

**‘STATE OF POLICING: THE ANNUAL ASSESSMENT OF POLICING IN ENGLAND AND WALES  
2021’ PUBLISHED BY HMICFRS ON 10TH MARCH 2022  
AVON & SOMERSET PCC RESPONSE DATED 8TH MAY 2022**

There are no new specific recommendations in this annual summary. However there are some important aspects I would like to highlight and comment on. This is written under the headings as they appear in the report.

Overview

It is absolutely right that I acknowledge the bravery of those who work in policing – particularly front line officers – who routinely put themselves in harm’s way to help keep us all safe. This is something we should never forget when discussing policing in this country.

The officers and staff that work in operational policing also routinely experience trauma; the police deal with some of the worst things that happen in our society. We must recognise this and ensure the workforce receive the support they need. I talk about wellbeing in the Police and Crime Plan I know this is a top priority for the Chief Constable.

Primary purpose: justice and prevention

The report talks about mental ill-health and adverse childhood experiences and the links these have to crime. I want to re-focus the Constabulary on preventing crime and it is issues like these the police cannot address in isolation. It is critical the police work with partner agencies in the public sector and voluntary, community and social enterprise sector alike. Taking this holistic approach will help ensure people get the help they really need and is the only way to truly break the revolving door of reoffending.

It is recognised that many crimes that happen are not reported to the police. There are a number of reasons for this but people may not report because they do not have confidence in the police. This lack of confidence can be because they do not trust the police or simply do not feel the police will take any action. I am working with the Chief Constable to ensure the service delivered by the Constabulary is efficient, effective and legitimate. I strongly encourage any victim of crime to report this to the police so they can get the help and support they need.

Local accountability

The relationship between me (or any PCC) and their Chief Constable is critical to get right. HMICFRS have observed this has not always been the case in different areas. I am elected by the public and act as the voice of the public. I use my elected independence to hold the Chief Constable to account for the policing in Avon and Somerset, while recognising the importance of her operational independence to deliver policing. The political independence of the police is a cornerstone of the Peelian Principle of policing by consent.

In developing the [Police and Crime Plan](#) I worked collaboratively with the Chief Constable and know the plan represents a shared vision of the outstanding policing we want for Avon and Somerset.

### Culture and behaviour

To maintain the British model of policing by consent the public must trust the police. I recognise that not all people do, particularly among some groups and communities. The police are facing a lot of criticism; there are two most notable aspects of this. Firstly, male violence against women and girls which I discuss below. Secondly people from Black, Asian, mixed and minoritised communities often have a more negative experience of the police; a prominent example being police powers disproportionately used against Black people.

This needs to change and a fundamental part of improving the service and building trust is about addressing the internal culture of policing. There is no place for racism, misogyny or any discrimination within policing. This change starts at the top and I am confident that the new Chief Constable of Avon and Somerset is leading by example on this and taking practical steps to address the internal culture.

*“In too many respects, officers and staff suffer frustration and must work around inefficiency and unnecessary bureaucracy.”* I recognise this issue locally and an Assistant Chief Constable has recently taken the lead for a piece of work looking to reduce the time officers need to spend at their desks. We want officers to increase their visible presence within communities and we want to give them back the time to be able to do this.

### The gap between resourcing levels and public expectations

This is an important point for everyone to understand. I welcome the three year funding settlement and the additional 456 officers this will bring for Avon and Somerset Police. However over the next five years many millions of pounds of savings will still need to be made.

Even with this extra funding the police do not have enough resources to respond to every crime or incident in the way the public might expect. In acting as the voice of the public I will work with the Chief Constable to ensure we deliver value for money. This means making the best of what we do have and taking into account the views of the communities in setting the direction and prioritisation of policing services in Avon and Somerset.

### An epidemic of violence against women and girls

As mentioned above this speaks to the inequality in our society and absolutely has an impact on trust and confidence in the police. I want people to feel safe, I want better outcomes for victims and I want the police to be relentless in their pursuit of those who commit these crimes.

This is an area of focus in the Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Plan. The Constabulary have produced a local action plan – [a summary of which can be found on their website](#) – and I will be closely scrutinising their delivery of this plan.

### Crime data integrity: a polarised picture

In my first Police and Crime Board with the Chief Constable I made clear I was expecting to see improvements in the Constabulary's crime recording. I am encouraging people to report their crimes to the police, so when they do, the least they can expect is that they are recorded properly and in line with national standards.

The Constabulary have responded to this and put in place a number of improvements. One particular process change, which has been in place for about 10 months has resulted in over 8,000 additional crimes being properly recorded. The inspectorate have confirmed they will be assessing Avon and Somerset Police on Crime Data Integrity later in the year and I hope to see significant improvement from two years ago.

### Fraud should be taken more seriously

*"Adults are more likely to be victims of fraud than of any other crime"*. This really shows the scale of the problem. I have also been told by local people that the police response to fraud is often failing to meet their expectations.

Although local police forces can improve their response this is an issue which really needs to be gripped at a regional and national level. Recognising the importance of this I have taken the national lead for Economic and Cyber Crime on behalf of the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners. I really want to see greater awareness of these types of crimes and a real focus on prevention. But where people are victims they should receive an effective response from the police.

### Tackling serious and organised crime

The report talks about the importance of regional collaboration in tackling this issue. I am working with the other PCCs across the South West Region to help facilitate collaboration in operational policing. Serious and organised crime is our top priority. [Op Scorpion](#) is the first example of this which took place in March and targeted Organised Crime Groups dealing in drugs.

### Conclusion

In reading this annual assessment of policing there were no surprises. There are national challenges and issues discussed which, of course, are relevant in Avon and Somerset. What I was struck by was the synergy between this national assessment and the direction I have set through the Avon and Somerset Police and Crime. I am reassured by this because I know that I, together with the Chief Constable, are on a clear path to help improve policing and build safer communities for all.

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