

Rural Crime Assurance Paper – March 2022 (amended September 2022)
Avon and Somerset Police thematic lead: Superintendent Dickon Turner

Indicate below which IPQR Key Performance Questions this assurance report will cover:							
1. Are the public becoming more confident in the Constabulary?	✓	2. How well are we preventing crime, ASB and demand?	✓	3. How well are we responding to the public when they need us?	✓	4. How well are we supporting victims of crime?	✓
5. How well are we protecting vulnerable people?	✓	6. How well are we investigating crime?	✓	7. How well are we managing reoffending?		8. How well are we managing serious and organised crime?	
9. How well are we meeting the requirements of the Strategic Policing Requirement?		10. How well are we engaging with the people we serve and treating them fairly, appropriately and respectfully?	✓	11. Are we becoming a more inclusive and diverse organisation?		12. Are we developing a more engaged and happy workforce?	
13. Are we creating a more digital and data literate workforce?		14. How effective is workforce planning across the organisation?		15. How well are we managing data quality and information governance?		16. Does our workforce have the right tools and working environment to do their best?	

1. Purpose of Report

To provide assurance regarding the Constabulary's approach to Rural crime and make a number of recommendations for CMB to consider on areas for improvement.

2. Background and Context

In the past the rural community suffered very little crime, but now the criminal has access to all kinds of vehicles and is looking for softer targets which mean that the country areas are being visited by more criminal elements looking for the opportunity to commit crime. By co-operating with each other and Partner Agencies, we can help to prevent many crimes from happening in the first place, thus making our community a safer and more crime free area in which to live and work.

The National definition of Rural Crime:

Any offence occurring in a rural area which directly or indirectly affects a farming or rural business or the rural communities where /"rural" is given to mean "a close association with or dependence upon the land" within that location.'

There can be confusion between rural crime and crime that occurs in a rural area. It is important to understand the difference when considering the data and content of this report.

For example, whether a car is stolen in Bristol city centre or just outside of Fiddington, the crime remains a car was stolen. In contrast if a burglary took place in Bath and a television was stolen, the implications would be minimal other than the trauma of the burglary and inconvenience/expense of replacing. However, if a burglary took place on an agricultural premise and a tractor was stolen, the repercussions for the farmer would be immense and could have a seriously detrimental effect on their livelihood.



The Rural Affairs Team

The Rural Affairs Team sits under NPT and the command of Supt Dickon Turner.

There is 1 Sergeant, 2 PC's and a PCSO. Recruitment is currently underway to expand the team to 4 PC's who will cover the whole Force area between them. Their role is generally not response-based, however if they are in the location when the call comes in they will respond. Similarly, they are not an investigative unit, but will assist and by default investigate crimes such as those involving hunting and wildlife crime to utilise their specialist knowledge in these areas.

Primarily, the Rural Affairs Team provide a follow up and advisory service to the communities. The team works closely with partners such as NFU, Environment Agency, Trading Standards, The Forestry Commission, RSPCA, Angling Trust, Exmoor National Park and other Partners both on an individual basis and also through the Rural Affairs Forum (see section 3 for more detail on the Forum).

Rural Crime is allocated as per the A&SC [Deployment and Crime Allocation Procedure](#).

There are also approximately 70 Rural Crime Champions Forcewide who provide advice and links to local communities in addition to their main roles. They receive regular updates and training via the Rural Affairs Team sergeant.

There is an established network of meetings, initiatives and schemes in which the team are integral in maintaining engagement with communities and partnerships, building strong links and ensuring networks are strengthened.

Social media is used widely and there is a [dedicated Rural Affairs page](#) on the A&SC website. The @ASPolice Rural Affairs Unit on twitter is followed by over 2000 people and is an effective way to reach rural communities.

Internally, there is a [Rural Affairs pocketbook page](#) which is regularly updated and contains a wealth of information.

3. Current Force schemes and meetings in place within rural areas:

Neighbourhood watch

Neighbourhood Watch (NHW) is a national scheme which encourages local communities to come together to have their say about issues that matter to them, encourage community cohesion and create strong, friendly, active communities where crime and anti-social behaviour are less likely to happen.

On a local level, NHW coordinators are a trusted source of information about crime and suspicious incidents, and can also help the police to pass on crime prevention advice to members and other residents.

Horse and Farm watch

The main aims of the Horse and Farm watch Schemes

- 1) To reduce local opportunities for equine crime and theft of livestock and deadstock.
- 2) To reinforce the community spirit so that everyone can contribute towards the protection of their property by mutual co-operation and communication.
- 3) To introduce early warning systems in equine and countryside areas.
- 4) To improve the intelligence flow between the countryside communities and the police.



The advantages of Horse and Farm watch are:

1. A reduction in crime and the fear of the crime impacting on the community.
2. Suspicious people and vehicles can quickly be reported to the police and other members of the countryside communities.
3. Information and advice can be quickly and efficiently circulated between the police and the community.
4. A crime vigilant community in partnership with the police will create a safer environment.

	Farmwatch membership	Horsewatch membership
Somerset East	2,039	613
Somerset West	1,388	779
North Somerset	305	429
BaNES	337	172
South Gloucestershire	259	198

The Rural Affairs Forum

The Rural Affairs Forum, as mentioned above, is chaired by Supt Turner and consists of representatives from many Partner Agencies and NGO's including, but not limited to:

Environment Agency; RSPCA; NFU; high Sheriff; Lord Lieutenant of Somerset; Trading Standards; Forestry England; Animal Plant & Health Agency; Exmoor National Park Quantock Hills' Rangers; Cornish Mutual and the GLAA.

Meetings are held quarterly currently via Teams and are well attended with an engaged membership.

4. Rural Affairs Delivery Plan and actions within the Single Delivery Plan (SDP)

There is a Rural Affairs Delivery Plan in place within A&SC which is attached as Appendix A. Actions within it are reviewed and updated monthly between Supt Turner and Sgt Maun to ensure the Plan is at the forefront of any activity taking place, activity is focussed on the correct areas and to progress the actions in a timely manner.

The main objectives are:

- To improve our recording of rural crimes so we can better understand, target and resource the problem.
- To improve our collective response to reports of rural crime, including investigations.
- To improve our collection, dissemination and use of intelligence including links with other Forces. This should focus particularly on OCGs.
- To improve information sharing between key agencies.
- To improve our crime reduction/prevention work.
- To improve the trust and confidence of our rural communities.

This report will seek to advise how these may be implemented or progressed.



5. How well do we understand, track and measure rural crimes

In order to ensure rural crime is correctly identified, there are a number of filters we can use on Qlik apps. Additionally, along with Beat Codes that are predominantly “rural” we are able to extract, compare and track rural crime, comparing to non-rural or other data when required.

Furthermore, the Rural Affairs (RA) Sergeant receives a daily business object report, collated using a specific key word search such as “farm”, “cow”, “gate” to filter reports. From this, they are able to check the Niche records to ensure they have been correctly flagged as rural, or amended as necessary.

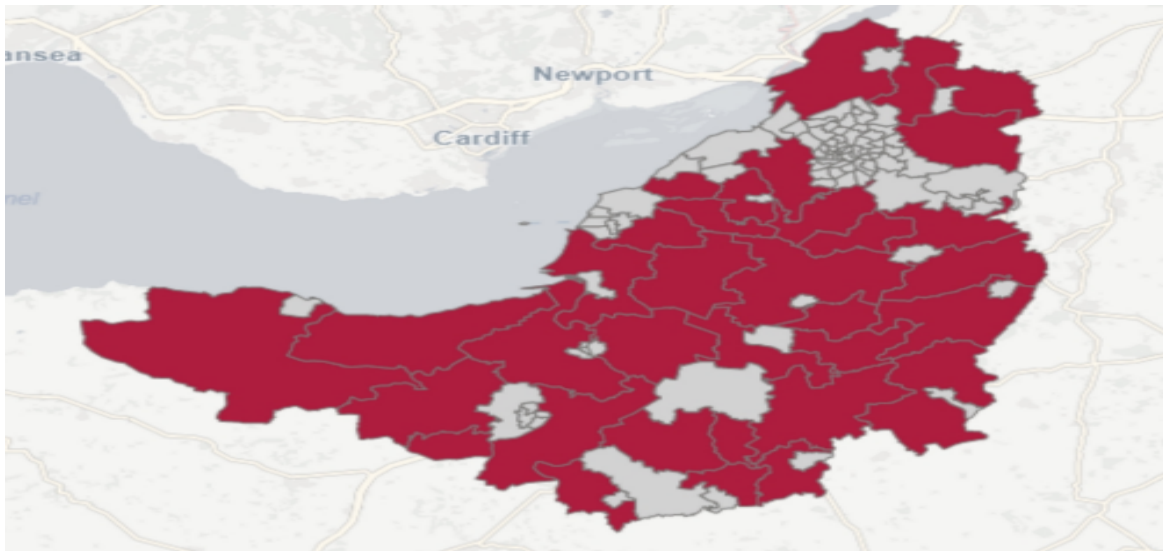
It is acknowledged rural crime is underreported and some low level or low monetary value crimes are not reported. There are a number of reasons for this such as no known lines of enquiry (no CCTV or witnesses). Low value thefts or damage to walls are often not reported so a true picture of rural crime, as can be said of all crime, cannot be quantified.

There is confidence in the Niche occurrences being correctly flagged for rural crime providing the most accurate picture as possible. Work is underway to ensure we have similar levels of confidence in the Storm logs with the RA Sergeant working closely with Comms to achieve this in a number of ways including a review of the question set asked by the Comms operators.

Beat Codes

The following Beat codes could be described as “rural” (though some do include an element of non-rural) and data can be filtered from the Qlik [Demand App](#)

Rural (by beat code)



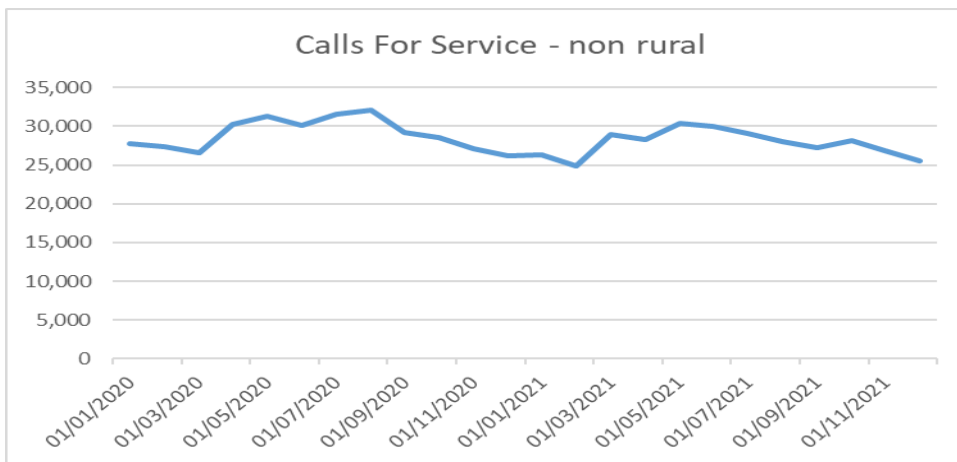
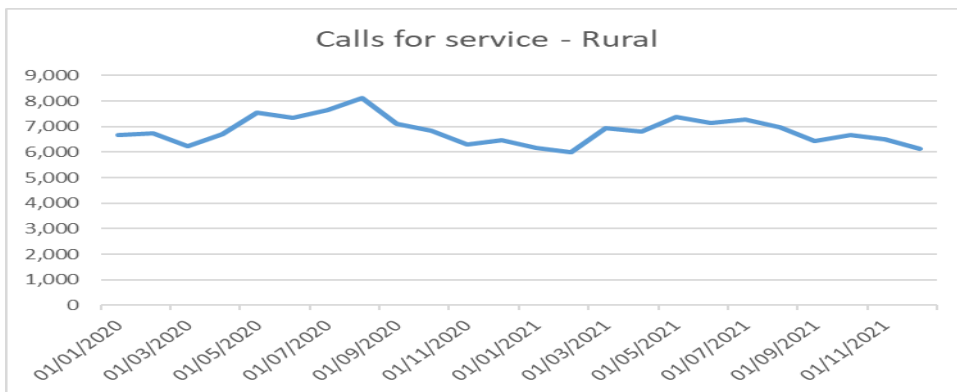
Comparison of demand per 1000 population in rural communities 2020-2021

Rural 164.02

Non-rural 681.61

Forcewide – 853.14

Calls for service:

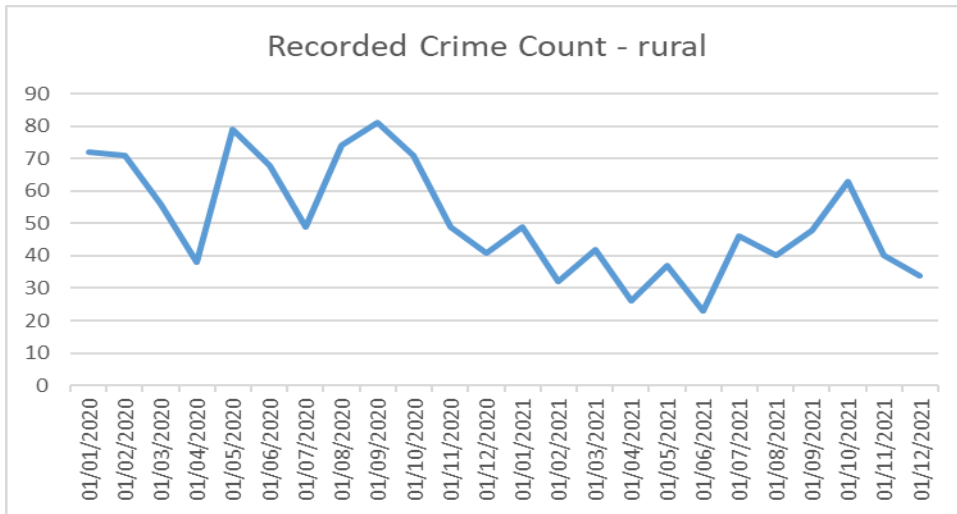


As previously cited, it is important to separate rural crime from crime that occurs in a rural area when analysing this data.

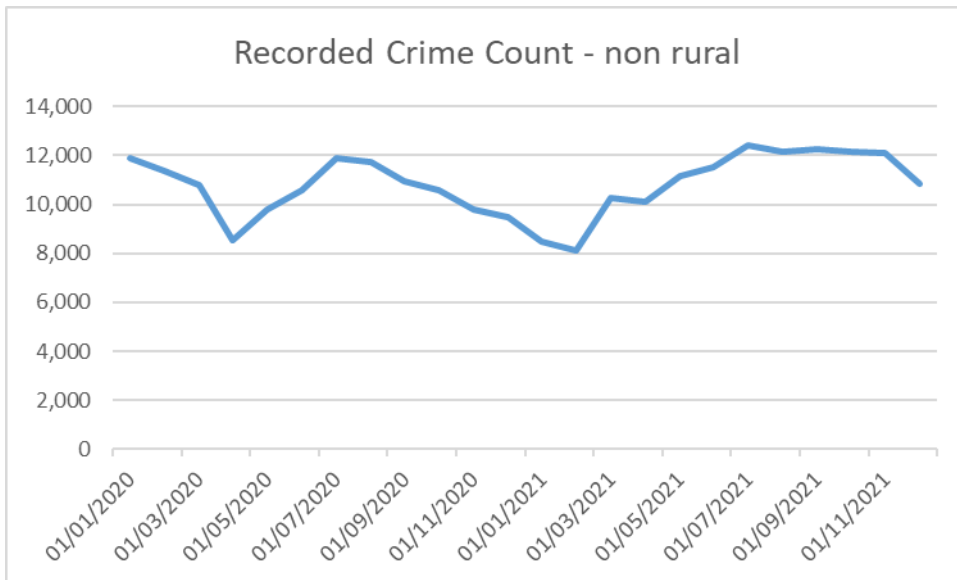
It is also important to appreciate recording of data by beat code is not an exact science as some of the beat codes will include heavily populated areas such as Bradley Stoke and Thornbury, both of which are towns however, are included in some part of the rural beat codes. Recording by beat code however remains the most accurate way of filtering reported crime for the purpose of this report and data analysis.

Recorded crime trends for rural crime

*data taken from the [Police and Crime Plan App](#) on 15 February 2022 using the rural crime tag (as per definition on page 1)



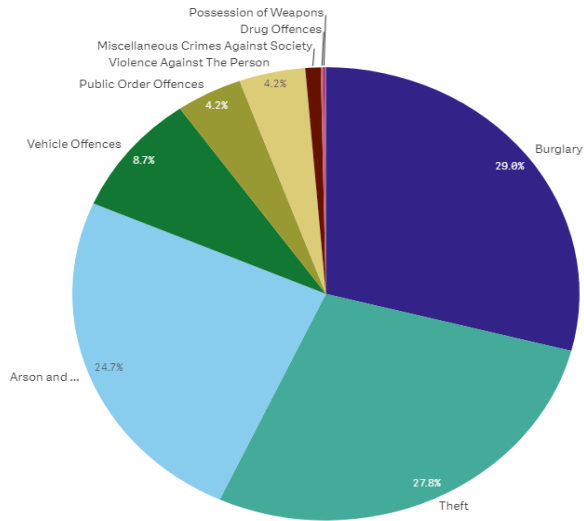
Non rural crime



Breakdown of offences 2020-2021

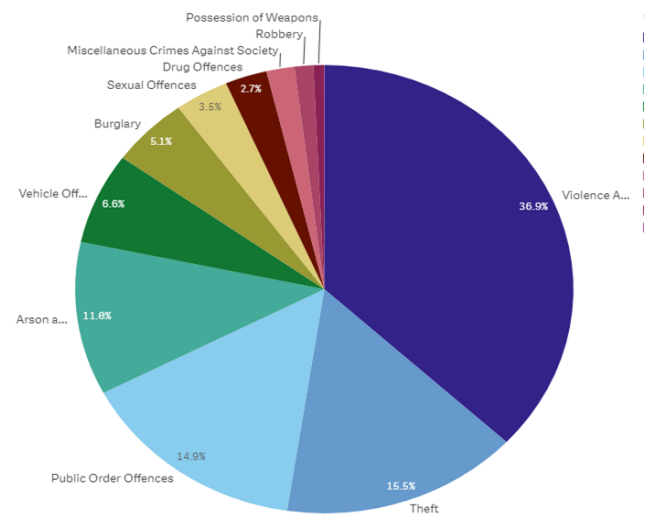
Rural crime

Offence Group Breakdown



Non rural crime

Offence Group Breakdown



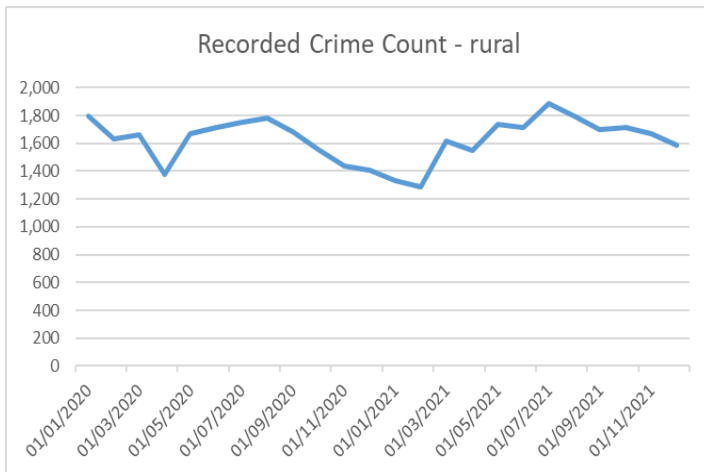
You will note the marked difference between the crime type levels recorded for rural crime and non-rural crime. Violence against the person is in rural areas almost 10% of that recorded in non-rural areas, however, burglary and theft account for 57% in rural areas compared to 20% in non-rural areas.

Breakdown of offence types for rural and non-rural areas * Sept 2019 – Aug 2022

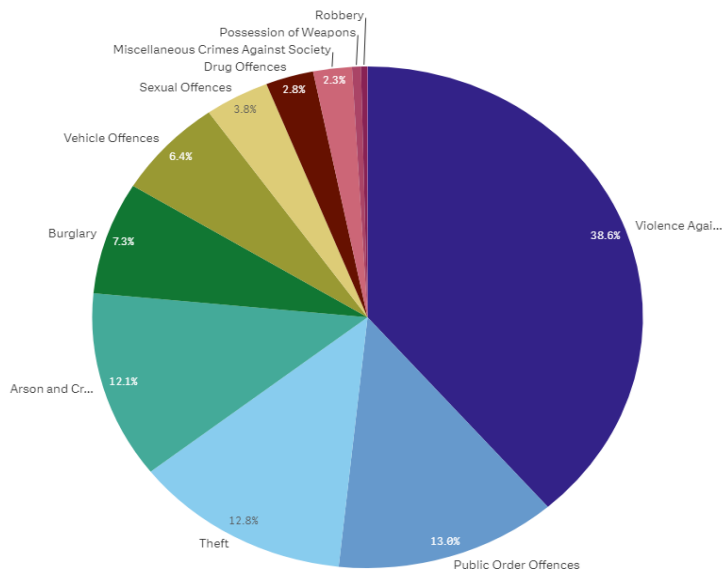
	Rural area	Non-rural area
Violence Against The Person (VAP)	38.5%	36.1%
Theft	13.2%	16.9%
Public Order Offences	12.8%	14.9%
Arson and Criminal Damage	11.9%	10.7%
Vehicle Offences	6.7%	6.7%
Burglary	7.4%	4.9%
Sexual Offences	3.8%	3.4%
Drug Offences	2.6%	2.6%
Misc. Crimes Against Society	2.2%	1.7%
Robbery	0.4%	1.3%
Possession of Weapons	0.5%	0.7%

The composition of crimes is broadly similar although there is some variance between rural and non-rural areas. Of all crimes in rural areas VAP and burglary make up larger proportions whereas theft and public order offences are smaller proportions compared to non-urban areas.

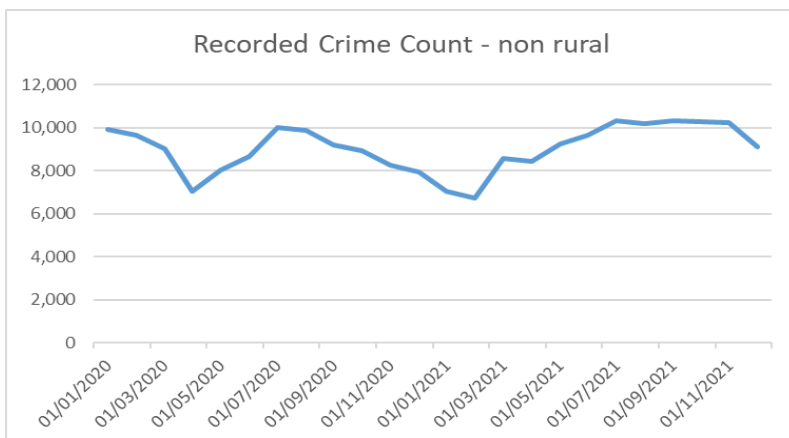
Recorded crime in rural areas (by beat code)

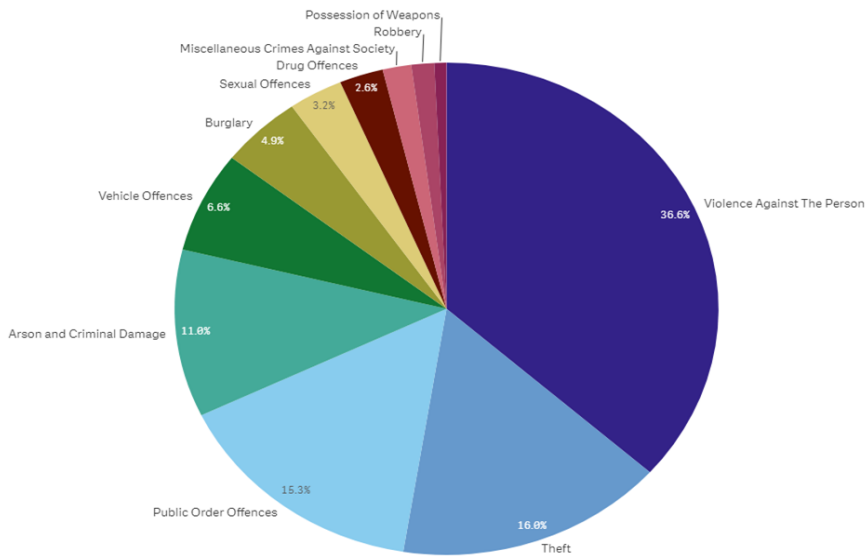


Offence Group Breakdown



Recorded crime in non rural areas (by beat code)





Crime rates for all *recorded crimes in rural areas* was an average of 1,627 per month and a total of 39,045 during 2020 and 2021.

Crime rates for all *recorded crimes in a non-rural areas* was an average of 10,788 per month and a total of 258,922 during 2020 and 2021.

Response times * 06/09/2019 – 05/09/2022

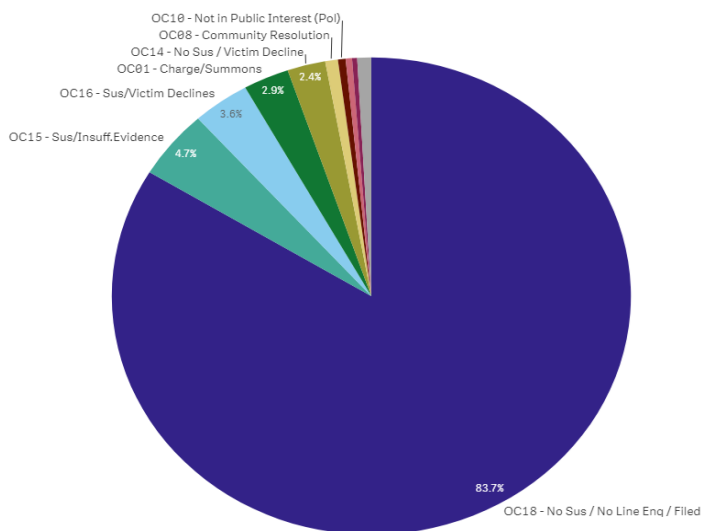
Table shows the percentage of calls responded to within the SLA.

	Immediate	Priority	Routine
Rural	70.6%	53.6%	48.8%
Urban	72.6%	55.7%	46.8%

You will note response times differ between rural and non-rural. This is mainly due to geographical locations and less teams in rural areas making response times longer. As a comparison, the SLA for 'Immediate calls' is 15 minutes for Non rural and 20 minutes for Rural. For 'priority calls', it's 1 hour regardless of location and for 'routines' it is 12 hours.



Outcome disposals 2020-2021 * data taken from the [Crime Outcomes Qlik app](#) on 15 February 2022



Rural crimes and crimes in rural areas are often difficult to investigate due to there being no known lines of enquiry such as CCTV, witnesses or identifying marks for stolen items which are widely available within non rural areas, resulting in a far greater numbers being closed using disposal code OC18 (83.7% compared to 40.2% Forcewide).

It is worth expressing that a positive outcome for a victim may be the recovery of stolen goods, however, this is not recorded in line with HOCR. An example of a positive outcome for a victim is last year we ran an operation over 3 days in which 18-20 stolen items were recovered and returned to their owners with all suspects linked to just one family.

6. Avon and Somerset Constabulary Rural Crime survey 2021

In order to gain an understanding of what our communities need from us, how well we respond to reports and how we can improve our response, we recently issued a survey to rural communities. The survey was issued using platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Horse and Farm watch and the A&S website, plus attention was drawn to the survey verbally during partnership meetings and shared directly to rural businesses.

They were asked to respond to 8 questions with most having options, sub-questions and boxes for comments or feedback. Examples of the questions asked were:

- What crime type concerns you the most?
- How concerned are you about being a victim of rural crime in the future?
- Did a police officer/ PCSO or other member of staff make contact with you after you had reported the crime?

Here is an overview of the results:

Rural Crime Survey 2021 - Total respondents: 1289

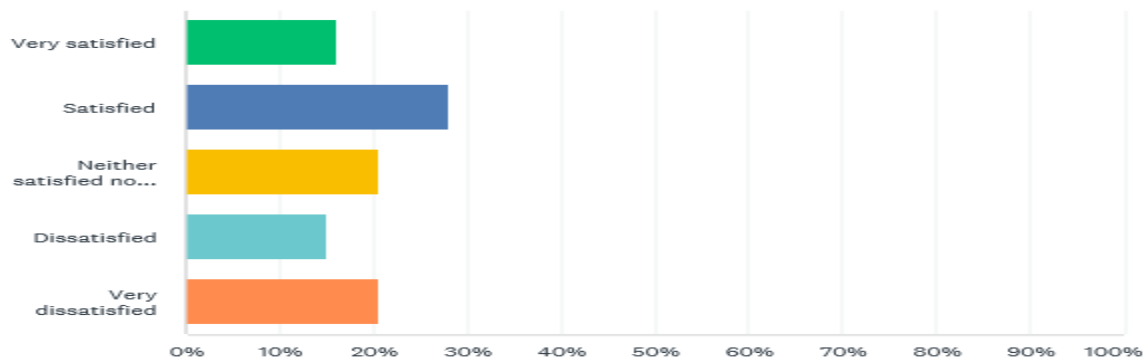
21.91% of the respondents had been a victim of rural crime. This totals 282 individuals. Of these 282 individuals, 19.5% had been a victim of theft and 18.8% of hunting offences. These were the two highest scoring crime types, with Arson, Wildlife interference and dwelling burglary being the three lowest scorers. Of the 282 individuals who were a victim of crime, 61% reported the crime and 38.43% did not report the crime. The most common method of reporting was via 101.

175 participants answered the question of “How satisfied were you with the service from Avon and Somerset Police”.

An overview of the results are shown below and are fairly well spread.

How satisfied were you with the service from Avon and Somerset Police

Answered: 175 Skipped: 1,114



For those that answered “Did not report the crime”, they were asked a follow up question of “Why did you not report the crime”. 61% chose to write a comment rather than click on an option. The responses include lack of evidence, police don’t appear to respond to it and concerns regarding retaliation.

97% were somewhat concerned about being a victim of crime in the future, and predominately this was theft, burglary or hunting.

Social media (Facebook) was the preferred method of engagements from the police and their work on rural crime.

7. Working with internal colleagues and partners to prevent and tackle rural crime including awareness raising

The previously mentioned RA Forum is an excellent platform for sharing best practice, building strong relations and tackling the challenges of rural crime, e.g attendance times, lack of witnesses, a lack of understanding of the implications of rural crime.

In order to raise awareness and understanding amongst colleagues in A&S there is a series of training and CPD, with training packages being prepared for dissemination Forcewide. There was also a CPD day held in November 2021 for the Rural Crime team and champions consisting of internal guest speakers, external partners and farmers all providing input.

Additionally, we are seeking to highlight available specialist resources to tackle rural crime within the RA Team and other methods such as drones; how to ID specialist equipment and encourage engagement with rural communities when opportunities arise during normal duties becoming standard practice.

A central register of stolen property has aided in recovered stolen property being identified and returned to their rightful owners.

Work is underway with SelectaDNA who are a security marking crime-prevention company. They work with repeat victims of crime in rural areas, encouraging owners of expensive agricultural and other machinery to mark and register it under the scheme making it easier to detect should it be recovered at a later date. Also encouraged is the taking of photos of equipment particularly any unique features so they can be released with an appeal using social media

In terms of active engagement and awareness raising, the following activities or initiatives take place:

- Community speed watch – many in place linked with occasional personal visits from NPT
- Farm and Horse Watches (see Section 3 for more detail)
- Neighbourhood watch – many in place with regular email alerts and updates (see Section 3 for more detail)
- Parish and town council meetings – many in place along with occasional visits with local crime stats or theme updates
- Bike marking events – these are always advertised in advance via Facebook and Twitter.
- Pop-up/mobile surgeries – held regularly and usually advertised on Facebook and/or Twitter in advance (eg staff with gazebo in a high street or van in a park entrance)
- Fixed neighbourhood engagement sessions – Covid reduced these but we are reintroducing these now
- Each and every beat has an officer and PCSOs assigned who are visible and contactable via the Force website (using the post code or address search facility)
- Regular local Facebook and Twitter pages to share quarterly newsletters and on the day updates about patrols, appeals, arrests, stolen or recovered property etc. (eg. in 2021 Sedgemoor West Tweeted 336 times which were liked 1800 times. They made 377 FB posts, liked 5300 times. By the end of the year they had 2200 Twitter followers and 2400 FB fans)
- Facebook Live events – attended by 10s of people live and viewed subsequently by hundreds or even thousands of people.
- Regular schools engagement visits by PCSOs, including classroom inputs and engagement with pupils and parents at some drop off and pick up times – every school has a named PCSO assigned.
- Other impromptu or planned visits to business forums, youth groups, old people's homes, WI meetings, village fetes, country or agricultural shows. Engagement varies from a casual conversation to formal crime prevention advice, and from one PCSO to several officers with a stand or display (including specialist officers if requested) at larger events

The neighbourhood policing teams participate in a lot of the engagement work along with the RA team.

It is hoped CPD events, training and the initiatives mentioned above will continue to improve our wider understanding of Rural Crime and increase our awareness and information flow of the subjects.

8. Vulnerabilities encountered within a rural setting and how we are seeking to address these.

As with all victims of crime in the A&S area, referral to the LSU follows Force policy however some rural victims may also have additional vulnerabilities such as isolation and a lack of access to facilities locally. To partly address this, additional support can on occasion be offered such as technological solutions for court hearing evidence provided



online rather in person (this service is available to all victims of crime). As with all victims of crime, if they were experiencing difficulties in getting to court, transport could be provided.

Crime within agricultural premises can also lead to a loss of livelihood if machinery is stolen that prevents them performing their business. This in turn may lead to homelessness, breakdown of relationships and ultimately suicidal thoughts. A Farm Safety Foundation survey found that 92% of farmers under the age of 40 rank poor mental health as the biggest hidden challenge they face. To assist with wellbeing in rural communities, funding has recently been secured for rural health hubs at the same locations as livestock markets to encourage farmers and rural communities to visit.

A&S contributed funding to these health hubs in collaboration with health partners to facilitate easy access to medical and mental health support.

9. National picture

The NPCC national crime strategy ran out last year and is in the process of being re-written. There are no national NPCC or similar meetings, however, there is a South West regional strategic group chaired by Supt Turner held quarterly via Teams which commenced in September. This meeting is attended by officers of Chief Inspector or Superintendent level.

There is also an operational group sitting below that with a network of regional Rural crime leads with a cohort of PCs and Sergeants sharing best practice, training etc.



Appendix A

Rural Affairs Delivery Plan – updated monthly

Objective	How	Actions
1) To raise the profile and awareness of rural affairs across the Force	New RA strategy	Consult, draw up and disseminate strategy
	RA delivery plan	consult and draw up delivery plan
		Decide on frequency of planning/review meetings
	RA training/awareness raising plan (DIT, Investigations, Remedy, Intel, Comms, IAU, Response)	organise CPD day Autumn 21 for 'champions'
		consider need for more Wildlife Crime officers and source appropriate training PCSO course
		consider including RA input to new PCDA students
	as above to include Remedy Local/NPT proactive teams when they arrive	seek champions from each local NPT proactive team
	improved visibility and availability of RA material on Pocketbook	develop specific pages for poaching, wildlife, hunting, badgers and link to RAU page
		develop a Rural Affairs Team Room
	RAU attending briefings and training days	create schedule of inputs/visits up to April 22
		create package for training/CPD - focus on crime prevention
	Network of RA 'champions' or SPOCs across directorates	Keep Champions network involved and engaged (encourage them to sign up to Team Room)
		approach managers in different Directorates to identify champions



2) To improve our recording or rural crimes so we can better understand, target and resource the problem	improve awareness of Rural Crime in Comms and IAU, including importance of properly recording stolen property	meeting with Comms and IAU managers, attendance at training days/briefings,
	improvement of daily process to collate and review RC via business objects	discuss and agree keyword list
		embed process for daily review/weeding and collation in one place.
	Qlik changes to enable visibility and filtering of RC data by area and crime type	Request changes in Qlik
effective identification of repeat victims/locations	process in place to identify repeat victims	
3) To improve our collective response to reports of rural crime, including investigations.	RA training/awareness raising plan (DIT, Investigations, Remedy, Intel, Comms, IAU, Response)	see above (line 5)
	improved frequency of CSI attendance	review CSI policy/service level
	effective and appropriate allocation of RCs	review allocation policy for implications on RC
	effective use of ANPR	review and improve use of ANPR in hotspot locations
	effective use of TSU tactics	consider guidance on Pocketbook or Team Room, consider threshold for TSU requests
	effective use of proactive policing tactics to target OCGs, hot spots or crime types	via Regional tactical group, use of Op Shogun or similar
	effective identification of repeat victims/locations	embed process for daily review/weeding and collation in one place.
	ownership of certain RC types in RAU (wildlife, poaching, hunting)	agree policy depending on resources and capabilities,
		consider need to amend crime allocation policy in light of this.
in rural areas of the Force, ensure Remedy Local Teams are used effectively to target rural criminals or crime trends	ensure these teams are aware of rural crime issues, and appropriately tasked with proactive work to address it.	



	growing RAU resources	submit growth bid to Futures Team
		recruit/plan growth of 2 PCs
4) To improve our collection, dissemination and use of intelligence including links with other Forces. This should focus particularly on OCGs.	RA training/awareness raising plan (DIT, Investigations, Remedy, Intel, Comms, IAU, Response)	see above
	explore benefits of a strategic SW regional RA group	
	establish contact with national rural crime lead and seek best practice and revised national strategy	2 emails sent to DCC Ford in 2021. Response in Dec 21. Email sent to Supt Steve Thomas (N Yorks)
	an effective regional tactical RC group focussing on OCGs, intel and operational activity	
	effective use of ANPR	review and if possible expand use of ANPR in hotspot locations
	effective identification and prioritisation of OCGs	ongoing work to monitor emerging groups, seek scoring and advice from intel/ROCU
	raising profile of RC at LTM	attendance with appropriate offenders or crime series
	RAU attendance at LTM	when appropriate
5) To improve information sharing between key agencies.	identify key partners (NFU, CLA, Environment Agency, National Park, National Trust, GLA...), develop relationships	increased contacts, meetings.
	effective communication and use of the RAF (Rural Affairs Forum)	
	seeking cooperation from NFU Mutual re claims, crime prevalence	
6) To improve our Crime Prevention work	better training in Crime Prevention - going beyond "get CCTV"	explore role/use of Bobby Van in RC
		identify training material and courses, Pocketbook etc
		identify cohort of staff requiring enhanced training or material



		improve links with Crime Prevention Officers - joint visits/surveys to victim locations
		improve use of SelectaDNA
	better use of rural PCSOs and RA 'champions'	develop effective tasking for follow up CP visits by NPTs
	increase Farm Watch	
	effective use of the drone for crime prevention surveys	target use at repeat victims or vulnerable premises.
		publicise RAU drone and purpose
7) To improve the trust and confidence of our rural communities. Thereby encourage reporting of offences.	effective use of communications and social media to promote successes, witness appeals and crime prevention messaging	build plan/approach with Corp Comms
	attending rural events, markets, fairs with crime prevention messaging	create schedule of events and assign RAU and/or NPT staff to attend
	effective use of Watch schemes	plan to increase? How do we use for comms
	effective use of RAF	consider extending membership of RAF to younger people
	better understand levels of trust and customer satisfaction among rural communities	consider utilising our own survey of rural crime victims and/or RA networks
8) improve the focus and Force wide coverage of the RAU	increased personnel in the RAU	submit bid to Futures Team
	Maintain staffing of RAU through staff moves	sgt retiring, to be replaced PC moving to drone unit, to be replaced
	increased use of volunteers/specials	explore options with CIP and Specials leaders
	assign RA themes and/or geographic areas to RAU team members (eg Partnerships, Prevention, Investigation, Intel, Comms/Engagement)	discuss and agree roles, consider any additional officers to be assigned

