

***‘PEEL 2023–25: An inspection of Avon and Somerset Constabulary’***  
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**Avon & Somerset PCC response dated 3 April 2025**

One of my main responsibilities as Police and Crime Commissioner is the scrutiny and governance of the police service, which means monitoring and challenging the Chief Constable to ensure that Avon and Somerset Police is delivering an effective and efficient service to the communities.

The Police Efficiency Effectiveness and Legitimacy Inspection (PEEL) provides important additional evidence to support me in my scrutiny role and guide the focus of that scrutiny alongside the main oversight delivered through my Police and Crime Plan. This table sets out the grades received.

<u>Outstanding</u>
-
<u>Good</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Police powers and public treatment</li> <li>• Preventing crime</li> </ul>
<u>Adequate</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing a positive workplace</li> </ul>
<u>Requires improvement</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responding to the public</li> <li>• Investigating crime</li> <li>• Protecting vulnerable people</li> <li>• Managing offenders</li> <li>• Leadership and force management</li> </ul>
<u>Inadequate</u>
-

For all themes that are not graded as outstanding or good the Inspectorate provide specific Areas for Improvement (AFIs). The Constabulary received 16 AFIs in total and below I set out the initial response to these.

It should be noted that I have a legal duty to respond to inspection reports within eight weeks of their publication. However, the Constabulary have longer to address these AFIs.

### Area for Improvement 1

The constabulary needs to improve the time it takes to answer emergency calls.

#### Response

The standard expected of all forces is to answer 90 percent of 999 calls within 10 seconds. The report showed that in the year ending 31 July 2024, the constabulary answered 79.5 percent within 10 seconds. The Constabulary have already improved their performance and surpassed the target: in the six months after this (August 2024 – January 2025) they answered 91.1 percent of 999 calls within 10 seconds.

There have been increases in the number of call handlers and this includes deploying officers into the Control Room. As well as the additional resource, the Constabulary have introduced several process and system improvements to lower the average time it takes on the call, including a new quality assurance process and a review of the call scripts used. Going forward the Constabulary are further exploring technical solutions that can help this process.

### Area for Improvement 2

The constabulary needs to reduce the number of non-emergency calls abandoned by callers because they aren't answered.

#### Response

The standard expected of all forces is to have a 101 abandonment rate of less than 5 percent. The report showed that in the year ending 31 August 2024, that callers abandoned 23.9 percent of 101 calls. The Constabulary have already improved their performance and in the six months after this (September 2024 – February 2025) this abandonment rate has reduced to 9.8%.

It is important to note that that same teams of people answer 999 and 101 calls so the action described in AFI 1 also applies here (albeit the officers were brought in to deal with 999 calls specifically). Within these teams the priority will always be 999 calls so while the 101 abandonment rate has not yet reached the 5 percent target the collective effort has seen the significant improvement in the 999 answering described above.

The Constabulary have reviewed the Interactive Voice Response system which operates on the 101 line to make this more efficient and user friendly. They have also started working with IT to review and understand better the 101 calls that do not generate 'logs' i.e. where there is no policing purpose for the call. This will enable them to understand how they can try and reduce these calls and direct people to the right service/resource.

### Area for Improvement 3

The constabulary needs to attend calls for service in line with its published attendance times, make sure there is effective supervision of deployment decisions, and make sure that callers are updated if there are delays.

#### Response

The Constabulary faces a lot of competing demands and does not have enough resource, particularly police officers, to be able to respond to everything in a way that

would meet the public expectation. To enable officers to respond to calls for service more quickly, the Constabulary are developing ways of responding differently.

Right Care Right Person is based on a national programme and changes how the police respond to calls about mental health and wellbeing, making sure the right professionals are involved. It involves working with healthcare services to help people get the specialised support they need from healthcare professionals and reducing the need for police to attend: freeing up time to respond to other crime and incidents. This started a phased roll out in June 2024.

Another important initiative that the Constabulary have recently started using is Enhanced Video Response (EVR). This is where officers talk to victims (in appropriate cases) using video calls rather than attending in person. Not only does this allow quicker responses to those incidents suitable for EVR it also reduces the total amount of incidents that officers need to physically attend, which will start to enable them to get to those incidents quicker as well.

The highest priority calls (grade 1 / immediate) should be responded to within 15 minutes in an urban area and 20 minutes in a rural area. In the last year over 80% of these calls were attended within the timescales. When responding to these calls officers usually need to respond 'on blue lights' which includes driving faster than the speed limit. To be able to drive 'on blue lights' officers must be 'response trained'. Therefore, the Constabulary have also been increasing the numbers of PCs in Patrol (usually the first responders) that are trained to this driving standard.

#### Area for Improvement 4

The constabulary should carry out timely investigations into all reported crimes, and make sure that officers take all investigative opportunities.

#### Response

There is often overlap between these AFIs. About a third of all crimes, in the last year, were allocated to Patrol officers. The improvements discussed in AFI 3, will create more capacity for Patrol officers, which can also create capacity for more timely investigations.

More broadly, the Constabulary will provide further training and guidance for investigators and supervisors on realistic lines of enquiry and the Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act; this will be accompanied by digitally available aide-memoires. Deployment processes are also being reviewed to try and enable attending officers more time at the scene to progress 'golden hour' investigative actions.

The Constabulary have also acknowledged that with the overwhelming demand that they face, officers can have a mindset of needing to quickly move from one crime/incident to the next. The Constabulary are looking to try and change this culture to provide a focus on investigating crime, not just responding to it.

#### Area for Improvement 5

The constabulary needs to make sure it is recording outcomes appropriately, and that they comply with force and national policies, leading to satisfactory results for victims.



### Response

The Inspectorate found that 32 of 91 cases looked at did not have the correct crime outcome applied to it. This is a very small sample compared to the 166,000 crimes that were finalised in this last year. This does not undermine the relevance of the findings but it does mean no firm conclusions can be drawn about why these errors are being made. The Constabulary therefore need to conduct larger audits themselves to better understand what the underlying problems are in order to be able to make improvements.

Whilst the Constabulary await any further detailed findings from this work, they are considering the training that is provided to supervisors across the force (who can apply the outcomes). This includes developing specific briefing packages on Outcomes 10 and 21 (which were highlighted in particular by the Inspectorate).

### Area for Improvement 6

The constabulary should make sure that it consistently achieves appropriate outcomes for victims.

### Response

The primary way the Constabulary will achieve better outcomes for victims is by conducting good quality and timely investigations: therefore the response to AFI 4 will also help address this recommendation.

In addition to this, a central team will start conducting independent reviews of investigations on a more regular basis. This will allow the Constabulary to identify any recurring issues which may need addressing at an organisational level but also allow feedback at a personal level so investigators that are performing less well can receive additional support.

### Area for Improvement 7

The constabulary should make sure that it properly documents, supervises, quality assures and monitors compliance of its vulnerability risk assessments.

### Response

The two risk assessments referred to are Blue, Red Amber, Green (BRAG) and the domestic abuse, stalking, harassment and honour-based violence assessment tool (DASH). Training on BRAG and DASH, and professional curiosity has been delivered to the Criminal Investigations Directorate and is scheduled for Patrol and Neighbourhood officers. The template used has also been changed which specifically asks for voice of the vulnerable person and is based on national best practice and partner toolkits.

A new automated process has been put in place so that when a risk assessment is present it flags that it needs to be supervised for quality assurance.

### Area for Improvement 8

The constabulary needs to make sure it has sufficiently trained personnel and the resources to make sure the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme [DVDS] complies with the required legislative processes and timescales.

### Response

The Constabulary agreed, in November, to deploy an additional ten officers into the team who deal with DVDS: these roles are due to be filled by the end of April 2025.

As well as additional resource the Constabulary are also looking at process and technology changes. This includes initial contact with the applicant being made prior to the research to make this quicker; and using video calls, in appropriate cases, rather than in-person visits. The Constabulary are developing automation of part of the process to create the initial record on the crime recording system straight from the application form. They have also developed data feeds into their data visualisation tool (Qlik) to allow for better oversight and management of the process.

### Area for Improvement 9

The constabulary should improve its governance and approach to managing suspects and wanted people.

### Response

The Constabulary are developing a new policy to ensure consistent classification of suspects, alongside new processes and procedures on bail management and how suspects and wanted people should be managed, and the process overseen, at an individual, team, department, directorate and area level.

In addition, the independent and ongoing reviews of investigations (discussed in AFI 6) will also consider the suspect management element of the investigation to enable organisational and personal learning to be taken from this.

### Area for Improvement 10

The constabulary should make sure that it has processes and resources in place to visit registered sex offenders [RSOs] and manage the risk posed by them.

### Response

The Constabulary agreed for additional officers to be put into the team that manages RSOs, on a permanent basis, and the last of these roles was filled at the end of February.

Other teams from the Constabulary have also been supporting the offender management teams, on a temporary basis, to help reduce the backlogs of visits and risk assessments referred to in the report.

The number of registered sex offenders has been growing consistently each year and this is expected to continue. Therefore, the Constabulary will need to further review their demand and resource in this area to ensure that, once the backlogs have been reduced this year, that they do not grow again in future years.

### Area for Improvement 11

The constabulary should make sure that its internet child abuse team [ICAT] can manage images of online child abuse in line with nationally recognised risk assessment timescales, and that supervisors regularly review officers' caseloads.

### Response

The ICAT team have had a number of vacancies but the Constabulary have now filled these. Alongside this permanent recruitment the Constabulary have also been using officers on a temporary basis to support the work in this area and reduce the backlogs. At the time of writing, cases are compliant with recommended timescales (except where those suspects cannot be located). During Spring it is forecast that the Constabulary will also be compliant on medium-risk and low-risk cases as well.

It is important to note that this is a crime type that has grown significantly over recent years and this is set to continue. The majority of cases are sent to local forces by the National Crime Agency (NCA); the NCA is anticipating that the amount of cases they will be sending through will double in the next year. To be able to respond to this increasing volume of crime the Constabulary are also developing a business case to permanently increase the resource in the ICAT teams: this is due to be decided by the end of March.

### Area for Improvement 12

The constabulary should make sure that it continually risk assesses any backlogs in online child abuse referrals and cases awaiting enforcement action, and that bail checks and intelligence refreshes take place following enforcement action.

### Response

As stated in response to AFI 11, the backlogs have been reduced to those cases where the suspects cannot be located. To sustain this performance there will be better use of the force tasking processes to ensure that planned arrests take place, for all ICAT suspects, within the recommended timescales. This ability to surge response is particularly important in this area as the referrals that come from the NCA do not come in a steady flow but in peaks and troughs.

A new policy is being written in terms of bail checks on ICAT suspects. Once written an automated process will be put in place for force wide tasking to conduct these bail checks.

### Area for Improvement 13

The constabulary needs to make sure it implements the findings of its occupational health unit review quickly, so that its workforce can benefit from the improvements.

### Response

The Constabulary have continued to implement the findings from its review with both the initial 'gatekeeping' triage process and the multi-disciplinary triage process now live, having started in early 2025. Some of the delays were caused in challenges recruiting Occupational Health Advisors (qualified nurses), however these are now due to start in April 2025.

The Constabulary have also implemented automated appointment reminders to staff and are developing a 'did not attend' policy.



#### Area for Improvement 14

The constabulary should use relevant data and analysis to make sure it is operating efficiently and effectively.

#### Response

The Constabulary have amended their performance framework so that it is outcomes focused and is aligned to their Strategic Outcomes. This has just been implemented and they are now reviewing the reporting that goes to Boards and Committees to ensure they are focused on the right matters. They are also amending the Qlik Apps used by front-line officers and staff, and their supervisors, to ensure they are focused on achieving outcomes and not just on process compliance.

The Constabulary are introducing a new mid-level leaders course: for Inspectors, Chief Inspectors and staff equivalent. A Data Literacy Module is being developed to help leaders better understand how data can be used to drive better outcomes.

In January and February this year the Constabulary held Leadership Time events with all leaders across the organisation. The Chief Constable reinforced the importance of conducting regular one-to-ones with their teams and giving permission for all leaders to make time for this.

The Constabulary have also asked the Inspectorate for clarification of expectations and good practice in relation to this AFI to ensure they are able to address this appropriately.

#### Area for Improvement 15

The constabulary needs to make sure that its senior leaders are more connected to its workforce.

#### Response

Chief Officers regularly put out communications and hold monthly Talk Time meetings where people from across the force can ask any questions. The Constabulary are looking at how they can improve the reach of these Talk Time sessions including clipping and cataloguing the questions and answers to make them more accessible. The Constabulary are exploring other options around targeted messaging through directorate newsletters, staff briefings or Q&A documents.

An important way to address this AFI is through the 'cascading' of information through the leadership structure. This has been hindered by the issues highlighted regarding one-to-one meetings. Therefore the renewed focus on these meetings (discussed in AFI 14) will help.

#### Area for Improvement 16

The constabulary needs to make sure its operating model helps its workforce to address priorities and current and future demand.

### Response

An initial step in addressing this AFI is that the Constabulary will, this year re-align the geographical boundaries in Response to match Neighbourhood Policing boundaries: this will allow these front-line officers to work more closely together.

The Constabulary have a Workforce Planning Team which have started to model various roles, teams and skills and they will be refining and expanding these models to support future planning.

In February, the Constabulary approved the Operating Model concept to move to the feasibility stage which is due to report back in Autumn 2025. This programme will consider how people, processes and systems work together to enable the Constabulary to best deliver their service while also finding opportunities for savings given the projected deficits the Medium Term Financial Plan.

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