

Building connections that last

The OPCC councillor advocate volunteer
scheme

Induction guide



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If you need this information in a different format, please contact us at the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner by email councilloradvocateopcc@dc-pcc.gov.uk or telephone 01392 225555 (between the hours of 10am and 2pm) and we will do our best to help you.

Welcome from the Commissioner



Dear Councillor Advocate

Thank you for participating in this office's councillor advocate scheme.

We all deserve police and criminal justice services you can trust and have confidence in.

The Chief Constable needs to deliver a service that is consistently assessed as good – by both national inspection standards and by the people we serve in Devon and Cornwall.

To address this the Chief Constable will need to deliver a consistently high standard of crime investigation which supports victims, and lead a police force which demonstrates the highest level of police conduct and professional standards in everything it does.

In my [Police and Crime Plan 2025-29](#), I set out how I intend to achieve this, and the priorities I have set for policing, based on data and public consultation.

I will be encouraging the Chief Constable and partners to focus their resources on repeat offenders, repeat crime locations, and repeat victims to keep us safer.

I will support partners like yourselves, to deliver strong leadership to reduce crime and disorder in your area.

Changing the behaviours of offenders is key to keeping our communities safe. As chair of the Local Criminal Justice Board and South West Regional Reducing Reoffending Board, I will continue to work with partners in the criminal justice system and more broadly to rehabilitate offenders back into society effectively.

Devon & Cornwall Police face unique challenges due to our diverse geography and increased population over the summer season, and I will continue to push government to provide fairer funding for our force area.

I know that while Devon and Cornwall is one of the safest places in the country, you need the police to focus on the things that matter to you.

The new government has committed to increase the numbers of police officers across the country by 13,000. My commitment is to tackle the key things that blight our towns, neighbourhoods and communities, and build safe, resilient, connected communities where everyone plays their part.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the emergency services, our volunteers, partners and those working across the criminal justice system for all they do to keep people safe, and to the public for their continued support for community safety.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alison Hernandez', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Alison Hernandez
Police and Crime Commissioner
for Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly

What is an OPCC councillor advocate volunteer?

An OPCC councillor advocate volunteer is an elected member from any council in Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly who has volunteered to help improve communication between the police, councils, and the Police and Crime Commissioner (the Commissioner).

Introducing OPCC councillor advocate volunteers

As a local councillor you know and understand your communities. You are a recognised and influential local leader who is well connected with the communities you represent. Because of this, you are in a unique position of being able to help improve the connection between your communities and the police.

The Commissioner's OPCC councillor advocate volunteer scheme (the scheme) aims to ensure that:

- a relationship is formed or built upon with your local policing team through the Local Sector Inspector;
- you feel more informed about crime and policing in your local area;
- a practical and positive route exists to enable you to bring the overall views of your communities to the police;
- the Commissioner is kept informed of community views across Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, so that she can effectively hold the Chief Constable to account for policing;
- consistent, accurate, and honest information relating to crime and community safety is cascaded to the public;
- you feel more equipped to inform the public about crime and policing, educate your communities about crime, and support/encourage greater reporting of issues to the police and other appropriate partner organisations; and
- police officers time is used to its optimum by enabling the cascade of information to be efficient and without duplication.

How the scheme works

The scheme works by improving the consistency and frequency of communication, and offers advocates:

1. A direct point of contact within the Commissioner's office
2. Face to face and online seminars around policing, crime, and victim service matters
3. Regular email updates to include media releases
4. Access to frequently asked information in terms of policing issues

Councillor advocates are invited to volunteer for the scheme from each council in Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. Advocates are welcome from unitary, district, and parish councils. At a town and parish level advocates are identified 'single points of contact' on behalf of their council and it is recognised that in some cases a clerk or representative of the town (such as a Town Manager) be allowed to join the scheme by prior notification and approval of this office. Unitary and district

councils may have more than one advocate. Councillors who have a desire to act as a positive and proactive communication conduit between the police, the Commissioner, and the public are invited to volunteer for the scheme. Advocates are not intended to be treated as political appointments.

Approximately every quarter, this office will host a seminar inviting councillors to hear from senior representatives from the police force as well as other staff and partners on matters such as policing priorities as laid out in the Police and Crime Plan 2025-2029.

This platform will offer an opportunity for you to raise relevant issues on behalf your community and allow the police the opportunity to update all councillor advocates on relevant information and/or request support with a specific issue.

Where possible, following this meeting, a video recording and any supportive documentation or presentations given will be shared with all councillor advocates.

The seminars will focus on the below key priorities in our towns and city areas, in our countryside and coastal areas, on our roads and in our homes and neighbourhoods. They are:

1. Antisocial behaviour (ASB)
2. Tackling drugs and alcohol
3. Tackling serious violence
4. Theft

Attendance at seminars will be exclusively for councillor advocates by prior confirmation and will provide opportunities to receive information and updates from professionals, and enable councillors to ask questions, raise queries and feedback on the views of their communities to the police and the Police and Crime Commissioner.

The role of a OPCC councillor advocate volunteer

The role of a OPCC councillor advocate volunteer is to:

- improve the connection between communities, the Force, and the Commissioner;
- identify opportunities where councillors may be able to proactively support the police with specific campaigns or activities;
- regularly engage with all councillors from their council and their communities to explore what crime and community safety issues they may be experiencing, and cascade that information back to the police;
- encourage all councillors from their council and their communities to register for the free neighbourhood alert system at <https://devonandcornwallpcc.neighbourhoodalert.co.uk/>;
- ensure that accurate information from the police is cascaded throughout their council and communities;
- cascade crime prevention information to encourage all communities to take proactive steps to reduce the risk of crime and encourage reporting;

- raise awareness and clarify the most appropriate methods of reporting antisocial behaviour, nuisance issues, and crimes within their communities;
- raise awareness within their council of the Victim Care Unit and encourage all councillors to promote it within their areas;
- ensure that specific police campaigns are widely communicated within their council and cascaded throughout communities; and
- tell the police about community concerns, but also about positive experiences so that good practice can be captured, and feedback used by the police.

In return a OPCC councillor advocate volunteer can expect:

- regular and consistent access to their local policing team;
- regular information from the Commissioner;
- to receive exclusive access to OPCC councillor advocate volunteer seminars;
- access to a named contact within the OPCC;
- for the views of their communities to be heard by the Commissioner; and
- recognition for their advocate efforts within the Commissioner's publicity.

What the councillor scheme is not:

- the scheme is about improving the cascade of information between groups, and is not designed to tackle issues relating to individual and specific cases within a locality as existing structures and forums already exist for that purpose;
- the scheme does not replace existing crime reporting or provide an alternative for reporting crime;
- the scheme is not intended to impinge on the local expertise of existing groups and forums (such as statutory Community Safety Partnerships);
- OPCC councillor advocate volunteers are not 'single points of contact' between the police and a council

The role of the police

The police will:

- arrange quarterly discussions with OPCC councillor advocate volunteers either (online or face to face) where councillors will receive:
 - up to date, accurate information about recorded crime, along with contextual information;
 - an outline of what specific work the police have been focusing on in the last quarter;
 - an outline of where the police will be focusing their efforts in the next quarter and if/how councillors can support that;
 - information about any planned police arranged community events and engagement activities

About the Police and Crime Commissioner

The role of a Police and Crime Commissioner is to be the voice of the people in policing, and to hold the Chief Constable to account for how he/she discharges their functions.

The aim of all Police and Crime Commissioners is to ensure the delivery of an effective and efficient police service within their force area.

Police and Crime Commissioners are responsible for 'the totality of policing' (i.e., all of policing, not just some parts of it) but they 'must not fetter the operational independence of the police force and the Chief Constable who leads it.'

By law (the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011), Police and Crime Commissioners must do certain things like:

1. secure an efficient and effective police force for their area;
2. appoint the Chief Constable, hold them to account for running the force, and if necessary, dismiss them;
3. set the police and crime objectives for their area through a police and crime plan;
4. set the force budget and determine the precept (i.e., the levy on the council tax bill that will go toward policing);
5. hold the Chief Constable to account for how the force contributes to the national and international policing capabilities set out by the Home Secretary; and
6. bring together community safety and criminal justice partners (i.e., other organisations and agencies), to make sure local priorities are joined up.

Chief Constable	Police and Crime Commissioner
Must deliver an effective police force.	Makes sure that the views and needs of Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly residents inform how our police service operates.
Leads and makes decisions on all aspects of operational policing.	Sets the police's priorities (i.e. the issues that are the most important) and decides how much money the police force will be given each year to operate.
Is the most senior police officer in Devon and Cornwall Police	Acts on behalf of the electorate to ensure that the chief constable is delivering effective policing in Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly by holding him to account.
Is responsible for the delivery of operational policing and overall performance of the police.	Decides what the council tax contribution towards policing (the precept) is, and then decides how much money the chief constable will have to run

Chief Constable	Police and Crime Commissioner
	the police force, as well as then commissioning other services to reduce crime and/or improve community safety.
Is politically independent.	Is elected into office.
Accountable to the Police and Crime Commissioner.	Accountable to the public.

Community Safety Partnerships

Community Safety Partnerships are structured groups who deliver activity based on data driven priorities. OPCC councillor advocate volunteers are expected to engage with the relevant Community Safety Partnership for their area.

Community Safety Partnerships are made up of representatives from the police, local council, fire service, health service, probation, as well as many others.

Their purpose is to make the community safer, reduce crime and the fear of crime, reduce anti-social behaviour, and work with business and residents on the issues of most concern.

Area	CSP address - link to further information
Cornwall	https://safercornwall.co.uk/
Plymouth	Safer Plymouth PLYMOUTH.GOV.UK
Torbay	Safer Torbay - Torbay Council
Devon	Safer Devon Partnership - Communities
East and Mid Devon	East and Mid Devon Community Safety Partnership - East Devon
Exeter	Exeter CSP - Safer Devon
North Devon and Torridge	North Devon and Torridge Community Safety Partnership
South Devon and Dartmoor	South Devon and Dartmoor CSP - Safer Devon
Isles of Scilly	Community Safety Partnership Council of the ISLES OF SCILLY

Your commitment

OPCC councillor advocate volunteers will be requested to attend meetings set by your local inspector and to proactively bring information to those discussions, as well as cascade the results of the meeting throughout their council and communities. In addition, OPCC councillor advocate volunteers will be invited to attend any relevant Police and Crime Commissioner consultation and engagement events which are scheduled to take place within their council's area. OPCC councillor advocate volunteers will also be invited to attend seminars each year. The Police and Crime Commissioner recognises that OPCC councillor advocate volunteers are volunteers and as such their attendance at any event is in a voluntary capacity.

Expenses

The Police and Crime Commissioner is unable to make any financial reimbursement to OPCC councillor advocate volunteers as part of the scheme. Refreshments will be provided at OPCC councillor advocate volunteer seminars.

Police vetting and the Disclosure and Barring Service

OPCC councillor advocate volunteers will not be expected to provide, nor be provided with personal, confidential, or sensitive information as part of the scheme. As such advocates will not be subject to police vetting or Disclosure and Barring Service processes.

Information security and data protection

OPCC councillor advocate volunteer meetings are not forums where specific cases or individuals will be discussed.

OPCC councillor advocate volunteers will not be expected to provide, nor be provided with personal, confidential, or sensitive information as part of the scheme.

Should a OPCC councillor advocate volunteer be made aware of a specific issue relating to any individual(s) that they wish to discuss with the police, or to report any criminal activity, this activity must be considered as being outside of the OPCC councillor advocate volunteer scheme process and the councillor should adhere to their council's own policies and practices for the appropriate, proportionate, and legal disclosure of information as well as the correct direct reporting of crime either via 101 or 999.

Should an incident occur where an OPCC councillor advocate volunteer does share any information with the police or the office of the police and crime commissioner that is deemed to relate to the safety and/or safeguarding of a person(s), that information may be shared with other organisations for the purposes of preventing crime and/or safeguarding in accordance with statutory duties.

Information exchanged via the councillor scheme should be stored and communicated using appropriate and secure methods, with due regard to relevant data protection and human rights legislation.

The following information about OPCC councillor advocate volunteers will be collected and stored by the office of the police and crime commissioner:

Type of information	Reason for use/storing/retaining
Councillor name	To enable registration to the scheme.
Name of council	To ensure that the office of the police and crime commissioner can identify which councils are represented on the scheme.

Email address	To enable councillors to receive regular information as part of the scheme.
Any special requirements	This will be asked for individual events and communications to ensure that staff from the office of the police and crime commissioner take any specific requirements into consideration.

Information sharing

Elected members understand that by registering to become a OPCC councillor advocate volunteer that they are consenting to their information (i.e., name and contact details) being shared with Devon and Cornwall Police, relevant Community Safety Partnerships, Democratic Services Teams/Town Clerks and other OPCC councillor advocate volunteers.

Councillors may request to be removed from the scheme at any time and are asked to notify the Office of any change to their role by emailing councilloradvocateopcc@dc-pcc.gov.uk

Access to police buildings

Quarterly meetings of advocates may take place on police premises, but advocates will not be provided with specific police authorised identification or access cards for any police premises as part of the scheme.

Training

OPCC councillor advocate volunteers will be invited to attend seminars each year where specific inputs and/or training will be provided. Four seminars will take place throughout the year either online or at the Headquarters in Exeter, Devon. We ask that you commit to attending at least one of these seminars per year. The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner will be guided by OPCC councillor advocate volunteers when choosing topics for each seminar (for example crime prevention, modern slavery and human trafficking, domestic abuse and sexual violence, scams, county lines etc).

Person specification

OPCC councillor advocate volunteers should demonstrate:

- commitment to working positively and in partnership to solve problems;
- excellent and professional communication skills;
- ability to proactively gather and cascade information;
- demonstrable integrity and commitment to promoting equality, diversity, and human rights; and
- diplomacy.

Equality, diversity, and human rights

It is important that the police and the Police and Crime Commissioner can demonstrate that they promote and respect equality, diversity, and human rights at all times. The police and Police and Crime Commissioner must ensure that those they interact with are treated fairly and without discrimination. It is also important that the police and Police and Crime Commissioner respects and understands the diversity of the individuals and communities they serve.

The Equality Act 2010 places a duty on all public authorities (including police and crime commissioners) which requires them to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The Police and Crime Commissioner's OPCC councillor advocate volunteer scheme must fully reflect the Commissioner's legal duties and all OPCC councillor advocate volunteers will be expected to behave in accordance with these duties and principles at all times online and offline and both professionally and privately. Failure to do so may result in a formal investigation by the office of the police and crime commissioner and possible removal from the scheme.

OPCC councillor advocate volunteer conduct

OPCC councillor advocate volunteers are expected to act in accordance with the seven Nolan principles that apply to the conduct of people in public life, which are:

1. Selflessness: you should act in the public interest.
2. Integrity: you should not put yourself under any obligations to others, allow them improperly to influence you or seek benefit for yourself, family, friends, or close associates.
3. Objectivity: you should act impartially, fairly, and on merit.
4. Accountability: you should be prepared to submit to public scrutiny necessary to ensure accountability.
5. Openness: you should be open and transparent in your actions and decisions unless there are clear and lawful reasons for non-disclosure.
6. Honesty: you should always be truthful.
7. Leadership: you should promote, support, and exhibit high standards of conduct and be willing to challenge poor behaviour.

Find out more

To discuss the scheme or to apply please contact the OPCC by email councilloradvocateopcc@dc-pcc.gov.uk or ring the office on 01392 225 555 (between the hours of 10am and 2pm).

Thank you for joining as a councillor advocate.