

‘An inspection into how effectively the police investigate crime’
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Avon & Somerset PCC response dated 22 May 2025

Offenders will not be brought to justice unless the police conduct effective investigations, that are perpetrator focused, and prepare high quality files to support successful conviction. The police are the start of the criminal justice process and their work is essential to secure justice both for victims of crime and for society more broadly.

Investigating crime was an area graded as requires improvement for Avon and Somerset Police in their most recent [PEEL Inspection](#). The Constabulary received a number of Areas for Improvement on this theme and my [initial response to these has been published](#).

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 recommendations. Below I set out the recommendations applicable to Chief Constables and the initial response to each of these.

Recommendation 3

By 31 December 2025, chief constables should make sure their force has an effective and efficient end-to-end process to deal with online reports of crime.

The process should remove all unnecessary delays in recording, assessing and allocating crime reports, and make sure the force consistently complies with its requirements under the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime.

Response

The Constabulary has a process for dealing with online crime reporting but they will undertake assurance activity to check and test how well that process is working, and they will consider how other police forces do this.

Recommendation 4

By 31 December 2025, chief constables should make sure the end-to-end process for receiving, assessing and allocating reports of crime in their force minimises delays in the investigation process and the length of time before investigators contact victims.

Recommendation 5

By 31 December 2025, chief constables should design and operate a policy that results in their force allocating to investigators crimes that are commensurate with each investigator's level of training, accreditation and experience.

Response

Recommendations 4 and 5 are closely related and this response covers both recommendations.

The Constabulary has a number of business data tools that provide up to date information on current crime allocations and outstanding allocation tasks as well as providing time series data to allow for broader performance management around the timeliness of investigations.

The Constabulary reviewed and published a revised version of their crime allocation procedure in 2024. The Constabulary has started reviewing its operating model and the first phase of this is to move the Patrol and Neighbourhood Policing teams from a directorate structure to a geographic model. As part of these changes the Constabulary will be reviewing the crime allocation procedure again.

Once the revised procedure is in place the Constabulary will carry out assurance to check that the procedure is being complied with and that this is resulting in appropriate outcomes for victims.

Recommendation 6

By 30 September 2025, chief constables should make sure their force has a clear policy relating to investigation plans. They should make sure their force communicates this policy to officers and staff. As a minimum, this policy should cover:

- when to start an investigation plan;
- who is responsible for writing the investigation plan;

- what to consider including in an investigation plan;
- how supervisors should review and approve investigation plans; and
- how the force will monitor investigation plans to check their quality, and to make sure investigators and supervisors have followed them.

Response

The Constabulary are currently writing a policy covering investigation plans.

Recommendation 7

By 30 June 2025, chief constables should include in their investigation policies a direction stating that when an image exists, investigators should search it against the Police National Database (PND) and any other relevant databases before their force closes an investigation.

Response

The Constabulary already uses PND to assist with the identification of offenders but they will review their existing policies and will ensure that they give appropriate direction to review against the PND wherever practicable and of evidential value.

Recommendation 9

By 31 December 2025, chief constables should make sure the first supervisory review of a crime investigation takes place early enough for the supervisor to be able to:

- review any actions taken, including those to assess and manage risk;
- make sure the investigator has put in place the appropriate support for victims, and is complying with the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime;
- set or approve an investigation plan;
- review the investigator's caseload; and
- set a date for a further review.

Response

The Constabulary has a policy that all crimes, allocated for investigation, will have an initial supervisory review within 7 days from the initial report.

The Constabulary will provide further training and guidance for supervisors which will be accompanied by digitally available aide-memoires.

After the initial supervisory review the Constabulary are moving away from further reviews at regular points in time and instead putting a focus on supervisors applying professional policing judgement to conduct reviews when needed; some will require review more frequently and this enables reviews based upon investigative milestones, such as arrest, bail, charge rather than an arbitrary date. Oversight of this will be supported by data visualisation software (Qlik).

The Constabulary are also planning to increase the checking and testing of investigations and collating this information centrally to be able to identify areas for improvement and where additional support and accountability is needed.

Recommendation 10

By 31 March 2026, chief constables should:

- make sure any member of staff who has a role in supporting the investigation process completes the College of Policing 'Introduction to investigation' learning programme;
- satisfy themselves that the content of their force's ongoing investigative training for responders is designed to develop their investigative skills and performance, and to improve outcomes for victims, and that their force gives responders protected time to complete this training;
- make sure their force focuses sufficiently on case file preparation when providing professionalising investigations programme (PIP) level 1 training, while taking into account local procedures and case management systems;
- make sure their force gives officers and staff continuing professional development opportunities about preparing case files;
- make sure their force keeps accurate records of professionalising investigations programme (PIP) level 2 accredited officers and staff, and that those officers and staff complete annual continuing professional development to maintain their accreditation, which forces should also accurately record; and
- review the investigative training their force gives to supervisors, making sure it equips them to oversee and direct crime investigations effectively.

Response

In its training of new officers the Constabulary follows the national curriculum set by the College of Policing. They also provide ongoing Continued Professional Development for officers and staff at both PIP level 1 and PIP level 2.

The Constabulary have made improvements to their case file quality over the last year but recognise there is still more to do. A training programme related to case file preparation has been developed locally and the focus of delivery is on front line teams (those that are PIP level 1 trained). They have piloted three new processes to improve case file quality and will be reviewing how these have worked to consider full implementation.

In relation to the supervisor training the Constabulary has been accepted onto the pilot of the College of Policing PIP level 1 Supervisors course. Whilst this is a pilot designed to put one cohort through the programme, there is flexibility to deliver training to more officers beyond this cohort ahead of a national go live date of April 2026. The force is working towards having a programme to deliver this training to all frontline operational Sergeants over the next 18 months. The Constabulary will use the learning from these pilots to inform the design of future investigative training for supervisors.

Recommendation 11

By 30 September 2025, chief constables should establish and implement a process to monitor the proportion of recorded crime that their force allocates for investigation. This should include a process to make sure a decision not to allocate a crime for investigation is appropriate.

Response

The Constabulary already has good data about crime allocation which is visualised through Qlik: they recognise the proportion of crime allocated has increased significantly over the last decade. As a result of this they have started work to implement an Evidence-Based Investigation Tool (EBIT). This is a tool that has been used in other forces and has been developed with the Cambridge Centre of Evidence-Based Policing. EBIT will support decision making as to whether certain crime types should be allocated for further investigation or not. All decisions not to allocate through this process will need to be signed off by a Sergeant.

Crimes that sit outside EBIT will continue to be reviewed by officers and staff, and subject to a supervisory decision-making process prior to closure. Policies and processes will be checked to ensure there is clear direction to provide a rationale where appropriate.

This response is published on the OPCC website <https://www.avonandsomerset-pcc.gov.uk/reports-publications/hmicfrs-reports/>

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