

# PEEL 2025–27

## 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 eight areas of policing. We make graded judgments as follows:

Outstanding	Good	Adequate	Requires improvement	Inadequate
		Police powers and public treatment	Leadership and force management	Investigating crime
		Preventing and deterring crime	Developing a diverse and inclusive workforce	Safeguarding children and adults
			Responding to the public	
			Managing fraud	

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.

We also assess the force's performance in a range of other areas, and we report on these separately. We make graded judgments for some of these areas.

## PEEL 2025–2027

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.

We have moved to a more [intelligence](#)-led, continual assessment approach, rather than the annual [PEEL inspections](#) we used in previous years. We assess forces against the [characteristics of good](#) performance, set out in the [PEEL assessment framework 2025–2027](#), and we more clearly link our judgments to [causes of concern](#) and [areas for improvement](#).

It isn't possible to make direct comparisons between the grades awarded in this PEEL inspection and those from the previous cycle of PEEL inspections. This is because we have increased our focus on making sure forces are achieving appropriate outcomes for the public. We have also changed the aspects of policing we inspect and added new areas.

### Terminology in this report

Our reports contain references to, among other things, 'national' definitions, priorities, policies, systems, responsibilities and processes.

In some instances, 'national' means applying to England or Wales, or England and Wales. In others, it means applying to England, Wales and Scotland, or the whole of the United Kingdom.

### About the data

For more information on data and analysis in this report, please [see the 'About the data' section of our website](#).

### HM Inspector's summary

I am satisfied with some aspects of the performance of Devon and Cornwall Police in keeping people safe, reducing crime and providing an effective service to [victims](#). The force has made improvements since our last inspection, particularly in how it responds to calls for service from the public. I am also pleased that it continues to focus on preventing crime, including its approach to managing [antisocial behaviour](#) and offender management. The force has good financial management and understanding. There are still areas of concern, especially regarding investigating crime and the [safeguarding](#) of [vulnerable people](#).

The force has recruited an experienced [chief constable](#) who has contributed positively to the overall direction of the force and provided stability and clarity on what it needs to do to improve overall performance. The force needs to make more improvements to how the wider leadership team promotes cultural change and uses data to inform decision-making.

The force's financial management is strong and provides a solid foundation for operational effectiveness. However, we found gaps in:

- leadership and development;
- the professional development review process;
- one-to-one meetings;
- talent management; and
- the provision and oversight of [continuing professional development](#).

While the force is expanding the training it offers, it must close these gaps to make sure it can sustain the improvements highlighted in this report.

The force continues to prevent and deter crime and antisocial behaviour well. Early intervention and partnership initiatives provide tangible benefits for its communities. The force is committed to improving how it deals with crime and supports vulnerable people. It must make sure that it effectively shares the good work seen in some areas with colleagues.

The force has improved how it responds to calls for service from the public. This includes how quickly it answers emergency calls. Although abandonment rates for non-emergency calls have improved, they are still too high. The force needs to improve how quickly its [officers](#) attend incidents. It also needs to better understand why they don't always attend.

The force's ability to carry out prompt and effective criminal investigations on behalf of victims is still a [cause of concern](#). I do, however, recognise that it has made improvements and that it is taking a sustainable approach to change. The force's audit function is a strength and helps to provide effective oversight. It still needs to make sure that it allocates investigations to the most appropriately skilled officers and [staff](#) and supervises them effectively. And it needs to make sure that it concludes more criminal investigations appropriately and that it accurately records outcomes. This will help to make sure that victims get the service they deserve.

I am concerned that the force doesn't yet have governance arrangements to make sure that it can always identify adults and [children](#) who need to be appropriately safeguarded. Too often, our inspection found examples of the force not having properly dealt with [Domestic Abuse Risk Assessments](#) recorded by its officers. Nor does it always satisfy itself that it could prevent vulnerable people from being left at the risk of serious harm. And it is disappointing that the force still hasn't made enough progress on a previous [area for improvement](#) about how it manages medium-risk [domestic abuse](#) cases. This a concern the force needs to address quickly. It also still needs to improve how effectively it records crime and how it monitors preventative orders.

The force has recently increased its focus on dealing with fraud. It has, though, yet to fully establish its strategic governance in this area. And we found some training gaps for [personnel](#) dealing with victims of fraud.

Devon and Cornwall police is making progress, particularly in its financial management, [control room](#) and prevention work. Continued focus on developing the workforce, improving investigation standards and safeguarding vulnerable people will be essential for sustained improvement. I expect to see more progress in the areas we have set out where it needs to improve, and I will continue to monitor performance.



**Kathryn Stone OBE**

His Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary

# Leadership and force management

Requires  
improvement

Devon and Cornwall Police's leadership and force management require improvement.

## Areas for improvement

### **The force needs to show it considers, analyses and evaluates changes to its processes, policies and procedures**

During our inspection, we found that the force wasn't effectively using data about demand to help it allocate resources efficiently or effectively. It wasn't using information about response times or geographic crime patterns to make sure it allocated [officers](#) and [staff](#) with the relevant skills to where they were most needed. This means that the force isn't aligning HR information about officer and staff skills with specific operational requirements.

We also found that [neighbourhood policing](#), investigation or emergency response teams often didn't have the right people with the right skills for them to provide an effective service. And when the force moved people to address problems it had identified, it didn't fully consider the impact of that decision or how achievable the intended outcome was.

The force should make effective use of its data to better allocate resources, and it should regularly check that changes it makes lead to its intended outcomes. This will help prevent unintended consequences, such as system backlogs and less effective service.

### **The force needs to improve its leadership standards, behaviour and culture to make sure its workforce feels valued**

In [our 2023–25 PEEL report](#), we said that [chief officers](#) were committed to attending all police stations in the force on a regular basis. The force supported this visibility through briefings to the workforce about its decisions and priorities.

During this inspection, members of the workforce told us that they had a positive view of the chief constable's visible leadership. However, [officers](#) and [staff](#) also told us that other senior leaders above the level of inspector weren't sufficiently or consistently visible.

The force should make sure that officers and staff have regular access to and interaction with senior leaders. This will help it improve and change and meet its wider priorities. Workforce feedback will also give the force a better understanding of demand and whether its resourcing plans are working.

The force needs to better train its leaders in these areas, and senior leaders need to create an environment that encourages debate and challenge. This will help officers and staff to feel trusted and valued.

### **The force needs to improve its operating model to make sure it uses resources effectively and promotes collaborative working**

During our inspection, we found a lack of collaborative working between the force's four [basic command units](#) and its departments. Often, members of the workforce introduced their own solutions for managing demand. At times, these solutions contradicted decisions made by the force's senior leaders. This caused confusion and disagreements between the basic command units and departments about how [personnel](#) should manage incidents. The processes weren't always effective, and it wasn't clear how the force was monitoring them.

The force should make sure it relays leadership decisions to the organisation using clear structures. This will help it to track demand and resources more efficiently.

At the time of our inspection, the force was reviewing parts of its operating model. It told us that in 2026, it was planning to improve resilience in its response function and the structure of its investigations. It is important that the force also reviews its governance, the operating model and its interdependencies to make sure that it provides services consistently and in line with its priorities.

## **Main findings**

In this section, we set out our main findings that relate to how good the force is at leadership and force management.

## **The force is using predictive analysis to inform its force management statement and to improve operational planning and resource allocation**

During our inspection, we found that the force was using predictive analytics to inform its [force management statement](#). By using historical crime data, call logs, demographic trends and environmental factors, the force is creating predictive models to forecast future demand with greater accuracy. These models identify patterns such as peak times for incidents, high-risk locations and seasonal fluctuations in crime rates. This proactive approach should help the force to distribute officers, staff and resources more efficiently, for example through 'Operation Resolve', which has resulted in more frontline officers.

The force uses predictive analytics to highlight emerging crime trends and support its strategic planning. This should allow it to develop targeted interventions and improve community policing initiatives. When integrated with real-time data systems, these insights could also inform the force's dynamic deployment strategies and help it to make sure that police presence aligns with actual demand.

Although this capability is promising, it isn't yet helping the force allocate resources as efficiently and effectively as it could. We discuss this in the [area for improvement 'The force needs to show it considers, analyses and evaluates changes to its processes, policies and procedures'](#).

## **The force should make sure that its leaders are accountable and understand their roles**

During our inspection, we carried out a workforce survey open to all officers and staff between 2 September and 24 October 2025. We received 1,191 responses, which we estimate to be 19.6 percent of the workforce at the time of the survey. We found that the force's workforce wasn't confident in their leaders' ability to deliver improved services.

Only 55.4 percent of respondents (660 of 1,191) agreed that the force's senior leaders demonstrated the standards, behaviours and culture expected from the police. And 64.2 percent of respondents (765 of 1,191) agreed that senior leaders made efforts to improve these standards, behaviours and culture in the force. Our interactions with personnel supported this.

Some superintendents and chief inspectors told us about lack of autonomy and clarity in their roles. And we found that different areas of the force had different understandings of force-wide leadership decisions. For example, we found that the appointment system for taking reports from members of the public wasn't being used consistently across the force. This means that the force can't accurately assess how effectively its systems are operating. We also found that a decision to make neighbourhood officers responsible for disclosing information to potential [domestic abuse victims](#) wasn't communicated clearly to all areas. As a result, some officers didn't fully understand why or how they needed to disclose important information to potential victims.

A governance board, chaired by the deputy chief constable, is the decision-making authority for resources and change activity. We attended these meetings and found that they were effective. We saw that the relevant people were present when discussions took place about change. There was healthy debate, and the board made informed decisions. We did find examples of the force not carrying out decisions in the ways it had agreed in the meetings. For example, the board decided how the force should manage [Domestic Abuse Risk Assessments](#) without consulting its workforce, and its approach to introducing the decision was inconsistent. This led to delayed services and increased demand.

The force should assure itself that proposals for changes are detailed enough and that it consults relevant members of the workforce. And when the board makes decisions, the force should make sure it follows the correct processes to carry them out. To make sure it understands how successfully it has made changes, it should monitor the process and note any alterations to the decision. It should feed this information back to the governance board. This will help the force manage performance and provide a good service for its communities.

### **The force needs a plan to show how it is using technology to improve how efficiently it operates**

The force told us that it didn't yet have digital transformation plans, which has affected operational efficiency. Without significant investment in technology, such as artificial intelligence, cloud storage systems and mobile tools, the force can't improve its productivity or how efficiently it operates. This approach risks undermining the effectiveness of its policing response as well as public trust.

### **The force can show how it aligns finances to its priorities and how it decides if its expenditure offers value for money**

The force can show that its finances and priorities are aligned. It clearly links its budget allocations to strategic objectives and operational needs. This involves transparent financial planning that shows how it uses resources in important areas such as investigations, neighbourhood policing and technological innovation.

The force has a strong strategic alliance with Dorset Police. It uses [benchmarking](#), cost-benefit analyses and adopts best practices in procurement and resource management to further support value for money. By maintaining this alignment and accountability, the force can create public confidence in its financial leadership and operational effectiveness.

The force focuses on providing a good service rather than just making savings. For example, it has introduced a clear process for managing overtime and time off in lieu of overtime. Before a supervisor authorises overtime, they must question whether it is needed and whether its use supports victims. This means that decisions are justified and leaders are more accountable. This approach has reduced overtime expenditure and provided the force with more clarity on how it is spending funds to improve its service.

### **The force appropriately targets its funding and resources**

In the year ending 31 March 2025, the force received £457.3 million in total funding. In common with other forces in England and Wales, this is a combination of government grants, [police precept](#) and other non-government grants. This combination of funds is £248,514 per 1,000 population, which is within the typical range for forces in England and Wales. In the financial year 2024/25, the force's precept income was around £176 million. This was equivalent to £95,845 per 1,000 population.

The force manages its combined reserves carefully and has a clear strategy in place for them. It has maintained its total reserves of around £14.9 million. This will keep the general reserve at around 3.2 percent of the budget requirement and is considered an adequate amount.

Since autumn 2025, the chief officer team has been leading Operation Resolve, which is helping the force develop a detailed understanding of how it uses its resources. It has also helped the force to meet savings requirements and improve its ability to manage summer demand.

Operation Resolve involves reviews of rank, the balance of skills and capabilities in the workforce and the effectiveness of officers placed in non-operational functions or specialist teams.

At the time of our inspection, the force told us that it had been able to return 123 officers back to frontline patrol duties. It had also reviewed and realigned its training programme to an 11-month cycle. This avoids summer demand and allows officers who are training to support operational policing. The force told us that it anticipated having more capacity during the summer of 2026. It believed that the extra officers it could deploy would provide approximately 5,500 additional hours of operational policing.

The force also told us that it had released an annual 25,000 hours of officer time by adopting the [College of Policing](#)'s approved reduction in the time officers spend attending officer safety training. The force told us that the extra time would help to support local policing. This work had also contributed to further investment in neighbourhood policing. At the time of our inspection, the force expected to have up to 51 additional officers by spring 2026. This means that the force can support its neighbourhood policing teams during busy periods.

We were impressed by the commitment shown by the force and its investment in frontline resources.

# Attracting, developing and retaining the workforce and creating a diverse and inclusive workplace

Requires  
improvement

Devon and Cornwall Police requires improvement at attracting, developing and retaining its workforce and creating a diverse and inclusive workplace.

## Areas for improvement

### **The force needs to improve its understanding of how continuing professional development supports its workforce by developing an effective evaluation process**

The force provides its workforce with voluntary and mandatory [continuing professional development \(CPD\)](#) training. It has regular training days and conferences to support its workforce in most of its departments. However, our workforce survey indicated that only 37.2 percent of respondents (443 of 1,191) agreed that time for training and development was protected and not regularly put to one side when operational demands increased.

During our inspection, we found that some members of the workforce didn't understand what CPD training they had received. People in some departments told us that the force had provided them with no CPD at all. And some told us that mandatory training wasn't effectively developing their skills.

The force couldn't assure us that it had evaluated or quality assured its CPD training. Supervisors told us that they didn't have the time to check if the CPD was effective. [Officers](#) told us that although the force offered them CPD, they used training days to catch up on administrative tasks. They also told us that low resourcing levels meant that the force couldn't always release them from duty to attend. Our workforce survey indicated that only 64.2 percent of [staff](#) (358 of 558) and 59.2 percent of officers (375 of 633) agreed that the force gave them the necessary training to carry out their roles.

The force should introduce an evaluation process to quality assure how it provides training and to test whether officers and staff have understood the training and can put it into practice.

**The force needs to invest in its professional development review process to make sure that its workforce understands the value of recording personal development**

In 2025, the force introduced its new personal development review (PDR) process. This is an electronic system that should provide enough information to support the personal development of the workforce. The system requires all [officers](#) to enter objectives to achieve in the calendar year. These may link to force priorities and personal goals.

During our inspection, we found that too many members of the workforce weren't interacting with the process. Some supervisors weren't arranging one-to-one meetings. And the officers and [staff](#) we spoke to couldn't confidently tell us that objectives had been set for them or how they linked to force priorities. Our workforce survey indicated that only 53.0 percent of respondents (631 of 1,191) agreed that there were opportunities for them to develop their career in the force. Members of the workforce told us that there was a lack of talent management and interaction with second-line managers.

The force told us that its PDR completion rate was high. In the year ending 31 March 2025, 88.7 percent of workers in the force had completed the PDR process. However, too many members of the workforce told us that they had no faith in the system and couldn't point to any benefits linked to completion. Our workforce survey indicated that only 46.1 percent (404 of 876) of respondents who had completed a PDR in the last 12 months agreed that it was valuable for their development.

The force needs to make sure that its PDR process has value by linking completion to [continuing professional development](#), training and wider developmental opportunities.

## **The force needs to communicate better with members of its workforce and act on information and feedback to improve their well-being**

The force has a comprehensive well-being plan, which is clearly aligned with the five main areas of the '[National Police Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2024–2026](#)'.

In our workforce survey, 55.6 percent of respondents (662 of 1,191) said that the force took their well-being into account when setting their working patterns. And 69.4 percent of respondents (826 of 1,191) said that their line manager actively checked that their workload was manageable.

Nevertheless, members of the workforce told us that they felt stressed. They commented on high workloads and sickness levels. Although we found that workloads were reducing, we still found [officers](#) and [staff](#) who didn't feel the force provided adequate support or interventions when they reported being stressed and anxious. We found examples of officers arranging their own counselling due to delays in the force's [occupational health service](#). We also learned of officers who were experiencing personal challenges. They had made their line managers aware, but their managers had either not arranged support or where they had, they hadn't followed through effectively.

The force needs to better communicate with its workforce so that it has a clear understanding of the well-being issues that officers and staff face. It needs to act on the information it learns. Without a better understanding of these challenges, it can't balance its need to manage demand with the well-being of its workforce.

## **Main findings**

In this section, we set out our main findings that relate to how good the force is at attracting, developing and retaining its workforce and creating a diverse and inclusive workplace.

### **The force has an open and fair recruitment policy**

At the time of our inspection, the force was running a recruitment campaign. We found that it had a good approach to communicating with its communities. It had processes in place to make sure it could support applicants from a wide range of backgrounds.

The force's website is informative and includes clear guidance for applicants on how to get support to follow a career in policing. The force uses support networks well and works closely with its [independent advisory group](#).

It has a small team that supports [positive action](#). We found that this team could do more to proactively interact with the force's communities. And the force needs better data to understand what activity it has carried out and to assess its effectiveness.

## **The force provides officers and staff with the right training to carry out specialist work**

The force has a comprehensive investigator resilience action plan that shows understanding of its current and future investigative demand. Investigators told us that they felt well trained to carry out their roles. As at 31 December 2025, the force had 505 full-time equivalent [professionalising investigations programme \(PIP\) 2](#) investigators in post compared to 700 who should be in post. This means 72.1 percent of PIP 2 investigator posts were filled. The force is working to reduce the shortfall, and as at 31 December 2025, it had 179 full-time equivalent PIP 2 trainees.

In September 2025, the force invested in its investigators' development and accreditation by introducing its investigation academy. It supports officers by providing mentors and tutors throughout their investigative training. It assigns workloads and keeps them at manageable levels of up to ten cases per investigator. This allows officers to develop their understanding of investigations with effective support. Once investigators are assigned to teams, the force and academy continue to monitor demand to make sure it remains at appropriate levels. The investigation academy aims to provide accreditation and development for PIP 1 and PIP 2 investigators across all departments.

The force needs to make progress with professionalising [neighbourhood policing](#). Although it has introduced the [College of Policing's neighbourhood policing programme](#), the [College of Policing](#) dashboard shows that, as at 17 February 2026, 92 individuals had completed the first part of the programme. The force had 435 neighbourhood officers and police community support officers eligible and required to complete the training. The force told us that it had developed its own training, based on the College of Policing's programme, which it made sure most neighbourhood officers and police community support officers attended.

The force provides effective training for volunteers in specialist roles. It has a comprehensive training programme for its special constables. After completing initial training and reaching independent patrol status, special constables continue to receive annual mandatory training to match that of regular police officers. And CPD is carried out either locally or by the force's citizens in policing training team when needed. Examples of CPD include mandatory training and leadership training.

Training for other volunteers depends on the roles they have. The force provides online learning for each role, which volunteers complete as part of their initial training. More role-specific training is given as part of the volunteer's induction by either the citizens in policing development officer or a mentor, who the volunteer can work alongside. For example, the development officer shows vehicle checkers what to do. After this, they are supported by either existing vehicle checkers or officers at the local station.

## **The force has processes in place to encourage officers and staff to stay in its workforce**

In the year ending 31 March 2025, the force's officer leaver rate (not including transfers) was 6.7 percent, which is close to the average for England and Wales.

The force checks on the satisfaction of its workforce through surveys and collects workforce data. It uses [‘stay’ interviews](#). These are new to the force and are a developing initiative. The interviews allow the force to identify concerns early and discuss how it can encourage people to stay in its workforce. The force has an effective and transparent exit interview process, which is independent of the line management chain. It also has an attendance support policy and retention ambassadors, who help with interviews to encourage [personnel](#) who want to leave the force to stay.

The force identifies the challenges experienced by personnel from [under-represented groups](#). It offers supportive measures. For example, all new recruits undergo a neurodivergence assessment to make sure that support is in place. This assessment is included in the officer's ‘well-being passport’. The passport contains the officer's personal information and any identified need for support. This means that they don't have to explain their needs to supervisors every time they move across the force. This allows the force to manage any movement and to effectively support its officers throughout their career.

## **The force needs to understand why officers and staff may want to leave**

In our workforce survey, 32.7 percent of respondents (343 of 1,049) said that they wanted to leave the force as soon as possible or within the next 12 months. Only 38.4 percent of respondents (403 of 1,049) saw their career continuing in the force beyond the next three years.

The force has some understanding of why people leave its workforce, but it needs to improve this understanding so that it can put effective actions in place to improve retention. The force carries out regular surveys and collects a range of workforce data. However, it told us that it didn't use this data to identify early-intervention opportunities to encourage people to stay or to identify patterns and trends in why those from under-represented groups left the force.

# Using powers fairly, appropriately and with justification

## Adequate

Devon and Cornwall Police is adequate at using its powers fairly, appropriately and with justification.

### Areas for improvement

#### **The force needs to make sure that officers complete safeguarding referrals for children when they have stopped and searched or used force against them**

The force doesn't check that [officers](#) who use force against [children](#) complete [public protection notices](#). Therefore, it can't be confident that officers always complete [safeguarding](#) referrals for children. In four of the five cases we reviewed of [body-worn video](#) where a child was subject to force, the officer hadn't made safeguarding referrals when they should have.

The force doesn't require officers to complete a public protection notice for children who have been [stopped and searched](#). It expects officers to use their professional judgment to decide if one is needed. During our inspection, we found that supervisory oversight of these cases needed to improve. Supervisors didn't always check that, if needed, officers had completed a referral. There was no expectation for officers to record their rationale as to why they hadn't made a referral, and supervisors didn't always record their reviews of stop and search records. Our audit of stop and search body-worn video footage found that officers had made safeguarding considerations in some but not all cases. Of the five cases we reviewed, only three had supervisory oversight.

The force's internal scrutiny panel [dip samples](#) stop and search and use of force cases. But it only reviews a small number of cases and not every case involving a child.

The force needs to make sure that its officers make safeguarding referrals when they stop and search children. It has acknowledged that this is an [area for improvement](#).

### **The force needs to make sure that when officers use force, they record the incidents effectively**

In the year ending 31 March 2025, the force recorded 18,879 use of force incidents. This is an increase of 18.1 percent compared to the previous year.

[Officers](#) are expected to record every use of force to make sure it is transparent and accountable. This includes recording low-level use of force such as handcuffing a compliant person and higher levels of force such as the use of a baton or [conducted energy device \(Taser\)](#). Where more than one officer uses force on a person, each officer must submit their own use of force report.

To determine if the force was recording use of force appropriately, we reviewed two different measures. We firstly examined the number of arrests and compared this to the number of recorded use of force reports. We expect the number of use of force reports to be at least as high as the number of arrests. Most arrests involve the use of handcuffs, and multiple officers may have used force during the arrest. In the year ending 31 March 2025, the force carried out 17,109 arrests and recorded 18,879 use of force reports.

We then reviewed the overall expected number of use of force records compared to the actual recorded number. The expected number is estimated based on the average number of uses of force associated with each recorded arrest.

We estimate that, in the year ending 31 March 2025, the force should have recorded 27,150 use of force incidents. This means it under-recorded its use of force by an estimated 8,271 incidents.

This shows no improvement in recording use of force compared to the previous year when, based on this estimation, it didn't record 8,280 use of force incidents.

The force doesn't compare arrests with recorded uses of force. The data the force uses compares its recorded use of force against the previous year's figures. The force told us that it used this data to conclude that it used force on 1.8 percent more occasions than in the previous year.

The force needs to develop this data to gain a better understanding of how and why officers are using force. It also needs to use this data more frequently.

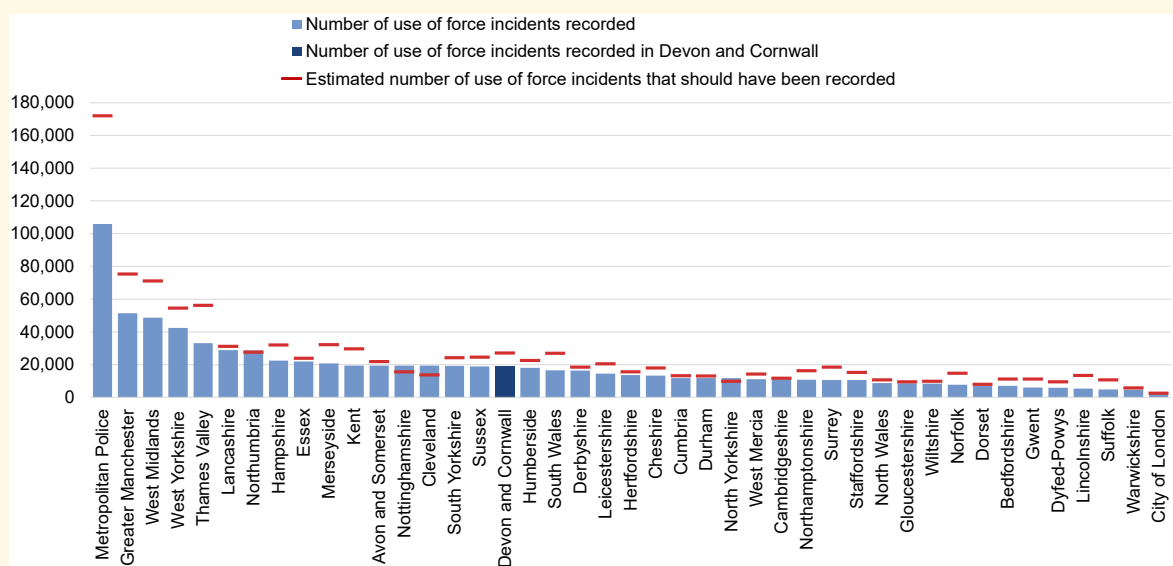
Our review of [body-worn video](#) footage found that officers weren't submitting use of force reporting forms when we would have expected to see them. This included when force was used against [children](#) or when multiple officers had used force.

Our body-worn footage audit also found that officers weren't always recording justification for using force. We found there wasn't a text box on the records system for officers to fully document their justification for using force.

The force may not be recording how officers use force when suspects are in custody. Our data indicates that in the year ending 31 March 2025, the force recorded that 6.2 percent of its total recorded use of force incidents occurred in custody. The England and Wales average is 12.6 percent. In 72.8 percent of cases, the force made no record of whether people subject to use of force in custody had been injured, compared to the England and Wales average of 8.7 percent.

The force needs to understand why it isn't always recording use of force or injuries sustained as a result.

**Figure 1: Number of use of force incidents that forces in England and Wales recorded and the estimated number that should have been recorded in the year ending 31 March 2025**



Source: [Police use of force open data tables](#) and [arrests open data tables](#) from the Home Office

Chart description: A combination chart showing the number of use of force incidents that all forces in England and Wales recorded (represented by columns) and the estimated number of use of force incidents that should have been recorded (represented by red target lines) in the year ending 31 March 2025. Devon and Cornwall Police recorded 18,879 use of force incidents. This was lower than the estimated 27,150 use of force incidents it should have recorded.

[The accessible data table for figure 1 is available on our website.](#)

Note: To understand how well forces record their use of force, we compare the number of incidents they recorded with the estimated number they should have recorded. To estimate the number of use of force incidents forces should have recorded, we use the number of recorded arrests and the number of recorded use of force incidents linked to an arrest.

## Main findings

In this section, we set out our main findings that relate to how good the force is at using its powers fairly, appropriately and with justification.

### **The force is aware of which officers are trained in use of force**

The force has detailed data on officers whose training to use force is up to date. And it monitors those officers whose training isn't up to date. Where appropriate, officers who aren't trained are placed in roles that make sure they are productive. This includes for example, in the force's crime management investigations teams. These teams manage incident demand in each [basic command unit](#). The force fills roles in these teams with officers who are on recuperative duties or who are unable to fulfil full operational duties.

### **Officers understand how to use stop and search powers fairly and appropriately**

During our inspection, we reviewed a sample of 134 stop and search records from 1 September 2024 to 31 August 2025. Based on this sample, we estimate that 95.5 percent (+/- 2.9 percentage points) of stop and searches the force carried out during this period had reasonable grounds recorded.

This is a statistically significant improvement compared to the findings from our previous review of records from 1 January 2022 to 15 November 2022. In that review, we found that 81.6 percent (+/- 4.8 percentage points) of stop and searches had reasonable grounds recorded.

The percentage that had reasonable grounds recorded suggests that officers are suitably trained and they use stop and search powers in a fair and appropriate way. Officers told us that they felt confident to use their stop and search powers and had enough training.

### **The force uses stop and search sufficiently**

In the year ending 31 March 2025, the force carried out 5,808 stop and searches of people. This equals 3.2 stop and searches per 1,000 population. This is at the lower end of the typical range for forces in England and Wales.

The number of stop and searches the force carried out decreased by 4.8 percent compared to the year ending 31 March 2024. This isn't in line with the overall picture for forces in England and Wales in which, on average, the number of stop and searches decreased by 1.3 percent.

In the year ending 31 March 2025, the force had an overall [find rate](#) of 34.2 percent from stop and search encounters. This was made up of 28.0 percent [linked finds](#) and 6.2 percent not linked finds.

Linked finds are when one or more items, which the officer suspected a person had in their possession, are found and were the reason for the search. Not linked finds are when items are found that a person may have been in unlawful possession of but weren't the reason for the search.

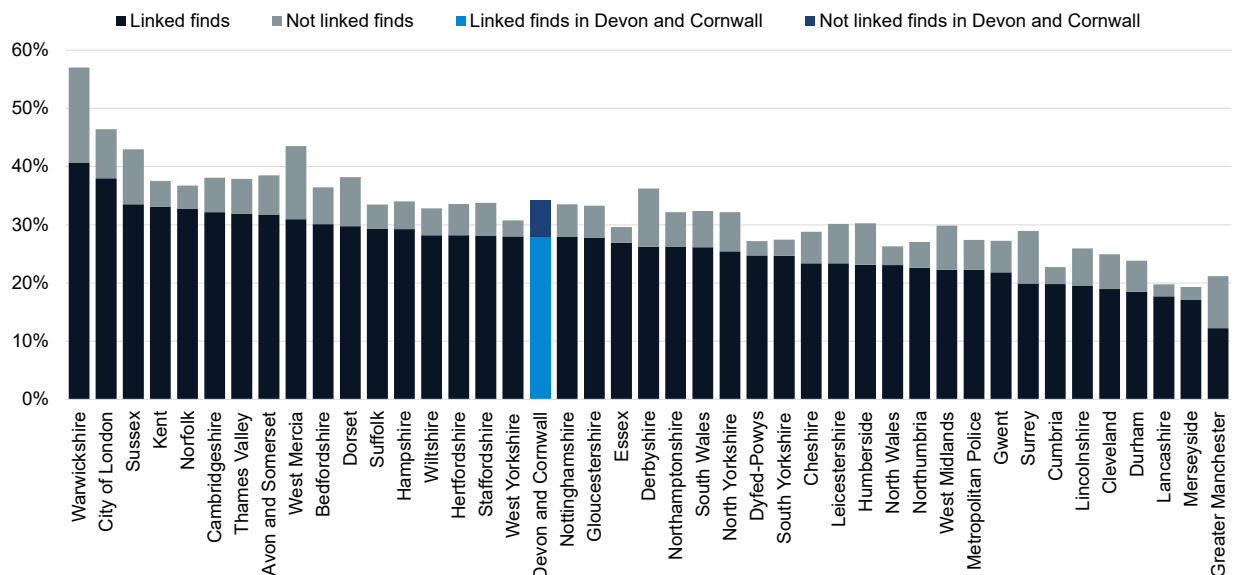
The force's linked find rate was within the typical range for England and Wales.

We examined:

- the number of searches the force carried out;
- the number of searches that had reasonable grounds; and
- the percentage of linked finds.

The results of this review show that although the force is using its stop and search powers less often than it used to, its officers often find the articles they are searching for.

**Figure 2: Percentage of stop and search encounters resulting in linked and not linked finds for forces in England and Wales in the year ending 31 March 2025**



Source: [Stop and search open data tables](#) from the Home Office

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Chart description: A stacked column chart showing the percentage of [stop and search](#) encounters where the item found was and wasn't linked to the reason for the search for all forces in England and Wales in the year ending 31 March 2025. In Devon and Cornwall Police, 28 percent of stop and search encounters resulted in a [linked find](#) and 6.2 percent in a not linked find.

[The accessible data table for figure 2 is available on our website.](#)

Note: In the calculation, we have excluded records where it isn't known whether the item found was linked to the reason for the search. We have also excluded records where it isn't known whether the [officer](#) found any items. If the percentage of linked or not linked finds isn't included in the chart for some forces, it is because they haven't supplied it.

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### **The force needs to make sure it collects accurate data to allow it to understand how fairly it is using stop and search**

Good quality data on self-defined ethnicity (how people define their ethnicity) allows the force to understand the rate at which it uses stop and search on people from ethnic minority backgrounds in the local resident population.

As part of our review of stop and search records, we asked the force to provide 12 months of stop and search data from 1 September 2024 to 31 August 2025. We found that self-defined ethnicity information was unknown (not recorded, not stated or refused) in 6 percent of these records. In the year ending 31 March 2025, on average, self-defined ethnicity was unknown for 18 percent of stop and searches that forces in England and Wales recorded.

Our review of 20 stop and search encounters filmed on body-worn video found that, although self-defined ethnicity was recorded for all of the encounters, officers asked for self-defined ethnicity on only one occasion. This means that officers may be assuming the ethnicity of the person being searched and recording it without making sure the information is correct. Therefore, the analysis the force carries out to understand [disproportionality](#) may be based on inaccurate data.

Officers should make sure they ask for this data to allow the force to better understand the demographics of those it stops and searches. With further analysis, this could help the force more accurately identify any disproportionate use of the power.

### **The force needs to better understand and do more to reduce its disproportionate use of stop and search**

In the year ending 31 March 2025, people from a Black ethnic minority background were 6.9 times more likely than White people to be the subject of a stop and search by the force. And they were 6.3 times more likely than White people to be subject to use of force.

We reviewed 11 stop and search records of people from an ethnic minority background. We found that all the records had reasonable grounds. The force doesn't, however, carry out effective analysis of its disproportionate use of stop and search powers to help it understand why this exists.

Although the force can view ethnicity data relating to stop and searches in smaller local authority areas, it told us that it still needed to better understand why disproportionality was greater in some areas. The force told us that it was carrying out more work to understand disproportionality rates, including when it stops and searches people during specific crime prevention and disruption operations.

**The force should make sure its supervisors regularly review how officers are using stop and search and use of force powers**

During our inspection, supervisors told us that they didn't always have the time to carry out reviews of uses of stop and search. Some were unaware that they had a responsibility to do so. The force couldn't provide us with any examples of a supervisor carrying out a review of body-worn video footage. While the force requires supervisors to review stop and search, it doesn't expect them to review use of force records.

We found that the force was inconsistent in how it carried out supervisory oversight of stop and search records. We reviewed 20 stop and search encounters. Of these, only ten supervisor reviews had been completed with added narrative comments. We found that only two encounters had thorough reviews with written feedback to the officer. Three were recorded as completed but had no added commentary.

Each month, the force holds five internal scrutiny panels to improve its review and quality assurance processes relating to use of force. There is one panel in each basic command unit. Each panel reviews up to ten pieces of body-worn video footage: five for stop search and five for use of force. They scrutinise cases involving children, people from Black ethnic minority backgrounds and strip searches. We found that the reviews were effective and supported by independent scrutiny. The force publishes the results of this scrutiny, with case examples and data, on its website so that the public can understand how officers use their powers.

# Preventing and deterring crime and antisocial behaviour, and reducing vulnerability

Adequate

Devon and Cornwall Police is adequate at preventing and deterring crime and [antisocial behaviour](#), and reducing [vulnerability](#).

## Areas for improvement

**The force still needs to encourage a problem-solving culture and to make better use of its existing systems to monitor and evaluate problem-solving activity**

In [our 2023–25 PEEL report](#), we said that the force should promote and improve the use and recording of local problem-solving plans and sharing of best practice. At the time, the force told us that it had created a central portal and invested in specific training for its [neighbourhood policing officers](#).

During this inspection, we were disappointed to find that the force's work hadn't yet led to tangible improvements in workforce confidence or effective problem-solving.

Our workforce survey found that only 41.7 percent of respondents (226 of 542) agreed that senior leaders valued and promoted problem-solving activity, and 10.5 percent of respondents (57 of 542) were unsure. Our survey also found that the force wasn't providing problem-solving training effectively. Only 18.1 percent of respondents (98 of 542) reported that they had received training, while 72.0 percent of respondents (390 of 542) reported that they hadn't received any. And 10.0 percent of respondents (54 of 542) told us that they were unsure.

During this inspection, we reviewed how the force stored problem-solving plans. We found that it wasn't regularly using its central system for storing examples of good problem-solving plans. And [officers](#) couldn't show us how they used it. We found that neighbourhood policing teams were storing problem-solving plans locally and not sharing them force wide. Our audit of problem-solving plans found that officers weren't following an effective problem-solving model. Plans lacked detail and analysis.

The force needs to improve its processes to oversee and evaluate the quality of its plans.

In our 2023–25 PEEL report, we stated that specialist problem-solvers applied evidence-based models to develop plans to tackle enduring force-wide problems and local threats that affected communities. During this inspection, we found that some neighbourhood officers didn't understand how to access resources or share tactics that had proved to be successful. Specialist problem-solvers can provide valuable support, but the force should better promote the services they offer so that officers can use them more effectively.

### **The force needs to improve how it manages abstractions to make sure its neighbourhood policing officers can fulfil their roles**

In our inspection, we found that the force too often diverted [neighbourhood policing officers](#) from their main duties to support other areas of the force.

Specialist neighbourhood officers are responsible for building relationships with communities, solving problems and working with partners to prevent crime and [antisocial behaviour](#). This requires local [officers](#) to be visible and have meaningful communication with those communities. Sometimes neighbourhood officers are diverted away from their usual work to carry out other duties in the force to meet demand. This is referred to as [abstraction](#).

During this inspection, neighbourhood officers told us that the force still frequently abstracted them from their core roles to cover vacancies and periods of high demand. We found that they were often allocated response policing duties at the start of their shifts. This meant that they had to work from different stations and cancel meetings in their own areas. Neighbourhood officers told us that a central system had been in place to record how often the force diverted them from their core responsibilities. However, due to perceived lack of action by leaders, they stopped using it. This means that the data gathered was less reliable.

The force has introduced a revised abstraction policy to provide clearer guidance on managing abstractions consistently. It told us it anticipated that its investment in neighbourhood and response officers, combined with its new guidance, should help to reduce abstractions.

Abstractions reduce how visible neighbourhood officers are in their communities, and make effective neighbourhood policing difficult. This means that senior leaders aren't always aware of the impact neighbourhood policing teams can have on the quality of life and confidence of its communities.

The force should make sure it fully implements its plans to protect neighbourhood policing.

## Main findings

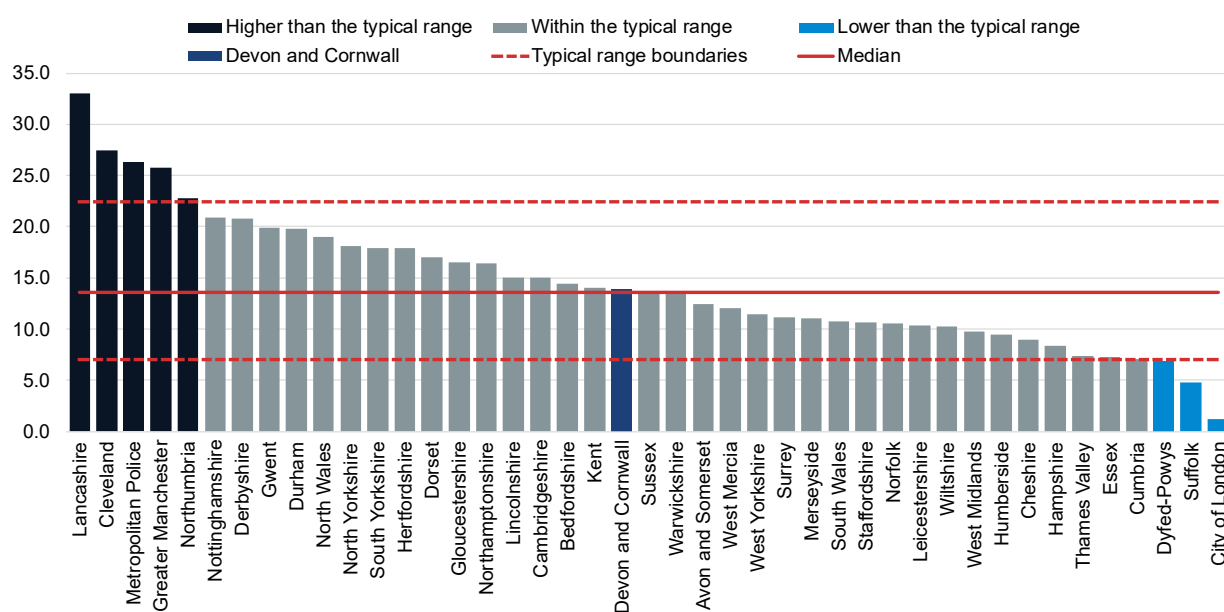
In this section, we set out our main findings that relate to how good the force is at preventing and deterring crime and antisocial behaviour, and reducing vulnerability.

### **The force doesn't understand the causes of antisocial behaviour and vulnerability in its communities**

During our inspection, we found that the force didn't have a clear understanding of antisocial behaviour and related vulnerability in its communities. The force has taken steps to understand trends in its antisocial behaviour reporting and the underlying causes. It works with community safety partnerships, in consultation with the [police and crime commissioner](#), to carry out antisocial behaviour case reviews across Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. It has also used government funding to support hotspot policing across the force to address incidents of antisocial behaviour and has measured the impact of this. And it has an informative website that supports community understanding and recording of antisocial behaviour.

In the year ending 31 March 2025, it recorded 14.0 antisocial behaviour incidents per 1,000 population. This is within the typical range for forces in England and Wales.

**Figure 3: Number of antisocial behaviour incidents per 1,000 population that forces in England and Wales recorded in the year ending 31 March 2025**



**Source: [Police-recorded antisocial behaviour incidents data](#) and [population estimates for England and Wales](#) from the Office for National Statistics**

Chart description: Column chart showing the number of [antisocial behaviour](#) incidents per 1,000 population that all forces in England and Wales recorded in the year ending 31 March 2025. Devon and Cornwall Police recorded 14.0 antisocial behaviour incidents per 1,000 population, which was within the typical range for forces in England and Wales. The typical range, represented by dashed red lines on the chart, is between 7.0 and 22.4 antisocial behaviour incidents per 1,000 population. The median value of 13.6 per 1,000 population is presented as a solid red line.

[The accessible data table for figure 3 is available on our website.](#)

The force needs to understand the reasons for differences between the number of antisocial behaviour incidents per 1,000 population and those recorded in other forces. This will help it develop strategies to tackle the causes of the antisocial behaviour, allocate resources where they are most needed and keep its communities safe.

During our 2023–25 inspection, we found that the force didn't always record all crimes that occurred when [victims](#) reported [antisocial behaviour personal](#) to them. This finding formed part of a recommendation linked to a [cause of concern](#) relating to how the force recorded crimes.

In our [quality service review](#) during this inspection, we found that in the cases we examined, the force had recorded 11 of 20 antisocial behaviour personal crimes correctly. The force still needs to make improvements in this area.

## **The force works with partners to use crime prevention activity to prevent and deter crime and antisocial behaviour in its communities**

During our inspection, we found that neighbourhood policing teams worked closely with local authority antisocial behaviour officers, housing providers and other partners to address the root causes of antisocial behaviour in their communities. For example, they worked on Operation Circus in Torquay, which secured funding to address antisocial behaviour and its causes after residents and traders reported feeling unsafe and that the area looked rundown, with vacant shopfronts.

The initiative used drones to map the town centre and identify the areas of high antisocial behaviour. It used the funds to make improvements in these areas. These included, for example, providing suitable benches, planting greenery and refurbishing the area by renewing benches and removing graffiti.

The force told us that after this partnership work was completed, it carried out a survey to monitor how it had improved quality of life for the force's communities.

## **The force isn't using preventative and protective orders effectively to help it tackle antisocial behaviour**

In the year ending 30 September 2025, the force issued 274 preventative and protective orders, which equals 0.15 orders per 1,000 population. This is within the typical range for forces in England and Wales.

In our quality service review, we examined 19 antisocial behaviour incidents and any crimes recorded from them. We found that in ten of these records, the force didn't use or consider antisocial behaviour legislation to help it tackle the root causes of antisocial behaviour.

During our inspection, officers we spoke to told us that they weren't confident in applying for and using tools such as [Criminal Behaviour Orders](#) and civil injunctions, particularly in more complex or persistent antisocial behaviour cases. The force knows it needs to make sure its officers understand antisocial behaviour legislation and the range of powers available to them. To support this, it has introduced a pilot scheme in Devon that aligns specialist lawyers with neighbourhood teams to help them apply for antisocial behaviour orders. We were pleased to find that, having evaluated the pilot scheme, the force had committed to expanding it across the rest of the force area in 2026 and 2027.

## **The force works well with partners to reduce the risk of persistent and problem offenders re-offending**

We were pleased to find that the force had a dedicated [integrated offender management](#) team. Members of this team understood their role and the principles of integrated offender management. The team managed their cohorts well, and team members told us that they had the support and time to carry out their work effectively.

We attended several meetings and saw clear partnership working. Attendees shared information well. For example, they shared the types of offending that had been reported as well as links to likely perpetrators and how officers and partners were managing them.

There was also positive involvement by partners who offered wider support for the service users being managed. For example, housing partners reported on service users who had taken up offers of accommodation. Where offers weren't taken up, they were actively working on other solutions. Drugs intervention partners updated the team on how well service users were working with them to support withdrawal from the use of drugs.

The depth of knowledge displayed by officers was impressive.

### **The force communicates well with its diverse communities to better understand their needs and help set its local priorities**

During our inspection, we found that neighbourhood policing teams were regularly communicating with local people to understand their concerns and help them feel safe. At the time of our inspection, the force had developed a plan to guide local teams in building relationships and setting local priorities based on community feedback.

We also found that neighbourhood policing teams had made efforts to reach communities that traditionally have less contact with the police or may have lower levels of trust and confidence. For example, the teams use an 'engagement van', which is publicised on social media platforms and Devon Alert with the dates, times and deployment locations. Devon Alert is a two-way community messaging system operated by the force that helps it connect with its communities. The force uses it to tell people what is happening in their area and members of the community can respond directly with any information. Neighbourhood teams also use a QR code to allow members of the community to access a survey about antisocial behaviour issues.

We found that some teams were also tailoring their communication toward [seldom-heard groups](#), such as newly settled communities. Neighbourhood officers told us that they had gone door-to-door to speak with people. They held pop-up surgeries and 'coffee with cops' events. The force also held local meetings to communicate with and hear from the public. Its corporate communications department attended the meetings, which meant that information most relevant to local communities could be released.

We found that communication practices varied across different areas of the force. In some locations, officers were confident and took the initiative in contacting diverse communities. In others, there wasn't a clear understanding of how to build trust with communities who don't often communicate with their local policing teams. The local neighbourhood teams lacked effective local plans to support interactions and didn't have ward profiles to help them understand their communities more effectively.

### **The force is investing in the capacity and capability of its neighbourhood policing teams**

In the year ending 31 March 2025, 7.7 percent of the force's officers were in dedicated neighbourhood policing roles. This is within the typical range for forces in England and Wales.

During our inspection, we found that neighbourhood policing teams didn't have the right skills and training to work effectively in their communities and with partners to reduce crime and antisocial behaviour. [Personnel](#) we spoke to commented on the lack of investment and training. Our workforce survey confirmed this was an issue, with 72.0 percent of respondents (390 of 542) reporting that they hadn't received training.

At the time of our inspection, the force told us that it was increasing officer numbers in its neighbourhood policing teams. It was also taking steps to improve the capability of its neighbourhood officers and [staff](#) through training and the development of essential skills and knowledge. This included building confidence in community liaison, working with partners, problem-solving and tackling antisocial behaviour.

# Responding to the public

Requires  
improvement

Devon and Cornwall Police requires improvement at responding to the public.

## Areas for improvement

### **The force needs to attend calls for service in line with its published target attendance times**

We found that the force correctly prioritised calls based on risk, but several factors affected how promptly its units attended incidents. These included how many [officers](#) were available and the availability of serviceable vehicles and trained drivers. The large rural area that the force covers means officers must sometimes travel long distances to attend calls.

The force doesn't always have response-trained officers in the right places. Often, officers with the correct training are placed in areas that don't always support an effective response to calls. For example, we found officers with a wide range of skills in the force investigation teams, but they weren't always available for deployment.

The force promises to attend emergency calls within 20 minutes. It told us that it managed this 68 percent of the time. The force also promises to attend priority calls within 60 minutes. It told us that it managed this 86 percent of the time.

The force is working to improve the promptness of its incident attendance and has performance management processes in place. Although there has been some improvement since [our 2023–25 PEEL inspection](#), it must do more to achieve the targets it has set.

### **The force should make sure it assesses ongoing risk when incidents are allocated to other departments**

The force has changed how it manages calls for service in its [control room](#). When call handlers review an incident and decide that contact or attendance can be delayed because, for example, there is no immediate risk, they assign the incident to other areas of the force.

We reviewed incidents that call handlers had transferred to local policing teams for contact or attendance. We found that many of the incidents related to [vulnerable people](#), including [domestic abuse victims](#). We found that, apart from emergency and priority calls, supervisors didn't have an effective overview of risk or deployment decisions. This meant that the force wasn't continuing to review and manage the risk to victims in incidents that had been initially risk assessed as suitable for a delayed response. Often, these incidents had been waiting for attendance for some time.

Without regular review, victims and witnesses may be left unsupported and exposed to further risk of harm. It also means that people's expectations aren't met and they are more likely to lose confidence and disengage from police support.

The force should make sure it assesses the ongoing risk of incidents that call handlers have assessed as suitable for delayed contact or attendance.

### **The force should make sure that the control room has sufficient oversight of incidents that are held in other areas of the force**

We found that the force [control room](#) was operating effectively and performance had improved since [our 2023–25 PEEL inspection](#). However, this improvement was achieved by passing demand that had been managed in the control room to other areas of the force, including its crime management investigation teams, [neighbourhood policing teams](#) and response [officers](#).

We reviewed the demand that this practice had created. We found that a high number of incidents that hadn't yet been dealt with were held in other areas of the force, such as the appointments system or the crime and incident recording system. This was putting pressure on teams. Officers told us that they couldn't cope with the demand it created.

The force couldn't assure us that it had effective oversight in its control room of the delayed demand and ongoing service to those incidents. This meant that it couldn't monitor how calls had been managed or whether [victims](#) had been contacted. The force told us that a new process had been introduced, but it still needs to make sure that callers receive the service they are promised.

The force should monitor its control room services through a suitable review process.

## Main findings

In this section, we set out our main findings that relate to how good the force is at responding to the public.

### **Devon and Cornwall Police has a good management, daily governance and performance structure in place for its force control room**

During our inspection, we found that the force held daily management meetings that reviewed the force control room (FCR) performance and how it had responded to incidents in the previous 24 hours. It produces daily performance reports that allow senior leaders to understand all aspects of FCR demand. It monitors [staff](#) numbers in the FCR to make sure that there are enough people on duty. Managers assign staff to different areas of the FCR as demand dictates.

The force's [chief officers](#) have oversight of the FCR's performance. They make sure that the leadership team is managing resources, training and quality assurance.

However, the force doesn't always have a clear view of the resources available to it. When we visited departments and stations, we found that local officers weren't always booking on (communicating that they have started work) through their Airwaves radios. And they sometimes didn't have all their equipment available. This meant that the FCR couldn't always identify them as being immediately available.

The force is working to improve its oversight of officers available to respond to calls for assistance from the public and to improve officer availability and Airwave compliance. This will support its efforts to improve the promptness of incident attendance.

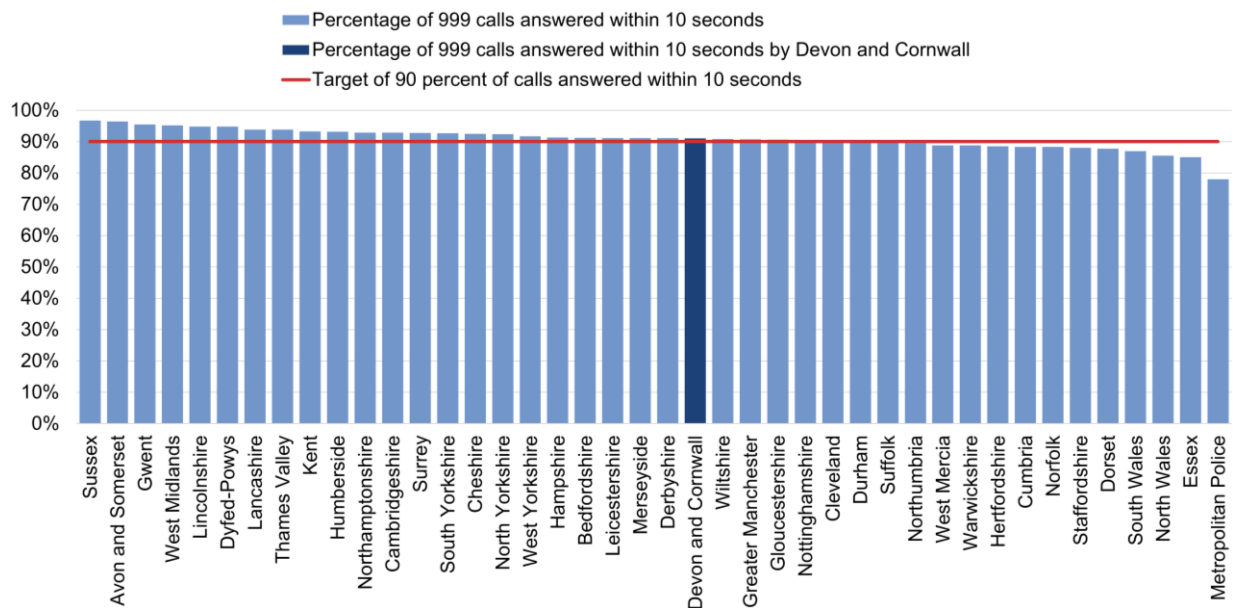
### **The force answers emergency calls quickly enough**

In our 2023–25 PEEL report, we found that the force wasn't answering emergency calls quickly enough. In the year ending 31 December 2023, the force answered 79.3 percent of its 999 calls within 10 seconds.

The force has worked to improve. In the year ending 31 January 2026, it received 162 emergency 999 calls per 1,000 population. This was within the typical range for forces in England and Wales. It answered 91 percent of the 999 calls it received within 10 seconds. This was higher than the standard expected of forces in England and Wales of answering 90.0 percent of 999 calls within 10 seconds.

This rate of call answering suggests that the force puts the victim at the centre of its decision-making to support an effective response.

**Figure 4: Percentage of 999 calls that forces in England and Wales answered within 10 seconds in the year ending 31 January 2026**



Source: [999 call answering times](#) from BT

Chart description: Column chart showing the percentage of 999 calls that all forces in England and Wales answered within 10 seconds in the year ending 31 January 2026. Devon and Cornwall Police answered 91.0 percent of the 999 calls it received within 10 seconds. This is above the expected standard of 90 percent for forces in England and Wales, which is marked with a solid red line on the chart. Fifteen forces were below the expected standard.

[The accessible data table for figure 4 is available on our website.](#)

Note: Call answering time is the time taken for a call to be transferred from BT to a force and then answered by that force.

**The force still needs to reduce the number of non-emergency calls that callers abandon because they aren’t answered**

We were pleased to see that, since our last inspection, the force had improved this area of performance.

In the year ending 30 September 2025, the force received 252 non-emergency [101](#) calls per 1,000 population. This was within the typical range for forces in England

and Wales. The force told us that in the same period, 11.2 percent of calls to its non-emergency 101 facility were abandoned. While there is no formal national standard for how non-emergency performance is measured, the force's performance isn't at an acceptable level. The force has completed work to understand its data and has a clear understanding of why callers hang up. It should make sure it continues to make improvements.

### **Call handlers provide appropriate advice on safeguarding, evidence preservation and crime prevention**

The force has improved the quality of service it provides to callers at the first point of contact. Our [quality service review](#) found that:

- crime prevention advice was given in 14 out of 15 relevant cases;
- advice about preserving evidence was given in 12 out of 12 relevant cases; and
- [safeguarding](#) advice was given in 24 out of 24 relevant cases.

Our workforce survey indicated that FCR staff were confident in supplying this information and the force supported this through effective initial training.

The FCR's leadership focuses on maintaining an improved level of service. FCR staff told us that they were confident that training had supported their understanding. In our workforce survey, 89.4 percent of respondents (110 of 123) said that [threat, harm, risk, investigation, vulnerability and engagement model](#) training had helped them understand how to identify vulnerability at the first point of contact. The force has also introduced enhanced crisis communicators, who support colleagues who are dealing with calls involving people in crisis.

### **Responding officers may not receive all the information and intelligence available for the calls they attend**

We found that officers felt that FCR dispatchers didn't always give them all the information they needed when attending calls for service. For example, officers told us that sometimes dispatchers didn't provide [warning markers](#) to indicate, for example, a violent person, the presence of firearms or the previous history of a person or address. And patrol officers told us they often felt that FCR staff focused on dispatching them to incidents as quickly as possible. They said that this meant FCR staff didn't always provide them with all the information and [intelligence](#) they could.

In our workforce survey, 66.4 percent of respondents (223 of 336) said that they received the necessary information and intelligence to provide an appropriate response to the public.

It is important that FCR staff provide officers with as much detail as possible to help them anticipate threats to their personal safety and allow them to consider appropriate safeguarding for victims of crime.

# Investigating crime

## Inadequate

Devon and Cornwall Police is inadequate at investigating crime.

### Cause of concern

#### **The force hasn't made enough progress in improving the standard of its investigations**

We found the force hadn't made enough progress in improving the standard of its investigations since [our 2023–25 PEEL inspection](#). As a result, it isn't bringing enough offenders to justice. We acknowledge that the force has made improvements, but more work is needed.

In our [quality service review](#), we found that [officers](#) and [staff](#) followed the investigation plan in only 41 out of 51 investigations.

Investigation plans support investigators to make sure they make the most of all available opportunities to gather evidence. We found too many cases where [victims](#) hadn't received an adequate service. Our review found evidence of effective supervision in 55 out of 75 cases. In 66 out of 85 cases, not all investigative opportunities had been taken. And we found only 61 out of 81 investigations were effective. During our inspection, supervisors told us that they didn't have time to complete all the supervisory tasks that they should.

#### **Recommendations**

Within three months, Devon and Cornwall Police should:

- make sure investigation plans are appropriate and that supervisors can make sure officers and staff take all appropriate investigative opportunities;
- make sure it carries out investigations without unnecessary delays;

- implement appropriate governance and monitoring processes to make sure that the [outcome types](#) used are appropriate and comply with force and national policies; and
- make sure it completes victim contracts.

## Areas for improvement

### **The force should make sure that crimes are allocated to appropriately skilled investigators**

During our inspection, we found that the force was allocating crimes to [officers](#) who weren't appropriately skilled. And there was a lack of support for officers who had been allocated more complex investigations.

In our workforce survey, 50.5 percent of respondents (147 of 291) told us that they were allocated investigations outside their level of accreditation or training on a quarterly or more frequent basis. We reviewed some of these investigations and found them to have been carried out to a high standard. However, officers investigating serious and complex crimes without appropriate training and accreditation are likely to take longer and need to work much harder to achieve appropriate outcomes on behalf of [victims](#).

Officers also told us that they 'constantly' needed to carry out challenging negotiations with other investigation teams about responsibility for investigations.

The force has introduced a more prescriptive crime allocation process. This should clarify who should retain an investigation. The force must still make sure the policy is supported by a process that allows challenge and scrutiny so that cases are allocated appropriately and not to manage demand.

The force needs to make sure that it supports victims of crime through effective investigations carried out by appropriately trained and effectively supervised investigators.

### **The force needs to consistently achieve appropriate outcomes for victims**

The force isn't always achieving acceptable outcomes for [victims](#) of crime.

In the year ending 30 September 2025, 10.4 percent of all [outcomes](#) that the force assigned to [victim-based crimes](#) were [positive outcomes](#).

This is an increase from the year ending 30 September 2023, where 8.8 percent of the outcomes assigned to victim-based crimes were positive outcomes. In the year ending 30 September 2025, of all sexual offences assigned an outcome, 7.2 percent were a charged or summonsed outcome. This is a slight increase compared to the year ending 30 September 2023, when the rate was 6.9 percent.

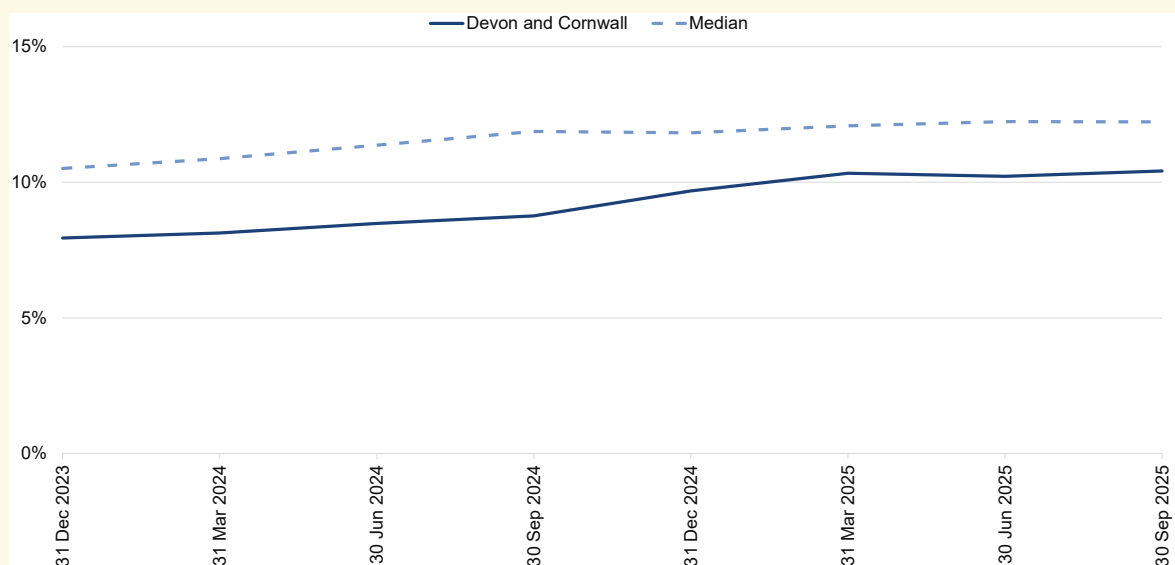
This is below the typical range for this outcome with this crime type compared to other forces in England and Wales. The force must do more to understand why it still charges too few suspected offenders.

In the year ending 30 September 2025, the force's use of adult and youth [cautions](#) was higher than the typical range compared to other forces in England and Wales. The force now has more [officers](#) to improve its use of cautions. It recognises that cautions help provide fair and quick justice, involve victims in how the matter is resolved, support offenders to change and help to keep public trust in policing.

We found that the force routinely audited and scrutinised the use of outcome types using scrutiny panels held by the office of the [police and crime commissioner](#). This means that senior leaders can be confident that they understand why some outcomes are used, whether they are used appropriately and what improvements might be needed to provide better justice for victims.

The force is working to improve outcomes for victims, but its improvements have yet to lead to consistently appropriate results for victims.

**Figure 5: Percentage of positive outcomes that Devon and Cornwall Police and all forces in England and Wales assigned to victim-based crimes between the year ending 31 December 2023 and the year ending 30 September 2025**



Source: [Police recorded crime and outcomes open data tables](#) from the Home Office

Chart description: Line chart showing the percentage of positive outcomes that Devon and Cornwall Police assigned and the median for forces in England and Wales for each year from the year ending 31 December 2023 to the year ending 30 September 2025. The chart shows that 10.4 percent of outcomes that Devon and Cornwall Police assigned to victim-based crimes were positive in the year ending 30 September 2025, compared to the median of 12.2 percent for forces in England and Wales. It also shows that the percentage of positive outcomes that Devon and Cornwall Police assigned has been slowly increasing since the year ending 31 December 2023. And the median percentage of positive outcomes for forces in England and Wales has been slowly increasing in the same period.

Note: The percentage of positive outcomes that forces assign is calculated from all outcomes they assign in a given period. Victim-based crimes include all police-recorded crimes where there is a direct victim, such as a person, an organisation or a corporate body. For a detailed description of crime and outcome types, please see the [Home Office statistics](#).

**Figure 6: Percentage of unresolved, resolved and positive outcomes that Devon and Cornwall Police and all forces in England and Wales assigned to victim-based crimes in the year ending 30 September 2025**

<b>Outcome types</b>	<b>Devon and Cornwall percentage [%]</b>	<b>Median percentage [%] for forces in England and Wales</b>
<a href="#">Unresolved crime outcomes</a> (Outcomes 11–18)	84.6	84.2
<a href="#">Resolved crime outcomes</a> (Outcomes 5, 9, 10, 20–22)	4.9	3.3
<a href="#">Positive crime outcomes</a> (Outcomes 1–4 and 8), of which:	10.4	12.2
1: Charged/summonsed	7.1	9.0
2 and 3: <a href="#">Caution</a> – youths and adults	1.4	0.8
4: Taken into consideration	0.1	0.1
8: <a href="#">Community resolution</a>	1.7	2.1

**Source:** [Police recorded crime and outcomes open data tables](#) from the Home Office

Note: The percentage of unresolved, resolved and positive outcomes that forces assign is calculated from all outcomes they assign in a given period. Victim-based crimes include all police-recorded crimes where there is a direct victim, such as an individual, an organisation or a corporate body. For a detailed description of crime and outcome types, please see the [Home Office statistics](#).

In the year ending 30 September 2025, of all the outcomes the force assigned to victim-based crimes, 27.5 percent were outcome 18: Investigation complete (no suspect identified). This is lower than the typical range for forces in England and Wales. But in the same period, 1.3 percent of outcomes assigned to victim-based crimes were outcome 10: Not in public interest (police decision) and 2 percent were outcome 21: formal action isn't in the public interest (police decision). These were both higher than the typical range for forces in England and Wales. This shows that the force is closing more crimes than expected where formal action may have been appropriate but the force deemed it not to be in the public interest.

As part of our [quality service review](#), we audited 15 cases where the force had applied outcome 21. We found that the outcome had been applied correctly in 11 of these cases. But in the four cases where it wasn't correct, three of these investigations shouldn't have been finalised.

The force scrutinises how it uses outcomes, but our findings indicate that it needs to be more thorough. It needs to do more work to show it has a detailed understanding of how it applies outcomes and to reassure itself that they are applied in the interests of victims.

## Main findings

In this section, we set out our main findings that relate to how good the force is at investigating crime.

### The force isn't recording crimes as soon as possible

As part of our quality service review, we reviewed 77 crimes that the force had recorded. We found that 52 of them had been recorded within 24 hours.

A crime must be recorded as soon as possible after the person receiving the report is satisfied that it is more likely than not that a crime has been committed. Forces are expected to record crimes on their systems promptly so they can start investigations quickly and don't lose vital opportunities to identify and follow lines of enquiry. Most importantly, forces need to make sure victims can access the support they need as soon as possible.

The force should make sure that it records crimes as soon as possible and no later than 24 hours after receiving the report.

## **Senior leaders set high investigative standards, and the force's structures allow detailed scrutiny to improve standards**

We found that senior leaders had set and maintained high investigative standards. Force structures allow detailed scrutiny to improve standards. The force operates an investigations standards board and has an audit process to promote improvements. It regularly carries out audits of investigation plans and files. It shares the results with governance boards and at force performance meetings. It also scrutinises the quality of the audits. Officers and staff we spoke to commented positively about the feedback and support they received.

The force monitors file quality against national file standards to identify areas where standards need to improve. It uses this information to identify good practice and areas of learning and to provide feedback to investigators.

The force has improved in this area. It has created evidence review officer roles, which means that all files receive a quality review. The process provides feedback and challenge to officers and supervisors. During our inspection, we attended criminal justice scrutiny meetings where partners, such as the Crown Prosecution Service, commented positively on the quality of the force's file submissions.

## **The force is improving the quality of investigations through monitoring and audits**

The force has improved how it monitors its investigative performance. Its investigations quality assurance board meets monthly and is supported by the investigations quality delivery group, which also meets monthly. These meetings focus on quality and timeliness. Data is supported by regular audits of cases and investigation plans.

Our quality service review found that the force allocated crimes to an investigator without delay in 81 out of 85 cases and that there were no delays due to forensic submissions in any of the 12 cases we reviewed. However, when we visited police stations, we found examples of investigations being delayed due to forensic examination requests not being progressed. For example, officers told us about cases where phone download requests were over 18 months old. In some cases, this meant that statutory prosecution time limits had been exceeded, so prosecutions couldn't take place on behalf of victims.

We found examples of victims contacting officers for updates due to the length of time investigations were taking. The force has implemented a digital extraction tool, called Odyssey, to improve how quickly it examines phones and to make sure that the right cases are prioritised. The force told us that it had 25 digital response officers, with more in training. Digital response officers meet with victims, which speeds up the evidence-gathering process. The force told us that in 2025, it used Odyssey to examine phones 143 times. This reduced demand on the [digital forensics](#) unit.

We found that officers didn't always follow investigation plans and that some updates lacked detail and didn't add value to the investigation. Officers told us that this was due to pressure to achieve target times for investigation updates.

The force has improved its investigations since our last inspection, but progress is slow. It should now focus on a victim-centred, qualitative approach. It needs to understand how its audit processes can support its investigators to provide an improved service to victims.

### **The force's supervision of investigations isn't always as effective as it could be**

During our inspection, investigators told us that they felt better supported by the force than at the time of our previous inspection. We found some examples of effective supervision, although this was inconsistent. Supervisors told us that they were able to review investigations within the timescales specified in the relevant force policy to provide direction to investigators. But we saw examples of reviews not completed within the timescales required by the force. Some supervisors also told us that they sometimes completed initial investigation plans for their officers as they weren't always confident that officers could complete them to the required standard.

We saw that officers were managing reduced caseloads but that supervisors didn't always have time to carry out all the tasks required by the force. Sergeants told us that the requirement to carry out [dip samples](#), file quality checks and reviews eroded their time, so their reviews of cases and workloads weren't always as detailed as they would like. They told us that this meant they occasionally worked on rest days or used overtime to complete routine tasks.

For example, supervisors in the [domestic abuse](#) team told us that they each had up to 120 cases to review, as well as responsibility for managing cases involving arrested suspects. They told us that, although they could meet the 28-day timeline for supervisory reviews, the reviews could lack quality and detail.

Without effective supervision, [personnel](#) can't improve how well they investigate offences. This means that the force and public can't be confident that appropriate outcomes will be achieved on behalf of victims. The force should make sure its supervisors can oversee investigations effectively.

### **The force has improved how it manages pre-charge bail**

During our inspection, we found that the force wasn't managing [bail](#) effectively. [Custody officers](#) told us that officers weren't making progress with investigations during the bail period. They said they also weren't updating custody records about cases.

The force responded well to this information. In July 2025, it introduced a bail management process that made the custody department responsible for managing bail dates. We were pleased to receive positive comments from officers. They told us that the new process was effective and supported them in progressing investigations and updating victims.

In January 2026, we found that this process wasn't yet fully in place in some areas of the force, which had led to some confusion about who was responsible for bail. The force has since clarified that the responsibility remains with its custody units. It is monitoring compliance.

### **The force is improving its support for victims of crime**

It is essential for the force to comply with [the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime \('the Victims' Code'\)](#) to give victims a high-quality service. The force investigations quality assurance board monitors the force's compliance with the Victims' Code. The force has detailed data that shows where it needs to focus to provide a better service for victims and be sure that it is supporting them.

Victims' needs being assessed and victims being updated are two of the rights in the Victims' Code. In 64 of 68 relevant cases we reviewed in our quality service review, we found that the force had recorded victim needs assessments. This means that investigators had assessed whether those victims needed support and if so, what type of support they needed and whether they were [vulnerable](#) or intimidated. In 35 of 35 relevant cases, we found that the force had updated victims on the progress of investigations.

But a victim contract was only recorded in 35 of the 49 cases we reviewed. This means that the force isn't meeting the requirements of the Victims' Code. And it could lower victims' confidence in the force's ability to carry out effective investigations.

We found that compared to our 2023–25 inspection, the officers we spoke to were more aware of their responsibilities, but they told us that they didn't always have the time to update victims. They also told us that in some cases officers decided when to update a victim rather than the victim deciding when and how they would receive an update. We also found examples of victims chasing for updates as the force hadn't contacted them.

In our report 2023–25 inspection report, we found that the force needed to improve how it complies with the Victims' Code. While it has made improvements, the force needs to use the data from the quality assurance board to make sure personnel take a consistent approach to better support victims of crime.

# Safeguarding children and adults at risk of harm

## Inadequate

Devon and Cornwall Police is inadequate at [safeguarding children](#) and [adults at risk of harm](#).

### Cause of concern

#### **The force is failing to effectively safeguard adults and children who are at risk of harm**

We found in [our 2023–25 PEEL inspection](#) that the force wasn't consistent in how it shared information about [vulnerable](#) adults and [children](#) with partner agencies.

In this inspection, we found that the force's [public protection notices \(PPNs\)](#) weren't of consistent quality. PPNs are documents that record [safeguarding](#) concerns about an adult or child. They are shared with safeguarding partner agencies to decide a response. We found examples of PPNs that didn't include all necessary police information. This meant that social care partners may have made decisions about the support a vulnerable person needed without understanding the full risk to the child or adult.

We found PPNs that suggested there was a low risk of [domestic abuse](#) to [victims](#), where [officers](#) hadn't considered previous offender and victim histories. In these cases, the victims should have been assessed as medium or high risk.

When considering repeat victims, understanding cumulative risk is important. This involves not just viewing the most recent crime or incident in isolation but also understanding what has happened before. This helps the force and its safeguarding partners to understand if there has been an increase in risk to the victim or in the frequency of offences, which often leads to a greater risk of harm.

In autumn 2025, the force changed its secondary [Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment](#) process, which had involved carrying out specialist reviews of attending officers' initial assessments. The force told us that it intended to carry out secondary risk reviews of its domestic abuse PPNs to improve consistency and safeguarding of victims and their children. At the time of this report, the force hadn't fully implemented the change. It still had work to do to make sure it had the capacity to manage these reviews.

The force couldn't reassure us that it had taken sufficient mitigating action to manage the risk to victims in the meantime. And it couldn't show that it understood the risks of serious harm to victims while no secondary [risk assessments](#) were taking place. Officers and [staff](#) in the force's central safeguarding teams told us that over 8,000 domestic abuse PPNs dating from October to December 2025 hadn't been reviewed. The number of cases where the risk of further or more serious harm to victims isn't fully understood will continue to increase until the force makes the changes it has planned.

Our review also found that the force raised the need for a child protection strategy meeting, in accordance with [section 47 of the Children Act 1989](#), with children's social care in only one of seven cases.

The force doesn't understand and isn't effectively managing the risk of serious harm to children and adults. This means victims might not receive the support or intervention they need.

These are serious issues that affect how well the force and its partners can protect vulnerable adults and children.

## **Recommendations**

Within three months, Devon and Cornwall Police should:

- introduce effective systems to understand the risk of harm to domestic abuse victims because of its unmet demand;
- develop effective governance and processes to understand and manage the risk of harm to vulnerable people that it is notified about through safeguarding referrals;
- make sure it has the capacity and capability to support its safeguarding referral processes to manage demand; and
- review its systems and processes to support the provision of police-held information and [intelligence](#) to improve initial risk assessments.

## Areas for improvement

### **The force needs to improve how it records rapes and crimes committed against victims of domestic abuse**

In [our 2023–25 PEEL inspection](#), we gave the force a [cause of concern](#) for how it recorded rapes and crime associated with [domestic abuse](#). In this inspection, we found that it still needed to improve.

In our [quality service review](#), we examined 45 incidents involving [victims](#) of domestic abuse and 50 reported incidents of rape.

We found 26 domestic abuse crimes that the force should have recorded and 20 domestic abuse crimes that it had recorded correctly.

Victims of domestic abuse are among the most [vulnerable](#) in our communities. Domestic abuse crimes must be recorded correctly and investigated so that victims can be given the protection they need.

We also found four crimes of rape that should have been recorded, but none were.

The force should improve its recording practices to make sure that rape crimes and reported incidents of rape are recorded correctly. If rape crimes aren't recorded correctly, then they may not be investigated properly and victims may not receive the service they expect and deserve from the police.

### **The force needs to effectively manage the preventative orders it applies for**

The force has invested in lawyers that support the applications of orders such as [Domestic Violence Protection Order \(DVPOs\)](#). [Officers](#) we spoke to commented positively on the support and advice that the lawyers gave them.

Officers told us that [Domestic Violence Protection Notices](#) and DVPOs were discussed in briefing and tasking meetings, but they weren't confident about who had responsibility for monitoring or enforcing them. They told us that people subject to orders didn't always know that they were under an obligation to comply with the conditions of a DVPO, as they hadn't been given any documentation. Officers also told us that DVPOs weren't allocated effectively to make sure the orders were proactively policed. Local policing teams keep spreadsheets of DVPOs issued but couldn't provide any data to show that compliance checks had been completed.

The force told us that it was going to introduce a process to manage these orders, but it couldn't reassure us that it was managing this risk effectively.

The force should make sure it has a process in place to support the effective enforcement of these orders. It should make sure it can monitor and track progress centrally through detailed reporting.

## Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to how good the force is at safeguarding children and adults at risk of harm.

### **The force doesn't have effective governance arrangements to protect vulnerable people**

The force has a governance structure that should allow it to effectively safeguard vulnerable people and to manage perpetrators. Its protecting vulnerable persons board oversees governance of safeguarding and vulnerability.

The force also has a strategic safeguarding improvement hub. The hub provides detailed information for panels, forums and meetings. It covers cases of [modern slavery](#), domestic abuse investigations and rape and serious sexual offences. There are other working groups that cover [stalking](#) and [harassment](#).

The force has a vulnerability plan, which is supported by tactical action plans. The performance and analysis team is responsible for the vulnerability plan, and a strategic safeguarding improvement hub manages the tactical action plans. The force also runs reflective learning and scrutiny panels. The panels review cases that have been assigned as needing no further safeguarding action. The force examines themes that involve multi-agency working and assesses individual officer performance to enhance learning and improve performance and awareness.

But we found a lack of oversight of some areas of performance. For example, the force doesn't have immediate access to performance data for its [multi-agency risk assessment conferences \(MARACs\)](#). This data is held in each MARAC and isn't available centrally unless requested by the force's strategic safeguarding improvement hub. Because the data isn't readily available, the force doesn't understand how many cases the MARACs discuss or how many repeat cases are identified.

Supervisors who manage rape and serious sexual offences told us that they were unaware of any performance framework or of how effectively they were working. They also told us that the force had no defined means of measuring team effectiveness. Rape and serious sexual offence teams don't have access to data about the outcomes relating to their investigations so don't have a full understanding of their own performance. We found examples where crime reports had been duplicated. This means that even when an investigation has been finalised, the force's systems may not show this.

This inconsistency and lack of oversight means that officers and staff aren't always clear on the part they play in [protecting vulnerable people](#).

### **The force gives its workforce safeguarding training**

Many officers we spoke to could recall receiving training on vulnerability. The force told us that it had provided its [personnel](#) with [vulnerability training](#), including domestic abuse, recognising vulnerability and the need to appropriately safeguard children. The force told us that around 80 percent of the 440 officers who needed specialist sexual assault investigators development programme training had completed it. At the time of our inspection, 84 officers were accredited.

But although many officers had completed the training programme, not all had completed a portfolio to allow them to be accredited and some had failed to maintain their annual [continuing professional development](#). At the time of our inspection, the force told us that it had training planned for spring 2026 to address these challenges. The force needs to make sure that all officers and staff who have attended training have their competence in carrying out specialist work appropriately assessed and, where possible, accredited.

The force provides its officers with scheduled training days, which include safeguarding training updates. Personnel who attend regular training days include those in the response, criminal investigation and protecting vulnerable people teams. This is positive, and the force told us that it was introducing similar training to its neighbourhood teams in 2026.

Officers told us that they had received training but not all of them felt it was sufficient or had properly equipped them to deal confidently with domestic abuse incidents. Some specialist teams had arranged training through [Community Safety Partnerships](#) across Devon and Cornwall, which wasn't recorded by the force. Some officers were confident in dealing with children and showed that they understood the [voice of the child](#), but others didn't. In our workforce survey, we found that only 52 percent of respondents (159 of 304) reported that they communicated and interacted with children when attending domestic abuse incidents.

The force needs to make sure all its officers and staff have the training they need to protect vulnerable people and that their understanding is evaluated.

### **The force records crimes committed against vulnerable victims effectively**

The force records most crimes committed against vulnerable victims. In our quality service review, we examined 50 records involving referrals made to the force about vulnerable adults and child protection cases and 20 decisions to cancel crimes of rape. We found the following:

- Vulnerable adult and child protection cases: 49 crimes should have been recorded and 45 were recorded correctly.
- Cancelled crimes of rape: 19 out of 20 crimes were cancelled correctly.

Recording and cancelling crimes correctly helps to make sure victims receive the service and support they expect and deserve from the police. If the force doesn't record or cancel crimes correctly, offenders may go on to commit further crimes against their victims or against other vulnerable victims.

### **The force safeguards children and adults at risk of harm**

As part of our quality service review, we reviewed 60 cases to determine how well the force safeguards victims.

We found that in 40 of 42 cases, safeguarding advice was appropriately given to victims. This suggests that officers are aware of their duty to identify and reduce the risk of harm to vulnerable victims. In four of six cases we reviewed, officers recorded the voice of the child in referrals, making sure that the child's experiences and needs were considered in safeguarding decisions.

When attending incidents, officers consistently show [professional curiosity](#) and look beyond the obvious to identify signs of hidden harm, exploitation or vulnerability. Officers made relevant referrals to specialist partners in 30 of 32 cases we reviewed, which shows that they were aware of available support services and the importance of connecting victims with the help they need.

While these findings are positive, they don't reflect our findings from speaking to officers. Officers told us that they were concerned about changes the force had introduced to manage safeguarding demand. We found cases where risk wasn't managed well or where detail was missing from reports that, if included, would have supported better safeguarding opportunities.

### **The force doesn't have a consistent enough approach to managing missing persons investigations**

The force's policy on managing [missing persons](#) makes sure it gives a structured and proactive response. During the missing person triage process, the force assesses risk and gathers important information. In 17 of 19 cases we reviewed, officers attended within the required time frames.

The force carries out thorough investigations to locate missing persons. In 12 of 13 cases we reviewed, officers followed the investigation plan, made relevant enquiries and recorded updates of their efforts to locate the missing person.

In 12 of 12 missing children's cases we reviewed, social care was notified of the missing episode. This means that children were assessed for the welfare support they may need.

But during our inspection, we found that there wasn't enough consistency in the way the force's four [basic command units](#) managed missing persons. One area had a team that managed missing persons, while another had a missing persons co-ordinator and another a youth intervention officer. Some officers we spoke to who were managing missing persons cases told us that they weren't confident that force or partnership meetings effectively discussed missing persons.

The force should make sure that it has a consistent approach to managing missing persons across all areas. It should also make sure that the positive initial response continues throughout the time a person is reported as missing. And it should learn why officers and staff lack confidence in its processes and systems to effectively safeguard vulnerable people.

### **The force works well with multi-agency partners to safeguard and reduce the risk of harm to vulnerable people**

Multi-agency working is an important part of the force's safeguarding strategy. The [multi-agency safeguarding hub](#) includes a wide range of partners, including social care, housing services and health providers, covering both child and adult safeguarding. In 26 of 26 relevant cases we reviewed, the force shared information with appropriate agencies, which allowed for a co-ordinated response to safeguarding. The force processes multi-agency referrals promptly.

But the force still needs to improve how it shares information to make sure partners understand the full picture of the adult's or child's lived experience. Working to commonly understood thresholds relating to the needs of vulnerable people would help the force improve how promptly and appropriately it makes referrals.

The force has systems or processes in place for promptly notifying schools of pupils living with domestic abuse ([Operation Encompass](#)). In 15 of 15 relevant cases we reviewed, officers notified schools about children exposed to domestic abuse. This means children may have received the required support in school.

### **The force doesn't refer enough high-risk cases to its MARACs**

We attended several MARACs across the force and found them to be well attended, with good partnership representation. The police representatives were knowledgeable and collaborative. All the cases discussed were high-risk. But we found that not all high-risk cases were referred due to a lack of qualitative risk assessments.

In the year ending 30 June 2025, [SafeLives](#) data indicates that the force should have discussed 3,130 domestic abuse cases at its MARACs, but it only discussed 2,208 cases. This is 922 fewer cases than expected. In the year ending 30 June 2024, it should have discussed 3,080 cases, but it only discussed 2,002 cases. The recommended number of cases to be discussed is based on [SafeLives' expected level of 40 domestic abuse cases per 10,000 women](#). The force couldn't show that it understood why its referral rate was low. There are 12 MARACs in the force, but it doesn't have a central, clear understanding of how effective they are.

We found that the force had a satisfactory level of child referrals from domestic abuse incidents. Our data shows that in the year ending 31 March 2025, child protection referrals as a proportion of domestic abuse incidents were 55.2 percent, compared to 29.9 percent for England and Wales.

The force has also piloted a [multi-agency tasking and co-ordination](#) group. The aim of the group is to identify the most harmful and serial [abusers](#) who have committed crimes of domestic abuse and to provide multi-agency interventions to prevent re-offending. This is to help safeguard adult and child victims of domestic abuse. We attended group meetings and saw an effective approach to managing the abusers identified. We were pleased to learn that the force was implementing this approach force-wide.

# Managing fraud

Requires  
improvement

Devon and Cornwall Police requires improvement at managing fraud.

## Areas for improvement

### **The force needs to protect its communities from the risk of fraud**

During our inspection, we found that the force didn't have a dedicated fraud protection capability. It uses a [victim](#)-care single point of contact to provide fraud protection advice. But these contacts aren't specifically trained for this role and sometimes give advice based on their own experience rather than national guidance.

The force has no capacity to proactively work with its communities to keep them safe from the risk of fraud. It uses social media and online platforms to provide advice to the public. A dedicated protection resource would allow it to map the threat that fraud poses to different sections of its communities and work with them effectively to reduce risk.

### **The force needs to provide effective training for all investigators and call takers and to continuously evaluate its capability to respond to and investigate fraud**

During our inspection, we found that the force's training for fraud investigators working outside specialist fraud departments and for call takers was inconsistent. It didn't have a clear understanding of which [personnel](#) had received training, or if they had, whether it was up to date.

The frontline investigators we spoke to told us that they didn't feel adequately trained to investigate fraud. They said that they lacked support from specialist departments. In our workforce survey, only 23.9 percent of respondents involved in managing fraud (66 of 276) reported that they had received fraud training. Our audit showed that this was having an impact on the quality of fraud investigations.

We also found that the force wasn't consistently using the [fraud investigation model](#). It hadn't used it in five of the ten cases we reviewed.

In September 2025, the force set up an investigation academy. This should help it improve how it provides investigations training. The force told us that fraud training was an integral part of its training and would be given to all new investigators. It recognises the need to support investigators through [continuing professional development](#) and told us that this would be a regular part of its training.

### **The force needs to record fraud in line with national guidance to prevent unnecessary demand**

The force regularly initiates initial investigation activity when responding to a [vulnerable victim](#) who is reporting a fraud. It has clear guidelines for when this should happen, and in relevant cases, it should be referring incidents to [Report Fraud \(the national fraud report service\)](#). But it isn't always doing this.

This creates additional demand for the force. In the quarter ending 30 September 2025, the force recorded higher numbers of frauds per 1,000 population than the typical range. This results in a lower quality of service for the public when reporting fraud, as the investigation and victim don't benefit from nationally developed understanding and expertise.

The force understands this risk, and its specialists review all fraud reports. But lack of referral can lead to the force closing initial investigations. This causes confusion and means that members of the public may not receive the service they need.

The force should make sure it records and refers fraud in line with national guidance to provide a quality service for the public and prevent unnecessary demand.

## Main findings

In this section, we set out our main findings that relate to how good the force is at managing fraud.

### **The force has effective accountability for fraud, and it understands and manages the threat of fraud in its communities**

During our inspection, we found that the force had assessed the threat from fraud and understood how it affected its communities. The assessment outlines local and national fraud threats. The force's fraud policy is clear and gives consistent direction for allocating fraud investigations and for [safeguarding](#) victims. The force has a named fraud lead and clear governance at both a strategic and an operational level. It effectively monitors performance in relation to fraud at its force-level performance board.

### **The force doesn't have enough capacity and capability to manage fraud in its communities and provide support to victims**

During our inspection, we found that the force didn't have the right capacity or capability to manage fraud. It doesn't use the [4P approach](#) to manage its fraud response or target high-threat fraud types. The force has recently implemented a fraud dashboard that provides a 4P [intelligence](#) overview. We found that fraud investigations were correctly triaged and passed to different investigation teams based on the level of complexity. But the force doesn't follow the fraud investigation model effectively, which means that some investigations aren't carried out in a proportionate, thorough and timely way.

While there are areas that the force needs to focus on, it told us that its fraud investigation outcomes had improved between 2022 and 2025. Our inspection data supported this and showed that the force achieved a [positive outcome](#) rate for fraud investigations of 11.7 percent in the two years ending 31 March 2025. This is higher than the average of 8.2 percent across forces in England and Wales. This is positive. Increased investment in capability should help the force sustain and improve this performance.

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