



Youth / child Out of Court Resolution (OoCR) Scrutiny Panel 25th February 2026

Theme: Weapons Offences

The Youth Justice System is a diversionary system that uses Out of Court Resolution (OoCR) outcomes where appropriate to resolve cases. The police can use both informal or formal justice system outcomes, these include Community Resolution (CR), Youth Caution (YC), Youth Conditional Caution (YCC) and Deferred Prosecution. The Deferred Prosecution Scheme in Devon and Cornwall police force area are informal diversionary offence disposals, which allow the police to resolve a case with no further action providing educational or diversionary action has been applied. The scrutiny panel's role is to provide assurance to the LCJB members, including the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and Chief Constable that these resolutions are applied consistently, in line with national guidance and local policy and are forums in which good practice and learning can be identified. This learning can then be used by the force operationally to implement any changes deemed fit to improve the OoCR process.

What are Out of Court Resolutions?

Previously called 'Out of Court Disposals' (OoCD) these are now referred to as Out of Court Resolutions (OoCR). An OoCR is a way of dealing with a crime without having to go to court and these are often used in cases where an offence is considered to be less harmful. These offences may have linked victims where their views should be considered in the resolution decision process, although they are not required to engage formally in the resolution process. The decision to use an OoCR is ultimately one for the Police and should be applied where appropriate when taking into consideration factors such as the offence level on the child gravity matrix score, offending history and potential engagement.

OoCRs will not be routinely used for offences where serious injury is caused, and care is taken when considering using them in sexual offences; nor will they be used for current persistent offenders (those that have been convicted or cautioned 3 or more times in the last 12 months).

Restorative Justice (RJ) is not a justice system outcome, rather an informal process which can be considered at any stage of any investigation. RJ brings the

offender and victim together in order that victims can move on from the harm they have experienced, and the offender can understand the harm that they have caused.

As of July 2025, Devon and Cornwall police have implemented their Child First 4-Point Framework for OoCRs which includes the new Child Deferred Prosecution Scheme.

Why the Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB) oversees the scrutiny of OoCRs

It is important that the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and the Chief Constable of the police help the public and other stakeholders to understand:

- What the police do and the difference they make
- The totality of policing (i.e. the parts of policing that the public may not usually see or come into contact with)
- How the police work with others
- How victims are considered through police processes
- The demands of the police
- How their police force is performing
- How public money is spent

Public Confidence is also about trust and having a police service that is open and transparent where policing at every level can be examined and scrutinised to help improve reassurance and the service to communities.

By giving the public this information openly as part of good governance, they can form their own informed views about whether or not they have confidence in their police force.

The LCJB works with partner agencies on behalf of the residents of Devon, Cornwall, and the Isles of Scilly in helping to deliver a police force and criminal justice system that works well and meets the needs of its communities. To do this the LCJB scrutinises certain issues and activities including the use of OoCRs. The scrutiny of OoCRs is about reviewing cases working practices, to recognise and promote good practice, identify any areas for improvement and support the police as an organisation to learn and improve.

How the LCJB scrutinises the use of OoCRs

The LCJB has a dedicated OoCR scrutiny panel to review child cases which is made up of specialists from a range of organisations including the Police, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), the Youth Justice Services (YJS), and the Magistracy. Subject Matter Experts (SME)'s will also be invited where it is felt this would add value and provide useful context to the discussions.

The panel 'dip-samples' cases which have been selected at random on a specific offence theme that have been resolved by Devon and Cornwall Police through the use of an OoCR. The panel does not audit the police's use of OoCRs but dip-

samples 40 randomly selected cases over a 12-month period which provides an exploratory 'snapshot' of police decisions and multiagency approaches. The panel reviews the decision making for each individual case and will talk about the OoCR that was given and where appropriate, the engagement with the relevant YJS.

The panel considers the written information available for each case and, using the expertise of members who are from agencies other than the police, explore in their view whether or not the OoCR that was issued at the time was the right decision, fitting within the guidelines of policy and practice.

Based on the information that the panel members have available to them; they will then place each case into one of four categories:

1.	Consistent with Police Policy (and the Crown Prosecution Service Code for Crown Prosecutors)
2.	Consistent with Police Policy (but with observations added from the panel)
3.	Inconsistent with Police Policy and/or Practice
4.	Panel fails to reach a conclusion

The panel met on the 25th of February and scrutinised 9 cases relating to possession of weapons and knife crime. 9 out of 10 planned cases were heard by the panel due to time constraints and lengthy discussions of the 9 cases completed in full.

Knife crime relates to crimes involving knives or other bladed or pointed articles. The carrying and use of a bladed weapon is prohibited in a variety of contexts and there are specific knives that are illegal for ownership, sale and/or carrying in public. In addition, the use of a weapon in a violent incident may be an aggravating factor in sentencing. The Crown Prosecution Service has a detailed description of legislation relating to knife crime: [knife and other weapons offences](#).

Statistics

National Statistics ([Office for National Statistics Data](#)):

- 9% decrease in police recorded offences involving a knife or sharp instrument in the last 12 months (up to September 2025)
- 50,430 police recorded offences involving a knife or sharp instrument in the last 12 months (up to September 2025)
- 54% increase in police recorded offences involving a knife or sharp instrument in the last 10 years (comparing September 2016 to March 2026)

Devon and Cornwall Police provided the panel with the following statistics. Number of knife and sharp instrument offences recorded by Devon and Cornwall Police between Oct 2024 – September 2025:

- 875 down 6% compared to the previous year (935 recorded offences)

- Possession of a weapon down 1.8%
- Knife crime risen by 1.3%

The findings from the panel's meeting

The panel was of the view that 4 cases were **consistent with Policy**. This score is awarded to cases which can be highlighted as examples of good practice and in line with both force policy and the CPS Code for Crown Prosecutors. Their reasons for making this decision were:

- In one case the child subject had no previous contact with the police and medical conditions would have impacted on his decisions. The subject was also vulnerable to exploitation, and the panel felt the case was a good example of a child first approach through a Community Resolution with conditions to work with a Youth Intervention Officer as a positive means to diversion.
- In one case the child was already receiving support from the Youth Justice Service and the decision to issue a Youth Caution meant the subject could continue working with the YJS, the case also used Restorative Justice for the subject and family members.
- Multiple cases highlighted positive and proactive work by Youth Justice Services to engage with the child subjects away from any investigation processes.
- In one case the subject had no previous contact with police, however the panel felt the offence of possession of a blade whilst on school premises a serious incident and that a Conditional Caution was a positive means of risk managing the individual through a set of conditions. The CPS noted this could have been one they provided advice on, although not required under policy.
- All 4 cases were within police policy and the Crown Prosecution Code for prosecutors.

The panel was of the view that 5 cases were **inconsistent** with Policy and their reasons for making this decision were:

- In 1 case the outcome decided by the police went against the advice of the YJS panel and should have gone back for further discussion, there was also a 6-month delay from time of offence to decision.
- In some cases, the Gravity Matrix had not been recorded (A gravity matrix is a tool used to help inform the police's decision making) which is inconsistent with Policy.
- In 1 case no responsibility for the offence by the suspect was recorded.
- In 1 case the perpetrator was not interviewed and admission not made.
- In 1 case a charging decision was made without YJS consultation which is against police policy. This case went to court but was adjourned for consideration of an OoCR.
- 1 case held multiple offences under 1 resolution and the panel felt that some of the offences recorded where the wrong offences due to the information held on the offence behaviour.
- In 3 cases a Community Resolution was given with no Inspectors authority which is required under police policy.
- For some cases there was a delayed timeframe from the date of offence to the relevant resolution being administered without reasonable explanation for the delay.

Additional observations and learning from the panel:

The Panel were provided with details of the new government [guidance for child knife possession offences](#) published in February 2026, which outlines that all children suspected of a knife, sharply pointed or bladed article offence must be subject of mandatory Youth Justice Service intervention by way of the following outcomes:

- Youth Conditional Caution
- Deferred Prosecution
- Charge

Previously, Devon and Cornwall police allowed a Community Resolution to be offered to a child under 16 years with the authority of an inspector, this practice has now ceased as new policy prohibits the use of a CR.

From the cases discussed at panel the representation from each organisation assumes responsibility of taking the learning captured by the panel to be considered for improvements in their respected agencies.

Further Information:

To help tackle knife crime, Devon & Cornwall Police launched a new knife crime website called [#NotTheOne](#) which is part of a national partnership-led campaign that aims to educate 11 to 16-year-olds on the dangers and consequences of carrying a knife.

It targets teachers, parents, friends and family who play a vital role in positively influencing young people's lives and stop them being drawn into knife crime.

It also includes supportive conversations and shares videos of victims of knife crime and the parent of a knife crime victim. It is through their braveness in sharing their experiences of the devastating impact of knife crime that will help make vital cultural behaviour changes to protect young children and future generations from becoming victims.

Using the panel's findings to make a difference:

The panel will report their findings directly to the Police & Crime Commissioner as Chair of the Local Criminal Justice Board and the Chief Constable.

Devon and Cornwall Police may choose to raise the panel's findings with individual police officers and may also cascade learning from the panel throughout the entire organisation. Any learning identified in the scrutiny reports will be presented to the Investigative Quality Assurance Board (IQAB) to identify relevant leads for improvements and responses to the panel.

Find out more about our scrutiny at www.devonandcornwall-pcc.gov.uk/about-us/scrutiny.

If you need this information in a different language or format please contact the Local Criminal Justice Board by email lcjb@dc-pcc.gov.uk or telephone 01392 225555.