

**AVON AND SOMERSET POLICE AND CRIME PANEL
COMMISSIONER'S UPDATE REPORT
29 MARCH 2023**

The following briefing provides an update for Panel Members on key activities since the last Panel meeting on 1 February 2023. A summary of key highlights for consideration by Panel Members is set out below:

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Governance and Scrutiny:

- **New Scrutiny Arrangements:** New format Boards go live in March. Forward dates have been circulated to Panel Members.
- **Inspections Update:** links to PCC responses to recent inspections. Final PEEL report expected w/c 13 March. This will be circulated to the Panel as soon as it is available.
- **Standing issues for Panel oversight:** a) Estates – update on Bath co-location plans, Trinity Road site, and South Somerset business case; b) Recruitment and Retention – Uplift target achieved and exceeded, focus on filling gaps in the south of the Force and on assurance regarding recruitment/retention/vetting processes.
- **Updates requested by the Panel:** arrangements for monitoring local compliance with the Victims Code of Practice; update on action to tackle court backlogs.

OPCC Business Update:

- **Tackling Disproportionality in the CJS in A&S:** first Steering Committee meeting taken place.
- **Consultation & Engagement:** Launch of new-format Performance & Accountability Board; Engagement and Consultation Manager appointment; evaluation of precept survey reach and PCC/Councillor Forum events.
- **Complaints & Contacts:** ICASE system (case management for complaints) procured and due to go live in June.
- **Policy & Partnerships:** Serious Violence Duty next steps and review of hub and spoke support arrangements; update on bids to secure continuation of projects to reduce reoffending; progress in development of needs assessments for local Combatting Drugs Partnerships; ASCJB and Restorative Justice Action Plan updates.
- **Scrutiny Panels:** Outcomes of successful volunteer recruitment campaign; summary of recent scrutiny panel meetings and work of OPCC panel members and Independent Custody Visitors.

National Updates:

- **PCC National Economic & Cyber Portfolio:** Influence through national board to improve new Action Fraud website; keynote speech at APCC general meeting; inclusion of fraud & cyber crime and support for victims in new Strategic Policing Requirement; facilitated partnership group with police, Trading Standards and victim support services to improve response to local victims.

1. GOVERNANCE AND SCRUTINY

New Scrutiny Arrangements

The oversight boards had been revised and the new format boards go live from March 2023.

Performance and Accountability Board (PAB) – these will now be held every month but for 30 minutes each time; they will also be broadcast on Facebook. These changes respond to feedback received and

to are aimed at improving engagement with the meetings. The last meeting in the current format was held on 7 February 2023 and can be found at the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ULhKmANhpM4>

The next public broadcast will take place on 9 March 2023. Members are encouraged to watch live or view the recording.

Governance and Scrutiny Board (GSB) – will now be monthly and the meeting will be held in two parts: governance and scrutiny. This is to help ensure that there is sufficient time allowed for all agenda items. Agendas and minutes from the GSBs can be found at the following link:

<https://www.avonandsomerset-pcc.gov.uk/reports-publications/oversight-boards/>

Key Decisions

Key decisions published since the last meeting are available at the following link:

<https://www.avonandsomerset-pcc.gov.uk/reports-publications/decisions-log/>

Inspections Update

HMICFRS

Since last reported one new response has been published:

- [Digital forensics: An inspection into how well the police and other agencies use digital forensics in their investigations](#)

The pending PEEL report is expected to be published in mid-March. This will be shared with Panel Members as soon as it is available.

Police Super-Complaints

Since last reported we have confirmed that we accept the recommendations from the following report:

- [How the police respond to victims of sexual abuse when the victim is from an ethnic minority background and may be at risk of honour-based abuse](#)

Since last reported the NPCC have published an update on a super-complaint:

- [Centre For Women's Justice Super Complaint: Police perpetrated domestic abuse](#)

Standing Items:

Estates

- Bath: Having recognised that a colocation in Bathwick was not viable, alternative options are being pursued for a long-term location in Bath. The Governance and Scrutiny Board (GSB) approved progressing to negotiations on the most promising, a commercial property on the Lower Bristol Road.
- Trinity Road: Following receipt of planning approval for Trinity Road, contracts were exchanged with the preferred bidder in September. Since then The Guinness Partnership has opted to go to tender for their works which may have some impact on timings. However, the decant process to Bridewell and Fishponds has now started, supported by ongoing extensive community engagement.
- Yeovil: The business case for the South Somerset review, covering Yeovil, Chard, Somerton, Crewkerne and Ilminster, will be presented to GSB in April with the intention for construction to start in 2024/25 and for completion in 2025/26.

Recruitment and Retention:

The Constabulary are delighted to confirm that after three years of collaborative working across internal teams and close liaison with the national Uplift programme, the agreed uplift target of 456 officers will be met by end March 2023. An additional 80 officers have also been recruited, as agreed

on a temporary basis with funding with the Home Office. At the start of March, the Force was at a total head count of 3316 officers (9th March 2023) already exceeding the target of 3291, and it is anticipated that the original target will be exceeded by 94 officers, achieving the additional 80 officers.

Since April 2019 the Force has recruited in excess of 1500 new officers into Avon and Somerset, made up of 1000 officers through PCDA, 300 through DHEP and welcomed other officers as transferees, rejoiners and through the Police Staff Investigator to Detective Constable programme. Graduation of the first Detective Degree Holder Entry Programme cohorts has taken place, bringing great detective resilience into the investigation teams. Numbers of police officer leavers per month has been reducing and remains under the 25 per month that was modelled in the trajectory. The Force is now focussing even more on retention of officers and participating in best practice learning nationally, in order to continuously improve workforce planning practice. There continues to be a resourcing challenge in the south of the Force area, and this will remain a focus of attention, which includes continuing to run local campaigns in the south. National guidance is being followed closely with regards to any recruitment changes, as well as other checks and tests on serving officers to ensure that the Force is recruiting and retaining the right people in line with public expectations of police officer standards.

Updates Requested by the Panel:

Victims Code of Practice

The Victims Code of Practice (VCOP) sets out the rights of victims of crime and the minimum standard that organisations must provide on their journey through the criminal justice system.

Further information about the current victims code can be found at the following link:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-code-of-practice-for-victims-of-crime The government is in the process of enshrining these rights and entitlements in law through the Victims Bill.

The PCC has a key role in ensuring compliance with VCOP through the following ways:

- Quarterly dip sampling carried out by the multi-agency Victims Governance Group (reporting to the A&S Criminal Justice Board);
- Escalating learning and issues of concern to the A&S Criminal Justice Board (which is chaired by the PCC) and through national channels as appropriate;
- Holding the Chief Constable to account for police compliance with VCOP and victim confidence;
- OPCC oversight of the Lighthouse Safeguarding Unit (LSU) (which is funded in part from the Ministry of Justice Victims Grant) and their role in compliance with VCOP.

A Constabulary audit of 396 crimes (with a named victim) was undertaken in 2022. The audit reviewed files to assess compliance with VCOP standards of service required of the police. Overall, 72% of records were found to be VCOP compliant.

The Victims Bill places a greater emphasis on quantitative data in measuring compliance. There are known gaps in data capture under current arrangements and inconsistencies in the way compliance is measured in different Force areas. The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) is working with national agencies and local areas to develop a minimum dataset for VCOP compliance feeding into an online data tool which can be accessed locally to review performance and allow comparison across other Force areas. Where practical, data will be in a format that can be broken down by crime type and protected characteristic. Locally, future oversight of VCOP compliance will be further strengthened by the development of a service specification for the victim care element of the LSU, providing a higher level of detail on performance and service delivery in line with other OPCC commissioned services. The MoJ is also looking to set up a national governance structure for oversight and escalation of issues.

The delay in progressing the Victims Bill means that national compliance arrangements are likely to go live in 2024. Local areas are encouraged to continue scrutinising VCOP compliance under local arrangements in the interim. Updates on progress with the Victims Bill and development of VCOP compliance arrangements will be brought to the Panel over the coming year.

Update on Court Backlogs

The PCC's Annual Report 2021/22 highlighted the national challenge of court backlogs and action taken locally to address this. Through concerted efforts to recover following the pandemic, the courts had reduced the backlog to 678 outstanding trials. Unfortunately, the position has deteriorated since Bar action last year. The number of outstanding trial cases now stands at 846 which is 35% above the pre-Covid baseline of 625 (based on an average from the 6 months prior to February 2020). Reasons for this include a changing case mix which has seen an increase in the proportion of rape and serious sexual offences (RASSO) cases leading to lengthier, more complex trials, and the disruption of cases due to lack of availability of advocates who are trying to cover more cases per person than pre-pandemic. The local position reflects the national picture, with outstanding trials currently standing at around 49.5k. In order to address the situation, 12 courtrooms are now sitting across Bristol and Taunton (the maximum number of courtrooms available in Avon and Somerset), and will continue to do so throughout 2023/24.

2. OPCC BUSINESS UPDATE

Tackling Disproportionality in the Criminal Justice System in A&S

The Steering Committee (SteerCo) has now been identified and the first onboarding meeting was scheduled for 7th March 2023. This meeting focused on agreeing the Terms of Reference, the portfolio work including governance, location & resourcing, understanding the stakeholder landscape and populating and agreeing the delivery group matrix.

This will be the catalyst to kick starting the project delivery groups across both OPCC/ASP and the multi-agency partners. The team continues to progress work towards the Independent Scrutiny Group.

Consultation and Engagement

The new format of Performance & Accountability Board (PAB) launched in March. The new iteration sees it livestreamed on Facebook as an event, and moving from a quarterly 90 minute broadcast to a monthly 30 minute meeting. Analytics of the first broadcast show:

- Up to 50 live viewers as it broadcast
- 3.4k views retrospectively to date
- 16,092 reached
- 19 comments (one saying going to tune into future broadcasts and others supporting Chief Constable) 5 shares, 10 likes

Following the precept survey consultation the Communications and Engagement Team will be undergoing an evaluation and reviewing the consultation strategy to ensure methods are employed to constantly improve on increasing legitimacy and better engaging and representing diverse communities. The PCC Engagement and Consultation strategies are both aligned to the OPCC objective of improving engagement, particularly within under-represented and vulnerable communities, e.g. Black, Asian, mixed and minoritised people, and other protected characteristics, socio-economically deprived people, women, young people and those living in isolated rural areas.

As in previous years the team set specific numeric targets for percentage responses from under-represented respondents – particularly focused improving representation of ethnically diverse

respondents using census data to set representative targets in ethnic grouping. In the 2011 census the overall population for A&S minoritized communities was 6.9% and in the new 2021 census it is now 9.7%.

The team has had some encouraging success around improving ethnically diverse representation within statutory consultations during the last three years, moving from 1.1% to 5.3% - over the three year period – an increase of 4.2%. The use of the postal survey as one of the delivery mechanisms has been an important tactic in supporting our aims. This year the postal delivery method yielded a 12% return from people identifying as Black, Asian, Mixed and other minoritized ethnicities. This is compared to 5% of respondents to our online survey from those communities. Evaluation will allow consideration of more bold and innovative ways to further increase representation.

The Communications and Engagement Team continues to use the PCC's programme of engagement and events to support the objectives of the Police and Crime Plan.

A second recruitment process has been run for the Community Engagement and Stakeholder Manager role. An independent panel member took part from the Avon and Somerset Police Outreach team. We hope to be able to announce the outcome shortly.

The new post-holder will continue to conduct engagement visits over two days a week - Thursdays to police teams and Fridays to public and partners as well as local political leaders in a geographical rotation of each of the Local Authority areas. The next three rotations around the Force area, approximately 24 weeks, will focus on engaging internally and externally on the Police and Crime Plan.

The series of PCC/Councillors forums in each Local Authority area finished on 16 March in North Somerset. Anecdotal feedback so far suggests they have proved to be a valuable way of connecting local councillors with their neighbourhood police teams and there has been very positive feedback – captured through survey – as well as some areas for learning identified. A full evaluation of the process will be carried out, including costs and measurable impact on objectives, to steer the planning of the next series of these events which is currently set to take place between September and December this year. This is a key deliverable for 2022/23, as part of the PCC's programme of engagement. The aim is to help the PCC and local neighbourhood teams in Avon and Somerset Police to better understand the crime and anti-social behaviour issues that are being reported to local councillors. The PCC also wants to forge stronger relationships, and promote closer partnership working, to address some of the anti-social behaviour and crime issues faced by residents and businesses in Avon and Somerset.

Contacts/Complaints Oversight

The IT issue in relation to obtaining management information from Iken is still being resolved and we await an update from Iken as to how we may be able to retrieve this data before conversion to the new case management system i-Case.

The i-Case project is still on course and is expected to go live in June 2023. The Scrutiny and Assurance team will use the new system to record and manage PCC contact and the system will offer enhanced reporting benefits and efficiency opportunities.

The team are still monitoring the contacts coming through the system as well as linking in with the new Staff Officer and the Comms and Engagement team to identify trends and themes in public contacts and engagement to assist the PCC in holding the Chief Constable to account through the

Performance and Accountability Board. So far this has included the Police Complaints Regime, the precept increase and Male Violence Against Women and Girls (MVAWG).

In line with the implementation of i-Case, both the Performance and Governance team and the Scrutiny and Assurance team are looking at how best to capture the feedback from the public through contacts and through wider scrutiny activity to steer strategic assurance activity. This will be progressed over the coming months.

The scrutiny of police complaint handling is a statutory function for the PCC. Since Sept 2019 (when records started), the PCC has monitored the handling of 487 police complaints through the 'keep in view' process. The team continue to check complaints handling regularly to support timely resolution and are currently overseeing 39 live complaint cases sat with PSD on behalf of the PCC. The team will be reviewing the 'keep in view' process to address the issues raised through last year's review of the OPCC.

Policy & Partnerships

Serious Violence

OPCC VRU Hub Update:

The long-awaited Serious Violence Duty guidance was launched on 31 January. Guidance leaves much of the shaping and development to local discretion, however Duty governance and grant allocation is to sit with PCCs. In A&S, some early scoping was undertaken with key partners (inclusive of the Duty Holders) around the potential model for delivery of the Duty, the consensus was that proposed outputs of the Duty are close to being met with the Hub and Spoke model in place for the VRU grant. Therefore, it is anticipated that each local authority will develop local serious violence problem profiles, which will feed into a wider A&S serious violence needs assessment, which in turn will be the foundation for an A&S Serious Violence Strategy, the oversight of this is likely to sit under the Strategic VRU board that the Deputy PCC currently chairs. The Duty will provide a means to create a more comprehensive assessment of the problem and provide leverage for stronger collaboration between Duty Holders; collaboration is extremely good in places but there are new relationships to be built, for example with the Fire service. A task and finish group has been set up to agree the approach, with the first meeting on 17 March.

At the last Strategic VRU Board on 31 January, the OPCC submitted a proposal to uplift the team and extend fixed term contract roles within the Hub structure. Subsequent discussions have resulted in agreement to a broader review of key roles, responsibilities and consideration to inefficiencies and challenges in delivery across the whole VRU model. Therefore the proposal for the Hub plans are now on hold until the review is complete. OPCC and local authorities will be meeting again on 17 March to agree the scope of the review and its timeline.

Local VRU Spoke Update

Delivery is well embedded for this year, key interventions taking place include work to reduce exclusions and a more inclusive education setting across the 5 areas. Detached youth work, which seeks to engage and divert young people away from risk. Targeted group work is in place, including partners, girls and groups known to be in conflict. Mentoring and 1:1 bespoke support is key to the VRU support offer and is being delivered by a number of specialist providers across the Force area.

The Constabulary have recently recruited a new Chief Inspector who will oversee the Early Intervention Police team (who work closely with the VRU spokes). There are plans to review the work being undertaken by this team and look at how greater consistency and clarity can be achieved. The team includes a newly recruited Serious Violence Business Analyst that will support

developing a better understanding of strategic performance against serious violence but also enabling better intelligence and data insights of police data through to partners within the VRU spokes.

Reducing Reoffending

The Court Up service at Bristol Magistrates Court is due to come to an end on 30 April 2023. The current provider is being supported to bid for MOJ funding to continue this work with expansion to Bath and North Somerset Courts in line with the [Female Offender Strategy](#) and the [Womens Concordat](#). Unfortunately the bid was unsuccessful.

The OPCC has also supported Nelsons Trust to submit a bid for Ministry of Justice funds to recruit a dedicated post to establishing a whole systems approach in line with the Concordat on women in or at risk of contact with the Criminal Justice System. The outcome of this bid is due to be known on 24th February 2023. The OPCC Reducing Reoffending lead is now a member of the APCC's Women in the Criminal Justice System working group as this continues to be a national focus.

Drive in South Gloucestershire is due to come to an end in 31 July 2023. The OPCC has submitted a bid for Home Office funding to allow this service to continue with expansion into Bristol and North Somerset. Notification of the outcome of this bid is expected 17 March 2023.

The Resolve Board was an agenda item for the A&S Criminal Justice Board (ASCJB) on 6 December 2022 where partners confirmed the importance of an ASCJB forum focussed on reducing reoffending. It has been renamed as the Avon & Somerset Reducing Reoffending Board and it held a further meeting on 21st February 2023. The new chair, Steve Kendall will start at the May board on the 18th.

Combating Drugs Partnerships

The five local Combating Drugs Partnerships are progressing at different rates. The OPCC has had sight of the Somerset Needs Assessment and strategy for comment, and the North Somerset Needs Assessment. It is anticipated that Needs Assessments for the remaining 3 areas will be received in the New Year.

All Senior Responsible Officers are regularly coming together to share learning across the force area and to avoid duplication of tasks where possible.

The OPCC's intention is to view all the needs assessments to ensure proportionality, escalate any barriers and be a critical friend. However, this is proving to be a difficult task because the documents are being received at different times. The SRO's have been made aware of this challenge and implication that feedback may be delayed.

Criminal Justice

ASCJB

The A&S Local Criminal Justice Board (ASCJB), chaired by the PCC, met on 2nd March. The Board focussed on the areas of the agreed ASCJB Business plan which include Performance, Violence Against Women and Girls, Victims and Witnesses, Reducing Reoffending, Tackling Disproportionality within the Criminal Justice System and Economic and Cyber Crime (including Fraud).

The OPCC CJ lead will be reviewing the ASCJB business plan with the PCC and Chief of Staff to ensure the board has a clear strategy and can support criminal justice stakeholders to focus on where improvements can be achieved locally.

Restorative Justice Action Plan

The Restorative Justice (RJ) Joint Working Group met on the 27 January. The Restorative Justice Joint Working Group is for multi-agency statutory and non-statutory sector partners who are committed to embedding RJ and restorative approaches across Avon and Somerset. The group is chaired by the PCC's RJ Lead as PCCs have responsibility for implementing RJ in their areas and the MOJ has made funding available for this purpose. The Working Group, at the first meeting, agreed their Terms of Reference and worked in partnership to draft an updated Action Plan (23/24) which incorporated the strategic objectives of increasing access and referrals, increasing awareness and understanding and delivering quality assured services.

Victim Services

No substantive update since the last meeting.

Scrutiny Panels

Independent Scrutiny of Police Complaints Panel (ISPCP)

The Panel met on 9 March to review cases on the theme of Discrimination. The panel reviewed a random sample of recently closed complaint cases where the complaint involved some form of Discrimination. The Independent Office of Police Conduct presented to the panel about the work they have been doing in handling matters involving discrimination.

As part of the OPCCs recent Volunteer Recruitment Campaign, the ISPCP have successfully appointed 5 new panel members, subject to satisfactory vetting. This will take the panel from 6 members to 11. This increase in members will allow for enhanced scrutiny work of the Constabulary, a higher proportion of completed complaint cases can be sampled, which will assist in driving accountability, seeking out best practice and improvements and to bringing about positive change in the police complaints process.

The panel plan to meet in June in person to welcome new members.

Independent Scrutiny of Police Powers Panel

The most recent ISOPP meeting was held on the 24th February 2023.

The OPCC facilitated the identification of 60 randomly selected cases that fall under specific themes. All complaints relating to stop and search were scrutinised by the panel.

Work is underway to complete the final report which will be published here:

[Independent Scrutiny of Police Powers Panel Reports | OPCC for Avon and Somerset \(avonandsomerset-pcc.gov.uk\)](https://www.avonandsomerset-pcc.gov.uk)

The annual report has also been published which is available via this link.

Recent volunteer recruitment campaign has been very successful and interviews for ISOPP members concludes at the end of the month.

Independent Custody Visiting Scheme

Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) have continued to conduct weekly, unannounced paired visits at each of the 3 Custody Units to check on detainees' rights, entitlements and wellbeing. ICVs previously identified challenges with the new provider (MITIE) of nurses in custody. Significant improvements have since been observed now that the new staff have been fully trained and successfully imbedded into the 3 Custody Units.

The OPCC interim Scheme Manager has liaised with ASC colleagues and IT to make improvements to the Custody Visitors print out which ICVs receive when they come into custody. Modifications have been made so that the time of arrival for a detainee is now shown. This will assist the ICVs in prioritising their visits accordingly.

As part of the recent OPCC Volunteer Recruitment Campaign, interviews are ongoing to increase volunteer numbers.

Additional information about the Scheme can be found at the following link:

[The Independent Custody Visiting Scheme | OPCC for Avon and Somerset \(avonandsomerset-pcc.gov.uk\)](https://www.avonandsomerset-pcc.gov.uk)

Out of Court Disposals Scrutiny Panel

The Panel met in March for their annual meeting at which they reviewed Terms of Reference, elected a Chair, agreed the work plan for the coming year and scrutinised cases resolved by Community Resolution. The theme was selected in recognition that this outcome has the greatest level of officer discretion and as such is in the greatest need of scrutiny in order to ensure consistency across the Force. The Panel reviewed 30 cases and found 7 to be appropriate, 16 appropriate with observations and 7 inappropriate. The primary reason for cases considered as inappropriate was where the outcome was incompatible with Force policy. This included two cases involving intimate domestic abuse, one in which the Gravity Matrix score was above the required level, and one in which the offender was ineligible for a Community Resolution, having received a Caution within the last two years. Findings will be used to inform Force training and guidance following publication of new national guidance for use of Community Resolutions. The report will be published at the following link: <https://www.avonandsomerset-pcc.gov.uk/reports-publications/out-court-disposals-reports/>

3. National Updates

Economic & Cyber Crime

The PCC continues to use his influence on the Fraud and Cyber Crime Reporting and Analysis Service (FCCRAS) Board to ensure the changes being proposed are efficient and effective. The PCC is due to meet with FCCRAS board members to review and discuss improvements to the new Action Fraud website.

The APCC GM took place on 25th and 26th January. PCCs and parliamentarians were present. The PCC delivered a keynote speech exploring key areas where PCCs can develop their forces local response to fraud. A resource pack with local fraud protect information was shared with attendees to help bolster local protect and prevent work. This will also be shared via the national Knowledge Hub forum.

The OPCC facilitated a multi-agency group, bringing together key partners from the Constabulary, Trading Standards and victim support services to understand the challenges of partnership working and improve responses to victims of fraud at a local level. The OPCC is working to facilitate better data sharing between Trading Standards departments and the Constabulary, as this was identified as the main barrier to improved partnership working.

Most recently, the PCC has written to Security and Policing Ministers to ask that they work closely together and with us to ensure a coherent and coordinated approach to tackling fraud.

The OPCC ECC leads are considering a strategy of how best to use the PCC's national ECC platform working closely with the APCC and City of London Police. Additionally the OPCC and A&S Constabulary will work together to align a communications strategy within the ECC business plan to ensure transparency and awareness are communicated to staff and the public on this area of work.

The Home Office have listened to concerns raised about the impact of fraud and cyber-crime on communities and the necessity of a greater responsibility for police forces to take accountability in improving outcomes. The recently published Strategic Policing Requirement specifically mentions both Fraud and Cyber-crime strategies and the requirement to better protect victims with a suitable level of support as would be expected in all other crime types.

Contact Officer – Alice Ripley, Chief of Staff