. This can hamper any subsequent investigation.

Both officers and the public become frustrated when attendance at non-emergency calls is significantly delayed. Deployment to these calls can be aborted in favour of emergency and higher-risk calls. Subsequently, callers may not be available by the time officers do attend. During our inspection we saw over 400 calls were unresolved in control room queues where too few staff, with too much to do, are unable to adequately review or record any escalating risk. And they can't consistently call people back to update them with likely attendance times.

We reviewed these queues and were disappointed to find that many of the oldest incidents related to vulnerable victims, including domestic abuse, stalking and harassment. Beyond emergency and more recent priority calls, supervisors didn't have an effective overview of risk or deployment decisions. When expectations aren't met it is more likely that victims will lose confidence and disengage.

The force has recently introduced measures so these non-emergency calls are assigned to frontline officers more quickly. It is also piloting a virtual appointment process and increasing capacity in its incident resolution centres where some crimes and incidents can be resolved or directed to neighbourhood or investigative teams. This should reduce overall attendance times and demands on frontline officers.

Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to how well the force responds to the public.

Staff are polite, professional and ethical during initial calls but could improve their recording of assessments of threat, risk and harm

Our inspection identified that call handlers and staff in control rooms were polite, professional and ethical. The force has conducted customer surveys and found that when callers contact them, customers feel the services they receive are of a good standard. Control room staff we spoke to told us they had too few officers available to them and unreliable end-of-life ICT systems, but there is a palpable desire to give the public a good service.

When a victim contacts the police, it is important all information is properly recorded and assessed, taking into consideration threat, harm, risk and vulnerability. However, in 27 of 74 cases we reviewed, call takers didn't check for vulnerability at the first point of contact. We found evidence of staff completing a [THRIVE risk assessment](#) in 65 of 75 applicable cases reviewed. We found that while call takers had a good understanding of the requirement to assess a caller's needs, they didn't properly record vulnerability due to incessant demand, their wish to service the needs of further callers, and a belief that, although not recorded, they took account of it in their decision making. It is important that a recorded assessment of the caller's vulnerability is made to ensure the force responds appropriately, provides the right services and develops an understanding of a victim's needs.

The public can contact the force through a range of channels to report a crime, but these services need to improve

Devon and Cornwall Police encourages the public to contact them through different reporting channels. The public are increasingly using webchat and email. This means valuable resources can be used more efficiently. The force is in the process of enhancing its existing online services, changing to a platform used by all forces for digital contact. There have been some technical challenges with this and with the implementation and integration of other information and communications technology hardware and software.

The force relies on help from external suppliers to modernise its ICT systems. Some aspects have taken far longer than agreed or expected. When first notified that older systems would lose support, the force should have acted with more urgency. These delays have meant the force is unable to use an automated search facility to identify risks in emails, and a system failure has led to the discovery of high numbers of incorrectly routed digital contacts. The force has had to tackle this using overtime and additional resources from other areas.

The force is supporting and developing initial contact staff, but training for response officers is affected by the need to resource calls

The force understands the importance of being an employer of choice by looking after, developing and retaining staff. Examples include leadership programmes, the introduction of voice analytics software to understand mood changes, ongoing psychological assessments, and the provision of 'fitbits' to encourage staff to move more and engage in wider activity.

Response officers also reported being well supported. However, time set aside for continuous professional development isn't used as well as it should be. Officers are diverted to other duties or will use this time to catch up on work. Response officers are invariably the first to crime scenes and must be confident and capable. Ensuring their training needs are met will support this.

Investigating crime

Requires improvement

Devon and Cornwall Police requires improvement at investigating crime.

Areas for improvement

The force should make sure investigation plans are appropriate and that supervisors can ensure all investigative opportunities are taken

During our inspection in 2019, we identified that the need for regular and consistently recorded supervision was an area for improvement. The force has put plans in place to address and review progress. However, during our inspection in 2022, we identified that this standard hadn't been met.

As part of our victim service assessment, we found 61 of 82 cases we reviewed had effective supervision, with all investigative opportunities taken in 71 of 86 cases reviewed. This meant that some investigations weren't thorough. It is good practice to use a structured investigation plan, but these were completed properly in only 43 of 63 applicable cases reviewed. Investigation plans add transparency, ensure opportunities aren't overlooked and determine any support necessary to progress an investigation quickly. This increases the likelihood of perpetrators being identified and victims not being let down.

Both investigators and supervisors knew the value of structured investigations. But supervisors acknowledged they are struggling to raise standards and improve the timeliness of their team's work due to high caseloads per officer. This has been aggravated by high numbers of inexperienced investigators, added complexity to case file preparation and slow examinations of mobile phones.

The force should ensure that where a victim has decided to withdraw support for police action, this is recorded in an auditable record that includes the reason for the decision

When a suspect has been identified but there are evidential difficulties and the victim doesn't support, or withdraws their support for, police action (outcome 16), an auditable record endorsed by the victim should be held confirming their decision. An auditable record of the victims' wishes wasn't present in any of the 20 relevant cases we reviewed. Our fieldwork identified that in most cases investigators would record a limited rationale on crime reports, but this wasn't easily found. There is a risk that victims' wishes may not be fully represented and considered before the investigation is closed. The force and criminal justice partners may also not understand why and at what point victims don't wish to support prosecutions. This means opportunities for improvements may be missed.

The force needs to implement appropriate governance and monitoring processes to make sure that the outcomes used are appropriate and comply with force and national policies

When a crime is finalised, the force should make sure it follows national guidance and rules for deciding the outcome type it will assign to that report of crime. In deciding the outcome type, the force should consider the nature of the crime, the offender and the victim. These decisions should be supported and overseen by leaders throughout the force. In 10 of the 20 cases we reviewed, where no suspect had been identified and the investigation was closed (outcome 18), there was no record that the victim had been informed of the decision to close the investigation. This means they may not know the reasons for its closure or be able to ask for a review of the decision.

When a suspect has been identified and the victim supports police action, but evidential difficulties prevent further action (outcome 15), the victim should also be informed of the decision to close the investigation. This occurred in 17 of 20 cases, but in 5 out of 20 cases the outcome had been incorrectly applied. We also identified that there were significant delays in finalising crimes in the crime standards unit. It is important that the force has a proper understanding of which cases fail and why. If nationally standardised outcomes and finalisation of cases aren't completed accurately and promptly, the force will find it harder to identify themes and target improvement activity.

Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to how well the force investigates crime.

The force has governance processes in place to monitor performance and encourage improvement

The force has comprehensive governance processes, and force and area-level meetings are held to consider performance and investigative standards.

Regular audits and reviews with detailed analysis of data investigate possible reasons for underperformance. Where good practice has led to better performance, this is shared across the force. Generally, investigations are allocated to those with the right skills and training. Clear aims and objectives are supported through the development of an online 'investigation academy', investigation standard templates and regular communications. These steps will lead to victims getting better outcomes.

However, some of these improvements aren't yet understood by everyone, and the force's ambition to raise standards can be hampered by the current capability and capacity of its investigators.

The force is developing an understanding of the investigative demand it faces, and the resources it needs to meet that demand effectively

To support investigators and understand the impact of their workloads, the force has used demand modelling software and completed analysis of workloads to determine the time it takes to complete an investigation. A workforce dashboard records such things as total crime numbers and officers' workloads. But the force can't always match investigators with demand. This is due to shortages of investigators and the challenges of addressing staff imbalances across a large force area.

The force is addressing the shortage of detectives (which continues to be a national problem) with an investigative resilience action plan. This promotes diverse entry routes, such as the Detective Degree Holder Entry Programme, and attracts transferees from other areas. The force offers investigator bonus payments and there is additional support for those who want to join and become accredited.

To address inconsistencies in the way crimes were being investigated, a review was held of the way the force operates and how its resources are allocated. This has strengthened domestic abuse investigation teams and increased the number of officers in incident resolution centres who can tackle less serious crimes.

These recently implemented changes haven't yet had a discernible effect. The force reports that shortfalls in investigators will largely be filled by spring 2023. But it doesn't yet have all the information it needs to determine whether it will have enough investigators to achieve manageable workloads that result in timely and high-quality investigations.

The force understands victims' needs and is proactive in pursuing justice, but should always keep victims updated during investigations

Under the [Code of Practice for Victims of Crime](#) there are certain requirements – which investigators were mostly meeting – that provide support to victims during an investigation and subsequent court process. These included conducting and recording a needs assessment at an early stage to determine whether victims need additional support, and taking victim personal statements, which give victims the opportunity to describe how the crime has affected their lives.

In six of eight cases we reviewed where the victim withdrew support for an investigation, the force considered a prosecution without the victim's support. In cases where coercive and controlling suspects may influence victims' decisions, this is an important way of safeguarding the victim and preventing further offences being committed. It was also evident that investigators understood the need for ongoing safeguarding, and there was appropriate referral and liaison with other relevant organisations to ensure ongoing support.

However, our victim service assessment identified that in 7 of 45 cases reviewed, victims weren't updated as they should be throughout the investigations. And during our fieldwork we found there were inconsistent practices. Some investigators reported that they regularly updated victims, but may not record this as well as they should.

The force has provided extra training to help officers with case file preparation, but should have done this sooner

Changes in national guidance have put more demands on investigators when considering what information needs to be disclosed during the preparation of case files. This had resulted in a loss of file quality and longer preparation time. But the force has put practical supportive measures in place by providing additional training, developing a case file building application, and using additional staff to support [disclosure](#) obligations. However, the force should have anticipated and acted on the consequences of these changes sooner. There are already delays to court cases being heard, so lessening the impact of delays by improving the preparation of files will help maintain confidence in the criminal justice system.

Delays in examining digital devices slow investigations down

In 2019, we identified that the force needed to be more efficient at retrieving digital evidence from mobile phones, computers and other electronic devices to make sure investigations aren't delayed. This is an area of constant growth in policing as the capacity for devices to store data increases. However, in our 2022 inspection we found that despite the force's efforts the position hadn't yet improved. The force continues to work closely with the team that examines digital devices, with a view to meeting service level agreements, but this isn't being achieved.

The force has a plan to improve services to victims through better transportation processes and additional funding. More training is also being given to officers, so that device interrogations are proportional and necessary. Funding has been agreed for hardware that allows mobile triage of devices, as well as for new equipment which will allow more officers to examine a range of digital devices in shorter time frames. This will relieve pressure on existing services. This is welcome as currently investigations can be delayed, and this can affect decisions about suspects who are subject to [bail](#) or [released under investigation \(RIU\)](#).

Protecting vulnerable people

Adequate

Devon and Cornwall Police is adequate at [protecting vulnerable people](#).

Areas for improvement

The force should ensure there is overarching governance and effective review of all vulnerability risk assessment processes. This should include effective monitoring of the domestic violence and [child sex offender disclosure schemes](#)

The force uses several different risk assessment forms and processes for officers and staff to record their concerns about vulnerable people. The forms are reviewed, and, where required, referrals are made to other appropriate organisations and support services. However, the current processes mean there is no overarching governance, assessment or understanding of all the risks being managed. We found that some risk assessment reviews were being duplicated and there was a lack of consistency and co-ordination in the quality assurance and sharing of information.

The force is currently integrating a new record management system which will use a single risk assessment form that covers all five groups of vulnerable people. The force recognises the opportunities this presents and is exploring the benefits of a central referral hub where all aspects of safeguarding can be considered. Proposals were first put forward two years ago, but they haven't been taken further due to the prioritisation of other projects and the anticipated implementation of the new ICT system. If a central referral hub is implemented, it will lead to stronger and more effective relationships with other safeguarding agencies.

A key element of safeguarding vulnerable people is the use of the [domestic violence disclosure scheme](#) and the [child sex offender disclosure scheme, which the force uses](#).

But there can be delays in processing applications, with some members of the public being notified of potential risks later than they should be. We found that while Devon and Cornwall Police has strategic oversight of its use of some preventative orders, the management of the domestic violence disclosure scheme and the child sex offender disclosure scheme was inconsistent across the force area. The force wasn't able to tell us how long it takes to give relevant people the information required under these schemes.

Improved governance and recording will help the force understand how well and how promptly these schemes are being used to safeguard vulnerable people.

The force should work with partners to improve multi-agency safeguarding services for adults at risk

The force has effective [multi-agency safeguarding hubs](#) (MASH) for children at risk, but similar arrangements for adults aren't as well developed. There are no co-located hubs in the same way as there are for children. While the force has helped in the development of a virtual MASH in Cornwall to aid the sharing of information, there are no similar arrangements in the other three MASH areas. This can affect the way information sharing, joint decision-making and co-ordinated intervention is carried out. For example, the force doesn't have multi-agency arrangements for all types of stalking and harassment cases, and it isn't always easy for domestic abuse specialists to share safeguarding referrals in a consistent way.

The force has an adult at risk safeguarding plan. This focuses on improving services and has identified the benefits of integrated and consistent provision of services. Actions are being taken to develop adult MASH arrangements, but the force hasn't yet been able to evaluate practices in Cornwall or work with partners to explore opportunities for co-location.

We have also identified that attendance by some safeguarding partners at [multi-agency risk assessment conferences \(MARACs\)](#) for high-risk victims of domestic abuse is lower than it could be. We also identified that in Devon referrals are almost entirely from police rather than other relevant agencies, although the police encourage other safeguarding agencies to increase their referrals. In the year ending 31 March 2022, the force discussed 2,366 cases at MARACs, less than the recommended number based on the force's population (2,890). It was also reported that many of the cases of domestic abuse that MARACs were reviewing involved repeat victims. To increase its chances of reducing the number of these cases, the force would benefit from a more developed understanding of which interventions are effective in protecting victims of domestic abuse and whether all the MARACs are equally effective in achieving their purpose. We have previously reported on the benefits of multi-agency working to increase the effectiveness of safeguarding adults. We encourage the force to continue to explore ways of doing this.

Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to how well the force protects vulnerable people.

The force understands all types of vulnerability and has governance in place to ensure effective plans can be developed to protect vulnerable people

The force has a clear focus on protecting vulnerable people. It has a vulnerability reduction strategy and a governance and performance framework. Leaders are appointed for all the 14 strands of vulnerability. They are supported by analysts and a specialist strategic safeguarding team that allows the force to understand the nature and scale of vulnerability. Their activities are aligned with the National Vulnerability Action Plan and the [National Policing Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme](#) where best practice is being identified and shared. There are good examples of the force working locally with other relevant organisations to improve services in the areas of mental health, missing and exploited children, and sexual violence.

The force prioritises the prevention of violence against women and girls, developing an action plan incorporating the views of advisory groups. It has recently introduced dedicated domestic abuse investigation teams and is piloting a new national approach to the investigation of rape and complex offences (Operation Gemstone). A focus on making public places safer for women and girls is evident through initiatives like Operation Vigilant, which involves proactive disruption activities alongside the [Enough](#) media campaign, and the force's work with licensing partners in pubs and clubs with schemes such as [Best Bar None](#).

The force collects feedback to improve services to vulnerable people

The force has several ways to determine how well it is providing services to victims. It conducts regular surveys, audits and reviews. It has forums and scrutiny panels to establish needs and share best practice. These include panels for mental health, modern slavery and human trafficking, [rape and serious sexual offences](#), and hate crime. The views of victims are considered, and changes made. For example, more appropriate language was adopted when helping transgender victims of hate crime.

The force's strategic safeguarding improvement hub has been working with a national knowledge and practice programme to further develop a consistent way of capturing the victim's journey and voice. Training is underway for officers to ensure they gather the views of children as part of a new risk assessment process. Recommendations from domestic homicide and other statutory reviews are put in place and monitored by a team that also evaluates initiatives such as Operation Gemstone. These different approaches help the force to understand where, and how, they need to improve services. But the force should enhance this understanding by effectively capturing and understanding the reasons why any victims of crime disengage from the criminal justice process.

The force recognises the need for effective and ongoing safeguarding of vulnerable victims

We found that frontline officers generally had a good understanding of safeguarding needs. The completion of risk assessment forms for those who may need ongoing help and support from the police and other services was consistently understood. Between 1 January and 31 March 2022, the force completed, on average, one risk assessment form for every domestic abuse related incident. Officers we spoke with knew about the harm that others may experience, and their knowledge has improved through vulnerability focused training.

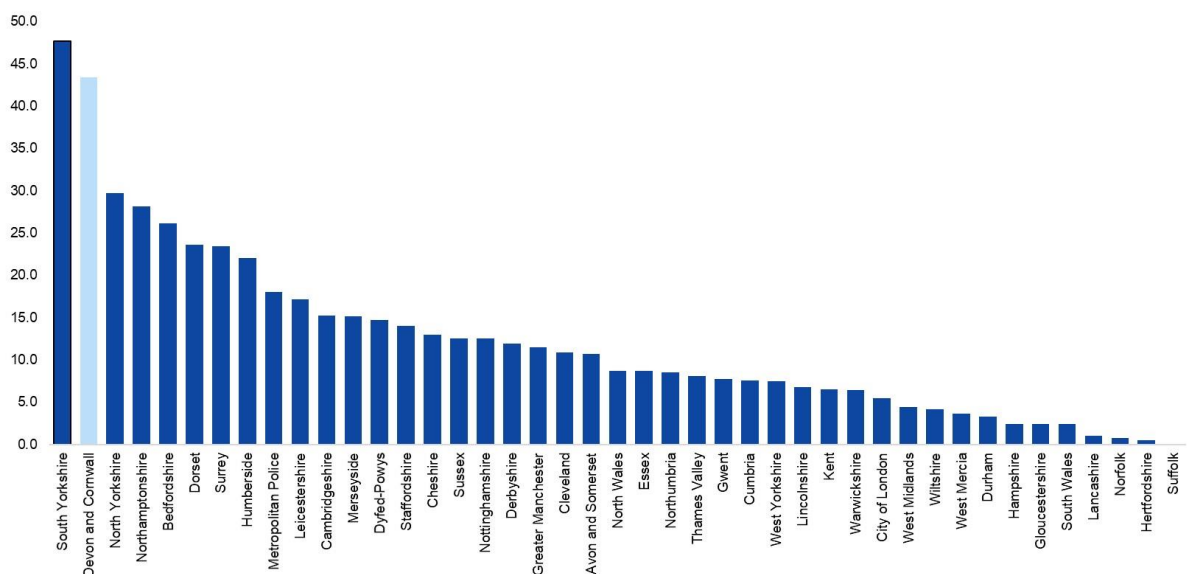
The force uses specialist domestic abuse officers to support victims and has a well-established scheme to notify schools of risks to children. Mental health services and local authorities who work with local policing teams were positive about the way the force responded to the needs of vulnerable people. For example, child exploitation is subject to strategic and local oversight by the police. The force conducts operations to identify and safeguard those exploited by drug dealers, and multi-agency child exploitation meetings are used to provide ongoing support.

Specialist problem solvers also focus on those with complex needs. They have developed a scheme called ‘mind the gap’ which ensures vulnerable adults and young women who are exhibiting risky behaviours, experience mental health problems, or are victimised, can access support services from all appropriate agencies. We also found that custody suites have well-established [liaison and diversion](#) schemes where colleagues from mental health services and drugs and alcohol teams offer signposting and support. When needed, detainees are referred to mandatory drug and alcohol treatment programmes. Efforts to break the cycle of low-level offending, and being offended against, through sustainable safeguarding and support mean frontline officers will have greater opportunities to focus on other crimes.

The force is making use of powers to protect domestic abuse victims from offenders

While it is recognised that all forces are missing opportunities to obtain [domestic violence protection orders \(DVPOs\)](#), our inspection of Devon and Cornwall Police identified that there was a well-developed understanding and relatively effective use of these orders. In the year ending 31 March 2022, the force applied for 43.4 DVPOs per 1,000 recorded domestic abuse related crimes. This was the second highest rate of all forces in England and Wales. The force has employed vulnerability lawyers who train officers to use these powers, and officers reported that it was now a straightforward process to obtain a DVPO. During our fieldwork we were encouraged to find that there was a thorough understanding and commitment to their use. Processes are in place to ensure that addresses are monitored, and breaches of orders prioritised and addressed. Further regard for the safeguarding of victims is illustrated by the force offering to pilot the use of new [domestic abuse prevention orders](#), and an emphasis on using bail conditions for high-harm suspects, such as perpetrators of domestic abuse.

Figure 4: DVPO applications per 1,000 recorded domestic abuse related crimes across forces in England and Wales in the year ending 31 March 2022



The force is prioritising the needs of vulnerable victims

Some investigators in public protection roles are carrying high caseloads but we found the force prioritised the needs of vulnerable victims, with some notable investigative outcomes and resourcing that was generally appropriate. The force has well-developed multi-agency partnership arrangements to address the safeguarding needs of vulnerable children. When officers and staff record their concerns about vulnerable people these are researched, and referrals are promptly made to support services and other relevant organisations where required. There have been occasional backlogs caused by failing ICT systems, but the force acts quickly to mitigate any risks. Dedicated decision-makers attend all strategy meetings, where decisions are jointly made to ensure children are protected, and we found no delays in any processes.

The force supports officers and staff involved in the protection of vulnerable people

Officers and staff who investigate cases like child abuse can access support through a comprehensive and well-developed alliance-wide (Dorset, Devon and Cornwall) well-being strategy. Because of the regular trauma investigators see, they are also given mandatory psychological screening and other services like counselling. Regular meetings with supervisors consider their well-being needs. The force was an early advocate of having a domestic abuse workplace policy to ensure that if any cases were reported there would be appropriate support in place and those coming forward would feel safe doing so. They received recognition from a charity that leads on this work.

Managing offenders and suspects

Inadequate

Devon and Cornwall Police is inadequate at managing offenders and suspects.

Cause of concern

The force should put appropriate measures in place to ensure sex offenders are managed effectively and in line with national guidance.

Recommendations

Within three months, Devon and Cornwall Police should:

- make sure all visits are conducted within appropriate time frames in accordance with national guidelines and [Authorised Professional Practice \(APP\)](#);
- make sure all risk assessments and management plans are completed within appropriate time frames and are effectively supervised; and
- make sure all breaches of Sex Offender [Notification Requirements](#) are recorded as crimes.

All registered sex offenders must be managed by police forces. Devon and Cornwall Police has [management of sexual offenders and violent offenders](#) teams, with members from other organisations such as probation, who are responsible for assessing, reviewing and managing the risks posed. They use a nationally used [active risk management system \(ARMS\)](#) designed to effectively manage convicted sex offenders who reside in the community. Police officers make home visits to satisfy themselves there are no escalating risks and, in some cases, can examine digital devices and use monitoring software. This allows the force to understand the level of risk posed by sex offenders in their local areas, whether they are in breach of any orders and whether any action needs to be taken to manage the risk.

During our inspection we found several areas that caused us concern. The force told us that as of 29 July 2022:

- There were 202 cases where risk assessments hadn't yet been completed.
- There were 328 overdue ARMS and risk management plan supervisory reviews.
- There were 446 overdue visits. Of these, 184 hadn't received visits in the last 12 months.
- Breaches of orders were not always being recorded as crimes.

The force had identified in strategic planning documents that there was a risk posed in the way offenders were being managed, but there had been insufficient timely strategic intervention to address these concerns. Local performance measures weren't sufficiently structured or robust enough to monitor overdue home visits and risk assessments. In addition, first- and second-line supervision lacked resilience and consistency. For example, the force doesn't routinely monitor how old the oldest ARMS assessments are, or the associated levels of risk. While supervisors can view any overdue work on the [Violent and Sex Offender Register](#) records management system, workloads are so high that supervisors can't effectively check the quality and timeliness of risk assessments and contact with sex offenders.

Offender managers had too many cases per officer to allow them to do their work in a thorough or timely way. This means that sometimes visits are conducted by officers on their own, which not only increases risks to them but can reduce their ability to complete monitoring checks and examinations of devices more effectively. Competing demands for resources in other areas of vulnerability have meant that requests for more resources haven't been successful.

Not all breaches of sex offender notification requirements are being correctly recorded as crimes. Officers told us that recording this as a crime was instead discretionary. Notification requirements include, for example, that a registered sex offender must notify police about a change of name or foreign travel.

The force has acted quickly on our findings, introducing short-term additional measures such as temporary additional resource and overtime to reduce the backlogs. It has made considerable progress in a short space of time. For example, the force told us that by 7 October 2022, overdue visits had been reduced to 260, with 61 over 12 months old, and agreement has been reached to invest in more supervisors and staff. But we remain concerned that this additional resource won't be in place quickly enough to maintain this progress, and continued use of overtime is unsustainable. In addition, although the force recognises the need to find more sustainable solutions to reduce the risks posed by offenders, plans are still in development. The force can't be sure how its teams will operate in the future and whether they will be able to conduct visits in a sustainable and timely way in this high-risk area of work.

Area for improvement

The force should work with its local authority partners to agree protocols for information sharing so children at risk of abuse can be safeguarded while enabling police to carry out enforcement activity without the risk of evidence being lost

When officers have information that a person may be viewing or sharing indecent images of children, they will take enforcement action. They may arrest and search individuals and premises for evidence. Once they identify potential offences it is important that the risks to any children in the household are considered with other safeguarding organisations and mitigated where necessary. If this isn't done in a co-ordinated way, partners may choose to intervene before enforcement activity takes place, which frustrates the purpose of that activity. Currently, officers don't routinely make any notifications until enforcement activity takes place.

This reduces the opportunity for multi-agency working, information sharing and determining those cases where children may be at higher risk quickly enough. The emphasis should be on safeguarding children in the first instance.

A national forum has identified this as a risk for other forces too. Devon and Cornwall Police has been seeking to resolve this with local authority partners for some time. It has recently agreed a pilot scheme with Torbay Council but has yet to implement this or come to an agreement on a satisfactory approach with the other local authorities in the force area. Until this issue is resolved, there is a risk that further offences may occur, and enforcement activity may not be as effective as it could be.

Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to how well the force manages offenders and suspects.

A rise in online sexual offending cases has made it difficult for the force to manage all such cases effectively

The force must investigate increasingly high numbers of cases of indecent images of children and other online offending. It is proactive in searching premises, and routinely makes effective use of support officers and a dog trained to find hidden devices, known as a 'Digi dog'. Support and signposting are also available for suspects and their families because of investigative action. This provides enhanced opportunities for thorough searches, increases evidence gathering opportunities and means the needs of potentially vulnerable suspects can be addressed.

Specialist teams are used for this work, but they only have the capacity to deal with high-priority cases. Medium and low-risk cases are allocated to public protection and investigative teams. When case numbers are high the force uses 'surge' operations using additional resources and money to manage the numbers of searches and enforcement activity that is required. The specialist team monitor which cases are allocated to other departments, but we found that oversight of these cases can vary. In the year ending 31 March 2022, the force recorded 909 obscene publications offences (indecent images of children). This is a similar number to the previous year. However, 529 (58 percent) of these offences haven't yet been assigned an outcome.

The force is currently reviewing all the cases and will include this data in performance meetings so it can reassure itself there is a timely response. Doing this will mean ongoing risks presented by those who are or could be engaged in the abuse of children will be reduced.

The force uses sexual harm prevention orders and investigates any breaches effectively

We found that the teams that investigate and manage the most dangerous offenders are applying for [sexual harm prevention orders](#) in all eligible cases and are being well supported in doing so by specialist lawyers. The force takes a proactive approach to identifying breaches of these orders and makes effective use of equipment to do so. It has also invested in software to monitor some registered offenders' activities.

Restrictions and prohibitions can be tailored to the sexual harm prevention orders as considered necessary for the purposes of either protecting the public from sexual harm or protecting children or vulnerable adults generally. However, offender managers should be consulted before these orders are applied for, to ensure that orders are tailored appropriately as far as possible and are suitable for protecting others.

The force pursues outstanding suspects and wanted persons effectively to protect the public from harm

In our inspection in 2019, we identified that the force needs to improve its approach to outstanding suspects and the management of wanted persons. In the 2022 inspection, we found that the force is prioritising and monitoring outstanding suspects. The force ensures there is a greater focus in these areas as part of an investigative improvement plan. Strategic oversight, use of a suspect management team and internal reviews mean leaders and supervisors stay informed. The force holds them responsible for making sure their officers know who those suspects are, and that they act against them.

High-harm offenders are prioritised; the intelligence department helps officers identify and find these offenders. Suspects the force considers are high priority are discussed at daily management meetings, where leaders determine if they will need any extra resources to find them. The force had handover arrangements in place to keep the pressure on until suspects had been caught. Officers can access a 'fugitive management' database. This process has been specifically designed to define all outstanding and wanted suspects by geographical area, risk, and length of time they have been outstanding.

Our victim service assessment found that the force arrested suspects at the earliest opportunity in 25 of 27 cases we reviewed. Our workplace testing identified that there is an emphasis on early and continued action, with well-understood processes to circulate suspects on the national database. However, the number of outstanding named suspects who haven't been circulated on the [Police National Computer](#) has increased over the past year, from 3,323 as of 31 March 2021 to 4,357 as of 31 March 2022. There have also been increases in the length of time it takes to apprehend those circulated as wanted. A continued emphasis on proactive approaches, monitoring and support for officers will reduce the risks of further offending and make sure investigations can be handled more quickly.

The use of pre-charge bail and released under investigation is subject to effective governance and support

In response to our 2019 inspection findings, the force developed ways to ensure that bail is being used appropriately, particularly with suspects who present a risk of harm to others. There is a clear expectation that these powers will be considered and used appropriately, and their use monitored. When required, bail extensions are applied for, and supportive leaders help with this. During our inspection we found the need for bail to safeguard and support vulnerable victims was understood, used by frontline teams and subject to supervision.

When bail conditions aren't required, suspects are RUI. Again, the force has made improvements, with suspects who are RUI being subject to proper oversight and monitoring. The force introduced a dedicated team who review whether RUI is being used appropriately. An IT application also provides details on the number of cases subject to RUI, timeliness and whether they have been reviewed by managers.

The force has given its officers extra training on when and how to use bail and RUI through its online Investigation Academy videos and guidance. This guidance is being applied by frontline staff and is subject to supervision. The force monitors compliance with expected standards at performance meetings. A continued emphasis at these forums will mean that victims are appropriately safeguarded, and cases can be moved forward more quickly.

The force has an effective integrated offender management programme

The force has an [integrated offender management \(IOM\)](#) programme, aligned with national principles, for offenders who pose the greatest threat, risk and harm. We found a clear focus on this, and strong partnerships with other relevant bodies working towards the rehabilitation of offenders. Some of these bodies share premises with police, which makes it easier for them to co-operate to achieve their shared goals.

Working with partners such as drug and alcohol abuse, probation, social and education services, the force developed a clear profile of repeat offenders, those most needing management to prevent reoffending, and those who should be considered for inclusion in the programme.

Once offenders were accepted onto the programme, IOM teams identified opportunities for early intervention, used behavioural change specialists, and made use of [out-of-court disposals](#) conditional on certain behaviour – all measures designed to prevent a cycle of reoffending.

Monitoring processes are used to score and manage offenders while they are on the programme. This information is used to decide which measures to reduce crime and offending should be used for each offender. Examples include focusing on substance misuse issues, lack of accommodation, or family and relationship instability, which may lead to further offending.

The force uses software to track the progress of offenders over time which details these risk factors, which interventions have been applied to reduce them, and whether they are having the desired effect. The force should develop this further to understand whether there are any racial or other disparities in its outcomes. There has been some evaluation of specific projects, but the force should try to gain a broader understanding of how effective these schemes are. This will help determine the costs and benefits and help to inform future allocation of resources.

The IOM teams share intelligence on offenders with community policing teams at performance meetings and through briefing systems to ensure enforcement activity takes place when required. This encourages intelligence gathering and early arrest of those not complying with requirements.

Disrupting serious organised crime

We now inspect [serious and organised crime \(SOC\)](#) on a regional basis, rather than inspecting each force individually in this area. This is so we can be more effective and efficient in how we inspect the whole SOC system, as set out in HM Government's SOC strategy.

SOC is tackled by each force working with [regional organised crime units \(ROCU\)](#)s. These units lead the regional response to SOC by providing access to specialist resources and assets to disrupt [organised crime groups](#) that pose the highest harm.

Through our new inspections we seek to understand how well forces and ROCUs work in partnership. As a result, we now inspect ROCUs and their forces together and report on regional performance. Forces and ROCUs are now graded and reported on in regional SOC reports.

Our SOC inspection of Devon and Cornwall Police hasn't yet been completed. We will update our website with our findings (including the force's grade) and a link to the regional report once the inspection is complete.

Building, supporting and protecting the workforce

Good

Devon and Cornwall Police is good at building and developing its workforce.

Innovative practice

The force uses innovative methods to support its workforce, such as Surfwell and Wellfest

Wellfest is a virtual well-being festival that was developed during the pandemic. Due to positive feedback and identified benefits it has continued to take place over subsequent years. Officers, staff and volunteers are encouraged to sign up to a wide variety of online workshops, fitness classes and training events. Many of these are led by external experts and focus on well-being resilience, and maintaining and improving physical and mental health.

The Surfwell programme has been recognised internationally as groundbreaking. It is a peer-support based scheme that uses mental health trained officers to help any staff and officers experiencing poor mental health. It supports them to remain in or return to the workplace. The surfing activities use action-centred therapy. This initiative has been extended to other emergency services staff, which helps to fund it and makes it sustainable for future events. Surfwell has won awards, and evaluation shows it has been overwhelmingly positive for participants.

Supporting staff in this way shows them the force values its people. It also increases the likelihood of maintaining an efficient, healthy and resilient organisation.

Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to how well the force builds and develops its workforce.

The force has an ethical culture and environment where the workforce understands what is expected of it, the force is reflective and the public are treated fairly

The force promotes a culture where the [Code of Ethics](#) is well accepted by the workforce and they understand the standards expected of them. Robust action is taken when required, with the outcomes of misconduct cases shared internally and externally. Leaders promote acceptable standards of behaviour and show this through reflective practices. The force holds regular forums that promote ethical behaviour, with members of the community invited to challenge ideas and share their perspectives. The forums include equality, diversity and human rights meetings, and a range of local scrutiny and advisory groups.

The force has shown its determination to make sure that everyone understands and demonstrates positive behaviours by providing leaders with three-day training workshops that consider cultural awareness and inclusion. It has also signed up to a 'duty of candour' charter that encourages transparent communication with communities that may have been adversely affected by operational policing decisions. Ethical behaviour is reinforced by training on [unconscious bias](#), abuse of power and 'bystander' awareness. Members of the workforce we spoke with were well informed about the type of inappropriate behaviour that had been reported on both nationally and locally, and felt confident to raise concerns. This shows a commitment to improvement through learning and promoting positive behaviour.

The force promotes an inclusive culture so that everyone in the organisation feels included

Nearly everyone in the workforce we spoke to believed the force is an inclusive and good place to work. In 2020, the force determined that it needed to move forward with cultural changes and began work to ensure that all members behave in an ethical and inclusive way at all times. It invited all officers and staff to learn about the findings from a cultural audit, and where it has identified unfairness it has taken action to support those that may be adversely affected.

An equality, diversity and inclusion lead promotes listening groups and the use of equality, diversity and inclusion champions. The force's [ethics committee](#) is open to all, and we saw examples of junior officers being supported to talk about ethical dilemmas they faced at work, and the committee shared the discussion points and any learning with the workforce.

The force promotes the use of many support networks, including:

- for people from ethnic minority backgrounds;
- for people who identify as LGBTQ+;
- for people who have disabilities, mental health conditions or dyslexia;
- for women through an Inspire network, menopause and domestic abuse forums; and
- a men's health forum.

Initiatives such as inclusion passports make managers aware of less obvious disabilities and adjustment needs, and mental health training for managers has encouraged them to adopt a trauma-informed approach to people's needs.

An Altogether Better campaign has raised awareness of workforce diversity. It included initiatives which encourage the workforce to submit details about protected characteristics. Encouraging staff to do this gives the force a better profile of its workforce. This helps it understand where and in what roles people are working, and if it is treating all people fairly, and shows its commitment to inclusivity. These efforts have been strengthened by the introduction of an e-recruitment system where more consistent trackable details are recorded.

The force understands the well-being of its officers and staff, and it uses this information to develop effective plans for improving workforce well-being

The force has a well-informed understanding of the workforce's well-being because it has a comprehensive well-being plan overseen by a [chief officer](#) and supportive leaders. These leaders know their workforce and how to access support for them. They use staff surveys, focus groups, exit interviews and regular feedback from staff associations and support groups (who report positive relationships with leaders) to make decisions at their strategic meetings. The force has workforce and well-being dashboards that draw on a range of data, including:

- resourcing in different departments;
- progress with recruitment streams;
- types and lengths of sickness absence;
- how well support services are being used;
- gender; and
- other [protected characteristic](#) representation.

This helps the force determine any risks to the well-being of its workforce and to expose any workplace disparities. The information is accessible to strategic and operational groups that the force has set up to address these issues. This will promote a resilient and valued workforce and encourage others to join.

The force has a good range of preventative and supportive measures in place to improve well-being

The staff we spoke to felt well supported, knew about workforce well-being arrangements and were comfortable about raising concerns and accessing these services. We found there were extensive measures in place which considered prevention, early intervention and resilience. One such measure is the force's employee assistance programme, which ensures officers and staff receive the right referrals, and that interventions such as counselling, physiotherapy or mental health resilience support are in place.

We also found creative approaches, including neurodiversity support, parenting workshops, online cafes, and a well-being self-service app that tracks and advises on health-promoting behaviours. Importantly, the force evaluates approaches to maintain the well-being of its workforce and aligns its methods to the national police well-being programme. This means it is actively assessing and promoting interventions that are most effective.

Leaders and supervisors are supportive of their officers and staff

During our inspection we found many examples of supportive leadership. Officers and staff have regular contact with their supervisors. This contact time is used to consider ways to manage high workloads and to make sure staff access relevant well-being support. Members of the workforce we spoke to were complimentary about the support they had received to overcome personal challenges.

Leaders are committed to improving the well-being of their workforce. Most senior leaders were approachable and visible. They take part in question-and-answer sessions, and representatives from staff associations can reach them easily. We found that the force has introduced many initiatives to support the workforce and make changes if concerns are raised. Examples of this include:

- mental health training for supervisors;
- neurodiversity peer support;
- protected learning time for student officers;
- a nine-point plan to ensure assaulted officers' needs are addressed;
- enhanced peer support for those reporting misconduct or being investigated; and
- flexible working arrangements.

Supervisors are aware of their well-being responsibilities. They have been trained to recognise signs of poor health and they understand their role in supporting their staff. For those in high-risk roles, this includes regular mandatory health screening and access to counselling. One leader managing a child abuse team had created a 'going home' checklist for his team to help them maintain perspective on the day's events. This included signposting and links to a variety of well-being support services.

High workloads have an adverse impact on investigators

Leaders have worked hard to support investigators with complex cases. Additional resources and training have been provided to reduce workloads and make case preparation easier. The force has recognised that well-being measures alone aren't always enough when officers are faced with high workloads. However, the force should have done more sooner as not all officers were aware of or had benefited from this support, and we found that in some areas workloads were still exceptionally high. By promptly addressing the challenges members of the workforce face, leaders show a commitment to improving well-being.

The force understands its recruitment needs

The strategic alliance between Devon and Cornwall Police and Dorset Police has a well-developed people strategy. This includes a five-year recruitment schedule with progress monitored through the strategic people's board. The board considers matters such as recruitment, promotion, talent management, workforce representation and retention.

A workforce capability dashboard gives an up-to-date overview of recruitment and helps recognise risk. This is important as the workforce has been stretched in some departments. To alleviate this, the force has maximised opportunities to recruit officers through the national police uplift programme and considers a wide variety of potential employee pools including 'rejoiners' and transferees. It encourages recruitment through many pathways, in particular with [direct entry schemes](#) (assessed by the College of Policing as meeting national standards) and by making progress with plans to increase the number of detectives and contact management staff.

The force continues to take action to build its workforce to reflect its communities

The recruitment plan incorporates actions to improve diversity in policing. The force has introduced a candidate tracking system. This will help it better understand why some candidates from an ethnic minority background or those with protected characteristics withdraw from the recruitment process. The force speaks to candidates who leave or withdraw their application so it can find out and address the reasons. A [positive action](#) support programme is available to potential recruits and those seeking promotion. The work of the positive action team underpins this approach. This team is overseen by a positive action leadership group and force representation at the national Positive Action Practitioners' Alliance.

The chief constable and senior leaders oversee the force's equality, diversity and inclusion plan. This helps the force improve its understanding of the factors that influence recruitment and retention. As at 31 March 2022, 1.9 percent of officers were from an ethnic minority background against a local population of 2.5 percent from an ethnic minority background. The number of police officers from an ethnic minority background has been increasing every year for the last four years and the latest data on joiners (year ending 31 March 2022) shows that 2.3 percent of joiners were from an ethnic minority background. If this trend continues, the workforce will become more diverse over time.

The force has invested in training for its workforce, but it could strengthen the link between appraisals and development

We found that the force has training plans that are relevant to all roles and help with their professional development. But there are times when those in high-demand roles find it difficult to complete their training. This can lead to a loss of confidence, and services to the public can be affected.

The force develops leaders through measures that include talent management, external leadership training and leadership skills audits. Leaders consider wider professional development, including succession planning, at a training planning board.

Leaders and supervisors hold one-to-one meetings with staff. But the force could take more opportunities to understand and act on learning and development needs during annual professional development reviews. Some members of the workforce we spoke to thought that the reviews had limited value and didn't influence their development. Reasserting the importance of this link between performance and development will help the force to identify those with the most potential.

Vetting and counter corruption

We now inspect how forces deal with vetting and counter corruption differently. This is so we can be more effective and efficient in how we inspect this high-risk area of police business.

Corruption in forces is tackled by specialist units, designed to proactively target corruption threats. Police corruption is corrosive and poses a significant risk to public trust and confidence. There is a national expectation of standards and how they should use specialist resources and assets to target and arrest those that pose the highest threat.

Through our new inspections, we seek to understand how well forces apply these standards. As a result, we now inspect forces and report on national risks and performance in this area. We now grade and report on forces' performance separately.

Devon and Cornwall Police's vetting and counter corruption inspection hasn't yet been completed. We will update our website with our findings and the separate report once the inspection is complete.

Strategic planning, organisational management and value for money

Requires improvement

Devon and Cornwall Police requires improvement at operating efficiently.

Areas for improvement

The force should improve the way it manages current demands on its services

The force analyses its demand across different policing areas and is developing its understanding of all sources of demand through some modelling and information from partners. In 2022, the force reviewed its operating model to better meet and respond to current demands. This has helped decision-making on resource deployment and the number of officers it needs. Consequently, it has prioritised the areas of domestic abuse, rape, neighbourhood policing and investigations.

The force generally responds appropriately to emergencies and vulnerable people who are most likely to come to harm. It has daily processes in place to ensure the greatest threats are tackled, and can adapt its resources to support this. But the force is unable to manage demand in its control rooms and officers can't always respond to calls within agreed time frames. It is also unable to cope with high numbers of investigations with its available staff as quickly or as well as it should.

Having large numbers of unresolved incidents waiting in control rooms is a risk for the force, as they aren't being distributed or supervised effectively. The force has started to increase capacity and capability in its incident resolution centres to reduce these demands on control room and frontline staff, but this hasn't yet led to discernible improvements.

We have also identified other areas where increases in demands aren't being managed effectively and result in backlogs. Examples include firearms licensing and digital forensic examination. It is important that the force gets a better understanding of the demand it faces and its resources, so that its operating model is properly supported. It should assure itself that it has the right resources in the right place and that they are supported by systems and data to provide effective services in each area identified.

The force should make sure its investment in technology is improving productivity

The force has made good progress in mobile working. There is worthwhile investment in mobile technology and a drive to improve efficiencies through the use of laptops and personal digital devices. It has developed its use of drones, and made use of some innovative apps like 'Good Sam', which provides instant video sharing and evidence uploading, and 'Airbox' which helps with operational planning and data sharing. It also has a suite of applications to explain performance and crime trends, but it should better promote its use by the workforce.

The force should maximise the opportunities that ICT and innovation can bring. The force is upgrading 'end of life' ICT systems where most functions are performed and records are held, but the introduction of a new record management system has been subject to many months of delays. This has meant not all elements of its existing ICT services are fully supported or reliable. There have been several contributing factors relating to suppliers, but plans to share databases with Dorset Police have also added to delays.

This is because Devon and Cornwall Police is rightly reviewing and improving thousands of records where it has identified that the quality of its stored data should have been better. It is positive that the force has committed to this significant task and illustrates its desire to drive efficiencies. However, until this is achieved and maintained, the benefits of information sharing with Dorset Police won't be fully realised and the force won't fully understand if its services are providing value for money or are effective.

Further challenges have been presented by interruptions to ICT upgrades in [force control rooms](#). These have affected call routing software and the integration of a call back service. This has resulted in delayed responses to the public, and has affected proposed resourcing plans intended to remove the pressures on frontline officers and control room staff.

The force has oversight arrangements in place to review the progress of projects and is developing a new ICT strategy in collaboration with Dorset. The force has recognised the importance of closely scrutinising deadline-critical projects. It is strengthening existing arrangements to ensure risks are identified and acted on at the earliest opportunity. The force should assure itself that its new strategy is accompanied by a review of its ICT assets and data to make sure that its investment in ICT is realising all the benefits it has identified, and productivity is improved, supported by effective use of data.

The force should make sure it has a good understanding of capability and capacity and that it makes best use of its resources

The force isn't currently able to respond effectively to threats across all areas. It has prioritised frontline services, but this hasn't yet led to sustainable improvements. Our inspection also identified that overarching governance should be strengthened to identify and respond to threats; for example, with the management and investigation of high-harm offenders, and the provision of safeguarding services.

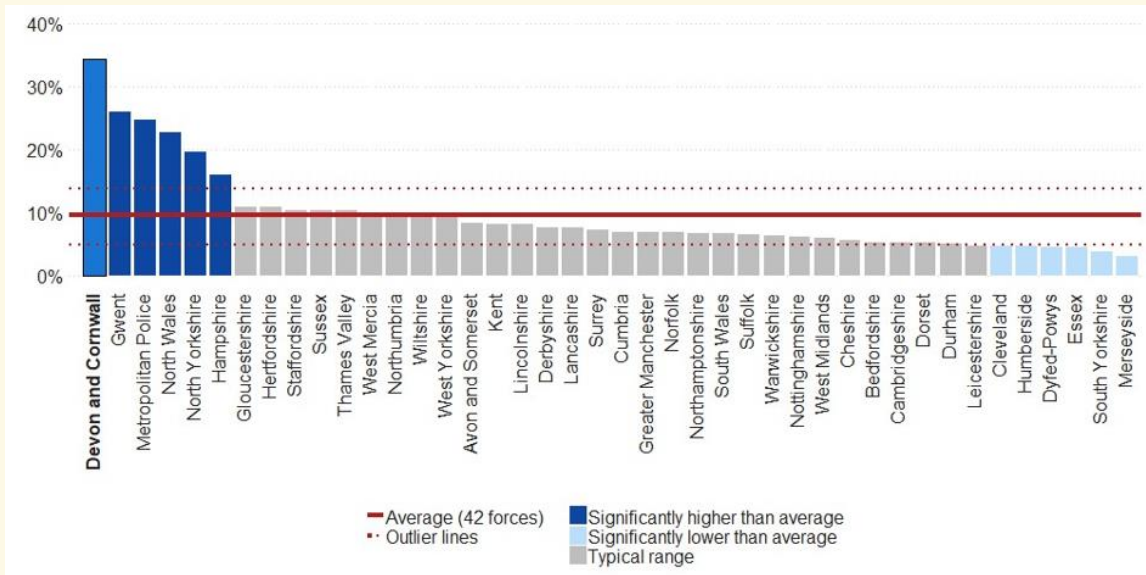
There is a reliance on overtime to manage workforce imbalances and address backlogs. Supervisors are taking on work, and training is being missed due to competing demands or a lack of tutors. This means valuable guidance isn't always available to a young workforce, which may affect the quality of services they provide.

The force should make better use of all the available data to inform its planning, as well as gaining a more detailed understanding of how well all its assets and capabilities are used to provide cost-effective sustainable services in the future. It has recently published estate and sustainability strategies, and acknowledges it needs to improve the use and costs of its buildings, but interdependent ICT and fleet strategies are still in development.

The force must also reassure itself that its crime recording, data quality and crime finalisation processes are accurate and timely. For example, incomplete data prevents the force from gaining a detailed understanding of the status of its investigations and outcomes. This information will help it establish the demands it must meet so that it can provide efficient and effective services to its communities.

In the year ending 31 March 2022, the proportion of crimes not yet assigned an outcome by Devon and Cornwall Police was significantly higher, at 34.4 percent, than the average across England and Wales of 9.6 percent.

Figure 5: Proportion of crimes not yet assigned an outcome across forces in England and Wales in the year ending 31 March 2022



The force should produce an overarching workforce plan, outlining its current capacity and capability and what is required for the future. This should consider all its resources and assets. Detailed future planning will help the force better understand performance, future costs and the implications this may have on resourcing.

Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to how well the force operates efficiently.

The force has a performance framework to make sure it tackles what is important locally and nationally, but should improve overarching governance of all operational areas to identify and respond to threats

The force has developed a corporate mission and vision. This sets out its principal aims and goals for the next two years. There is a good understanding of the needs and expectations of its communities. The force works constructively with the police and crime commissioner to align its activities to the priorities in the Police and Crime Plan. It obtains information from community consultations and through well-developed strategic meetings with local organisations and regular surveys. This means its plans and priorities are supported by relevant information, and they align closely with public expectations.

The force has a clear framework so leaders can oversee and scrutinise investigative performance at force and local levels. This is well supported by detailed analysis of crime trends and information by the performance and analysis department. However, it should strengthen its governance arrangements as increasing demands, and the inability to effectively respond to, or manage, risks identified in all areas means the force hasn't yet translated its vision for world-class sustainable policing into well-run services. The force acknowledges its plans need time to develop to bring about the improvements needed.

The force's financial plans are affordable and will support it to continue to meet future demands

The police and crime commissioner has supported a full £10 increase in precept, which has allowed the force to present a balanced [medium term financial plan](#) over the next four-year period. (This would mean a £10 rise in the part of council tax that is used to fund policing.) The force operates on a budget of £344m but anticipates an underspend of £6m to £7m, which is approximately 2 percent of its net budget. This underspend is attributed to delays in recruitment and services brought about by the impact of COVID-19 and the force hosting the G7 summit. In 2021/22, the force saved £1.85m. Its medium term financial plan would benefit from closer alignment with the force's planning for current and future demand and resource management. The force has invested in resources to develop a more informed picture using data.

The force predicts reserves will fall to £13.4m by the end of 2024/25. The reserves policy for Devon and Cornwall will be looking to maintain general balances at no more than 5 percent and no less than 3 percent of overall funding levels each year, which is prudent.

The force should do more to promote efficiency savings across all areas. It wasn't clear how its investments in its capital programme were linked to the force's strategies for property, fleet and ICT. The force should assure itself that the process for reviewing plans through its joint capital board inform its financial planning effectively. Developing this understanding will allow the force to realise benefits in all areas of investment.

The force collaborates effectively with partner organisations, demonstrably leading to better value for money

The force actively seeks opportunities to improve services through working collaboratively with others. Devon and Cornwall Police works closely with neighbouring Dorset Police to jointly provide several policing services. This alliance is led and managed well. Chief officers from each force meet regularly to oversee arrangements and assess benefits when further opportunities arise. The force also has a prominent role in local and regional collaboration with emergency services where opportunities are explored to share resources and services. Tracking the benefits of shared services more effectively will provide confidence and may encourage further collaboration.

The force collaborates with other forces as part of wider regional planning, for example for forensic services provision and procurement. The Southwest Police Procurement Service (SWPPS) provides a collaborative procurement service for Devon and Cornwall, Dorset, Avon and Somerset, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire. This collaboration was established to provide better planning so that forces could obtain goods and services jointly and get better value for money. For example, the five forces have jointly bought the same system for vetting. Not only did they save money through joint procurement, but as they all use the same system, it has also allowed them to consider a joint vetting unit in the future.

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