

Maidstone Community Safety Partnership Plan 2022-2025

Strategic Assessment 2024/25 and Partnership Plan Update

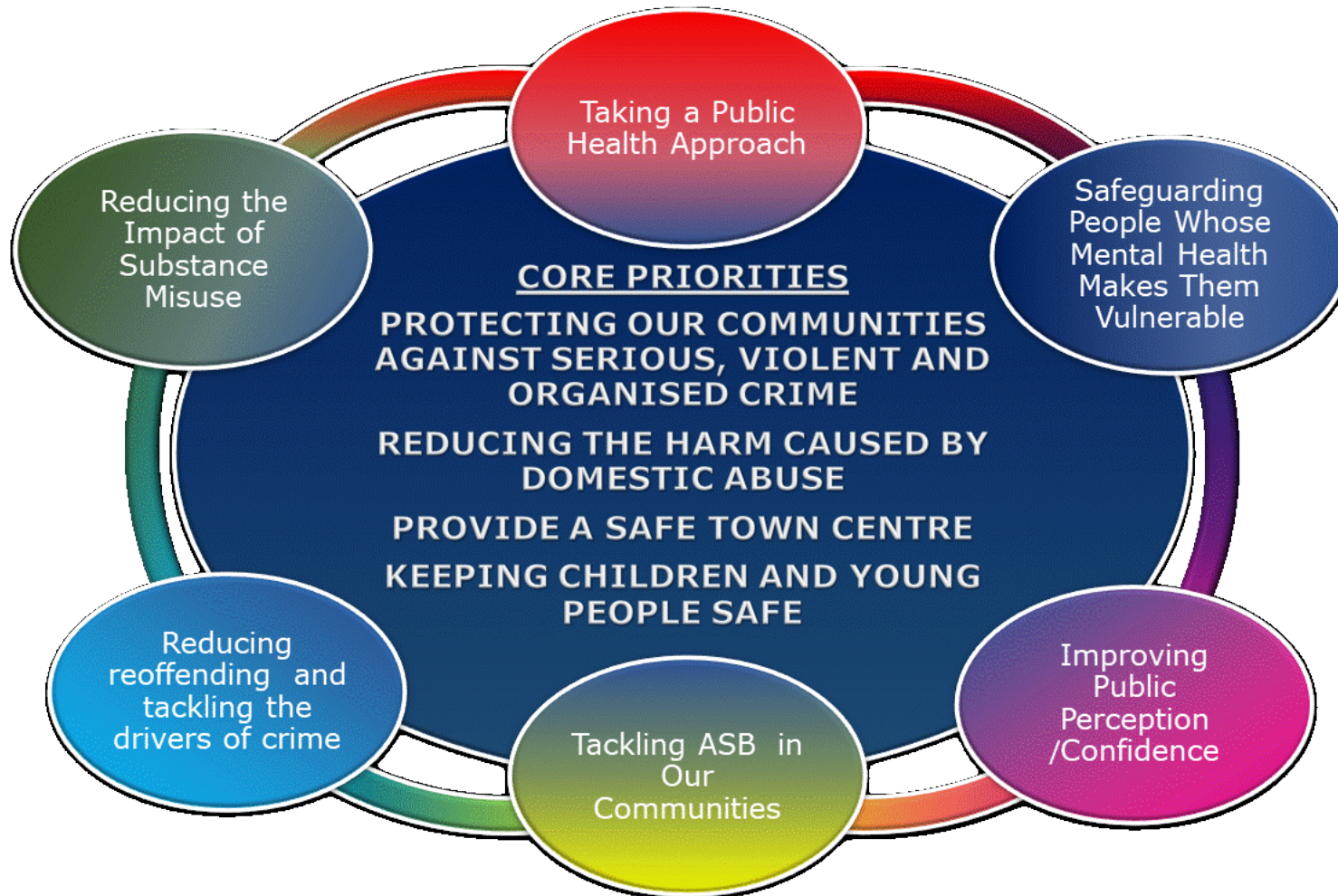
'Feel safe, Be safe'.

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Maidstone Community Safety Partnership Plan

2022-2025



Cross-cutting Themes

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1. Introduction

The Maidstone Community Safety Partnership, locally known as the Safer Maidstone Partnership (SMP), has diligently worked for over a decade to address crime and disorder, making the Maidstone borough a safer place. Through collaborative efforts integrated into their day-to-day work, a unique blend of statutory and non-statutory agencies consistently engages in joint problem-solving, develops shared action plans for complex cases, and raises awareness around agreed-upon priorities. These priorities emerge from analysing residents' thoughts and concerns alongside local community safety data. Professionals contribute deeper analysis and narrative to shape meaningful priorities and objectives.

In recent years, the SMP has shifted its focus to prioritise issues that cause the most harm, impact the most vulnerable, or pose the highest risk. These multifaceted challenges demand thorough investigation to unravel intricate mechanisms at play. With growing expertise in creative problem-solving, broad legislative powers, and innovative practices, the SMP effectively addresses safety threats and alleviates fear within our borough.

This report not only highlights the extent of collaborative efforts but also showcases how the SMP confronts crimes and unwanted behaviour, enhances community engagement, and establishes legacies for future generations.

The Strategic Assessment 2023/24 and Partnership Plan Update includes:

- Emerging community safety concerns.
- Crime data for the borough, wards, and ward clusters.
- Status and delivery updates, including relevant data, for our four core priorities.
- Updates on the six cross-cutting themes.

Safer Maidstone Partnership

“Where Partnership Working is Working”

To explain the format:

- **First Column (High-Level Narrative):** This column provides a high-level summary or key points. It's designed to give the reader an overview of the topic or issue at hand.
- **Second Column (Detailed Data and Analysis):** This column provides more detailed information, data, and analysis to support the high-level narrative in the first column. This could include graphs, tables, or text that provide further context and evidence.
- **Central Numbered Section (Paragraph Number):** This section provides a reference number for each row (or paragraph) in the table. This makes it easy to reference specific parts of the report during discussions or in other documents.



2. The 2024/25 Strategic Assessment

The purpose of this document

To align the Safer Maidstone Partnership (SMP) with our Community Safety Partnership (CSP) plan, we analyse partnership data to identify trends and any emerging concerns beyond current priorities.

- 1 The Strategic Assessment for the Safer Maidstone Partnership (SMP) covers the period 2023 unless otherwise specified. It evaluates the SMP's efforts during the second year of the current Community Safety Partnership (CSP) Plan 2022-2025, ensuring alignment with priorities and planned activities for 2023-24. The assessment examines emerging concerns related to crime, anti-social behaviour (ASB), and broader community safety, including health data. Updates on progress towards current priorities and cross-cutting themes are also provided.

The Background of Strategic Assessments

This fulfils our Statutory Duty to undertake an annual Crime and Disorder Audit.

- 2 The Safer Maidstone Partnership (SMP) fulfils its statutory duty by conducting an annual crime and disorder audit. This collaborative process involves key agencies and the community, ensuring strategic priorities are identified and performance measures set. Reforms in 2006 underscored the value of partnership working, emphasising annual audits over the previous three-year cycle.

Methodology for the Strategic Assessments

Data is collated from across the SMP, presented within this report in various ways to show both long- and short-term trends.

- 3 Data from across the Partnership (SMP) is collated and presented in various formats within this report, revealing both long- and short-term trends. Sourced by the Kent Community Safety Unit, this data involves a range of statutory partners, including Police, Health, Probation, and KCC Services. The assessment incorporates diverse data display tools, such as graphs and maps, to provide context for crime data over different time frames. Additionally, it considers the threat, risk, and harm, ensuring that even low-volume offenses with significant potential for harm are recognised.

The impact of the pandemic continues to be considered as a factor in each individual priority theme, wherever it is relevant.

- 4 The pandemic has significantly shaped our lives. While its impact remains an ongoing concern, we recognise that its relevance is gradually diminishing as a virus. Measures such as national lockdowns, social distancing, and temporary closures of educational institutions have directly affected individuals' physical health, mental well-being, education, and employment. As we navigate the "new normal," we remain vigilant in addressing the challenges posed by the pandemic, and our commitment to community safety and well-being remains steadfast.

Operational delivery must continue to adapt to provide support and mitigate against those who would exploit people made vulnerable by the cost-of-living crisis and to support the changes in service delivery.

- 5 Driven by a combination of international and national factors, the current cost of living crisis exerts additional socioeconomic pressure, likely impacting community safety. Key points include:
1. **Unemployment and Financial Pressures:**
 - Escalating unemployment rates and financial strain can lead to increased crime rates and affect mental health and other determinants of safety.
 - The strain on agencies due cuts may result in service reviews and losses, particularly in already deprived areas where financial challenges exacerbate social exclusion.
 - Maidstone has 2 LSOAs amongst the 10% most deprived areas in England and ranks 8th out of 12 local authorities in Kent. 188th out of 317 in England for deprivation.
 2. **Impact on Service Capacity:**
 - Services face capacity challenges as they adapt to financial pressures.
 - The Safer Maidstone Partnership (SMP) collaborates with the charity sector, which relies heavily on grants to deliver vital and specialised services within the borough.
 - The absence of these services could intensify pressures on statutory agency services.
 3. **Reducing KCC Community Wardens:**
 - The reduction in KCC Community Wardens may impact community resilience and the ability to address safety concerns promptly.
 - Fewer wardens could affect vulnerable individuals and hinder community cohesion.
 4. **Introduction of Family Hubs:**
 - While the concept of Family Hubs aims to provide comprehensive support, it's essential to consider potential trade-offs.
 - The shift in focus may lead to reduced resources for existing services, including Youth workers and safe spaces for teenagers.
 - Ensuring a balanced approach that addresses both immediate safety needs and long-term community well-being is crucial and will rely on the partnership to find new solutions.

The CSP has a duty to collaborate to prevent serious violence.

- 6 The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 (PCSC Act) introduced a new duty that reinforces the need for a partnership led, public health approach to reduce systemic serious violence. Led by the Kent Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC) and the Kent and Medway Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) are working with Kent's CSPs to reduce serious violence, defined in the Kent Strategy as:

"Specific types of crime such as homicide, knife crime, gun crime and areas of criminality where serious violence or its threat is inherent, such as in domestic abuse, sexual offences, gangs, county lines, and drug supply."

The SMP is well placed to continue to deliver work which will prevent and reduce serious violence with strong links to existing CSP Plan Priorities.

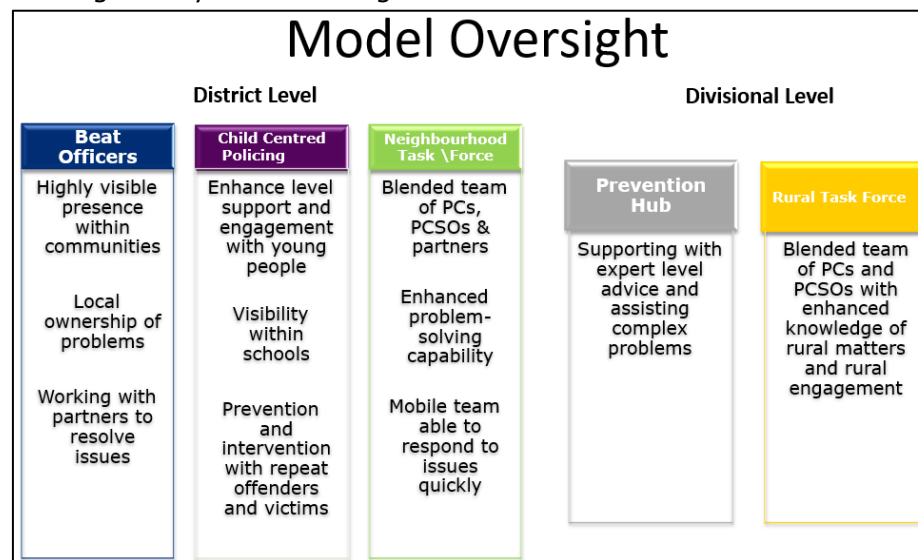
- 7 The Kent and Medway Strategy outlines three core aims which complement the priorities set out in our CSP Plan:
- **Reducing Violence:** Targeting both partner violence and public space violence, aiming for a 10% reduction each year.
 - **Protecting Children and Young People:** Ensuring they grow up without trauma and fear, especially girls and women disproportionately affected by violence.
 - **Creating Safe Communities:** Promoting safe socialising.

The Kent and Medway Strategy for reducing violence is also aligned to the SMP Priorities.

- 8 The Kent and Medway Strategies Board have identified three priority work streams:
1. **Sexual Violence (Led by Kent Police):**
 - The existing structure includes a draft strategy (the Kent and Medway Partnership Domestic Abuse Strategy 2024-2029) with three key areas: Early Intervention and Prevention, Immediate Need, and Recovery. The Serious Violence Strategy will primarily address sexual violence and complement existing efforts.
 2. **Serious Youth Violence (Led by Kent County Council):**
 - Children and young people face a significantly higher risk of violence when compared to older adults.
 - Despite constituting 19.2% of the county's population, they account for 44.1% of serious violence suspects and 38.9% of victims.
 - Early experiences of violence or neglect can escalate into further violence during adolescence and early adulthood.
 3. **Violence linked to Drugs and Alcohol (Led by Medway Public Health):**
 - An increase in violence is linked to people being out in town centres late at night, often associated with alcohol and/or illegal drug use.
 - Collaborating with businesses and communities can help design out violence and raise awareness of available resources and support.
 - Addiction to alcohol or drugs may drive individuals to use violence to meet the demands of their addiction.

Kent Police's new Neighbourhood Policing model, implemented in June 2023, led to significant changes in community policing, introducing Beat Police Constables and district and divisional teams focused on key areas of neighbourhood crime.

- 9 Kent Police implemented their new Neighbourhood Policing Model in June 2023, resulting in significant changes to community policing. Amongst the changes was the redeployment of PCSOs, who were replaced in communities by Beat Police Constables who now serve in communities. The PCSOs joined district and divisional teams focusing on key areas of neighbourhood crime:



The new model is thriving in Maidstone due to the established frameworks from the Maidstone and Town Centre Task Forces, Ward Clusters, and robust relationships.

- 10 The success of the Neighbourhood Policing Model in Maidstone can be attributed to existing frameworks, including the Maidstone and Town Centre Task Forces, Ward Clusters, and strong relationships. These structures provided a solid framework for implementing the model effectively, while Kent Police focused on resourcing their new partnership approach, which was rolled out in Kent based on the work undertaken in Maidstone in the last 5 years.

The 2021 Community Safety Surveys remain relevant and will be updated and redelivered throughout 2024, ahead of the new CSP plan in 2025.

- 11 Our Resident's, Public and Youth safety surveys were used to guide our priorities for 2022-25. Details of these surveys are in [Appendix 1](#). These surveys were part of our efforts to shape the current Community Safety Partnership Plan for 2022-25. Operational surveys, like quality-of-life surveys, gauge local crime perceptions. However, these are not detailed in this document. Looking ahead, we plan to conduct new Community Safety and Youth Safety surveys in 2024, in preparation for the 2025 update of the CSP Plan.

The Community Safety Partnership Plan 2022/25 is delivered via a series of working groups and action plans.

12 Strategic subgroups, operational groups and specialist teams work collectively to develop, co-ordinate and deliver activities. The work undertaken evolves over the life of the Community Safety Plan, with a combination of short- and longer-term actions to deliver a holistic approach. Given the nature of Community Safety there is significant cross-over between each of the working groups to meet the overall objective of the CSP Plan.

An update on activity undertaken in 2023 against the SMP Priorities is provided within this report.

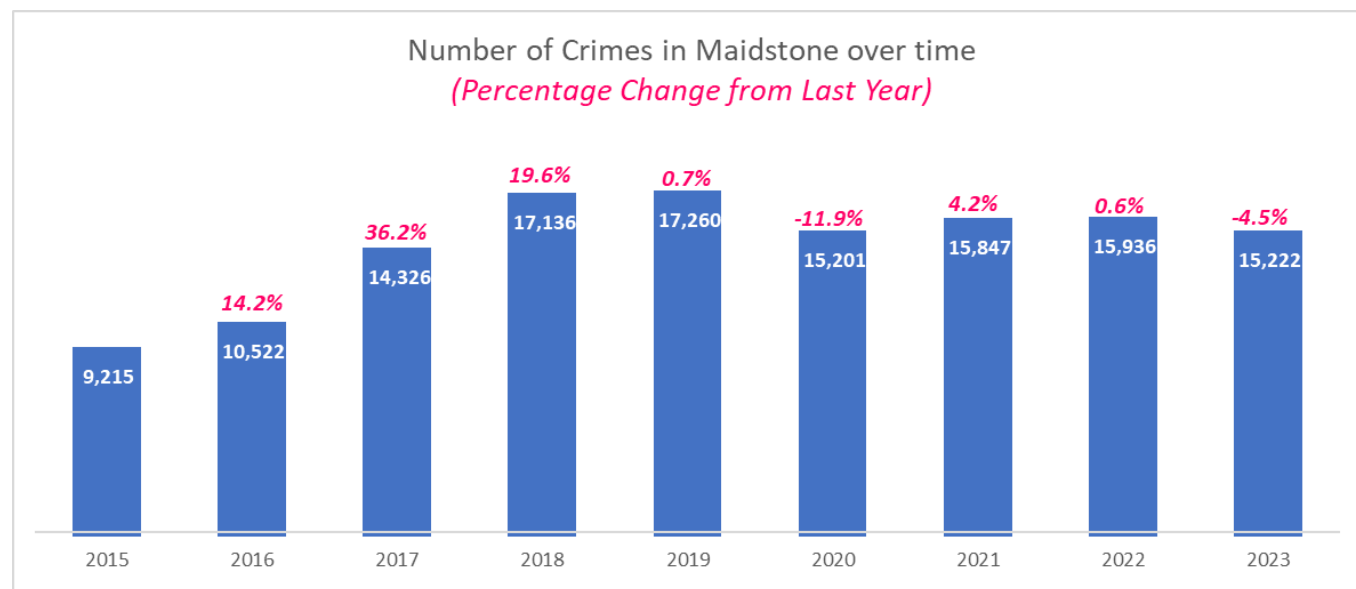
13 Details of what has been delivered by the SMP against the CSP Priorities in 2023 is summarised in the following sections:

- [Protecting our communities against serious, violent, and organised crime \(including modern-day slavery\)-Delivered through the Serious & Organised Crime Panel](#)
- [Reducing the harm caused by domestic abuse \(including stalking\)- Delivered through the Domestic Abuse Forum](#)
- [Providing a Safe Town Centre – Delivered by the Town Centre Task Force](#)
- [Keeping children and young people safe- Delivered through the District Contextual Safeguarding Meeting](#)

14 Below, we outline how crime in Maidstone compares to previous years, national and local levels, and its distribution across the borough at a ward level. Note that changes in crime recording make data prior to 2017 incomparable to recent records, as offenses are now broken down into greater detail, resulting in multiple recorded crimes from a single incident. It should also be noted that the population of Maidstone has grown significantly in recent years. Between 2011 and 2021 the population census recorded a 13.3% increase, which is significantly higher than the 7.1% average increase across Kent and Medway. It should also be noted that the ward boundaries used in this assessment are prior to the boundary changes in May 2024.

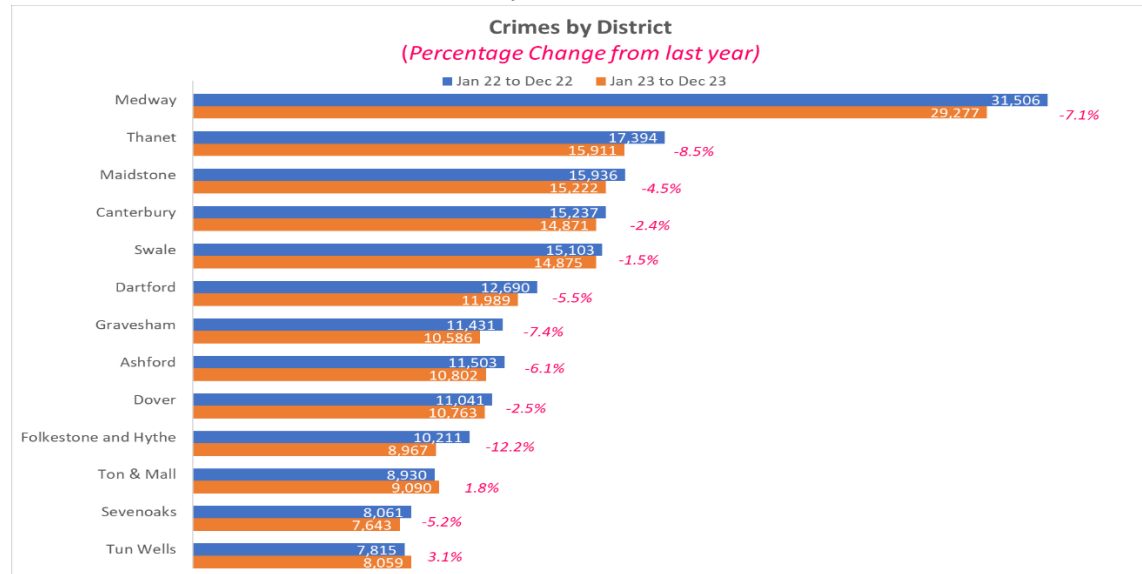
Overall reported crimes in Maidstone have decreased by 4.5%.

15 In 2023 compared with 2022, there has been a decrease of 714 crimes. The graph here shows how crimes in the Borough have changed over the last seven years. The 4.5% decrease in crimes for the year 2023 is in line with the overall Kent decrease of 5%.



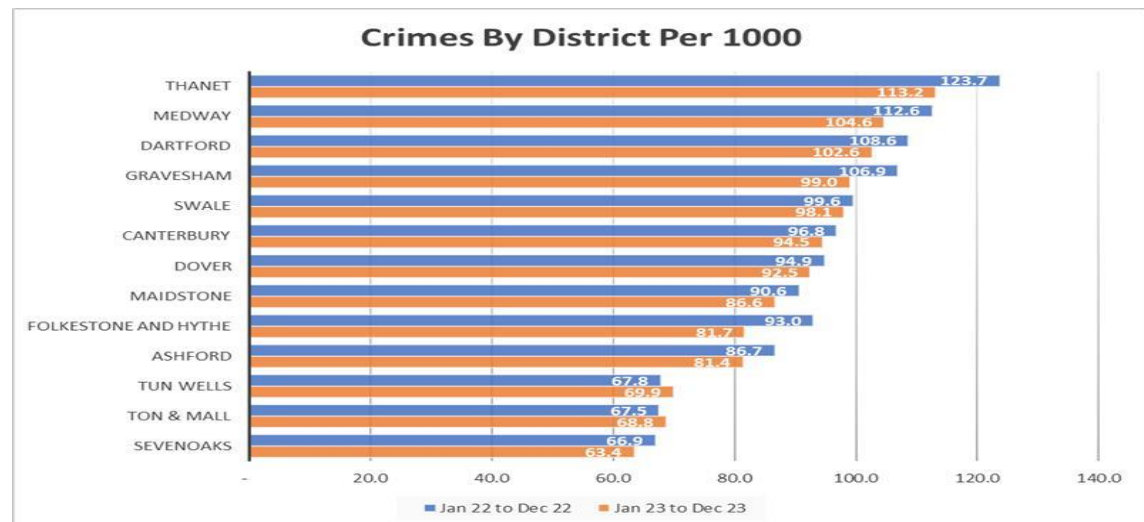
Maidstone remains the 3rd highest for Crime in Kent by volume, behind Medway and Thanet.

16 The graph below shows how the Maidstone compares to other Kent districts.



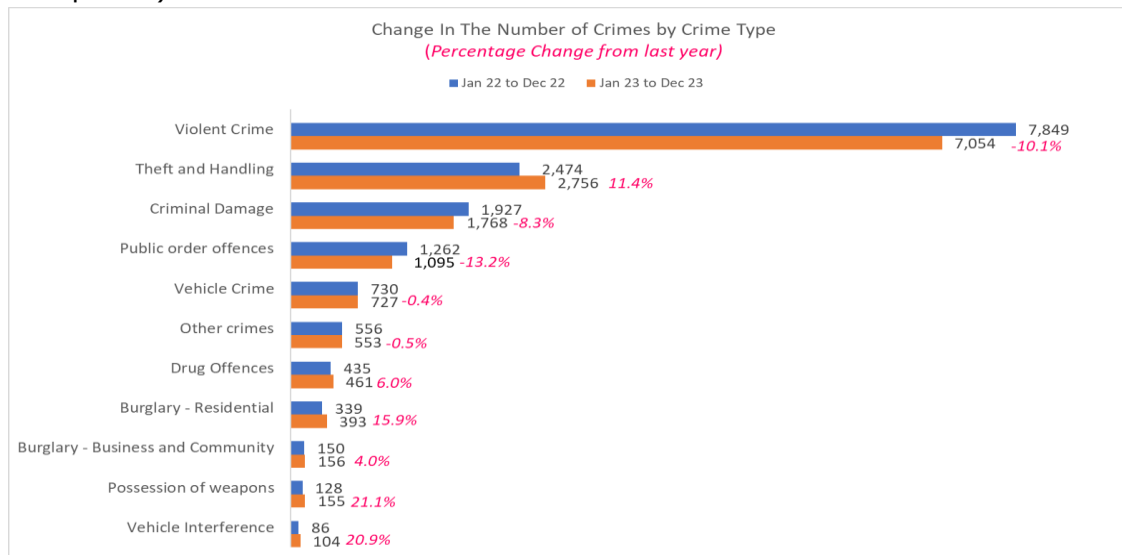
Normalising with population data shows that Maidstone is the 8th safest district in Kent, despite being the 2nd most populated.

17 Whilst crimes by volume is amongst the highest in Kent, the normalised data, using the 2021 census data for each district shows that Maidstone, despite being the 2nd most populated district in Kent, currently ranks 8th (86.6 crimes per 1000 residents). This is an improvement from 2022's ranking of 7th (90.6 crimes per 1000 residents).



The largest increases are in low volume crimes, like possession of weapons and vehicle interference. Increases were also across in thefts/burglary. However, violent crime, criminal damage and public order all fell, collectively recording over 1000 less reported crimes.

18 The chart below shows how different crime types have changed in 2023 (current period) compared with 2022 (previous period).



Violent Crime, despite reductions above the Kent average, remains the most prevalent crime type.

19 Despite observed declines in various crime categories, violent crime remains the most prevalent type, as it is across Kent. This is true even with a reduction of nearly 800 incidents. The 10% decrease, which surpasses the force average of -8.6%, includes a significant contribution from the High Street Ward. This ward, which accounts for over a fifth of all violent crime in the borough, experienced a 9.45% reduction. Other categories such as Criminal Damage (-100) and Public Order Offences (-167) also saw substantial reductions.

National pressures are believed to be driving up certain crimes, including shoplifting and vehicle interference/theft.

20 Theft and Handling offences have continued to rise, with an increase of 282 incidents (11.4%). Shoplifting in the High Street ward has seen a further 15% rise, from 296 in 2022 to 339 in 2023, although its proportion of total shoplifting has decreased from 31% to 28%. The Town Centre Task Force's collaborative work has improved reporting and action against persistent shoplifters. Shoplifting remains higher in the Wards around the town centre, with Park Wood, Shepway South and Staplehurst also noticeably higher than other areas. These trends may reflect the cost-of-living crisis, with essential items being frequently stolen. The Neighbourhood Task Force has a new focus on tackling this as an issue and efforts are underway to guide those in need towards support services when appropriate. Despite a slowdown, the 22.1% increase in vehicle crime in 2022 persists, influenced by national trends such as vehicle part shortages and organised crime. An increase in Burglary (16%, +54) has been linked to Organised Crime, with recidivist offenders/suspects identified through intel and ops have been planned to tackle this.

Increases in weapon possession and vehicle interference are a concern, but the increase are disproportionately high due relatively to low volumes.

High Street Ward still accounts for most of the crime in the borough, but has also seen reductions, like many of the wards, above the Kent average. Those wards showing increases have been assessed and localised plans are being developed.

Normalised data, based on populations, provides a better understanding of those areas disproportionately impacted by crime. Those areas most affected remain relatively unchanged from the previous period.

21 Whilst there are increases in some areas, some of those with significant increases are those areas with the lowest numbers. For example, in the category of Vehicle Interference (+18) a localised series of incidents led to a non-Maidstone nominal being arrested and charged with 17 offences. For possession of weapons and drugs, Stop and Search remains an effective tool in Maidstone detecting these crimes, rather than relying on post-incident reports and contributes to some of the figures.

22 Table 1 ([Appendix 2](#)) provides a full ward breakdown in relation to all crime by volume. High Street accounts for 22% of all crime in Maidstone, with around 2000 more crimes than the nearest other ward, Park Wood. 17 wards showed a reduction in crimes and 15 of those wards saw reductions of 5% or more, which is above the Kent average. Heath Ward (+86) Park Wood (+73) and South Ward (+61) saw the biggest increase in reported crimes. For Heath Ward, 71 of the increased reported crimes were violence against the person, the majority of which can be attributed to the Maidstone General Hospital and Priority House, due to assaults on staff, carers, and family members, rather than a community-based crime. For Parkwood the increase can be attributed to Thefts, Arson, and Shoplifting, which mask a significant decrease in violence against the person, which fell by 57. For South Ward the increase cannot be attributed to a particular crime type with increases across both victim-based (shoplifting and violence) and societal based. Map 1 in [Appendix 3](#) provides a visual representation of crime distribution for of all crime reported to the Police in 2023.

23 Normalising the data, (table two, [appendix 2](#)), with population data, provides an understanding of which areas are impacted by crime, despite the population level. The normalised data, per 1000 people shows that the top 5 wards were very similar to the last period, with Heath ward and Bridge ward swapping places. Fant ward also dropped off the top 5 wards with Shepway South replacing it, but Shepway South also saw a reduction from 92 reported crimes in 2022. 2021 ward population data was used.

Ward	2023		Ward	2022
High Street	275		High Street	296
Park Wood	136		Park Wood	128
Heath	125		Bridge	119
Bridge	102		Heath	114
Shepway South	88		Fant	103

Normalised data also allows analysis to see where crime has truly increase, despite the population density of the ward. Although not reflected in the population data further consideration should be given regarding High Street Ward where the leisure and shopping provided in the Town Centre attracts an additional visiting population.

- 24 The Ward Clusters* group together up to four Wards with similar geography, demographics, and concerns. The Ward Clusters, which are made up as follows, are shown on Map 2 ([appendix 3](#)):

Ward Cluster 1 (Urban)	Ward Cluster 2 (Rural)
Allington	Bearsted
Barming and Teston	Downswood and Otham
Heath	Leeds
Ward Cluster 3 (Rural)	Ward Cluster 4 (Rural)
Boughton Monchelsea and Chart Sutton	Boxley
Coxheath and Hunton	Detling and Thurnham
Loose	Harrietsham and Lenham
Sutton Valence and Langley	North Downs
Ward Cluster 5 (Urban)	Ward Cluster 6 (Rural)
Bridge	Headcorn (A)
East	Staplehurst (A)
High Street	Marden and Yalding (B)
North	
Ward Cluster 7 (Urban)	Ward Cluster 8 (Urban)
Fant	Park Wood
South	Shepway North
	Shepway South

* Please note that new Clusters have been introduced in 2024, to reflect the new Ward Boundaries.

Since 2021, Ward Cluster meetings have provided Ward Members and Parish Councils a platform to engage with representatives from across the CSP. These have also become the geographical boundaries for Beat Officers to focus their efforts under the new policing model.

- 25 In 2021, the SMP introduced Ward Cluster meetings to support engagement with Ward Members and Parish Councils, with the purpose of providing a framework to:
- increase engagement and understanding between all parties regarding Community Safety, including anti-social behaviour and neighbour nuisance, within each cluster.
 - ensure that an evidence-based approach is taken in addressing concerns within communities.
 - share initiatives and operational information, where appropriate and relevant to each cluster
 - to encourage member, officers, and police officers to work collaboratively to challenge, report and prevent crime within each cluster.

The Cluster process was disrupted during 2023 which the police introduced their new policing model. But the feedback received indicates that the new model, particularly the beat officers, have been well received in the communities.

Crime data is broken down into Victim Based Crimes and Crimes Against Society. Data is also provided in relation to ASB.

26 The crime data provided in this report is made up of two categories:

Victim Based Crimes (VBC)

- Arson & Criminal Damage
- Bicycle Theft
- Burglary - Business and Community
- Burglary - Residential
- Robbery
- Sexual Offences
- Shoplifting
- Theft From a Vehicle
- Theft Of Motor Vehicle
- Theft Offences
- Vehicle Interference
- Violence Against the Person

Crimes Against Society (CAS)

- Drug Offences
- Public Order
- Possession Of Weapons
- Misc. Crimes Against Society

Data is also provided in relation to ASB, but this is not a recorded as a crime, although it can be criminalised using various statues. Further detail on this is provided later in the report.

Victim based crime makes up most of all crime but it is falling. Urban, densely populated clusters naturally see higher volumes of crimes than the more rural areas of the borough.

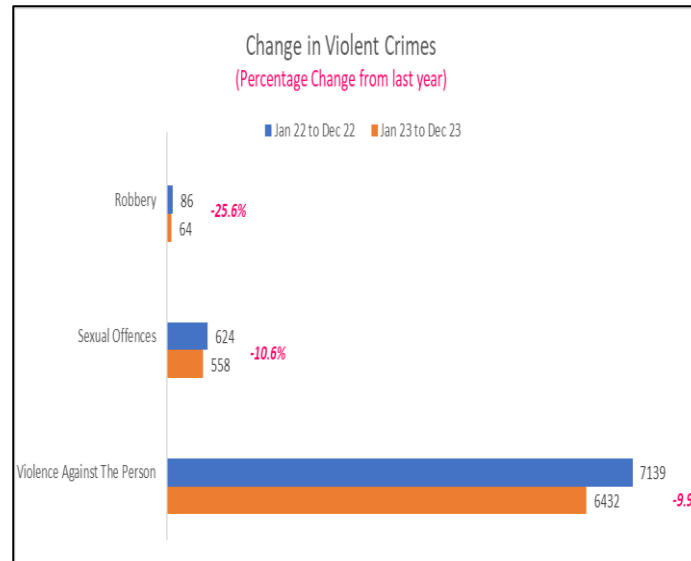
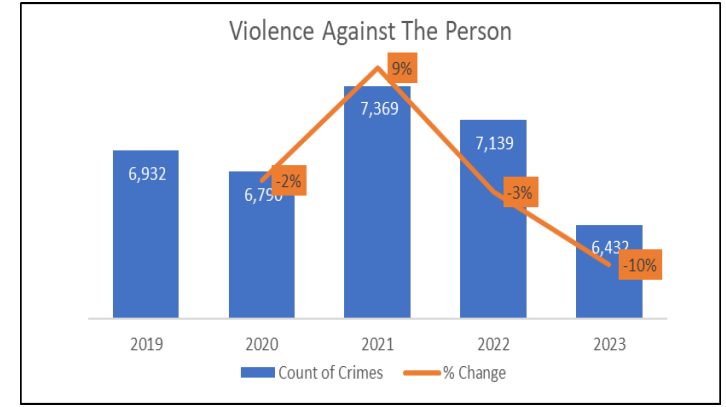
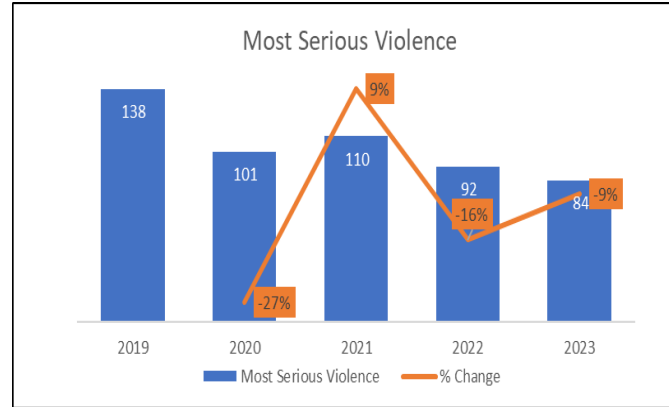
27 The VBC (Table Three), CAS (Table Four) and ASB data (Table Five) for each Cluster is provided in [Appendix 2](#). Across the Clusters, VBC reduced by 6%, having increase by 2% in 2022. Cluster 5 accounts for 36% of all VBC, with High Street ward accounting for 21% of the cluster alone. Only Cluster 1 increased between 2022 and 2023, but, as detailed in paragraph 23, 54% of that increase is linked to increases in violence against the person in Heath Ward, most of the rest being linked to shoplifting in Allington. Cluster 5 accounts for the majority of CAS (42%), however, CAS is often led by proactive policing, as opposed to reported crime, and some of the reductions may reflect the time taken to imbed the new policing model and changes in roles. Cluster 5 also accounts for the majority of ASB (30%). Significant reductions in reported ASB continued in Cluster 5, which includes the Town Centre. This is explored later in this report in relation to the Town Centre, Youth Safety and as a cross-cutting theme. Shepway South accounts for nearly half of the increase in ASB in Cluster 8.

6. SMP Priority area data and partnership updates

Priority: Protecting our communities against serious, violent, and organised crime (including modern-day slavery)

Serious violence reduced, but violence against a person, including domestic abuse, still makes up over 40% of all crimes.

28 Crimes of most serious violence, which includes Murder, Attempted Murders, Death or serious injury by dangerous driving, Death by careless, inconsiderate driving and Wounding (Grievous Bodily Harm) are shown in this chart. In each year, GBH makes up a significant proportion of the crimes in this category.



Violence against a person, which includes common assault, actual bodily harm and domestic abuse has decreased significantly across the district and is lower than pre-pandemic levels. The chart to the left shows how Maidstone’s violent crime has changed in 2023 compared to 2022. ‘Violence against the person’ (VAP) which accounts for 91% of the overall violent crimes. As well as VAP decreasing, robbery and sexual offences have also decreased. Hospital Admissions (paragraph 103) for assault are also falling, with a 17% decrease in 2022/23 when compared to the previous period.

Further analysis of Domestic Abuse is provided in the next section.

Public Health approach has been highlighted the key to tackling violent crimes.

The Kent and Medway VRU Strategic Needs Assessment provides further insight into violent crime within Kent.

Most and All Serious Violence categories are ranked according to volume, harm and by population to provide a strategic insight to the violence in the county.

29 There is growing evidence to show that violence can be prevented. The World Health Organisation (2002) produced a report on [Violence and Health](#) which has subsequently seen a growing understanding of risk factors that contribute to violence and how things can be done on an individual, family, community and societal level to prevent it. A 'Public Health approach' is therefore used as it is imperative to look at inequalities when addressing violence.

30 The Tables below, produced by the Kent and Medway Violence Reduction "Strategic Needs Assessment" demonstrate by victim or suspect age cohorts and total, count, harm and per 1000 population levels ranking throughout the county for All Serious Violent Crime (ASVC (inclusive of MSVC) and Most Serious Violent Crime (MSVC) for the year 22/23 ending June. "Most Serious Violence" is a subset of "All Serious Violence". It represents the most severe forms of violent crime within the broader category. While the exact offences included in this category can vary, they typically involve significant harm to the victim and carry severe penalties, such as aggravated offences homicide or serious sexual offences. All serious violence includes categories such as Possession of Weapons, Trafficking Drugs (Class A only) or Public Order offences.

31

District	U18			U25			25+			All		
	Count	Harm	Per 1000 Population	Count	Harm	Per 1000 Population	Count	Harm	Per 1000 Population	Count	Harm	Per 1000 Population
Medway	1	1	3	1	1	2	1	1	2	1	1	2
Thanet	2	2	1	3	4	1	2	2	1	2	2	1
Canterbury	3	3	4	2	2	5	4	4	5	3	4	4
Swale	4	4	6	4	3	7	5	3	8	5	3	6
Dartford	8	7	7	6	5	6	6	7	3	6	6	3
Dover	5	5	2	7	8	3	7	9	7	7	8	5
Maidstone	7	11	10	5	7	10	3	5	6	4	5	9
Folkestone & Hythe	9	9	5	9	9	4	8	6	9	8	7	7
Gravesham	10	8	9	10	6	9	9	8	4	10	9	8
Ashford	6	6	8	8	10	8	10	10	10	9	11	10
Tunbridge Wells	12	13	12	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	10	11
Tonbridge And Malling	11	10	11	12	12	12	12	13	13	12	12	12
Sevenoaks	13	12	13	13	13	13	13	12	12	13	13	13

32

District	U18			U25			25+			All		
	Count	Harm	Per 1000 Population	Count	Harm	Per 1000 Population	Count	Harm	Per 1000 Population	Count	Harm	Per 1000 Population
Medway	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1
Thanet	4	5	5	6	5	6	2	2	1	2	2	3
Swale	4	4	8	3	2	5	3	3	5	4	3	6
Canterbury	2	3	3	2	3	7	6	5	8	3	4	8
Dartford	4	7	4	7	6	4	4	6	4	5	6	4
Gravesham	9	8	9	4	4	3	5	4	3	6	5	2
Folkestone & Hythe	3	9	2	5	7	2	8	7	6	7	8	5
Dover	8	10	6	9	13	8	7	9	7	9	9	7
Ashford	7	2	7	9	9	9	11	11	12	10	10	11
Maidstone	9	11	13	8	8	12	8	8	9	7	7	9
Tunbridge Wells	12	13	10	11	11	10	10	12	10	11	12	10
Tonbridge And Malling	11	6	11	13	10	13	13	10	13	13	11	13
Sevenoaks	13	12	12	11	12	11	12	13	11	12	13	12

Maidstone ranks high in Kent for the volume and harm caused by ASVC but is comparatively low when the population is taken into consideration.

Maidstone's volume, harm, and per capita score for MSVC are lower per category.

Despite a lower per capita violent crime rate, Maidstone's high crime volume, particularly in High Street Ward, necessitates ongoing vigilance and proactive policing efforts, particularly as this creates a perception of Maidstone being more dangerous than it is.

Although Maidstone has a lower violent crime rate per person, the high volume of crime, especially in the High Street Ward, calls for continuous alertness and proactive law enforcement. This is crucial as it counters the perception that Maidstone is more dangerous than it actually is.

- 33 Maidstone exhibits a high volume of crime, particularly in the 25+ age group, which significantly influences the overall crime rate. However, when adjusting for population size, Maidstone's crime rate ranks lower among Kent districts. Specifically, it ranks 10th for individuals under 18 (U18), 10th for individuals under 25 (U25), 6th for individuals aged 25 and above, and 9th overall. In this context, a rank of 1 represents the highest crime rate, and 13 represents the lowest. Therefore, while Maidstone's absolute crime numbers are high, its per capita crime rate is comparatively lower.
- 34 In the "Most Serious Violence" category, Maidstone's rankings per thousand population are lower compared to its volume of crimes. Specifically, it ranks 13th for under 18s (U18), 12th for under 25s (U25), and 9th for those aged 25 and above. Overall, Maidstone ranks 9th. Despite high crime volumes, especially in the 25+ category, these rankings indicate a lower per capita crime rate in Maidstone relative to other Kent districts.
- 35 Whilst the per capita data suggests Maidstone's violent crime is low, the volume suggests a need for continued vigilance and proactive policing, particularly in high crime areas. Further information within the VRU Assessment indicates that LSOA E01033090, located within High Street Ward, Maidstone, is a key focus area for crime prevention. For 2022/23, up to June 2003, it ranks first in both count and harm for All Serious Violence (ASVC), with 267 incidents and a harm score of 50847, as per the Cambridge Crime Harm Index (CCHI). This area sees a high volume of crimes on streets and in clubs and public houses, with Violence Against the Person (VAP) being the most common offence type. The area has a notable presence of knife-related incidents and Most Serious Violence (MSVC) cases. The victim profile is diverse, with the majority being males and those aged twenty-five and above. The suspect profile mirrors this trend.
- 36 This area incorporates the Town Centre, including areas such as High Street, Week Street, and Bank Street, which see a concentration of reported incidents. Despite the implementation of additional funding and interventions under Operation Grip and the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU), and the focus of Maidstone's successful Safer Streets Bid, high crime rates persist. These initiatives are still in their preliminary stages, aiming to bring about long-term change in the Night-Time Economy (NTE), reshape narratives around certain locations, reduce Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) as a precursor to violence and change the culture in these areas. However, as with many public health approaches, the results may not be immediately evident in short-term data. This underscores the need for continued support, intervention, and a robust approach to crime prevention and community safety in this LSOA. Further detail on this approach is provided in the priority update on Providing a Safe Town Centre, below.

Outside of the Town Centre, Park Wood, the south of High Street Ward and Shepway are also identified as district priorities.

The SOCP's unique structure and collaborative approach enables it to effectively combat organised crime and extremism in Maidstone.

Advanced problem solving, through the NTF, builds on Maidstone's previous "Task Force" successes and sets a precedent for the County.

County Lines and Cuckooing remain a complex OCG threat across Kent.

- 37 LSOAs E01024389 (Park Wood Ward), E01024372 (High Street Ward), and E01024392 (Shepway) are also identified as areas of concern due to high Violence Against the Person (VAP) rates. Incidents are more prevalent within dwellings in Park Wood and Shepway, and on the street in High Street South. The victim and suspect profiles are like the Town Centre. E01033088 (Heath) Ward ranked second for count (67) but is not considered a priority as fifty-six offences occurred at Priority House, Hermitage Lane, Maidstone.
- 38 The Serious Organised Crime Panel (SOCP), plays a crucial role in combating in the fight against Organised Crime Groups (OCGs), repeat offending, and extremism. Its unique structure fosters a collaborative environment, promoting information sharing among various agencies, under the Kent and Medway information sharing agreement. The SOCP's focus encompasses district threat, risk, and harm priorities, including any series, clusters, and trends. It also collaborates with Kent County Council (KCC) on Modern Day Slavery (MDS), Serious Organised Crime (SOC), and intelligence matters. The SOCP addresses a wide range of crimes, from firearms and drugs to cybercrime, fraud, and economic crime.
- 39 Following the SOCP meeting, the Strategic Neighbourhood Policing meeting takes place, focusing on the work carried out by the newly formed Neighbourhood Task Force (NTF). Although initially not resourced effectively, due to staffing shortages, the NTF, which relaunched in February 2024, builds on the template create in Maidstone for the Maidstone and Town Centre Task Forces. Emphasis on maintaining effective partnerships, problem-solving related to locations, individuals, and families, and addressing beat cluster concerns and seasonal plans are all routinely developed. This comprehensive approach ensures a holistic approach to community safety, reinforcing the SOCP's efforts at a neighbourhood level, which will contribute significantly to the safety and well-being of the community in the next year and beyond.
- 40 County Lines refers to a type of Organised Crime Group (OCG) known for drug trafficking. However, their criminal infrastructure extends to Modern Slavery, People Trafficking, Brothels, Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE), Serious Violence, Money Laundering, and illegal weapons supply. They often employ 'cuckooing', where criminals take over a person's home for exploitation. Victims are typically vulnerable individuals, such as substance misusers, people with learning difficulties, mental health issues, physical disabilities, or those who are socially isolated. Cuckooed addresses are used for various criminal activities, including drug storage/distribution, people trafficking, modern slavery, illegal firearms supply/storage, sex work, or as 'safe houses' for criminals avoiding police detection.

A Multi-Agency approach remains necessary to disrupt County Lines and protect communities.

41 A small number of County Lines have operated across Kent, mainly effecting North and East Kent. Intelligence-driven operations disrupt these OCGs. Despite their small volume, the harm caused by an established County Line OCG can be significant. Tactical documents are shared across the Safer Maidstone Partnership (SMP) to share intelligence about local lines, especially, through the District Contextual Safeguarding Meeting (DCSM) to practitioners working with at-risk youth. Actions undertaken across the SMP to challenge the threat in Maidstone include targeted activity of known drug dealing nominals, large volume of drugs/cash/digital devices seizures, execution of secured warrants, dismantling of cannabis production, collaboration with HMP Maidstone, regular visits to Nail Bars, car washes, brothels for intelligence gathering and safeguarding cuckooed individuals, and supporting other agencies in their investigations.

The Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 mandates local authorities to prevent terrorism. Kent and Medway is a Prevent priority area.

42 Under the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015, local authorities are mandated to prevent individuals from being drawn into terrorism. Kent and Medway, designated as a Prevent priority, receive additional Home Office funding for local Prevent resources, including the Kent and Medway Prevent Team. This team delivers Prevent activities and supports local partners in understanding and responding to the risk of terrorism, extremism, and vulnerability to radicalisation. Since December 2022, when Kent and Medway ceased being a Dovetail site, case management has been handled by Counter Terrorism Policing Southeast (CTPSE). Kent and Medway operate a joint Channel panel, chaired by KCC. In February 2023, the government accepted all recommendations from the Independent Review of Prevent, with the Home Office leading the implementation of these changes, communicated to Prevent teams through monthly updates.

UK terror threat level remains substantial, indicating that an attack remains likely.

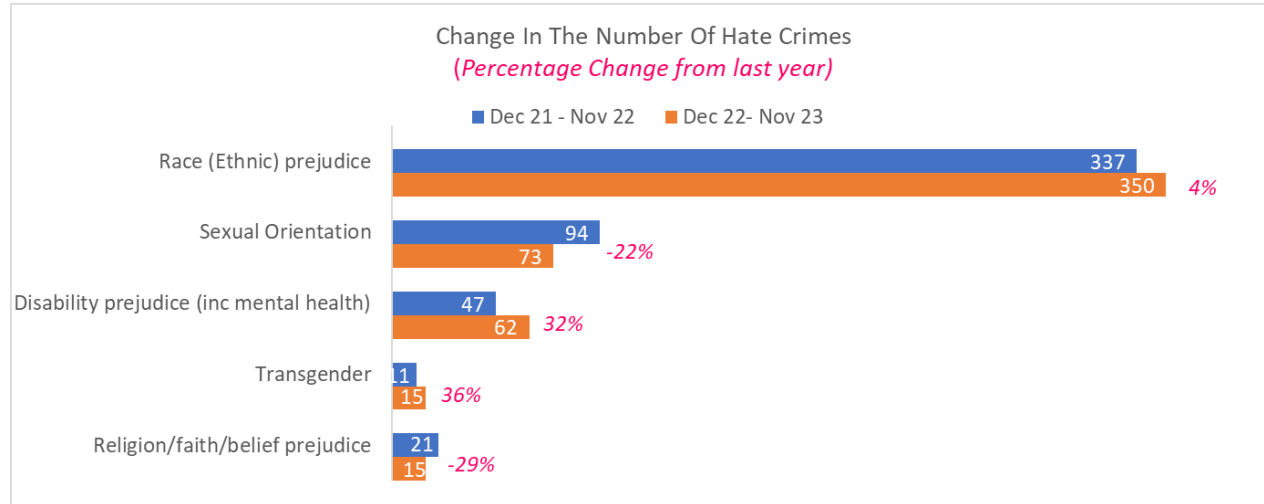
43 The UK's current national terror threat level is SUBSTANTIAL, indicating a likely attack. The petrol bomb attack on the Dover Immigration Centre in October 2022, the only terrorist attack in the UK that year, highlighted the importance of understanding Prevent and terrorist-related incidents, and the role of the internet in radicalisation.

The Israel-Hamas conflict creates risks in the UK due to the strong reactions it has elicited.

44 The ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas, which began on October 7, 2023, has elicited strong reactions in the UK. While the government supports the facilitation of lawful protest and freedom of speech, the Home Secretary has made it clear that any group or individual exploiting this tragic conflict to incite hatred or further extremist ideologies will face a robust response. Since the conflict began there has been a significant increase in both anti-Semitic and anti-Muslimism incidents at a national level. We must remain vigilant to the risk posed by chronic radicalisers across all ideologies, whose rhetoric may lead susceptible individuals to be radicalised towards violence. The Kent and Medway Prevent team is working closely with all partners to understand and mitigate the risk on the ground. They are proactive in reducing the influence and harm of chronic radicalisers by disrupting their activity where possible and share all relevant information with Home Office teams.

Race prejudice dominates hate crime, with High St and Heath Wards dominating, but reported hate crime has not changed significantly.

45 The term 'hate crime' can be used to describe a range of criminal behaviour where the perpetrator is motivated by hostility or demonstrates hostility towards the victim's disability, race, religion, sexual orientation, or transgender identity. Over the last reporting period (Dec 22 to Nov 23) there have been **515** reported hate crimes this is compared to **510**. 42% of the Hate Crimes reported are from High Street and Heath Wards. Race prejudice accounts for 68% of all hate crimes, followed by Sexual Orientation hate related crimes which accounts for 14% of all hate crimes. The table below shows a breakdown of the hate crimes.



The SMP Modern-Day Slavery sub-group continues to put in place additional safeguarding measures to protect victims and detect those exploiting them.

46 In September 2022, the SMP formed the Maidstone Anti-Slavery Partnership (Maidstone ASP). The monthly working group meet to share and develop intelligence of cross-boundary MDS risks. Although growing, the Maidstone ASP currently consists of representatives from:

- MBC Community Protection
- Kent Police
- British Transport Police
- Stop The Traffik
- Salvation Army
- Kent County Council
- MBC Housing and Health
- Gangmasters & Labour Abuse Authority
- Kent Fire & Rescue Service
- Violence Reduction Unit
- Immigration
- Gravesham Borough Council

In 2023, the Maidstone ASP joined the ERASP (Eastern Region Anti-Slavery Partnership), who are members of the WMASN (West Midlands Anti-Slavery Network), the leading Partnership for best practice and policy nationally, are also seeking to join the National Coordinators Network Forum, to increase learning and information sharing. Maidstone ASP Members also attended specialist inputs from the Local Government Association meetings.

The work of the Maidstone ASP is centred around 4 work streams, utilised across this sector:

Prevent- Intelligence sharing and early interventions are used to prevent MDS being established. Awareness raising activities have included supporting Anti-Slavery Day in October and networking with sector experts to improve local delivery. In addition, the ASP takes part in Operation Aidant, a national initiative lead by the GLAA which involves periods of intensification around awareness raising, intelligence gathering and enforcement. The dates and themes for 2024 are: -

11th March – 30th March – Labour Exploitation in the Care Sector

20th May – 8th June – Online Recruitment as an Enabler of MSHT

9th September – 28th September – Property as an Enabler of MSHT

11th November – 30th November – Sexual Exploitation, High Value Targets & Tiered Response

Pursue- Using intelligence developed across the partnership, days of action and targeted visits have been undertaken to disrupt MDS in locations across the borough. This work includes visits to high-risk industries, such as farming, car washes and nail bars, where exploitation is common. During 2024, this work is likely to involve more focus around the care sector and associated recruitment agencies and more HMO visits.

Protect- Raising awareness within vulnerable groups is a key element to disrupting MDS. “Cost of Living” Events and recruitment events have been attended to raise awareness of the risks and temptations used by OCGs etc. to draw people in. Proactive “Safe and Well” visits have also been carried out, and advice given to women located in suspected brothels. Nationalities identified as being at highest risk include Eastern European, Chinese.

Prepare- A key part of raising awareness is about ensuring as many people as possible are aware of the risk MDS poses. The Maidstone ASP has created an internal “MDS Champions Network” where we can ensure every contact with key departments is a potential opportunity to identify exploitation. Training supplied for information/awareness and to allow the Champions to deliver awareness training to their respective teams/ departments. Training will be given to reflect updated policy/legislation/best practice that have and are due to occur in 2024.

Integrated Offender Management allows the SMP to work collectively to reduce reoffending.

47 The IOM process is a multi-agency approach to manage individuals, both young and adult, who are at risk of causing the most harm to their communities. Threat, Risk and Harm is considered regarding Serious and Acquisitive Crime, Domestic Abuse (DA), Serious Violence, Gang activity, Organised Crime Groups (OCG), Troubled Families, Terrorism, Trafficking and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). The IOM Cohort data was not available for inclusion with this report, but only provides a snapshot, as numbers vary monthly. The IOM Cohort for Maidstone are discussed at the Serious and Organised Crime Panel, where partners work to support IOM with intelligence and interventions of their own to reduce reoffending.

Ministry of Justice report reveals national reoffending rates still need local interventions to reduce them.

48 An MOJ report, published in January 2023, provides proven reoffending statistics for England and Wales between January and March 2021. The overall proven reoffending rate was 24.3%. Adult offenders had a rate of 24%, while juvenile offenders had a rate of 31.1%. Adults released from custody or starting court orders had a rate of 30.9%.

- 49 Domestic abuse crimes are those involving persons over the age of 16 who are personally connected and where the behaviour is abusive, such as any of the following:
- physical or sexual abuse
 - violent or threatening behaviour
 - controlling or coercive behaviour
 - economic abuse
 - psychological, emotional, or other abuse

Domestic Abuse is regarded as an under reported crime. National coverage around domestic abuse, supported by the introduction of new legislation has led to an increased level of awareness and the availability of services to support victims.

Domestic Abuse is everybody's business and tackling DA is a CSP duty.

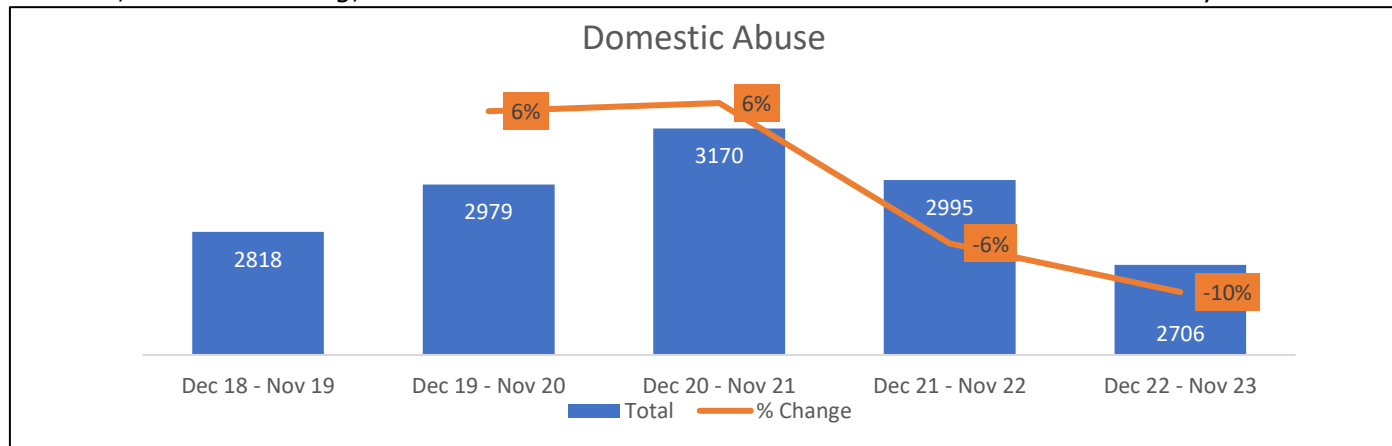
- 50 The Domestic Abuse Act became law in April 2021 and placed duties on local authorities to help tackle domestic abuse. The legislation is driving changes that will:
- promote awareness.
 - protect and support victims.
 - transform the justice response.
 - improve performance of Domestic Abuse Services
 - Recognise children as victims in their own right- not witnesses to abuse.

The SMP plays a role at both a local and a County Level to ensure consistency and has worked to improve internal processes in housing and HR to support DA Survivors.

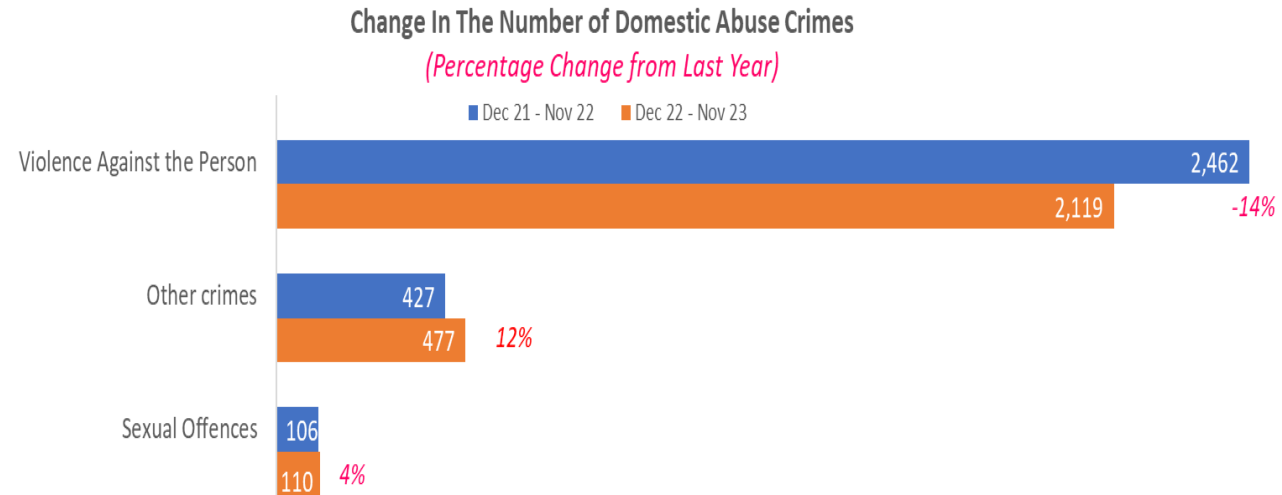
- 51 Kent County Council and Maidstone Borough Council officers continue to play an active role on the Kent Domestic Abuse Partnership Board and the Maidstone Domestic Abuse Forum to help shape the Kent-wide Domestic Abuse Strategy and develop services for people experiencing domestic abuse. In addition, staff have been updated on changes made to the homelessness legislation brought about by the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act, which is reflected in the Council's Housing Strategy. An infographic has been created as part of the strategy for all housing for all staff to respond to DA survivors correctly.

Reported domestic abuse levels drop to pre-pandemic levels, despite increases in request for support services.

52 The data for 2023 shows a decrease of 10% of all crimes recorded as Domestic Abuse, with reported levels dropping to levels closer to those seen pre-pandemic. The needs assessment undertaken by Kent's Integrated Domestic Abuse Service (KIDAS) supports a reduction in reports, including referrals to social services. Increases to other services, such as housing, indicates that more work is needed to understand the anomaly.



Currently, **18%** of all crime in Maidstone Borough is related to Domestic Abuse (where parties are connected to each other) and this equates to **38%** of all violent crime.



Breaking down the Domestic Abuse Crimes sees Violence Against the Person (VAP) reducing by 14%, but still making up 78% of these crimes.

Coercion and control and stalking/harassment reports have fallen disproportionately and also needs further assessment.

53 Included in VAP, Stalking/Harassment (-13%) and Coercion and Control (-38%) also decreased. Assessment will be needed, by the Domestic Abuse Forum, to determine why Coercion and Control has decreased disproportionately to other crimes, as this is a typically under reported crime type. Reported Sexual Offences, which represent some of the most harmful crimes, increased in 2023 by 4%, but remain relatively low in number overall.

	Dec 2018 - Nov 2019	Dec 2019 - Nov 2020	Dec 2020 - Nov 2021	Dec 2021 - Nov 2022	Dec 2022 - Nov 2023
Violence Against the Person	2,235	2,453	2,637	2,462	2,119
- Stalking/Harassment	618	672	731	655	569
- Coercion and Control	84	302	388	304	188
Sexual Offences	92	87	91	106	110
- Rape	71	59	48	59	69
Other crimes	491	439	442	427	477
Total	2,818	2,979	3,170	2,995	2,706

Across the wards, Domestic Abuse crimes remain highest in High Street Ward, despite drop.

54 Table six, [appendix 2](#), provides a breakdown of domestic abuse crimes across the wards. The highest five wards, by volume, is indicated in dark red, with a lighter red show the top half. The lowest five are represented by Dark Green, with a lighter green showing the bottom half. 14 of the 26 wards show a decrease, with South, Bridge and East showing significant drops. .

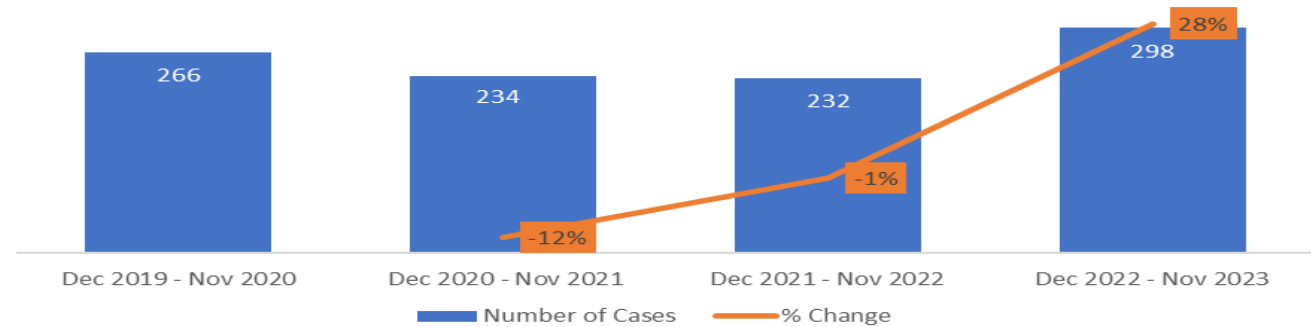
Normalised data, based on populations, provides a better understanding of those areas disproportionately impacted by Domestic Abuse.

55 Normalising the data, table seven ([appendix 2](#)), with population data, provides an understanding of which areas are impacted by domestic abuse. Using the 2021 ward population data, the table shows that across the borough, domestic abuse remains relatively low. Increases are indicated in more rural areas.

Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) rise by nearly 30% as local agencies work to support victims.

56 MARACs are meetings where information about high-risk domestic abuse victims (those at risk of murder or serious harm) is shared between local agencies. By bringing all agencies together at a MARAC, a risk-focused, co-ordinated safety plan can be drawn together to support the victim. MARACs now cover all victims aged 16 years and over. Maidstone has had 298 MARAC cases in the current period, up from 232 in the previous period. 28 % (82) were repeat cases.

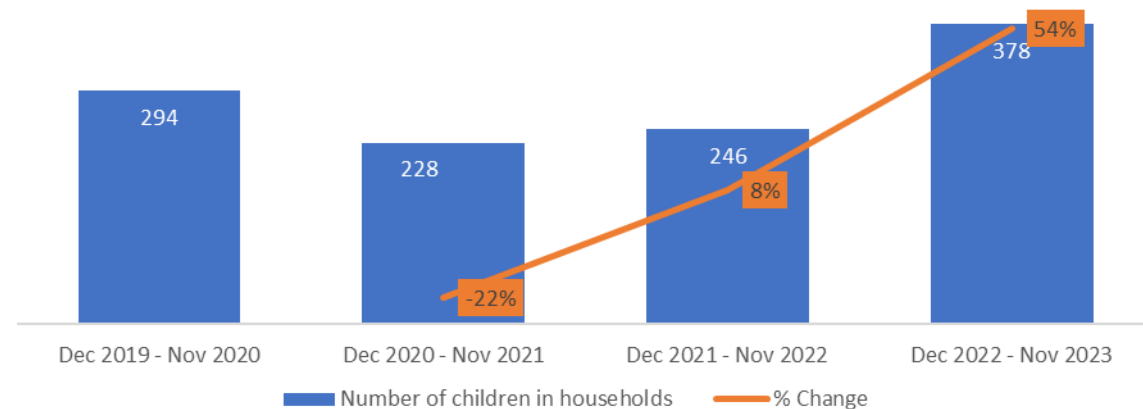
Number of Cases



The number of children considered in MARACs rises considerably as families seek support.

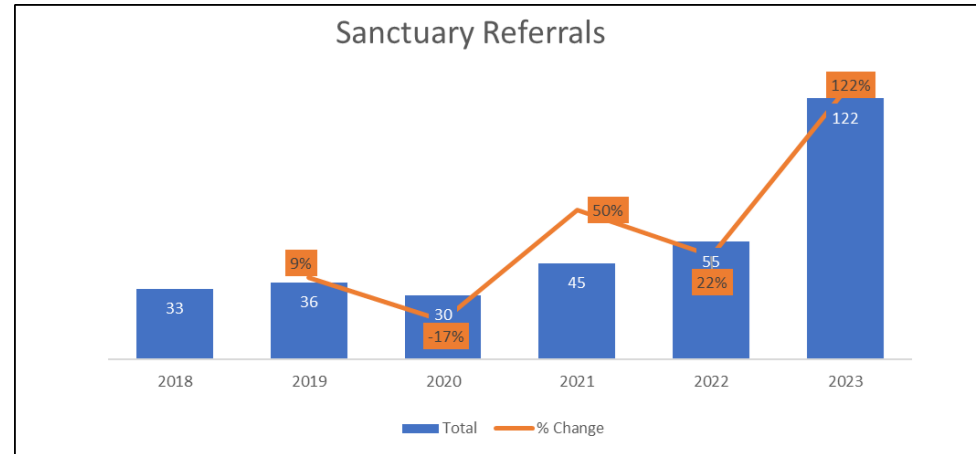
57 There were 378 children living in these households, a 54% increase on the previous period. Under the Domestic Abuse Act all children in these circumstances are to be considered victims. The voice of the child is considered in all MARAC meetings.

Number of children in households



Sanctuary referrals, from MARACs and Independent Domestic Violence Advisor's Assessments have increase by 122%, as more support is offered to those want to stay at home after surviving abuse.

58 Sanctuary assessments, often generated as a result of a MARAC or Independent Domestic Violence Advisors referral, are where a victim of domestic abuse expresses a desire to stay in their family home but requires assistance to do so. For privately owned properties, the CPT attend the victim's property and undertake an assessment which determines what works need to be undertaken to safeguard the victim against their abuser. This can include a variety of property alterations, including changing locks and installing PIR lights, which are undertaken by the handy man service provided in partnership with Involve Kent. Social properties undertake their own assessments when appropriate.



MARAC Sanctuary referrals to MBC and Housing providers continue to increase (122%). During 2023, £1,119.59 was spent to make properties secure. This excludes properties owned by Social Landlords, who undertake work on behalf of their residents where appropriate.

Partner agencies support available at One Stop Shop has increased from 1 to 5 attendees, following the introduction of a local steering committee.

59 In this period, partner agencies saw an increase in attendance from 1 to 5 attendees per week, thanks to a marketing launch and new design. The attendees include organisations such as Clarion Commissioned Service, MBC Housing Advice, KCC Early Help, SATEDA Support to Court, and Police VIT (Virtual). Procedures have been strengthened with the introduction of privacy screens, which received positive feedback from service users. A local steering committee has been established to improve processes, risk identification, and assess safeguarding concerns. This committee also feeds into the Kent & Medway steering group.

The Domestic Abuse Forum (MDAF) continues to raise awareness and support victims, delivering a range of activities that ensure services are promoted and provided for victims and to raise awareness.

60 The Maidstone DA Forum (MDAF) work across the SMP and link in with the KIDAS to deliver several activities and services to support the victims of abuse and to raise awareness. Here are some of the activities undertaken in 2023:

Hosted Domestic Abuse & Wellbeing Network event	In September, the Domestic Abuse & Wellbeing Network held a large-scale event at the Hazlitt Theatre. The Forum coordinated this first joint event, inviting professionals and the public to seek advice from national and district partners, with a focus on local organisations. The event, featuring guest speakers and survivor accounts, was well-received and promoted by partners including Kent Police. This will now be an annual event.
Supported Key projects consultations	The Forum has supported the consultation on the Kent & Medway Domestic Abuse Strategy and the SAFER scheme, with the Chair participating in the procurement panel for the SAFER contract. The Forum is set to receive a demonstration from the commissioned service of the SAFER project.
Improved local service provision	<p>Outreach services have seen increased demand, as evidenced by survivor feedback and professional referrals. The Forum has identified and addressed a gap in service provision, forming a significant part of the local action plan.</p> <p>Several services have been established within Maidstone, supported by the Forum through promotion, training, and funding advice. Two drop-in sessions have been created in High Street and Parkwood wards, offering a safe space for those affected by domestic abuse. These sessions, overseen by Clarion and Golding Homes but led by A Survivor's Story, provide a haven for those uncomfortable disclosing to professional bodies.</p>
Improving data analysis	<p>The Forum has focused on data to ensure both operational and strategic approaches locally. Despite internal changes limiting access to raw data from Kent Police, the Forum has explored alternative data sources such as the One Stop Shop and service referrals. This issue has been raised centrally to standardise data sharing across all DA Forums.</p> <p>The Forum requested and received data in the form of a gender breakdown to identify service gaps. MARAC and Police data revealed a need for female perpetrator interventions, leading to active engagement with an organisation now attending the Forum and filling that gap.</p>
"Reframe for Resilience" events delivered	A professional, multi-agency conference focused on trauma awareness, trauma attachment, and domestic abuse has delivered four in-person and two virtual events to the NHS and the KMSAB.

<p>Agreed to assess local S208 submissions</p>	<p>A major ongoing project supports those who have fled domestic abuse and been placed in Maidstone by other authorities. The Forum agreed to action Section 208 submissions given the community's level of need and the increase in crisis intervention for those in temporary accommodation. MBC's Welfare Team has agreed to provide financial aid in the form of supermarket vouchers. A welcome pack is being designed to provide access to local health, education, financial support, leisure, and housing information. Advice has been sought from the Kent Housing Group, with the proposed outcome that this project is preventative and addresses the greater risk of hidden harm among this cohort of survivors/victims.</p> <p>Advice has been sought from the Kent Housing Group. with the proposed outcome that this project is preventative, and this cohort of survivors/victims are at greater risk of hidden harm</p>
<p>Updated MDAF Support Directory</p>	<p>In response to the evolving needs of services, a virtual directory has been established for real-time updates.</p>
<p>MDAF welcomed new attendees to increase collaboration</p>	<p>The Maidstone Domestic Abuse Forum (MDAF) has seen increased engagement from various agencies, including by and for services, Kent Police, stalking specialists, and perpetrator intervention organisations. A significant development is the partnership with Nationwide bank, supporting their Safe Space initiative and promoting financial inclusion and awareness of economic abuse.</p>
<p>Increased focus on Comms</p>	<p>Efforts to increase visibility and awareness include the design and distribution of new One Stop Shop posters and the creation of business cards with a concealed QR code. These cards, which link to the digital directory and One Stop Shop information, provide discreet support for victims/survivors, and can be distributed by professionals during police call outs.</p> <p>The 16 Days of Action campaign in November was a focal point for raising awareness, with all members playing a crucial role.</p>
<p>Increased suicide awareness and shared Domestic Homicide Review findings</p>	<p>Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) have been reviewed with a particular focus on death by suicide and domestic abuse. Kent County Council (KCC) has presented findings on this key theme, enabling members to share this knowledge and enhance skills within their own organisations.</p>

- 61 In June 2022, the Safer Maidstone Partnership launched the Town Centre Task Force (TCTF) to tackle growing concerns around the Town Centre. Whilst the new Neighbourhood Policing Model introduces non-geographical Task Forces, the decision to ensure Beat Officers engage in the multi-agency Task Force as ensured continued success against the shared vision:



“To utilise a multi-agency ‘One Team’ evidence-based approach to tackle crime, health inequality and the wider determinants of crime/health. To ensure we implement long term permanent changes that improve the reputation of the Town and the quality of life for those who live, work, or visit the County Town and keep them safe from harm.”

The overarching purpose of the TCTF is to operate within the Town Centre, focusing on reducing crime, anti-social behaviour, and the underlying factors contributing to criminal activity. The TCTF aims to achieve this through the following strategies:

- **Protecting People from Harm and Cultivating a Positive Environment:**
 - Enhancing the culture within the Daytime Economy (DTE) and Nighttime Economy (NTE).
 - Identifying and addressing crime hotspots and emerging trends.
- **Identifying Vulnerability and Providing Necessary Support:**
 - Recognizing vulnerable individuals and offering protection and support where needed.
- **Building Resilience through Collaboration and Empowerment:**
 - Engaging with stakeholders in the Town Centre to foster resilience.
 - Empowering participation and forming partnerships.

The TCTF continues to utilise a three-part delivery model to maintain a holistic approach to driving down crime and anti-social behaviour and improve public perceptions of safety.

- 62 The TCTF’s activities revolve around three priority workstreams:
- **Monitor and Maintain (formerly Implementation and Creation):**
 - Analysing available data and developing workforce toolkits.
 - **Pursuing, Changing, and Challenging Behaviour (PCCB):**
 - Identifying threats and risks associated with criminality and ASB.
 - **Engagement and Legacy:**
 - Working to transform the town’s reputation positively.

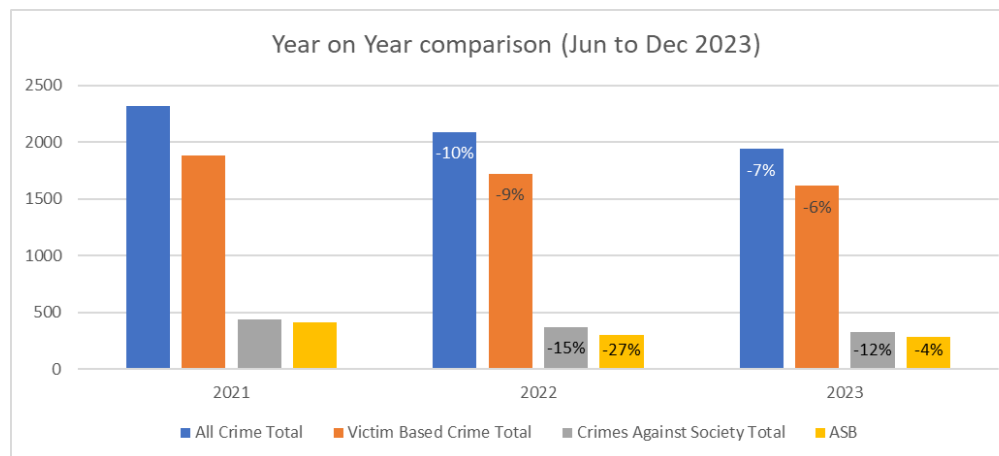
The Task Force (TCTF) diligently monitors progress across its workstreams via two alternating fortnightly meetings:

- **Operational Delivery Group:**
 - Focus on “Monitor and Maintain” and “Engagement and Legacy” workstreams.
- **Nominals and Locations Meeting:**
 - This pursuit-based meeting focusing on individuals, businesses, and locations of concern.

MONITOR AND MAINTAIN

The data for the High Street Ward is starting to show the impact of the TCTF with sustainable decrease across many crime types

63 Crime data for the High Street Ward, which constitutes 22% of all reported incidents in the borough, reveals encouraging trends following the implementation of the TCTF in June. A comparison of the same period (June to December) indicates notable declines across various categories. Overall, there has been a reduction of 16% in all reported crimes, with victim-based offenses seeing a decrease of 14%, crimes against society declining by 25%, and anti-social behaviour (ASB) incidents dropping by 30% from June to December 2021 to the same period in 2023.



MONITOR AND MAINTAIN
Our multiagency approach, boosted by Safer Streets 4 and VRU funding, has provided an opportunity to put in place sustainable changes to the Town Centre.

64 Owing to the volume of crime in High Street Ward, these reductions signify not only a significant volume of crime and ASB, but, as shown in the table below, the reduction rates, for the same period, are, in most cases significantly better than the borough. The decreases in VBC included a significant increase in shoplifting, although it is worth noting that the 35% increase in High Street is less than the increase seen across the borough. High Street also accounts for 9% of all Domestic Abuse, but still saw an 18% decrease.

Reported crimes (Jun to Dec)	2023	2022	2021	Diff (since 2021)	% Change (since 2021)
All Crime High Street	1938	2088	2316	-378	-16%
All Crime Rest of Borough	6840	7240	7436	-596	-8%
High Street VBC Total	1615	1719	1884	-269	-14%
VBC Rest of Borough	5876	6185	6364	-488	-8%
High Street CAS Total	323	369	432	-109	-25%
CAS Rest of Borough	964	1055	1072	-108	-10%
ASB High Street	286	298	411	-125	-30%
ASB Rest of Borough	1153	1114	1338	-185	-14%
Shoplifting High Street	272	229	202	+70	35%
Shoplifting Rest of Borough	954	321	352	+602	171%
Domestic Abuse High Street*	218	228	265	-47	-18%
Domestic Abuse Rest of Borough*	1080	1199	1372	-292	-21%

*June to November data used owing to issue with DA data for December 2021.

MONITOR AND MAINTAIN
Safer Streets 4 and VRU funding provided a significant opportunity to put in place sustainable changes to the Town Centre.

PURSUE/CHANGING/CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR (PCCB)- Analysis has found that a small number of individuals represent a disproportionate amount of the crime and ASB in the town centre.

PCCB
A holistic approach ensures that the most prevalent individuals are supported and a prevention approach reduces the need for enforcement or the criminal justice system.

PCCB
The TCTF also identifies and focusses their resources on certain locations and businesses which had become synonymous or identified with Crime and ASB.

65 In 2022, the SMP, through the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, successfully secured £565,877. This funding was allocated to a broad spectrum of initiatives aimed at reducing Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and Anti-Social Behaviour. Updates on these initiatives can be found in the engagement section below. The Safer Streets funding, in conjunction with the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) funding, has led to direct interventions and the establishment of initiatives that have continued beyond the funding period, which ended in September 2023 for Safer Streets 4. Achieving sustainable change necessitates ongoing investment, and the exploration for additional funding opportunities is a continuous process.

66 The TCTF has continued to evolve over the past year, focussing on the small number of individuals or the issues which contribute to disproportionate amounts of crime and ASB in the town. The multi-agency approach has been strengthened further, with broader investment from partners, including Southeast Rail, Kent Fire and Rescue Service (KFRS), and probation services. This expanded collaboration has only served to strengthen the ongoing efforts to mitigate crime and ASB in the town.

67 The TCTF then use their collective resources and powers to disrupt their behaviour 4P approach. The 4 Ps are Prevent, Protect, Pursue, Protect ensures everyone is dealt with on a case-by-case basis. The most appropriate combination of "Ps" is used to either disrupt their behaviour or make them accountable. In 2023, a further **12 individuals** were disrupted by the TCTF nominals group and were archived owing to their behaviour no longer impacting on the Town Centre. Additional persons and locations were discussed as the work remains fluid.

68 Certain locations within the town are identified as higher risk for unwanted behaviour. Areas that are synonymous with concerns, and new locations, are routinely visited and discussed by the Task Force in order to reduce issues and address concerns as they arise. These locations are subject of OSARA, problem solving plans, whereby the Task Force identify opportunities to reduce the risk of incidents. This approach considers not only the offenders, but also the victims and the location as a whole and seeks to find the most effective combination of interventions to tackle the problem of concern.

PCCB
Positive changes, including a new Community Hub, in Brenchley Gardens continue to improve the Parks reputation.

69 One of the locations identified as an area of concern in 2022 was Brenchley Gardens. The removal of key influencers, those individuals around whom a disproportionate amount of unwanted behaviour stemmed, increased patrols from across agencies and a variety of community events have significantly reduce the incidents in the park and improved the park’s atmosphere. The transformation of the disused toilet block into an Community Safety hub has provided a strategic base for police officers, One Maidstone Ambassadors, and Community Protection Officers to improve operations across the North of the town. This hub has not only improved the aesthetics and visibility in the park area but also enhanced the guardianship over this part of the town centre.



PCCB
Where significant risks are identified through intelligence, hostile operations have been undertaken to disrupt criminal activity or to safeguard those at risk of exploitation.

70 A key element of the TCTF sits within its intelligence sharing protocol. The sharing of information across several operational agencies has been the driving force to regular “hostile operations”. The operations can be in the form of days of action, test purchasing operations or the execution of warrants. The following are examples of the operations undertaken:

- Drug busts and county line disruption
- Trading Standards operations targeting illegal tobacco and underage vape sales
- Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking operations, including sex workers.
- Community Protection action against buildings with poor waste management, security and pest control
- Disruption of aggressive Chuggers and street traders.
- Knife Crime awareness and stop searches
- Enforcement and education of delivery drivers on North Week Street
- Electric Scooters education and seizures
- Increased NTE police presence

ENGAGEMENT AND LEGACY

The partnership has continued to utilise Safer Streets funding to implement initiatives to prevent Violence Against Women and Girls and reduce ASB.

71 The SMP were successful in obtaining funding from the Safer Streets 4 fund. As a partnership we identified several initiatives that would reduce and prevent Violence Against Women and Girls and ASB. [Appendix 4](#) Provides an update on the delivery of work undertaken with the funding and how they have contributed to the reported reductions in crime and ASB. These include:

- **Safer Spaces:** The Brenchley Community Safety Hub, staffing for 326 Youth Hub and upgraded CCTV
- **Proactive guardians:** Brenchley Summer Wardens, Active Bystander Training partners and security teams
- **Safer NTE:** Best Bar None for safer socialising, anti-spiking and personal safety equipment for women, supported NTE volunteers with equipment and recruitment
- **Improved perceptions:** Maidsafer media campaign, shopfront artwork and murals.

ENGAGEMENT AND LEGACY

Further funding has been secured to protect the 326 Youth Hub for another year.

72 Although initially funded by the Kent and Medway VRU, the partnership has worked to ensure the 326 Youth Hubs future could be secured, despite uncertainty in relation to the introduction of Family Hubs and the closure of other Youth provisions across Kent. Funding was secured from Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) / Section 106 monies to secure a further year of rent. Discussions are ongoing with a local charity to help secure the units longer term future and even its expansion into a Town Centre based indoor wheeled sport facility for skating, skateboarding and other similar activities, alongside a café and other wellbeing facilities to support young people in the town.

73 Attendance and activities at the 326 Youth Hub since opening continue to support the need for a provision in the town. Since February 2023, the 326 has:

- Welcomed 1520 different young people, who visited over 3800 times.
- Delivered 180 Sessions.
- Forty percent of the young people attend more than once.
- Fifty-five percent were young males.



Strategically, the SMP aligned this priority to the Local Children’s Partnership Group’s Action Plan 2024-2024, which is linked to the 0-25 Kent Health and Wellbeing Board Priorities.

- 74 The behaviour of some young people puts individuals and communities at risk. The SMP continues in its duty to safeguard our young people. This includes those individuals that intend to cause them harm through the supply of drugs and sexual exploitation (CSE) or those whose acts of domestic, drug or alcohol abuse in the home. Knife crime, serious youth violence and the impact of gang culture remain prevalent threats in young people’s lives. The SMP, through the DCSM, continues to look for opportunities to provide safe spaces for young people, where meaningful relationships can be formed.
- 75 The Maidstone District Local Children’s Partnership Groups (LCPG) brings several partner organisations together with the aim of improving outcomes for children and young people in the Borough. Working collaboratively to understand and meet the needs of residents, the LCPG set out yearly district partnership priorities of:

Community-
Children and young people to grow in safe families and communities, free from exposure to adverse childhood experiences, domestic abuse, anti-social behaviour, parental and/or community conflict, with better access to educational, social, and developmental opportunities.
Resilience and Empowerment
Support children and young people to become empowered and resilient through developing core life skills and improving awareness of issues such as child sexual exploitation, child criminal exploitation and risk-taking behaviours.
Family
Improved support for parents that enhances: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Parental engagement ○ Access to services such as employment opportunities ○ Parental understanding of child and adolescent development ○ Parent’s ability to manage children’s behaviour and nurture their development
Improved financial stability for families
Families are supported to deal with financial pressures, debt and cost-of-living crisis through appropriate advice and guidance, so they are better able to meet the basic needs of children and young people.

SMP has continued to deliver towards the LCPG action plan through its working group and through the introduction of a specialist “child-focussed” policing team and our Task Forces.

76 The action plan includes KCC specific deliverables around Early Years provisions, social services, and children/youth provisions. However, that are actions delivered by the SMP in response or support of the agreed priorities, including:

<p>District Contextual Safeguarding and Domestic Abuse Forum</p>
<p>Partnership work to protect young people, particularly around trauma informed practice, as detailed within this report. In 2023 the DCSM identified 24 locations / premises across the borough where young people’s behaviour is deemed to have been putting themselves or others at risk. In discussing these locations 41 young people were identified and plans put in place to support, divert, or disrupt their behaviour to safeguard them.</p>
<p>Child Centred Policing Team</p>
<p>The Child Centred Policing Team (CCPT), introduced in June 2023, as part of the new Neighbourhood Policing Model, works closely with young people, educational establishments, and partner agencies to build positive relationships and facilitate a two-way exchange of information. They identify and work with young people at risk, using prevention initiatives and enforcement powers to reduce crime and antisocial behaviour. The CCPT utilises tools to identify high harm drivers and understand young people’s concerns, developing effective plans for lasting resolutions. They actively participate in meetings to develop joint problem-solving strategies and utilise restorative approaches. The team develops intervention plans for at-risk youth, advocates the use of AWARE principles and OP Encompass within Kent Police, and assists with criminal investigations requiring a child-centred approach. Their work ensures early identification and support for young people exposed to domestic abuse and trauma.</p> <p>Since their introduction in June 2023, the Maidstone CCPT have supported several individual young people, many of whom have been considered high risk for harm. Interventions have been undertaken that have encouraged the young people to disclose some of the drivers behind their risk-taking behaviour, leading to arrests of abusers, on one occasion, the child being taken into care. In addition to the individual work, the officers have made repeat visits to 28 Secondary Schools and Colleges and several primary schools, supporting with specific students, and delivering inputs on specific topics, including knife crime, bullying and malicious communications, gangs and county lines, racism, and sexual exploitation (including sexting).</p>

Town Centre Task Force

As detailed in previous section

- Undertaken extensive work has been undertaken to reduce ASB particularly in North Week Street and Brenchley Gardens.
- Looked at substance misuse in young people, with growing concerns around underage vaping and associated risk-taking behaviour.
- operations undertaken to tackle:
 - those selling vapes to minors.
 - those acquiring them for young people.
 - and challenging the young people themselves.
- 3-2-6 Youth Hub opened.
- Several measures under Safer Streets 4 feed into this priority, including:
 - Brenchley Gardens Community Safety Hub.
 - Youth Workers for the "Lost Hours".
 - Bystander Training for professionals who work with Young People.
 - CCTV for locations where young people are known to gather since the intensification. of guardianship in Brenchley Gardens.

A specific area of child safety, Missing Children shows that Children who go missing are at a higher risk of harm and are often those identified as being linked to risk taking behaviour in hotspot locations.

As with other areas of safeguarding, partnership working is recognised as being essential when looking after children who frequently go missing.

Preventative work and co-ordinated responses to missing children has led to a

- 77 Nationally, children represent approximately two thirds of the missing person incidents. The reasons for running away are varied, complex and unique to individual children. The most frequent reason given is 'problems at home'. Physical abuse from adults, mental health and substance misuse problems, and involvement in criminality are commonly associated with children running away. Missing children are at high risk of physical and sexual abuse, criminality, and homelessness. Persistent running away is increasingly understood to be an indicator that a child may be a victim of sexual exploitation.
- 78 The DCSM ensures local concerns and young people, who's missing episodes are of greatest concern, are kept safe through effective partnership working. From the information provided below, Maidstone borough saw an increase of 31% in comparison to the previous period, although levels remain lower than pre-pandemic. Whilst increasing levels is a concern, the levels in Maidstone and West remain considerably lower than the levels seen in East Kent and North Kent, where missing children are considerably higher.
- 79 There has been a slight decrease in risk taking behaviour in children between 11 and 14 in the borough and nationally, the age groups whose transition to secondary school was most impacted by the pandemic. However, it is important that we continue to see them as children first, recognising that their behaviours or

reduction of missing episodes and how long young people are missing, but the risk of CSE whilst missing has increased..

actions could be influenced by other people (such as adults who may be exploiting them) or by a past traumatic experience.

	Maidstone	North Kent	East Kent	West Kent
Missing Reports	348	2570	2778	972
Individuals	167	888	1048	463

M-CET DATA	2023	2022	2021	Diff +/-	% Change
Missing Reports	348	414	315	99	-16%
Individuals	168	173	154	19	-3%
Average Missing Time (hours)	13.5	20	18	2	-33%
Repeat Rate%	64%	72%	67%	-	-11%
Possible CSE	112	99	51	48	13%
Found Harmed	15	16	14	2	-6.25%

- **Possible CSE** –CSE is a highly complex crime. This figure is used to record both those at risk, not just those as confirmed as victims of this offence, so the increase here reflects risk as opposed to harm.
- **Found Harmed** – this can mean a multitude of things. A child can be harmed either from an assault, road traffic crash or even self-harm. This remains relatively low.
- **Repeat Rate** – children have a significantly higher rate of repeat missing than adults, with children in care more likely to go missing more often. Repeat rate has not increased significantly.

Gangs remain a peripheral threat to Maidstone with active County Lines across Kent, but “gang culture” can be misleading to the public.

80 Maidstone does not have an identified “gang/OCG”, although the risk of County Lines remains, with active lines working across the county. Attempts to establish line in Maidstone are quickly disrupted by specialist teams and intelligence led policing. Perceived “gang culture” does however continue to influence how our young people act, dress, and speak. When referring to groups of young people we must ensure that we use the defined terms, as the follows:

- **Peer Group** - A small, unorganised, transient grouping occupying the same space with a common history. Crime is not integral to their self-definition.
- **Street Group** - A relatively durable, predominantly street-based group of young people who see themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernible group for whom crime and violence is integral to the group's identity.
- **An Organised Criminal Network/Gang** - A group of individuals for whom involvement in crime is for personal gain. The gain is mostly measured in financial terms. Crime is their 'occupation'.

The DCSM often works to disrupt "Peer Groups" who's behaviour is considered unacceptable or posing a risk. Where a Peer Group starts to demonstrate a hierarchy and begins to engage in criminality and violence, the then "Street Group" are then mapped, and a holistic plan drawn up to disrupt their behaviour.

Youth Justice and the Youth Offending Team continue to support young people who commit criminal offences. Numbers remain relatively low, but have increased in both offences committed and the number of children committing crimes.

81

Age of Offenders	2022/23	2021/22
Age under 12	8	10
Age 13	13	10
Age 14	22	10
Age 15	25	9
Age 16	20	18
Age 17 +	21	26

Looking at the latest period, April 2022 to March 2023, youth offences have increased from **146 to 202**, an increase of **56 (38%)**.

There has been an increase in the number of individuals committing crime, from **83 to 109** an increase of **26(31%)**. The breakdown of these offenders' age groups is shown in the table on the left.

Around **0.7%** of the youth population have been convicted of an offence. The table below shows that the total number of youth offences has continued to decrease in the last six years.

Period	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Youth Offences	132	97	110	87	152	146	202

7. Priority area Summary Reviews

Protecting our communities against serious, violent, and organised crime (including modern-day slavery).

Priority status: On track 82 The SMP remains well placed to continue to deliver work which will prevent and reduce serious violent and organised crime as this area continues to pose a significant risk. The operational frameworks in Maidstone, that promote collaborative working and early intervention are aligned with both County and National models of best practice.

Priority status: Reducing the harm caused by domestic abuse.

Priority status: On track 83 Domestic Abuse remains a national priority. Locally, Domestic Abuse makes up nearly a fifth of all crime and over 80% of all crimes involving violence against a person. The MDAF is well placed to continue to support the SMP's Domestic Abuse duty, continuing to support victims and raise awareness through a growing array of new and improving services. Reductions in reported crimes, particularly disproportionate reductions in reports of coercion and control requires further investigation to understand the cause, as this remains an under reported crime.

Priority status: Provide a safe town centre.

Priority status: Exceeding expectations 84 The TCTF has built on their 2022 achievements, enhancing the collaboration with the wider SMP for a more comprehensive public health response to challenges. This has led to further reductions in crime and ASB. The delivery of Safer Streets 4 (SS4) accelerated the delivery of services that might have taken years to fund or may not been delivered at all, enhancing our effectiveness and community impact. Collaboration remains key to these advancements.

Priority status: Keeping children and young people safe.

Priority status: On track 85 Alignment to the LCPGs action plan has ensured that, alongside other children services' priorities, adverse childhood experiences, their impact on decision making and risk taking, continues to be considered when protecting young people across the priorities. It also ensures that services are designed that create spaces where young people feel safe, have a sense of belonging and know that they matter. There are many societal factors that are beyond the control of the partnership, but DCSM continues to work to protect young people in locations where their behaviour, or the behaviour of others, puts them or others at risk. The new Family Hub model will require close monitoring to ensure young people are not impacted by changes.

ASB is falling to pre-pandemic levels. Dog incidents are increasing, but still relatively low in comparison to other issues.

Effective use of Community Protection Powers continues across the SMP with more partners authorised to use them through SLAs.

Use of CPWs to challenge ASB has increased, with Kent Police and partners increasing their use significantly

- 86 As detailed the [Cluster Data Analysis and trends](#), ASB has reduced by 31% across the whole borough.
- 87 The table eight in [appendix 2](#) provides a breakdown of ASB reported by Kent police by Ward. Map 3 ([appendix 3](#)), shows the distribution of ASB in 2022, in comparison with 2021. The Council’s CPT has the also recorded a reduction in service requests for both ASB (-27%) and Nuisance (-15%), whereas incidents involving dangerous, or nuisance dogs has increase (+25), although the numbers remain relatively low. The service request activity breakdown is provided in [Appendix 4](#)
- 88 Community Protection Notice (CPNs) remains one of the most effective tools in the Community Safety tool kit. It is a legislative requirement to issue a written warning prior to issuing a CPN. These are referred to within the SMP as CPWs. CPWs continue to be the most effective aspect of this power, as compliance with warnings remains high. Service level agreements are now in place with Housing Providers and the Town Centre Ambassadors to allow them to use CPWs as part of their role, to complement the Police and Council use of this effective tool.
- 89 Reductions in ASB across the borough and the effectiveness of the CPWs previously issued on those individuals responsible for the majority of the ASB, such as those in the Town Centre, has seen a net reduction in the number of CPWs issued, particularly for ASB and noise. It should also be noted that, as part of the neighbourhood policing review, the Warnings issued by Kent Police are now recorded centrally and at the time of producing this report, there have been some issues in obtaining that information. It is likely that the figure below will increase once the information is obtained.

Breakdown of CPWs Issued	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
ASB	13	28	26	62	19
Nuisance/Dangerous dog (Inc Barking)	5	8	19	6	13
Noise (Inc with ASB)	4	18	25	28	12
Nuisance	1	14	15	12	14
Unauthorised Encampment	5	2	0	0	0
Total	28	70	85	108	59

Use of CPNs has increased relative to CPWs, but still shows CPWs are largely effective in dealing with unwanted behaviour

90 Where the unwanted behaviour persists after a CPW is issued, it can be necessary to issue a CPN, which can put in place requirements. The use of CPNs, with the threat of prosecution or fixed penalty notice, is used as part of an escalating approach. As detailed in paragraph 89, there are a number of factors leading to a reduction, including under reporting due to issues obtaining the data.

Breakdown of CPNs Issued	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
ASB	1	20	4	19	2
Nuisance/Dangerous dog (Inc Barking)	0	0	0	5	1
Noise (Inc with ASB)	1	2	6	12	1
Nuisance	0	8	3	1	1
Unauthorised Encampment	1	1	0	0	0
Total	3	31	13	37	5

The SMP’s collaborative approach utilises a range of ASB Powers and other powers to challenge unwanted behaviour, including the use of seizures, Public Space Protection Orders and housing powers. .

91 In addition to the above, the SMP continues to utilise a range of other powers and techniques to reduce ASB. This includes utilising dispersal orders in locations where it is needed to give relief to a specific community or area. Seizures have been undertaken in relation to catapults and other weapons, off-road bikes, e-scooters, vapes, and alcohol where they have been found and linked to anti-social behaviour. In more serious cases, the SMP have worked to build the evidence required to secure Criminal Behaviour Orders against persistent offenders and, with housing providers, supported or utilised the threat of eviction, specifically to control the behaviour of residents both in their homes and in the local communities. Work is currently being developed to look at closure orders in relation to stores suspected as supplying illicit tobacco and the selling of either illegal vapes or selling any vape to a young person. The Community Protection Team, in 2024, will also introduce a new App, which allows victims of noise and ASB to report their concerns more efficiently.

Maidstone experienced no unauthorised encampments as effectiveness of ASB led approach continues to protect our public spaces.

93 In 2019 the CPT introduced the use of ASB powers to challenge the behaviour of those individuals or groups who created unauthorised encampments in the borough. This included several encampments who returned to specific locations annually. In 2023 there were no encampments on Public Land. Advice was provided to remove encampments on private land.

Community Triggers were rebranded in 2023 as ASB Case reviews, prompting an increase in applications, although only one case met the threshold.

93 The 'Community Trigger', a mechanism that gives victims of persistent anti-social behaviour the ability to demand a formal case review when a locally defined threshold is met, was rebranded as ASB Case Reviews as part of the Government's ASB Action Plan. The rebranding of the 'Community Trigger' to ASB Case Reviews was promoted locally as part of ASB Awareness Week in July 2023. The aim of the National Week of action was to raise awareness about the rights of victims of anti-social behaviour and the actions that can be taken by those experiencing it and to highlight the efforts of the SMP to reduce it. The week was filled with activities and events including activities in the Town Centre and rural areas, as well as social media posts, celebrating the work of our "ASB Champions," the charities and partners who all play their role in tackling ASB in Maidstone. In 2022, no Community Triggers were requested. However, in 2023, we received seven applications for ASB Case Reviews, of which only one met the threshold to trigger a review. Most of the applications were made from customers who were not happy with the outcome of the investigations and were using the ASB Case Review to supplement their service complaints. Many of these indicated that agencies involved had investigated and taken the relevant steps but could not meet the customers unreasonable expectations.

Growing Customer expectations have led to increases in service complaints, but investigations find that their expectations often cannot be met due to a lack of evidence or unrealistic expectations.

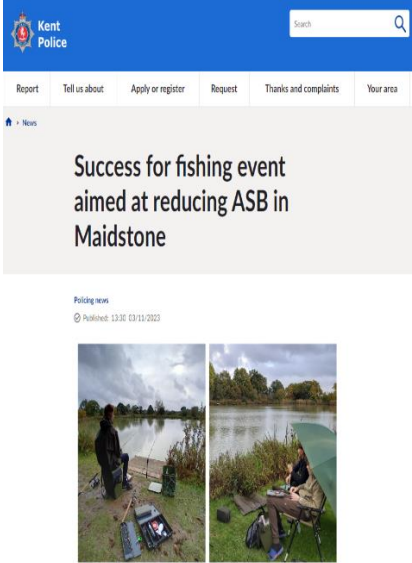


94 There have been notable increases in service complaints against officers in the Community Protection Team, increasing by 133% since 2020. Most concerns raised are due to people having an unreasonable expectation of service or dissatisfaction with the action taken, including warning letters. These are thoroughly investigated and are rarely found to have been handled poorly by the officers. In addition to this, a complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) was also not upheld as it was found the Community Protection Team had investigated the matter thoroughly and could not meet the complainant's unreasonable expectations. Complaints have been noted as increasing across a number of services and partner agencies, including Kent Police and Elected members/MPs. This should be noted as a necessary but draining impact on resourcing levels across the Community Safety Partnership (CSP).

Considerable investment has been made by partners across the SMP to utilise their media channels to raise awareness and celebrate successes.

96 The surveys undertaken in 2021 and conversations with ward members have highlighted that there is a perception that crime and ASB is increasing in the borough. Whilst that is true, the extent to which it is increasing is disproportionate to the actual crime figures. Within this report we can demonstrate the extent to which the partnership is working to reduce crime and ASB and safeguard the vulnerable and young people. A specific communications plan is in place to install a sense of safety, remove the fear and negative perception, and encourage behaviour change of people who install fear and are responsible for antisocial behaviour. The plan includes the use of several press releases, social media posts, newsletter content to promote the work of the SMP and to promote the Town Centre in a positive way. As an example, there has been 126 My Community Voice posts from Kent Police delivered to residents and interested parties for the Town Centre. The MaidSafer brand, on posters around the town provides a visual reminder of the work being undertaken to keep Maidstone safe. Paragraph 100 provides a sample of some of the media released throughout the year to raise awareness.

Examples of media and shared throughout 2023

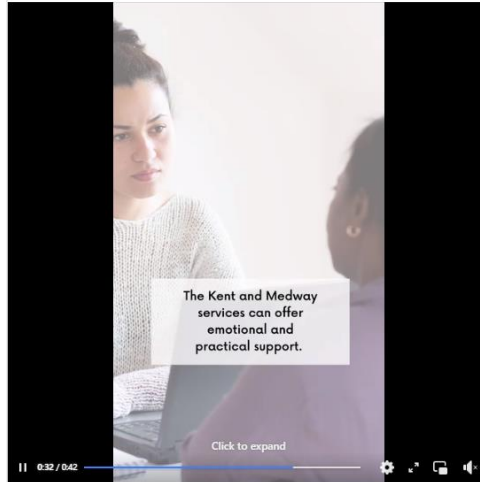
97

Kent Police Press Releases	Safer Maidstone Media Campaign	
 <p>The screenshot shows a news article from Kent Police. The headline is "Success for fishing event aimed at reducing ASB in Maidstone". Below the headline, there are two photographs showing people fishing in a pond. The article text is partially visible at the bottom.</p>	 <p>The screenshot shows a social media post from "Maidstone Community" dated May 12, 2023. It features a large, colorful graffiti piece on a wall. The graffiti includes the word "Maidstone" in large, stylized letters, a bus, and other local landmarks. Below the main image are three smaller images showing different parts of the graffiti.</p>	 <p>The photograph shows a street scene in Maidstone. A utility pole in the foreground has a blue poster attached to it. The poster features the text "Be Safe. Keep Safe." and an image of a woman and a man. The background shows a street with buildings and a street sign.</p>

Domestic Abuse Campaigns

Maidstone Borough Council
November 26, 2023

Domestic Abuse is when a current/ex-partner or family member uses power to control a person. It can be physical, psychological, sexual, economic, emotional, and/or coercive. Let's #ChangeTheStory this #16Days. Learn more www.domesticabuseservices.org.uk #KnowSeeSpeakOut #EndDomesticAbuse



My Community Voice

;/’/#



Seized scooters on My Community Voice post

ASB Awareness Week July 2023

Maidstone Borough Council
July 7, 2023

As part of #ASBAwarenessWeek, the Violence Reduction Unit has installed a new, temporary exhibition in Maidstone Leisure Centre. The exhibition will be here for a week, and gives information and advice to help everyone feel safer in their communities. Cllr Lottie Parfitt-Reid, MBC Cabinet Member for Housing & Health, signed a pledge again anti-social behaviour, along with Kent Police, Kent County Council Community Wardens and MBC Community Protection, and you can too. #KnowYourRights



SAFE, CLEAN AND GREEN

Part of the team

If anyone has been in the town centre on a Saturday night, they would have seen the Urban Blue Bus, parked in Jubilee Square. The charity, which has been running for the past 14 years has volunteers onboard offering first aid and welfare assistance to anyone who needs it, as well as providing a safe space for those feeling vulnerable. They aim to take some of the pressure off the Police, venue door staff and the ambulance service. The Bus has a large footfall at the weekends and have had many hundreds of positive comments saying the facility is something they have never seen before and how it makes them feel safe in the town centre.

The Urban Blue Bus team works very closely with the Maidstone Street Pastors who let them know about any people they come across during their walks around the town centre who need help, advice or treatment for minor injuries. They provide Kent Police with an area where those needing to speak to a police officer can do so in relative privacy, without having to go to the police station. The Urban Blue Bus is one of the many community safety organisations who all work together to keep residents and visitors safe. For more information visit: www.urbanbluemedical.co.uk

Borough Update Articles throughout the year

SAFE, CLEAN AND GREEN



We're in The Mall!

Since opening in February the 326 Youth Hub in The Mall in the town centre has seen more than 850 young people visit and enjoy the activities and support on offer.

Situated on the upper level of the shopping centre next to Sports Direct, the Youth Hub is open to young people Monday to Friday between 3pm and 6pm and during the day on Saturdays with extended hours over school holidays.

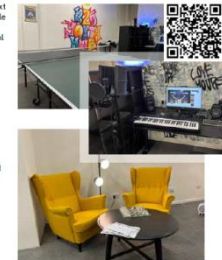
Maidstone Borough Council's Community Protection Team worked in partnership with Kent and Medway Violence Reduction Unit, the Kent Police Crime Commissioner, Kent County Council, Maidstone Mall and One Maidstone BID to launch the project.

Activities on offer include boxing, singing and music, providing a place for young people to meet in a safe space where they feel they belong.

They are also able to talk to professionals, such as youth workers and health specialists, helping to build resilience, confidence and develop life skills to make better informed choices.

Events in the Hub are promoted through schools and youth services. For more information please email: communityprotection@maidstone.gov.uk

All young people are welcome, please drop in.



SAFE, CLEAN AND GREEN

Clamping down on irresponsible dog owners

The Council has introduced further measures as part of The Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) for Dog Control to clamp-down on unacceptable behaviour and issue Fixed Penalty Notices where necessary.

Keeping dogs under proper control is the responsibility of every dog owner.

For the past three years, the Dog Control PSPO in Maidstone has made the following actions an offence:

- Allowing dogs to wander or roam loose without a person accompanying them
- Failing to place a dog on a lead when asked to do so by an authorised officer
- Allowing dogs into play areas and MBC owned tennis courts
- Failing to keep dogs on leads in Maidstone Cemetery or Crematorium

In addition to these measures, the Dog Control PSPO has now been extended to include the following requirements for anyone in charge of a dog:

- Dogs must be kept on a lead in Maidstone Town Centre
- The number of dogs one person can walk at any one time is four, unless they are a professional dog walker who has signed up to MBC's Professional Dog Walker's Scheme and then the limit is increased to six dogs for that person

Offences under the PSPO for Dog Control carry a fixed penalty of £100.

Members of the public can view the Dog Control PSPO or report related issues on the maidstone.gov.uk website or reports can be made by calling 01422 402202.

Anyone in charge of a dog is being asked to behave responsibly and follow the rules and regulations that apply to the animal.



Clearing the River Tow Paths

The Council works hard to keep the river tow paths clear however, at rainy times when water levels are high, this can be challenging.

The silt on the paths can only be removed when it is still wet and only when there is no more rain expected. New signs have been put up along the River Medway at places where this is an issue.



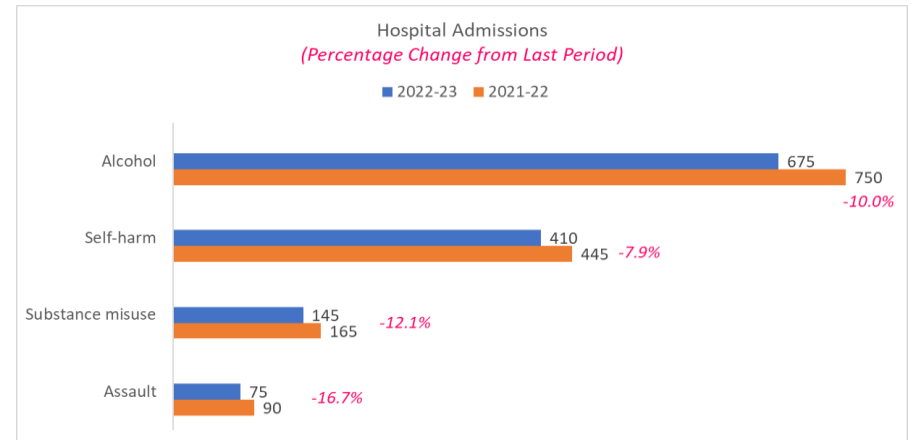
Trauma informed practice remains a fundamental element of the SMPs work

- 98 There is a significant body of evidence that identifies that a public health approach is needed to reduce violence and reduce the wider determinants of crime.
- 99 Trauma informed practice is imbedded within the work of all the priority delivery groups as a foundation to the work undertaken. There are several examples within this report of the work undertaken in this period where a public health approach is taken. Here are some examples for each group:

Protecting our communities against serious, violent, and organised crime (including modern-day slavery)-Delivered through the SOCP
Recognising the impact of past traumas in offenders. Plans that put in place support and opportunities for rehabilitation, restorative justice, and community payback
Reducing the harm caused by domestic abuse (including stalking)- Delivered through the MDAF
Processes that support victims/survivors of DA through the housing process. Trauma informed awareness events for practitioners
Providing a Safe Town Centre – Delivered by the TCTF
Active Bystander training funded by safer streets, promoting awareness of social influences and pressures on boys in particular
Keeping children and young people safe- Delivered through the DCSM
Recognising the impact on young people who are witnesses to violence or abuse in their decision making. Raising awareness of Adverse Childhood Experiences within schools and with businesses.

100 Substance misuse relates to the use of drugs, alcohol and includes New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) previously known as legal highs

101 The data regarding Hospital Admissions, which covers the fiscal year, show that Alcohol and Substance Abuse admissions have decreased, but the volume of alcohol admissions remaining significantly higher than any other admission types. Admissions for self-harm also remain significantly higher than admissions for Substance Misuse and Assault.

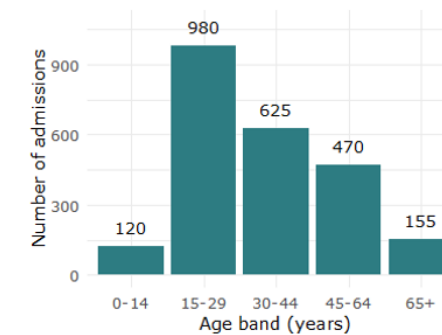
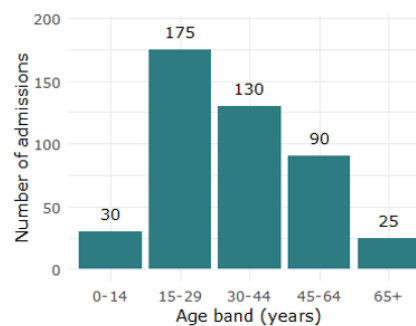
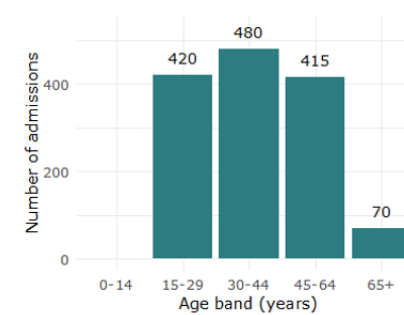
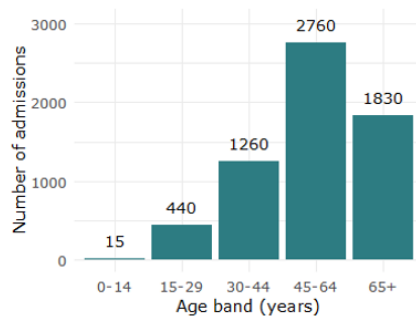
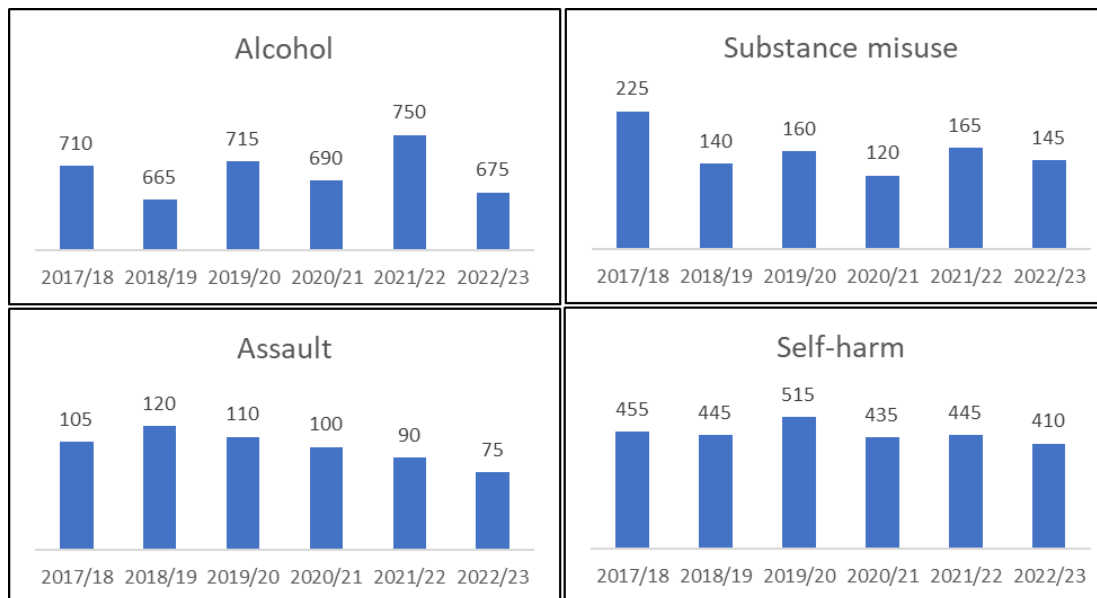


Hospital admissions over a longer period show that levels are remaining stable in Maidstone, with admissions for assault beginning to show a negative trend.

102 The number of emergency admissions for alcohol have reduced between 2021/22 and 2022/23, while substance misuse and assaults and self-harm have been similar or shown a slight reduction. Admissions for alcohol and substance misuse were at similar levels to records from 2018/19. Admissions by age follow the general pattern for Kent, however alcohol admissions were higher in 30–44-year-olds compared to most other districts, and age 65+ lower. Age 30-44 was the largest age group for substance misuse.

Alcohol admissions and substance misuse admissions were highest in residents of Maidstone Central and West, Ringlestone, Parkwood and Shepway.

Graphs showing the breakdown of hospital admissions by type for Maidstone and by age for across Kent.



Admissions by age band in Kent. Source: Hospital Episode Statistics, NHS Digital

Kent Police recorded a 6% rise in drug related offences

103 Kent police’s recorded drug offences include both offences of drug supply and possession. Under this category of crime Maidstone has seen a **(6%)** increase in drug offences in 2023 compared to 2022 with **461 (+26)**. Overall, Kent saw an increase of (18.6%) of drug offences for the rolling year January 2023 to December 2023 with 821 crimes more than last year. This data includes the proactive work of Maidstone police engaging in warrants and stop and search.

Needle finds in the borough rise but remain significantly lower than previous years.

104 The following table shows the needle finds in the borough. The figure **combines** the needles removed by the council’s waste team and the contents of external needle bins, strategically placed in the town to try to reduce discarded needles. 713 Needles were found/retrieved in the year 2023, which is a 51% increase.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
2019	143	164	84	205	87	85	85	203	120	136	113	97	1,522
2020	59	54	138	1,542	117	27	104	128	107	121	17	74	2,488
2021	135	55	38		14	539	34	42	23	120	43	23	1,066
2022	80	15	18	51	22	41	79	55	26	24	43	18	472
2023	89	44	20	77	81	83	70	71	77	38	32	31	713

Riverside locations continue give rise to concern as hot spots for needle finds, despite increased monitoring

105 The sustained reduction in needles has been linked largely to the work of the Outreach team within the Council’s Housing Team, who this year have continued to work closely with the TCTF. The following shows that some areas like the Rose Garden, has seen significant decreases. The Rose Garden is close to the Amphitheatre and River Steps, which is an area where some displacement has been seen from the Town Centre. These areas are routinely monitored by the TCTF, and the finds are felt to be linked to a small cohort of users.

Top 5 locations

Jan-21 to Dec-21

Location	Count
Sutton Rd Cemetary	500
Rose Garden	129
Ampitheatre	107
River steps	96
Whatman Park	88

Jan-22 to Dec-22

Location	Count
Whatman Park	143
Ampitheatre	109
River steps	70
Brewer St Cemetary	61
Rose Garden	40

Jan-23 to Dec-23

Location	Count
Whatman Park	190
Ampitheatre	140
Rose Garden	124
River steps	109
Brewer St Cemetary	71

Safeguarding people whose mental health makes them vulnerable to becoming a victim or where it leads to an impact on the wider community-social behaviour.

- 106 Mental health/wellbeing can play a significant role in how people behave, but it also influences how they access services and vulnerability to others who might choose to exploit them.
- Mental Health/wellbeing remains an integral to all aspects of the CSP Plan**
- 107 Mental Health is intrinsically linked to all aspects of this plan, including the four priority workstreams. Whether it is the control and coercion used by a domestic abuse perpetrator or adverse childhood experiences stunting development in our young people, mental health remains at the heart of the SMP's work to reduce crime and ASB
- The Community Safety and Vulnerability Group (CSVG) continues to work in partnership to safeguard our 41 of our most vulnerable residents**
- 108 The weekly CSVG is a partnership meeting that considers the welfare most vulnerable in our district, with mental health a common concern for those residents referred to the group for discussion. Representatives from up to ten partnership agencies and service providers discuss the needs of individuals of concern, sharing intelligence and targeting their resources to safeguard them against themselves and those who might seek to exploit them. In 2023 the CSVG received 41 referrals for individuals to be discussed by the partnership. Most referrals identified concerns with mental health, although many of them had no mental health support or had refused to engage with services.
- Work around the point of crisis remains key to minimise risk**
- 109 When someone is in crisis in a public space and posing a risk to themselves or others, the police have the power under Section 136 of the Mental Health Act to remove a person to a place of safety. The power cannot be used to remove people from their own home, or someone else's home. The use of section 136 in Maidstone in 2022/23 fell by 28% to 47. Hospital admissions, as shown in [paragraph 104](#), also showed that self-harm was the second highest reason for admission, with 31% of Hospital Admissions in the borough. This is particularly prevalent in those age 15 to 29. Maidstone has also experienced suicides in public places, some of which involved young people. Support networks and working groups are in place.
- Referrals into support services have risen in older people, but remain higher in younger adults.**
- 110 Where a concern is identified, practitioners can make a mental health referral into support services. In 2022/23, younger adult (18-64) services (including acute/community recovery services) 1344 case referrals were made, compared to 1432 the previous year, and decrease of 6%. In older adults (65+) there was an increase of 14% to 1210 cases compared to 1065 the previous year.

**The SMP continue to work
in line with the HMPPS
Reducing Reoffending Plan
2021-2024, utilising
partnership working as a
key element of reducing
reoffending**

- 111 Reducing reoffending is a statutory requirement for all Community Safety Partnerships. People offend for a variety of reasons. Some offenders have troubled lives with complex needs, and, in many cases, this contributes to their continuing offending behaviour. Some of these factors include health related issues (including mental health), accommodation, drugs and alcohol and attitudes (thinking/behaviour).
- 112 The HMPPS Reducing Reoffending Plan 2021-2024 acknowledges the importance of partnership working to provide services and interventions at the critical time when repeat offenders want to change their offending lifestyle. The Plan articulates this will be achieved at a local level through the Community Safety Partnerships, Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference [MARAC], local MAPPA boards, Child and Adult Safeguarding Partnerships and Reducing Reoffending groups. The current IOM cohort and prison releases for Maidstone are discussed at SOCP

9. Appendices

Appendix 1 Community Safety, Youth Safety Surveys and Residents Covid 19 Surveys

Undertaking surveys enables us to capture individual's perceptions or feelings of safety and how they feel the partnership are tackling issues in their area and the borough. Surveys provided a representative response and can allow us to understand whether there are any areas of particular concern, as well as ensuring that the Partnership's priorities are aligned with those of the residents of Maidstone.

In 2021 we undertook two surveys to help inform our 2022-25 priorities. A public and a youth survey. For the public survey used some comparable questions to those asked in 2019 so comparisons could be drawn.

The **public** survey was undertaken in the Autumn and received 1241 responses. The key findings were as follows:

- 84% of respondents felt safe in their local area in the daytime, increasing from 77% in 2019.
- 38% of respondents felt safe in their local area at night, decreasing from 41% in 2019.
- People feel most unsafe in the Town Centre- Brenchley Gardens and North Week Street highlighted as areas of concern.
- 74% of respondents said they do not feel safe in the Town Centre at night.
- 80% of respondents felt that crime has increased to some degree in the last three years.
- 52% did not feel that public services were successfully dealing with ASB and Crime, with 48% of respondents feeling that ASB was not being dealt with in their local area.
- 27% of responders have experienced a crime in the last 3 years. The crime experienced the most was vandalism/graffiti/other. Of those experiencing a crime, 31% (100) people did not report it.
- 77% who stated they had witnessed a crime, witnessed fly tipping, littering or dog fouling.
- Of the 2019-2022 CSP Plan priorities, "Keeping children and young people safe" was given the highest level of importance.
- Of the top three issues that most need tackling in Maidstone, responders chose anti-social behaviour (653), drugs and substance abuse (598), and people carrying weapons (448).

The **youth** survey was distributed via schools in their spring term and received over 2000 responses. 80% of respondents were female. The key findings were as follows:

- Almost one in six respondents said they worried about their safety on a regular basis (daily or a few times a week).
- Just under a third said they felt unsafe in town centre, while a quarter said they feel unsafe on public transport.
- More than one in five respondents said that verbal bullying and racist and homophobic comments were a problem at their school.
- Respondents from minority groups considered negative behaviour in their local area to be a bigger problem than white group respondents - specifically underage drinking, verbal bullying, racists or homophobic comments and knife crime.
- Young year groups (years 6 and 7) perceived those negative behaviour at their schools were bigger problems than the other year groups - both these groups had significantly greater proportions saying that drug dealing, fighting, knife crime and gangs are a problem at their school.
- Almost two in five respondents said they felt unsafe in their local area during the night.
- One in five respondents said they had been cyber-bullied and almost two thirds of respondents said they had been asked to send a picture or video of themselves or show themselves on webcam.
- Attitudes to the police were mixed with almost two thirds agreeing that they think they would be treated with respect if they met the local police however less than half agreed that the local police listen to the concerns of young people or that the police are dealing with the issues that matter most to young people.

Analysis of survey results

Both surveys indicated increased fear and perception of crime, with the Town Centre itself being highlighted as an area of concern. Perception of crime and safety can be influenced by several factors. The pandemic, society and the media can all significantly influence perceptions and may or may not relate to whether someone has been a victim of crime. For example, whilst 77% of respondents stated that they had witnessed a crime, most of those crimes were environmental crimes, such as littering. Whilst criminal offences, they are not regarded as "harmful" crimes, albeit they do have a cumulative impact on a community.

Anti-social behaviour and the perceived lack of action by the partnership is an area of great concern, indicating both a need to improve the way in which certain behaviour are challenged and a need to publicise the work of the partnership, which, as is explained in this report, is amongst the most proactive in the county. Drugs and substance abuse, and people carrying weapons were also highlighted as areas of concern. As detailed in the data within this report, neither of these crimes are a prevalent as people seem to think, but it is recognised that isolated incidents of violence can have significant impacts on people's perceptions.

The way media and social media works has been highlighted as a particular challenge when it comes to community safety. It is well documented that during times of crisis we are more drawn to news/information. This enables us to make decisions that keep us and our loved ones safe. To support this, we have an inherent negativity bias, which is used to trigger our flight, fight, fear, feint responses. But in the absence of physical threats, our biological responses are more readily triggered by perceived rather than actual threats, which can reduce our cognitive functions. To compound this, repeated exposure can create cognitive distortions, deeper rooted negative perceptions- such as violent crime being more prevalent than reality.

There have been a small number of isolated issues, particularly in parts of the town, but how they have been reported in the media and on social media, creates a narrative that is difficult to challenge. Actual and alleged violent incidents are more readily reported than 10-20 years ago, therefore creating a perception of increased violence. However, the nature of some of the incidents themselves will also be a factor, particularly where weapons are used. Overall, the surveys show more work is needed to reduce ASB and certain crime types, whilst improving public perception and confidence.

Residents Covid 19 Survey

A Residents' Covid survey undertaken in 2020 received 1453 responses. Survey respondents were asked about the impact of the pandemic on their mental health and around 50% responded that they have been negatively impacted by the pandemic. They were also asked to select their top three concerns and around 14% selected mental health as one of their top three concerns.

Table One- Actual Crimes Reported

Table Two- Normalised Reported Crimes based on population (per 1000 people)

Ward	This Year	Last Year	Change in Crimes	Ward	This Year	Last Year	Change in Crimes		Ward	This Year	Last Year	%Change	Ward	This Year	Last Year	%Change
Allington	271	247	24	Heath	933	847	86		Allington	34	31	10%	Heath	125	114	10%
Barming	81	82	-1	High Street	3272	3530	-258		Barming	34	34	N/A	High Street	275	296	-7%
Bearsted	217	262	-45	Leeds	81	145	-64		Bearsted	26	31	-17%	Leeds	33	60	-44%
Boughton Monchelsea and Chart Sutton	129	117	12	Loose	80	113	-33		Boughton Monchelsea and Chart Sutton	44	40	10%	Loose	31	44	-29%
Boxley	618	658	-40	Marden and Yalding	560	616	-56		Boxley	71	75	-6%	Marden and Yalding	59	65	-9%
Bridge	687	796	-109	North Downs	214	239	-25		Bridge	102	119	-14%	North Downs	80	89	-10%
Coxheath and Hunton	396	429	-33	North	788	865	-77		Coxheath and Hunton	48	52	-8%	North	77	84	-9%
Detling and Thurnham	175	162	13	Park Wood	1274	1201	73		Detling and Thurnham	54	50	8%	Park Wood	136	128	6%
Downswood and Otham	166	157	9	Shepway North	705	794	-89		Downswood and Otham	49	47	6%	Shepway North	76	86	-11%
East	693	737	-44	Shepway South	521	545	-24		East	77	82	-6%	Shepway South	88	92	-4%
Fant	802	1069	-267	South	593	532	61		Fant	77	103	-25%	South	58	52	11%
Harrietsham and Lenham	396	501	-105	Staplehurst	469	493	-24		Harrietsham and Lenham	56	71	-21%	Staplehurst	70	74	-5%
Headcorn	472	441	31	Sutton Valence and Langley	181	167	14		Headcorn	78	73	7%	Sutton Valence and Langley	58	54	8%

Table Three

VBC	2023	2022	2021	Diff +/-	% Change to 2021
Cluster 1	1,126	995	1008	131	12%
Cluster 2	398	483	526	-85	-24%
Cluster 3	693	704	699	-11	-1%
Cluster 4	1,204	1,359	1786	-155	-9%
Cluster 5	4,497	4,936	4224	-439	-3%
Cluster 6	1,172	1,389	1274	-217	2%
Cluster 7	1,296	1,348	1552	-52	-24%
Cluster 8	2,152	2,184	2242	-32	-4%
Total	12,538	13,398	13,311	-860	-6%

Table Four

CAS	2023	2022	2021	Diff +/-	% Change to 2021
Cluster 1	159	181	159	-22	0%
Cluster 2	66	81	99	-15	-33%
Cluster 3	93	122	116	-29	-20%
Cluster 4	199	201	214	-2	-7%
Cluster 5	943	992	1029	-49	-8%
Cluster 6	205	202	188	11	9%
Cluster 7	206	217	244	3	-12%
Cluster 8	348	356	406	-8	-14%
Total	2219	2352	2455	-111	-9%

Table 5

ASB	2023	2022	2021	Diff +/-	% Change to 2021
Cluster 1	163	166	233	-3	-30%
Cluster 2	100	96	121	4	-17%
Cluster 3	111	127	170	-16	-35%
Cluster 4	288	271	367	17	-49%
Cluster 5	715	806	1265	-91	-36%
Cluster 6	243	268	330	-25	-28%
Cluster 7	236	222	481	14	-49%
Cluster 8	516	469	630	47	-18%
Total	2,372	2,425	3,597	-53	-34%

Legend	
VBC	Victim Based Crime
CAS	Crimes Against Society
ASB	Anti-Social Behaviour
	Negative trend
	Positive trend
Cluster 1	Allington, Barming, Heath
Cluster 2	Bearsted, Downswood & Otham, Leeds
Cluster 3	Coxheath & Hunton, Loose, Boughton Monchelsea & Chart Sutton, Sutton Valance & Langley
Cluster 4	Boxley, Detling & Thurnham, North Downs, Harrietsham & Lenham
Cluster 5	Bridge, East, High Street and North
Cluster 6	Marden & Yalding, Staplehurst, Headcorn
Cluster 7	Fant, South
Cluster 8	Shepway North, Shepway South, Park Wood

Table 6- Actual DA Crimes Reported

**Table 7- Normalise DA Crimes Reported based on ward population.
(Per 1000 people) with 2021 population data.
(Dec – Nov)**

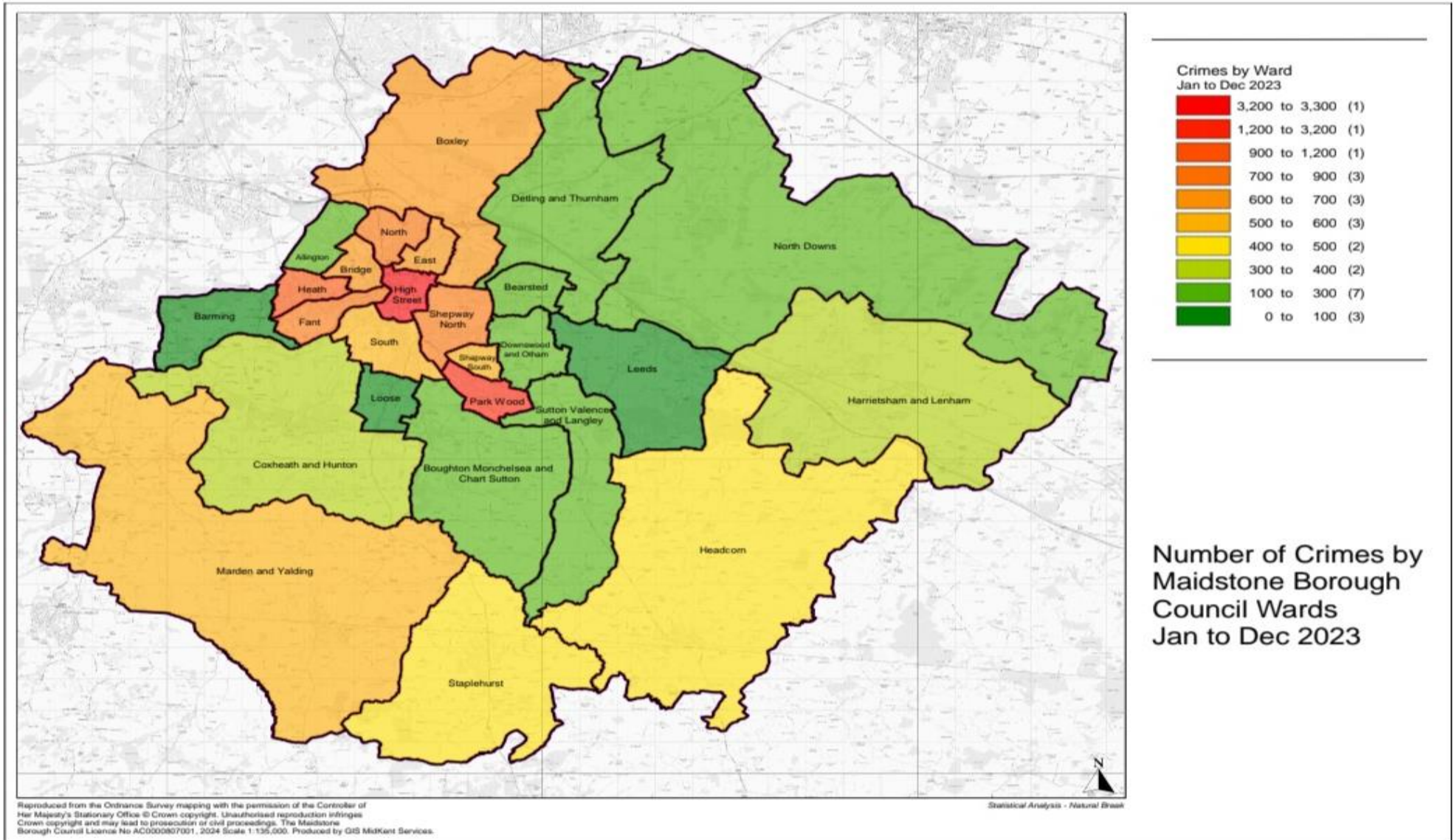
Ward	This Year	Last Year	Change in Crimes	Ward	This Year	Last Year	Change in Crimes	Ward	This Year	Last Year	%Change	Ward	This Year	Last Year	%Change
Allington	68	70	-2	Heath	119	110	9	Allington	8.6	8.9	-2.9%	Heath	16.0	14.8	8.2%
Barming	17	18	-1	High Street	419	471	-52	Barming	7.1	7.5	-5.6%	High Street	35.2	39.5	-11.0%
Bearsted	52	53	-1	Leeds	22	27	-5	Bearsted	6.2	6.3	-1.9%	Leeds	9.1	11.1	-18.5%
Boughton Monchelsea & Chart Sutton	24	15	9	Loose	18	20	-2	Boughton Monchelsea & Chart Sutton	8.2	5.2	60.0%	Loose	7.0	7.8	-10.0%
Boxley	71	90	-19	Marden & Yalding	145	150	-5	Boxley	8.1	10.3	-21.1%	Marden & Yalding	15.3	15.8	-3.3%
Bridge	117	136	-19	North	169	204	-43	Bridge	17.4	20.3	-14.0%	North	3.8	4.2	-9.3%
Coxheath & Hunton	108	111	-3	North Downs	39	43	-4	Coxheath & Hunton	13.1	13.5	-2.7%	North Downs	60.1	76.2	-21.1%
Detling & Thurnham	28	20	8	Park Wood	259	310	-51	Detling & Thurnham	8.6	6.2	40.0%	Park Wood	27.6	33.0	-16.5%
Downswood & Otham	42	49	-7	Shepway North	150	174	-24	Downswood & Otham	12.5	14.6	-14.3%	Shepway North	16.3	18.9	-13.8%
East	115	131	-16	Shepway South	107	117	-10	East	12.8	14.6	-12.2%	Shepway South	18.1	19.8	-8.5%
Fant	180	269	-89	South	109	100	9	Fant	17.3	25.9	-33.1%	South	10.6	9.7	9.0%
Harrietsham & Lenham	84	94	-10	Staplehurst	77	86	-9	Harrietsham & Lenham	11.9	13.3	-10.6%	Staplehurst	11.5	12.8	-10.5%
Headcorn	101	76	25	Sutton Valence & Langley	41	26	15	Headcorn	16.6	12.5	32.9%	Sutton Valence & Langley	13.2	8.4	57.7%

Table 8- ASB in Wards

Ward	2021	2022	2023	Annual Change	%Change since 2021	Ward	2021	2022	2023	Annual Change	%Change since 2021
Allington	65	39	69	30	6%	Heath	106	82	62	-20	-42%
Barming	62	45	32	-13	-48%	High Street	738	539	496	-43	-33%
Bearsted	59	37	26	-11	-56%	Leeds	24	28	34	6	42%
Boughton Monchelsea and Chart Sutton	20	23	16	-7	-20%	Loose	24	18	18	0	-25%
Boxley	181	61	97	36	-46%	Marden and Yalding	149	96	86	-10	-42%
Bridge	153	92	100	8	-35%	North	194	137	132	-5	-32%
Coxheath and Hunton	104	63	55	-8	-47%	North Downs	69	28	32	4	-54%
Detling and Thurnham	33	11	15	4	-55%	Park Wood	241	196	206	10	-15%
Downswood and Otham	38	31	40	9	5%	Shepway North	262	172	181	9	-31%
East	180	147	87	-60	-52%	Shepway South	127	101	129	28	2%
Fant	235	165	154	-11	-34%	South	246	103	89	-14	-64%
Harrietsham and Lenham	84	62	44	-18	-48%	Staplehurst	78	61	67	6	-14%
Headcorn	103	65	83	18	-19%	Sutton Valence and Langley	22	23	22	-1	0%

Please note that ward boundaries represent Wards prior to boundary changes in May 2024

Map 1 All Crime (2023)

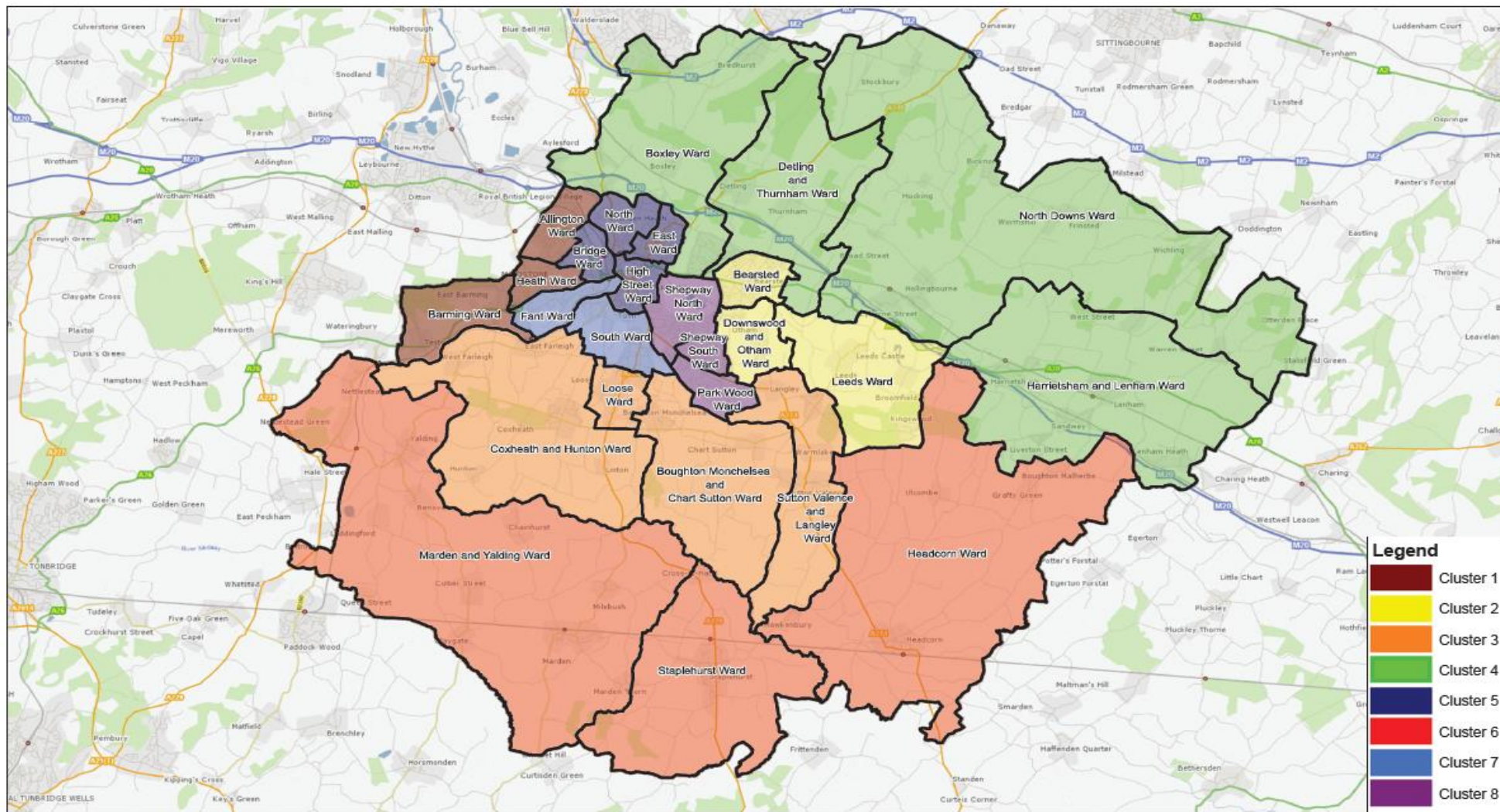


Map 2- Ward Clusters

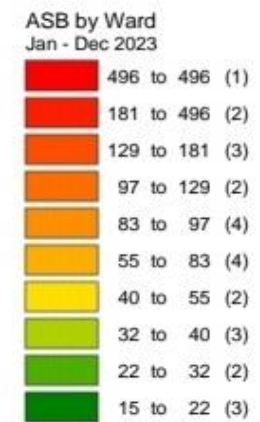
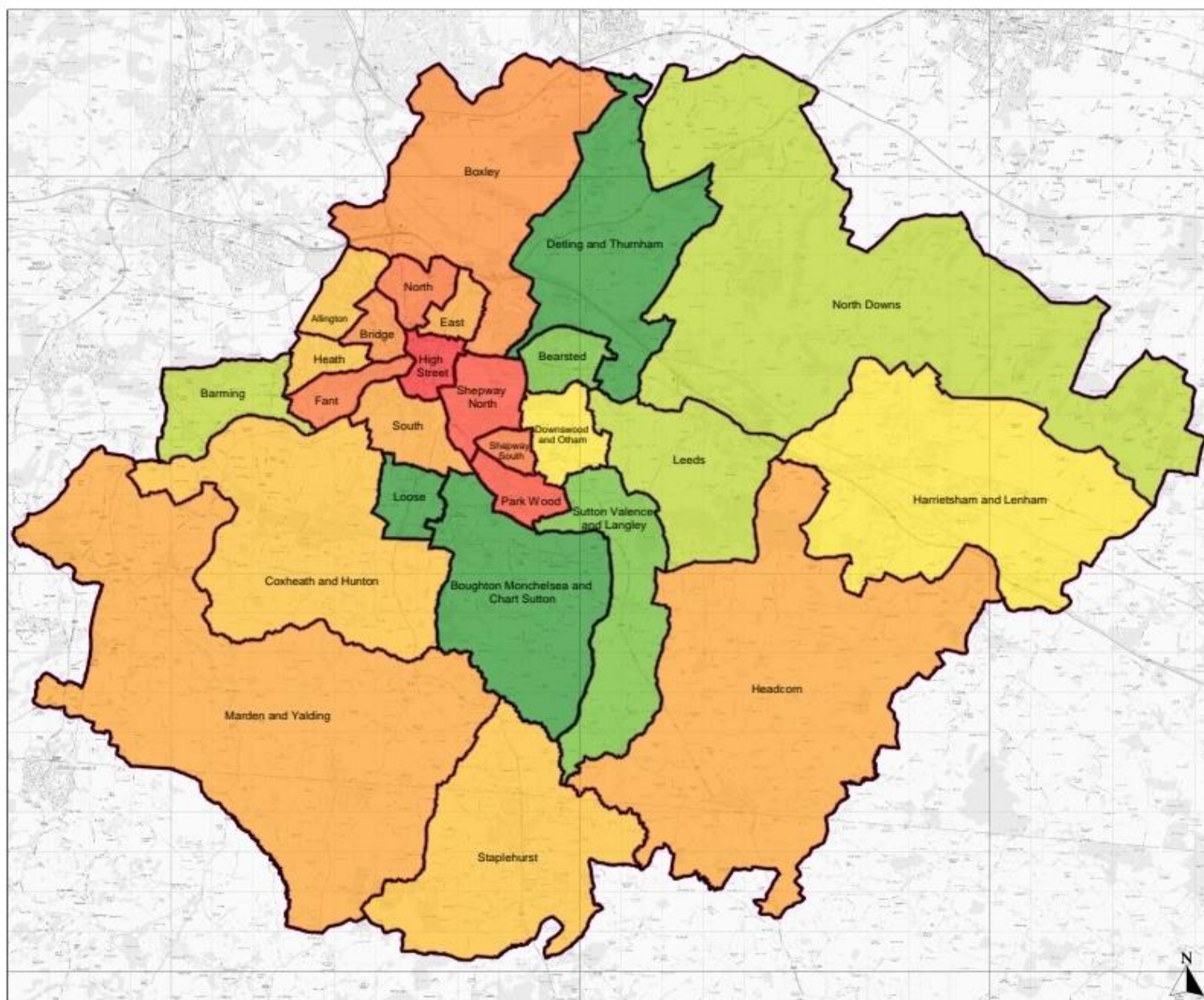


Combined Ward Clusters

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Map 3- Anti-social behaviour 2023






ASB by Maidstone Borough Council Wards
Jan - Dec 2023

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Statistical Analysis - Natural Break

Project Description	Our funding objectives:	What we have delivered:
<p><i>Safer Streets Project manager and business initiatives</i></p>	<p>To ensure the effective and timely delivery of Safer Streets our proposal include a temporary contract/secondment for a Project Manager. This role would facilitate collaboration across the various workstreams and wider partnership activities, enhancing the overall sustainability of the initiatives. In addition to the co-ordination of training and initiatives, our safer street application identified some equipment to enhance communication and security in the town, which, because of the delivery, is added to this role.</p>	<p>Despite initial delays in receiving funding confirmation and recruitment challenges, we successfully absorbed elements of this role within the Community Protection Team. Subsequently, the allocated funding was utilised to create a dedicated Safer Streets Role within One Maidstone. The responsibilities of this role included:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rolling out Best Bar None: Detailed updates on this project are provided below. 2. Active Bystander Training for DTE and NTE: Detailed updates on this project are provided below. 3. Management of the Body Worn Camera Pool: A pool of cameras were purchased and are available for use by businesses in the town centre for events etc. when needed, without the need to purchase/hire their own. 4. MaidSafe Radios: similarly, to the body-worn cameras, some smaller businesses struggle to pay the subscription fees for the MaidSafe Radio initiative offered by One Maidstone. To allow those business to access the network a small number of radio subscriptions were purchased, and radios have been distributed to support those who need it. <p>Additionally, the role engaged directly with local businesses to improve overall feelings of safety. As a result, this position has now been integrated into the One Maidstone staffing structure as the Business Crime Manager. The Business Crime Manager continues to drive further initiatives aimed at enhancing safety and security for both residents and businesses.</p>

<p>Conversion of disused toilet block into an outreach hub</p>	<p>Brenchley Gardens was identified as a hotspot for anti-social behaviour (ASB), drug-related activities, underage drinking, and violence against women and girls (VAWG). The existing decommissioned toilet block/storage offered little to enhance the overall park quality and negatively impacted on safety perceptions. Our proposal aimed to re-purpose and to bring it in to use for multiple purposes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Closer Proximity: The hub would allow Town Centre based police officers and other professionals to stay closer to areas of concern. 2. Increased Guardianship: When the park is open, the hub would offer increased guardianship. 3. Inspiration from Old Police Boxes: Our approach builds upon successful efforts to enhance old police boxes and similar facilities in London and other parts of the UK. 4. Equipment Storage: The building would also continue to serve as storage for street-scene equipment and park-related items, thereby increasing overall visibility within the area from more council staff. 	<p>The conversion of the building has been successfully completed, resulting in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small Office Space: The hub now provides a small office space and rest facilities for police officers, One Maidstone Ambassadors and Community Protection Officers, allowing them to periodically base their Town Centre operations there. • Aesthetic Improvements: Changes to the building have not only made it more aesthetically pleasing but also significantly improved visibility and guardianship over the park. • Storage Facilities: A portion of the building continues to offer storage and facilities for the council's street cleansing team. • Challenges: Initial occupancy faced financial challenges due to unexpected development costs arising from the rising cost of materials. • Ongoing Work: We are actively working to establish necessary agreements with Kent Police and One Maidstone for long term use. 
<p>Summer Warden for Brenchley Gardens</p>	<p>The objective was to pilot an approach during the summer, encouraging legitimate park use by families, residents, and visitors. The summer warden would support the provision of equipment, such as deckchairs and events, providing a visible guardian in the area.</p>	<p>In both 2022 and 2023, a Summer Warden was present in Brenchley Gardens, supporting the delivery of activities and summer concerts. The deckchairs were made available every Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday from 11 am to 3 pm, including each of the concerts.</p> <p>Due to the remarkable success in 2022, funding for the 2023 warden was secured from an alternative source.</p>

		<p>Music and Art on the bandstand</p> 
<p>Active Bystander Training and coordinator</p>	<p>The objective of the Active Bystander Training was to deliver a training package endorsed by the Kent and Medway VRU, which focuses on educating professionals on the role of boys and men in reducing violence towards women and girls. The training supports attitudinal and behavioural change and encouraging change in boys and men, rather than solely teaching women how to avoid victimisation. Upon completing the training, participants would also be given access to materials and resources that they could share with boys and men within their organisations or educational settings.</p>	<p>The objective was to collaborate with a Domestic Abuse charity (DA) and the trainer, Cultivating Minds, to deliver the training. However, the DA provider withdrew their provision from Maidstone. Subsequently, coordination shifted to the Community Protection Team.</p> <p>Adaptation and Target Audience:</p> <p>Initially, uptake for the training was poor. To address this, we redesigned the training to specifically target professionals who work with or engage young people. This broadened the delivery to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KCC Youth Specialists • KCC Youth Offending Teams Workers • KCC Community Wardens • Town Centre Task Force, including CPT officers and One Maidstone Staff • Child-Centred Policing Officers • Town Centre Security Officers <p>Training Sessions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four sessions were hosted for approximately 35 participants. • Additionally, officers from the Community Protection Team were trained as trainers. • Recently, they undertook the training of 60 Rail Enforcement Officers from Southeast Rail.

Enhancing Shop Fronts and Community Locations

Empty shop fronts contribute to increased fear of crime and negatively impact perceptions of safety, aligning with the broken window theory. Our proposal aimed to utilise the creativity of a local artists to develop artwork that could be used to “wrap” the fronts of unused shops. Additionally, the hope was for an artist to collaborate with a group of young people to create the art. The Council’s Arts & Culture Officer was identified as the proposed lead.

The allocated funding was successfully utilised to install murals at a few locations:

1. **M&S Men’s Store**
2. **M&S Ladies’ Store**
3. **The Co-op**

Furthermore, murals were applied to the following areas:

- **High Level Bridge Footpath**
- **Whatman Park Skate Park**

The mural on the High-Level Bridge engaged students from local secondary schools, showcasing their talent and contributing to the Safer Streets legacy.



**Tackling Youth ASB
in the Town**

Anti-social behaviour (ASB) in the Town Centre and Week Street was evidenced by data, and consultations. This was assessed to be centred around “honeypot” locations such as fast-food outlets and Brenchley Gardens. The ASB was found to be consistently between 3:00 PM and 6:00 PM almost every day of the week. This pattern aligned with the end of the school day, with young people using the town as a transport hub. The absence of alternative locations was leading to more and more young people congregating in certain areas, with that contributing to their behaviour.

Challenges and Impact:



- **Security Overwhelmed:** Fast-food restaurants, who had employed additional security officers to maintain safety, reported that factors like the behaviour of some young people and their sheer volume, often let to security teams becoming overwhelmed. This also resulted in further escalations and violent incidents.
- **Behaviour Patterns:** Beyond ASB, young people in this area engage in underage drinking, smoking/vaping, drug use, and sexualised behaviour toward girls. This behaviour also leads to intimidation and harassment of the wider public using the area.
- **Broader Implications:** The ASB and associated behaviour in the early evening serve as a barometer for the Night-Time Economy (NTE), especially on Friday and Saturday evenings. This has ramifications for Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and NTE crimes. Staff capacity is reduced as they manage issues from earlier in the evening, potentially hindering the identification of emerging risks and threats.

The allocated funding was utilised by KCC to employ staff, including a senior officer and sessional staff, to deliver activities from the 326 Youth Hub. This strategic approach successfully drew young people into the safety of the Youth Hub.

Key Actions:

1. **Building Relationships:** Our officers worked closely with local security teams, fostering better relationships with young people. Respectful conversations were facilitated between security officers and young individuals who had caused concerns.
2. **Targeted Support:** Specific support was provided for young people with challenging behavioural issues.
3. **Youth Clubs:** We ran clubs for young people, including sessions focused on LGBTQ+, music, and other specific interests.
4. **Gym Memberships:** Collaborating with a local gym, we provided over 50 short-term gym memberships, funded through the VRU. This initiative encouraged young people to engage in fitness and overcome any reservations they had about going to the gym.
5. **Increased Engagement:** During spring, the 326 Youth Hub saw up to **40** different young people per day. This number surged to nearly **70** during the summer.
6. **Continued Operation:** Despite significant changes in delivery elsewhere, the 326 club continues to operate within the KCC delivery model.
7. **Sustained Funding:** The club has secured additional funding from SIL monies and will be staffed by KCC personnel from the Family Hub team.

Continued investment in youth engagement contributes to a safer and more supportive community environment.

	<p>The Proposed Solution:</p> <p>To address these challenges, funding was sought to increase the presence of youth workers in the town. Their role objectives included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging with young people. • Supporting security teams and local police in de-escalating situations. • Implementing necessary safeguarding measures. • Encouraging young people into diversionary activities and safe places. 	
<p>Best Bar None (Safer Socialising NTE scheme) including awards evening.</p> 	<p>To support the rollout of Best Bar None, which aim to encourage NTE (Night-Time Economy) businesses to enhance safety within their venues and the broader NTE, funding was sought to make Maidstone’s “the Best” Best Bar None in Kent. Through the initiative, Businesses would be asked to implement measures beyond their licensing requirements to improve safety. Amongst our objectives for introducing Best Bar None to Maidstone were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reducing Crime: businesses actively incentivised participate in crime reduction. 2. Reputation Repair: The scheme aimed to challenge negative perceptions the town had faced in recent years. 3. Public Reassurance/Safe Spaces: By increasing awareness among staff, the initiative reassured the public about safety and built on both “Ask Angela” and “Ask Ani” to get help or find a safe space in the NTE` 	<p>During the funding period, officers from One Maidstone and Kent Police received assessor training and collaboratively devised the bespoke Maidstone assessment criteria. Following this, venues were invited to apply for assessment and accreditation under the Best Bar No scheme.</p> <p>In November 2023, One Maidstone hosted the inaugural Best Bar None awards evening, recognizing that 9 venues had achieved accreditation under the scheme. These venues underwent assessment by trained assessors, focusing on various aspects of improved safety, including overall safety and efforts to reduce violence against women and girls. The assessed venues ranged from pubs to some of the larger clubs and bars in the town.</p> <p>Staff members were invited to join representatives from the Safer Maidstone Partnership in celebrating their individual and corporate commitments to making Maidstone’s NTE a safer and more secure space.</p>

"Maid safer" Safer Streets public education and awareness Campaign (including advertising and digital media)



The "Maid safer" campaign aimed to raise awareness and promote long-term behavioural change. Key objectives included:

1. **Challenging Social Norms:** ensuring that the unacceptability of VAWG as a social norm and recognising unacceptable behaviour was showcased as everyone's responsibility.
2. **Service Awareness:** Raising awareness of available services for those experiencing VAWG directly or indirectly.
3. **Tailored Outreach:** Utilising online digital channels to reach a wide audience in Maidstone postcode areas.
4. **Outdoor Publicity:** Complementing digital efforts with outdoor messaging to flood the area and prompt discussions.
5. **Sustained Campaign:** Running the media campaign over 12-18 months to encourage longer -term behaviour change.
6. **Shared Responsibility:** Reinforcing that everyone shares the responsibility for making public places safer.

Although developed as part of the delivery of this funding "Maid safer" has become synonymous with the delivery of this campaign, which now features on artwork beyond the Town Centre as part of the broader Community Safety Message for the Safer Maidstone Partnership. The campaign, started with the conceptualisation of the "Maid safer" brand and the associated artwork, which has featured across a variety of platforms in the last 18 months.

The campaign combined a mixture of direct advertising, utilising advertising space on transport networks, including trains and buses and in the public realm, utilising lamp-post banners which ran for several weeks either side of the King's Coronation, for which they were temporarily removed. This was complemented by the provision of two gazebos and feather banners, which are utilised by the TCTF and others to deliver awareness and engagement activities in the town.

Paid editorial pieces promoting the work of the Town Centre Task Force and digital campaigns on the Global and KM Network. This includes a KM Media 8-week website takeover for the "Enough" campaign, which dominated their advertising space for those accessing the site in the Maidstone area.




Control Tools (Merchandise and Materials)

The objective of securing these control tools was to provide:

- **Reassurance and Protection:** enabling officers to provide reassurance to women and girls while potentially protecting them from harm.
- **Engagement Opportunity:** By distributing these items, we create an opportunity to engage with

Through the funding we were able to secure:

- **5000 Personal Alarms-** discrete alarms shaped as ladybirds.
- **5000 NightCap Drink Cover Scrunchie:** Disguised as a hair scrunchie, it discreetly protects against drink spiking.

	<p>recipients, listen to their experiences, and gain insights into prevalent Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) concerns.</p> <p>The chosen items, in combination with the wider campaign, were selected to empower girls and women to be more self-aware and better equipped for safety during socialising or travel. Although not identified as a specific concern in Maidstone, drink spiking/tampering was one area that had been highlighted through engagement.</p>	<p>These items have been distributed to women and girls in the Day and Nighttime economy, and where appropriate to older students in schools at a range of engagement and awareness raising events. This includes women who work in the town. Recipients are grateful for the discreet protection offered by these items offer.</p> 
<p>Supporting Nighttime Economy (NTE) volunteers</p>	<p>The existence of both Street Pastors and Urban Blue faced challenges after the pandemic. However, with additional funding, we aimed to support them in training and equipping new recruits. These dedicated volunteers play a vital role in ensuring safety and well-being within the Nighttime Economy (NTE), and our efforts were directed toward sustaining and enhancing their impact as providers of support, first-aid and as guardians in the NTE.</p>	<p>As with many operating in the charity sector, the sustainability of these vital partners is under continuous threat. Funding was used to help with delivery of training, uniform, and equipment as they continue to provide a presence in the NTE, for as long as they are able.</p>
<p>Hollie Guard App (paid option vouchers)</p>	<p>Women who have been subjected to stalking or abusive behaviour may fear going out into public spaces. This can be the case even if a perpetrator has been caught. The Hollie Guard App can be downloaded onto the user's mobile phone. Whilst free to download, the funding sought to secure vouchers to give access to the enhanced version of the app. The objective was to, through the Maidstone Domestic Abuse Forum, to identify and support vulnerable victims of crimes such as stalking.</p>	<p>Awaiting update from Charlotte King, but the vouchers have been purchased and are available for use.</p>

<p><i>Improved public realm and mobile CCTV across the Town Centre</i></p>	<p>As part of the continued maintenance and development of the CCTV coverage in the Town Centre a selection of options were identified to improve the public realm (static) and mobile CCTV.</p>	<p>Issues with connectivity and some operational blind spots around Lockmeadow presented an opportunity to source funding to improve this area. A new radio antenna and camera at Lockmeadow has improved the connectivity of 4 cameras on the west side of the river.</p> <p>To mitigate concerns around the displacement of issues after the closure of Brenchley Gardens at night, several locations were identified, but these areas where areas were the static system cannot be linked to. Mobile solutions in these areas provide a suitable alternative, and two cameras with 4G access were secured and have been deployed in the Brewer Street cemetery, outside Mote Park and in St Peter's Street so far.</p>
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Appendix 5- Community Protection Team Activity

The following provides a breakdown of service requests received by the community protection.

Description	2020	2021	2022	2023	Comments
All Anti-social behaviour complaints	440	408	299	300	ASB reports to MBC did not reduce by the same levels as seen reported to the police. This may relate to the reduction in Police Community Support Officers, KCC Wardens and the introduction of Beat Officers leading to the public reporting their concerns to MBC instead.
All noise nuisances including amplified music and barking	693	719	610	539	Noise nuisance complaints have returned to pre-pandemic levels. Barking dogs (116) and amplified music (100) remain the most reported area of concern. A new app has been introduced to help victims to provide evidence of the noise they are experiencing.
Other Nuisance (Odour, dust etc.)	349	257	222	218	No significant change.
Dangerous and Nuisance dogs (Not strays)	47	52	65	99	In the past year, allegations related to dangerous dogs have seen a mixed trajectory in Maidstone. While allegations of dangerous dogs fell from 31 to 22, there has been a concerning rise in alleged dog attacks on animals, which escalated from 20 to 48 incidents. These two categories constitute a significant proportion of the overall complaints. The issue extends beyond Maidstone. Kent and national statistics reveal an even more pronounced increase in such incidents, capturing the attention of the media nationwide. The surge in complaints coincides with an influx of new dog owners, many of whom acquired pets during the pandemic. These novice owners are grappling with controlling their dogs' behaviour, leading to more incidents. Nationally, several high-profile cases involving dangerous dogs, have garnered public attention. The fear of dog attacks has intensified, prompting individuals to report incidents more frequently. The ban on XL Bullies has contributed to the workload of the CPT, managing enquiries, liaising with the police, and investigating allegations of illegal breeding.
Dog Fouling	30	28	47	45	No significant change although levels are likely associated with the issues discuss above.
Straying and lost dogs' enquiries	261	212	252	340	Similarly, increases in this area are linked to the issues outlined above, with the temperament of dogs and breed of dog's, particularly bull breeds, an increasing factor in dog's not being collected or being abandoned. The cost-of-living crisis has also contributed to an increase in abandoned and unclaimed strays with many pounds and rescues reporting they are overwhelmed.
Street trading enquiries/complaints	9	5	2	3	No significant change.