



## Let's build bridges between police and our communities in Neighbourhood Policing Week



This week neighbourhood policing teams across Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly will be highlighting the work they do as part of a national neighbourhood policing week of action.

The teams will be highlighting meetings that members of the public can attend to discuss local priorities and issues that concern them and will also be increasing patrols around hotspot areas.

It is a time to recognise the vital role our neighbourhood police officers play in keeping our streets safe, building trust, and fostering a sense of belonging within our communities.

Neighbourhood policing goes far beyond simply responding to emergencies. It is about proactive engagement, building relationships, and working hand-in-hand with residents to address local concerns and create a safer, more resilient and connected communities.

Over nearly two terms as a Police and Crime Commissioner I have used my influence, and spending power, to support the vital role neighbourhood policing has in our communities. You may not know but the national model of neighbourhood policing has its roots here in Devon and Cornwall, and I think there is a direct link between this approach and the fact we now have the lowest recorded crime rate in England and Wales.

Our communities want a visible, approachable police service which is able to recognise and respond to problems like antisocial behaviour before they escalate.

My office, working with the support of our communities through increases to the police precept I set, has put in place budgets that have enabled the Chief Constable to bolster neighbourhood policing teams and take force strength to record levels. When I became Commissioner there were 2,924 officers in the force, thanks to local contributions and the national police uplift programme this figure now stands at 3,610.

I have also invested heavily in a programme to reopen 18 police enquiry offices to greater connected us to our community teams. This week Kingsbridge opens its doors to the public for the first time in years, providing another place people can go as a place of safety, to give information to the force or to seek advice and help.

There's still a lot to do but when the force gets neighbourhood policing right the impact can be tremendous. PC Andy Hocking is still remembered with great fondness in Falmouth, a town he served in until his tragic and sudden death, at the age of 52, in 2015. His smile and friendly manner led to one resident describing him as 'the most approachable officer he had ever known'. But he could also be firm, receiving a Chief Constable's commendation in 2004 for making more than 200 arrests in two years.

It was with pride that I named the building which my office works from after PC Hocking, and it is his name and image which greets visitors to the force and new recruits. And it was with pride that I invited his mother Elizabeth, who sadly died recently, to reopen Falmouth Police Station's front desk a year ago.

Effective neighbourhood policing cannot just be left to the police though. It is strengthened by community involvement in which we all have a role to play, whether that's going the extra mile to report crime and give intelligence to the force, setting up a Neighbourhood Watch, Speedwatch or Farmwatch scheme in your community or working with your local councillors to solve problems where you live - there is always a way to get involved and make a positive impact.

A safer community is a stronger community. So this week would be a good one to find out about the team of officers and staff who works in your area. They will be active on social media and you can find details of your local team via the [www.police.uk](http://www.police.uk) website.