



Devon & Cornwall
POLICE



May 2026

**Submission by the Chief Constable of Devon and Cornwall
Police to the Call for Evidence by the Independent Review
of Police Force Structures**

This submission to the Call for Evidence by the Independent Review of Police Force Structures is being published alongside the response submitted by the Police and Crime Commissioner for Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

Note sections 1 and 2 are organisational data and not included here.

Section 3 – Police Force Mergers

The questions in this section are for all respondents

4. What are the greatest potential opportunities a policing system with fewer, larger forces could create? (Please rank the top five)

	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th
Better partnership work with local government and wider public sector					
Clearer accountability and governance					
Enhanced intelligence and data-sharing capabilities					X
Greater consistency in service quality for the public					
Greater operational resilience and agility				X	
Greater organisational resilience and workforce development			X		
Improved access to specialist capabilities					
Improved effectiveness in tackling serious, complex and cross-border crime	X				
Improved value for money and financial sustainability					
Improved victim experience and confidence in policing services					
Increased welfare provisions and career development opportunities for officers and staff					
Modern, interoperable data-enabled policing		X			
More efficient use of resources (e.g. people, money, systems)					
Stronger and more responsive local policing					
Stronger strategic leadership and coordination					

5. What other opportunities might arise from structural reform? [max 300 words]

Structural reform could create opportunities across policing, public services and communities if lessons from previous reforms are applied effectively.

Experience from Police Scotland demonstrated that greater national coordination can improve specialist capabilities, intelligence sharing and resilience against organised crime, cybercrime and terrorism. Similar lessons emerged from the Dutch restructuring of the National Police Corps, where centralisation improved operational consistency and national deployment capacity. For England and Wales, reform could therefore strengthen cross-border investigations, digital policing capability and workforce standardisation.

Structural reform also presents opportunities for stronger multi-agency collaboration. More coterminous arrangements between policing, health, local authorities and probation could improve safeguarding, offender management and early intervention. Lessons from UK public sector reforms, including integrated care systems within the National Health Service, show that aligned governance and shared data can improve accountability and service coordination.

For the criminal justice system, reform could reduce duplication, streamline processes and improve information sharing between courts, prisons and policing partners. Citizens and victims may benefit from more consistent service standards, clearer accountability and improved access to specialist victim support services.

However, reforms in Scotland and the Netherlands also highlighted risks of over-centralisation, bureaucracy and weakened local responsiveness. Canadian policing reforms further demonstrated the importance of balancing national capability with local autonomy and democratic oversight. Data and systems are fundamental to understanding risk. Inaccurate data, limited transparency, or unintended restrictions on use reduce operational effectiveness and the quality of forecasting. At present, information is too fragmented across forces, so the transition must prioritise aligning systems, processes, and data standards to make them consistent and as accurate as possible across appropriate geography and boundaries.

Overall, the key opportunity is not simply structural efficiency, but the creation of a more integrated, accountable and preventative public safety system centred on community outcomes and public trust.

6. What are the most significant challenges in transitioning to a policing system with fewer, larger forces? (Please rank the top five)

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
Ensuring clear accountability and governance arrangements		X			
Ensuring effective and timely operational response and service delivery	X				
Ensuring efficient use of resources (e.g. people, money, systems), particularly during transition					
Ensuring value for money and financial sustainability					
Integration challenges for IT, data systems, and operational technology			X		
Legal, contractual, and procurement barriers to consolidation					
Limiting disruption on victim services and safeguarding arrangements					
Limiting disruption to existing partnerships					
Maintaining effective leadership at scale					X
Maintaining local policing responsiveness and visibility					
Maintaining operational resilience, agility or capability during transition					
Maintaining partnership working with local government and wider public sector and other partners / services				X	
Maintaining public confidence in policing					
Maintaining service quality experienced by the public					
Maintaining workforce resilience, morale or organisational culture					

7. What other challenges, risks and/or potential unintended consequences might result from structural reform? [max 300 words]

UK police structural reform could create significant challenges and unintended consequences if implementation focuses primarily on efficiency rather than legitimacy, culture and local accountability.

Lessons from Police Scotland and the Dutch National Police Corps show that large-scale, government-led reform can weaken local responsiveness and public confidence if local policing identity and community relationships are underestimated. In both cases, concerns emerged around policing becoming more distant from communities, reducing trust and perceived legitimacy.

A key risk is failing to establish clear accountability arrangements from the outset. Structural reform can blur responsibilities between chief officers, government, local authorities and oversight bodies, potentially weakening scrutiny and delaying decision-making. This may also affect multi-agency safeguarding and community safety partnerships if local governance structures become unclear or overly centralised.

There is also a risk that reform disrupts established partnership working. Coterminous relationships between policing, local authorities, health and voluntary organisations are often built on long-standing local knowledge and trust. Reorganisation could unintentionally weaken collaboration, information sharing and understanding of local demographics, vulnerability and community risk.

Canada's more evolutionary approach highlights the value of gradual adaptation over rapid restructuring. Incremental reform may reduce operational disruption, workforce uncertainty and cultural resistance. By contrast, rapid centralisation can create bureaucracy, lower morale and increase abstraction from frontline delivery.

Financial risks are also significant. Experience from Scotland suggests transition costs, ICT /DDaT integration (which all 5 SW forces are collaborating on with Police Digital Services) and organisational redesign are frequently underestimated. Equalisation of police staff pay, conditions and pensions across merged organisations may create substantial long-term costs and workforce tensions. Welfare impacts, including uncertainty, stress and loss of organisational identity, may further affect morale, retention and performance.

Ultimately, poorly managed reform risks reducing effectiveness, partnership cohesion and police legitimacy rather than strengthening them.

Section 4 – Local Policing

8. At what level should the following policing functions be organised? [Please provide a response for all policing functions where you have direct or relevant knowledge/expertise]

	Local Policing Area Level	Police Force Level
Custody	Yes	
Volume Crime [PIP1]	Yes	
Serious and Complex Crime [PIP2]	Yes	
Culpable Homicide [Cat C/C+]		Yes
Culpable Homicide [Cat B and above]		Yes

Neighbourhood Crime Investigation (Burglary/Robbery, Theft from the person, vehicle, and cycle crime)	Yes	
Domestic Abuse	Yes	
Local Child Protection Investigation [PIP1/2]	Yes	
Triage - Digital forensic capability	Yes	
Proactive Team– Lower-level SOC (pursue capability)	Yes	
Public protection	Yes	
Safeguarding	Yes	
Roads policing		Yes
Public order		Yes
Firearms		Yes
Contact management and Control Rooms		Yes
Criminal justice operational support		Yes
VAWG (incl. monitoring dangerous and repeat offenders)	Yes	
Local intelligence	Yes	
Crime Prevention	Yes	Yes “what works etc”
Performance		Yes
MASH capability	Yes	

9. If there are any other policing functions you think are important to include please do so here, indicating if they should be organised at the Local Policing Area level or Police Force level.

It might be helpful for the Review Team to review the list against the policing functions and activities set out by HMICFRS in the Force Management Statement and if necessary seek further views based upon this to ensure nothing is lost. Civil and Contingency planning at current force level will need thought as LRFs have clear boundaries upon which they operate.

If LPAs are to be focused on the issues that matter most to communities, they must have leverage over a wide range of resources. A “draw down service” or “service level agreements” would need to be highly sophisticated to ensure the more rural areas could access resources even if risk, when scored against large urban areas, is less. A weighting mechanism for local harm would be required as opposed to pure crime harm scores.

Identifying what resources will be held in an LPA cannot be separated from thinking about force size.

In a very large force, more resources such as roads policing and firearms units, dogs, emergency planning teams will need to sit alongside the LPA Commander to ensure that their communities can access them and to reflect local context. Hub and spoke or clustered operational systems may need to operate. Costs for operational services are disproportionate in a large complex rural geography due to limited road infrastructure and sparsity, as highlighted below.

For example, Devon and Cornwall is already the largest geographic force in England at 4,000 square miles. It is highly rural, with over 59% of our population living in rural areas, occupies an isolated peninsula location with over 730 miles of coastline and has the largest road network at 13,500 miles with 85% of our roads classified as rural. Much of that network is not supported by National Highways, with less than 20 miles of road included in their strategic road network and means that the responsibility for patrolling, broken down vehicles and debris across our network is left to the police.

If our force was to move into a wider south-west force, covering up to 20% of the geographic land mass of England, then many of the services currently delivered at force level would need to be moved in some capacity to LPA. Failure to do this will create significant risk over the ability of more remote areas to access the services that they need – with resources sucked into the larger urban areas in the north of the region through an over-reliance on crime harm scores if not weighted against levels of risks that may be disproportionate to a local community when compared against a similar community in an urban area. It may also reduce public confidence and undermine policing by consent given that local residents fund 43% of the policing budget through their council tax.

An additional risk for Devon and Cornwall is the loss of recognition, in a larger force, of the unique characteristics of the peninsula and Islands and its implications for service delivery and the cost of delivering those services. Our submission to the Home Office's 2022 Call for Evidence on Seasonality and Sparsity as part of its work to examine the existing police funding formula has been shared with the Review Team. That submission evidenced a number of examples where our geography, lack of transport infrastructure and jumps in levels of seasonal demand in both crime and incidents mean that we need to have more resources located in the area which affects our costs. These requirements risk getting lost in a larger force that includes significant urban centres at the north of the region.

10. What are the most significant benefits associated with alignment of Local Policing Areas to local government boundaries at unitary authority level? [max. 300 words]

The core policy logic addressed in numerous findings by HMICFRS, local government governance frameworks, integrated care reforms and public service integration research suggests that communities experience public services as a single local system and outcomes improve when those services are organised around place-based geography.

A principal benefit is stronger multi-agency collaboration. Crime and vulnerability are closely linked to issues managed by councils, including housing, youth services, safeguarding, public health and antisocial behaviour. Where boundaries align, agencies can share intelligence, coordinate interventions and jointly commission services more effectively. Government reviews of integrated public services and policing reform have repeatedly concluded that coterminous structures improve collaboration, reduce silo working and support preventative approaches.

Aligned boundaries also strengthen neighbourhood policing. HMIC inspections found that where policing areas matched council wards, partnership engagement and community consultation were simpler and more effective. Shared geographies create clearer accountability for residents, councillors and partner agencies and reduce confusion regarding responsibility and service delivery.

From a governance perspective, coterminosity simplifies oversight arrangements and strategic planning. Police, councils and community safety partnerships can operate through common priorities, shared data and unified performance frameworks. This supports faster decision-making and clearer democratic accountability.

There are also efficiency benefits. Shared boundaries make it easier to pool resources, coordinate estates, integrate safeguarding hubs and reduce administrative duplication. Evidence from public sector integration programmes indicates that fragmented geographies often create unnecessary bureaucracy and weaker service coordination.

Importantly, modern policing increasingly depends on prevention rather than reactive enforcement. Aligned governance enables policing to be integrated with broader local strategies addressing deprivation, youth violence, mental health and social vulnerability.

Overall, the evidence indicates that boundary alignment supports more coherent local leadership, better use of public resources, stronger prevention activity and improved outcomes for communities through genuinely place-based public services.

11. What are the greatest risks associated with the alignment of Local Policing Areas to local government boundaries at unitary authority level [or most similar unit of local government (e.g. metropolitan district)]? [max. 300 words]

A key concern could be the loss of operational independence. Policing must remain impartial and free from undue political influence. Closer alignment with local government structures may create perceptions that policing priorities are being shaped by political or electoral considerations rather than operational need.

There is also a risk that local priorities become fragmented. Crime does not always follow council boundaries, and policing increasingly deals with regional, national and global crime threats. Strong local alignment can sometimes reduce flexibility and create tensions between neighbourhood priorities and wider policing responsibilities.

Another potential concern is inconsistency in service provision and capability. Smaller or highly localised policing structures may struggle to maintain all the functions it may be asked to perform such as cybercrime investigation or advanced safeguarding services. Economies of scale can be lost if governance becomes overly fragmented.

Boundary changes can also create significant transition costs and organisational disruption. Realigning structures often requires changes to IT systems, estates, staffing models, governance arrangements and partnership frameworks. During transition periods, productivity and service quality can temporarily decline.

There are governance risks too. If multiple agencies become too closely integrated, accountability can become blurred rather than strengthened, particularly where responsibilities overlap. Clear lines of decision-making and scrutiny are essential.

Coterminous boundaries do not automatically guarantee effective collaboration. Strong leadership, organisational culture and shared objectives remain critical. Poorly functioning partnerships can still exist even where boundaries align.

Finally, there is a risk that highly localised governance may create unequal outcomes between areas with differing financial strength, leadership capacity or demand pressures.

Overall, while alignment can improve coordination and prevention, successful implementation depends on balancing local responsiveness with operational independence, and a clearly defined process on which to draw down specialist capability when required.

Section 5 – Interaction with other local services

12. What opportunities could fewer larger forces and the introduction of LPAs create for local partnerships and / or commissioning services? [max 300 words]

It is difficult to see how a move to fewer larger forces will bring benefits to local partnership work or the commissioning of services in Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. The isolated

peninsula location and large rural and coastal footprint mean we already work collaboratively across local authority boundaries to deliver peninsula or multi-area initiatives and projects such as Vision Zero South West, Tri Service Safety Officers and the Local Resilience Forum, SARC's, Sexual Violence Contracts, VCSE commissioning of victims services, Operation Encompass. These relationships need to be fostered and there is a risk these services will be disrupted and disappear in a much larger force.

It is much more likely that increasing the size of the force – which is already large – will make it harder to work with partners and lead to disruption or termination of long-standing and valuable partnerships unless thought is given to how to foster and maintain them. (See further answers for potential options)

- Existing partnerships may no longer be viewed as a priority by a Chief Constable who has a remit and responsibility for a much larger force.
- Costs and disruption caused by merging multiple forces will reduce funding and capacity for partnership working for a long time.
- Weakened relationships between Chief Constable/Policing & Crime Lead and other strategic leaders will mean less opportunity to innovate and collaborate.

13. What risks or negative impacts could fewer, larger forces have on local partnerships and / or commissioning services? [max 300 words]

UK policing should be cautious about assuming that “bigger is automatically better”. Lessons from corporate demergers, alongside reforms in Police Scotland, Canada and the Dutch National Police Corps, suggest that excessive scale can create bureaucracy, weaken local responsiveness and reduce organisational agility.

A key lesson from businesses such as GE, DuPont and Hewlett-Packard is that large organisations often overestimate the benefits of economies of scale while underestimating the costs of complexity. In policing, larger forces may improve specialist capability, procurement and national coordination, but could also slow decision-making and distance leadership from frontline communities. Scotland and the Netherlands both experienced concerns around centralisation weakening local legitimacy and partnership working.

Corporate break-ups also show that organisations perform best when focused on clear core functions rather than pursuing scale for its own sake. For UK policing, this suggests reform should prioritise operational effectiveness, public trust and community outcomes rather than simply reducing force numbers. Canada’s more evolutionary approach demonstrates that collaboration, shared services and national coordination can strengthen capability without fully removing local autonomy.

Another lesson is the importance of culture and identity. Large mergers in both business and policing frequently underestimated workforce culture, morale and organisational identity, as just like communities many staff recognise and enjoy local identity. Equalisation of pay, conditions and systems can generate significant long-term financial pressures and welfare challenges if poorly managed.

Businesses have also learned that customers disengage when organisations become too remote. In policing, this equates to reduced community confidence and weaker understanding of local demographics and risks. Structural reform must therefore preserve neighbourhood policing, local accountability and where possible coterminous partnership arrangements with health, local authorities and safeguarding agencies.

Overall, scale should be a means to improve public outcomes, not an objective in itself.

14. What risks or negative impacts could the introduction of LPAs have on local partnerships and / or commissioning services? [max 300 words]

The introduction of LPAs could create several risks for local partnerships and commissioning arrangements, particularly if LPAs become significantly more localised while policing governance and operational command are “regionally” organised.

The scale of the LPA is critical. If LPAs broadly mirror current BCU arrangements, there may be benefits in maintaining strong local relationships and place-based responsiveness. However, this could also create a widening gap between local identity and the strategic direction of a larger regional force. Local partnerships may increasingly identify with the LPA rather than the wider force, potentially weakening consistency of service delivery, organisational cohesion and strategic alignment across the region.

A major risk is fragmentation. Highly localised LPAs could unintentionally create a sub-structure resembling a network of many smaller quasi-forces, each prioritising its own local geography. This may undermine the ability to take decisions in the broader public interest across wider communities, particularly where crime, vulnerability and offender networks cross boundaries.

For partnerships and commissioning, this may result in:

- inconsistent commissioning priorities between LPAs,
- duplication of governance structures and partnership boards,
- competition for finite resources,
- varying service standards,
- reduced economies of scale.

There is also a risk that regional commissioning models for safeguarding, violence reduction, victim services or offender management become more difficult to coordinate if local LPAs pursue differing priorities or operational approaches.

Partnership fatigue may increase where councils, health bodies and voluntary organisations are required to engage with multiple policing structures operating at different geographical levels.

Localism can create inequalities. Areas with stronger leadership, funding or partnership maturity may secure better outcomes, while others fall behind.

Ultimately, while LPAs may strengthen local responsiveness, reform must avoid excessive fragmentation. Effective models will require strong regional coordination, consistent governance frameworks and clear accountability to ensure local priorities do not undermine wider strategic policing and community safety outcomes.

Section 6 – Governance

Please only answer the following questions if you have direct or relevant experience or expect to be involved in future policing governance.

How can Local Policing Areas (LPAs) be implemented to ensure that:

15. The public can shape the priorities of LPAs? [max 300 words]

There is evidence from UK neighbourhood policing, community safety partnerships and public service governance that successful Local Policing Areas (LPAs) depend heavily on visible

local engagement, influence over priorities and clear accountability mechanisms. However, there is also a recognised tension in describing LPAs as “accountable” to communities when officers and staff ultimately remain employed by, directed by and operationally accountable to a wider regional force.

Research and inspectorate findings consistently show that local policing works best where communities can genuinely influence priorities rather than simply being consulted after decisions are made.

Successful models typically include:

- regular neighbourhood engagement forums,
- locally published priorities and performance measures,
- named local policing leads,
- co-designed community safety plans,
- ward-level problem solving,
- transparent feedback loops (“you said, we did”),
- and strong links with councillors, housing providers, schools and voluntary organisations.

HMICFRS neighbourhood policing inspections have repeatedly found that public confidence improves where communities understand:

- who their local officers are,
- how priorities are set,
- and how concerns influence operational activity.

The evidence also supports locally aligned problem-solving structures, where policing, councils and health partners jointly analyse local demand and vulnerability.

Importantly, successful implementation usually involves devolved influence rather than fully devolved control. Communities help shape priorities, but operational policing decisions remain within force-wide governance and legal frameworks.

16. LPAs are accountable to local communities? [max 300 words]

There is a legitimate governance challenge with the word “accountable” in this context especially when looking at restructuring and attempting to stop the emergence of quasi-force sub structures.

LPAs may appear locally accountable, but officers and staff remain:

- employed by the wider force,
- subject to force-wide policies,
- operationally directed through command structures,
- and ultimately accountable through the Chief Constable and statutory policing framework.

This means LPAs are often better described as:

- locally responsive,
- locally influenced,
- or locally governed in partnership

rather than fully accountable in a constitutional or operational sense.

Using “accountability” too loosely risks creating unrealistic public expectations that local communities or councils can direct policing activity, budgets or operational decisions when legal accountability remains at force level.

The most successful models therefore tend to combine:

- strong local influence and visibility,
- transparent engagement,
- clear routes for challenge and scrutiny,
- but unambiguous force-wide operational accountability.

In practice, clarity of governance is critical. Communities need to understand:

- what LPAs can decide,
- what remains a force responsibility,
- and who ultimately answers for policing performance.

17. There is an appropriate relationship between the operational leads of LPAs and local authority leaders? [max 300 words]

Police can learn from several models across policing, health and local government.

Adopt a “shared outcomes” model rather than shared control

Successful partnerships elsewhere in the public sector work because agencies align around common outcomes while retaining distinct statutory responsibilities.

Integrated Care Systems in the NHS provide a useful example. Health bodies and councils jointly plan around shared priorities such as vulnerability, prevention and demand reduction, but accountability for operational delivery remains clear within each organisation.

For LPAs, this means:

- agreeing shared local priorities,
 - jointly analysing local demand,
 - and coordinating interventions,
- without blurring operational policing independence.

Create formal partnership governance structures

Evidence from CSPs and VRUs shows that collaboration is strongest where governance arrangements are formalised.

Successful arrangements include:

- jointly chaired strategic boards,
- clear escalation routes,
- shared performance frameworks,
- agreed decision-making protocols,
- regular joint tasking meetings.

This prevents partnerships becoming personality dependent.

Police and LAs should also define:

- what decisions are local,
- what remains force-wide,
- how disagreements are resolved.

Focus on place-based leadership

Research shows that place-based leadership improves outcomes where senior leaders act as “system leaders” rather than representatives of individual organisations.

Effective LPA leads typically:

- understand wider social demand,
- engage beyond enforcement,
- work alongside council leaders on prevention and vulnerability.

Local authority leaders similarly need visibility of operational policing pressures and legal constraints.

Maintain clear accountability boundaries

A primary lesson from integrated governance elsewhere is that accountability must remain explicit.

LPA leads should be:

- operationally accountable to the wider force,
- but publicly visible and locally responsive.

Councils should influence priorities and partnership activity, but not direct operational policing decisions.

Invest in shared intelligence and joint problem solving

The strongest partnerships elsewhere are data-led.

Police have learnt from safeguarding hubs and public protection partnerships where agencies:

- share risk data,
- jointly identify vulnerable cohorts,
- coordinate interventions around repeat demand.

This shifts relationships from reactive coordination to proactive prevention.

In summary

The evidence suggests successful LPA-local authority relationships are built on:

- shared local outcomes,
- formal governance,
- place-based leadership,
- strong partnership culture,
- clear accountability boundaries.

18. Local policing priorities are reflected at the regional level? [max 300 words]

The main risk would be that strategic efficiency is gained at the expense of local legitimacy, neighbourhood knowledge and responsiveness. Evidence from policing research and from other “hub and spoke” public-sector models suggests the answer is not simply structural; it is about how accountability, budgets, performance and decision-making are distributed.

Protect neighbourhood policing as a devolved “spoke”

The evidence suggests regionalisation should therefore:

- centralise specialist and enabling functions;
- but devolve neighbourhood policing budgets and priority-setting to local commands.

This resembles a “federated” model used in industry such as retail banking and in the public sector, NHS.

- Local Policing Areas (LPAs) aligned to counties/unitary authorities;

- each led by a local commander with delegated budgets and staffing;
- protected neighbourhood teams that cannot routinely be abstracted to regional demand.

Ringfence local priorities through budgets and performance measures
Large organisations drift toward what is centrally measured.

Evidence from neighbourhood policing studies showed tension between:

- force-level crime targets,
- and community concerns such as antisocial behaviour, visibility and disorder.

Create formal community priority mechanisms

Evidence on neighbourhood policing repeatedly highlights that local priorities are strongest when communities directly shape them.

Regional forces could institutionalise this through:

- quarterly neighbourhood assemblies;
- digital participation platforms;
- citizen panels;
- local problem-solving forums;
- participatory budgeting for community safety initiatives.

Importantly, local priorities should feed upward into the regional control strategy rather than being symbolic consultation exercises.

A useful model is the “hub and spoke” approach used in safeguarding partnerships:

- central standards,
- local multi-agency delivery.

Align policing geography with existing civic identity

One lesson from public-sector reorganisations is that legitimacy weakens when administrative geography ignores local identity.

Regional police forces would work better if:

- local commands matched recognisable counties/cities;
- local branding and visibility remained;
- communities still identified “their” police commander (risks to this have been highlighted in previous question)

The key lesson is that mergers alone do not improve policing unless local accountability/responsibility mechanisms are strengthened simultaneously.

Performance

Balanced scorecard:

- regional crime performance,
- plus mandatory local confidence and community metrics.

19. What existing good practice for policing governance should be built into Police and Crime Boards? [max 500 words]

Governance

- regional elected oversight body or mayoral structure;
- plus local community safety boards with formal influence over plans and budgets.

Use subsidiarity as an operating principle

A strong design principle from both public administration and large organisations is decisions should be taken at the lowest level capable of effectively resolving the issue. E.g.

Regional level

Serious organised crime
Digital forensics
Procurement
HR and training
Intelligence systems

Local level

Neighbourhood patrols
Local problem-solving
School engagement
Community relationships
Local prevention partnerships

This prevents over-centralisation.

Avoid the “Police Scotland” risk

Debates around large-force models often cite concerns that national or regional mergers can:

- weaken local responsiveness,
- centralise decision-making,
- create distance from communities.

Use “double-key accountability”: regional strategy + local democratic mandate

This is similar to current arrangements with ROCU accountability alongside force accountability.

One of the biggest risks of large regional forces is that priorities become dominated by urban centres or national performance targets.

This concern already appears in debates around regionalisation. Rural and smaller communities often fear resources will migrate toward major cities.

Other sectors manage this through dual governance systems.

Public sector example: NHS Integrated Care Systems

In the NHS:

- specialist services are organised regionally for efficiency;
- but “place-based partnerships” still shape local priorities.

A policing equivalent could include:

Regional Police Board made up of top tier leaders

Responsible for:

- major crime,
- SOC,
- digital infrastructure,
- standards,
- procurement,
- workforce planning.

Local Policing Boards led by a member on the regional policing board

At county or metropolitan level, who may, through the police and crime lead (executive officer) liaise with:

- councils,
- victims’ groups,

- community representatives,
- business improvement districts,
- youth services.

These boards would:

- set local policing plans,
- commission neighbourhood priorities,
- scrutinise local outcomes,
- hold commanders publicly accountable/responsible (definition of accountable to be considered).

This would preserve democratic legitimacy even inside a larger force.

The evidence suggests regionalisation can improve efficiency and specialist capability, but only if local policing is treated as a protected function rather than a residual one. The strongest lesson from both policing research and hub-and-spoke public services is: Centralise infrastructure and specialist capability but decentralise legitimacy, relationships and problem solving. Organisations fail when they centralise both.

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