

County Council
Thursday, 22nd July, 2021



You can view the agenda at
<https://www.devon.gov.uk/democracy/>
or use a smart phone camera and scan the code above.

A G E N D A

8. Cabinet Member Reports (Pages 1 - 34)

To consider reports from Cabinet Members.

Report of the Cabinet Member for Policy, Corporate and Asset Management

I have been asked to report as follows for Full Council on 22 July 2021:

By Councillor Hannaford on:

Can the Leader please confirm that there are absolutely no plans to sell off our county farms estate. Could he or the relevant cabinet member also please outline the investment, development work and land acquisitions that have taken place during the last council term.

Furthermore could council please be updated about our Devon County Council commitment and vision for our county farms estate to ensure they have a secure , sustainable ,and profitable future.

Response

I am not sure how a rumour was circulated that the Farms estate was up for sale back in April / May of this year but to clarify the situation I have not suggested selling nor would I suggest it. One of my first decisions when we took over the Council in 2009 was to actually put a Cabinet Member responsible for the Farms Estate, and organised a review of the estate to look at the large list of backlog maintenance work, a lot of it critical. There was also need to do something urgently about Slurry handling on Dairy farms for the Environment Agency. We are now investing in the property to modernise a number of the farm houses.

The Farms estate is now in a much better condition than in 2009. We may have less farms, but they are more practical and viable farms for our tenants to work.

Please see table below for full details.

Year	Size (ac)	No of farms	Capital receipts (£)	Capital investment (£)	Land purchase (£)	Land purchase (ac)
2009/10	10,001 ac	82	£1,173,600	£63,252	£799,311	85 acres at Ide & 60 acres at Rockbear e
2010/11	9,888 ac	80	£1,275,000	£588,746	0	0
2011/12	9,729 ac	75	£1,241,000	£1,121,004	0	0

Agenda Item 8.

2012/13	9,650 ac	75	£1,247,500	£1,489,777	0	0
2013/14	9,509 ac	71	£1,021,500	£552,215	0	0
2014/15	9,687 ac	68	£608,924	£377,000	£615,000	102 aces at Braunton
2015/16	9,619 ac	69	£3,843,000	£1,284,000	0	0
2016/17	9,590 ac	69	£1,476,115	£1,107,944	£150,000	26 acres at Marwood
2017/18	9,570 ac	68	£11,130,00 0	£778,599	0	0
2018/19	9,555 ac	65	£2,700,644	£1,365,740	0	0
2019/20	9,544 ac	65	£1,569,062	£1,189,225	0	0
2020/21	9,572 ac	65	£610,000	£954,093	£278,980	36 acres at Rose Ash
TOTAL S			£27,896,34 5	£10,871,59 5	£1,843,29 1	309 acres

In summary between financial years 2009/10 and 2020/21:

- the estate has reduced in size by 429 acres
- the estate has purchased 309 acres in 5 separate blocks
- the Council has invested £1,843,291 on the purchase of the replacement land (average of £5,965 / acre)
- the number of residential equipped holdings has reduced by 17
- the estate has generated £27,896,345 in capital receipts
- the Council has invested £10,871,595 in improved infrastructure on the estate – largely NVZ/SSAFO compliant slurry stores and farmhouse renovation and energy efficiency works

It is perhaps worth noting that we have been very successful buying land that is well located to the Estate. It is very rare that land sufficiently well located to existing holdings comes to the market, but we have pursued most, if not all suitable opportunities.

Councillor John Hart

Cabinet Member for Policy, Corporate and Asset Management

Report of the Cabinet Member for Economic Recovery and Skills

I will be reporting as follows for Full Council on 22 July 2021:

1. By Councillor Hannaford on Tractor GPS Thefts & Agricultural Crime as follows:

“According to rural insurer NFU Mutual and local police forces last year saw an unprecedented surge in GPS equipment thefts from farms across the UK.

Westcountry farmers are being warned to again ramp up their security measures that they have in place following a spring surge in tractor global positioning system (GPS) thefts.

Thieves are stealing all makes and models of GPS control units, together with screens and domes from tractors.

Some deterrent work includes setting up a PIN and then labelling the system as PIN Enabled, or the equivalent on farm management software such as Trimble. Also if the system has to be permanently fitted, to encourage the use of anti-tamper/theft screws and bolts.

Targeted funding has been made available from NFU Mutual, and the National Vehicle Crime Intelligence Service (NaVCIS) is supporting operations across the country to tackle organised agricultural machinery crime and is working with overseas police forces to disrupt international crime gangs.

What work are we doing through our trading standards operations with key partners in Devon to tackle these issues and criminal activity?

Are we working with our tenant farmers to protect their equipment and property?

Also do we have the latest data, figures and trends about agricultural crime in Devon? “

2. By Councillor Hannaford on the UK & Australia Free Trade Agreement - Agricultural Sector:

Can the cabinet member please update council on what representations DCC has made with our local Devon Members of Parliament about these important matters, and to central government to ensure the best deal for Devon is achieved.

Also, what analysis and scoping work has been done regionally and through our own economic and environmental officers to assess the potential strengths, weaknesses

and threats from these changes, for Devon's farmers, food producers and the rural communities that depend on them?

3. By Councillor Atkinson as follows:

Please can we have a report on the current situation across all districts in the county on the following:

- The total economic activity in 2021 (as granular as possible to show trends please)
- Number of unemployed by gender and age and district
- Areas where vacancies exist and the sectors
- Outlook and issues for key sectors e.g. agriculture engineering health and social care tourism retail,

Response

1. Tractor GPS Thefts & Agricultural Crime

What work are we doing through trading standards operations with key partners in Devon to tackle Tractor GPS Thefts, Agricultural Crime issues and other rural criminal activity?

Devon, Plymouth, Somerset & Torbay Trading Standards Service (TS) has close working links with both Devon & Cornwall and Avon & Somerset Police forces and officers liaise with their Rural Affairs Teams on a regular basis, sharing intelligence and monitoring rural crime trends.

The TS Rural Crime Intelligence Officer attends the Exmoor Rural Crime Initiative, Dartmoor Rural Crime Initiative and Avon & Somerset Crime Forum and a TS officer also attends the South West Illegal Meat Group which adopts a multi-agency approach for tackling the illegal supply of meat/shellfish in the South West.

TS host and chair the Trading Standards Farming Partnership (TSFP) which is made up of public-voluntary and private groups from within the farming and agriculture industry including the National Farmers Union (NFU), Animal Plant Health Agency (APHA), Private Vets, livestock haulier associations, Chairs of County/Agricultural shows, etc. Within its wider remit the TSFP raises awareness and shares intelligence on rural crime issues such as vehicle and machinery theft, doorstep crime and livestock rustling. For example, in conjunction with the Rural Crime Officer for D&C Police the TSFP is seeking to raise the profile of rural crime issues by hosting a webinar on 19 July 2021 (coinciding with Farm Safety Week). The aim being to highlight the work of the Police and explain their involvement in tackling rural crime. Going forward, it is hoped that by having these contacts in place both TS and the Police will then be better placed to identify issues within their wider remit and to signpost to other support quickly and effectively.

TS also use Social Media and other communications to disseminate a wide range of rural issues, including campaigns and initiatives by the Police and other partners to highlight and raise awareness of rural crime.

Joint operations with the Police have included roadside stops of animal livestock vehicles which are checked for stolen livestock and compliance with welfare legislation, these operations incorporate stops of vehicles likely to be associated with rogue traders.

Rogue traders have also been the focus of a Farm “No Cold Caller” scheme set up by Trading Standards, Devon and Cornwall Police, and leading rural insurer NFU Mutual to tackle “cold calling” criminals at farms across the region. [“No Cold Callers” scheme launched to combat rural crime and protect South West farmers - Trading Standards \(devonsomersettradingstandards.gov.uk\)](https://www.devonsomersettradingstandards.gov.uk)

Are we working with our tenant farmers to protect their equipment and property?

The number of reported thefts on the County Farms Estate remains low and GPS equipment is not generally used for dairy and livestock holdings (DCCs County Farms estate comprises of dairy and livestock farms). Consequently, very few tenants use GPS technology.

More widely however, through the County Farms Estate tenant’s representative security issues and theft is discussed and awareness is raised through DCCs regular tenant’s newsletter to highlight the risks of theft and signposting to relevant advice and information.

At present TS do not work specifically with tenant farmers as a separate group although they would be included in all their general work with farms and rural communities. The TSFP has plans to extend its participation to seek representation from other rural groups and one of those already identified is DCC tenant farmers.

Do we have the latest data, figures and trends about agricultural crime in Devon?

The data belongs to Devon & Cornwall Police as the data holders. However, searches can be requested for specific legitimate purposes and information would then normally be shared.

For example, the Devon & Cornwall Police Rural Affairs Team report that in relation to GPS system thefts, whilst there has been a concentration of thefts reported further up country which are sporadic in location and frequency, as of 23 June they have received two reports this calendar year.

The National Police Chief Council Rural Crime Strategy, shows the core rural crime types which the police are prioritising: <https://www.nwcu.police.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/NPCC-Rural-affairs-Strategy-2018-2021.pdf>

2. UK & Australia Free Trade Agreement - Agricultural Sector

Devon County Council (DCC) continues to work in very close partnership with all of Devon's Members of Parliament and with businesses and business representative organisations, in relation to both EU exit and Covid economic recovery, as well as on many other matters. On agricultural matters DCC has a very strong ongoing working relationship with the National Farmers' Union (NFU), particularly related to EU exit and the future of the agricultural sector.

Recent examples include our work to brief Devon's MPs and the Digital Minister on the digital divide and how it affects farmers, specifically regarding our consultation with the NFU that has informed the Connecting Devon and Somerset response to Government on improving broadband in very hard to reach areas. We have also very recently briefed Devon's MPs on Team Devon's Community Renewal Fund bids, which include a proposal for a Devon Agri Tech Accelerator.

With regard to the recent UK and Australia Free Trade Deal, our close working partners the NFU have undertaken in depth analysis of the deal, which they have shared with our Economic Recovery and Skills team. They have also provided recent briefings to Senior Ministers, MPs and Civil Servants on this issue.

Devon County Council's Economic Recovery and Skills team has also reviewed the deal information published to date and concluded that:

- The UK has agreed an 'in principle' free trade deal with Australia which will see tariffs and quotas removed from products including Agricultural products. Trade between the UK and Australia currently accounts for about 2% of the level it is between the UK and EU.
- The Government summary of the deal highlights the benefits of the UK/Australia deal for exports of products such as technology, pottery and cars, but in terms of Devon's specific agricultural sector provides little additional analysis or information from which to conclude significant benefits, or disbenefits. **The full text of the agreement in principle has yet to be published.**
- As part of the deal there will be a cap on tariff free imports for a period of 15 years, which should enable some degree of adaptation by farmers and producers, including in Devon.
- For example, for beef 35,000 tonnes will initially be allowed in tariff free, but this will increase to 110,000 tonnes over 10 years. If too much beef enters the UK a safeguard duty can be introduced for a further period of 5 years.
- Tariff free quotas will be removed sooner for sugar (of which Devon produces very little) at 7 years and for dairy at 5 years.
- Concerns have been expressed from the NFU, rural charities and environmental bodies as beef and lamb producers may not be able to compete with Australian producers on price. Should these concerns materialise, this could lead to some adverse impacts on supply chains, producers and workers if mitigations are not properly considered.

DCC will continue to monitor details of the Trade Agreement, including with partners such as the NFU, as these emerge.

More in-depth Information we have received from the Devon NFU concludes:

NFU labelling position

On labelling, the NFU stance has always been that the information carried on a label must be clear and unambiguous so that it makes sense to a consumer (and can be proven through audit). Additionally:

- There needs to be clear country of origin labelling
- Retailers often add more information on a voluntary basis, but it can be confusing or inconsistent
- A YouGov survey found that 81% of consumers think retailers should give the same amount of country of origin data for buying online as they do in store
- More information on country of origin should be that in the foodservice sector

What is the Australia trade deal?

The trade deal with Australia will be the first big post-Brexit trade deal negotiated by the UK government, that is not a 'rollover' of existing agreements the UK enjoyed as an EU member. It is a symbolic moment for those arguing for the benefits of free trade.

What is the issue of concern for British farmers?

The UK government has decided to grant tariff-free access to the British market for Australian farmers, phased in over a period of years. If the deal is ratified, beef and sheep meat tariffs (extra charges, similar to a tax, that importers have to pay) will be eliminated after ten years and sugar tariffs eliminated after eight years. In both the beef and sheep meat sectors, a further safeguard will mean a 20% tariff can apply for volumes above a certain limit (170,000t and 125,000t respectively) for a further five years, bringing the length of time in which UK farmers will have some protection to 15 years.

While some details of the agreement have been announced, such as the tariffs above, the full text of the agreement in principle has yet to be published. The NFU awaits further details of the agreement to properly understand and analyse what it will mean for its members.

Why is it important to British farmers?

Without the UK government imposing tariffs on imported products in this trade deal, many British farmers – especially those who rear beef cattle and sheep – may not be able to compete because of the differences in economy of scale, production methods and standards. Australia believes beef imports could displace Irish beef in the UK,

and any increase in lamb volumes could displace imported New Zealand volumes. This may be the case in the short term, but given the sheer volume of product a major agricultural exporter like Australia can produce and sell, there is no guarantee that under such pressure, UK producers will not face damaging price falls.

Granting Australia complete free access to the UK's market could potentially also set a precedent for other future trade deals. The US, for instance, may demand the same unrestricted access for their beef as has been granted to Australia in any future trade negotiations.

What is the NFU calling for?

Responding to the UK government's announcement of an agreement in principle, NFU President Minette Batters said: "While details remain very thin on the ground, it appears that the agreement will include important safeguards that attempt to strike a balance between liberalising trade and supporting UK farm businesses, as well as a reasonable time period to allow UK farmers to adjust to the new trading environment.

"We await further details of the agreement to understand whether these safeguards are sufficient, and in particular that they can be deployed effectively should imports rise to an unmanageable level leading to significant market disruption."

The NFU, alongside a range of UK farming bodies, is calling for the government to stand up for British farmers in all its negotiations and adhere to five principles that are of crucial importance to UK food and farming in the negotiations:

- Upholding our high standards of production and positioning the UK as a global leader in sustainable farming and in tackling climate change.
- Recognising the specific sensitivities of some UK farming sectors, such as beef and sheep, in the current negotiations.
- Balancing improved access and lower tariffs for agricultural imports with quotas and other safeguards to avoid irreversible damage to UK farming.
- Ensuring any trade deal is genuinely reciprocal and that the benefits properly reflect how valuable UK market access is for foreign exporters.
- Acknowledging that these deals will establish precedents that will be reflected in all our trade deals.

What else is the NFU doing?

As well as coordinating with a range of UK farming organisations, the NFU has been on the front foot explaining to prominent national journalists the importance of a fair-trade deal for British farmers at two specially convened press conferences. At the same time, officeholders and NFU experts have been speaking to senior ministers, MPs and civil servants about the importance of the five principles outlined above.

What happens next?

Any parliamentary scrutiny of the deal is likely to take place in the autumn of 2021, where MPs will have the opportunity to see the detail. This will also be when the Trade and Agriculture Commission reports on the deal's impact on standards of

animal welfare, environment and human, animal, plant life or health. After this, MPs could have a debate on the deal, but a vote in the House of Commons is not required to ratify the deal. However, one could be taken if enough MPs support one. It is only after these steps are all completed that the UK and Australia will ratify the deal and enter into a legally binding international treaty between each other. As this is the first free trade deal that has been renegotiated since Brexit it is hard to tell how long this process will take.

The NFU continues to make the case for fair trade deals and highlight the damage a bad deal could cause to UK agriculture at the highest levels of government.

Comparing farming standards

Some key differences between UK and Australian farming standards, as published by Red Tractor are:

 LEGAL FARMING STANDARDS COMPARED The Red Tractor logo means food can be traced back to British farms and produced to standards you can trust.		
FARM STANDARDS		
HORMONE-FED BEEF	Legal 	Banned
HOT BRANDING	Legal 	Banned
SOW STALLS	Legal 	Banned
MANAGEMENT OF SOILED WOOL	Mulesing - cutting skin away (Only Victoria state requires pain relief) 	Dagging – trimming wool only to prevent soiling
PARAQUAT (WEED KILLER)	Legal 	Banned toxic to animals and humans
SLAUGHTERHOUSE CCTV	Not required 	Mandatory
TRANSPORT TIMES	Up to 24 hours 	Up to 8 hours on conventional transport

3. Total Economic Activity

The total economic activity in 2021

Economic output data produced at a national level is only available up to 2019 for Devon and is still provisional. At a national level provisional data has been released for the first part of 2021.

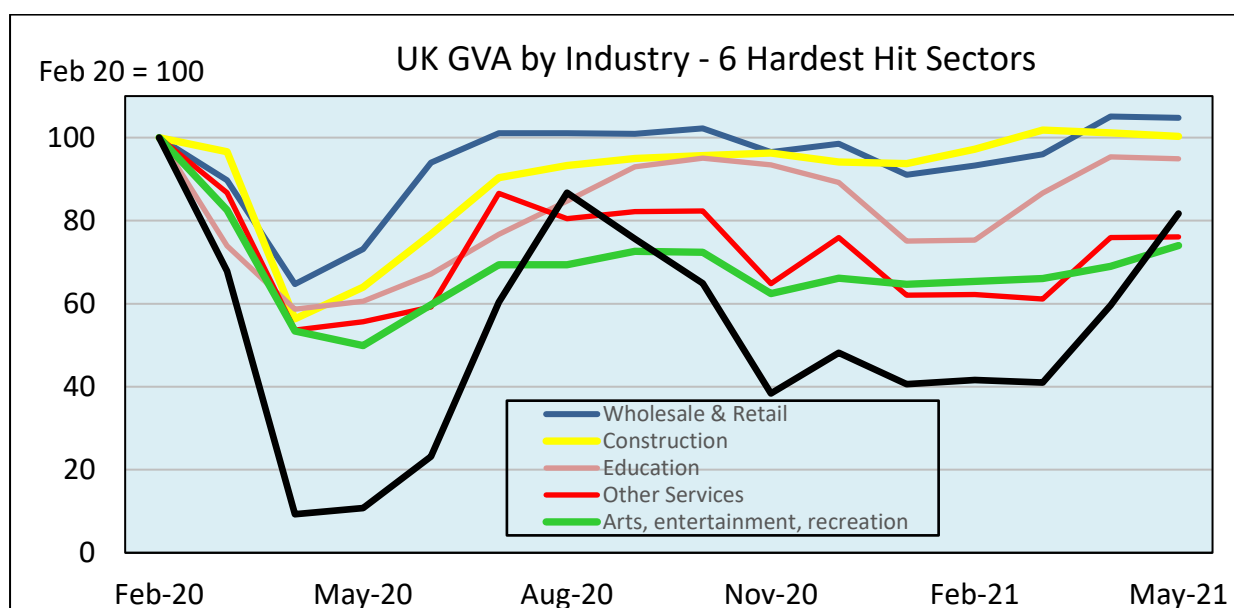
In Devon we commissioned some economic projections from Oxford Economics in June 2020 which looked at data available during the first 2020 lockdown and post Covid recovery prospects. The findings were:

- For a forecasted loss of output / productivity similar to the UK wide impact of almost 10% for 2020 as a whole, but with particular lags in recovery in Mid and West Devon and a slightly faster recovery in Exeter.

The Bank of England currently forecasts a swifter and more sustained UK recovery of 7.25% in 2021 and 5.75% in 2022, with the economy returning to its pre-Covid level by the end of 2021.

Latest provisional UK GDP (output) data for May 2021 shows the UK economy has now recovered to 3.1% below the level in February 2020 before the pandemic. Between April and May 2021, the economy grew by 0.8% as it continued to re-open; with Services output up 0.9% (driven by a 37% recovery in accommodation & food output); Production output up 0.8%; while Construction output was down 0.8% (leaving it 0.3% above the February 2020 level).

Devon is over-represented in many of the sectors that were hardest hit in 2020, but which are now recovering.



Source: ONS July 2021

The number of unemployed by gender and age and District

The latest Universal Credit (unemployed measure) Claimant Count was published by the Government's Office for National Statistics in July 2021, with the figures for June 2021. In Devon claimant numbers were at a historic low level in 2018. They rose rapidly during the first Covid lockdown, but have been falling significantly for all cohorts in recent months.

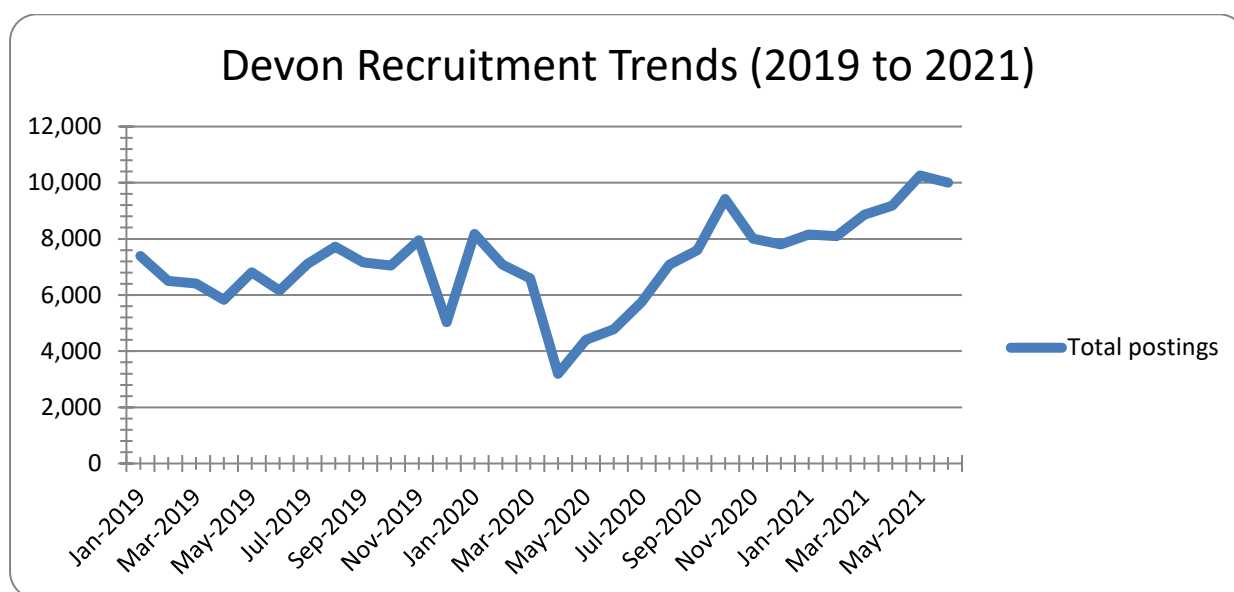
Younger people were affected most during the lockdown in early 2020, with over 50s affected much more since. Overall men have been slightly more affected than women, but with slightly faster rises in claimant counts for both younger and older women.

Full tables are available at Appendix one.

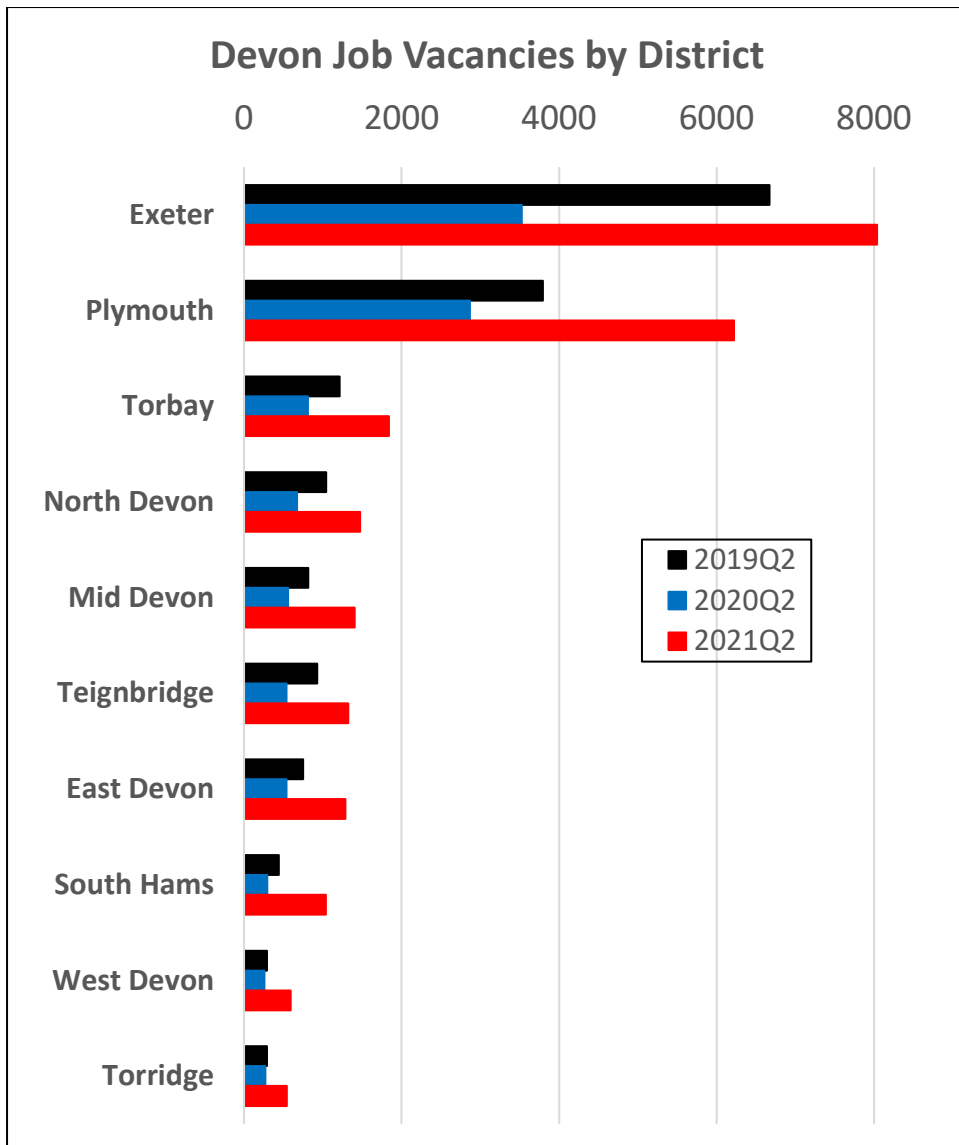
Areas where vacancies exist and the sectors

COVID-19 initially impacted significantly on recruitment by businesses across Devon, but there has been a subsequent recovery which has now become broad based across the region and across different sectors of the economy. Jobs postings are now higher than pre-Covid across Devon. Bounce-backs in recruitment have occurred in all parts of Devon. This bounce back is especially in manufacturing, hospitality, personal services and agriculture.

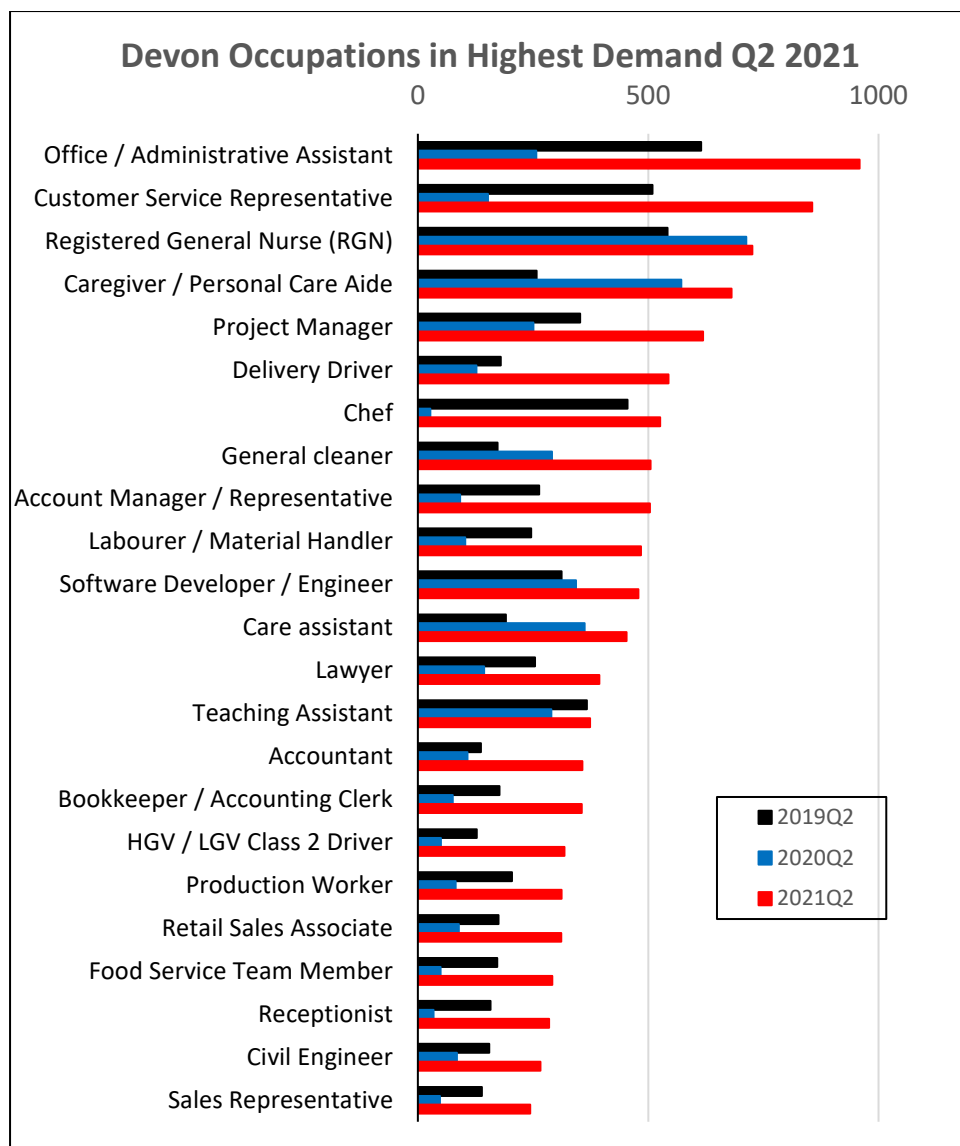
Occupations in highest demand currently include Office Admin, Customer Service, Registered General Nurse and Care Workers. Others such as Delivery Drivers are now in much higher demand than before the pandemic and there has been a dramatic turnaround in the demand for Chefs as hospitality has re-opened.



Source: *Burning Glass – Labour Insights*



Source: Burning Glass – Labour Insights



Source: *Burning Glass – Labour Insights*

Change in recruitment by sector	Apr-Jun 2021	Jun 2020 to Jun 2021	Feb 20 to Jun 21
Agriculture, Horticulture, & the Outdoors	4.0%	225.0%	188.9%
Business Management and Operations	33.7%	201.9%	93.6%
Clerical and Administrative	36.2%	246.4%	90.2%
Community and Social Services	-13.5%	20.7%	48.6%
Construction, Extraction, and Architecture	-21.1%	118.5%	58.4%
Customer and Client Support	66.1%	374.6%	116.7%
Design, Media, and Writing	-32.8%	141.2%	0.0%
Education and Training	23.0%	11.2%	-19.6%
Engineering	-11.1%	104.6%	38.3%
Finance	-12.5%	94.4%	24.1%
Health Care including Nursing	21.3%	19.6%	27.3%
Hospitality, Food, and Tourism	27.9%	325.4%	62.2%
Human Resources	86.2%	250.0%	36.7%
Information Technology	13.0%	56.2%	10.4%
Law, Compliance, and Public Safety	-9.6%	140.6%	51.8%
Maintenance, Repair, and Installation	10.9%	100.0%	60.0%
Manufacturing and Production	-10.9%	241.8%	81.7%
Marketing and Public Relations	-10.2%	146.9%	51.9%
Performing Arts	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Personal Services	89.7%	189.5%	66.7%
Planning and Analysis	-7.9%	103.5%	34.9%
Sales	10.4%	251.3%	66.8%
Science and Research	27.7%	122.2%	39.5%
Transportation	-10.6%	181.5%	115.6%

Source: Burning Glass – Labour Insights

Outlook and issues for key sectors e.g. agriculture, engineering, health and social care, tourism, retail

We are closely monitoring the rapidly changing situation in all sectors across Devon. There are current shortages of staff in all sectors and some upward pay pressures for certain vocations, particularly skilled construction staff. There are also reports of some hospitality businesses offering retention bonuses for skilled staff such as chefs.

There is still a great deal of uncertainty as to which sectors will fare best as the economy recovers, as noted by the Bank of England and at this stage it is key to ensure that the right conditions for recovery of all sectors continues, including ensuring people have the right skills to benefit from the future labour market.

There is also significant uncertainty as to what the economic impacts will be as Furlough winds down this autumn. Devon County Council will be studying this

closely when this happens, reporting back and making any relevant recommendations regarding interventions internally and to partner organisations.

We expect demand in many of these sectors to continue, at least in the short-term. In the medium to longer-term we expect there to be the continuation of existing trends, which includes a shift in retail spend patterns to more online shopping and local neighbourhood shops, plus the further digitisation of many roles, meaning the need for people to upskill. We also expect there to be further demand for health and social care, with an ageing population and the continuing need to recruit in this sector.

Councillor Rufus Gilbert

Cabinet Member for Economic Recovery and Skills

Appendix One to Cabinet Member for Economic Recovery and Skills Report

Unemployment claimant count data

All UC claimants (unemployed)									
Area	March 2019	March 2020	March 2021	May 2021	June 2021	% Rate June 2021	% change May 21 to Jun 21	% change Mar 21 to Jun 21	% change Mar 20 to Jun 21
Devon	6,690	8,590	21,020	18,385	16,635	3.6	-9.5	-20.9	93.7
East Devon	980	1,380	3,385	2,875	2,585	3.3	-10.1	-23.6	87.3
Exeter	1,155	1,555	3,720	3,295	3,060	3.4	-7.1	-17.7	96.8
Mid Devon	665	820	1,865	1,665	1,545	3.2	-7.2	-17.2	88.4
North Devon	1,055	1,230	3,070	2,670	2,355	4.2	-11.8	-23.3	91.5
South Hams	640	740	2,180	1,870	1,670	3.4	-10.7	-23.4	125.7
Teignbridge	1,050	1,465	3,535	3,120	2,815	3.7	-9.8	-20.4	92.2
Torridge	755	900	1,970	1,740	1,565	4.1	-10.1	-20.6	73.9
West Devon	385	490	1,295	1,150	1,040	3.3	-9.6	-19.7	112.2
<i>Plymouth</i>	<i>5,440</i>	<i>5,790</i>	<i>10,070</i>	<i>9,190</i>	<i>8,595</i>	<i>5.2</i>	<i>-6.5</i>	<i>-14.6</i>	<i>48.4</i>
<i>Torbay</i>	<i>2,300</i>	<i>2,675</i>	<i>5,570</i>	<i>4,870</i>	<i>4,405</i>	<i>5.7</i>	<i>-9.5</i>	<i>-20.9</i>	<i>64.7</i>
<i>England</i>	<i>900,650</i>	<i>1,063,505</i>	<i>2,294,110</i>	<i>2,113,170</i>	<i>1,995,710</i>	<i>5.7</i>	<i>-5.6</i>	<i>-13.0</i>	<i>87.7</i>

Aged 16 to 24 UC claimants (unemployed)									
Area	March 2019	March 2020	March 2021	May 2021	June 2021	% Rate June 2021	% change May 21 to Jun 21	% change Mar 21 to Jun 21	% change Mar 20 to Jun 21
Devon	1,380	1,710	4,140	3,495	3,095	NA	-11.4	-25.2	81.0
East Devon	180	235	640	520	450	NA	-13.5	-29.7	91.5
Exeter	220	315	760	685	630	NA	-8.0	-17.1	100.0
Mid Devon	150	165	375	310	280	NA	-9.7	-25.3	69.7
North Devon	240	260	630	550	490	NA	-10.9	-22.2	88.5
South Hams	105	130	430	340	285	NA	-16.2	-33.7	119.2
Teignbridge	210	305	670	575	490	NA	-14.8	-26.9	60.7
Torridge	195	205	385	320	280	NA	-12.5	-27.3	36.6
West Devon	75	90	245	195	185	NA	-5.1	-24.5	105.6
<i>Plymouth</i>	<i>1,170</i>	<i>1,275</i>	<i>2,120</i>	<i>1,915</i>	<i>1,790</i>	NA	-6.5	-15.6	40.4
<i>Torbay</i>	<i>470</i>	<i>495</i>	<i>1,005</i>	<i>825</i>	<i>735</i>	NA	-10.9	-26.9	48.5
<i>England</i>	<i>169,340</i>	<i>200,350</i>	<i>435,695</i>	<i>393,145</i>	<i>367,390</i>	NA	-6.6	-15.7	83.4

Aged 25 to 49 UC claimants (unemployed)									
Area	March 2019	March 2020	March 2021	May 2021	June 2021	% Rate June 2021	% change May 21 to Jun 21	% change Mar 21 to Jun 21	% change Mar 20 to Jun 21
Devon	3,365	4,580	11,070	9,770	8,950	NA	-8.4	-19.2	95.4
East Devon	500	755	1,800	1,535	1,430	NA	-6.8	-20.6	89.4
Exeter	615	885	2,135	1,850	1,725	NA	-6.8	-19.2	94.9
Mid Devon	315	430	960	875	835	NA	-4.6	-13.0	94.2
North Devon	530	690	1,635	1,440	1,260	NA	-12.5	-22.9	82.6
South Hams	315	360	1,085	945	870	NA	-7.9	-19.8	141.7

Teignbridge	530	750	1,770	1,600	1,450	NA	-9.4	-18.1	93.3
Torridge	370	445	1,020	930	830	NA	-10.8	-18.6	86.5
West Devon	190	260	670	595	550	NA	-7.6	-17.9	111.5
<i>Plymouth</i>	3,035	3,270	5,770	5,280	4,955	NA	-6.2	-14.1	51.5
<i>Torbay</i>	1,140	1,470	2,945	2,630	2,390	NA	-9.1	-18.8	62.6
<i>England</i>	493,870	602,115	1,310,490	1,213,415	1,150,165	NA	-5.2	-12.2	91.0

Aged 50+ UC claimants (unemployed)									
Area	March 2019	March 2020	March 2021	May 2021	June 2021	% Rate June 2021	% change May 21 to Jun 21	% change Mar 21 to Jun 21	% change Mar 20 to Jun 21
Devon	1,950	2,300	5,805	5,120	4,590	NA	-10.4	-20.9	99.6
East Devon	300	390	945	815	705	NA	-13.5	-25.4	80.8
Exeter	320	350	825	760	705	NA	-7.2	-14.5	101.4
Mid Devon	195	230	530	480	430	NA	-10.4	-18.9	87.0
North Devon	285	280	805	680	605	NA	-11.0	-24.8	116.1
South Hams	220	250	660	585	515	NA	-12.0	-22.0	106.0
Teignbridge	310	410	1,095	945	870	NA	-7.9	-20.5	112.2
Torridge	195	245	565	495	450	NA	-9.1	-20.4	83.7
West Devon	120	140	380	360	305	NA	-15.3	-19.7	117.9
<i>Plymouth</i>	1,240	1,245	2,180	1,995	1,850	NA	-7.3	-15.1	48.6
<i>Torbay</i>	690	710	1,620	1,420	1,275	NA	-10.2	-21.3	79.6
<i>England</i>	237,385	261,015	547,845	506,545	478,100	NA	-5.6	-12.7	83.2

All female UC claimants (unemployed)

Area	March 2019	March 2020	March 2021	May 2021	June 2021	% Rate June 2021	% change May 21 to Jun 21	% change Mar 21 to Jun 21	% change Mar 20 to Jun 21
Devon	2,715	3,645	8,815	7,725	6,950	2.9	-10.0	-21.2	90.7
East Devon	415	570	1,450	1,245	1,105	2.8	-11.2	-23.8	93.9
Exeter	440	595	1,415	1,250	1,160	2.6	-7.2	-18.0	95.0
Mid Devon	250	350	815	730	700	2.8	-4.1	-14.1	100.0
North Devon	430	510	1,270	1,105	960	3.4	-13.1	-24.4	88.2
South Hams	280	350	1,015	870	780	3.1	-10.3	-23.2	122.9
Teignbridge	430	670	1,485	1,300	1,145	2.9	-11.9	-22.9	70.9
Torridge	310	380	815	735	645	3.3	-12.2	-20.9	69.7
West Devon	155	215	555	490	455	2.9	-7.1	-18.0	111.6
<i>Plymouth</i>	2,135	2,280	4,085	3,705	3,420	4.2	-7.7	-16.3	50.0
<i>Torbay</i>	830	1,010	2,120	1,890	1,700	4.4	-10.1	-19.8	68.3
<i>England</i>	371,845	444,515	945,715	870,690	820,320	4.7	-5.8	-13.3	84.5

Female UC claimants aged 16-24 (unemployed)									
Area	March 2019	March 2020	March 2021	May 2021	June 2021	% Rate June 2021	% change May 21 to Jun 21	% change Mar 21 to Jun 21	% change Mar 20 to Jun 21
Devon	525	630	1,575	1,350	1,160	NA	-14.1	-26.3	84.1
East Devon	75	85	245	205	170	NA	-17.1	-30.6	100.0
Exeter	80	115	290	260	240	NA	-7.7	-17.2	108.7
Mid Devon	50	60	155	130	105	NA	-19.2	-32.3	75.0
North Devon	100	85	245	205	180	NA	-12.2	-26.5	111.8
South Hams	45	50	170	145	120	NA	-17.2	-29.4	140.0

Teignbridge	85	120	250	220	185	NA	-15.9	-26.0	54.2
Torridge	65	85	135	120	90	NA	-25.0	-33.3	5.9
West Devon	25	30	85	70	65	NA	-7.1	-23.5	116.7
<i>Plymouth</i>	490	500	865	775	700	NA	-9.7	-19.1	40.0
<i>Torbay</i>	185	190	405	340	305	NA	-10.3	-24.7	60.5
<i>England</i>	67,350	77,025	169,780	151,030	139,490	NA	-7.6	-17.8	81.1

Female UC claimants aged 25-49 (unemployed)									
Area	March 2019	March 2020	March 2021	May 2021	June 2021	% Rate June 2021	% change May 21 to Jun 21	% change Mar 21 to Jun 21	% change Mar 20 to Jun 21
Devon	1,375	2,045	4,610	4,080	3,740	NA	-8.3	-18.9	82.9
East Devon	205	320	755	660	605	NA	-8.3	-19.9	89.1
Exeter	235	340	790	690	645	NA	-6.5	-18.4	89.7
Mid Devon	125	200	415	385	395	NA	2.6	-4.8	97.5
North Devon	215	300	675	590	515	NA	-12.7	-23.7	71.7
South Hams	140	175	505	435	410	NA	-5.7	-18.8	134.3
Teignbridge	225	375	745	660	580	NA	-12.1	-22.1	54.7
Torridge	155	195	420	385	345	NA	-10.4	-17.9	76.9
West Devon	75	130	305	265	250	NA	-5.7	-18.0	92.3
<i>Plymouth</i>	<i>1,190</i>	<i>1,340</i>	<i>2,335</i>	<i>2,155</i>	<i>2,005</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>-7.0</i>	<i>-14.1</i>	<i>49.6</i>
<i>Torbay</i>	<i>400</i>	<i>575</i>	<i>1,070</i>	<i>985</i>	<i>885</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>-10.2</i>	<i>-17.3</i>	<i>53.9</i>
<i>England</i>	<i>206,760</i>	<i>260,285</i>	<i>543,335</i>	<i>504,860</i>	<i>477,950</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>-5.3</i>	<i>-12.0</i>	<i>83.6</i>

Female UC claimants aged 50+ (unemployed)	
---	--

Area	March 2019	March 2020	March 2021	May 2021	June 2021	% Rate June 2021	% change May 21 to Jun 21	% change Mar 21 to Jun 21	% change Mar 20 to Jun 21
Devon	815	970	2,630	2,300	2,045	NA	-11.1	-22.2	110.8
East Devon	140	165	450	380	330	NA	-13.2	-26.7	100.0
Exeter	125	140	335	300	275	NA	-8.3	-17.9	96.4
Mid Devon	75	90	245	215	200	NA	-7.0	-18.4	122.2
North Devon	120	125	345	305	265	NA	-13.1	-23.2	112.0
South Hams	100	125	340	290	250	NA	-13.8	-26.5	100.0
Teignbridge	120	175	490	420	380	NA	-9.5	-22.4	117.1
Torridge	85	100	260	230	210	NA	-8.7	-19.2	110.0
West Devon	55	55	165	155	140	NA	-9.7	-15.2	154.5
<i>Plymouth</i>	455	440	885	780	710	NA	-9.0	-19.8	61.4
<i>Torbay</i>	245	250	640	565	510	NA	-9.7	-20.3	104.0
<i>England</i>	97,720	107,195	232,560	214,780	202,860	NA	-5.5	-12.8	89.2

All male UC claimants (unemployed)									
Area	March 2019	March 2020	March 2021	May 2021	June 2021	% Rate June 2021	% change May 21 to Jun 21	% change Mar 21 to Jun 21	% change Mar 20 to Jun 21
Devon	3,975	4,945	12,205	10,660	9,685	4.2	-9.1	-20.6	95.9
East Devon	565	810	1,935	1,630	1,485	3.9	-8.9	-23.3	83.3
Exeter	715	960	2,310	2,045	1,900	4.1	-7.1	-17.7	97.9
Mid Devon	415	475	1,050	935	850	3.6	-9.1	-19.0	78.9
North Devon	625	720	1,805	1,565	1,395	5.0	-10.9	-22.7	93.8
South Hams	355	390	1,165	1,000	895	6.2	-10.5	-23.2	129.5
Teignbridge	620	795	2,045	1,820	1,665	3.8	-8.5	-18.6	109.4

Torridge	450	515	1,155	1,005	915	4.4	-9.0	-20.8	77.7
West Devon	230	280	740	660	585	7.1	-11.4	-20.9	108.9
<i>Plymouth</i>	<i>3,310</i>	<i>3,510</i>	<i>5,985</i>	<i>5,485</i>	<i>5,175</i>	<i>4.9</i>	<i>-5.7</i>	<i>-13.5</i>	<i>47.4</i>
<i>Torbay</i>	<i>1,470</i>	<i>1,665</i>	<i>3,450</i>	<i>2,980</i>	<i>2,705</i>	<i>3.8</i>	<i>-9.2</i>	<i>-21.6</i>	<i>62.5</i>
<i>England</i>	<i>528,805</i>	<i>618,990</i>	<i>1,348,400</i>	<i>1,242,480</i>	<i>1,175,390</i>	<i>6.7</i>	<i>-5.4</i>	<i>-12.8</i>	<i>89.9</i>

Male UC claimants aged 16-24 (unemployed)									
Area	March 2019	March 2020	March 2021	May 2021	June 2021	% Rate June 2021	% change May 21 to Jun 21	% change Mar 21 to Jun 21	% change Mar 20 to Jun 21
Devon	855	1,080	2,565	2,150	1,935	NA	-10.0	-24.6	79.2
East Devon	110	150	395	320	280	NA	-12.5	-29.1	86.7
Exeter	140	200	475	425	390	NA	-8.2	-17.9	95.0
Mid Devon	100	105	220	180	175	NA	-2.8	-20.5	66.7
North Devon	140	175	385	340	310	NA	-8.8	-19.5	77.1
South Hams	65	80	265	195	165	NA	-15.4	-37.7	106.3
Teignbridge	130	185	420	355	305	NA	-14.1	-27.4	64.9
Torridge	125	125	250	200	190	NA	-5.0	-24.0	52.0
West Devon	50	60	160	130	120	NA	-7.7	-25.0	100.0
<i>Plymouth</i>	<i>680</i>	<i>775</i>	<i>1,260</i>	<i>1,140</i>	<i>1,090</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>-4.4</i>	<i>-13.5</i>	<i>40.6</i>
<i>Torbay</i>	<i>285</i>	<i>305</i>	<i>600</i>	<i>485</i>	<i>430</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>-11.3</i>	<i>-28.3</i>	<i>41.0</i>
<i>England</i>	<i>101,990</i>	<i>123,325</i>	<i>265,910</i>	<i>242,120</i>	<i>227,900</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>-5.9</i>	<i>-14.3</i>	<i>84.8</i>

Male UC claimants aged 25-49 (unemployed)

Area	March 2019	March 2020	March 2021	May 2021	June 2021	% Rate June 2021	% change May 21 to Jun 21	% change Mar 21 to Jun 21	% change Mar 20 to Jun 21
Devon	1,985	2,535	6,460	5,690	5,205	NA	-8.5	-19.4	105.3
East Devon	295	435	1,045	875	825	NA	-5.7	-21.1	89.7
Exeter	380	545	1,345	1,160	1,080	NA	-6.9	-19.7	98.2
Mid Devon	195	230	540	490	440	NA	-10.2	-18.5	91.3
North Devon	315	390	960	850	745	NA	-12.4	-22.4	91.0
South Hams	175	185	580	510	460	NA	-9.8	-20.7	148.6
Teignbridge	300	370	1,025	940	870	NA	-7.4	-15.1	135.1
Torridge	215	250	600	540	490	NA	-9.3	-18.3	96.0
West Devon	115	130	365	325	300	NA	-7.7	-17.8	130.8
<i>Plymouth</i>	1,845	1,930	3,435	3,130	2,950	NA	-5.8	-14.1	52.8
<i>Torbay</i>	740	900	1,870	1,640	1,510	NA	-7.9	-19.3	67.8
<i>England</i>	287,110	341,830	767,155	708,555	672,215	NA	-5.1	-12.4	96.7

Male UC claimants aged 50+ (unemployed)

Area	March 2019	March 2020	March 2021	May 2021	June 2021	% Rate June 2021	% change May 21 to Jun 21	% change Mar 21 to Jun 21	% change Mar 20 to Jun 21
Devon	1,135	1,330	3,175	2,825	2,545	NA	-9.9	-19.8	91.4
East Devon	165	225	495	435	380	NA	-12.6	-23.2	68.9
Exeter	195	215	490	460	430	NA	-6.5	-12.2	100.0
Mid Devon	120	140	285	265	235	NA	-11.3	-17.5	67.9
North Devon	165	160	455	375	340	NA	-9.3	-25.3	112.5
South Hams	120	125	320	295	265	NA	-10.2	-17.2	112.0
Teignbridge	190	240	605	525	490	NA	-6.7	-19.0	104.2
Torridge	110	145	305	265	240	NA	-9.4	-21.3	65.5
West Devon	65	85	215	205	165	NA	-19.5	-23.3	94.1
<i>Plymouth</i>	785	805	1,295	1,215	1,140	NA	-6.2	-12.0	41.6
<i>Torbay</i>	445	465	980	855	765	NA	-10.5	-21.9	64.5
<i>England</i>	139,665	153,815	315,280	291,765	275,240	NA	-5.7	-12.7	78.9

**Report of the Cabinet Member for
Public Health, Communities and Equality**

Introduction

I have been asked to report by Councillor Hannaford as follows:

The UK government has apologised for “failing” rape victims over many years through plunging conviction levels and a serious lack of help & support.

It has now published its **Rape Review Report** more than two years after it was launched to examine these serious systemic failings.

The reports introduction includes “ These are trends of which we are deeply ashamed. Victims of rape are being failed. Thousands of victims have gone without justice. But this isn’t just about numbers – every instance involves a real person who has suffered a truly terrible crime.”

It sets out plans for a “system and culture change” that will include focusing more on the behavior of the suspect than the accuser.

The report recommends a root-and-branch examination of the whole system. This includes looking at evidence of allegations being reported, how they are dealt with by the police and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), the decision to prosecute, and the outcomes in court, across England and Wales.

Campaigners say that the review – which was commissioned in March 2019 – was crucial to properly understand why rape prosecutions are still plummeting, despite an increase in people coming forward with allegations.

The latest CPS data, published last summer for the year 2019/20, showed just **1,439 people** were convicted of rape or lesser offences, down 25% from **1,925** the previous year. It represented a record low.

There are an estimated **128,000 victims of rape and attempted rape** a year, but only **1.6%** of all reported cases result in a charge.

The increase in reporting has gone up from **24,093 adult rapes** recorded by the police in **2015-16** to **43,187 in 2019-20**.

Overall the idea is to increase trust in the judicial service, make the experience less traumatic for victims, and bring about guilty pleas without the need for a trial by building solid cases.

There are a range of proposed measures including;

- Police moving towards a default investigatory model that recognises the prevalence of serial offending in rape and sexual offences, with a greater emphasis on the behavior of the suspect rather than, as Justice Secretary Robert Buckland QC described it, “the obsessive focus on the credibility of the victim”.
- Phones used in evidence gathering should be returned to the complainant within 24 hours.
- Plans for pilot schemes where alleged victims pre-record their cross-examination and re-examination by defence and prosecution lawyers, so that it can be done away from what can be an intimidating court environment.
- A pledge in consultation with victims, survivors, and those that support them to commission a support service that it says will provide rape victims with easily accessed immediate support, whenever and wherever they require it.
- The establishment of “scorecards” to measure the effectiveness of these new measures in an effort to work out what is effective and what is not.

Can the Cabinet Member appointed to the Police and Crime Panel, in consultation with the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chief Constable, please confirm with council the following questions;

- What is the official Devon and Cornwall Police and Police and Crime Commissioner response to the Rape Review Report?
- Can they please confirm their action plan to implement its findings and recommendations?
- In terms of rape cases, how do the national statistics, data, trends and figures compare with our local police and CPS performance?
- Can Devon and Cornwall be nominated as one of the pilot prerecorded court session areas?
- How will the new commissioned support services operate locally?
- Will the “scorecards” system be monitored and collated locally and nationally?
- How will Devon County Council support, promote and help develop this initiative working with the PCC, police and other key partners?

Response

On 18 June the government published its end to end rape review. The Review found that nationally there had been a sharp decrease in the number of prosecutions since 2016-17 and that victims too often felt their recovery was at odds with continuing to pursue their case.

The report commits the government to ‘urgent, sustained change’ to roll out a new approach to investigations, reduce the number of victims withdrawing from the process, increase the volumes of trials being heard, protect the

public and put more rapists behind bars. Some actions are for government while others are for policing, CPS and others to take forward. Organisations nationally and locally are still developing their plans to take forward the findings of the Review and in some instances awaiting guidance from government regarding how areas of action will be progressed.

The Commissioner published a statement following publication of the Review recognising that more needs to be done to support victims of rape.

<https://www.devonandcornwall-pcc.gov.uk/news-and-blog/multimedia-hub/commissioner-urges-sexual-assault-victims-to-seek-support-as-government-highlights-'systemic-failings'-in-criminal-justice-system/>

In the year to March 2020 Devon and Cornwall recorded 1,620 rape offences compared to a national average of 1,337. This equates to a rate of 91 per 100,000 people compared to the national rate of 104. The percentage of rape offences charged that were assigned a positive outcome in Devon and Cornwall was 2.8% which is slightly higher than the national average of 2.6% and is the 11th highest across police forces.

Devon and Cornwall Police had already begun working with partners and local services to improve the response it provides to all victims of rape which address many of the issues identified in the Review.

A joint action plan with the Crown Prosecution Service is in place which builds upon the National Police/CPS Plan set out in January 2021. The local plan includes actions to improve the quality and timeliness of investigations and improvements to the services and support provided to victims during investigation. Since the Review was published a bid has been made for new funding being offered nationally to enhance forensic investigation services within policing for rape offences.

There is already a wide range of work underway with partners to improve the service provided to victims of rape and serious sexual assault. The OPCC and Devon and Cornwall Police are fully engaged in the Peninsula Wide Sexual Violence and Abuse Board, working alongside local authorities and NHS England which has a detailed delivery and action plan in place. Projects already being progressed before the review was published included a digital walk through of the system for victims which is one of the recommendations of the Review. The Board is examining the Review findings to identify additional actions they need to take forward in partnership.

The Local Criminal Justice Board, which is chaired by the Police and Crime Commissioner will play an important role in steering and overseeing progress to improve the service to victims of rape and reverse the trends shown in the Review. The Board will be meeting in a few weeks and this is a key area for focus.

Some of the questions asked by Cllr Hannaford are not capable of being answered at this stage. We await further information and advice nationally

regarding the proposed scorecards and the roll-out of the widening of section 28.

We also await guidance on what new commissioned support services are recommended by the review. Locally we already have a number of support services for people affected by rape and sexual violence:

- Across the peninsula we have three sexual assault referral centers for adults and one paediatric centre of excellence.
- The independent sexual violence advisor (ISVA) service which supports all victims of reported sexual violence and abuse. Over the last 18 months we have secured national funding to recruit 4 new ISVA's to provide specialist support to men and boys, people from the LGBTQ community and children..
- The Commissioner also funds a network of community therapeutic support services for adults and children, where they can access psycho-social support for historic and acute cases of abuse where these have been reported and not to the police.
- The Commissioner has recently applied for £1.5m of crisis funding from government to provide additional support services to victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence to deliver greater IDVA and ISVA services.
- Devon County Council is working with Plymouth City Council, Torbay Council, OPCC and CCG to develop a radically improved response to sexual violence and abuse. The Chairs of the Safeguarding Adults Board, Safer Devon Partnership, Children and Families and Health and Well Being Partnerships and the Integrated Care System have all agreed to priorities Sexual Violence and Abuse (and Domestic Abuse) as cross board issues.

Councillor Roger Croad

Cabinet Member for Public Health, Communities and Equality

Report of the Cabinet Member **Children's Services and Schools**

I have been asked to Report by Councillor Connett for Full Council on 22 July 2021 on:

the Ofsted letter of 15 July 2021 regarding Children's Services in Devon.

Response

Ofsted inspected the Council's Children's Services on 26th and 27th May 2021, as a focused visit under the ILACS inspection framework. This was a standard visit which all local authorities receive regardless of rating, and it covers nine different areas which are set out in Ofsted's inspection framework and are below:

Help and protection

- the effectiveness of the front door, with specific reference to any rise in and response to referrals, section 47 enquiries and strategy discussions
- the progress of children subject to child protection and child in need plans (those who have experienced abuse, neglect or exploitation)
- the progress of those recently stepped up or stepped down to early help and the exercise of thresholds
- edge of care/pre-proceedings, particularly those subject to a letter before proceedings (under the pre-proceedings stage of the PLO, local authorities are required to write to parents setting out what needs to change if they are to avoid family court proceedings)

Children in care and care leavers

- the focus on physical and mental health of children in care and care leavers, including how the local authority has maintained contact with the child/care leaver and how they have facilitated contact with families
- placement decisions, including the quality of matching, particularly when sufficiency is a challenge

Impact of leaders

- the quality assurance of practice and 'line of sight' to the quality and impact of practice with children and families
- management and workforce capacity, including responses to staff well-being
- the effectiveness of leaders in leading and contributing to multi-agency working that leads to effective social work practice

This inspection also looked at our arrangements in response to Covid. The inspection letter was published by Ofsted on their website on July 15th.

Main Findings

Ofsted recognised the strength of partnership working for children in response to Covid, describing how Devon organisations working with children had come together well to provide an effective and well co-ordinated response. They highlighted our good school attendance of all children, and in particular vulnerable children, including those in care and those living with their families as children in need or children on child protection plans. Our school attendance of all these groups of children, including those with special educational needs, both during the pandemic and following lockdowns has been above national average. This is an opportunity to thank all partners, particularly schools, for the tremendous contribution they have made to securing children's education and welfare during Covid.

Ofsted further found that children were seen and supported by social care services during the pandemic, and that those children who are electively home educated, were safe and monitored appropriately.

Our progress in improving some areas of social care that were found wanting in the January 2020 inspection was acknowledged during the focused visit. Specific examples include better use of 'pre-proceedings' and more timely interventions, meaning that children were coming into care at the right time and for the right reasons. Pre-proceedings is the work done to help a family change before it is necessary to seek a court order. Ofsted found that our relationships with the judiciary and with CafCass, the independent social work service representing children in the courts, was much improved since 2020.

Our improved service for care leavers was also recognised, and Ofsted said that young people were starting to benefit from an improved strategic focus, with tenacious staff building good relationships with them. Ofsted also found strengths in our work with children and young people who go missing, and found that senior leaders had responded quickly to areas of concern.

However, overall we agree with Ofsted's feedback in the letter, that our improvement journey is at an early stage (and outcomes for some children who need our help are still poor). This is because there can be delays in children getting the help they need, and we are not undertaking strong enough assessments, leading to insufficiently smart and robust plans for children. Our social work practice is too variable. Since January 2020 there has been an improvement in the overall frequency of audit work, and an increase in the use of performance data, but this has not so far led to consistent practice across differently localities within Devon. There is not enough challenge in the system, for example we are too ready to accept small changes within families as indicators of sustainable improvements for children, and there is insufficient challenge of practice at all levels, including from the corporate centre and elected members. Our evaluation of where the service was at, completed in March 2021, also interpreted small changes as indicators of greater change, leading to over-optimism about progress since the January 2020 inspection. We recognise that our workforce instability is a significant contributory factor, with high levels of agency staff and 30 social work posts currently not filled by either permanent or agency social workers.

We are absolutely committed and determined to get this right for children, and recognise there is a considerable amount of work ahead in order to do so. We have recruited a permanent Head of Children's Social Care, and a significant package of recruitment and retention measures will be going to formal Cabinet in September, to improve our ability to attract, keep and develop the best staff. Our improvement partnership with Leeds, funded by the Department for Education, has started, with an initial diagnostic of our MASH and front door service, and yesterday we held a leadership day with the social care management team. We also have an Improvement Advisor working with us, appointed by the DfE, who is bringing his

experience of taking authorities out of intervention and developing good and outstanding services for children.

We will not rest until our children are receiving the services that they deserve.

Andrew Leadbetter

Cabinet Member

Children's Services and Schools

**Report of the Cabinet Member
Organisational Development, Workforce & Digital
Transformation**

I have been asked to Report by Councillor Whitton for Full Council on 22 July 2021 on:

the current situation on the handling of Freedom of Information requests, including how many are not being replied to within the normal recommended response time, what is the average time that is currently being taken for requests to be answered in full, the current trend in numbers of requests received, and what action is being taken within the Council to deal with any backlog or to address any anticipated increase in the number of requests expected to be received. Can the cabinet member also indicate whether a similar situation is arising with regard to general enquiries received through the Customer Services Centre or individual department mailboxes.

Response:

1. Outline the current situation on the handling of Freedom of Information requests

At the start of the pandemic in March 2020 it was agreed through DCC's Pandemic Incident Management Team that the Freedom of Information (FOI) service would be temporarily suspended to enable the Access to Information team to be re-deployed to help support DCC's response to the pandemic and enable greater resource to help vulnerable people in Devon. The service was reinstated in July 2020. This approach mirrors the agreed approach taken for customer complaints and was an approach which the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) endorsed as a recognition of the public sector's ability to manage information effectively. The ICO continue to take a pragmatic approach to compliance during the pandemic.

A. how many are not being replied to within the normal recommended response time

There are currently 37 information requests that are overdue (over the 20 day response timescale). Customers with overdue cases are regularly contacted to update them on progress and advise of the delay. Some of these requests are of a more complex nature and require co-ordination across more than one service.

B. what is the average time that is currently being taken for requests to be answered in full

16 days on average for June 2021, within the 20 day legislative timescale for responding to requests.

C. the current trend in numbers of requests received

Broadly the figures remain at c.100 information requests received per month and we have not seen any significant fluctuations to that figure in the last 12 months.

D. what action is being taken within the Council to deal with any backlog or to address any anticipated increase in the number of requests expected to be received

Within the Access to Information Service, more complex time consuming Subject Access Requests are being commissioned to enable the team to focus on dealing with reducing the current FOI backlog, however based on the trend outlined above we are not currently anticipating an increase.

Since Feb 2021 the backlog of FOI requests has reduced from 45 to 37 in May 2021.

Since April 2021 a new Access to Information Manager has been in post to directly oversee the service.

2. Is there a similar situation arising with regard to general enquiries received through the Customer Services Centre or individual department mailboxes?

There is a general upward trend of phone contact into the Customer Service Centre over the last 3 months from c.26000 in April to c.31000 in June.

Volumes in corresponding months this year (2021) are higher than the same period in 2020.

The Customer Service Centre also deals with a number of Service Mailboxes for the Council. Mailboxes have a 5 day response target turnaround, however the current response time is between 1 and 3 days.

The performance of the Customer Service Centre is monitored on a regular basis by the Digital Transformation and Business Support Leadership Team and plans are in place to increase resources where there are known increases in call volumes (for example in September due to School Admissions or at times of bad weather).

Andrew Saywell

Cabinet Member

Organisational Development, Workforce & Digital Transformation