

Report to Police and Crime Commissioners on Norfolk and Suffolk's Out of Court Disposal Scrutiny Panel

Meeting date: 6 March 2025

About the Panel

Norfolk and Suffolk Constabulary's Out of Court Disposal Scrutiny Panel has been set up to independently scrutinise the use of Out of Court Disposals in response to national recommendations, following concerns about their appropriate use.

The role of the panel is to ensure that the use of Out of Court Disposals is appropriate and proportionate, consistent with national and local policy, and considers the victims' wishes where appropriate.

The panel membership comprises a range of criminal justice services professionals including representatives from the police, Criminal Justice Service, Youth Justice Service, Magistrates and Police and Crime Commissioner offices who aim to bring transparency to the use of Out of Court Disposals to increase public understanding and confidence in their use. Findings of the panel, together with responses to recommendations made, are to be reported publicly by the two Offices of the Police and Crime Commissioners to support this aim.

How the Panel operates

The panel independently review and discuss a selection of anonymised case files that have been resolved by use of an Out of Court Disposal within Norfolk or Suffolk and conclude whether the method of disposal fits one of three categories:

- Appropriate and consistent with national and local guidelines
- Appropriate but with comments/observations from the panel
- Inappropriate use of Out of Court Disposal

Decisions reached by the panel on each case file are recorded, together with observations and recommendations, to inform changes of policy or practice. The panel also consider performance information regarding levels and use of Out of Court Disposals, changes to legislation, and policies and practice to support them in their role. The panel cannot endorse, resend or alter individual decisions already made.

Panel business

The panel met on 6 March 2025. Seven panel members were present with five members offering apologies. The panel discussed:

- Scrutiny of case files
- Rationale and file selection

The Panel findings

Eight cases were scrutinised: four Norfolk and four Suffolk cases. These cases were selected at random by Norfolk and Suffolk Constabularies and included both adult (five) and youth (three) disposals. No individual group of people were specifically selected based solely on characteristics (such as perceived race) on this occasion, however the cases scrutinised represented a wide range of members of our communities.

Norfolk cases

The four Norfolk cases scrutinised by the panel were deemed to have met the evidential standard and were concluded to be appropriate and consistent with national and local guidelines. However, further explanation was sought in relation to the two youth cases.

Conversation was had around why a violent youth case (assault and battery) resulted in a Conditional Caution whereas a theft case (shoplifting) resulted in a Challenge for Change outcome. It was confirmed by both Norfolk and Suffolk Constabulary representatives that you will not get the same outcome using a 'child first approach' as the officers on the scene have to take individual factors into account, and that assessment will differ dependent on the officer dealing with the incident. Norfolk Constabulary is looking into the Suffolk Constabulary approach where outcomes are triaged and assessed by Youth Justice Service to allow for greater consistency.

Suffolk cases

The four Suffolk cases scrutinised by the panel were also deemed to have met the evidential standard and were concluded to be appropriate and consistent with national and local guidelines.

Performance data

Data was provided by Norfolk and Suffolk Constabularies on the number of Out of Court Disposals for each force for the period of October 2024 to December 2024. Please see the data broken down by type of Out of Court Disposals for each force below:

Norfolk Constabulary data

Norfolk Constabulary				
Outcome	October	November	December	Total
Type 2 - Caution Youth	2	0	2	4
Type 3 - Caution Adult	87	87	67	241
Type 3A - Caution Adult - alternate offence.	9	7	5	21
Adult Caution - conditional	0	1	3	4
Type 4 - TIC - Taken into Consideration	52	38	48	138
Type 5 - Offender has died	2	2	0	4
Type 8 - Community resolution (Crime)	275	230	213	718
Type 22 - Diversionary, educational or intervention activity, resulting from the crime report, has been undertaken and it is not in the public interest to take any further action.	26	27	28	81
Grand Total	453	392	366	1,211

Suffolk Constabulary data

Suffolk Constabulary				
Outcome	October	November	December	Total
Type 2 - Caution Youth	11	4	2	17
Type 3 - Caution Adult	40	51	38	129
Type 3A - Caution Adult - alternate offence.	5	3	4	12
Adult Caution - conditional	3	1	5	9
Type 4 - TIC - Taken into Consideration	4	2	6	12
Type 5 - Offender has died	1	1	3	5
Type 7 - Cannabis/Khat Warning	0	0	2	2
Type 8 - Community resolution (Crime)	163	185	163	511
Type 22 - Diversionary, educational or intervention activity, resulting from the crime report, has been undertaken and it is not in the public interest to take any further action.	26	17	15	58
Grand Total	253	264	238	755

Next meeting:

Thursday 5 June 2025