



Drugs strategic intentions plan 2022-2025



PCC

Office of the Police and
Crime Commissioner
Devon and Cornwall

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Foreword

By **Alison Hernandez**, PCC for Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly

As Police and Crime Commissioner, I am aware that drugs can have a devastating social impact on community life and on those who are dependent on them.

It is for this reason that Drugs is one of the key priorities within my 2021-2025 Police and Crime Plan. There are clear links between substance misuse and other priorities set out in the Police and Crime Plan, highlighting the significance of drugs as a cross-cutting theme in crime, policing and criminal justice.

To tackle drugs effectively, we will adopt a two-fold approach, where we will address both the supply of drugs into our communities and the level of demand for those drugs. Too often

people are afraid to report these crimes and we must therefore give them the confidence and tools to do so.

This strategy, working alongside the Government's 10-year drug strategy "From harm to hope", and following the ADDER principles of 'Addiction, Diversion, Disruption, Enforcement and Recover', is aimed at reducing the impact of drugs across Devon and Cornwall by encouraging effective collaboration between the public, police and partners to disrupt the drug supply networks, to crack down on the criminals who poison our communities and prey on the vulnerable and to make the area a hostile environment for drug dealers.

I acknowledge that police enforcement alone will not address the issue; a public health approach is needed to educate young people to view drugs as socially unacceptable and unhealthy, in addition to supporting people into recovery. Providing support to these groups and investing in prevention is particularly essential, as young and vulnerable people tend to be at a greater risk of becoming easy targets and are more susceptible to the harms that come with drug-use. This will be key for diverting all recreational drug users away from fuelling the drugs market and protecting them from falling into the dangerous trap of habitual drug-use.

Taking a Prevention, People,

Partnership and Place based approach, this strategy sets out the activity that my office will undertake, what activity I will hold the Chief Constable to account for delivering, and how I will work with the vast array of partners locally and across the Southwest in order to successfully:

Holding the police to account for enforcing the laws on drugs

Securing investment for better drug treatment

Driving drugs out of the South West region

Understanding the drugs landscape and why action is required

Across Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, the drug landscape has changed over the last decade; there has been a continued spread of organised drug trafficking activity, particularly County Lines, from the major cities into towns and rural areas across the Peninsula.

This brings with it a greater risk profile, including a rise in violence and exploitation, and serious health harms.

Drug prevalence has increased across all areas throughout Devon and Cornwall, with a large proportion of drugs being used for recreational purposes; Cannabis and Cocaine being the most commonly used drugs.

Drug seizure numbers in Devon and Cornwall tell us that there is a greater flow of Class B and Class C drugs in the area.

Most 'recreational users' are often blind to the social consequences of the drug trade; they simply do not see first-hand the violence, human exploitation, severe addiction and crime that comes with drug trafficking, leading them to view their use of drugs as harmless.

This uninformed approach to drug-use commonly results in individuals disregarding the impacts that drugs have on their own health, despite the vast evidence that highlights the adverse effects that drug-consumption has on both physical and mental health.

There are an estimated

8,178

people using opiates and/or crack cocaine in our local population within Devon and Cornwall; equating to 7.8 per 1000 aged 15 -64 (an increase of 15%).

YOUNG PEOPLE

3,055

crimes were recorded for possession of drugs from August 2017 to July 2019 for offenders aged between 13 - 25.

Class A

- Ecstasy/MDMA
- Cocaine
- Heroin
- Crack
- LSD

Class B

- Cannabis
- Ketamine
- Mephedrone (M-Cat)
- Speed

Class C

- Anabolic steroids
- Gamma-hydroxybutyrate (GHB)
- Tranquilisers eg benzodiazepines

Drugs-caused deaths

Devon and Cornwall area has seen a

72.8%

increase in drug-poisoning related deaths (59 in 2010 – 102 in 2020) – and a

57%

increase in drug-misuse related deaths (42 in 2010 – 66 in 2020).

Specialist treatment and recovery services tend to be integrated for alcohol and other drugs. In 2019-2020,

12%

of the population in recovery in Devon and Cornwall were being treated for both non-opiates and alcohol dependency together.

Drug-related deaths have increased locally and nationally and are at their highest since records began. More people die from drug misuse every year than from all knife crime and road traffic incidents combined.

Alcohol is a critical factor in many drug-related deaths alongside drugs, including heroin and methadone. In the night-time economy, drugs such as cocaine and MDMA are frequently used alongside alcohol.

Prevention

“ I will undertake preventative activities by investing in early intervention and ensuring that people are equipped with the right tools to tackle drugs together as a community.

Recreational drug-use

Sadly, there is a growing view that recreational drug use is acceptable. People openly smoke cannabis and students and young adults have drugs dealt to them in colleges, pubs and nightclubs; amongst a proportion of the adult population, it is perceived to be the norm to use cocaine, amphetamine or ecstasy in social settings.

This social acceptance of so called ‘recreational’ drugs is reinforcing

In the year to October 2020, there were

681

drug-related driving offences committed in Devon and Cornwall. This included offences such as being ‘in charge of a vehicle whilst unfit through drugs’ and to ‘drive a motor vehicle with a proportion of a specified controlled drug above the specified limit.

the drug trade and, in turn, the crime, misery and damage caused by organised crime gangs supplying these illegal drugs.

The impacts of these developments are reflected by the fact that, one of the main causes of death on the roads is linked to driving whilst under the influence of drink and drugs.

The majority of the public are firmly aware of the impact of alcohol on road safety, but less so for the impact of drugs. For instance, Cannabis acutely impairs driving related skills and the ability to perceive hazards, as well as reducing response times. This calls for increased public awareness of the risks associated with driving whilst under the influence of drugs.



Our solution

Best practice has shown that early intervention with recreational drug users and non-criminal sanctions that provide education, guidance and support is the most effective way to stop further offending; however, should individuals continue to offend once educated, more punitive measures must be adopted where necessary.



My office will:

- Through a strong and sustained communications campaign, send a clear message that Devon and Cornwall will not tolerate the drug trade and it will educate the public around the risks involved in drug taking.
- In conjunction with the Government, explore new sanctions and criminal justice outcomes that impact on those recreationally using drugs.

I will hold the Chief Constable to account for:

- Supporting delivery of school-based prevention and early intervention.
- Carrying out proactive anti-drug driving operations, increasing the use of roadside drug testing.

I will work with partners to:

- Inform and engage young people in educational and youth settings about the risks and harm caused by drugs.
- Scope an initiative whereby when individuals are stopped with recreational drugs, they can be asked to attend an educational intervention with the aim to stop them offending again.
- Increase public awareness of the risks associated with driving whilst under the influence of drugs, with support from our Vision Zero Road Safety Partnership.

People

“ I am committed to understanding and meeting the needs of our communities by placing people at the heart of this strategy and ensuring that support is targeted to those who need it the most.

A perpetual cycle

Substance misuse is often linked to an individual's response to a past trauma or other unmet needs. Complexity and vulnerability continue to be increasing themes amongst drug users, with significant cross over in mental health issues, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), domestic abuse, housing difficulties and involvement in the Criminal Justice System.

Whilst the police and other law enforcement agencies are undoubtedly best placed to restrict the supply of illicit drugs into the force area, they do not necessarily have the specialist skills to support someone with their recovery. Too often, people are solely treated for the physical symptoms of drug addiction, meaning that the root causes of such dependency are frequently overlooked and not addressed effectively. These unresolved issues translate into costs that everyone must pay the price for.

Drug testing on arrest is a powerful tool for identifying drug-misusing offenders. A positive drugs test for heroin, crack or cocaine use is a valuable gateway to ensure the offender can access treatment and other support to tackle their drug related offending.

Our solution

It is essential that a multi-agency trauma informed approach is adopted in order to tackle the threats posed by drugs in a comprehensive manner. Research has shown that drug treatment substantially reduces crime therefore, in line with the OPCC Commissioning Intentions Plan, scoping work will be undertaken to identify what regional co-commissioning opportunities exist to support people who are in the Criminal Justice System .

Analysis of treatment and police data found that

44%

of people who started treatment hadn't offended again two years later and that recorded offences by people in treatment fell by a third over the two years.

For individuals in the Criminal Justice System, it is pivotal that treatment plans are tailored in order to meet their individual needs in each step of their journey, with a focus on ensuring effective treatment referral services, high levels of engagement with support officers during treatment and extensive planning ahead of the person's release and transition back into the community.

Identification of those who require support with their substance misuse through heightened drug testing on arrest will enable them

Total estimated gross social and economic benefits of treatment for substance abuse (Drug & Alcohol Clients):

£59,478,661

to receive a holistic criminal justice response at the earliest opportunity.

I will hold the Chief Constable to account for:

■ Develop processes around drug testing on arrest to secure appropriate criminal justice and treatment recovery results.

I will work with partners to:

■ Deliver a World Class Treatment and Recovery System in the Southwest, valuing the expertise of our partners in Drug Treatment Services, Community Safety, NHS, Probation, HMPPS, SWAS, the Local Directors of Public Health and their teams, as well as people with lived experience.

■ Ensure there is smooth transition and continuity of care for those leaving prison into community treatment.

My office will:

■ Undertake scoping work to look at what regional co-commissioning opportunities exist to support people who are in the Criminal Justice System.

■ Through my Commissioners Grant scheme, support whole community initiatives that provide full-scale support to people dependent on drugs to break the cycle of drug usage.

■ Continue pre-existing pooled budget agreements with our Local Authority partners into current treatment services whilst the regional co-commissioning work is undertaken (2022/2023).

Drug misuse currently costs society more than
£19bn
per year

Place

“ I am committed to taking a proactive approach to tackling drug dealing and drug use in order to make Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly a hostile environment.

Drugs Trafficking & County Lines

The illegal supply of drugs is a multi-billion-pound international crime business that is felt across the peninsula. It drives crime, fuels violence, destroys people's lives and distresses communities. Devon and Cornwall, as a largely rural area with many coastal and market towns, is a net importer of Dangerous Drugs Networks using the County Lines model, the majority of which originate in Merseyside, the West Midlands and London. There are typically up to 20 active County Lines in Devon and Cornwall at any one time, not including other classes of Dangerous Drugs Networks.

These organised criminal gangs exploit children and vulnerable adults to move and store drugs and money, often through the use of intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons.

Dangerous Drugs Networks are dynamic in their nature; to maintain their activity they frequently change lines when responding to disruptions in their existing lines; either by starting new lines or resuming old ones.

We know that young people are coerced and exploited into becoming “runners and dealers” for the OCGs and this has increased by

41%
in the past two years

Local drug markets and dealing

The County Lines model forms just one small element of the drugs market; there are also well-established local drugs markets embedded in neighbourhoods and city centres. The key challenge is to find ways to encourage local communities to 'disembed' them. The pressures discouraging communities from tackling drug dealing can be intense, and it is therefore crucial that every opportunity is taken to encourage greater reporting of illegal drug dealing, which will equip the police with the necessary knowledge to take action.

A zero-tolerance approach to public space drug use

No one should have to put up with persistent and unchallenged drug taking in their community. Anti-social drug use is a serious blight on our town centres, with the presence of drug use, visible discarded needles, and associated public disorder. This is further aggravated by recreational drug use, which is increasingly taking place within the public sphere. Such behaviour will not be tolerated. It is essential that all agencies, and the wider public, work together to share information and intelligence in order to address this criminality and anti-social behaviour.

Our solution

Under Operation Scorpion, all five PCCs and Chief Constables across the Southwest have committed to working together to target and disrupt drug supply routes into the region via a number of operations which use intelligence, technology, joint innovation and robust policing to stop drug dealers on their tracks. By harnessing our collective power we will create a “ring of steel” around the Southwest, with all services working together to prevent drugs getting into our communities.

I will work with partners to:

- Develop a positive partnership and police response for those who cause drug related Anti-Social Behaviour problems.
- Work with Devon and Cornwall Police, partners and the public to encourage greater reporting of illegal drug activity, including promoting anonymous reporting through Crimestoppers.
- Protect individuals vulnerable to exploitation by ‘target hardening’ their homes and through effective support mechanisms aim to reduce their vulnerability.

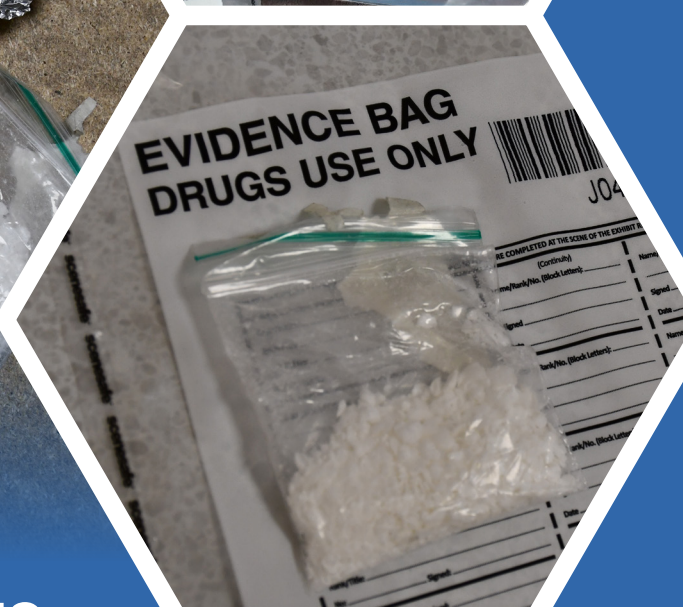
My office will:

- Support Devon and Cornwall Police in carrying out regional operations and days of action to deny criminals the use of our transport networks to supply drugs, including working with the British Transport Police and the Regional Organised Crime Unit.

I will hold the Chief Constable to account for:

- Working with the regional PCC's and Chief Constables to make the Southwest region a hostile environment for drug supply (Op Scorpion) by taking positive action through the use of drug warrants and days of action.
- Using all appropriate tactical methods to target those transporting drugs into our region, including ensuring all technological forensic opportunities are considered to identify drug networks and where circumstances permit, seizing drug dealers' assets through confiscation orders and other criminal orders to restrict them from profiting from their crime.

- Feeding back to communities on the positive results the police have achieved as a result of community intelligence.



Partnership

“ I will collaborate with police and partners to support system-wide change and promote a holistic approach to pursuing criminals and tackling drugs. ”

Collaborative action and response

Working in partnership is essential if we are to effectively deliver this plan. Success is reliant on partners working together to understand our Devon and Cornwall population and how drugs are causing harm in our area, any challenges in our system and the changes that are needed to address them.

Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly already have robust multi-agency partnerships established operating through structures such as Community Safety Partnerships

(CSPs), the Serious Violence Prevention Programme, the Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB), Safeguarding Partnerships, Health and Wellbeing Boards (HWBs), and Integrated Care Partnerships (ICPs).

While all these (and more) may contribute to addressing drug use and promoting recovery, the government's Harm to Hope strategy is seeking the establishment of local dedicated Combating Drugs Partnerships which will bring together action and oversight.

Information and Intelligence Sharing

By collectively pooling our data and conducting an initial assessment of evidence will enable us to understand better the local issues and patterns of drug-related harm. A singular partnership assessment will produce a fuller picture of drug activities and trends in the area, as well as proving

a better understanding of the harm that drugs cause to individuals and our communities. Most importantly, it will enable us to adopt an evidence-based approach to inform interventions in accordance with issue priority, therefore delivering the best possible results.

My office and I will work with partners to:

- Create dedicated Combating Drugs Partnerships with identified Local Senior Responsible Owners (SROs).
- Conduct a joint drug needs assessment, reviewing local drug data and evidence.
- Agree local and regional strategic profiles and delivery plans, including data analysis and information sharing.
- Monitor success against the outcomes set out in the National Combating Drugs Outcomes Framework.

I will hold the Chief Constable to account for:

- Working with partners to create a Combating Drugs Partnership and support the development of a joint drugs needs assessment.