

Maidstone Community Safety

Partnership Plan

2022-2025

DRAFT

'Feel safe, Be safe'

maidstone.gov.uk



Maidstone Community Safety Partnership Plan

2022-2025



Table of Contents

Introduction from the Leader of Maidstone Borough Council	4
Maidstone Community Safety Partnership Plan – Priorities	5
CSP Plan 2022-2025 Core Priorities	7
Protecting Our Communities Against Serious, Violent And Organised Crime (Including Modern-Day Slavery	8
Reducing The Harm Caused By Domestic Abuse (Including Stalking):	9
Provide A Safe Town Centre:	10
Keeping Children And Young People Safe:.....	11
Cross-cutting Themes	12
Tackle ASB in Our Communities.....	12
Taking a public health approach.....	13
Improve Public Perception /Confidence	14
Reducing reoffending and tackling the drivers of crime.....	15
Reducing the Impact of Substance Misuse	16
Safeguard People Whose Mental Health Makes Them Vulnerable to Becoming a Victim or Where it Leads to an Impact on the Wider Community:	17
Appendices.....	18
Appendix 1- Summary of the Information Analysed in the Strategic Assessment:.....	18
Appendix 2- Safer Maidstone Partnership Governance:	24
Appendix 3- Summary of the sub-groups and working groups that work in each of the priority areas:.....	27



Introduction from the Leader of Maidstone Borough Council

I am very pleased to introduce the Maidstone Community Safety Partnership Plan 2022-2025, which sets out the priorities of the Safer Maidstone Partnership.

Community safety in Maidstone is not the sole responsibility of one agency or body. Regulation requires that we form a Community Safety Partnership made up of 'responsible authorities'; those agencies with a duty participate, as well as other interested bodies from across the borough and beyond. The Community Safety Partnership (CSP) works to implement and deliver initiatives that will help keep the borough of Maidstone a safe place to live, work, learn and visit.

Many of our residents have told us they do not feel safe. Perception of rising violence on our streets and increases in violence in our homes is also something our residents want to see tackled. They want us to protect children and take steps to address rising levels of anti-social behaviour in our communities. We know that our Town Centre's reputation as a safe space needs to improve and that crime in rural areas can be organised, causing significant harm to those communities. This Plan sets out the new partnership priorities, ensuring that our efforts remain relevant and effective. We will continue to work to protect our communities across the borough of Maidstone and use the powers Parliament has given us to tackle anti-social behaviour and criminality robustly. As the Leader of Maidstone Borough Council, I am committed that we will work even closer to create a hostile environment for criminals and those whose behaviour causes harm and distress. We will ensure Maidstone is a place **where law abiding residents feel safe and are safe**

Maidstone's CSP, known locally as the Safer Maidstone Partnership (SMP) has produced this document in response to what residents have told us and using relevant crime and health data to identify trends and concerns.

This document will set out clearly for our residents:

- a) Our Community Safety objectives for the next three years
- b) Why the Council has been focussing on these areas
- c) What we plan to achieve



**Cllr David Burton,
Leader of Maidstone
Borough Council**

Maidstone Community Safety Partnership Plan – Priorities

The SMP sets the priorities for the CSP Plan based on the analysis and interpretation of the data and survey information analysed through the strategic assessment. Details of the priority setting process is recorded in the strategic assessment and a summary of the data assessed is provided in Appendix 1. Governance of the SMP and how we deliver our priorities is set out in Appendix 2. The 2022-23 Strategic Assessment identified four Core priorities.

Core Priorities	Focus
Protecting our communities against serious, violent and organised crime (including modern-day slavery)	Strong Prevention and Strong Enforcement Measures
Keeping Children and Young People Safe	Relationships Change Lives, Not Resources
Reducing the Harm Caused by Domestic Abuse (including stalking)	Domestic Abuse is Everyone's Business
Provide a Safe Town Centre	A Space to Feel Safe

Our Core Priorities are supported by an established set of multi-agency sub-groups, whose work on these priorities will be at the heart of the Partnership. We recognise that there is also crossover between these priorities, such as reducing reoffending, that present opportunities for the sub-groups to collaborate in delivering better outcomes.

Cross-cutting Themes

Integrated within each of the priorities are six cross cutting themes:

- Tackling ASB in Our Communities
- Taking a Public Health Approach
- Improve Public Perception /Confidence
- Reducing reoffending and tackling the drivers of crime
- Safeguarding People Whose Mental Health Makes Them Vulnerable to Becoming a Victim or Where it Leads to an Impact on the Wider Community
- Reducing the Impact of Substance Misuse

For each of these themes, working groups will be created, pulling together representatives from each sub-group to ensure the themes are incorporated into both Priority Action Plans and day to day business. As an example, a Communications working group will be created to ensure we maximise opportunities to celebrate successes and to ensure our awareness raising efforts are co-ordinated.

Other considerations to our priorities:

The Pandemic

The pandemic has had a significant impact on how front-line services have operated and how people have behaved. The combined impact of reduced contact with the public, significant limitations on travel and social contact, closure and strict restrictions in public spaces and recreational spaces, has led to almost all services experiencing unprecedented shifts in demand. This is reflected in the data since 2020, with that year considered highly irregular. Many of the long-term impacts of the pandemic remain hidden, on an individual, community and society level.

Hate Crime

A hate crime is any criminal offence which is perceived by the victim, or anybody else, to be motivated by hostility or prejudice towards someone's:

- race
- religion
- sexual orientation
- transgender identity
- disability

The government is committed to tackling hate crime. We want to raise awareness of what a hate crime is and help people understand that it is not right to target individuals based on their identity.

Extremism and radicalisation

Work will continue around the Government driven Prevent programme. The early intervention support provided by Prevent addresses the personal and social factors which make people more receptive to radicalisation, diverting people away from being drawn into violent ideologies and criminal behaviour.

Awareness raising about local extremist influences is something that all practitioners within the partnership should have regard to whilst working towards the core priorities.

Local priorities for Kent

The priorities identified for the borough of Maidstone are reflective of those across the county of Kent:

Kent Police's Priorities – 2022 to 2025	PCC Priorities
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work with residents, communities and businesses to fight crime and antisocial behaviour• Tackle violence against women and girls• Protect people from exploitation and abuse• Combat organised crime and county lines• Be visible and responsive to the needs of communities• Prevent road danger and support Vision Zero• Protect young people and provide opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hold all agencies to account for the delivery of an effective and efficient criminal justice system• Work in partnership with the police and others to prevent crime and antisocial behaviour• Be responsive to emerging issues and trends through innovation Secure the funding that Kent needs through specific grants and the funding formula review• Support volunteering• Commission services for victims that are needs-led

CSP Plan 2022-2025 Core Priorities



Protecting Our Communities Against Serious, Violent and Organised Crime (Including Modern-day Slavery)



Reducing the Harm Caused by Domestic Abuse (including stalking)

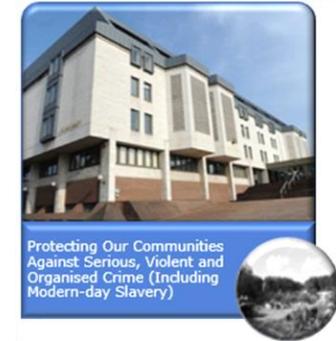


Provide a Safe Town Centre



Keeping Children and Young People Safe





PROTECTING OUR COMMUNITIES AGAINST SERIOUS, VIOLENT AND ORGANISED CRIME (INCLUDING MODERN-DAY SLAVERY)

Strong Prevention and Strong Enforcement Measures

Why is this important?

The Serious Violence Strategy (2018) recognised that a range of powers are held by agencies, such as local authorities, that play a vital role in supporting the police to disrupt serious and organised crime activities in the borough. The Serious and Organised Crime Panel (SOCP) continue to work to disrupt organised crime and reduce violence in the area. Maidstone, due to the appeal of the County Town and our diverse communities, will always present opportunities for organised criminals and we must remain vigilant and active in ensuring Maidstone remains hostile to those who look to establish activity in the area.

Serious, violent crimes remain relatively infrequent, but continued effort is needed across all the SMP priorities to ensure services are in place to reduce violence in our district. When incidents occur, we must also be swift to act to bring those responsible to justice and support victims.

The pandemic has also highlighted another form of organised crime in relation to the supply of dogs. Changes in people's lifestyles have seen significant increases in demand for puppies in particular. Unlicensed breeders and

puppy farms are actively exploiting this demand and a partnership approach is needed to disrupt the illegal activity to ensure animal welfare standards are met.

What is the SMP's Objective?

The SMP will protect our communities from violent crime and the illegal practices of serious organised crime groups in urban and rural areas.

What is our focus?

SMP Partners will:

- tackle the threat, risk and harm of serious organised crime through a coordinated **4P** approach.
 - **Pursue** offenders of crimes in both rural and urban areas, through prosecution and disruption
 - **Prepare** for when serious and organised crime occurs and mitigate impact
 - **Protect** individuals, organisations, and systems from the effects of serious and organised crime
 - **Prevent** people from engaging in serious and organised crime
- use analytical data and intelligence to put in place support, diversions and actions that will reduce violence.

What will we do?

The SOCP will update their action plan to help deliver on our SMP objective. Actions from the plan will include:

- Work to disrupt an OCG relating to drugs/money laundering with links in and around the town centre.
- Work with partners to identify and disrupt illegal puppy farms and unlicensed breeders.

REDUCING THE HARM CAUSED BY DOMESTIC ABUSE (INCLUDING STALKING):

Domestic Abuse is Everyone's Business

Why is this important?

The Domestic Abuse Act defines this as any incident(s) of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members. The abuse can be, but is not limited to psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional.

Domestic Abuse accounts for a significant proportion of Maidstone's recorded crime. Whilst support services exist, accessing them for victims can be challenging, due to the personal risk they may need to take to reach out for help. Whilst not exclusive, women are disproportionately the victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence. One in four women experience domestic abuse from a partner in their lifetime. 92% of rapists are known to the woman they rape

The Domestic Abuse Act became law in April 2021 and places new duties on local authorities to help tackle the issue. Kent County Council and Maidstone Borough Council officers are taking an active role on the Kent Domestic Abuse Partnership Board and through the Maidstone Domestic Abuse Forum to help shape the new Kent-wide Domestic Abuse Strategy. In addition, staff have been updated on changes made to the homelessness legislation brought about by the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act, which will be reflected in the review of the Council's new Housing Strategy due to be adopted in the Summer of 2022.

What is the SMP's Objective?

The SMP will ensure that all communities residing in the borough can live their lives in safety without the fear or harm caused by domestic abuse.

What is our focus?

SMP Partners will:

- prioritise supporting the victims of domestic abuse through the provision of local services like MARAC, Sanctuary and IDVA
- find new innovative ways to raise awareness so that people can seek advice and are confident in reporting abuse if it occurs.
- support children who witness domestic abuse in their home and treat them as victims of crime
- promote safer relationships, helping young people make better choices and increasing their confidence to report issues.

What will we do?

The Domestic Abuse Forum will update their action plan to help deliver on our SMP objective. Actions from the plan will include:

- Support the roll out of Domestic Abuse Champions across Maidstone and Kent in partnership with Kent Independent Domestic Abuse Services
- Deliver more awareness raising events, such a Cradle to Grave, that target nurseries, schools and professionals who will be less aware of the impact of Domestic Abuse



Reducing the harm caused by domestic abuse (including stalking)





PROVIDE A SAFE TOWN CENTRE: *A Space to Feel Safe*

Why is this important?

Maidstone is the County Town of Kent hosting one of the largest retail centres in the southeast. It has excellent rail and road networks to London and the County. Many of our residents utilise the town for retail, leisure and work. As a transportation hub the Town Centre also welcomes large numbers of commuters and children travelling to and from school. It also hosts a large night-time economy that brings its own challenges and rewards. The town benefits from a Business Improvement District, One Maidstone, which provides the MaidSafe radio network and works in partnership with the police, local authorities and local businesses to reduce crime, increase trade and make Maidstone a safer environment for its staff, customers and visitors.

Recent surveys highlight that both adults and young people feel the Town Centre is unsafe. A series of isolated but unacceptable incidents have further tarnished the Town's reputation. Analysis shows that there are hotspots within the Town Centre where violent crime and ASB is most prevalent. Parks and other areas of the town have suffered significant reputational damage due to the behaviour of a small number of individuals.

We must remain realistic to the fact that the Town Centre attracts a variety of people and as a result, there will be occasional incidents, but these must be kept to a minimum. The Town Centre is complex, and complex problems require multi-faceted solutions.

What is the SMP's Objective?

The SMP will work to restore the reputation of the town as a place where people feel safe and are safe.

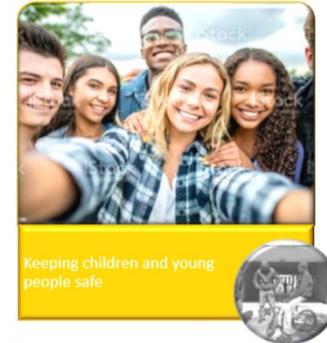
What is our focus?

SMP Partners will:

- develop a multi-agency task force to address concerns, such as:
 - anti-social behaviour
 - violence, particularly in the night-time economy
 - substance misuse and illegal supply of drugs and alcohol, particularly to children
 - vulnerable people who live in the town, including domestic abuse
- ensure businesses develop a culture in the town that keeps people safe in both day-time and night-time economies
- protect young people by challenging behaviour and ensuring safeguarding opportunities are provided for those in need of support
- work to improve the reputation of the town by sharing successes and publicising initiatives that make people feel safe when in the town

What will we do?

The SMP will bring together statutory and non-statutory partners to form a dedicated Town Centre Task Force to develop a new multi-agency strategy.



KEEPING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SAFE: *Relationships Change Lives, Not Resources*

Why is this important?

We know that some of children and young people live in abusive and violent households, and some are affected by drugs and alcohol. Young people are often affected by issues across our priority themes which affect them more deeply, causing longer term damage. We must safeguard our young people from individuals that intend to cause them harm through the supply of drugs and sexual exploitation (CSE). We must also challenge growing trends such as knife crime, serious youth violence and the impact of gang culture. There also remains a concern that the behaviour of some of young people puts individuals and communities at risk and that increases in their fears is leading to a worrying national trend of carrying knives for safety.

Better understanding of violence, from projects and initiatives across the UK, demonstrates the need to adopt a Public Health approach and the need to work with boys and young men in particular. Males are disproportionately involved in violent crimes against women, children and other males. Working practices need to adapt to demonstrate the need to challenge learnt behaviours and to put in place systems and services that will ensure violence is reduced.

Key to all work with young people is building meaningful relationships; relationships change lives, not resources, but do need time and space to develop to effectively challenge negative and risk taking behaviours.

What is the SMP's Objective?

The SMP we will protect our young people from those that put them at risk.

What is our focus?

SMP Partners will:

- identify individuals and locations of concern and put in place support and measures to safeguard/disrupt/challenge as appropriate
- stay vigilant to the threat posed by London and other Kent based gangs, gang culture itself and the associated CSE/substance misuse issues
- identify and divert the activities of disruptive groups within our communities
- utilise funding opportunities provided by the VRU to reduce violence in young people
- ensure the DCSM feeds into the revamped Local Children's Partnership Group "Reconnect" strategy

What will we do?

The DCSM will update their action plan to help deliver on our SMP objective. Actions from the plan will include:

- Adopt services and initiatives that specifically support boys and young men in order to reduce long-term violence
- Implement new initiatives to support parents, including Caring Dads and DICE training
- Create safe places for young people to access support

Cross-cutting Themes

Tackle ASB in Our Communities

Why is this important?

Tackling ASB is one of the biggest challenges we face as a partnership. Resident perceptions and reports to agencies identify a vast range of behaviours considered as anti-social. This can vary considerably depending on location. In the Town Centre this could include drunk and rowdy behaviour in public places, and in rural areas people littering or fly tipping their waste. Neighbourhood crime and disorder has a significant impact on the community, which can lead to significant increase in fear of crime and can be gateway crimes to more serious issues including criminal damage, arson and burglary. Reports of ASB to the police and other agencies have increased significantly compared to previous years and can be linked to a variety of factors.

Youth ASB is often identified as an area of concern and has also been seen to escalate recently. However, teenagers are driven by biological needs to express themselves, to take risks and to find companionship outside of their family unit. This is often perceived as "mis-behaving". No generation of teenagers has ever undertaken this "rite of passage" under such a high level of surveillance and social pressure. As a result, we are seeing higher levels of teenage depression, teenage suicide and the carrying of knives for protection.

What we will do?

Continuously deliver a victim-focused response to ASB with robust use of ASB enforcement powers where appropriate.

Improve our understanding of ASB to deliver a more informed approach to tackling the underlying drivers of demand.

Utilise local information through Ward Cluster Meetings to ensure local information is used as part of an intelligence-led approach.

Is it Anti-Social Behaviour?	
What is ASB?	What is NOT ASB?
✓ Domestic violence and abuse - Report to the police first	✗ Cooking smells
✓ Physical violence - Report to the police first	✗ DIY in reasonable hours
✓ Hate-related incidents (eg based on race, sexual orientation, gender, disability or belief) - Report to the police first	✗ Minor car repairs
✓ Verbal abuse, harassment, intimidation or threatening behaviour - Report to the police first	✗ Young people gathering socially
✓ Vandalism and damage to properties - Report to the police first	✗ Children playing in the street, including ball games
✓ Prostitution, sexual acts or kerb crawling - Report to the police first	✗ Parking disputes
✓ Criminal behaviour including using/dealing drugs - Report to the police first	✗ Civil disputes between neighbours
✓ Misuse of open spaces, public areas or loitering, including begging and off-road use of vehicles - Report to the police first	✗ Disputes over social media
✓ Rowdy behaviour linked to drugs or alcohol use	✗ Lifestyle differences
✓ Noise complaints	✗ Bonfires and BBQ's
✓ Problem Neighbours	✗ One off house parties
✓ Nuisance dogs and fouling	✗ Littering, but it is a crime!*
	✗ Fly tipping, but it is a crime!*

UNDERSTANDING ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

Compared with people with no ACEs, those with 4+ ACEs are:

- 4x** more likely to be a high-risk drinker
- 6x** more likely to have had or caused unintended teenage pregnancy
- 6x** more likely to smoke e-cigarettes or tobacco
- 6x** more likely to have had sex under the age of 16 years
- 11x** more likely to have smoked cannabis
- 14x** more likely to have been a victim of violence against another person in the last 12 months
- 15x** more likely to have committed violence against another person in the last 12 months
- 16x** more likely to have used crack or heroin
- 20x** more likely to have been incarcerated at any point in their lifetime
- 20x** more likely to have been incarcerated at any point in their lifetime

Taking a public health approach

Why is this important?

The public health approach is a science-driven, population-based, interdisciplinary, cross sector approach which emphasises primary prevention. Rather than focusing on individuals, this approach aims to provide the maximum benefit for the largest number of people, and extends better care and safety to a larger population. The public health approach is interdisciplinary, drawing upon knowledge from many disciplines including medicine, epidemiology, sociology, psychology, criminology, education and economics. The public health approach considers that violence, rather than being the result of any single factor, is the outcome of multiple risk factors and causes, interacting at four levels - individual, close relationship/family, community and wider society of the social ecological model. There is a large body of research that shows that adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are a main driver of violence and crime. ACEs are experiences and events that occur before the age of 18 which can have a significant impact on child development. Addressing ACEs must be a key part of any long-term strategy. People who have experienced multiple ACEs have far higher levels of health-harming behaviours.

What we will do?

Focus on contextual safeguarding, taking a whole-family approach and accounting for every context and environment that adolescents encounter beyond their family. This involves adopting a trauma-informed approach, using a local understanding of the impact that adverse childhood experiences have on involvement in crime and ASB.

Focus on early intervention and prevention, and the wider determinants of crime and community safety, including social inequalities, employment, skills, health, housing and environment.

Improve Public Perception /Confidence

Why is this important?

We understand that the perception of crime and safety for our local people can be very different to the reality of issues our residents are concerned about. To help understand this, we conduct resident surveys and monitor public perceptions data to ensure we are responding to the concerns that local communities tell us about. In Autumn 2021 we undertook a community safety survey for residents; 80% of respondents felt that crime has increased to some degree in the last three years, with 52% feeling that agencies weren't working effectively to reduce crime. Young people also expressed their fears. Whilst the extent of their fears doesn't necessarily fit the reality, particularly where knife crime is concerned, we know that fear does impact on our ability to access cognitive functions. We also know that repeat exposure can lead to distortion, creating the perception that violent crimes are more prevalent than in reality. Exposure to social media, which more people refer to particularly at a time of crisis, can lead to increased exposure to negative images and stories which make people feel more vulnerable. We know that fear of crime can lead to social isolation, create vulnerability for those seeking safety and belonging and can, particularly in young people, lead to some carrying weapons to protect themselves.

What we will do?

Further improve our community engagement through a partnership communications strategy.

Introduce an Annual Community Safety Partnership Public Meeting, ensuring senior CSP partners are public facing and engage our local community.

Ensure victims of crime are at the heart of our response and that public reassurance is delivered through joined up communications.

Improve ways of reporting crime and ASB and publicise our Community Trigger - allowing people to ask the Community Safety Partnership to review their responses to unresolved complaints of ASB.

Improve police, partnership and community interaction to provide greater visibility and opportunities to engage with services.

Reducing reoffending and tackling the drivers of crime

Why is this important?

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). Reducing reoffending is a statutory requirement for all Community Safety Partnerships. This is now supported by a new probation structure which was introduced in June 2021 and was designed to bring partners together to reduce reoffending in their area. The HMPPS Reducing Reoffending Plan 2021-2024 acknowledges the importance of partnership working to provide services and interventions at the critical time when proliferate offenders want to desist from 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.

Drugs are a driver of crime in Maidstone, and one of our residents' top concerns is around drug dealing and visible drug use. Drugs are often distributed by organised criminal networks and require a partnership response to address the wider impact they have on our local communities.

What we will do?

Support the aims sets out in the Kent, Surrey & Sussex Reducing Reoffending Plan 2021-2024

Enforce against persistent/prolific offenders who misuse drugs/alcohol as well as working locally and nationally, to disrupt and prevent serious and organised crime to reduce the impact of its resulting social harms on communities and residents

Increase support to offenders with access to housing, training and employment, financial aid, debt recovery and drugs and alcohol service

Engage in the local MAPPA board, MARAC assessment meetings and reducing reoffending group.

Support those who misuse drugs and/or alcohol to successfully complete community/facility-based treatment

Address drugs, as a driver of crime, and associated criminalities through innovative initiatives

Review opportunities to improve referral rates to drug and alcohol services

Reducing the Impact of Substance Misuse

Why is this important?

People who misuse drugs, alcohol or other substances cause considerable harm to themselves (physical and mental health), family and friends as well as to their communities. The communities in which they live can also be harmed through crime, disorder and ASB associated with substance misuse. Alcohol consumption has increased over the last 18 months as a result of the pandemic. There are areas where there is a high density of off licences which increases the likelihood of high strength and cheap alcohol being available to high-risk groups (including children). There is also associated crime, disruption and violence alongside density of places where alcohol is sold. Substance misuse can be a driver for low-level crime, such as petty-theft, and has a disproportionate impact on local communities and businesses.

What we will do?

Tackling local alcohol supply –

- map the number of off licensed and licensed premises in Maidstone against areas of deprivation and risk factors for harm.
- Seek to challenge license applications in areas with risk for potential harms using 'cumulative impact'.
- Seek to understand and audit the issues and barriers for Maidstone for Late Night Levies and work in areas of greatest alcohol risks in a place-based approach.

Working in partnership to share data and intelligence (at individual-level)

- work with multi-agency or partnership forums to share intelligence and identify individuals (or locations) which have vulnerable, street-homeless or those committing anti-social behaviour.
- Safeguard those vulnerable (both adults and young people) to drug related harm.
- Provide intensive support for young people / vulnerable adults identified at risk of exploitation and drug related harm

Safeguard People Whose Mental Health Makes Them Vulnerable to Becoming a Victim or Where it Leads to an Impact on the Wider Community:

Why is this important?

The mental health of our residents can be affected greatly by the behaviour of others, particularly where it is unchallenged. Whether that is the behaviour of inconsiderate neighbours or a coercive and/or controlling partner, the impact can have a significant impact on an individual's quality of life. Mental health concerns can lead to people targeting their vulnerability and abusing them for financial or other forms of gain. People with mental health concerns can also be the cause of anti-social behaviour which affects others or a wider community. They can also become isolated, lose their support network and neglect their own care.

Mental health, like substance misuse, cuts across all our priority themes and is a growing concern in Maidstone with more police and local authority investigations containing issues around the mental health of either the victim or perpetrator. This is evident in the weekly Community Safety and Vulnerability Group (CSVG) where an estimated 75% of cases relate to mental health for either the perpetrator or the victim.

What we will do?

Ensure access to statutory mental health support for both victims and perpetrators of violence.

Ensure that a trauma informed approach is used to support individuals who are vulnerable, street-homeless or committing anti-social behaviour. Partners will problem-solve to co-ordinate support alongside wider issues.

Provide intensive support for young people / vulnerable adults identified at risk of exploitation or self-harm, ensuring that appropriate referrals are made to specialist services or the Community Safety Vulnerability Group as appropriate.

Appendices

Appendix 1- Summary of the Information Analysed in the Strategic Assessment:

What People Told Us:

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 as a whole. 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 a public and youth surveys to help inform our 2022-25 priorities. For the public survey, we used similar 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 residents responding felt safe in their local area in the daytime, increasing from 77% in 2019.
- 38% of residents responding 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 don't 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 said they had 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 centres, 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 behaviours 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.
- Younger year groups (6 and 7) perceived those negative behaviours 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 came into contact with 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.

Perception of crime and safety can be influenced by a number of 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. This has been considered as part of the Strategic Assessment, where perception vs the reality has been reviewed and has led to the inclusion of a new cross-cutting theme specifically linked to improving public perception and confidence.

What Data We Used and What It Told Us:

The data allows us to develop analysis to see what trends exist, but we **must** be mindful that the pandemic and lockdown in particular has impacted on the data recorded and cannot be considered "normal" times. Unless the stated the data below is a comparison between 2020 and 2021.

Many of the increases recorded below are due to lower levels in the previous period as a direct result of the pandemic and lockdowns.

KEY FINDINGS

Total Crime

- Overall crime increased by 4.2%
- Overall volume of crime in Maidstone has increased to a lesser extent than the years before the pandemic and remains lower than past year
- Less pandemic restrictions than previous year a key consideration
- Violent Crime makes up the largest proportion of reported crime and increased by 8.5%
- Criminal damage saw the greatest percentage increase (11%)
- Burglary showed the greatest reduction (-39%)

Serious, Organised and Violent Crime

- Most serious violence (murder, death by dangerous driving, GBH, etc) reduced by 7%
- Violence against person (common assault, ABH and Domestic Abuse etc) increased by 8.5% and accounts for 92% of violent crimes
- Crimes for possession of weapons decrease by 9%
- Sexual offences increased by 14%
- In the last three years, four OCGs have been successfully disrupted and as a result are no longer considered an active threat. There is one active OCG in the borough
- 7% of hospital admissions are as a result of violence

Anti-social Behaviour

- Reports of ASB to the police reduced by 29% but remains higher than pre-pandemic
- ASB reported to the Council reduced by 7% but remains higher than pre-pandemic
- Noise complaints increased by 4% and remains higher than pre-pandemic
- 15% increase in the use of formal warnings (CPWs) against ASB, up 204% since 2019
- 61% decrease in the use of formal notices (CPNs) due to improved compliance
- Maidstone's use of Community Protection Powers (86 CPWs) is significantly higher than the average use in Kent (18 CPWs) and our CIPFA Nearest Neighbours (11 CPWs)
- Disruption from Unauthorised Encampments reduced by 83% (no. encampments) and 99% (no. days of disruption)
- No Community Triggers were requested in 2021

Domestic Abuse

- 31% of all crime in Maidstone is related to Domestic Abuse
- Domestic Abuse remains under reported, so increases are considered positive as it indicates more victims are feeling able to report
- Domestic Abuse crimes increased by 6% and is up 14% since 2019
- The largest increase is in the reporting of Coercion and Control which is more readily recognised as a crime
- 220 MARACs were undertaken, a decrease of 18%
- Sanctuary referrals increased by 36%

Youth Services/Justice – Comparative data April 2020- March 2021 and the previous period

- Youth offences decreased from 87 to 74 (15%) and these were committed by 30 individuals
- The number of individuals committing offences reduced by 23%
- Youth offending has decreased by 60% since 2015-16
- Children's educational and emotional development has been impacted by the pandemic
- There are no "home grown" Gangs active in Maidstone but the threat from County Lines remains
- Peer Groups and Street Groups do exist and are often incorrectly labelled as Gangs
- The District Contextual Safeguarding meeting has discussed 18 individuals and closed 17 of them after successful interventions
- A number of locations have also been discussed and interventions implemented
- 5 new School Officers have been added to the police and are actively working in and around secondary schools

Substance Misuse

- 19% decrease in drug offences
- 56% decrease in needles found or retrieved from public places/bins respectively
- Significant reductions in have been seen at high-risk locations including the river steps (75%) and the amphitheatre (54%) can be linked to work of MBC Outreach and Change Grow Live with vulnerable individuals
- 60% of hospital admissions are as a result of alcohol or substance misuse

Mental Health

- Section 136 of the Mental Health Act was used 89 times, a 22% decrease
- Mental health referrals into younger adult (18-64) services (including acute/community recovery services) saw a decrease of 4.1% to 1247
- In older adults (65+) there was a decrease of 2.9% to 866 cases
- In 2020, 52% of respondents said they had experienced a fairly negative impact on their mental health, due to the pandemic
- Mental health can contribute significantly to crime figure, due to repeat offences
- 32% of hospital admissions are as a result self-harm

Hate Crime- reporting period Dec 20 to Nov 21

- 37.1% increase in Hate Crimes with 521 reported hate crimes
- Race prejudice accounts for 70% of all hate crimes
- Sexual Orientation hate related crimes which accounts for 13%
- no reported crimes relating to gender and age prejudice in the period

Integrated Offender Management (IOM) (As of 27/10/2021)

- IOM combined cohort sits at 108 individuals, which is a -36.5% decrease (-62 individuals) compared to the cohort in August which saw 170 individuals.
- West Division, which includes Maidstone, represents 28% of the cohort.#
- There were 228 arrests made of 57 individuals whilst on IOM. Maidstone accounts for 29% (66 offences) of the offences committed on IOM.

Maidstone Task Force

- 33.4% decrease in harmful crime in the Shepway area
- 100% of original ASB Nominal's enforcement plans have been closed as no longer posing a threat to the community.
- Over 190 Arrests for drug, weapon, indecent exposure offences and 110 offences changed
- Ten's Thousands of pounds worth of drugs seized
- Increased use of stop and search (384) and cross agency intelligence sharing, leading to significant arrests and disruption
- 50 vehicles seized for various offences
- Significant engagement activity across a variety of services
- New support services introduced locally to support the community

Appendix 2- Safer Maidstone Partnership Governance:

The continued success of the SMP is linked to the work of its sub-groups and the leadership of its Executive Board and Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

This section describes how the Partnership works as a structured entity and how it delivers its community safety priorities through the work of its sub-groups.

Safer Maidstone Partnership Executive Group (SMPEG):

The Safer Maidstone Partnership Executive Group (SMPEG) works with all other strategic boards in the borough. It offers strategic governance to ensure high quality and cost-effective services are provided within the borough. The key functions of the executive group are to:

- Provide strategic leadership and vision to make Maidstone a safer borough
- Be a strategic driver, working with all partners to support the direction of the partnership
- Deliver sustainable Community Safety Strategy (CSS) priorities and any relevant targets arising from these priorities
- Deliver statutory responsibilities held by the SMPEG
- Have oversight, receive and agree funds and funding applications relating to community safety within Maidstone

Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

Under the Crime and Disorder (Overview and Scrutiny) Regulations 2009, every local authority is required to have in place a Crime and Disorder Committee. The Committee is empowered to review, scrutinise and make recommendations regarding the work of the responsible authorities regarding their crime and disorder functions. MBC Elected Members are also invited to 'Members Briefings' and training sessions, where specialist training is provided to support them in their understanding of the priorities themselves and the work that is being undertaken.

Safer Maidstone Partnership:

The SMP is responsible for:

- Delivering CSP strategic priorities and any relevant targets arising from these priorities on behalf of the SMPEG
- Fulfilling statutory responsibilities held by the SMPEG
- Responding to other issues relating to community safety, which include those that may arise, from government policies or other developments

SMP Subgroups:

The Partnership is structured so that it has subgroups to develop, co-ordinate and deliver the activities to achieve the outcomes for each of the core priority themes. Appendix 3 provides a summary list of the sub and working groups utilised by the Partnership. Each sub-group is responsible for:

- Producing an action plan containing measurable activities and indicators
- Ensuring that there are resources available to deliver these plans
- Submitting funding applications to obtain additional resources where required
- Ensuring cross-cutting themes are integrated into the action plans

The nature of some of the work is such that it is difficult to measure or show a direct impact of what is being undertaken. For example, it is not possible to measure how engagement and diversion of young people reduces their individual risk-taking behaviours, but we are able to measure how many young people engage with services and our impact on the specific individuals, groups or locations that are brought to the District Contextual Safeguarding Meeting.

For each priority theme an action plan will be agreed that has:

- A high-level outcome which set out what the Partnership is aiming to achieve
- Indicators which measure trends in associated behaviours, crimes, service usage, etc
- A series of measurable actions that the partnership believes will achieve the higher-level outcome

Using the same example, one such action is to ensure that Contextual Safeguarding Location Assessments are undertaken by the partnership in ASB “hot spots” or areas of concern. As developed by the University of Bedfordshire, the survey uses a Neighbourhood Assessment Triangle (fig.1), focussing on three key factors:

- Understanding the needs of children and young people (including groups of young people) who spend time in the location
- Finding out about who has (or could have) guardianship capacity in the location (i.e. who are the people invested in the location being safe for everyone)
- Any relevant Community and Environmental factors linked to the location

The assessments can be used to focus partnership resources, improve local youth provision or support changes to the locations.

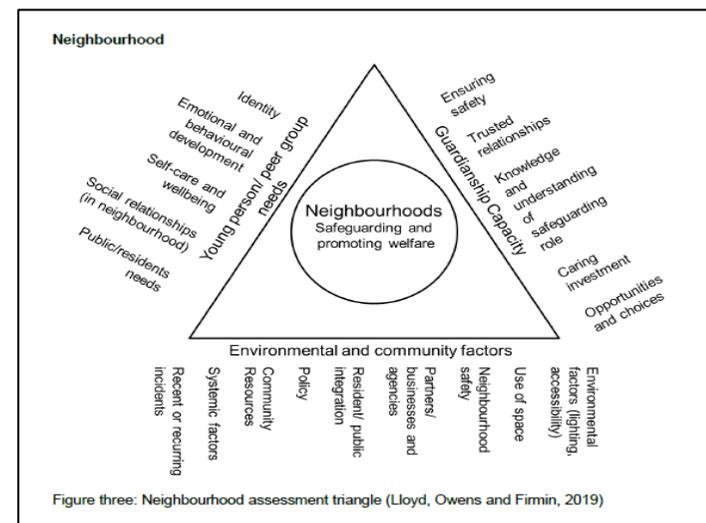


Fig1. Neighbourhood Assessment Triangle for Location Assessments

The Maidstone Task Force



As one of the largest districts in Kent, it was recognised that some areas in Maidstone have disproportionate levels of crime, social/economic deprivation and health inequality. Taking the learning from other Kent Task Forces and Public Health led approaches both nationally and internationally, it was decided to implement the Maidstone Task Force, which launched September 2020.

The Task Force's objective is to work with communities, and provide resilience and long-term/permanent improvement to not only crime levels, but also health and well-being. The Task Force was established to provide enhanced joined up solutions to complex problems.

Based in a collaborative workspace in Maidstone House, the MTF has been focussed on the combined wards of Shepway South and Shepway North. Analysis of the available crime data revealed high levels of ASB, particularly around the shops and in housing blocks, and domestic abuse in both wards. Analysis of the health data revealed that residents in these areas also face disproportionate health challenges, including a lower life expectancy. Further analysis also revealed other wider determinants in regard to accessibility to employment, skills gaps, financial challenges and food poverty.

Delivery in the focus areas is centred around "Building Community Engagement and Cohesion." Using the problem-solving model, known as OSARA, the task force takes a partnership approach to challenging some of the social norms that are evident in those wards. Tackling ASB in partnership with Golding Homes, who have provided a dedicated officer into the Task Force, has seen some improvement in the area according to residents.

Appendix 3- Summary of the sub-groups and working groups that work in each of the priority areas:

Priority Theme	Sub-groups and Working Groups delivering the action plans (not an exhaustive list)
Protecting our communities against serious and organised crime (including modern slavery)	Serious & Organised Crime Panel Sites of interest Multi-agency meeting Kent Environmental Crime Waste Practitioners Group
Reducing the harm caused by domestic abuse	Domestic Abuse Forum Kent Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board. KIDAS DA Forum Chair's meeting Kent OSS steering group
Keeping Children and Young People Safe	District Contextual Safeguarding Meeting (DSCM), with escalation to Complex Adolescent Risk Meetings Maidstone Local Children's Partnership Group Adolescent Risk Management panel
Cross-Cutting Theme	Working Groups in addition to those listed above (not an exhaustive list)
Reducing the impact of Substance Misuse on our community	Kent Substance Misuse Alliance
Reducing the impact of Mental Health on our community	Community Safety and Vulnerability Group
Reducing reoffending and tackling the drivers of crime	Delivered through Serious & Organised Crime Panel
Tackle ASB in our communities and Town Centre	Proposed Town Centre Community Safety Steering Group Ward Cluster Meetings
Improve public perception /confidence	Proposed multi-agency public reassurance working group

'Feel safe, Be safe'

maidstone.gov.uk

