



Avon and Somerset Police
NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING

Taunton

Policing Newsletter

July 2025

NEWS FROM ACROSS TAUNTON

Hello and welcome to the Taunton Policing Newsletter for the month of July 2025. As always, the newsletters contain a snapshot of some of the work the Taunton Policing Teams have been involved with in the previous month.

Teenager sentenced for minibus arson in Taunton

You may remember the horrific incident of which 7 minibuses used by school children were set alight in April 2025.

A teenager has been sentenced after setting fire to seven minibuses, including specially-adapted vehicles, in Silk Mills Park and Ride, in Taunton, last month.

The incident happened on Saturday 26 April and destroyed the vehicles.

The teenager, who was 17 at the time of the offence, pleaded guilty to six offences:

- Two counts of arson, both at Silk Mills Park and Ride, namely to an Audi A1 on Friday 25 April and the minibuses on 26 April
- Affray on 27 April
- Criminal damage to two cars on 27 April
- Assault by beating an emergency worker on 27 April.

He was sentenced at Exeter Magistrates Court yesterday (Thursday 29 May) to a two-year detention and training order and ordered to pay £600 compensation to victims whose vehicles were damaged.

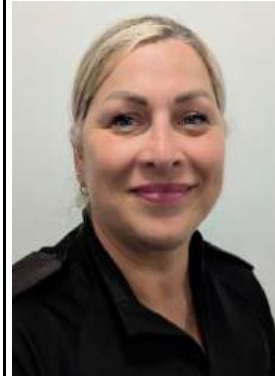
Detective Sergeant William Instance said: "The damage caused to the minibuses was huge and has had a significant impact on the local community. "An arrest was made the day after the fire and a thorough investigation has led to this conviction."

"ITS HOT.....PROBABLY TOO HOT!"

Finally we saw some decent weather in June and in typical British fashion we moaned about it being too hot. Unfortunately, British constabulary's don't have summer uniform like other parts of the world (to be able to wear a pair of shorts in this weather would be a live-saver) so officers continue to patrol in full kit! But we honestly shouldn't moan, it doesn't happen very often! **PC's Bella and Lydia** were on foot patrol in the town centre in blistering 30°C heat and as you can imagine, every comment consisted of, "Cooorr bet you must be hot in that!" Even though the temperature was blistering hot, both **PC's Bella and Lydia** completed over 20,000 steps in and around the town centre, speaking with members of the public and liaising with businesses...especially those businesses with air-con!



MEET THE TEAM



OFFICER

PC Iwona Baird

POLICING AREA

Taunton

YEARS SERVICE

15

HOBBY

Walking the dog

FAVOURITE FOOD

Fish and Chips

ABOUT ME

This month's 'Meet the Team' is PC Iwona Baird.

I started my career with Avon and Somerset police as a volunteer 16 years ago and I was working along side with the hate crime officer for the Taunton area. Through the hard work and support I applied for a PCSO position. I was one of the first officers with a diverse background employed at Taunton police station. I worked hard over the years to build positive relationship between communities and police in the Somerset area. I initiated Taunton together event 9 years ago to bring all communities together.

I then decided to become a Police officer as I felt that I was ready for another chapter in my life and I applied for PC position 8 years ago. Through hard work and determination I was successful and became a Police officer.

I am now part of the Neighbourhood policing team in Taunton and I am very passionate about my work as I care about people and like helping people and changing things for better. I feel that over all this years I made a difference and built a lot of positive relationship with the local communities.

It was not an easy road for me to achieve all of this but just to show that hard work and determination making things possible and if I would be have to make my choice again I would do it again.

I would like to encourage people to apply for PCSO or PC or any other civilian positions within Avon and Somerset Constabulary because "YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE"!

I was very supported and welcomed by my colleagues when I started my career with Avon and Somerset police.

I am proud to be a member of Avon and Somerset family and local policing team who is working extremely hard to be there for you, provide support and change things for better.

Goodbye to PCSO Amber...

We said farewell to **PCSO Amber** (in the middle in non-uniform) in June as she takes on a new role in the Professional Development Unit within our training department. **Amber** had been a PCSO on the Halcon beat for just over 3 and half years, and during that time had worked hard to support her community. Amber had a passion for working with young people, be that through 1-2-1 support or working with additional services to support those in times of crisis. The team will miss **Amber** a lot, especially as she was the teams designated cake baker!



Careers Fest at Richard Huish

PC **Bella Fitzgerald** alongside colleagues from other departments, supported the Richard Huish College Career Fest at the end of June. Having attended Richard Huish college herself, Bella was the best person to advise those in college on their options should they fancy a career in policing. Her college lecturers were more than proud to see her fulfilling her career dream!



HUMANS IN POLICING

In this new section, we wanted to share with the public the humans we have in policing and what their lives look like outside of work!

Britain's Strongest Police Officer

We wanted to take the opportunity to share how proud we are, of two Police Officers based in Taunton.

Response Sgt Jon Gallagher (bottom left) & DC Mark Santrian (bottom right) participated in **Britain's Strongest Police Officer** which took place in Hartlepool at the end of June.

They represented Avon and Somerset Police in a tightly fought contest, with the final placings needing to go to a tie breaker. This was a huge achievement considering **Mark** had never competed before and **Jon** overcame having a stroke last year. Their hard work and dedication doesn't stop there, as they're on track to raise £10,000 for St Margaret's Hospice through their strongman efforts. We're incredibly proud of our officers and below you can see the both Jon and Mark participating. **Jon** came 2nd on the day and **Mark** came 4th! For those that would like to know more and donate, you can do so here!

<https://tinyurl.com/5ehsdvnr>



POLICE EARLY INTERVENTION TEAM

Memories of summer holidays can conjure up images of long hot summer days spent outdoors. With the summer holidays approaching children will have more time to be out and about with friends.

Although Somerset remains a safe place to live, this can be a worrying time for both parents and children. Children have told us that they want advice on how to stay safe.

Helping your children to develop strategies to keep safe, doesn't need to be difficult.

Talk with your children about what worries them and what to do if they see or hear something that worries them. If something makes them uncomfortable, they should listen to that instinct. Do they understand when they should call the police.

Explain to them that although they are growing up, it's still ok to seek help and support from you and other trusted adults.

There is advice on the Somerset Gov website [Town centre safety and young people](#) about speaking to your children about safety and links to other support.

There are some good guides for children around keeping safe if you find it difficult.

[Conflict Resolution for Teens: 9 Essential Skills – Teen Wire](#)

[Coping With Conflict – Young Scot](#)

Make sure your children know how to contact you or whoever is looking after them or how they can seek safety in shops or other public buildings.

Explain the importance of staying in touch and sticking to agreed times for being home.

Tracking apps on phones can offer a sense of security for both you and your children and there are a wide range of apps available for both Android and Apple phones.

You can report concerns at [Avon and Somerset Police](#)

Children and Young People can access support via our Highlight Youth Hubs. The Taunton Hub is run from 3pm to 5pm on Saturdays in McDonalds, East Street.



FRAUD AWARENESS

This section on the newsletter will include information on scams that we as the Police are currently aware of and how to hopefully avoid falling victim to these types of crimes.

Courier Fraud

What is Courier Fraud?

Courier fraud involves the victim receiving a call from a fraudster pretending to be from their bank or the police. More commonly, they purport to be a high-ranking police officer, usually from London. They will claim that they need your help with an investigation. This is a long process where a range of lies are told in order to convince the victim that this is a legitimate investigation, and often lasts a whole day or takes place over a couple of days. They will often claim that they have someone in custody claiming to be your relative. When you say that you don't have a relative of that name, they will say that they are using a false identity and have a cloned bank card of yours. They then say that there is fraud occurring within the victim's bank.

The victim will eventually be asked to attend their bank and withdraw a sum of money, or instead, purchase high value goods such as jewellery or gold. To make the fraud more plausible, they will often ask the victim to read out the serial numbers on the back of the notes. The fraudster will proceed to tell them that a large percentage of the notes are counterfeit and therefore must be collected by a "courier" as evidence. They will usually provide the victim with a pre-agreed password for pick up and may even give them a receipt so that the money can be reimbursed. The fraudster may instead ask that they hand over their bank card(s) and PIN.

Remember...

- The bank or police will NEVER ask you to withdraw cash, purchase high value goods or hand over your bank cards and PIN to assist with an investigation.
- HANG UP! – the genuine police or bank would never be annoyed by you being cautious of a call, only a fraudster.
- Fraudsters can disguise their numbers to appear to be calling from anywhere they want, including your bank. They can also hold the line open, so ensure you either do your checks on a different phone or wait at least 10 minutes for the line to clear. If you can, attend your bank or police station in person.
- Take 5 and Tell 2 – Take 5 minutes away from the contact and think carefully about what is being asked of you. Then, tell 2 people about the contact you have had to get their opinion.



COMMUNITY SPEEDWATCH

For those that don't know what 'Community Speedwatch' is, it is where volunteers from the local community carry out speed monitoring checks on specific roads across the community.

The aim of Community SpeedWatch is to make motorists who speed through residential neighbourhoods aware of the impact their actions have on local residents, or the danger they pose to other road users and pedestrians. This is something we are working with communities to address.

The 14 CSW groups in the Taunton area operate in a variety of environments with different speed limits and traffic flows. The urban sites that they operate at have far higher traffic flows with typically 500 to 1400 vehicles per hour whereas the rural sites have approximately 50 to 200 vehicles an hour. However the rural sites have a higher proportion of speeders. Unfortunately the 20mph limits have a higher proportion of speeders whether they are an urban site or rural.

Activity during June

Over the month of June, 6 out of the 14 Community Speedwatch schemes in Taunton have been visibly active across the different communities. From the 20 sessions that took place, 4,565 vehicles have been monitored by our Speedwatch volunteers. From those, a total of 130 letters have been sent out to drivers that have not adhered to the speed limit.

The Community Speedwatch is a great service that greatly assists the Constabulary in reducing speed across the communities. Should you wish to join an existing Speedwatch, or would like to set one up for your area, you can find more information here:

[Community SpeedWatch | Avon and Somerset Police](#)

PHOTOS OF THE MONTH

PCSOs Brian and Amber on foot patrol through Vivary Park on a Sunday afternoon, ensuring all those watching the choir and band performances were behaving themselves! We know how rowdy they can become....



CRIME STATISTICS - May 2025

(Latest information available to the public online)

Category	Crimes Recorded
Anti-social behaviour	118
Bicycle Theft	3
Burglary (Including Commercial Burglary)	20
Criminal Damage & Arson	46
Drugs	5
Other theft	56
Possession of weapons	2
Public Order	89
Robbery	7
Shoplifting	71
Theft from the person	2
Vehicle Crime	12
Violent Crime	340
Other Crime	12

UPCOMING EVENTS

Upcoming events where you can speak with a member of the Taunton Neighbourhood Policing Team.

• Taunton Flower Show — Vivary Park 01/08/2025—02/08/2025

The team will be there with a variety of equipment and crime prevention leaflets.

• Road Safety Event and Bike Marking—Taunton Town centre 0900hrs 20/08/2025

Joining Somerset Road Safety and On Your Bike, we will be on hand to answer any queries around staying safe on the road, as well as security marking bikes.

• Taunton Ambulance Station Open Day—Lisieux Way, Taunton 24/08/2025

The team will be there with a variety of equipment and crime prevention leaflets.

DID YOU KNOW...?

Month-long ninja sword surrender campaign launched on 1st July

The Home Office has launched its Ninja Sword Surrender and Compensation Scheme. The campaign will run for the entire month of July (31 days) in England and Wales, before the ownership of these bladed weapons becomes illegal on 1 August – unless a specific legal defence applies.

Throughout July, Avon and Somerset Police will be urging the public to safely transport and hand in any ninja sword in their possession to a designated police station across the force area.

All ninja swords can be surrendered, yet owners will only be eligible for financial compensation if they can prove they purchased the sword before 27 March 2025 and if the item is handed in during the surrender period – up until 11:59pm on 31 July.

Once the surrender period ends, the possession, manufacture, importation, sale and supply of ninja swords will be prohibited.

Taunton Police Station will accept the surrender of these items and you can find our opening times, at the upper right corner of this page.

More information can be found here — [Month-long ninja sword surrender campaign launches on 1 July | Avon and Somerset Police](#)

TAUNTON POLICE STATION

Opening Times

Monday: 08:30—16:30

Tuesday: 08:30—16:30

Wednesday: 08:30—16:30

Thursday: 08:30—16:30

Friday: 08:30—16:30

Saturday: CLOSED

Sunday: CLOSED

USEFUL LINKS

STREET SAFE

StreetSafe is an online tool that can be used by anyone to anonymously tell us about public places where they have felt or feel unsafe.

You might have felt unsafe in your local area due to anti-social behaviour or environmental factors, such as a lack of street lighting. We encourage you to share your experience using the StreetSafe tool.

The information you provide will be considered alongside evidence already gathered by police forces and will be used to inform policing and local authority safety activities within your community.

Link to Website to report:

[StreetSafe | Police.uk \(www.police.uk\)](#)

KEEP UP TO DATE



Facebook is a great way to keep up to date with your local Neighbourhood Policing team. Follow us on:

Facebook: [West Somerset and Taunton Neighbourhood Policing](#)

GET IN TOUCH

In an emergency always call 999

For non-emergency matters call us on 101 or report online via

[www.avonandsomerset.police.uk/report](#)

Contact the Neighbourhood Team directly:

[SomersetWest-](#)

[NPT@avonandsomerset.police.uk](#)

To report a crime anonymously, contact Crimestoppers on

0800 555 111 or visit

[www.crimestoppers-uk.org](#)

