

Corporate Infrastructure & Regulatory Services  
Scrutiny Committee

# Impact of Changes to Local Policing Spotlight Review

November 2017

## 1. Recommendations

The Spotlight Review group asks the Corporate Infrastructure & Regulatory Services Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet to endorse that the recommendations below be sent to the Chief Constable and the Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC) for Devon & Cornwall Police, for their consideration, and to be fed into the Police's Project Genesis review, and to receive a progress update in 6-9 months' time.

### Recommendation 1

The Chief Constable's decision to cut Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) numbers across the Peninsula by 190, whilst increasing Police Officer numbers by 100, will result in an overall reduction to Neighbourhood Policing across Devon's communities. The Chief Constable should therefore, closely monitor the impact of his decision to reduce overall numbers of the workforce, and ensure that this does not result in less effective working in Neighbourhood teams, whilst making every effort to reconnect local policing with communities.

#### Outcome

Ensure that all local communities across Devon are confident that the Police will detect and prevent harm, protect the vulnerable and reduce crime.

### Recommendation 2

That as part of Project Genesis, the Police undertake to identify:

- The nature and number of incidents PCSOs are deployed to deal with
- The frequency of PCSO attended incidents which required the support of a warranted officer, due to PCSOs having insufficient powers to deal with an incident
- The frequency of warranted officer attended incidents where it was found that PCSO attendance would have been sufficient
- The effectiveness of PCSOs vs warranted officers in detecting or apprehending crime and the supporting of victims, and whether this supports the decision made to reduce PCSO numbers
- To report these findings, and the full findings of Project Genesis, back to the Corporate Infrastructure & Regulatory Services Scrutiny Committee.

#### Outcome

To assure communities that the changes being made to local policing are necessary and appropriate.

### Recommendation 3

Increase public understanding and trust in modern police work and how the Police in Devon are keeping communities safe by:

- Reviewing the Devon & Cornwall Police and PCC websites and other communication (digital and print) to ensure that they consistently reflect the state of policing and crime today
- Promoting the work of new police roles such as 'Specialist Problem Solvers' and 'Police Staff Investigators' and others, to show communities how 'hidden' police work is preventing crime, cracking down on offending and keeping communities safe
- Working more closely with local Councillors, utilising their local knowledge and links with communities to allow for better two way communication between the public and the Police
- Ensuring that Neighbourhood Alerts are relevant to their target audience, and that Parish and Town Councils receive up to date and relevant reports on policing in their areas.

#### Outcome

Build public confidence and reconnect communities with the work of the Police.

#### **Recommendation 4**

Make the most of volunteers and communities as a valuable asset by:

- Creating varied and valuable volunteering opportunities within the Police, attracting a range of skills into the Force, such as Specials and well trained community volunteers
- Targeting volunteer recruitment at Devon's retired and student populations – create peer community workers for older/younger people and minority groups
- Looking at how volunteers and volunteer training can be shared across agencies
- Working with communities to create safe community spaces – learn from examples such as 'claiming back the alley ways' in Exeter
- Providing more information for communities about how to keep property safe, particularly in rural/farming areas
- Providing greater support for Community Speedwatch schemes.

#### **Outcome**

Help to maintain a strong police presence and connection with communities, provide local insight and opportunities for early intervention and make communities feel safer and be safer. This recommendation is proposed to support, rather than replace the work of neighbourhood policing teams.

#### **Recommendation 5**

Working more effectively with public sector and voluntary sector partners by:

- Working hard to overcome issues around data sharing with other agencies and create 'information sharing agreements' for those agencies where sharing is regular
- Working with other agencies and the voluntary sector to reduce first time offending and reoffending through 'nudging' type approaches
- Considering 'co-location' of agencies for working on strategic issues such as CSE, cyber-crime and extremism
- Aligning commissioning activity, so that services are not planned in isolation, but with an awareness of services being provided within the wider public sector and voluntary sector landscape
- Working proactively with community groups and the County Council to identify the impact of hate crime, developing appropriate support programmes for victims, and safeguard vulnerable individuals who are at risk of radicalisation through the Prevent Strategy and Channel process<sup>1</sup>
- Using the Safer Devon Partnership as a platform to address the above recommendations.

#### **Outcome**

Police and other agencies will be able to make the most of limited resources, avoid duplication, keep a focus on prevention and provide communities and individuals with a consistent and meaningful service.

## **2. Background**

2.1 Devon & Cornwall Police have faced year on year reductions in funding. Crime figures are increasing both locally and nationally. Due to the changing nature of crime, police forces are being driven to focus more limited resources on strategic threats such as terrorism, child sexual exploitation and modern slavery; threats which are often unseen by the public.

2.2 Communities highly value the work of their PCSOs and Neighbourhood Police Officers, but report that they are less present than ever. Police front desks have been closed across the County and there is an expected reduction in PCSOs from 340 to 150 across the Peninsula, which adds to the perceived vulnerability of the public.

2.3 Communities are alarmed that reductions in local policing are currently, and will in future result in increased crime and risks to community safety.

2.4 A review of neighbourhood policing is currently taking place across Devon and Cornwall (Project Genesis) which is considering changes in resource levels, definitions of roles in neighbourhood policing, training and the role of volunteers in policing.

## Scope of the Review

2.5 The Corporate Infrastructure & Regulatory Services Scrutiny Committee elected to undertake a Spotlight Review, to be held on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2017, to look at the potential impact that changes to local policing may have, and offer some suggested ways forward. The scope of the review was to:

- Begin to identify and seek to quantify the impact that reductions in funding and changes to police, local authority and partner priorities and activities are having on local communities, local crime and anti-social behaviour
- Identify the value that PCSOs bring to communities and as such, consider the potential impact of planned reductions across the County
- Consider how Devon & Cornwall Police, public sector and third sector partners can work together to best protect communities into the future
- Feed the findings of the review into Devon & Cornwall Police's Project Genesis review

2.6 Time and resources necessitate that this report provides a snapshot approach to highlight some of the most significant crime, safety and anti-social behaviour issues affecting communities in Devon today. In this vein the Spotlight Review's recommendations do not profess to solve all the crime related problems currently being faced by Devon's communities, but ask that Devon & Cornwall Police do all that they can to keep communities safe, to facilitate a greater partnership approach to protecting communities, and encourage greater collaboration and trust between the Police and the communities they serve.

## 3. Findings

### Crime and Safety in Devon - Devon & Cornwall Police's Perspective

3.1 Statistically Devon is a safe place to live, experiencing less crime than other parts of the UK. However, in line with the national picture, crime in Devon is increasing. Crime figures show that serious victim based crimes such as rape and other sexual offences, violence against the person, domestic abuse and crime have all seen increases. Although this may be in part due to an increase in reporting of these crimes, the total increase cannot be entirely attributed to this. Other types of crime are also increasing including drug trafficking, possession of a weapon and vehicle offences (see Appendix).

3.2 Devon & Cornwall Police, alongside other national police forces are also seeing a change in the pattern of crime. A large proportion of police time and resource is focussed on complex investigations, with common themes of vulnerability and safeguarding, in areas such as child sexual exploitation and abuse, modern slavery, radicalisation as well as domestic violence and abuse. The internet, often the 'dark web' is being used to facilitate many of these crime types, as well as crimes such as financial fraud, drugs and weapon dealing. These crimes often require investigators to take a very different approach and use a more diverse skill set to that of 'traditional' crime investigations. Police staff with strong crime analysis and specialist problem solving skills are needed to detect and react to this type of crime, and to work to prevent it.



3.8 Devon-wide issues such as speeding and dangerous driving, vehicle crime, neighbourhood disputes, vandalism, anti-social behaviour, theft and burglary, domestic abuse and hate crime were clearly of severe concern to many communities, and themes of vulnerability, particularly around children and young people, and those with mental health problems were apparent.

3.9 A number of these types of crime might be considered 'low level' or less serious than the complex police investigations outlined in paragraph 3.2. However, it is clear that these incidents have a real impact on people's lives, on community cohesion and on wellbeing. Communities also feel that the lack of police available to tackle these more traditional crimes actually encourages perpetrators to think they can get away with impunity.

3.10 'Hidden' crimes, particularly child sexual exploitation and abuse were also raised, but it was acknowledged that this type of crime is often not seen by the public at large. Strong links between criminal activity such as drug dealing and petty crime with child sexual exploitation and abuse and modern slavery were also made, and concerns about 'County Lines'<sup>2</sup> style trafficking of children in particular were acknowledged as being an unseen but very real issue in Devon.

### Changes to Local Policing

3.11 Local policing is changing. This is driven both by the need to rebalance the police workforce to reflect the changing pattern of crime, but also as a result of increasing demand and reducing financial resources. The Devon & Cornwall Police & Crime Plan 2017-2020<sup>3</sup> however, promises that local policing will be accessible, responsive, informative and supportive. The below diagram illustrates 'Local Policing' as described by Devon & Cornwall Police at the Spotlight Review meeting.



PPC Plan	Police and Crime Commissioner Plan
NCA	National Crime Agency
PSD	Professional Standards Department
CMCU	Contact management and communications unit
SPR	Strategic Policing Requirement
PPU	Public Protection Unit
CTIU	Counter Terrorism Intelligence Unit
SOCB	Serious and Organised Crime Branch

3.12 Changes to local policing include a reduction in PCSO numbers across Devon & Cornwall from 340 to 150. This decision has been controversial and unpopular in many areas and has caused concern for many communities, feeling that a huge void will be left if their PCSO is taken away, and that crime and safety will be affected.

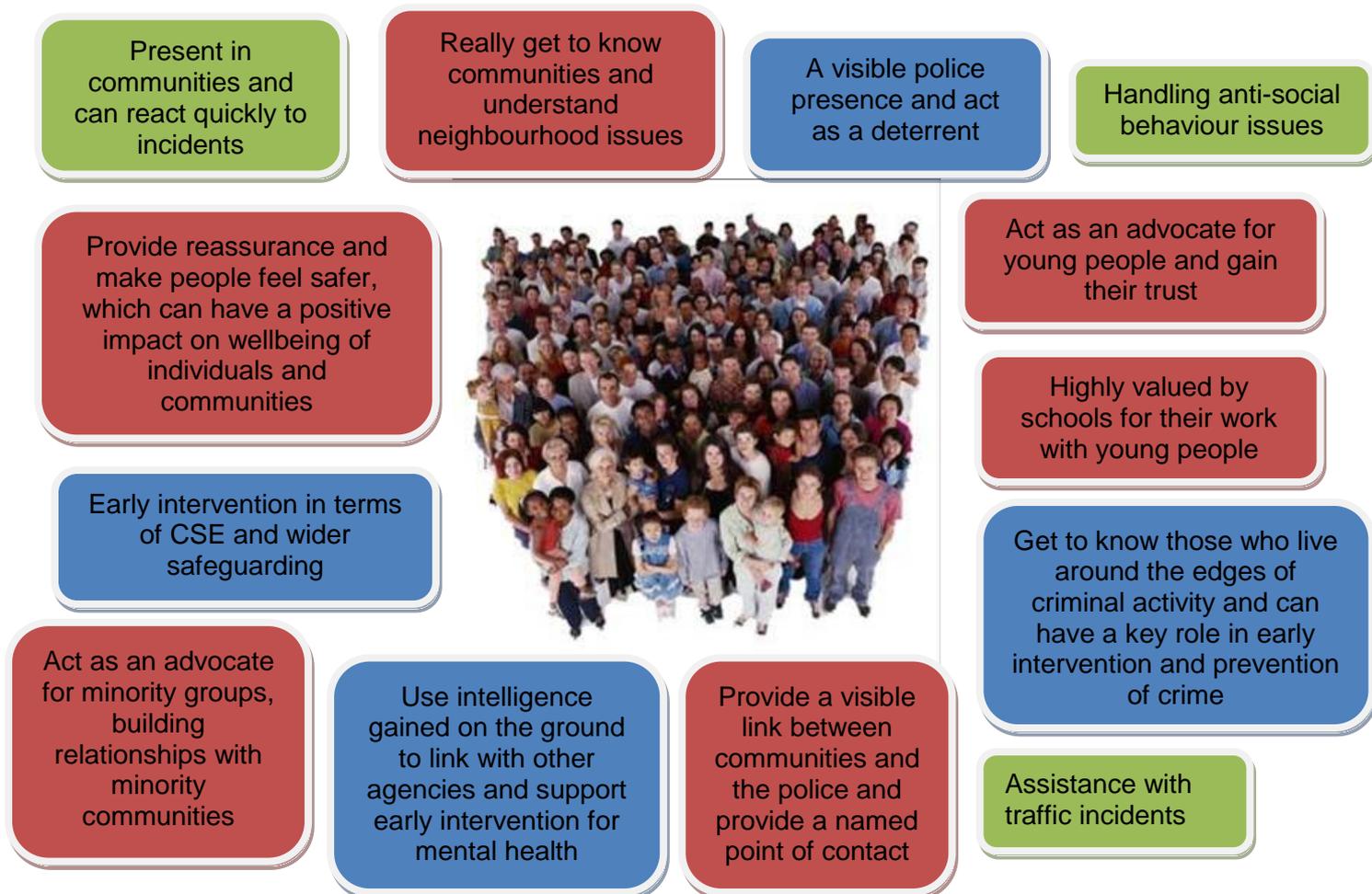
<sup>2</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-41720980>

<sup>3</sup> [https://devonandcornwall.s3.amazonaws.com/Documents/Our%20information/Key%20document/Police%20and%20Crime%20Plan%202017-2020%20FINAL%20\(002\).pdf](https://devonandcornwall.s3.amazonaws.com/Documents/Our%20information/Key%20document/Police%20and%20Crime%20Plan%202017-2020%20FINAL%20(002).pdf)

3.13 As part of the Project Genesis review, Devon & Cornwall Police are evaluating the role that PCSOs are currently performing. However, as yet no information on this, or on the expected impact of these changes has been made available to communities or to the Spotlight Review group.

### What does your PCSO do for you?

3.14 At the Spotlight Review meeting, councillors and stakeholders were asked what value their PCSO brings to their community. Feedback is summarised below. Roughly speaking, the green boxes are 'reactive' work, the blue boxes are 'preventative' work and the pink boxes are more 'communication' and 'reassurance' type work.



3.15 PCSOs in Devon work as part of a wider Neighbourhood Policing team. Currently communities across Devon report inconsistencies in the service and engagement they receive from their Neighbourhood Policing teams. Some feel very well supported locally where as others find them difficult to engage with. For many communities, and as illustrated above, the PCSO is highly valued as a community worker, a conflict resolver, someone who has the trust of young people and minority groups, and someone who has their ear to the ground, has local knowledge and insight. They are also often the most visible and accessible side of the police. However, the workload of PCSOs across the county also differs, and in some areas this has verged nearer to traditional policing work, rather than community work.

3.16 Devon & Cornwall Police informed the Spotlight Review that a rebalanced police force will also include an increase in police officer numbers by 100 to local policing by 2021, an uplift in Armed Response Officers, an investment in Evidence Record Takers to improve efficiency, investment to 50 Police Staff Investigators, investment in 10 Specialist Problem Solvers and investment in

volunteering across the Force. However, it is difficult to see that these new roles will fulfil all the reactive, preventative and communication/reassurance work communities currently get from their PCSOs.

## What is the potential impact of these changes for communities?

3.17 Ultimately, one of the consequences of ongoing changes to local policing in Devon is that there are less uniformed police officers and PCSOs present and visible in communities. But what impact does this actually have for communities? Feedback from Councillors and Stakeholders at the Spotlight Review meeting is summarised below.

### **Increase in crime and fear of crime**



While research in the area of police numbers and the impact on crime tends to be fairly inconclusive<sup>4</sup>, there is real concern and anecdotal evidence from communities that a reduction in the visibility of police, does result in an increase in crime. Even if this evidence isn't conclusive, it is likely that many people's fear of crime does at least increase when the police are less visible, which has an impact on the wellbeing of individuals and communities.

### **Loss of prevention, intelligence and early intervention work**



The relationship and trust built with communities, alongside the time spent working in communities provides Neighbourhood Policing teams with a unique insight into their local area, which allows them to act on or pass on intelligence gathered and facilitate work with other agencies. There is real concern that the value of this 'intelligence' aspect is not recognised enough by the Police, and there is fear that if lost, this will actually have a detrimental impact on police work which is focussed on the prevention and detection of crime in areas such as such as child sexual exploitation and abuse, modern slavery and radicalisation.

### **Less reporting of crime**



Accounts of people in communities not reporting crime are becoming common, either because they do not feel that the police will respond and therefore reporting is pointless, or because the informal reporting mechanism of the 'bobby on the beat', or the more formal process of visiting a police front desk, is no longer available to them.

### **Loss of interface between the Police and communities**



Communities and councillors report that police presence and reporting at Parish Council and community meetings has reduced across the County. A reduction in neighbourhood policing will provide less opportunity for two way, face to face communication between communities and the Police.

### **Loss of an advocate for young people and minority groups**



PCSOs in particular are known for their unique positive working relationships and building trust with young people and minority groups, and can often act as an advocate for them. There are concerns that this key community role will be lost for many communities in Devon.

### **A disconnect between the public and the police**



Emerging from a landscape of changing patterns of crime and reduced police visibility, the disparity between what communities expect the police to be doing and what the police are actually doing or are able to do seems to be growing. 'Hidden' crimes are tackled through

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/media/police-numbers-and-crime-rates-rapid-evidence-review-20110721.pdf>

'hidden' police work, and generally speaking, the public at large has a lack of knowledge around what modern policing involves.

## Working together to make communities safer

3.18 It is an undeniable fact that all parts of the public sector are having to respond to reductions in funding, and for the majority, an increase in demand. It is therefore even more important than ever that the police and their public sector and voluntary sector partners work together, with communities, to overcome the crime and safety related issues that may arise as a result of changes to local policing.

3.19 At the Spotlight Review, Councillors and stakeholders discussed a number of ways that the Police and partners could work better together to make communities safer, including:

- Better opportunities and recruitment for volunteers
- Joint training of volunteers across agencies
- Joint working on awareness raising of 'hidden crime'
- Break down barriers to information sharing once and for all
- Joint awareness raising around vulnerability
- Greater joint investment in prevention and early intervention
- Use of 'nudging' techniques to prevent offending
- Operational joined up working i.e. co-location of agencies
- Help urban neighbourhoods create safe spaces
- Use Councillors as a link between Police and communities
- Address the different thresholds used for intervention by different agencies
- Don't commission in isolation – consider what other services are doing
- Better education for farming communities about keeping property safe
- More 'Community Speedwatch' schemes

## 4. Conclusion

4.1 Members of the Spotlight Review group acknowledge that Devon & Cornwall Police are under growing pressure as a result of cuts in funding, increasing crime levels and changing patterns of crime. There is a clear need for the Police to undertake work which tackles growing areas of concern such as child sexual exploitation, modern slavery, extremism and organised crime in the region, and to grow public awareness and understanding around these issues.

4.2 During such a period of budget reductions and change, it is more important than ever that the Police work effectively with public sector and voluntary sector partners, and make the most of volunteers and communities to support common objectives and build strong links between the Police and communities.

4.3 PCSOs provide an economical alternative to warranted officers and offer a known, visible and accessible police presence, providing vital early intervention, local insight and a link between communities and the Police. Community stakeholders reported to the Spotlight Review real concerns about the impact that cuts to PCSO numbers and neighbourhood policing more generally will have on crime levels, safety and wellbeing within Devon's communities. Concerns relate to not only 'low level' crime and anti-social behaviour, but also the loss of intelligence and local knowledge which can support the Police's work combatting organised crime and protecting vulnerable people.

4.4 The recommendations laid out at the beginning of this report are based on evidence recorded at the Spotlight Review meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> October and summarised in this report.

## 5. Membership

Councillors Alistair Dewhirst, (Chair), Marina Asvachin, Yvonne Atkinson, Ray Bloxham, Polly Colthorpe, Andrew Saywell and Martin Shaw.

## 6. Sources of Evidence

Stakeholders from a range of agencies and organisations attended the Spotlight Review meeting to share their knowledge and experience, and as such the Spotlight Review group would like to express their sincere thanks to the following people for their contribution and the information shared.

Chief Constable Shaun Sawyer	Devon & Cornwall Police
Chief Superintendent Jim Colwell	Devon & Cornwall Police
Superintendent Jim Gale	Devon & Cornwall Police
Superintendent Matt Lawler	Devon & Cornwall Police
Duncan Walton	Interim CEO & Monitoring Officer Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner
Lisa Vango	Strategy & Planning Manager Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner
Councillor Roger Croad	Chair of Police & Crime Panel
Councillor Su Aves	Devon County Council
Councillor Frank Biederman	Devon County Council
Councillor Christine Channon	Devon County Council
Councillor Alan Connett	Devon County Council
Councillor Ian Hall	Devon County Council
Councillor Linda Hellyer	Devon County Council
Councillor Richard Hosking	Devon County Council
Councillor Sylvia Russell	Devon County Council
Councillor Nick Way	Devon County Council
Phil Norrey	Chief Executive, Devon County Council
Virginia Pearson	Safer Devon Partnership Chair and DCC Chief Officer for Communities, Public Health, Environment & Prosperity
Julie Richards	Safer Devon Partnership Manager Devon County Council
Gerry Moore	East & Mid Devon Community Safety Partnership
Amanda Palmer	North Devon Community Safety Partnership
Janet Williams	Torrige Community Safety Partnership
Julie Paget	Plymouth & Devon Racial Equality Council
Andrew Turnock	Young Devon
Steven Aughton	Living Options
Lou Hart	Fawcett Society
Kate Waller	Fawcett Society
Simon Bowkett	CEO, Exeter CVS
Brett Rowson	Safeguarding & Education Lead DYS Space
Iain Miller	Exeter Street Pastors
Trevor Staverley	Torbay & Newton Abbot Street Pastors

The Spotlight Review also considered written evidence submitted from County Councillors and other stakeholders.

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Councillor Jackie Brodie	Devon County Council
Councillor Carol Whitton	Devon County Council
Reverend Iain McDonald	Devon Faith & Belief Forum
South Devon & Dartmoor Community Safety Partnership	
Devon and Cornwall Community Watch Association	

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[https://devonandcornwall.s3.amazonaws.com/Documents/Our%20information/Key%20document/Police%20and%20Crime%20Plan%202017-2020%20FINAL%20\(002\).pdf](https://devonandcornwall.s3.amazonaws.com/Documents/Our%20information/Key%20document/Police%20and%20Crime%20Plan%202017-2020%20FINAL%20(002).pdf)

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<http://www.northdevongazette.co.uk/news/loss-of-up-to-190-pcsos-in-devon-and-cornwall-will-be-massive-1-4874264>

## 7. Contact

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## Devon and Cornwall Police

## Force

↑ Offences	12 months to 04/10	% Change
	19	-
Homicide	20	66.7%
Violence with Injury	13370	13.4%
Violence without Injury	19341	44.1%
Rape	1566	39.1%
Other Sexual Offences	2681	52.1%
Robbery	478	26.1%
Burglary Dwelling	2693	4.5%
Burglary Non-Dwelling	3338	-2.7%
Vehicle Offences	5643	20.4%
Shoplifting	7859	23.3%
Other Theft	12370	11.2%
Criminal Damage	14891	11.9%
Public Order Offences	6179	34.6%
Possession of Weapons	792	34.0%
Trafficking of Drugs	751	7.6%
Possession of Drugs	2899	3.0%
Other Offences	1945	68.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>96835</b>	<b>21.3%</b>

## Devon

↑ Offences	12 months to 04/10	% Change
	1	-
Homicide	9	12.5%
Violence with Injury	6401	14.7%
Violence without Injury	9575	43.7%
Rape	728	31.6%
Other Sexual Offences	1299	37.6%
Robbery	203	16.7%
Burglary Dwelling	1322	3.5%
Burglary Non-Dwelling	1736	-9.0%
Vehicle Offences	3157	27.2%
Shoplifting	3791	20.3%
Other Theft	6421	12.5%
Criminal Damage	7279	13.9%
Public Order Offences	3060	25.6%
Possession of Weapons	377	34.2%
Trafficking of Drugs	425	28.8%
Possession of Drugs	1424	15.9%
Other Offences	1048	63.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>48256</b>	<b>21.4%</b>

Violence Against the Person (not DA)	21453	31.6%	Violence Against the Person (not DA)	10387	30.9%
Domestic Abuse Crimes	14639	27.8%	Domestic Abuse Crimes	7247	30.2%
Domestic Abuse Crimes & Incidents	28243	1.7%	Domestic Abuse Crimes & Incidents	13242	3.4%
Hate Crimes	1245	28.7%	Hate Crimes	651	33.1%
Victim Based Crime minus DA	66038	17.5%	Victim Based Crime minus DA	32953	17.4%