

Response from the Police & Crime Commissioner of Devon and Cornwall to [An inspection into how effectively the police investigate crime](#)

My Police and Crime Plan has a sharp focus on improving policing and crime services, and I have made it clear that I expect the Chief Constable to provide the public with a police service which is relentless in its fight against crime and the pursuit of justice, whilst providing the right support to victims.

Timely and thorough crime investigations are an integral part of this. When investigation standards slip, victims are let down and perpetrators of crime escape justice.

Investigation standards in Devon and Cornwall need improving; this has been highlighted already by HMICFRS in Devon and Cornwall Police's latest PEEL (Police Effectiveness, Efficiency & Legitimacy) report, and also by my own team who recently conducted a scrutiny inquiry into the quality and timeliness of files prepared by investigating officers for the Crown Prosecution Service.

Officers care about doing a good job and want to get justice for victims, but too often levels of crime, bureaucracy and lack of investigation capacity can mean that the public does not get the service that they expect and are entitled to.

Considerable work has already been undertaken by Devon and Cornwall Police in response to the recommendations made around investigation standards in the 2023-2025 PEEL report. At the Police Performance and Oversight Group on 21st May, the Chief Constable reported to HMCI Andy Cooke on the progress and improvements made in investigation standards.

I will continue to hold the Chief Constable to account for improving the effectiveness of investigations in Devon and Cornwall, and to embed the improvements laid out below as part of the force's ongoing improvement work in this area, and help clarify the longer term levels of investment required.

Recommendation 3

By 31 December 2025, chief constables should make sure their force has an effective and efficient end-to-end process to deal with online reports of crime. The process should remove all unnecessary delays in recording, assessing and allocating crime reports, and make sure the force consistently complies with its requirements under the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime.

Action planned/taken: The force has already undertaken considerable work in this area as part of its investigation improvement work and considers that an effective and efficient end-to-end process is now in place, as follows:

Online reports of crime are reported by the public and businesses through the force's website and an automation process is in place for recording and allocating volume crime of stolen or

damaged property. All other crime is processed through the Contact Resolution Centre (CRC), where the processes and allocation mirrors that for crime recorded over the phone. The CRC are responsible for inputting these crimes into Niche (crime recording system) within 24 hours of the report, and for ensuring that contact is made with victims of all reported crime in line with the requirements of the Victims Code of Practice.

For crimes input by the CRC, a solvability matrix is used to determine whether the crime report should be allocated for assessment by the Crime Management Investigation Team (CMIT) or filed with no viable lines of enquiry.

If a crime report is reviewed and assessed by the CMIT for further investigation, it is allocated to an investigator. CMIT will check the compliance with the Home Office Counting Rules (and record the crime if not done so already). The allocated investigator will check to ensure that the victims code of practice has been adhered to and monitor these rights throughout the investigation. A supervisor will review the crime report at 28-day intervals and will also check that the VCoP rights have been offered/completed.

At the end of the crime investigation a further and final check is carried out by a supervisor, ensuring all crimes have been recorded and VCoP rights complied with before filing the report.

Recommendation 4

By 31 December 2025, chief constables should make sure the end-to-end process for receiving, assessing and allocating reports of crime in their force minimises delays in the investigation process and the length of time before investigators contact victims.

Recommendation 5

By 31 December 2025, chief constables should design and operate a policy that results in their force allocating to investigators crimes that are commensurate with each investigator's level of training, accreditation and experience.

Action planned/taken: The force's Crime Allocation Policy, including an investigation flow is being currently being reviewed and is subject to engagement across all areas of investigation.

Once the refreshed policy is finalised, the force plans to implement a digital tool which will enable consistent investigation allocations, based on risk and complexity.

Professional discussions will take place following allocation by exception following an agreed escalation process. This escalation process is also in draft and will be appended to the main Crime Allocation document.

Recommendation 6

By 30 September 2025, chief constables should make sure their force has a clear policy relating to investigation plans. They should make sure their force communicates this policy to officers and staff.

As a minimum, this policy should cover:

- when to start an investigation plan;
- who is responsible for writing the investigation plan;
- what to consider including in an investigation plan;
- how supervisors should review and approve investigation plans; and
- how the force will monitor investigation plans to check their quality, and to make sure investigators and supervisors have followed them.

Action planned/taken: The force already has clear and embedded processes in place for investigation plans. An investigation plan is required for all crime investigations, which records all reasonable lines of enquiry considered and documents any decisions where these have not been followed. Supervisors are required to complete an initial review of the investigation plan within 28 days of the start of the investigation, and then every 28 days after that. Both supervisors and investigators are able to see at a glance which investigations have investigation plans completed as well as whether supervisor reviews have been completed.

In addition the force has an Investigation Audit quality assurance process carried out by all Inspectors and above. These are mandated at one review per week. Consistent poor performance from investigators or supervisors is identified and training and support is offered. Further poor performance begins the unsatisfactory performance process

The working practice and guidance for plan templates are accessible to all officers and staff via the force's Investigation Academy Intranet site and form part of standard training materials.

Recommendation 7

By 30 June 2025, chief constables should include in their investigation policies a direction stating that when an image exists, investigators should search it against the Police National Database and any other relevant databases before their force closes an investigation.

Action planned/taken: The force is planning to update its investigation policy and relevant templates to ensure officers are reminded at first supervisor review, and before closing as a final check, that the investigation, where relevant, has used Police National Database (PND) image search for suspects.

Drop-in workshops for investigators have been set up now through to June by the Home Office National Police Capabilities Unit to share understanding and demonstrate the PND Image search capability and the force's internal communications team have created a messaging campaign for investigators to make them aware of the policy and template changes.

Recommendation 9

By 31 December 2025, chief constables should make sure the first supervisory review of a crime investigation takes place early enough for the supervisor to be able to:

- review any actions taken, including those to assess and manage risk;
- make sure the investigator has put in place the appropriate support for victims, and is complying with the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime;
- set or approve an investigation plan;
- review the investigator's caseload; and
- set a date for a further review

Action planned/taken: The force has already embedded templates which provide a consistent structure for supervisor reviews and investigation plans. This focuses supervisors on ensuring the investigator has complied with Victims Code of Practice, sets or approves the investigation plan and reviews the investigative activity to that point, setting clear priorities and ensuring action is taken promptly. The supervisor review is undertaken at least every 28 days and is part of a review of the officer's caseload. The force monitors performance data on the completion of investigation plan templates, and quality assurance assessment (investigation audits) ensure that the reviews are meaningful and that supervisors are prioritising and driving prompt activity effectively. Individual feedback is given with support mandated for those found not to have met the standard in three cases.

Data from investigation audits has shown an improvement in the quality of investigations, with the current area of focus being PIP1 investigations. Via the Investigation Academy the force is piloting a PIP1 (professional investigators programme level 1) supervisor training package to further improve skills and competence in managing investigations.

Recommendation 10

By 31 March 2026, chief constables should:

- make sure any member of staff who has a role in supporting the investigation process completes the College of Policing 'Introduction to investigation' learning programme;
- satisfy themselves that the content of their force's ongoing investigative training for responders is designed to develop their investigative skills and performance, and to improve outcomes for victims, and that their force gives responders protected time to complete this training;
- make sure their force focuses sufficiently on case file preparation when providing professionalising investigations programme level 1 training, while taking into account local procedures and case management systems;
- make sure their force gives officers and staff continuing professional development opportunities about preparing case files;
- make sure their force keeps accurate records of professionalising investigations programme level 2 accredited officers and staff, and that those officers and staff complete annual continuing professional development to maintain their accreditation, which forces should also accurately record; and
- review the investigative training their force gives to supervisors, making sure it equips them to oversee and direct crime investigations effectively.

Action taken/planned: Through the delivery of the new Investigation Academy (IA) the investigative training offering is being redesigned and scope broadened to cover PIP1 (professional investigation programme level 1) training, as well as PIP2 (professional investigation programme level 2).

The force has secured the College of Policing (CoP) PIP1 supervisor training course pilot which will launch in September and resources have already been secured to deliver this with officers engaged in train the trainer events at the CoP. The pilot area will be South Devon BCU and if the CoP and the force are content with the results, the training will become an established training product which can be rolled out across the force.

The PIP1 officer in the case (OIC) training provision also remains a priority for the IA and the force is in the early stages of developing a 'post foundation' PIP1 training course (2-3 weeks in person). This would provide operational context for officers and assist in solidifying their learning, rather than relying solely on on-the-job training. This training course will include the 'introduction to investigation' learning programme/outcomes and establish a consistent PIP1 investigation training package for new students.

The training course will address a range of priority investigation standards, as well as the requirements around victim management standards, file standards and criminal justice processes. More broadly it will assist in developing a culture of career long learning and continuous professional development (CPD).

The IA also continues to work with force leads (PIP etc) to set out a common service level from the IA to offer consistent and meaningful CPD opportunities through annual CPD events, the development of a new video bite size training provision (which reaches across a range of thematic areas) and work is advancing to aligning initial accreditation / reaccreditation processes against force / national priority areas (at both PIP1 and PIP2).

The management and tracking of investigation accreditation remains a key priority for the IA. The force has recently completed an audit of both PIP1 and PIP2 accreditation rates and work is advancing to lift accreditation rates and maintain reaccreditation levels for those officers that require it. This has been supported by an audit of all roles across the force to identify those functions that require PIP2 accreditation. PIP2 accreditation rates are currently good in force with over 90% of PIP 2 staff accredited to the right level, or on the pathway to accreditation.

Recommendation 11

By 30 September 2025, chief constables should establish and implement a process to monitor the proportion of recorded crime that their force allocates for investigation. This should include a process to make sure a decision not to allocate a crime for investigation is appropriate.

Action planned/taken: The force has clear processes in place for the assessment and allocation of crimes for investigation, but does not currently have a performance measure for the percentage of crimes screened out, or routinely monitor this proportion. Further work will be undertaken by the force to ensure that this can be tracked going forward.

Crime outcomes are however audited as part of the force's investigation audit process. This provides scrutiny and feedback to investigators and supervisors and also highlights wider issues for performance management, or for improvement work via the Investigation Quality Assurance Board.