



Youth / child Out of Court Resolution (OoCR) Scrutiny Panel 25th November 2025

Theme: Drugs

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 OoCR's which includes the new Child Deferred Prosecution Scheme.

Why the Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB) oversees the scrutiny of OoCR's

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 OoCR's. The scrutiny of OoCR's 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.

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
4.	Panel fails to reach a conclusion

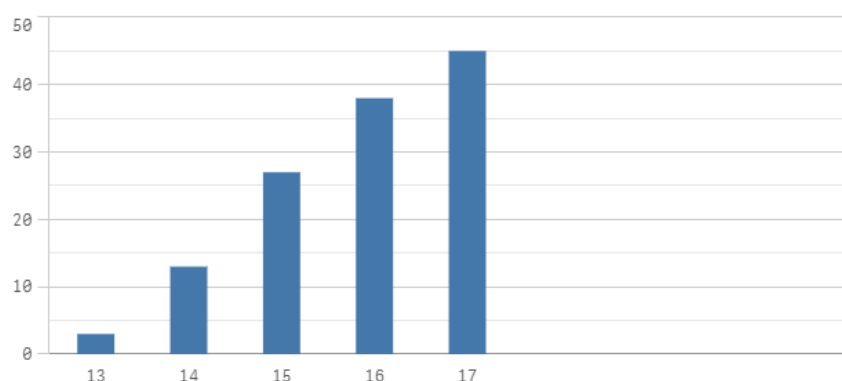
The panel met on the 25th November 2025 and scrutinised 10 cases relating to drug offences. The legal restrictions placed on the use of controlled drugs are aimed at preventing drug misuse. The principal offences relating to the misuse of controlled drugs are contained in the [Misuse of Drugs Act 1971](#). The primary objective of the Act is the control of the use and distribution of dangerous and harmful drugs. The Act classifies the drugs according to their relative degree of overall harm from misuse.

Statistics:

Devon and Cornwall Police provided the panel with the following statistics, and the data suggests:

- Over a 12- month period 126 crimes were recorded in relation to drug offences, with a total of 122 offenders.
- 12 cases were dealt with by way of an Outcome 22.
- 103 cases were dealt with by way of a Community Resolution or Youth Restorative Disposal.
- 8 cases were dealt with by way of a Conditional Caution.
- 3 cases were dealt with by way of a Youth Caution.

Person Age Profile (at time committed)



The findings from the panel's meeting

The panel was of the view that 2 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:

- The police investigation considered all safeguarding and vulnerabilities of the child subject, and a child strategy plan was put in place. Considering all the mitigating factors, a youth conditional caution was the most appropriate outcome and required the subject to meet a set of conditions and good interventions were put in place to reduce any further offending.

The panel was of the view that 1 case was **consistent with Policy but with observations**. Their reasons for making this decision were:

- The panel felt that the case involved a vulnerable child subject who had been coerced by older males. The subject received a youth caution and there were no previous offending history. However, this case recorded a gravity score of 4, which may not warrant a youth caution, and a youth conditional caution may have been more appropriate where conditions would have been enforceable to help and support the child subject.

The panel was of the view that 7 cases were **inconsistent** with Policy and their reasons for making this decision were:

- The panel heard that in some instances there was no record that the drugs were tested and therefore questioned the evidence that a crime had been committed. The police should record the testing and the outcome. The panel cannot presume testing had taken place.
- 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 one case no admission by the suspect was recorded.
- In one case no statement had been made.
- In 1 case the perpetrator was not interviewed, and no Inspectors authority was given for a Community Resolution which is required under police policy.
- In 1 case 2 previous Community Resolutions have already been given to the subject in a 12-month period.

Observations and learning from the panel:

- In some cases, there were no record that the drug(s) seized had been tested, and the panel could not presume this to be the case, therefore the evidential test could be questionable.
- The Gravity Matrix had not been completed in some cases, which is a requirement under police policy.
- In some cases admissions were vague or not recorded.

Further Information:

County Lines

'County Lines' is a national issue which involves the exploitation of vulnerable children and adults by violent gang members in order to move and sell drugs across the country.

The National Crime Agency has identified that there is growing evidence of city-based organised crime gangs extending their drug dealing activity into new areas, many of which are coastal towns. The gangs recruit vulnerable people, often children, to act as couriers and to sell drugs.

They operate by using runners who dispatch the drugs by deliveries via a telephone 'relay or exchange' system. The 'runners' are invariably children, often aged 14 to 17 years, who are groomed with money and gifts and forced to carry out day to day dealing.

Runaway and missing children are particularly targeted and used by gangs to expand inner city drugs empires into county towns. Children as young as 11 years of age have been reported as being recruited into the highly sophisticated gangs.

The Modern Slavery Act 2015 may provide opportunities to consider the circumstances of 'County Line' offending, particularly where there has been deliberate targeting, recruitment and significant exploitation of young and vulnerable people.

Op Scorpion

Operation Scorpion is the regional police response to tackling drugs in the South West. The operation ran from Monday 24 to Sunday 30 November 2025 with activity taking place across Devon and Cornwall alongside Avon & Somerset Police, Dorset Police, Gloucestershire Police, Wiltshire Police and the South West Regional Organised Crime Unit with the main theme to tackle the exploitation of young people.

During the recent collaboration between forces the police made more than a hundred arrests, with a range of activity taking place, including the execution of arrest and search warrants, vehicle stops and the use of drones to track suspected dealers.

In total, across the South West:

- 112 people were arrested
- £67,329 cash was seized
- 52kg of cannabis was confiscated, including 868 cannabis plants
- Three guns were recovered, plus five imitation firearms
- 48 people were safeguarded, including five children

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.