

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL



A

**MEETING OF THE HERTFORDSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME
PANEL**

will be held at

**DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL, THE FORUM, MARLOWES,
HEMEL HEMPSTEAD, HP1 1DN**

On

THURSDAY, 18TH JUNE, 2026 AT 6.00 PM

Agenda Part I

Item		Page
1.	AGENDA AND REPORTS This meeting is administered by Broxbourne Borough Council. The agenda and reports pack are attached.	(Pages 3 - 96)



MEETING OF HERTFORDSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

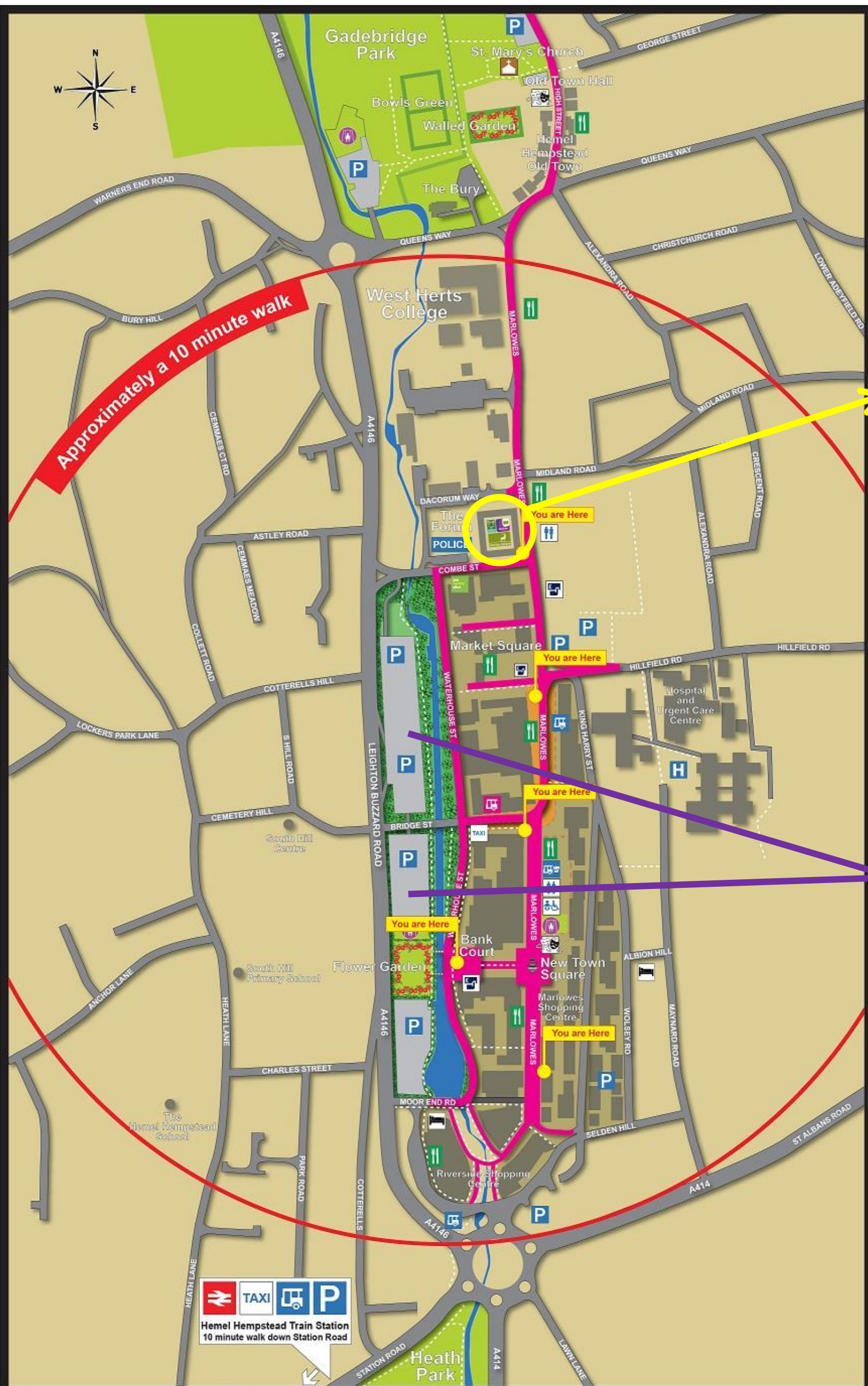
THURSDAY 18 JUNE 2026- 6 PM

DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL
THE FORUM,
MARLOWES,
HEMEL HEMPSTEAD, HP1 1DN

AGENDA

- 1 WELCOME
- 2 APPOINTMENT OF THE PCP CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR
- 3 APOLOGIES
- 4 WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS
- 5 MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS ON 27 MAY 2026(*attached*)
- 6 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES
- 7 **QUESTIONS TO THE PANEL FROM THE PUBLIC**
Questions are to be sent to pcp@broxbourne.gov.uk by 11 June 2026, seven days in advance of the meeting to allow for a quicker and more complete response. (*20 minutes are permitted*)
- 8 **QUESTIONS TO THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER FROM THE PUBLIC**
Questions are to be sent to pcp@broxbourne.gov.uk by 11 June 2026, seven days in advance of the meeting to allow for a quicker and more complete response. (*20 minutes are permitted*)
- 9 POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER ANNUAL REPORT
- 10 INDEPENDENT STOP & SEARCH SCRUTINY PANEL ANNUAL REPORT
- 11 INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VOLUNTEERS ANNUAL REPORT
- 12 AOB
- 13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING 19 NOVEMBER 2026-6PM- BROXBOURNE BOROUGH COUNCIL OFFICES

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The Forum,
Marlowes,
Hemel Hempstead,
Hertfordshire,
HP1 1DN

Parking:
Water Gardens Parking

Hemel Hempstead Town Centre

- | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------------------|--|-------------------------|--|-------------------------------|
| | Water Gardens | | Bus Interchange/Coaches | | Café/Restaurant |
| | Main Shopping/Restaurant Area | | Major Bus Stop | | Toilets |
| | Car Park | | Coach Pick Up/Drop off | | Hemel Hempstead Train Station |
| | Hospital and Urgent Care | | Hotel | | Entertainment/Theatre |
| | Bank/Cash Machine | | Taxi Rank | | Job Centre Plus |
| | Play Area | | Bus Ticket Office | | St Mary's Church |
| | | | | | Dacorum Borough Council |
| | | | | | The Library |
| | | | | | Register Office |
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WATFORD
BOROUGH
COUNCIL



MEETING OF HERTFORDSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

Wednesday 27 May 2026- 6 PM

Broxbourne Borough Council
Bishops' College,
Churchgate, Cheshunt
Hertfordshire, EN8 9XQ

DRAFT MINUTES

(Please note that the minutes are a summary of the discussion and not intended to be verbatim)

Members Present:

Cllr Tom Plater ('Chair')	Stevenage Borough Council
Dr Malcolm Ramsay('Vice Chair')	Independent Panel Member
Cllr Vijaiya Poopalasingham	North Herts Borough Council
Mr Luke Rigg	Independent Panel Member
Dr Julian Hargreaves	Independent Panel Member
Cllr Andrew Scarth	Three Rivers District Council
Cllr Aaditya Kaza	Hertsmere Borough Council

Also Present:

Mr Jonathan Ash-Edwards, Hertfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner ('PCC')

Mr Scott Hague- Head of Delivery and Innovation- Hertfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner's Office

Mr Andy Prophet- Chief Constable, Proposed Candidate for the re-appointment as Chief Constable

Mr Ibrahim Balta, Clerk to the Hertfordshire Police and Crime Panel

- 1 WELCOME**
Welcome by Chair.
- 2 APOLOGIES**
Apologies from Cllr Christian Gray(substitute attending), Cllr Jim Clune, Cllr Duncan Jones, Mr Mark Jackson and Cllr Matt Fisher, Cllr Aga Dychton(joined remotely via Teams)
- 3 MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 5 FEBRUARY 2026**
Agreed.
- 4 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES**
None.
- 5 CONFIRMATION HEARING FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF CHIEF CONSTABLE REPORT ATTACHED AT APPENDIX 1**

PCC: Presented his report for the proposed candidate Mr Andy Prophet (**‘Chief Constable’**) to be reappointed as Chief Constable for Hertfordshire.

Chief Constable: provided an outline progress made by Hertfordshire Constabulary, highlighting: Increased success in catching criminals and reducing crime, continued focus on improving responses to domestic abuse and commitment to achieving better outcomes for victims.

6 QUESTIONS FROM THE PANEL TO THE PROPOSED CANDIDATE/COMMISSIONER

Dr Hargreaves: asked about improving confidence in reporting domestic abuse and how reports would be recorded and investigated.

Chief Constable: Proactively encouraging reporting through direct contact, victim groups and third-party reporting mechanisms. Working closely with professional networks and support organisations. Committed to improving investigative standards. Developing a centralised process for every domestic abuse call received. Seeking to improve criminal justice outcomes and use appropriate out-of-court disposals where evidence thresholds are not met. Noted that approximately 10% of domestic abuse cases are currently resolved and that progress had been made prior to his appointment.

Dr Ramsay: asked about steps being taken to improve transparency.

Chief Constable: He wishes to strengthen neighbourhood policing and make existing resources more effective. Monthly public meetings and question-and-answer sessions are held across the county. Public discussions focus on key priorities including shop theft and domestic abuse.

Chair: raised concerns regarding access to police misconduct hearings and noted correspondence received about a lack of online access.

Chief Constable: acknowledged the importance of transparency and accountability, explaining that: Professional Standards functions are delivered collaboratively with Cambridgeshire. Misconduct outcomes are published where appropriate. Greater scrutiny may be possible, while balancing transparency with fairness and staff confidence.

Chair: The Chair thanked the Chief Constable for his response and recognised the need to balance openness with maintaining staff trust.

Cllr Poopalasingham: asked how the force measures public trust and confidence.

Chief Constable: Surveys provide some insight, but public confidence is largely shaped by everyday interactions. Prompt responses and effective policing help build trust over time. Sustained performance improvements should increase public confidence.

Cllr Poopalasingham: referenced improvements in crime recording and asked whether these improvements were sustainable.

Chief Constable: Improved performance is sustainable. New systems now provide staff with detailed information on investigations and outcomes. This level of performance data was not available 15 months ago.

Mr Rigg: asked whether pension abatement would apply under the proposed retire-and-return arrangement.

PCC: confirmed that abatement would apply.

Mr Rigg: also asked what assumptions the Chief Constable had made at the start of his tenure and what lessons he had learned.

Chief Constable: He spent three months researching the force before applying. He found a strong sense of pride within the organisation. There was significant opportunity for improvement. Organisational change had taken longer than expected. New leadership and restructuring had been necessary. Cultural and performance improvements require time. The force is moving in the right direction but there remains significant work to do.

Cllr Kaza: referred to paragraph 4.8 of the report and asked about Hertfordshire's ranking.

Chief Constable: The ranking is based on the proportion of reported crimes solved. The figures are derived from national data. While the ranking is positive, the ambition is to improve further.

Cllr Kaza: comparison between different areas in Hertfordshire, good and bad areas and enquired about room for improvement.

Chief Constable: In response to questions regarding geographical differences across the county, the Chief Constable said: Hertfordshire remains a relatively low-crime area. Certain crime hotspots exist, particularly in areas such as Watford and Dacorum. Resources are targeted using data analysis. Both overt and covert tactics are used against organised crime groups. Long-term reductions in crime have been achieved through targeted policing.

Cllr Kaza: enquired about priorities.

Chief Constable: A new public protection structure is being introduced. Greater specialist skills will be developed in areas such as crimes against children. Improved performance and outcomes are expected. Implementation is expected to begin in the autumn.

Dr Ramsay: asked about ensuring the force reflects Hertfordshire's changing ethnic composition.

Chief Constable: acknowledged that progress has been too slow and outlined plans to: Improve recruitment from underrepresented groups. Increase oversight of diversity initiatives. Strengthen engagement with colleges and communities. Improve understanding of policing careers among diverse communities.

Chair: asked about engagement with communities affected by antisemitism, Islamophobia and other forms of hate crime.

Chief Constable: The force continues to prioritise hate crime investigations. Dedicated hate crime officers remain in place. Regular meetings are held with faith and community leaders. Hertfordshire Together and other partnership initiatives continue to support community cohesion. Police intervention focuses on preventing division and maintaining community safety.

Cllr Poopalasingham: how organisational changes had been received by frontline officers.

Chief Constable: Extensive staff engagement had taken place. Feedback from approximately 2,000–3,000 staff members informed reforms. Improvements have been made to technology, vehicle access and operational support. Senior leaders regularly spend time alongside frontline officers. Cultural surveys are used to monitor staff sentiment and track progress.

Mr Rigg: asked about arrangements during the Chief Constable's proposed period of absence.

PCC: explained that: Plans have been carefully developed. Subject to Panel approval, arrangements would commence in mid-July. The Deputy Chief Constable would provide leadership during the period. The PCC expressed confidence in the leadership team's ability to maintain performance.

Chair: asked about recent restructuring.

Chief Constable: outlined creation of East and West policing commands. Reduction of district structures from ten to six. Consolidation of criminal investigation functions from ten teams to four. Larger teams providing greater resilience, expertise and efficiency.

Cllr Kaza: asked about criminal activity crossing county boundaries.

Chief Constable: confirmed that criminals frequently travel from London into Hertfordshire. Vehicle crime and drug-related offences are key concerns. Close collaboration takes place with London, Essex, Thames Valley and Bedfordshire police forces. Joint operations are used to disrupt organised criminal networks.

Chair: asked both the PCC and Chief Constable about relationships with neighbouring forces.

Chief Constable: reported strong working relationships with Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire, including: Weekly meetings with counterparts. Shared governance arrangements. Collaboration on specialist functions such as dogs, scientific services and firearms licensing. The PCC agreed that collaboration had strengthened and highlighted improvements in firearms licensing and governance arrangements.

7 **CLOSED SESSION TO DISCUSS THE PROPOSED APPOINTMENT TO THE ROLE OF CHIEF CONSTABLE.**

Public and PCC's team has been asked to vacate.

8 CLOSED SESSION TO DISCUSS THE PROPOSED APPOINTMENT TO THE ROLE OF CHIEF CONSTABLE.

Panel discussed the Proposed Re-Appointment of Mr Andy Prophet as the Chief Constable.

Panel's decision following discussions in closed session:

Panel Members present unanimously agreed accept the proposed re-appointment.

Chief Constable: thanked the Panel for its trust and confidence and stated that he would continue to work tirelessly to improve policing across Hertfordshire.

9 AOB

Dr Hargreaves: asked whether the recently launched Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy had been made publicly available.

PCC: confirmed that the strategy had been formally launched. It had been developed in partnership with Hertfordshire County Council and other agencies. The document would be circulated to Panel members.

Chair: in personal capacity noted that the circumstances requiring this additional meeting as set out in PCC's report were not ideal and suggested that future government reforms should seek to avoid similar situations.

Chair: appreciated the Panel members, the Chief Constable and PCC for their attendance, Officers supporting the Panel, including Ms Sandra Beck Deputy Chief Executive of Broxbourne Borough Council, and Ibrahim Balta, Clerk to the Panel.

PCC: thanked the Panel for its professionalism and balanced scrutiny throughout the year.

10 DATE OF NEXT MEETING 18 JUNE 2026- DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL

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PCC Annual Report

2025 - 2026



Police & Crime
Commissioner
FOR HERTFORDSHIRE



Foreword from the Commissioner



I am delighted to publish my Annual Report for 2026/27.

This year has been a pivotal one in implementing the Police & Crime Plan and real progress has been made. I would like to thank OPCC staff and the Constabulary's police officers and staff for their work on the Plan priorities and delivering improvements in the policing provided to Hertfordshire.

Over the last year, the improvements outlined as priorities in the Police & Crime Plan have begun to be realised. 999 and 101 calls are being answered quicker. Crime is now being recorded more accurately. Key crime types impacting Hertfordshire's communities are beginning to fall, sometimes against the national trend. More crime is being solved. Protective safeguarding powers are being used more regularly.

Operation Hotspot hit the milestone of 50,000 patrol hours over the last two years and Neighbourhood Policing Teams have been uplifted across the county. New initiatives on retail crime reporting, tackling prolific shoplifters, reducing youth violence and Live Facial Recognition technology are being introduced. Our Safer Town Centres project galvanised partnership activity through summer and Christmas.

I actively scrutinise and hold the police to account through Accountability & Performance Meetings and with the support of our volunteer custody visitors and scrutiny panel members. Proactive public engagement has been carried out on live facial recognition, police reform and with our Youth Commission. I continue to advocate for victims of crime and champion the need for improvements across the criminal justice system.

Jonathan Ash-Edwards Police & Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire

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Overview of Performance

Overall crime volumes have stabilised following CDI improvements, with a +2.3% increase year-on-year.

Predicted demand continues to rise, forecasted at 1.85% increase for 26-27, reflecting improved recording and sustained demand.

Across the force, performance is improving with strong governance, better use of data, and operational innovation driving change.

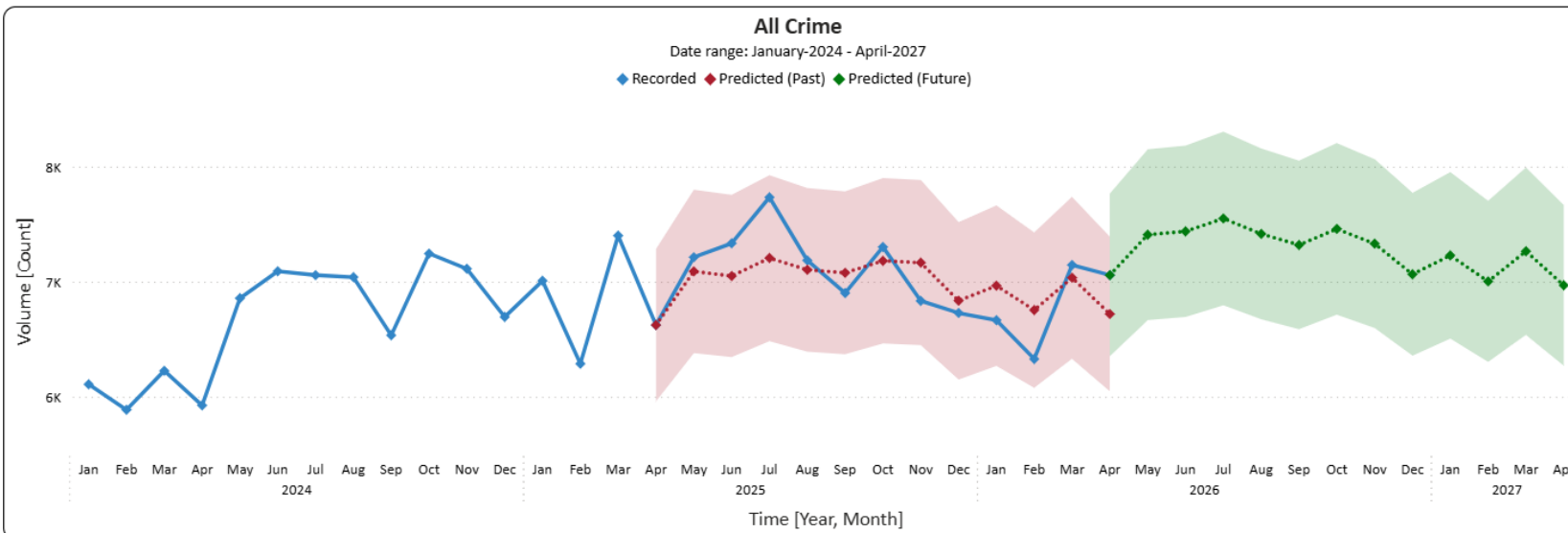
1.1 Better policing for Hertfordshire



12-Month Forecasts

Last Updated: 08/06/2026 00:05:25
Official-Sensitive

999 Calls	101 Calls	Incidents	ASB	Foreign National Offenders	Mental Health	All Crime	Arson & Criminal Damage	Burglary	DA Crime	DA Non-crime	Drug Offences	Harassment	>
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Date period in the line chart is Jan 24 – Apr 27 but the prediction considers historical data going back to June 2018.

Strategic Performance Objectives

Over the last year, the Constabulary has continued working to implement the recommendations of the 2024PEEL Inspection as well as other priorities outlined in the Police and Crime Plan.

Improvements to crime recording accuracy resulted in an increase in overall recorded crime from 82,268 (Apr24-Mar25) to 84,181 (Apr 25 – Mar 26) representing a 2.33% increase. This increase was primarily seen in recording of domestic abuse, sexual offences, stalking, harassment and hate crime. Crime types not impacted by crime recording accuracy, such as burglary, vehicle crime, shoplifting and robbery, all fell.

Domestic abuse tagged crime now represents approximately 1,000 crimes per month and is a key area of demand for the Constabulary.

However, I am encouraged by positive improvements in several key areas;

Solving crime:

Performance in Q1 2026 was impressive, in line with the trajectory of improvement, with around 20% of crime being solved each month, putting Hertfordshire 9th best out of 43 police forces. This compares strongly to the 11.6% solved rate in 2024/25, when Hertfordshire was 37th best out of 43 police forces. Q2 2026 is maintaining this strong trajectory and the goal is to maintain rolling 12 month performance before seeking further improvements.



Strategic Performance Objectives cont.

Crime recording:

The 2024 HMICFRS Cause of Concern regarding the accuracy of crime recording, graded 'Inadequate' at the time of inspection, was lifted in mid-2025. At inspection, crime recording accuracy was judged to be 82% and worse for sexual offences.

Monthly compliance for both all crime and sexual offences is now routinely at 92% or better (the standard for a Good judgement) and exceeds that in many months. The Constabulary is working towards a target of 97% accuracy. We are now broadly at the stage where we can say we have an accurate picture of crime, which will allow for judgements to be made in the year ahead about prevention and reduction in areas previously impacted by under-recording.

Reducing crime:

Despite the above increases in the amount of crime being recorded, there has been meaningful progress in reducing crime in 2025/26 areas that did not have crime recording issues:

- Burglary offences (business, community, residential and unconnected buildings) fell by 5.6%
- Robbery offences fell by 13.3%
- Shoplifting fell by 12.0%
- Vehicle crime fell by 8.9%



Strategic Performance Objectives cont.

Protecting vulnerable people

- Hertfordshire Constabulary has improved the use of protective powers such as Domestic Abuse Protection Orders (DVPOs) and the use of the Domestic Abuse Disclosure Scheme (Clare's Law). These powers are critical to protecting vulnerable people from abuse and harm.
- In 2023/24, Hertfordshire was bottom in the country for its use of Clare's Law, but in the year to September 2025, has risen to 5th best nationally, with further improvements ongoing.

Responding to the public

- The 999-call answering target of 90% in under 10 seconds is now routinely exceeded. Q1 2026 achieved 96% within 10 seconds and an average answer time of 3 seconds. The 999 target was not being achieved in 2024.
- There is no national target for 101 calls, so call abandonment rates and average answer times are usually the key metrics. Call abandonment in Q1 2026 was 5% compared to 12% in Q1 2024. Average answer time is now under 60 seconds most months.



Safer Town Centres



Outcomes

Delivered coordinated Safer Streets activity targeting ASB, retail and street crime in priority town centres, alongside reducing crime and ASB in key locations through high visibility patrols and targeted enforcement. Police visibility increased during peak periods, including the safer town centre summer campaign and the winter of action Christmas campaign, strengthening public presence and reassurance.

Partnership working was strengthened by bringing together councils, businesses and local partners to deliver joint responses, alongside enhanced business engagement through training and prevention activity. This included targeted night-time economy safety operations, as well as prevention and problem-solving measures such as environmental improvements and CCTV deployment.

Forward plan for 2026-27

Safer Town Centres will maintain visible policing, reduce crime through data-led targeting, and strengthen partnerships, prevention and enforcement to improve safety and confidence, including targeted VAWG activity during the World Cup such as Op Vigilant.



Operation Hotspot



Outcomes

Increasing police visibility in high-demand locations by delivering sustained hotspot policing activity, with over 50,000 hours of patrols in the last two years.

This has reduced crime and ASB in hotspot areas : by 14.5% during the first year of the programme and strengthened engagement with communities and businesses by building confidence and improving intelligence.

The hotspot patrols have seen an increase in enforcement activity, with year 1 and 2 combined data resulting in 703 arrests and 1,334 stop searches with robust action against weapons and criminality, removing knives and dangerous weapons from circulation and supporting significant knife surrender activity

In addition, a total of 3,245 ASB powers have been used, over 50,000 patrol hours, 370 arrests and 109 knives seized disrupting offending and improving safety in town centres and open spaces and problem-solving interventions, including CCTV installation, environmental design changes and targeted prevention activity has been delivered in hotspot locations.

Forward plan for 2026-2027:

The Government has cancelled hotspot funding for 2026/27. I have allocated some local grant funding to the Constabulary to sustain this work through the summer while we develop a plan for the long term sustainability of hotspot policing.

Strengthen local policing



Outcomes

Neighbourhood policing capacity was strengthened through the deployment of 54 additional officers, increasing visible presence across communities and delivering sustained high-visibility policing through Operation Hotspot and targeted town centre activity aligned to public priorities.

Frontline capacity was further improved by progressing work to free up officer time, alongside enhanced problem-solving and partnership working to embed a more consistent, locally focused approach addressing the root causes of crime and anti-social behaviour, while maintaining a focus on public confidence through alignment with community priorities identified through consultation.

Forward plan for 2026-27

Neighbourhood policing will be embedded as the foundation of local delivery, with stronger community connection, targeted hotspot policing, increased frontline visibility, and partnership-led prevention focused on early intervention and coordinated responses to anti-social behaviour and youth violence.



Youth Violence Pathfinder

Outcomes

The Hertfordshire Pathfinder piloted a multi-agency panel in Dacorum, bringing together partners from policing, education, youth services and other local agencies to identify children who had contact with police but required no further action.

Whilst without the infrastructure of a Violence Reduction Unit (one of only 3 areas nationally), the panel still enabled structured information sharing, a fuller understanding of each child's circumstances, and agreement of actions to reduce risk. Between October 2025 and March 2026, 17 children were reviewed and referred for further positive support, with early outcomes showing improved engagement with education, participation in structured activities, and increased confidence and wellbeing.

Forward plan for 2026-27

To build on the successes of the pathfinder to date and hand over delivery to partners in Dacorum with learning from Year 1 taken to further enhance the model to ensure that more children can access early intervention support.



Serious Violence



Outcomes

Through the Serious Violence Duty, £900,000 has been administered to interventions reaching over 1,000 individuals across Hertfordshire.

This includes:

- sport interventions for children and young people at high risk of serious violence
- trauma informed support for those carrying knives or involved in serious violence
- a personal development programme for young men with convictions or links to serious violence
- a trauma-informed outreach and mentoring programme across six secondary schools in Stevenage
- the use of virtual reality headsets by Police to deter knife carrying and support for the Clear, Hold, Build initiatives

Forward plan for 2026-27

To strengthen governance for the Serious Violence Duty in Hertfordshire by establishing a Serious Violence Governance Board to bring partners together for collaboration and information sharing, and to secure Home Office funding to continue delivering a programme of interventions to prevent and reduce serious violence.



Turning the tide on retail crime



Outcomes

On average, there has been a 17% reduction in monthly recorded shoplifting offences 2024/25 to 2025/26, supported by strengthened collaboration through the first countywide Retail Crime Forum in July 2025, attended by over a hundred representatives from retail, partners and the police.

The Herts Against Retail Crime partnership board has been established to bring businesses and police together, alongside the launch of a new reporting system pilot in St Albans, Bishops Stortford, Stevenage and Welwyn Garden City, grant funding a project at 9 Yards retail park. and the introduction of the ShopSafe Alert app and Auror reporting platform to improve information sharing, reporting and investigation of retail crime.

Hertfordshire Constabulary has reached agreement with the CPS for direct police summoning in retail crime cases that have a strong evidence base and expected guilty plea.

Forward plan for 2026-27

To accelerate business and police collaboration, further roll out of the ShopSafe Alert system to enable direct reporting to police, deliver a diversionary support programme for prolific shoplifters, and support independent retailers through a new retail crime prevention scheme.



Rural Crime



Outcomes

The Selecta DNA pilot, initially launched on a small scale in 2025, demonstrated positive outcomes and progressed into a full project, proving effective as a crime prevention and investigative tool with none of the tagged equipment being stolen, and over 200 kits supplied to increase coverage for rural communities.

The Fly Tipping Fund has also continued to support private landowners, particularly farmers, with clean-up and prevention measures, with five awards made across St Albans, East Herts and Hertsmere totalling over £7.5k.

Forward plan for 2026-27

Continue to review the effectiveness of the Fly Tipping Fund and levels of application, while expanding prevention and public engagement in rural communities through increased awareness and active engagement at barn meetings, strengthening resilience through practical crime prevention advice, targeted outreach and community-based initiatives.



Burglary



Outcomes

Delivered through Operation Guardian, a countywide framework aligned prevention and enforcement activity to tackle dwelling burglary, contributing to sustained year on year reductions.

This included increased targeted enforcement in high-risk areas, strengthened prevention through consistent messaging and proactive engagement, enhanced investigative opportunities through improved evidence and intelligence capture, and improved community reassurance through visibility, cocooning and targeted engagement with affected residents.

A burglary gold group was established to strengthen governance, accountability and investigative practice, improving outcomes through Op Linkage, stronger tasking, better suspect management, improved forensic focus and clearer repeat victim oversight. Hertfordshire is now ranked 14th nationally and 2nd out of 8 in its MSG, with a 12.0% outcome rate, compared to 38th nationally and 7th out of 8 with a 6.4% rate over the previous 12 months.

Forward plan for 2026-27

Sustain Operation Guardian through a coordinated approach, reducing burglary through data-led targeting while improving prevention, engagement, investigative outcomes and visible policing.



Anti-Social Behaviour

Outcomes

A coordinated countywide approach aligned policing and partners to tackle anti-social behaviour, contributing to reductions in hotspot areas through high-visibility patrols and targeted activity.

This was supported by increased visible policing in high-demand locations, strengthened problem-solving focused on repeat issues, enhanced partnership working, greater use of ASB powers against persistent offenders, improved support for victims, and expanded community engagement to reflect local priorities.

Forward plan for 2026-27

Sustain a countywide approach to ASB with consistent delivery across all districts, reducing incidents through data-led targeting of repeat demand and high-risk areas, while expanding prevention and early intervention, strengthening problem solving and enforcement, increasing visibility and community engagement, and deepening partnership working to deliver a coordinated, victim-focused response.





Outcomes

In response to residents' concerns and constabulary statistics on tool theft, the PCC Developed Project Trace: Hands Off Our Tools, bringing together police, national retailers and key partners to design a countywide response.

During 2025/26 work focused on building partnerships, securing support from major retailers, developing crime prevention materials, procuring forensic marking kits and planning a programme of engagement aimed at protecting tradespeople and reducing opportunities for offenders to profit from stolen tools.

Forward plan for 2026-27

Project Trace will give away 1000 forensic marking kits at roadshows across the county, meaning up to 50,000 tools and pieces of equipment will be marked in Hertfordshire.

There will be partnership activity throughout the summer with the constabulary to disrupt the resale of stolen tools at car boot sales.

Road Safety



Outcomes

Over £80,000 was distributed to projects and services, supporting 93 residents affected by life-limiting or fatal road traffic collisions through the Roads Victims Trust, delivering over 950 hours of specialist counselling, issuing over 1,500 educational letters to speeding drivers, installing three Speed Indicator Devices, and providing subsidised training and safety courses for motorcyclists.

Community DriveSafe schemes also increased activity, with volunteers spending over 300 hours monitoring traffic across 11 schemes and 35 locations, supported by two automated speed watch cameras, which monitored over 4.6 million vehicles, issued 2,207 warning letters, and contributed to reducing speeding with only 1.18% of vehicles identified at 40mph or above.

Forward plan for 2026-27

Investment will increase Roads Policing activity in targeted locations to reduce KSIs, Fatal 5 behaviours and concerns about speeding, while increasing the number of Community DriveSafe schemes with additional Police presence during monitoring sessions, and continuing work with partners to use the latest technologies to tackle anti-social driving, particularly noisy vehicles.

Accountability and Performance Meetings

The Police and Crime Commissioner continues to hold the Chief Constable to account for the performance of Hertfordshire Constabulary in monthly Accountability and Performance Meetings.

These meetings enable the PCC to scrutinise the delivery of policing and ask questions about performance and topics of public interest.

In 2025/27, 11 APM's were held and broadcast to the public. Over 30 topics were covered in these meetings include:

- Leadership and wellbeing
- Use of AI in policing
- Hare Coursing
- Town Centre Hotspots
- Safer Streets
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Road's policing and road safety
- Burglary
- Missing people
- Project Vigilant
- Firearms licensing
- Burglary performance
- The use of Live Facial Recognition
- Hate crime and community reassurance
- Progress on PEEL inspection recommendations

These meetings provide robust and transparent oversight of the Constabulary, and helps drive improvements in police performance, strengthen public confidence, and ensures progress is made.



Public Scrutiny Panels

Police performance is also scrutinised through the PCC's public scrutiny panels.

These panels play a key role in holding the police to account and ensuring police powers are used fairly and proportionately.

The PCC hosts two scrutiny panels:

- 1. Use of Force**
- 2. Stop and Search**

The Panels are made up of a dedicated group of volunteers who live, work, or study in Hertfordshire, ensuring that community perspectives are represented in the scrutiny process.

The Panels meet every two months to review written statements and body worn video, finding good practice, highlighting areas for improvement, and providing assurance to the public that stop and search and use of force powers are being applied appropriately.



Public Scrutiny Panels cont.

Looking ahead, the Panels will continue to strengthen their data-led approach to scrutiny, maintain a focus on fairness, proportionality and transparency, and support efforts to improve community confidence and engagement in the use of police powers.

To achieve this, we will prioritise the following actions in 2026/27:

- Re-establish a data subgroup working across both panels to identify trends and support more targeted, focused scrutiny.
- Work with the PCC's Youth Commission and the Constabulary's Youth Race Inclusion Board to deliver youth-focused scrutiny sessions, ensuring young people's voices inform the process.
- Rebalance meeting structures to prioritise scrutiny time, including introducing a more formal cycle of meetings covering the data subgroup, Panel meetings and joint sessions to share updates more efficiently.
- Develop more targeted communications to increase both the diversity and number of volunteers on scrutiny panels.



Stop and Search Scrutiny Panel



In 2025/26, there were **7735** stop and searches across Hertfordshire. This is a **15%** increase from the previous year.

The Panel scrutinised **182** stop and search records. This includes written records, body worn video, strip searches of under-18s, and Section 60s.

79% of records scrutinised received a 'Green' grading meaning that they demonstrated excellent or good practice.

A smaller proportion of records scrutinised (**21%**) raised concerns for the panel, with **14%** graded Amber and **7%** graded Red, indicating more serious issues.

Use of Force Scrutiny Panel



In 2025/26, there were **16,418** Use of Force records completed across Hertfordshire. This is an 14% increase from the previous year.

The Panel scrutinised **60** Use of Force records. This included deep dives on under-18s, taser use and custody records.

95% of records scrutinised received a 'Green' grading meaning that they showed excellent or good practice.

A smaller proportion of records scrutinised (**5%**) raised concerns for the panel, with **2%** graded Amber and **3%** graded Red, indicating more serious issues.

Complaints

Improving early resolution

During the year, the team handled 1,603 (up from the previous year at 1,562) complaints, with 69% resolved without referral to the Professional Standards Department. This enabled concerns to be addressed more quickly and with less formality, while still providing clear explanations and outcomes.

The focus throughout has been on early resolution, effective communication and responding constructively to public concerns.

Independent review and organisational learning

The OPCC received 91 complaint reviews, with 16 upheld and 70 not upheld, alongside a small number remaining open.

Reviews provide an important safeguard for fairness and accountability. Where upheld, they highlighted gaps in how complaints were handled or explained. Even where not upheld, they identified learning to strengthen communication, record keeping and customer updates.



Complaints cont.

Key themes from public contact

Alongside complaints, the team supported the PCC with a high volume of non-complaint public enquiries, closing 351 cases during the year, with 24 remaining open.

The most common themes raised were:

- Road safety and speeding
- Local crime and anti-social behaviour
- Violence against women and girls
- Fly tipping
- Firearms licensing

Future return to Model 1 complaints handling

The PCC has decided to revert to Model 1 complaints handling as is the majority position nationally. (Hertfordshire currently does Model 2). This means that initial complaints handling will return to Hertfordshire Constabulary and the OPCC will continue to undertake complaints reviews. It is expected that this will result in earlier intervention in public dissatisfaction and a sustainable complaints function ahead of future governance changes. The statutory complaints framework is the same regardless of the complaints handling model.



Firearms Licensing

Firearms licensing remains a critical area of public safety requiring robust governance, consistent decision-making, and sustained performance improvement.

Historic backlogs and issues with service timeliness resulted in HMICFRS issuing a Cause of Concern to BCH in 2026/27. This was anticipated and the issues raised were not a surprise.

The PCC has prioritised the resolution of these issues and firearms licensing is the most scrutinised topic in Accountability & Performance Meetings, being on the agenda eight times.

Significant improvements have been made by BCH over the last year:

- A doubling of staff resource in firearms licensing
- The number of Herts renewals over the 120-day national decision target has halved
- BCH are no longer the three worst performing forces in the country on timeliness
- Systems, processes, governance and digital case management has been overhauled

Public safety and the quality of decision making remains the overriding priority.



Strategic Policing Requirement

The Strategic Policing Requirement sets out the national threats that policing must address collectively, including terrorism, serious and organised crime, public disorder, civil emergencies, cyber threats, child sexual abuse, and violence against women and girls.

For 2026/27, delivery will be fully integrated into local policing, ensuring national threats are addressed through a clear focus on threat, harm and risk, as identified in the Force Management Statement and aligned to the Police and Crime Plan.

Strategic Approach

- Threat-led policing: Activity is prioritised toward high-harm offences, vulnerability, and prolific offenders who drive disproportionate demand.
- Prevention and early intervention: A continued shift toward preventing harm, not just responding, through targeted, data-led activity and early intervention.
- Partnership delivery: Effective response to SPR threats is dependent on coordinated multi-agency working across policing, local authorities, health, and criminal justice partners.



Strategic Policing Requirement cont.

- Place-based focus: Hotspot and locality-based approaches ensure national threats are addressed through visible, community-focused activity that also strengthens public confidence.
- Regional collaboration: Specialist capabilities, including serious organised crime and counter-terrorism, are delivered through regional arrangements such as ERSOU to ensure sufficient capacity and resilience.

Outcome Focus

Delivery of the SPR in 2026/27 will be evidenced through:

- Reduced crime and anti-social behaviour.
- Improved outcomes for victims and increased crimes solved
- Stronger safeguarding, including increased use of protective powers
- Greater public confidence in policing

For 2026/27, the SPR will be delivered through a joined-up, prevention-led and intelligence-driven approach, ensuring national threats are translated into tangible local impact, with resources focused on the greatest risk to communities across Hertfordshire.



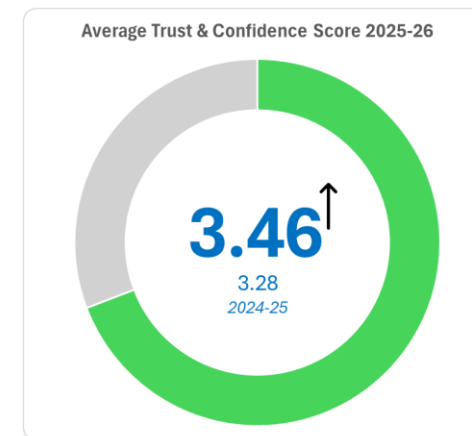
Trust and Confidence

Trust and Confidence

The Herts Connected survey highlights a strong and consistent focus on visible community issues. Speeding emerges as the most significant concern by a clear margin, followed by road-related obstructions, indicating that road safety remains a dominant public priority. Environmental and quality of life issues, including fly tipping and anti-social behaviour, also feature prominently.

Public confidence in Hertfordshire Constabulary remains stable and moderately positive, with average scores consistently ranging between 3.1 and 3.6 over the reporting period. There is a gradual upward trend, with scores increasing from around 3.2 to approximately 3.5 to 3.6, alongside minor month-to-month variation.

Importantly, confidence levels remain consistently above the midpoint, indicating that sentiment is more positive than negative overall. The absence of any sustained decline provides assurance that confidence is being maintained, with evidence of steady improvement over time.



4.3 Live Facial Recognition (LFR): A program of public engagement

Awareness of LFR is high, with 71% having heard a little or fair amount about LFR

2

Public
Webinars

3,667

Herts
Connected
responses

1,058

Independent
Research
responses

1

Public street
polling

In an agreement of Mutual Aid with Bedfordshire Police to utilise their own LFR vans, in total there have been **4** deployments of LFR in Hertfordshire, with **139,983 faces** scanned by the technology using a watchlist consisting of **2,086** made up of people wanted by Hertfordshire Constabulary or the courts and/or are subject to strict court orders that they have failed to adhere to.

LFR has been positively received by our communities and businesses and as such, I have invested in two dedicated LFR vans to be fully operationalised across the County.

LFR attracts five broad areas of concern amongst the public

Proving the OPCC and Constabulary an opportunity to address and reframe public knowledge

Racial bias

Storing of data

Scrutiny of use

Transparency
of use

Incorrect
triggers

“
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I believe it would help cut down shoplifting & street crimes like phone theft. For this reason, it's a good idea. However, I would be concerned that it may accidentally be racially biased

“

How can the Police therefore assure the public that FRT will not be used as a cost-effective extension of day to day Stop and Search activities

“

It can be useful in specific situations like locating suspects or missing people, but it needs strict safeguards to prevent misuse

“

Will the Watchlist be a National or Local Watchlist and can it be used to find missing people?

“

How safe is the USB stick? What controls are in place for securing the data onto and off of the USB stick?

“

What due diligence has been done to ensure that the LFR technology doesn't disproportionately discriminate against Black people or people from ethnic minorities?



The public are highly supportive of LFR in Hertfordshire

Using mixed methodology to reach a diverse and representative sample

93%

think it is acceptable for the police to at least sometimes use LFR

5%

believe the technology should never be used by the police

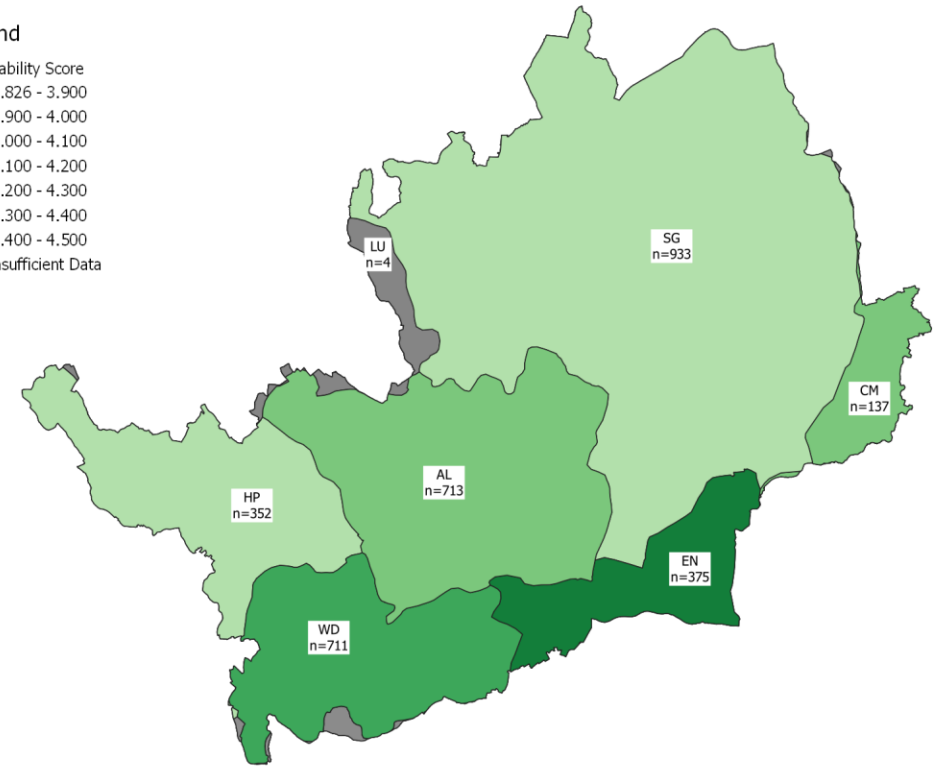
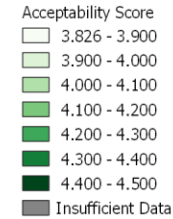
81%

think the use of LFR technology will help the police catch more criminals

82%

LFR within a town centre/retail space will not affect the likelihood of visiting

Legend



Using mixed methodology to reach a diverse and representative sample



Police Reform

As well as representing the public on local policing matters, it's my job to ensure Hertfordshire's best interests are considered ahead of any national changes to the police.

This Spring, I launched a consultation to understand the public's views on the Government's plans to merge police forces across England and Wales.

The plans mean that your local police force could cover a much larger area than just Hertfordshire in future and this could affect the service you receive.

The consultation remains open until 21st June and I am grateful to the residents, businesses and stakeholders who have completed the consultation so far.



Hertfordshire Youth Commission

The Hertfordshire Youth Commission (HYC) enables young people aged 14-25 to inform decisions about policing and crime prevention in Hertfordshire, working in partnership with the PCC and Hertfordshire Constabulary (HC).

Embedding youth voice and lived experience through the HYC is vital, as it enables young people from across Hertfordshire to independently represent the views of their peers, ensuring that decisions and priorities are informed by those directly affected.

The sessions that children take part in throughout the year as part of the HYC feed directly into the Big Conversation, helping to shape and agree the priority areas that the PCC will focus on.

Through the 'Big Conversation' HYC members conducted peer research with over **1,600 young people between May 2025 and December 2025**, ensuring that young people's views and lived experiences meaningfully inform future priorities and decision-making.

Achievements from the previous cohort of Youth commission:

- A key achievement for the Youth Commission was the delivery of a youth sector roundtable at Westminster (House of Commons) in July 2025, featuring discussions focused on Youth Justice, Prevention and Community Safety for Children and Young People, helping to inform future priorities and collaboration.

Key recommendations for the OPCC and Partners

Following an extensive evaluation report in May 2026, several recommendations will be taken forward into the plan for 26-27:

1. The Police to commit to a YIAG session on Knife Crime and Joint Enterprise, and to include young people's feedback into policy and strategic development
2. Local councils to work together with the PCC to make public spaces safer and more secure.
3. Deliver more in-person Knife Crime and Joint Enterprise workshops in both educational and youth settings, working more collaboratively with the police to inform young people on the consequences.



Criminal Justice Board

As Chair of the Hertfordshire Criminal Justice Board (HCJB), the Commissioner has provided leadership across the criminal justice system in Hertfordshire.

Over the past year, as chair the Commissioner has led system-wide preparation for Sentencing Act reforms, strengthened HCJB governance and resourcing and driven a renewed approach to prolific offenders.

Achievements of the Criminal Justice Board include:

- Leading Hertfordshire's system-wide response to Sentencing Act reforms ensuring that relevant agencies are aligned on managing the changes
- Finalising the Fairness in the Criminal Justice System review examining disproportionality across policing, probation, courts, and youth justice.
- Developing a new Navigator diversion pilot to tackle repeat shoplifting and addiction-driven offending.



Victim Services

In 2025/26, **over £2.45million** in funding was used to deliver victim support services in Hertfordshire. This includes funding from the Ministry of Justice, and funding from the OPCC core budget.

Beacon Victim Care, the victim support hub for Hertfordshire, provided tailored **support to over 4,000 victims** over 4 years old. Support is provided to all victims and witnesses with crime types supported this year including burglary, fraud, cybercrime, ASB, theft, and violence with or without injury.

Additional funded services provided specialist advocacy, practical support, and counselling services to victims of VAWG, including Domestic Abuse, Sexual Violence, and Stalking.

An additional funding opportunity offered during the year **provided £126,325.66 in funding to 14 organisations** (mostly VCSE organisations), supporting initiatives that strengthened, enhanced, or added resilience to victim support services delivered in Hertfordshire. Initiatives included: specialist training for frontline practitioners, outreach sessions, improved security for refuge and support facilities, and educational campaigns.



Chrysalis Centre

The Chrysalis Centre is the Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Programme for Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire. Interventions within the programme address a range of perpetrator types and behaviours, across all risk levels. **In 2025/26, 743 referrals were received into the service, and 431 individuals were referred** on to one of the programme's specialist intervention or support providers.

Intervention providers work alongside other support professionals to ensure that any wider needs are met, ensuring that perpetrators can successfully engage with an intervention and achieve lasting behaviour change, keeping victims and families safe.

Evaluation of the programme has shown an **81% reduction in DA related crime rates (and a 58% reduction in overall crime rates)** for those who undertook an intervention, compared to a control group who did not.

For 2025/26, the interventions offered were expanded to include a Specialist Intervention Service, delivered by The Change Project, which delivers an intervention for perpetrators of both DA and non-DA related stalking behaviour. Referrals are received directly into the Chrysalis Centre referral hub, and via the Constabulary led Hertfordshire Stalking Intervention Panel.

Home Office funding for the scheme is due to end in September subject to recommissioning.



VAWG advocacy

In 2025/26, a joint commissioning activity was started between Hertfordshire OPCC, Hertfordshire County Council, and the Central East Integrated Care Board, to deliver a joined-up advocacy programme delivering support for all types of VAWG.

This approach was taken response to feedback from victims and survivors that the existing patchwork delivery with multiple VAWG specialist services could be challenging and confusing when trying to identify where to go for support.

In 2025/26, VAWG victim support services funded by the PCC provided advocacy, practical support, counselling and community-based support to around 3,900 victims of VAWG related crime, including domestic abuse, sexual violence and abuse, and stalking.



Finance summary

Significant work has been done to reduce the structural overspends in the Constabulary budget. This progress has continued in 2025/26 with a substantially smaller overspend than in previous years.

The draft outturn for last year is an £634k* overspend (approx. 0.2% of total budget). This is a reduction from a £3m overspend in 2024/25.

The main reasons for the variance are as follows:

Police Officer & Staff Pay	+£342k overspend
Police Officer & Staff Pay Overtime	+£627k overspend
Non-pay	-£336k underspend

*subject to change and budget closure process



Making the case for fairer funding

Hertfordshire has lower than average funding per head of population and the fifth lowest police precept in England & Wales.

For 2026/27, I raised the precept by £15 per household (Band D), with the support of 68% of residents who responded to my survey.

I am committed to delivering value for money for Hertfordshire taxpayers.

The 2026/27 budget required a savings target of £7m which is on track to be achieved through the interventions planned during budget setting.

I continue to make the case to the Home Office for greater precept flexibility to improve policing across Hertfordshire. Moving the precept to the England & Wales average would release funding equivalent to a 10% increase in police officer numbers. I was disappointed that we did not receive flexibility from the Home Office for 2026/27, especially given better funded areas were given flexibility. I will be pursuing this again for the 2027/28 budget.



OPCC structure

The restructure of the OPCC was completed in 2025/26. This was the first such review of the OPCC structure since 2017. The restructure was a significant organisational change aimed at improving efficiency, aligning resources with strategic priorities, and ensuring financial sustainability.

The office has historically been one of the largest nationally as a percentage cost of the overall police budget and exceeded the Home Office guidance of being within 1% of the force budget.

The restructure reduced the size of the office by 18% and is expected to deliver approximately £300,000 in annual savings compared to the projected pre-restructure outturn.

These savings have been allocated to ensure the OPCC does not place any inflationary cost on the overall policing budget in 2026/27 and to increase investment on Police & Crime Plan projects.

The restructure was done in a legally compliant manner with full staff consultation and Unison involvement.



Estates Summary

- HQ Redevelopment remains on track and scheduled to be fully operational in August 2026.
- New Estates Strategy is currently being worked on.
- Actively engaging with Planning Depts within District & Borough Councils to make case for the Commissioner to be legitimate recipient of Section 106 and CIL contributions to mitigate the impact of housing growth.

Estates projects delivered in 2026/27 or in progress:

- Relocation of Harpenden NPT to the Town Hall to generate cost savings and closer joint working with the Town Council. Sale of redundant police station to be concluded in Q2
- Relocation of PCC's office to Welwyn Garden City
- Former Borehamwood police station site advertised for sale having been empty and disused for 10+ years
- Seeking to acquire new premises to accommodate Operational Learning Dept enabling vacation of poor-quality leased accommodation together with achieving associated revenue savings.
- Improved signage at core police stations to improve visibility and presence in communities.



Grants Summary

- £1.3m Home Office/OPCC funding awarded across 6 separate grant schemes/initiatives
- £0.8m Home Office/OPCC funding awarded to 57 projects across 5 separate grant schemes/initiatives
- Over £350,000 OPCC awarded to 49 projects across 4 separate grant schemes

Grant Scheme	Total Funding Awarded	Number of Projects
Home Office-Funded (further £0.491m allocated towards statutory bodies staffing and Young Futures Prevention Partnership delivery)		
Serious Violence Duty	£0.437m	8
OPCC-Funded		
Community Safety	£0.133m	11
Safer Town Centre Scheme	£0.133m	28
Road Safety	£0.081m	5
Fly Tipping on Private Land	£0.008m	5



Grants Project Summary

Safer Town Centre Scheme

- Over £130,000 awarded to 28 projects across Hertfordshire focusing on tackling ASB, VAWG, Community Safety, Retail Crime, and Youth Diversionary Activities.
- *(note: only about £80k spent due to unclaimed overtime/projects)*

Serious Violence Duty/Young Futures Prevention Partnership Income Generation/Management

- The OPCC has continued to lead on securing and administering Home Office funding to enable Hertfordshire's statutory partners to deliver interventions within the Serious Violence Duty and the Young Futures Prevention Partnership.
- In 2025/26, over £900,000 Home Office funding secured/administered by the OPCC led to over 1000 individuals across Hertfordshire benefiting from either targeted 1:1 trauma-informed intensive support, group activities, or training/awareness.





Police & Crime
Commissioner
FOR HERTFORDSHIRE

PCC Annual Report

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For all media and press enquires, please email rachel.stone@herts-pcc.gov.uk

For general enquiries regarding the report, please email commissioner@herts-pcc.gov.uk

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Hertfordshire Independent Stop and Search Scrutiny Panel

Annual Report 2025/26

Police and Crime Commissioner's foreword

As Police and Crime Commissioner, it is my role to scrutinise police performance and represent the views of the public. Independent scrutiny plays an important role in supporting me in this duty, while also maintaining public confidence in the fair and appropriate use of police powers.

Stop and search is an important policing tool. Used effectively, it prevents and disrupts crime, removes weapons and drugs from our communities, and keeps people safe. However, it is also an intrusive power and must always be used in a fair, justified and proportionate way.

Nationally, the use of stop and search has been declining and so I welcome the fact that Hertfordshire Constabulary has increased the use of this important power by 15% over the last year. Importantly, that increase has not come at the cost of quality of searches and the positive outcome rate has increased, demonstrating the increasing effectiveness of the use of the powers.

The Stop and Search Scrutiny Panel provide valuable assurance that these powers are being used appropriately across Hertfordshire. During 2025/26, this work has continued, and I am pleased that the Panel remains confident in the use of stop and search powers by police officers. Most of the records reviewed by the Panel were assessed as demonstrating good or excellent practice.

The Panel's work also plays an important role in promoting transparency and openness of policing activity. The involvement of independent community members ensures that a range of perspectives are reflected, helping to build trust between the public and the police.

Where the Panel identifies areas for improvement, this feedback is consistently shared with the Constabulary. A well-established feedback process is in place, ensuring that the Panel's insights support continuous improvement in police practice, training and standards. As such the Panel is recognised as a trusted and constructive voice within the Constabulary.

I would like to thank all Panel members for their time and commitment to this important work. In the year ahead, I look forward to continuing to work with them to maintain a strong focus on fairness and community confidence, as they support me in my role as Police and Crime Commissioner.

Jonathan Ash-Edwards

Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire

Chair's foreword

It is my privilege once again to present the Annual Report of the Hertfordshire Independent Stop and Search Scrutiny Panel to the people of Hertfordshire. This has been another important year for independent scrutiny in Hertfordshire. National conversations about trust, fairness and confidence in policing continue to shape public expectations, and in that context visible, credible and community-rooted scrutiny remains essential. Stop and search remains a valuable policing tool, but it is also an intrusive power and must always be used lawfully, fairly and proportionately. That is why strong independent oversight matters.

The Panel provides independent community oversight on behalf of the public. Members review stop and search records, body-worn video footage, disproportionality data and wider trends to assess whether powers are being used fairly, ethically and proportionately. Through this work, the Panel identifies good practice, challenges areas for improvement, and supports accountability and public confidence.

Alongside targeted thematic reviews, the Panel continues to use random dip-sampling of records and body-worn video footage to help ensure scrutiny remains impartial, representative and free from selective filtering.

The Panel has continued to mature as a body of scrutiny. Stability in membership has enabled volunteers to develop confidence, expertise and consistency in their approach. I would like to place on record my sincere thanks to all Panel members for the commitment, professionalism and diligence they continue to demonstrate. The work is detailed, demanding and entirely voluntary. The integrity and quality of the Panel's work continue to receive wider recognition. Senior officers from Hertfordshire Constabulary attend meetings regularly and engage positively and professionally with scrutiny, reinforcing the value of meaningful independent oversight.

The relationship between the Panel and the Constabulary has continued to develop positively. Independent scrutiny should never be confused with hostility towards policing. Our role is to act as a constructive critical friend. The Constabulary's willingness to engage openly with scrutiny and feedback has helped strengthen both accountability and professional standards across the force.

At the same time, significant challenges remain. Disproportionality in stop and search continues to be a serious issue both locally and nationally. Research by the University of Hertfordshire found that Black people in Hertfordshire remain more than three times as likely to be stopped and searched as White people, with people from mixed ethnicity backgrounds also disproportionately affected. The research also identified areas where continued scrutiny is needed in relation to outcomes, perceptions and possible discrimination. These issues must continue to be examined carefully and objectively.

The Panel continues to work closely with the OPCC and Constabulary through scrutiny and data subgroup processes to better understand the drivers of disproportionality. This remains a complex issue, shaped by factors including demographics, vulnerability, criminal exploitation, social conditions, policing demand and community trust. That is why scrutiny must remain rigorous, evidence-led and independent.

Whilst longstanding concerns around ethnic disproportionality, particularly affecting Black communities, rightly remain a major focus, the Panel has also begun reflecting on whether wider socio-economic disadvantage and social exclusion may shape stop and search encounters across a broader range of communities.

Another ongoing challenge is public awareness and participation. Despite the significance of this work, independent scrutiny remains relatively unknown to many residents across Hertfordshire. As I have said previously, it remains one of Hertfordshire's best-kept secrets. Too few people are aware that ordinary members of the public are directly involved in scrutinising police powers in this way.

We continue to encourage broader participation, particularly from younger people and communities whose voices are often underrepresented. The challenge for the future is to widen participation whilst preserving the quality, professionalism and credibility of scrutiny.

During 2025/26, the Panel scrutinised fewer records than in the previous reporting year, reflecting the reduction in scrutiny meetings and the reduced opportunities for review. Effective scrutiny must remain visibly independent, community-rooted and capable of providing robust challenge where necessary. Ultimately, policing in the United Kingdom depends not simply upon powers, but upon legitimacy. Legitimacy, in turn, depends upon public trust. Independent scrutiny plays an important role in sustaining that trust.

On behalf of the Panel, I would like to thank the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for their continued support, Hertfordshire Constabulary for their openness and professionalism, and most importantly the volunteer Panel members who continue to give their time in service of the wider community.

I would also encourage any resident with an interest in accountability, fairness, policing, or public service to find out more about the work of the Panel and consider getting involved. Independent scrutiny works best when it genuinely reflects the communities it serves.

Demitrius Nurse

Chair

Hertfordshire Independent Stop and Search Scrutiny Panel

Hertfordshire Constabulary foreword

As the senior officer responsible for overseeing how police officers in Hertfordshire use their stop and search powers, I am delighted to take on this role and to build on the strong work already delivered. It is fantastic to see the positive partnership between the Stop and Search Scrutiny Panel and the Constabulary continue to develop over the last 12 months.

Stop and search remains an important power. It takes weapons off the street, tackles crime and helps keep the people of Hertfordshire safe. I am also pleased to highlight our strong and improving conversion rate for stop and search, demonstrating that our use of the power is increasingly targeted and effective. However, we recognise that policing has not always used these powers fairly or appropriately, which can undermine both their legitimacy and public confidence, particularly where disproportionality exists and is not clearly explained.

To ensure we are addressing this, all stop searches involving members of Black communities in areas of disproportionality are now subject to additional scrutiny, with oversight from Hertfordshire's Black and Asian Police Association and our Positive Action Team. This provides a further layer of independent and informed review, helping us to continuously challenge and improve our approach. We are also exploring opportunities to work with academic partners to strengthen our understanding, bring external insight, and support our ongoing focus on fairness and legitimacy.

In addition, we continue to expand the role of the public in scrutinising our use of powers. Community members are now invited to review our use of Section 60 authorities, and we are offering opportunities for them to observe, and in some cases participate in officer training. This openness is an important step in building trust, improving understanding, and ensuring our officers are using these powers in a way that is both effective and fair.

It remains encouraging that the Panel is broadly confident in our use of the power based on the searches and body-worn video it has reviewed. Where concerns are identified, we work closely with the Panel, officers and supervisors to improve performance and make changes to training, policy and processes where required.

As in previous years, I have continued to encourage frontline officers and supervisors to attend Panel meetings. This provides valuable operational context for Panel members, whilst also ensuring that officers understand the Panel's role and can share that insight with colleagues.

I am also pleased that the Panel Chair and Vice Chair continue to attend the Police Powers Board, where strategic decisions on police powers are made. Their presence

ensures the Panel's voice is heard at the highest level and contributes directly to improving our overall approach.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone involved in making the Stop and Search Scrutiny Panel such a success. I am sincerely grateful to the volunteers who give their time as critical friends and help hold us to account. I look forward to continuing this important work together over the coming year.

Chief Superintendent Luke Mooney
Chair of Hertfordshire Constabulary's Police Powers Board

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Independent scrutiny of stop searches	11
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Executive summary

This report sets out the work of the Hertfordshire Stop and Search Scrutiny Panel between April 2025 and March 2026.

- Hertfordshire Constabulary conducted 7,735 stop and searches, a 15% increase on the previous year. The arrest rate was 19.4% and the overall positive outcome rate was 40%.
- Of the stop and searches conducted in 2025/26, the object of the search in over half of cases (55%) was drug-related.
- Young people aged 15 to 24 and males continue to make up the largest proportion of those stopped. Whilst white individuals account for the highest number of stop and searches overall, Black individuals are stopped at the highest rate per 1,000 population. These patterns align with national trends.
- In 2025/26, the Panel scrutinised 182 records, including written records, body-worn video, strip searches and Section 60s.
- Of the records scrutinised, 79% of cases were graded as good or excellent practice. The Panel noted improvements in the quality of written grounds, with clearer links between intelligence and officer decision making.
- A smaller proportion of records scrutinised (21%) raised concerns for the Panel. This was due to unclear grounds, insufficient detail, and the use of generic or copied text in a small number of cases.

Looking ahead, the Panel will strengthen its data-led and focused approach to scrutiny, with a continued emphasis on fairness and transparency. In 2026/27, the Panel will prioritise improving efficiency, increasing representation, and ensuring that young people’s voices are reflected in oversight. This will be supported by re-establishing a data subgroup, delivering targeted youth scrutiny sessions, rebalancing meeting structures to prioritise scrutiny, and enhancing communications to broaden participation.

Introduction

Hertfordshire's Stop and Search Scrutiny Panel was established by the Police and Crime Commissioner in 2015 to provide an independent view on the use of stop and search powers across the county. For more than a decade, the Panel has played an important role in supporting the Commissioner to fulfil statutory responsibilities and to hold the Chief Constable to account.

The Panel reviews a sample of stop and search cases from across Hertfordshire to assess whether these powers are being used fairly, proportionately and lawfully. This scrutiny helps to identify good practice, highlight areas where improvements can be made, and provide assurance to the public that stop and search powers are being applied appropriately. The Panel is made up of a dedicated group of volunteers who live, work, or study in Hertfordshire, ensuring that community perspectives are represented in the scrutiny process.

The Panel's work forms part of a wider framework of oversight of stop and search. The Constabulary's Police Powers Board provides strategic oversight of the use of police powers and is attended by the Chairs of the scrutiny panels. In addition, the Constabulary's Operational Strategy Team undertakes internal dip-sampling of stop and search records, while supervisors regularly review officers' encounters, including body-worn video and recorded grounds for searches. Together, these arrangements provide a comprehensive and robust approach to the scrutiny of stop and search in Hertfordshire.

This report summarises the work of the Panel between April 2025 and March 2026, reflecting on progress made over the year and identifying areas where further improvement is needed. The report aims to provide transparency on the use of stop and search powers, highlight trends over the year, and support ongoing improvement in policing practice.

Panel membership and leadership

The Panel's work has continued to benefit from consistency in leadership and membership this year. Demetrius Nurse has served as Chair of the Panel for three years, with Mohammad Islam Ruman as Vice Chair.

As of May 2026, the Panel has a total membership of 21 members, all of whom live, work or study in Hertfordshire. Over the course of the year, two members have left the Panel, and two new members have joined. The Panel's diversity by ethnicity has improved since last year, but there is more progress to be made:

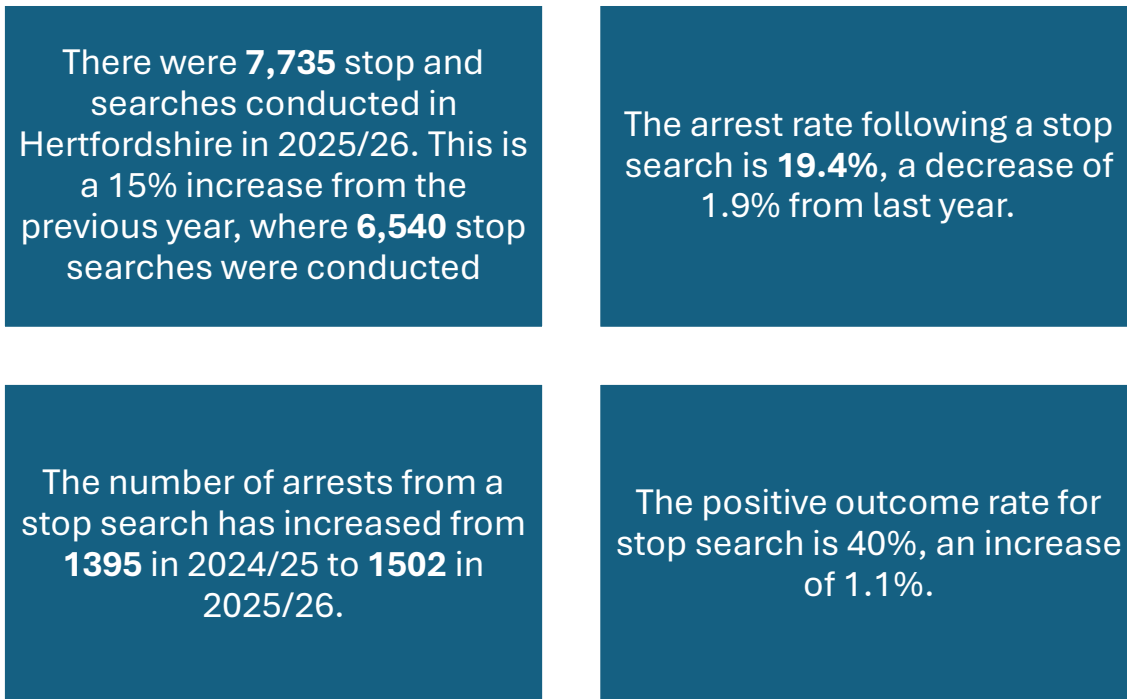
Category	Panel Membership
Gender	
Female	28.6%
Male	71.4%
Age	
18-24	0%
25-39	0%
40-54	23.8%
55-70	38.1%
70+	38.1%
Self-defined Ethnicity	
White	71.43%
Asian/Asian British	9.5%
Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Groups	9.5%
Black, Black British, Caribbean, or African	9.5%
Other Ethnic Group	0%

The OPCC has continued to strengthen its level of engagement with the Constabulary's Race Inclusion Board (RIB), which scrutinises the Constabulary's implementation of the Police Race Action Plan. As part of this, a workshop was delivered for RIB members to support greater diversity within the Panel. This year, to promote engagement with young people, members of the police cadets also attended Panel meetings.

Stop and searches in Hertfordshire

This year, Hertfordshire Constabulary conducted 7,735 stop and searches. The arrest rate was 19.4%, a decrease of 1.9% from the previous year. This decrease is attributed to the increased use of out of court resolutions across the force.

Figure 1: Stop and search in numbers

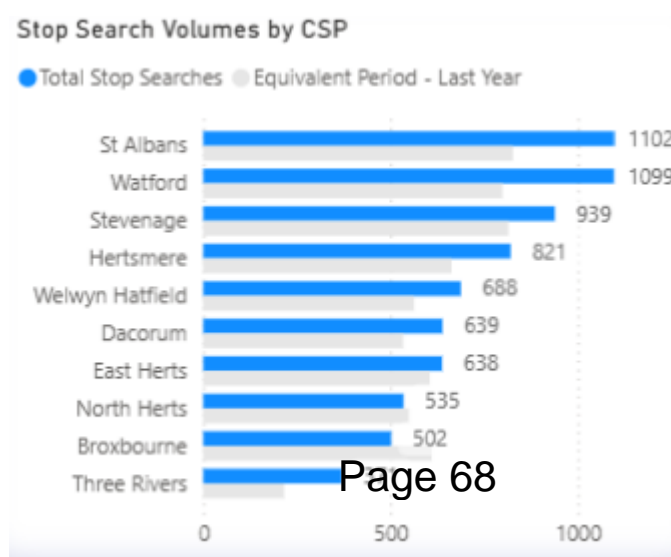


Of the stop and searches conducted in 2025/26, the object of the search in over half of cases (55%) was drug-related. A further 22% of stop and searches related to individuals carrying items with the intent to use them to commit crime or cause harm, and 16% related to offensive weapons.

Stop and searches by district

In 2025/26, St Albans district recorded the highest number of stop searches, followed by Watford and Stevenage. Three Rivers recorded the lowest number of stop searches.

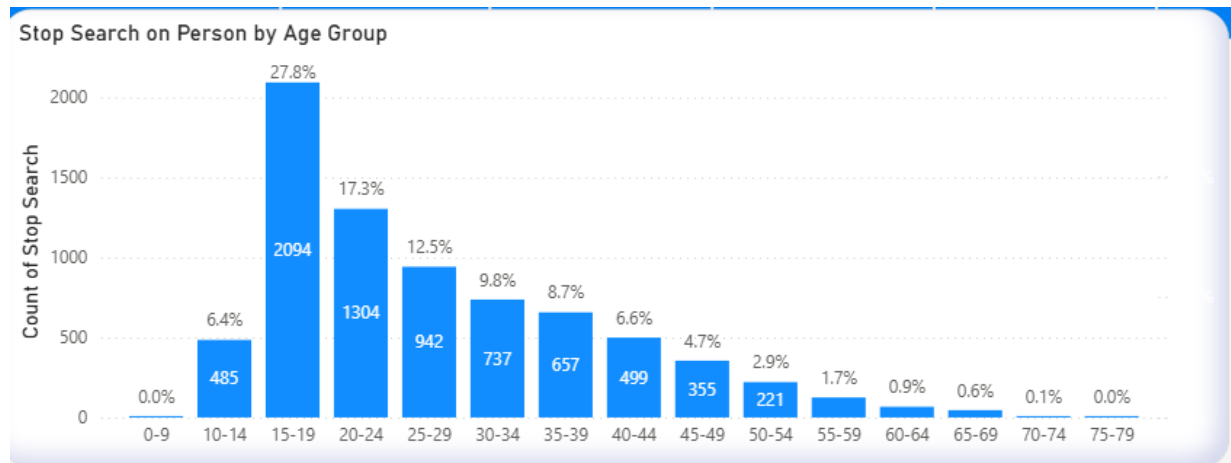
Figure 2: Stop and search by CSP (2025/26)



Stop and search by age and ethnicity

Young people aged 15 to 24 account for the largest proportion of stop and searches in Hertfordshire, representing 45% of all records. Males account for 46.7% of those stopped.

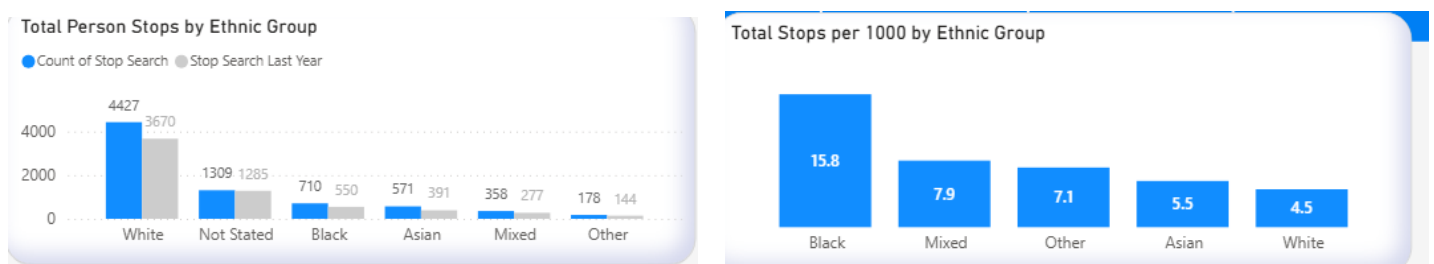
Figure 2 Stop and Search by age (2025-26)



Data shows that the highest number of stop and searches in Hertfordshire are carried out on White individuals, with **4,427 searches** involving White people during 2025/26.

However, when the figures are adjusted for population size, a different pattern emerges. Black individuals have the highest stop and search rate at **15.8 per 1,000 population**, which shows that they are more likely to be stopped and searched than other groups.

Figure 4: Stop and search by ethnic group (2025/26)



These patterns are consistent with wider national trends across England and Wales, where stop and search is more commonly used on younger males and where Black individuals are disproportionately more likely to be stopped.

As stop and search is concentrated among younger age groups, further age-based analysis would provide a more detailed understanding of disproportionality. The Panel will continue to monitor this closely as part of its ongoing scrutiny work.

Independent scrutiny of stop searches

When scrutinising stop and search, the Panel reviews a representative sample of cases to assess the lawfulness, proportionality and quality of police practice. At each meeting, the Panel reviews:

- A sample of written stop and search records
- A sample of body-worn video footage
- All records relating to strip searches involving under 18s
- A review of any Section 60s

Panel members are responsible for reviewing the records to identify any areas of concern or risk, as well as examples of good practice. Following discussion, panel members reach a collective judgement on each case, assigning a RAG (Red, Amber, Green) rating, which reflects the overall quality of the encounter. This grading ranges from:

- Green (excellent/good practice)
- Amber (Not confident with areas for improvement)
- Red (serious concerns identified)

The Panel's assessment of records is then shared with the appropriate District Inspector as feedback to their officers. A copy of the feedback loop can be found in Appendix A.

During 2025/26, changes were introduced to how feedback from panel members is recorded. This involved moving to a more automated system, enabling feedback to be captured more efficiently and shared directly with the Constabulary. This change has streamlined the process, improved the timeliness of feedback, and strengthened the ability to support organisational learning and continuous improvement in stop and search practice.

Findings from scrutiny

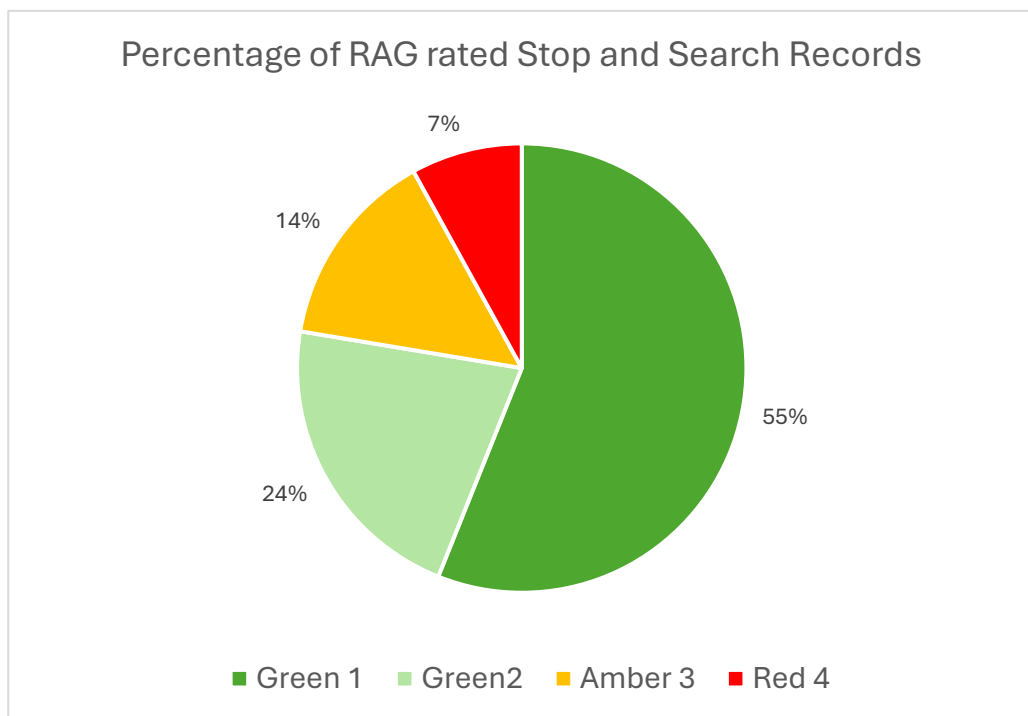
In 2025/26, the Panel scrutinised **182** stop and search records in Hertfordshire. This includes written records, body-worn video, strip searches and Section 60s. Of the records scrutinised, 4 related to a strip search of an under 18 and 2 related to a Section 60.

The number of records scrutinised has reduced compared with the previous year, when 496 records were reviewed. This decrease is primarily due to the change in frequency from monthly meetings to meetings held every two months. During the year, six scrutiny Panel meetings were held, each lasting three hours, compared with twelve in the previous year. While there were fewer meetings, each session included a broader agenda with more items to cover. As a result, less time was available for detailed

scrutiny of individual records. This approach is currently under review, and work is underway to improve efficiency and increase the number of records that can be scrutinised within the available time.

Record type	Total number of records scrutinised in 2025/26	% of total records scrutinised
Written record	154	85%
body-worn video footage	28	15%

Overall, **79%** of records scrutinised received a ‘green’ grading meaning that the record demonstrated excellent or good practice.



Over half of records (55%) scrutinised by the Panel in 2025/26 were rated as excellent, and 24% were rated as satisfactory.

Feedback from the Panel indicates that there has been a noticeable improvement in the articulation of reasonable grounds, with many written records demonstrating a clear link between intelligence, observed behaviour and the decision to conduct a search. The Panel continues to recognise and highlight examples of good practice as part of its scrutiny.

Case study of a record that was graded as excellent (written record)

Reason for Stop: Police were made aware of three teenagers entering an abandoned building by a private security company who were watching on CCTV. On police arrival, three females were seen to attempt to run away from this building. Females were stuck inside the fenced area of abandoned building, aided over the fence by police and detained under S1 PACE.

Description: Only description given was youth / teenager, DP matched this description as appeared approx. 16yrs old

Grounds: DP was matching description given by security, in an abandoned building which clearly stated no access for public. DP also attempted to run away from police.

Group Association: All youths in the group detained.

Suspected Item: Object of search was any articles relating to or to facilitate burglary / theft

Panel grading: Green 1 – Excellent

Panel feedback: Clear, well described and justified stop

A smaller proportion of records scrutinised (21%) raised concerns for the Panel, with **14% graded Amber** and **7% graded Red**, indicating more serious issues.

The key themes within these cases remain broadly consistent with those identified previously. The Panel found that some records did not clearly justify the reason for the search, with decisions sometimes based on limited information or without sufficient supporting detail. There were also instances where records lacked clarity or detail, and where assumptions appeared to be made rather than evidence clearly set out.

In addition, the Panel continued to identify concerns around the use of generic or copied text within records, which reduces clarity and confidence.

A further theme identified this year was the lack of clear explanation in cases involving multiple individuals, where it was not always clear why each person was searched or who in a group was subject to the search. This issue was particularly evident in cases involving young people under the age of 18.

Case study of a record that was graded as a serious concern (written record)

Mobile patrol. Secluded car park in darkness with little light...in a known hotspot for drug taking and supply. One male and female sat in darkness on the floor near to a large fallen tree. Neither person stood up or verbally engaged with officers as approached and despite lights being shone in their direction from a marked police vehicle. There was a faint smell of cannabis near to where the couple were sat and both persons pupils were dilated when spoken to raising the suspicion that they may have been smoking cannabis and still be in possession of.

Panel grading: Red 4 – serious concern

Panel feedback: Location is stated unknown- why? Grounds appear to be based on 'faint' smell of cannabis- insufficient grounds for stop.

Strip searches

In 2025/26, the Panel scrutinised **4** records that involved a strip search of an under 18-year-old. Only one record was flagged as a serious concern. In this case, the Panel felt that the justification for escalating to a strip search was not clearly articulated. An officer present in the meeting set out the rationale for the strip search, which the Panel accepted but stated that this needed to be more clearly set out in the written record.

Whilst the number of strip searches recorded in Hertfordshire is low, the Panel will continue to provide scrutiny over these cases to ensure clear justification and robust safeguarding in every case.

Section 60

In 2018, the Panel began reviewing Section 60 authorisations. Officers searching under Section 60 are not required to provide reasonable grounds for individual searches and therefore, there is no requirement for the Panel to scrutinise individual grounds.

Across the records reviewed by the Panel this year, the use of Section 60 powers was limited, with only **2** recorded cases. Both cases were graded as excellent. The Panel noted that the records reviewed demonstrated that authorisations were supported by an identifiable operational context, and that the rationale for using Section 60 powers was clearly articulated and aligned with the legislative threshold.

Conclusion

This report demonstrates that the Stop and Search Scrutiny Panel continue to play an important role in supporting transparency, accountability and public confidence in Hertfordshire.

The Panel remains broadly confident that stop and search powers in Hertfordshire are being used appropriately and fairly in the majority of cases. Evidence of improved practice, particularly in written grounds, reflects the positive impact of ongoing scrutiny and feedback. At the same time, the Panel has identified clear areas for improvement, including the need for more consistent detail and clearer justification.

Disproportionality remains an important issue. While the patterns seen in Hertfordshire reflect national trends, continued scrutiny and analysis will be essential to understand and address these differences.

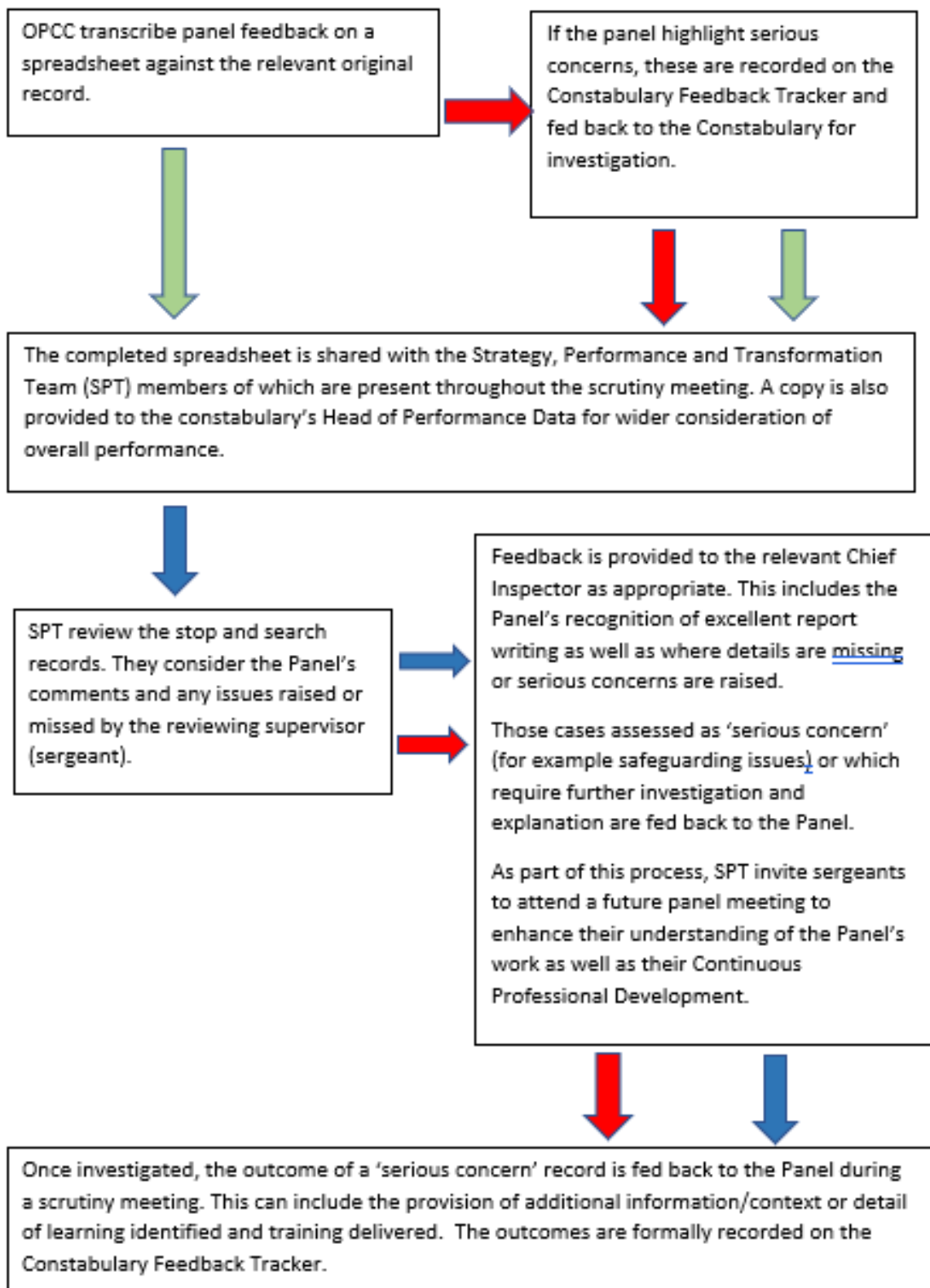
The strength of the Panel lies in its independence and its ability to provide constructive challenge. Through a well-established feedback process, its work continues to influence policing practice and support continuous improvement.

Looking ahead, the Panel will continue to strengthen its data-led approach to scrutiny, maintain a focus on fairness, proportionality and transparency, and support efforts to improve community confidence and engagement in the use of police powers. To achieve this, we will prioritise the following actions in 2026/27:

- Re-establish a data subgroup working across both panels to identify trends and support more targeted, focused scrutiny.
- Work with the PCC's Youth Commission and the Constabulary's Youth Race Inclusion Board to deliver youth-focused scrutiny sessions, ensuring young people's voices inform the process.
- Rebalance meeting structures to prioritise scrutiny time, including introducing a more formal cycle of meetings covering the data subgroup, Panel meetings and joint sessions to share updates more efficiently.
- Develop more targeted communications to increase both the diversity and number of volunteers on scrutiny panels.

Appendix A – Feedback loop

Scrutiny Feedback Loop



Appendix B – RAG grading systems for written records and body worn video

Written Record	
<p>EXCELLENT</p> <p><i>The grounds for the stop and search were evidenced and clear.</i></p>	<p>Panel members were able to make a straightforward judgement. The written report evidenced the grounds and the officer’s decision making and justification were clear.</p>
<p>SATISFACTORY</p> <p><i>The grounds for the stop and search were correctly applied. However, the report would benefit from clarification.</i></p>	<p>The correct use of stop and search has been applied but the report would benefit from minor clarification*. Panel members should note what this is on the feedback form.</p> <p>* For example, timeline of events, descriptions of the person searched, proximity of people stopped to location</p>
<p>NOT CONFIDENT</p> <p><i>Panel members understand why stop and search was used but the report does not fully justify the search.</i></p>	<p>Panel members were unclear how the report related to the individual who has been stopped and searched and/or key information is missing*. Panel members should note the missing information on the feedback form.</p> <p>* For example, how the detained person matches the intelligence received</p>
<p>SERIOUS CONCERNS</p> <p><i>There were no clear grounds for the stop and search.</i></p>	<p>The written report does not contain the justification required for the stop and search.</p>

Body Worn Video	
<p>EXCELLENT</p> <p><i>The officer issued GOWISELY clearly and appropriately. They always acted with professionalism. The footage reflects the written grounds.</i></p>	<p>Panel members were able to make a straightforward judgement. The officer acted with professionalism and always treated the detained person with dignity. The footage reflects the written grounds.</p>
<p>SATISFACTORY</p> <p><i>The officer issued GOWISELY appropriately. They acted with professionalism. The footage reflects the written grounds. However, the interaction could have been improved.</i></p>	<p>The footage reflects the written grounds. The officer has behaved professionally but would benefit from minor improvement*. Panel members should note what this is on the feedback form.</p> <p>* For example, they rushed through GOWISELY or one part of GOWISELY was not clearly heard.</p>
<p>NOT CONFIDENT</p> <p><i>Panel members understand why stop and search was used but the written record only partially reflects the footage.</i></p>	<p>The footage only partially reflects the written grounds. Panel members agreed that the interaction would have been satisfactory but have minor concerns around the language* or behaviour used by the officer. Panel members should note this on the feedback form.</p> <p>*For example, unnecessary swearing.</p>
<p>SERIOUS CONCERNS</p> <p><i>There were no clear grounds for the stop search and/or the officer's professionalism was of serious concern.</i></p>	<p>The footage does not reflect the written grounds. Panel members have serious concerns about the search and/or the officer's professionalism.</p>

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**Police & Crime
Commissioner**
FOR HERTFORDSHIRE



**INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITORS SCHEME
ANNUAL REPORT
2025 – 2026**



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Foreword by Jonathan Ash-Edwards, Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire



I am pleased to introduce this Annual Report for the Independent Custody Visiting (ICV) Scheme for 2025–2026. The scheme continues to play a vital role in strengthening public confidence by providing independent oversight of the treatment, care and welfare of people detained in police custody.

Over the past year, volunteer Independent Custody Visitors have demonstrated remarkable dedication, undertaking regular unannounced visits across our custody suites and engaging directly with detainees to ensure their rights are upheld and their dignity respected. Their work offers invaluable reassurance to the public and supports continuous improvement within Hertfordshire Constabulary.

It is encouraging to see that the overwhelming majority of detainees reported positive experiences, with very few issues raised and high levels of satisfaction with their treatment. This reflects the professionalism and commitment of custody staff, as well as the effectiveness of scrutiny and partnership working between the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Constabulary.

This year has also seen ongoing progress in key areas such as healthcare provision, data quality, and the reduction in the use of anti-rip clothing. At the same time, the report highlights opportunities for further improvement, particularly in strengthening volunteer recruitment, enhancing diversity, and maintaining high standards in facilities and processes.

I would like to place on record my sincere thanks to our Independent Custody Visitors for their commitment and professionalism. Their contribution is central to ensuring transparency, accountability, and fairness within our policing system.

I am also delighted to announce the scheme has been awarded Gold from the ICVA Quality Assurance Framework assessment, another testament to the work undertaken by everyone involved.

As we look ahead, I remain committed to supporting and developing the ICV scheme so that it continues to reflect the communities it serves and provides robust, independent assurance across all aspects of custody

Jonathan Ash-Edwards
Hertfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner

Foreword by the Chief Inspector of Hertfordshire Constabulary's Custody Units



I am pleased to contribute to this year's Independent Custody Visiting (ICV) Annual Report, which highlights the continued commitment to transparency, accountability, and the welfare of those detained within Hertfordshire's custody suites.

The Independent Custody Visiting Scheme provides an essential safeguard, offering independent scrutiny of our practices and valuable reassurance to the public that detainees are treated fairly, with dignity and respect. The feedback provided by our ICV volunteers plays a crucial role in helping us maintain and improve the standards of care we deliver.

Over the past year, it is encouraging to note that 99% of detainees did not raise any issues with their treatment and care when speaking with ICVs, with only a very small number of issues raised. This is a testament to the professionalism and dedication of custody staff, who work in often challenging circumstances to ensure the rights and welfare of detainees are upheld.

We have also seen positive progress in key areas, including improved healthcare provision and increased consistency in recording data, particularly around self-defined ethnicity. We have also seen positive progress in key areas, including maintenance across the suites, improved healthcare provision and increased consistency in recording data, particularly around self-defined ethnicity. At the same time, the report has highlighted areas where further improvements are needed, such as ensuring resources are consistently available, and continuing to strengthen staffing resilience.

I am grateful to our Independent Custody Visitors for their ongoing commitment and constructive feedback, and to custody staff for their continued professionalism and willingness to engage positively with scrutiny.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to building on this progress, addressing the challenges identified, and ensuring that our custody services continue to meet the highest standards of care, fairness and accountability.

**Paul Mitson,
Chief Inspector,
Head of Hertfordshire Custody**

Overview of the Scheme

Under the Police Reform Act 2002, all police force areas are required to have a custody visiting scheme. The scheme's independent checks give the public reassurance that detainees are being treated fairly, that their legal rights and entitlements¹ are given, as well as checking their welfare and dignity are being maintained. Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) also review the custody suites for issues around cleanliness and maintenance. The scheme also provides assurances to detainees at a time when they may be feeling vulnerable or confused.

Following the introduction of Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) under the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act (2011), the PCC assumed responsibility for the operation of the Independent Custody Visiting Scheme in Hertfordshire. The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) manages and supports the smooth running of the scheme including the day-to-day enquiries, recruitment of the volunteers and improvements and development to the scheme.

ICVs are unpaid volunteers who live, work or study in Hertfordshire – at the end of March 2026 we had 19 ICVs and looking to recruit more into the role. Recruitment will be a focus over the coming year to replace those who have already left and those who will be reaching the end of their tenure in the next 12 months. This recruitment drive will also make renewed efforts to attract volunteers from diverse backgrounds to better reflect the communities the scheme serves.

In ordinary times all visits are unannounced and can take place at any time, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The ICVs are trained to introduce themselves to detainees in custody and ask questions that ensures their treatment is fair and that they have access to their rights and entitlements. At the beginning of each visit, ICVs are told how many detainees are in custody at the suite being visited. The detainees are then introduced to the ICVs and, subject to their consent and availability a visit is undertaken.

ICVs complete a report form summarising their visit to each individual detainee. This is then forwarded to the scheme manager at the OPCC, with a hard copy retained by custody staff. Concerns raised by ICVs are reported to the Custody Inspector or escorting officer at the time of the visit and then submitted to the scheme manager for review. The scheme manager highlights any concerns with the Custody Chief Inspector via email, telephone, or during regular meetings, depending on the urgency. The ICVs can also raise general matters arising from visits at their regular half-yearly meetings with the OPCC.

The position of an ICV is an unpaid, voluntary role. All ICVs are encouraged to regularly complete an expense form to allow any costs associated with visits to be reimbursed by

¹ An extensive list of these legal rights are provided under the section Rights of Detainees

the Commissioner. The Commissioner also incurs other related costs for running the scheme including, but not limited to OPCC staff time, ICV training, printing, some limited catering for panel meetings, conference booking fees, and OPCC membership of the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA). Over the year, training has been carried out online so no catering has been required for in-person meetings, the scheme manager attended the ICVA National Conference in November 2025 at a cost of £150+VAT plus travel and OPCC Membership of ICVA was renewed at a cost of £1750+VAT. ICV Expenses claims have totalled £1,030.90.

Nationally, the Independent Custody Visitor Association² leads, supports and represents PCCs and police forces with regards to the Independent Custody Visiting schemes. The OPCC has developed a good relationship with ICVA and other scheme managers over several years. This has enabled the OPCC to ensure the scheme's aims and management are effective, and that they are kept informed of legislative changes and reforms. The subscription fee this year has also allowed them to develop and launch an ICV online training portal.

ICVA Quality Assurance

Framework

The Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) was introduced by the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA) in April 2018. It enables schemes to reflect on how they comply with the Code of Practice and the legislation which underpins custody visiting. The QAF seeks to encourage schemes to celebrate areas of strength and achievement, promote custody visiting, drive performance, recognise the independent voice of volunteers, and increase sharing of good practice.

Having been presented with the silver award in November 2023, ICVA has since launched the revised standards (March 2025). Following a lot of hard work over the year to implement some of the changes specified in the framework we have completed our submission and are extremely pleased to state the scheme has achieved the Gold award.

Anti-Rip Clothing Scrutiny

In April 2023, a new scrutiny panel was established to review the use of anti-rip or safety clothing in custody – this was in response to recommendations in the most recent HMICFRS Inspection of Custody³. The panel is made up of ICVs and representatives

² [Home Page of ICVA \(The Independent Custody Visitors Association\)](#)

³ [HMICFRS Report on an Unannounced Inspection Visit to Police Custody Suites in Hertfordshire June 2022](#)

from the Constabulary who continue to meet on a regular basis to review incidents and ensure the use of the clothing is justified and proportionate.

Using feedback from these reviews the Constabulary has introduced changes to reduce the use of this clothing.

A review of the effectiveness of this panel has been undertaken given that the instances of use of the clothing has reduced dramatically. Upon recommendation the decision was taken by the Commissioner to disband the panel but maintain scrutiny by other means of monitoring such as Custody Chief Inspector reviews and ICVs recording any use they encounter.

Key Findings (1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026)

Number of Visits

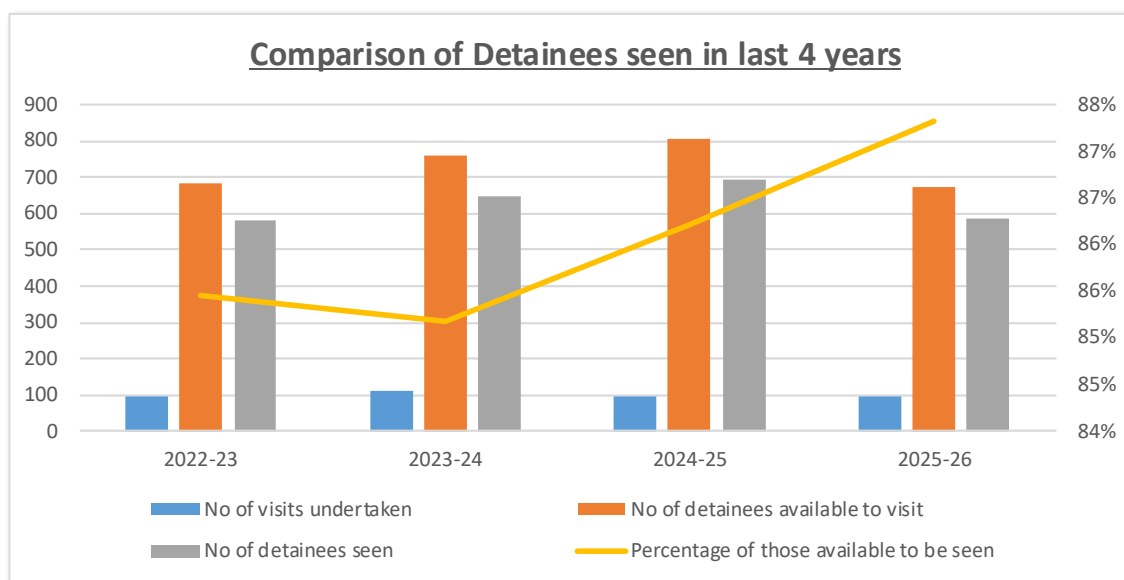
Over twelve-months, 12,699 detainees passed through both custody suites (6,563 through Hatfield and 6,136 through Stevenage).

Figure 1 shows that in 2025/26, ICVs undertook 97 custody visits, speaking to or observing a total of 586 detainees from a possible 671 who were available for a visit.

Figure 1: Breakdown of the visits for the period 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025

Custody Suite Visited	No. of visits undertaken	No. of detained persons held	No. of detainees available to visit	No. of detained persons visited	% of detainees visited (of those available)
Hatfield	45	516	378	335	89%
Stevenage	52	412	293	251	86%
TOTAL	97	928	671	586	87%

Figure 2: Comparison of detainees seen between 2021/22 and 2024/25



Declined Visits

Detainees who do not consent to a visit equates to 12% of the cohort (see Figure 1). This is a decrease on the previous figure of 14% and compares favourably with other forces;

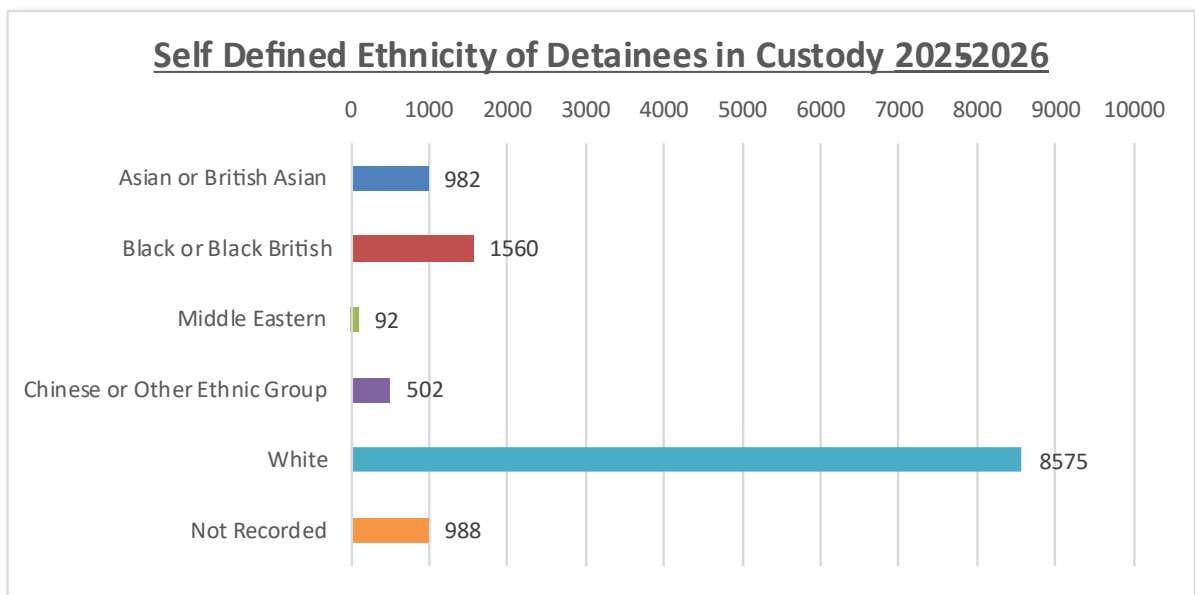
the refusal rate elsewhere is between 7% and 16%⁴. There are several reasons why ICVs are unable speak to detainees, including detainees being asleep, intoxicated or deemed too violent by custody staff. Detainees may also be unavailable if they are being interviewed, they may be in Court, with a health care professional or providing a DNA sample.

We will continue monitoring refusal data and try to find ways of improving the interactions between detainees and ICVs.

Detainee Data

Figure 3 shows that the proportion of ‘Not Recorded’ self-defined ethnicity has once again decreased significantly on the previous year and now accounts for 8% of records, down from 19% the previous year. This shows that the monitoring and addressing of the issue of non-recording has had a direct impact on the data.

Figure 3: Self-Defined Ethnicity of those passing through custody 2025-2026



Profile of the Independent Custody Visitors

At the end of 2024/25 there were 19 ICVs supporting the scheme who live in Hertfordshire. While short of our target of retaining around 30-35 volunteers, recruitment has met with challenges in reaching interested members of the community, which is being addressed through updated social media presence, the level of engagement and commitment among the existing cohort of volunteers is high, which means the scheme operates well and further recruitment will be targeted over the next year.

⁴ Taken from annual reports and direct enquiries with other forces.

ICVs are asked to fill in a voluntary information disclosure agreement. From the data available, 53% of volunteers are male, 47% are female. The breakdown of ethnicity and age can be seen in see Figures 4⁵ and 5⁶ below. Forthcoming recruitment campaigns will focus more notably on how we engage people from all backgrounds to increase diversity among our ICVs.

Figure 4: Ethnicity profile of the Independent Custody Visitors

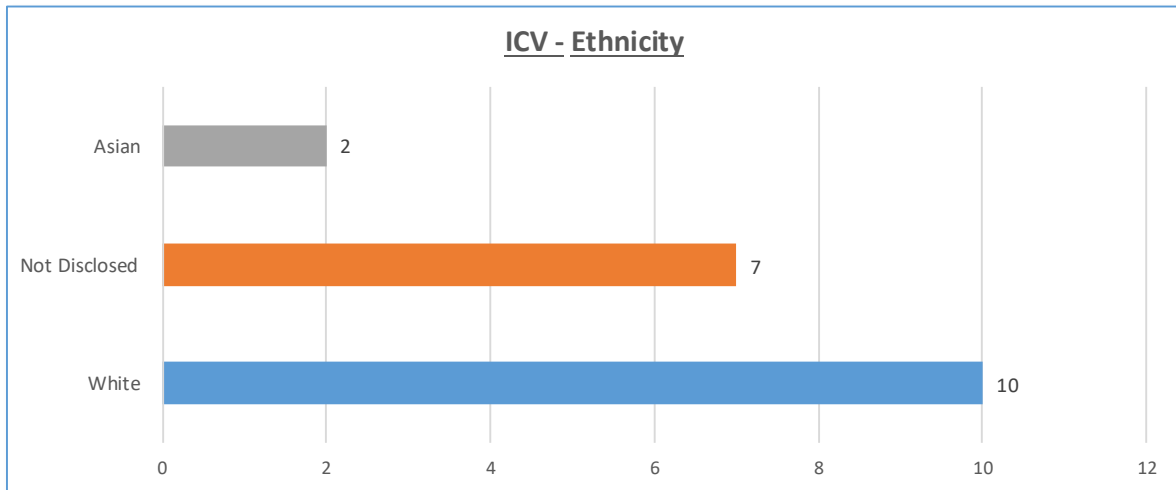
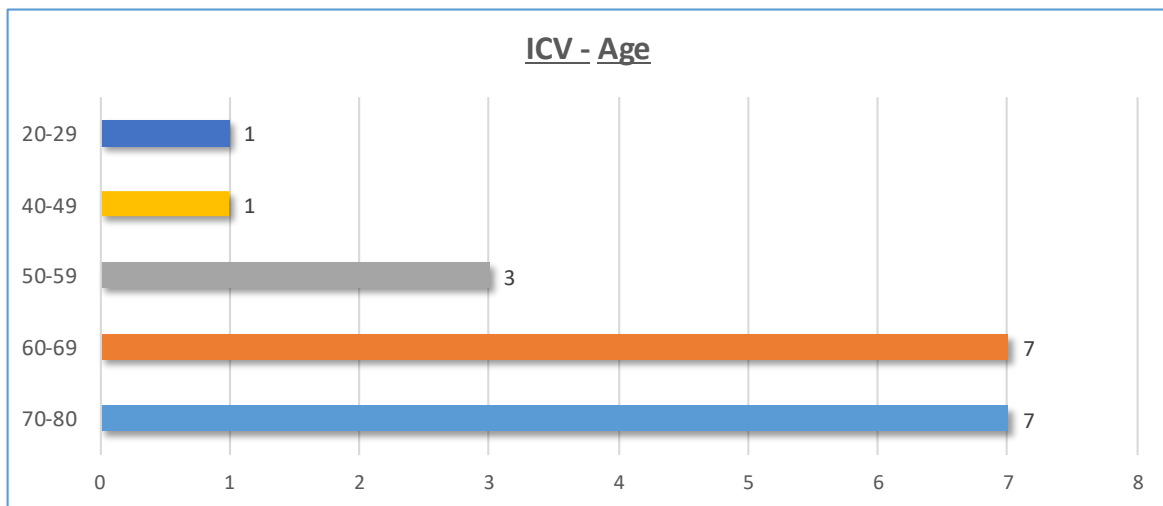


Figure 5: Age profile of the Independent Custody Visitors



⁵ According to the Office for National Statistics 2021 population denominators, Hertfordshire’s population demographics shows ethnicity as: White 81.8%, Asian/Asian British 8.6%, Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British 3.7%, Mixed multiple ethnic group 3.8%, and other 2.1%. This information can be found at:

https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/sources/census_2021/report?compare=E10000015#section_5

⁶ According to the Office for National Statistics 2021 Census the comparable age range in Hertfordshire was represented by 11% aged 20-29, 21% aged 30-44, 21% aged 45-59, 6% aged 60-64, 9% aged 65-74 and 6% aged 75-84.

Matters arising from custody visits

ICVs have performed at least one visit to each custody suite per week, other than when these were closed for refurbishment. The visits take place over a 24-hour period which meets the minimum statutory requirement. We do undertake extra visits when availability permits but this has not been consistently possible in the reporting year due to volunteer capacity.

During 2025/26 of the 586 detainees visited, issues of note were recorded from only 7 detainees (1%). In total, 18 issues⁷ raised by detainees were reviewed and 35 raised by ICVs. Concerns raised by detainees primarily related to Detention Issues, specifically long detention time and the Rights of Detainee (see Figure 7).

It has been good to note that health care provision has improved under the new contract with detainees being seen and monitored regularly resulting in no complaints from detainees and only 3 instances where ICVs have specifically reported there was no cover at the time of the visit.

Overall, it is a credit to operation of Custody and the Custody staff that so few issues have been raised and 99% of detainees have been satisfied with their treatment and care.

Given the number of reported issues is very low and ethnicity is not recorded in every instance, it is not possible to draw any conclusions about bias relating to ethnicity.

Categories of issues raised by ICVs

1. Maintenance and Cleaning

Given the low number of issues raised by detainees, other categories have stood out this year. Unusually this category raised the highest number of reported issues. ICVs are regularly commenting on the cleanliness of the custody suites however some repeated issues were noted around the cleaning of the microwaves in the kitchens, dirty areas about air conditioning vents and a dirty towel left in a shower. While most of these were dealt with swiftly, the status of the air condition vents was only resolved following a deep clean towards the end of the year.

Of most significance were the repeated reports of showers being out of action due to a water leak reported on at least 12 occasions over a number of visits. While the issue had been reported multiple times there seemed to be an excessive delay in getting it fixed so further enquires were made.

⁷ More than one issue may have been reported by each detainee or may have been expressed by an ICV and exclude the positive comments

Following this it was confirmed by Estates and Facilities that the issue had actually been resolved but signage had not been removed so staff were not aware. Thanks to the intervention of the ICVs this was finally resolved and the showers put back into use.

2. Staff Issues

This was the next highest reported category with 7 issues noted. This is a general category for ICVs to highlight issues they witness or encounter in the custody suite or any general issues that do not fit into other categories.

3 of these related to complaints of low staff numbers on some shifts and at busy time. Following up with the Chief Inspector it was noted there had been sick leave and annual leave at these times but recruitment was on-going to ensure numbers could be maintained.

A further 2 issues were about delayed entry. This was due to ICVs arriving at particularly busy times and also noted that staffing levels seemed to be lower than previously encountered.

Another issue relate to being unable to find the translation sheets used to assist ICVs in some instances and when found these were not stored correctly and some appeared to be missing. This is has been subsequently addressed and it is noted that work is being done to establish the use of a specific custody translation tool to assist all staff. While language line translation services can be used this can also take time to arrange.

The final issue was an allegation made by a detainee against an officer during the booking in process. The custody record was reviewed and CCTV footage checked and it was found by all parties that the matter had been dealt with appropriately given the detainees behaviour at the time.

3. Rights of Detainee

Only 2 issues of note were recorded under this category. One where the detainee stated they had not been offered and food or drink and not been offered any medical attention. The custody record was reviewed and found that food and drink had been offered and the detainee had seen the onsite heathcare.

The second was a claim the detainee had not received their rights on booking in. During speaking to the ICVs it was clear they actually couldn't remember whether they had. Again the custody record was reviewed which stated that rights had previously been given but the detainee would be refreshed on this.

4. Other issue

No other serious issues of note were recorded. There were 3 complaints of long detention times, two being due to court delays and one where the case had been significantly reviewed and was deemed to be of a very complex nature such that there would be a long delay between detention and interview and this was being monitored by the Inspector.

There was one instance where there was a significant delay in identifying an appropriate adult for a Vulnerable Detainee⁸ but one was eventually located.

5. Summary

It is positive to see that there has been very few reported matters of note during the year. Healthcare coverage has improved significantly to almost full coverage. Maintenance issues were the most significant but eventually resolved.

Overall, the observations made by ICVs continue to demonstrate that the Constabulary is maintaining the welfare, dignity and needs of detainees.

6. Positive Feedback

ICVs recorded several positive comments by detainees regarding their welfare in custody. Of 11 comments worth noting, 9 were from detainees and 1 from the ICVs.

All detainees chose to comment specifically about their welfare saying they had been well treated and that their dignity had been maintained. Comments such as; “treated him well and with respect”, “staff been as nice as pie”, “looked after really well”, “Been really good here” are a credit to the work that the staff do at what can be a distressing and difficult time for many people.

The positive of note from the ICVs related to an elderly female detainee who was diabetic and although receiving regular checks from the nurse, an officer sat with her through the night for further reassurance.

Once again ICVs also noted that police staff were helpful and professional when dealing with detainees and themselves.

⁸ For a definition of vulnerability, see Appendix 1.

Areas of focus for the year ahead (2026/2027)

Recruitment

Recruitment will continue with a focus on targeting a wider age and ethnic demographic, particularly as some volunteers will reach the end of their three-year tenure period. With new outreach and social media capacity within the OPCC we will seek to utilise these skills to promote and communicate more effectively.

Additionally, we will continue to use the GoVolHerts online volunteering portal to reach out to the community and take part in their volunteering activities and there has already been some success using this. Work has been undertaken to explore other established online volunteering portals which have an extensive base of potential volunteers.

IT Systems

The Constabulary's intelligence and case management system, Athena, provides ICVs with a snapshot of the detainees in custody when they arrive to undertake their visit. There are still occasional outages causing timeliness issues with obtaining the data, resulting in delays for ICVs. This continues to be monitored as updates are made to the system.

The OPCC is reviewing how other forces use electronic reporting for their ICVs. ICVA will also be developing a standardised system which may prove more suitable and cost effective than a bespoke approach.

We have trialled an initial system in recent months and will be assessing the feedback from this to make improvements to both the data that is being captured and the overall user experience.

We will also be looking at ways of automating other scheme functions such as expenses submission and improved ways of communicating directly with the volunteers using social media applications.

Data Quality

The Constabulary continue to review the data they record about detainees. Whilst the recording of self-defined ethnicity has greatly improved in the last year, with fewer instances when it is not recorded, custody staff are being reminded to always record this information or mark it as "not stated". In parallel, the OPCC will continue to monitor and raise issues with Chief Officers to improve systems and data capture.

ICVA

ICVA monitor issues raised by scheme managers across the country to review and assess national trends and cascade details of legislative changes and reforms. The OPCC will continue monitoring any findings to inform the scheme's ongoing development.

Appendix 1

The term vulnerable⁹ applies to any person who, because of a mental health condition or mental disorder:

(i) may have difficulty understanding or communicating effectively about the full implications for them of any procedures and processes connected with:

- their arrest and detention; or (as the case may be)
- their voluntary attendance at a police station or their presence elsewhere, for the purpose of a voluntary interview; and
- the exercise of their rights and entitlements.

(ii) does not appear to understand the significance of what they are told, of questions they are asked or of their replies

(iii) appears to be particularly prone to:

- becoming confused and unclear about their position;
- providing unreliable, misleading or incriminating information without knowing or wishing to do so;
- accepting or acting on suggestions from others without consciously knowing or wishing to do so; or
- readily agreeing to suggestions or proposals without any protest or question.

⁹ Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE) Code C – Revised July 2018 section 1.13(d)

Interested in becoming an Independent Custody Visitor?

If you are interested in becoming an Independent Custody Visitor please contact:

Independent Custody Visiting Scheme Administrator
Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire
Hertfordshire Police HQ
Stanborough Road
Welwyn Garden City
AL8 6XF
Email: pccadmin@herts-pcc.gov.uk

For more information regarding the role of ICVs and that of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire, please visit <https://www.herts-pcc.gov.uk/>

For more information on the role of the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA), please visit: www.icva.org.uk

We welcome applications from anyone who lives in Hertfordshire. The OPCC is particularly interested to hear from younger people and those from ethnic minority backgrounds.

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