

Community Safety Strategy

1. Foreword

As the Chair of Gravesham's Community Safety Partnership, I am very pleased to introduce this Community Safety Strategy 2021-24 on behalf of both all the Partnership's statutory partners and the range of other agencies and organisations who work collaboratively to make Gravesham a safer place.

This Strategy carries particular importance for us as it is the first created by our new Partnership, established in October 2020 and that is dedicated to our Borough. This approach will enable us to better understand those issues that are impacting quality of life in our neighbourhoods and to drive forward our co-ordinated activity on tackling priorities at a much more local level. Having our own Partnership means that we will be able to ensure that time and effort is spent on reducing the types of crime and disorder that are most important to local people and the communities we serve.

Although we have already achieved much through partnership working, we know that we still face challenges in Gravesham. We know that alongside prosperous areas of the Borough there are pockets of deprivation in which families suffer crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB) disproportionately. We also know that there are additional risks faced by vulnerable people to whom we have a duty of care in safeguarding them against the activity of perpetrators who seek to take advantage. Whilst our Borough's geographical position and its proximity and ease of access to London is a positive feature, it also means that we are seen as an attractive location for cross-border criminals who will travel to commit crime locally. These are all factors that we have taken into account in producing this new Strategy. In reviewing the impact of earlier work, we have considered the different responses that we may want to adopt moving forwards and how we can develop locally focused solutions that will lead to improvements that will be sustainable in the longer term.

Our aim is to ensure that Gravesham is a safe place for everyone who lives, works in or visits our Borough. This Strategy is a recognition of the fact that we need to work together to achieve this ambition – we all have a part to play and a contribution to make. This includes local people taking an interest in their neighbourhood and exercising their responsibilities as citizens – this can be as simple as reporting community safety issues when they emerge, putting forward suggestions about how things could be improved or working with friends and neighbours to help us create the kind of areas in which people will want to live and raise their families.

Careful analysis of recorded crime and ASB data has been carried out in identifying the priorities contained in this Strategy but in Gravesham we do also take pride in our approach to community engagement and making decisions not just on behalf of but together with our local residents. A Community Safety Public Consultation has taken place during February 2021 to give people, whatever their age, background and connection with Gravesham, an opportunity to tell us about their experiences of crime and ASB and what they feel the issues are that we need to tackle first. The findings of the Consultation are summarised in the Strategy itself and I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has given their time to provide their views so that whilst this Strategy is one that the Partnership has a duty to deliver it is

one that belongs to local people and that is about also responding to publicly identified priorities.

Our new three year plan sets our Partnership a tough and challenging programme of work but we feel that it provides us with a firm grounding upon which we can make some positive changes. The nature of the crime and disorder issues that we and the country face now are very different to those that we faced just a few years ago. In the last 12 months we have also had to build into the equation the impact that Covid-19 has had on criminal behaviour and ASB – something that none of us could have foreseen. Whilst hopefully the pandemic will be under control before too long, we still need to be mindful of how it has influenced offending behaviour and new tactics that have been employed, particularly against the most vulnerable in our society. Whether or not Covid-19 has longer term implications for community safety is something that we will need to monitor.

I hope that this Strategy reassures you of the firm commitment that all our Partnership members share in supporting and protecting local people so that our Borough is a safer place for everyone. We often cite that our diversity is one of our greatest strengths; by working together across all of our different communities and combining that effort with the support of our wide range of partner agencies we can create a safer Gravesham and indeed, a Gravesham to be proud of.

Councillor Shane Mochrie-Cox

Chair, Gravesham Community Safety Partnership

Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure, Gravesham Borough Council

2. Our Partnership

Gravesham Community Safety Partnership (CSP) is made up of statutory agencies brought together under a shared responsibility placed upon them by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. Since its introduction the Act has seen several amendments and our Partnership now has an obligation to work together not only to reduce crime and disorder but also to address anti-social behaviour (ASB) and to lessen the reoffending of those who repeatedly commit crime.

Key statutory partners have all experienced considerable pressures on their resources, particularly during the period of the pandemic, at the same time that expectations and statutory requirements placed on Partnerships have increased. The community safety landscape has also been changing with certain strands of criminal activity including serious organised crime and offences targeted at vulnerable people having become both national and local priorities. As the new Gravesham Community Safety Partnership, we will be seeking to extend our membership beyond the core statutory partners in order to increase our capacity for joint working so that we are well-placed to tackle these issues effectively.

Our Partners and our legal responsibilities

Gravesham has a strong track record of working in Partnership and much of the successful work carried out in recent years would not have been possible without the excellent relationship between the specified authorities that form the core membership of our CSP. Currently these are:

- Gravesham Borough Council

- Kent Police
- Kent Fire and Rescue Service
- Kent County Council
- Kent Surrey and Sussex Rehabilitation Company
- NHS Dartford, Gravesham and Swanley Clinical Commissioning Group
- Office of the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner

Significant contributions are also made to Partnership activity by a host of voluntary and private sector groups, charitable organisations and local community groups, without which our ability to tackle community safety priorities would be more restricted. As our Partnership develops, we will encourage colleagues from these sectors to bring their expertise and knowledge to the table and contribute to our effort. This wider partnership approach will be really beneficial as the drivers of crime and ASB are often multiple and complex, cutting across a range of different agencies and services.

Each year the CSP has a legal duty to complete a Strategic Assessment of the levels of crime and disorder being experienced in our Borough. The purpose of the Assessment is to:

- Determine whether priorities remain the same or whether there are new priorities to address;
- Highlight performance, progress and achievements against commitments made in the most current Community Safety Strategy; and,
- Identify key crime, disorder and ASB risks and threats to our local communities.

Gravesham's Community Safety Unit (CSU) completed the latest Strategic Assessment on behalf of our CSP in December 2020. As part of developing this new Strategy, the Assessment also looked back at work completed over the previous 12 months. It is clear that despite the emergence of Covid-19 placing extraordinary demands on all partner agencies, collaborative work not only continued but delivered some significant achievements in tackling our strategic priorities including those highlighted below.

Tackling violent crime and domestic abuse

The Gravesham community led *Altogether Safer – Reducing Violence Against Women and Girls Project*, funded through the Home Office VAWG Transformation Fund for 3 years following a successful bid (total received: £248,464) ended in March 2020. The Project provided support to 269 adult victims and 349 children through a Police Station-based Independent Domestic Violence (IDVA) service. Awareness-raising activity, including an annual women and girls' only conference targeted at BAME communities, saw in excess of 300 attendees at each event. BAME victims accessing support from the Out of Hours IDVA service increased from 19.1% to over 30% during the Project's 3 years. The 'Choose Respect' Programme supported a total of 204 boys and young men with 12-week courses and one-to-one work to break the cycle of aggressive behaviour. A post-course sample of 32 participants found 100% stated that their aggressive behaviour had decreased and they were now able to identify healthy relationships.

The Gravesham community led Step Change Project, providing intensive wrap-around-the family support to victims of domestic abuse with complex needs and their children, was funded for 2 years through a successful bid to the MHCLG Domestic Abuse Fund (total received: £137,880). The Project's original target of working with up to 80 victims and 120 children was exceeded: 92 victims and 180 children received support. The Project's funding ended in March 2020 but Choices, who deliver the service, were able to secure additional funding from the Big Lottery to enable this work to continue until March 2022.

Additional financial assistance has been provided by Gravesham Borough Council to Choices during Covid-19 to support victims of domestic abuse. £12,350 was provided in September 2020 from the Council's Emergency Grant Assistance Fund to meet the increased demand for support from victims during the pandemic and which will be available to spend until September 2021.

Following funding being made available via the Office of the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner, 5 large trauma packs, 20 smaller packs and 10 knife wands were purchased by the CSU for distribution to key premises across the Borough to enable rapid assistance in the event of a violent incident and to detect weapons by those entering some premises.

Targeted work and tailored interventions have been delivered through Gravesham's Vulnerability Panel and Rough Sleeper Initiative to encourage those with alcohol or drug dependency issues (particularly those who are also street homeless) who become involved in violence as perpetrators or who are vulnerable to violence as victims, into treatment services and accommodation.

Gravesham's Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee completed a first review of Knife and Youth Violence to identify multi-agency opportunities to reduce youth violence involving weapons. (Further activity has been unavoidably temporarily postponed due to Covid-19).

Tackling Persistent anti-social behaviour (ASB) and environmental crime

Gravesham Council launched its first cross-departmental ASB Strategy in September 2019. An ASB Strategy Delivery Group has also been established and has developed an action plan to progress activity from prevention through to enforcement. A key objective is to introduce a uniform ASB case management system to enable full records to be maintained on ASB reports received by the Council, to ensure coordinated and effective support responses are provided to victims and evidence is pooled to facilitate formal action against perpetrators as appropriate.

Following the extension of the Council's Safer Place Officer Team to 5 personnel, the Council has also recruited a permanent Environmental Enforcement Manager who came into post in September 2020 and is now based in the CSU. Since mid-September the Team has taken on 134 active enquiries from evidence obtained at waste crime sites. 57 of these enquiries are ongoing at the time of writing. Since October 2020 the Team has issued 9 fixed penalty notices at \$400 each, for fly-tipping and several £150 fines for littering. The Council is also planning to recruit an Environmental Crime Investigation Officer in early 2021.

In November-December 2019, Gravesham Council installed 5 new permanent CCTV cameras in the Riverside Leisure Area to provide reassurance in the location which had been a hotspot for ASB. 8 key permanent cameras in Gravesend town centre were also upgraded to act as a deterrent and secure evidence against perpetrators. Mobile camera units have been deployed where viable to help reduce ASB in key areas that have included: King Street, Gravesend; School Close, Meopham; and Woodlands Park, Gravesend.

A new Public Space Protection Order restricting the consumption of alcohol in and around Gravesend the Town Centre has been approved to help address persistent ASB linked to street drinking which will be capable of being enforced by both Police officers and the Council's Safer Place Officer Team.

Effective use has been made of enforcement tools and successful action against those persistently involved in ASB e.g. Community Protection Warnings, Community Protection Notices. Active cases involving Council tenants against whom Notices of Seeking Possession were being sought have been temporarily 'frozen' due to Covid-19 but will be re-opened as soon as permissible.

Targeted outreach youth work has taken place (observing Covid-19 restrictions) in key locations where ASB involving young people is prevalent. A Gravesham Youth Engagement Panel is being established that will form an operational group of the Gravesham CSP that will take a multi-agency approach in dealing with referrals of young people engaging in both low-level and more serious ASB to identify appropriate interventions to effect a change in behaviour.

Plans are in place to establish a multi-agency Gravesham Area Based Action Group as an operational Group of the CSP to tackle persistent ASB and environmental crime in geographical locations or hotspots where these issues have been long-standing. Gravesham Borough Council will be recruiting a full-time Community Safety Project Coordinator dedicated to leading this work who will be based within the Council's CSU in early 2021.

Preventing offending and reoffending

Intelligence-sharing has continued through the Gravesham Serious Organised Crime Group to collate evidence with the aim of disrupting the activity of the Borough's one current live Organised Crime Group and to take formal action whenever possible. Several members of the Group or associates are due to attend court in 2021.

Multi-agency activity and information sharing, particularly between Gravesham Council's CSU and Housing Department, Kent Police and Porchlight, has led to the identification of a car wash in the Borough that is believed to be engaging in labour exploitation and a live investigation is now ongoing as a result.

Considerable work has been carried out by Gravesham Council's CSU, Kent Police and colleagues from Kent Trading Standards and HMRC to disrupt and prevent the continuation of criminal activity linked to the sale of illegal cigarettes and tobacco. In addition to the collation of considerable evidence, numerous seizures of illegal cigarettes and tobacco have taken place during the last 12 months, depriving the criminal networks involved of thousands of pounds. Community Impact Statements

have now also been gathered and the Council is investigating the viability of using closure orders against a number of premises in 2021.

During Covid-19, Council officers across several Departments and led by the Environmental Protection Team, carried out premises checks during the night-time economy to ensure that businesses were complying with trading restrictions, giving warnings and taking formal action against those who failed to do so.

Reducing offending and reoffending by designing out crime - very persistent ASB being caused at St. Andrew's Court that was having a negative impact on the quality of life of residents, many of whom were elderly, was addressed by the CSU using some of its funding allocated via the PCC's Crime Reduction Grant to meet the costs of installing CCTV and security lighting.

Funding obtained through the MHCLG Migration Fund allowed The Gr@nd in Gravesend to open on Friday evenings between 7.00pm-10.00pm as a means of engaging, young people (particularly those who had been coming to regular attention for causing ASB) with a view to changing their behaviour. The majority of the approximately 25-30 weekly attendees were a culturally diverse group – chiefly Slovakian, Bulgarian and British. They engaged well in the activities provided and there was a resultant improvement in behaviour as well as better integration between the attendees from different backgrounds with cultural barriers being broken down. Final sessions during Covid-19 were maintained through on-line engagement.

Multi-agency seasonal work in the Fort Gardens and Promenade area included the provision of security staff during the summer months to September between 6.00pm - 10.00pm to allow earlier intervention with individuals engaging in ASB and to support intelligence-sharing with Kent Police.

Protecting vulnerable people and strengthening communities

Gravesham Borough Council publically launched its Modern Slavery Strategy in October 2019 (to our knowledge, the first Local Authority in the County to have a dedicated strategy to deal with this issue) that was very well-publicised. A multi-agency Modern Slavery Working Group has been established as an operational group of the CSP. In the few months since closer working between partner agencies has taken place, 4 individuals have come to light as potential victims of labour exploitation. NRM referrals have been completed and 3 of them have now been housed outside of the Borough whilst investigations continue.

During Covid-19 the CSU's Safer Place Officers were redeployed to support the Council's Community Hub established to ensure that support could be provided to vulnerable people in the community without family or friends. Food parcels and medication were delivered and welfare checks/door knocks carried out and referrals made into other support services as appropriate.

Gravesham Council reviewed and published a Modern Slavery Statement on its website and the Council's Procurement Policy now includes reference to modern slavery to guard against modern slavery being present in any part of the Council's supply chains.

Gravesham Vulnerability Panel has continued to meet on a monthly basis, operating virtual meetings during Covid-19. The majority of cases concern vulnerable people with serious mental health issues, in some cases linked to drug and/or alcohol dependency issues and the Panel works collectively to try to identify support and interventions to meet individuals' needs. The Panel's most recent meeting in December 2020 dealt with 12 cases (9 male and 3 female) and 3 new referrals were accepted.

Rough sleepers/homeless people are recognised as being particularly vulnerable to harm. Gravesham Council's Rough Sleeper Initiative led by Housing Services supported by the CSU, working closely with homeless charities, Porchlight and Sanctuary and Kent Police, has been identifying tailored support for homeless people referred. Fortnightly meetings continue.

Funding awarded through the MHCLG Controlling Migration Fund has been used to deliver the Altogether Stronger Project to promote integration and community cohesion through community events. Two events were held prior to Covid-19 restrictions meaning (further work has had to be temporarily postponed). An African Caribbean food event was held in October 2019, attracting a footfall of approximately 600 people and a second event, Desserts Around the World, took place in January 2020 with similarly positive attendance and feedback.

Housing ASB Officers have now relocated to the CSU and are dealing with private housing cases and persistent ASB complaints concerning or affecting Council tenants. Where residents/tenants are considered particularly vulnerable additional assistance has been provided to improve their home security including the gifting of peephole cameras for front doors.

Gravesham Council's Safeguarding Policy is in the process of being reviewed and updated and the Council has a part-time Lead Safeguarding Officer as a key point of contact for Council departments and external agencies should they have concerns about the vulnerability of any adult or child.

Safeguarding briefings have been circulated to Council staff to remind them of how to spot signs of abuse/neglect of vulnerable adults and/or children and what steps to take so that all cases are reported without delay. The Lead Safeguarding Officer is now developing a training programme that will be rolled out in 2021.

As well as provision of funding from the Council Emergency Assistance Grants of c. £12,500 towards additional staffing costs for Choices advisors to assist victims of domestic abuse during the pandemic, the Council's CSU also provided £2,000 to fund a crisis/emergency pot to ensure that domestic abuse victims and their children could cover the cost of basic essentials or other necessities to keep them safe from harm e.g. transport costs.

3. Strategic Assessment

The Assessment process enables the CSP to better identify key community safety issues and potential risks to the health and quality of life of local people. Headline

findings of the Assessment are provided below in relation to data for the 12 months ending 30 September 2020 compared with the previous year.

Key crime categories

Total crime

- Total crime has fallen by 1.1% however providing a rate of 113.9 offences per 1,000 population (the second highest in the County).
- Pelham Ward has recorded a significantly greater proportion of total crime (almost a 1/5th of all crime recorded across all Wards despite a sharp decline during Covid-19 lockdown).
- Secondary Wards with significantly higher crime rates per 1,000 population are: Northfleet South, Riverside, Northfleet North and Whitehill Wards.

Violent crime

- Violent crime has increased by 3.4% and accounts for 46.4% of all crime in the Borough.
- Over 90% of violent crime relates to violence against the person offences but of these over 40% are offences of violence without injury.
- A significant increase of 27.5% has been seen in stalking and harassment which has impacted the total violent crime figure and this crime accounts for over a quarter of all violent crime.
- Gravesham has the 3rd highest rate of violent crime per 1,000 population in the County.
- Pelham Ward experiences a significantly higher rate of violent crime per 1,000 population due to a concentration of violent offences in Gravesend town centre and the immediate vicinity.
- Sexual offences have fallen by 3.8%.
- Robbery has increased by 2.6%.

Domestic abuse

- Domestic abuse crimes and serious incidents have increased by 13.1%.
- The rate of domestic abuse per 1,000 population in the Borough is the 3rd highest in the County.
- Domestic abuse began to increase at the beginning of the Covid-19 lockdown, reaching a peak in mid-July

Criminal damage

- Criminal damage has increased by 11.5% locally and accounts for 13.8% of all crime locally.
- Gravesham has the highest rate of criminal damage per 1,000 population of any District and Medway (15.7 offences compared with an average of 11.4 offences).
- Offences fell significantly early in the pandemic but have since returned to pre-Covid levels.
- Northfleet South Ward experiences the highest rate of criminal damage per 1,000 population.

Theft and handling stolen goods (THSG)

- THSG offences have fallen by 4.2% but still account for 13.6% of total crime.

- The reduction seen locally is less than the average recorded Countywide of 17.5% but this may be linked to considerably busier retail and hospitality sectors in other areas affected by lockdown.
- Patterns of offending were influenced by Covid-19 and trading restrictions with significant reductions in the early part of the year followed by an increase as restrictions were lifted.
- Key Wards experiencing higher levels of THSG are not surprisingly Pelham, Riverside and Northfleet South although unexpectedly, Painters Ash.

Burglary - residential

- A very significant reduction of 17.3% has been seen in residential burglary (offending having been impacted by lockdown and Covid-19).
- Despite the reduction, the rate per 1,000 population (12.2 offences per 1,000 households is the highest in the County).
- Council Wards experiencing higher levels of residential burglary are Pelham and Riverside.

Burglary – business and community

- Burglaries of business and community buildings have reduced by 14.5% in Gravesham.
- A steady decline has been seen since late January 2020, continuing throughout the Covid-19 period.
- Pelham and Riverside Wards, with a concentration of business and community buildings in these areas, experience higher levels of burglaries in such premises.

Vehicle crime

- Vehicle crime has fallen significantly by 27.7% - people working from home, lockdown and socialising restrictions have clearly had an impact.
- At 6.4 offences per 1,000 population, the rate is slightly higher than the Kent-average of 4.9.

Drug offences - trafficking

- Drug trafficking offences have fallen by 17.0%.
- Gravesham is the only area in the County to record a reduction – the average increase in Kent is 49.9%.
- The sharpest reduction was seen in August 2020 - shortly after successive months of significant arrests made between January - July.

Drug offences - possession

- Possession offences have increased by 40.3% in compared to a 27.3% increase Countywide.
- Gravesham's rate of 1.9 offences per 1,000 population is the 2nd highest in the County.
- Temporal analysis suggests that the increase is partly linked to greater visibility/easier detection of suspicious behaviour during the pandemic.

Possession of weapons

- Offences have risen by 56.2% in Gravesham – the greatest increase seen in the County (the average increase Kent-wide is 9.6%).

- The rate of offences per 1,000 population at 1.1 offences is the 2nd highest in the County.
- Offences have been reducing and following a downward trend since March 2020.
- As with drug offences, Wards with higher numbers of weapons possession offences are in the Town Centre - Pelham, Riverside and Central.

Public order

- Public order offences have reduced by 8.6% in line with the Countywide average reduction of 8.4%.
- At 8.8, rates per 1,000 population remain slightly higher than the Kent average rate of 7.8 offences.
- A sharp reduction occurred during the first lockdown period due to reduced footfall in Gravesend town centre and public areas.
- The greatest number of public order offences is recorded in Pelham Ward.

Other community safety issues

Anti-social behaviour (ASB)

- Kent Police recorded ASB has risen by 46.7% in Gravesham and by 43.1% across the County. •
- The increase is heavily linked to reports to Police of breaches of Covid-19 restrictions recorded within the ASB offence category. •
- Key Wards affected by ASB are Pelham, Riverside, Coldharbour, Northfleet South and Shorne, Cobham and Luddesdown. •
- Almost half of noise complaints concerned loud music – a significantly greater proportion than usual.

Deliberate fires

- 58.0% of fires in Gravesham are deliberate.
- Deliberate fires have increased by 15.6% locally compared to an average reduction of 0.6% in Kent.
- Our rate of deliberate fires per 1,000 population is more than twice the Kent average.
- 77 deliberate fires took place in Riverside Ward – over a 1/3rd of all the Borough's deliberate fires.
- Riverside Ward is the single Ward across the County recording the greatest number of deliberate fires.

Fly-tipping

- The greatest monthly increase in fly-tipping in Gravesham was recorded in April 2020, possibly due to irresponsible and illegal disposal of waste during the lockdown period.
- Local hotspots include: The Shore, Factory Road, Denton and the Dickens Estate (Riverside Ward) in urban areas and Istead Rise, Nurstead, Luddesdown, Cobham and Harvel in rural areas.

Road safety and travel safety

- The number of road casualties and road collisions per 1,000 population locally is aligned to the Kent average.

- Overall, child and older road users (60/+) have reduced.
- A specific causal feature in collisions during Covid-19 is speed.
- Offences recorded by BTP have risen by 36.1% - compared to a District average increase of 8.8%.
- 71.7% of all local BTP offences relate to Gravesend Station.
- The most notable increase at Gravesend Station is in offences of violence against the person (from 16 to 40 offences).
- Violence against the person offences (across all Gravesham Stations and services) account for almost a quarter of all railway/BTP recorded offences locally.

Reducing reoffending

- Over half of Gravesham NPS clients are medium risk with fewer clients being high risk than the Kent average.
- The number of CRC clients has reduced by 27.4% to 135 individuals and the majority are on community orders.
- The most common offence committed is violence.
- Gravesham's proven adult reoffending rate is 22.5% compared to an average Kent rate of 25.3%.
- North Division's IOM adult and youth cohorts have seen a reduction in offences committed whilst on IOM of 60% and a 78.0% respectively.
- Youth offending has fallen in Gravesham by 36.8% compared to a KCC District average reduction of 6.2%.
- The most common offences committed by Gravesham young offenders are drugs-related.

Protecting vulnerable people and communities

- Gravesham has recorded the smallest proportion of Safeguarding Concerns across KCC Districts (5.7%).
- Mental Health referrals have increased by 13.8% locally compared to an average District increase of 3.8%.
- A 72.9% reduction in doorstep crime (as reported to KCC Trading Standards) has been recorded in Gravesham – the greatest decrease in any District (the District average reduction is 52.0%).
- Scams have increased by 22.8% Countywide during Covid-19 with almost half of all scams being conducted by telephone.
- Hate crime has reduced by 5.5% locally but Gravesham still has the highest rate of hate crimes per 1,000 population in the County (3.1 offences compared to an average 2.5 offences).
- The vast majority (74.6%) of hate crime in Gravesham is racially motivated.
- Gravesham has the most modern slavery cases reported to the TILI Project in the country/nationwide (13 cases) as a result of the proactive approach being taken locally

4. Community Safety Public Consultation

The need for local people to be given an opportunity to voice their views and opinions is recognised as crucially important in achieving long-term change and improving community safety. Whilst the statistics collated through the Strategic Assessment process provide a good foundation in identifying priorities, relying on

them alone may result in issues that are key concerns in local neighbourhood being missed.

Therefore, a Community Safety Public Consultation exercise was conducted between 1 February and 28 February 2021. A detailed survey was made available on the Gravesham Borough Council website (flagged on its homepage) and the survey was promoted via the Council's social media platforms. Links to the survey were also circulated to a wide range of community groups and organisations to encourage participation from local people of all ages and backgrounds in an effort to ensure that the views of as many as possible were represented. Anyone living, working, studying or who visits Gravesham was invited to take part. Key findings resulting from responses are provided below.

A total of 184 responses were received. Of these, 88 (47.8%) of the respondents live in Gravesham; 59 (32.1%) both live and work in Borough; 33 (17.9%) work but do not live in the Borough; and 4 (2.2%) live and study in Gravesham.

The top three most important issues

Residents were asked to select the top 3 most important issues that they believe affect community safety most significantly and to prioritise their choices (1 being their greatest priority).

Most important issue

More than half of all respondents (102 or 55.4%) identified ASB as their greatest priority (in the last Community Safety Survey completed in February 2019, ASB was also the greatest priority although then by 40% of all respondents).

- ASB - 56%
- Violence - 17%
- Property crime - 13%
- Town centre safety - 9%
- Substance misuse - 5%

Second most important issue

Responses in relation to the second most important issue produce results that are more evenly spread between the different categories with town centre safety, ASB and property crime all accounting for the same or similar proportion of the total responses received.

- ASB - 24%
- Town centre safety - 24%
- Property crime - 22%
- Substance misuse - 17%
- Violence - 13%

Third most important issue

Responses in relation to the third most important issue, demonstrate that town centre safety and violence are perceived as being fairly evenly significant in impacting community safety locally.

- Town centre safety - 27%
- Violence - 24%

- Property crime - 19%
- Substance misuse - 17%
- ASB - 13%

Type of issues

For each of the top three issues that respondents had identified, they were then asked to select their key concerns within the particular category with the following results:

ASB

170 respondents chose ASB as one of their top 3 issues and 169 responded to this question.

- Alcohol-related ASB (44 / 9.1%)
- ASB – drug dealing/drug use (78 / 16.1%)
- Criminal damage (68 / 14.0%)
- Dog fouling (34 / 7.0%)
- Fire/arson-related ASB (8 / 1.6%)
- Fly-tipping (91 / 18.8%)
- Irresponsible parking (19 / 3.9%)
- Littering (37/7.6%) Noisy/rowdy behaviour (54 / 11.1%)
- Nuisance bikes/scooters (38 / 7.8%)
- Nuisance vehicles (cars) (9 / 1.9%)
- Unauthorised encampments (5 / 1.1%)

In respect of ASB, environmental factors predominate with fly-tipping being the single most commonly cited ASB priority. ASB related to substance misuse (if the responses for alcohol-related and drug-related ASB are combined they account for over a quarter of top concerns) are also significant issues locally.

Property crime

99 respondents chose this as one of their top 3 issues and responded to this question.

- Burglary residential (67 / 27.5%)
- Burglary business (56 / 23.0%)
- Identity theft (54 / 22.1%)
- Shed/garage breaks (16 / 6.5%)
- Shoplifting (10 / 4.1%)
- Theft from MV (10 / 4.1%)
- Theft of MV (11 / 4.5%)
- Scams/deception (20 / 8.2%)

Since the last Community Safety Survey, public concerns relating to property crime appear to have changed in emphasis slightly. Traditionally residential burglary would have been cited much more often as the major concern. The impact of Covid-19, which has seen a significant increase in doorstep crime/scams and fraud which have also been well-publicised (both nationally and locally) has sharpened awareness of these issues. This may explain why, if responses to identify theft and scams/deception are combined, they account for almost a third of issues identified as top concerns.

Substance misuse

71 respondents chose this as one of their top 3 issues and responded to this question.

- Alcohol misuse (25 / 13.1%)
- Cannabis use (23 / 12.0%)
- Class A drug use (25 / 13.1%)
- Drug dealing (53 / 27.8%)
- Irresponsible sales of alcohol (11 / 5.7%)
- Recreational drug use (19 / 9.9%)
- Street drinking (35 / 18.4%)

Drug dealing has historically been and continues to be the most commonly cited the greatest concern in respect of substance misuse and the level of concern regarding cannabis use and Class A drug use is proportionally in line with previous surveys. Street drinking is the issue that has become more significant and now accounts for almost a fifth of all the responses and is clearly a growing priority.

Town centre safety

111 respondents chose this as one of their top 3 issues and responded to this question.

- Aggressive begging (26 / 8.4%)
- Alcohol misuse/street drinking (44 / 14.2%)
- Burglary – business (3 / 1.0%)
- Drug misuse/dealing (29 / 9.4%)
- Feeling unsafe – low footfall (18 / 5.8%)
- Groups gathering (71 / 23.0%)
- Homelessness/rough sleeping (25 / 8.1%)
- Poor street lighting (13 / 4.2%)
- Public space violence (22 / 7.1%)
- Robbery (16 / 5.2%)
- Violence – evening/NTE (42 / 13.6%)

By far the most commonly cited issue seen as affecting community safety in the town centre is 'groups gathering', with almost a quarter of respondents selecting this issue. This has featured highly in previous surveys but historically the proportion of responses identifying this as a concern and those identifying 'violence in the evening/NTE' have been much more aligned. Concern over groups of people gathering may have been exacerbated during Covid-19 and fears linked to social distancing measures not being observed. 'Alcohol misuse/street drinking' also appear to have become a more commonly cited issue within Gravesend town centre with main retail stretches, particularly New Road being mentioned frequently.

Violence

101 respondents chose this as one of their top 3 issues and answered this question.

- Alcohol-related violence (38 / 14.3%)
- Domestic abuse (29 / 10.9%)
- Drug trafficking/drug-related violence (36 / 13.5%)
- Gun/knife crime (34 / 12.8%)
- Hate crime (27 / 10.2%)

- Modern slavery/trafficking (15 / 5.6%)
- NTE violence (24 / 9.0%)
- Robbery (16 / 6.0%)
- Sexual violence (15 / 5.6%)
- Youth violence (32 / 12.1%)

Responses indicate that concerns relating to violence are perceived as linked to substance misuse (with either alcohol misuse or drug-related crime being contributory factors to violence). There also seems to be growing concern in respect of youth violence and gun/knife crime (although Assessment data suggests that each of these is low in Gravesham compared with other areas) but this may be because both these issues are related to drug trafficking which incorporates county lines activity and is linked to the use of weapons.

Direct experience of crime and ASB

When selecting their top 3 community safety issues, respondents were also asked if they had had direct experience of the issue selected as a victim as this gives an insight on the impact of direct experience on perceptions.

ASB

- Victim - Yes: 60 (32.6%)
- Victim - No: 109 (59.2%)
- No answer: 15 (8.2%)
- Total: 184 (100.0%)

Property crime

- Victim - Yes: 44 (44.4%)
- Victim - No: 53 (53.5%)
- No answer: 3 (3.0%)
- Total: 99 (100.0%)

Substance misuse

- Victim - Yes: 5 (7.0%)
- Victim - No: 65 (91.5%)
- No answer: 1 (1.5%)
- Total: 71 (100.0%)

Town centre safety

- Victim - Yes: 6 (5.4%)
- Victim - No: 105 (95.6%)
- No answer: 0 (0.0%)
- Total: 111 (100.0%)

Violence

- Victim - Yes: 15 (14.8%)
- Victim - No: 83 (82.2%)
- No answer: 0 (0.0%)
- Total: 101 (100.0%)

Victim reporting

Respondents stating that they had been a victim of one of the issues that they had selected were also asked whether they had reported the incident to the Police and if not, if they could share why this was the case. The following highlights the headlines from the responses:

37 (61.7%) of the 60 victims of ASB had reported to Kent Police. The most common reasons given for not doing so by the 23 (38.3%) was that they had considered the matter to be too minor and that it would have been wasting Police resources to report it to them; that there would not be sufficient evidence for the Police to deal with it; and, that the issue was not a Police matter and so was reported to another agency e.g. noise – reported to Gravesham BC;

The vast majority of victims of property crime (38 of the 44 victims or 83.4%) reported the incident to Kent Police. This high level of reporting is expected in relation to property crime due to insurance claims or a general requirement of reporting by banks in the event of financial theft/fraud. Of the 6 victims who did not report the key reasons were that it was felt that the incident was too minor or that involving the Police would not help;

Very few respondents had directly been victims of substance misuse-related crime or ASB (5 (7.0%). All 5 had reported their experience to Kent Police which is an indication of confidence that their situation would be treated seriously;

Only 6 (5.4%) had been victims of the issues relating to town centre safety. Of these, 4 (66.6%) had reported the incident to Kent Police. Of the 2 victims who did not report one was unsure about the details of what they had witnessed and one did not feel that Police would be able to do anything;

13 (86.7%) of the 15 respondents who identified violence as a top issue had experienced violence as a victim reported their experience to Kent Police. Again, this is an indication of confidence in the Police to handle the case seriously. Neither of the 2 respondents who stated they did not report their experience provided any reasons for their not doing so.

Breakdown of respondents who completed the survey

Gender

- Male: 57 (31.0%)
- Female: 120 (65.2%)
- Prefer not to say: 6 (3.3%)
- No details: 1 (0.5%)
- Total: 184 (100.0%)

The gender split of respondents to this survey has remained very similar to that in previous surveys completed, with the majority of participants being female

Age

- Under 18: 3 (1.6%)
- 18-24: 11 (6.0%)
- 25-34: 13 (7.0%)
- 35-44: 26 (14.1%)
- 45-54: 55 (30.0%)

- 55-64: 50 (27.2%)
- 65/+: 19 (10.3%)
- Prefer not to say: 6 (3.3%)
- No details provided: 1 (0.5%)
- Total: 184 (100.0%)

This survey has seen a slightly higher number of young people taking part and a reduction in those over 65 participating. For the last Community Safety Survey only 3.5% of respondents were aged 24 or under compared to 7.6% on this occasion.

Ethnicity

- White British: 144 (78.3%)
- White and Black African: 1 (0.5%)
- Indian 9: (4.9%)
- White and Black Caribbean: 1 (0.5%)
- White - other: 7 (3.9%)
- Caribbean: 1 (0.5%)
- Prefer not to say: 7 (3.9%)
- Other Asian background: 1 (0.5%)
- No details provided: 7 (3.9%)
- Other (unspecified): 1 (0.5%)
- White - Irish: 3 (1.6%)
- Any other mixed background: 1 (0.5%)
- White and Asian: 1 (0.5%)
- Total: 184 (100.0%)

For the last Community Safety Survey completed, 88.0% of respondents stated they were 'White British' compared with 78.3% on this occasion which suggests that responses are moving in the right direction of being representative of the local population

Disability

Respondents to the survey were asked to indicate if they were registered disabled. 8 (4.3%) of respondents confirmed that they were; 7 (3.8%) of respondents stated they would prefer not to say and 2 (1.1%) of respondents did not answer this question. In the last Community Safety Survey completed no respondents identified themselves as registered disabled so whilst these figures are still small, it's encouraging that we are reaching more people with a disability to seek their views.

5. Our New Objectives

How have we identified our objectives?

Besides the findings of the Strategic Assessment and the Community Safety Public Consultation, other considerations are taken into account in this new Community Safety Strategy. These include:

- Volume – the level of offences within a crime category as a proportion of total crime;
- Level of harm – the impact that a type of offending has on victims and communities;

- Community concern – the level of priority that local people have attributed an issue;
- Partnership added-value – the extent to which a multi-agency approach can enhance the ability of agencies to tackle a particular strand of offending behaviour;
- Trend analysis – patterns of increase in an offence type (where it is possible to ascertain).

The Community Safety Strategy also considers:

- Existing and emerging national priorities;
- Legal obligations (existing or anticipated) faced by CSPs;
- Policing priorities contained within the Kent Police Control Strategy and the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner's Policing and Crime Plan.

Having given due attention to the above, the following broad priorities have been identified:

Violent Crime including Domestic Abuse

Violent crime continues to account for the greatest proportion of all crime recorded in Gravesham and levels of domestic abuse have continued to rise. Domestic abuse is a high priority both locally and nationally with the Domestic Abuse Act is set to come into force in early 2021 bringing new responsibilities to Local Authorities in the way in which they will need to support victims. The rise in stalking and harassment during Covid-19 needs to be addressed and monitored. It is also apparent that under-reporting is still a particular issue for certain groups of domestic abuse victims including victims who have a disability and male victims. This is something the CSP needs to address.

Public safety is a matter of the highest concern amongst local people. The impact of violence on individuals, families and communities is profoundly negative. Locally, public-place violence is concentrated in our town centre, affecting perceptions of the Borough and the ability of day, evening and night-time economies to develop.

Persistent Anti-Social Behaviour and Environmental Crime

Preventing and tackling persistent ASB is frequently identified as a key priority by local people because of the impact it has on quality of life within neighbourhoods. Within town centres, ASB also has the ability to negatively impact local businesses and discourage investment. Multi-agency working helps to tackle ASB as it is resource intensive, especially when the ASB is linked to drug and alcohol misuse.

Pockets of the Borough experience ASB and environmental crime disproportionately and these areas, in which problems have persisted for lengthy periods of time, require a dedicated response. It is recommended that this work be led by the Area Based Action Group as an operational sub-group of the CSP.

Preventing Offending and Reducing Reoffending

Within this priority it is suggested that a firm focus is specifically maintained on:

- Disrupting Serious and Organised Crime (SOC);
- Preventing and reducing serious youth offending;
- Reducing the reoffending of domestic abuse perpetrators.

SOC and gang-related youth offending are now recognised as issues of the highest priority, nationally. Traditionally, law enforcement agencies tackle these issues but now CSP partners are expected to work much closely with them. Some London Boroughs have experienced these issues for a while now. Our proximity is close enough to London that our area becomes attractive to cross-border criminals.

The local VRU, Child and Adolescent Services and the Gravesham Youth Engagement Panel will work together. This will enable a more coordinated approach to be taken to reduce serious youth offending. This will help prevent vulnerable young people from recruited into criminality, particularly that which is drug-related.

The focus of local activity in relation to domestic abuse has rightly been on increasing support for victims and improving access to services. It's vital that the CSP develop an activity that will break the cycle of offending and reoffending. They must consider what preventive work could be carried out with those who have been exposed to domestic violence. This is to prevent generational cycles of offending behaviour developing.

Protecting Vulnerable People and Strengthening Communities

CSP members share Safeguarding responsibilities to protect vulnerable people from harm. Recent work has demonstrated the value of a joint, multi-agency approach to delivering tailored interventions to identified individuals and/or families. This has been in respect of modern slavery and the activity of the Gravesham Vulnerability Panel. Vulnerable people are frequently repeat victims – ensuring they are fully supported will help to bring offenders to justice and ultimately also reduce demand on services.

Our Borough has the most diverse population in the county and it has continued to change at a much more rapid pace than in the past. An increase in hate crime indicates a need to carry out a much more detailed analysis of this issue in order that preventive work can be put in place, that we can address the significant level of under-reporting of hate crime and reduce risks to community cohesion and resilience.

Local Authorities have a legal duty to take steps to reduce threats posed by terrorism and extremism and to mitigate against security risks. There is a recognised risk of right-wing extremism at County level and a need to continue monitoring this activity locally. Covid-19 is likely to continue to affect our way of life for much of 2021, with the potential for many people still feeling socially isolated and spending much more time online. There is national concern that this may increase vulnerability to radicalisation and/or being drawn into extremism. Gravesham will not be immune to this risk and consideration should be given to preventative steps that may be taken.

Vulnerability to crime and exploitation for different age groups and for people with different personal characteristics were highlighted throughout Assessment. In addition, vulnerable people within our communities have needed additional safeguarding during the pandemic. This likely to continue until the pandemic is fully under control - the CSP will need to keep pace with criminals who will change their tactics to take advantage of the most vulnerable to further their own gains.

Communication and Engagement

It's vitally important that we improve the way we communicate with the local people about the work we do as a CSP, including the response to local concerns. This can help to reduce crime and ASB in addition to creating a positive profile for our Borough. Communicating our work will raise awareness with both internal and external audiences of the role of the CSP, its responsibilities and its achievements. This is important to building public confidence in the ability of the partner agencies to work together effectively to tackle community safety priorities.

Community engagement will help to ensure that our approaches reflect and respond to local concerns. It will also encourage local people to get involved and take the opportunity to influence what happens in respect of community safety in their area. As a new, dedicated Gravesham CSP, we need to make sure that we make it clear that we are committed to hearing from the public, building our understanding of the issues being faced within neighbourhoods and finding solutions with them not for them.

Communication and reassurance are priorities for each of our partner agencies and whilst we are working towards a common goal we have not previously taken full advantage of a more unified approach in how we tell people about the work we do and the impact we are having – positive work and good results need to be conveyed so that the public can see that the concerns they have raised have been taken on board and are being addressed.

A Partnership Structure to deliver the Strategy

After identifying the broad priorities and reviewing the structure of the Partnership, the new dedicated CSP will have clear goals and will have the capacity to run effectively. As well as the overarching strategic group that brings together statutory agencies at a most senior level, a number of operational groups serve to deliver projects on the ground. New working/delivery CSP groups have been established on top of the previously existing ones. They will be reporting back and be accountable to the CSP. A representative from each of the Partnership's operational groups, as outlined in the CSP Structure diagram below will be required to attend Partnership meeting to report on progress being made.

Gravesham's CSP is chaired by the Council's Elected Member with Community Safety in their portfolio. This ensures that there is democratic oversight and the position of Vice-Chair is drawn from the partnership's core membership.

Partnership meetings are held four times a year although should an urgent and serious need arise, an extraordinary meeting of the Partnership may be called by any of the core members of the Partnership.

The CSP Executive Group meets in advance of CSP meeting to agree the Agenda. This also serves as an opportunity to consider any new/merging priorities of which the wider Partnership should be made aware. This Group comprises the Director (Communities, GBC), the Elected Member/Community Safety Portfolio and Council officers as appropriate. Other statutory partner representatives may be invited and are welcome to attend an Executive Group meeting if a specific issue has arisen that will make their participation beneficial.

Meetings are managed by our Community Safety Unit so that full records are made of all decisions and progress made. The Partnership's performance is taken into account by Gravesham's Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee which meets at least twice a year.

6. Priorities

All priorities are summarised below:

Priority 1 - Violent Crime and Domestic Abuse

Protecting people from harm has been identified as a priority because the Partnership recognises that personal safety is paramount. Certain offences such as domestic abuse or sexual offences, are known to suffer from under-reporting and significant Partnership work has taken place over a number of years to raise awareness of services and assistance, particularly amongst hard to reach groups and encourage victims to come forward. National and global attention to sexual violence and abuse has generated public debate. This together with a series of local initiatives that have been helping to fill gaps in services, have contributed to increases in reports to Police and other agencies.

Due to Covid-19 there has been a reduction in violent crime, especially at night; however, domestic abuse has increased over the pandemic. In particular, there has been a rise in reported incidents of stalking and harassment that that has led to this offence accounting for over a quarter of all violent crime.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 is due to come into force in recognition of the scale of this issue and this will also introduce new responsibilities for Local Authorities in providing support to victims who have been placed in safe accommodation.

Most serious violent crimes are rare. Violent crime (against the person, sexual offences and robberies) still accounts for 46.4% of total crime in Gravesham where a fifth result in injury.

Information provided by the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) indicates that North Division (which includes Gravesham) is most affected by serious violence involving young people. Gravesend Town Centre has been identified as an area within the Borough that experiences a higher prevalence of violence involving young people under the age of 25 whether as victims or as perpetrators.

For more information about how we are going to prioritise Violent Crime and Domestic Abuse visit our [Priority 1 - Violent Crime and Domestic Abuse page](#).

Priority 2 - Persistent Anti-Social Behaviour and Environmental Crime

A key priority is preventing and tackling Anti-social Behaviour (ASB) because of its impact on the quality of life in neighbourhoods. Within town centres, ASB has the ability to negatively impact local businesses and is particularly damaging to public perceptions of local areas. Multi-agency working helps to tackle ASB as it is resource intensive, especially when dealing with drug and alcohol misuse or fly tipping. Gravesham Borough Council developed a dedicated Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy to structure local responses to dealing with this issue.

Data gathered in the Strategic Assessment was primarily concerned with ASB incidents recorded by Kent Police. It is recognised that there will be numerous incidents that are reported to Council service departments and that may be effectively resolved that will not feature in Police records. Gravesham Borough Council is seeking to address this gap by introducing a cross-departmental database to accurately record these incidents that will help to provide a much fuller and more accurate picture of ASB.

The impact of Covid-19 demonstrably influenced levels of Police-recorded ASB incidents both nationally and locally but several important factors should be taken into account to avoid a misrepresentation of the extent of the issue. In Gravesham there were 3,651 ASB incidents recorded in the year ending 30 September 2020, an increase of 46.7% compared with the previous 12 months or an additional 1,163 incidents. An increase in incidents recorded is directly linked to reports made to Police of breaches of Covid-19 restrictions. These were not capable of being recorded separately and have therefore been logged within the 'anti-social behaviour' category.

Factors external to the behaviour itself have contributed to the increase during the pandemic. Many people have had to remain at home or work from home and particularly during lockdown periods, with the majority of children unable to go to school. Particularly warm weather in early 2020 came alongside little opportunity to access leisure and social facilities as usual resulting in many people spending far greater time either indoors or if available to them, in their gardens/outdoor spaces linked to their properties. Domestic noise that would ordinarily be accepted has tested tolerance levels. This has been very challenging for those living in accommodation with no outdoor space and/or restricted financial means. Frustrations and anxiety may have resulted in disputes that would not necessarily occur at home.

Fly-tipping is seen as a key manifestation of ASB and potentially, a factor in crime and fear of crime and is frequently linked to deliberate fire-setting. In Gravesham, fly-tipping is affecting certain urban and semi-rural areas more frequently than others. Environmental crime has had an effect on the quality of life of local residents. It's also effected the economic development in the area; this then makes areas less attractive to potential investors and visitors.

In 2020, Gravesham Borough Council invested in the creation of an Environmental Enforcement Team that sits within the Community Safety Unit to tackle this issue. Whilst efforts are made to educate and prevent environmental crime, the work of the Team also includes adopting a zero tolerance approach to identified offenders, taking formal action against them when appropriate.

For more information about how we are going to prioritise Anti-Social Behaviour and Environmental Crime visit our [Priority 2 - Persistent Anti-Social Behaviour and Environmental Crime page](#).

Priority 3 - Preventing Offending and Re-offending

Preventing offending has been identified as a priority because the Partnership understands the significant detrimental impact that crime has on victims, their families and local communities. The partnership activity aims to prevent and reduce youth offending as well as repeat offending of those involved in violence. It also aims

to disrupt serious and organised crime. The primary offence committed by both offenders managed locally by the CRC and those on the Integrated Offender Management Programme (IOM) is violence.

Reducing re-offending is a cross-cutting theme and affects all areas of the Partnership's work and it has an impact on all statutory partners' resources. To achieve longer-term changes in behaviour, the Partnership must aim to take a problem solving approach. They must take into account casual factors which contribute to offending behaviour. They must consider physical environments where offences repeatedly take place. This way, preventive measures can be put in place. For more information about how we are going to prioritise Preventing Offending and Re-offending visit our [Priority 3 - Preventing Offending and Re-offending page](#).
Priority 4 - Protecting Vulnerable People and Strengthening Communities

Members of our CSP share Safeguarding responsibilities to protect people who are more vulnerable to harm. Although some can be harmed through various factors such as religion or gender, there are some who have specific circumstances or personal characteristics that make them vulnerable to repeated harm. Throughout the pandemic, there has been a national increase in criminals targeting the most vulnerable. This is done through 'doorstep crime' as well as online and telephone scams.

Gravesham's Vulnerability Panel, which has now been operating for several years, takes a joint, multi-agency approach in delivering tailored interventions to identified individuals and/or families. Vulnerable people are frequently repeat victims; ensuring they receive relevant and timely support will help to bring offenders to justice and ultimately also reduce demand on services.

Gravesham already the most diverse in the county and in recent years we have also seen new migrants settling in the Borough whilst planned developments will also see more people moving into the area. We are very fortunate to have a very strong history of community cohesion and a reputation for being a Borough that welcomes people from all backgrounds and walks of life. However, experience from other parts of the country indicates that rapid changes in population can pose a threat to community resilience and weaken community cohesion. We therefore, want to make sure that we carry out work to reduce the incidence of hate crime in any of its forms and deliver a clear message that it will not be tolerated. This includes joint work to reduce the risks posed by right-wing extremism, taking steps to reduce threats posed by terrorism and ensuring that we work with Counter Terrorism colleagues to meet our obligations under Prevent legislation.

Modern Slavery has been recognised more in recent years and statutory partners to the CSP have legal responsibilities under the Modern Slavery Act 2015 to report and refer cases of modern slavery if they encounter them. Last year, Gravesham Borough Council produced its first dedicated Modern Slavery Strategy and the CSP now has a Modern Slavery Working Group. They plan the delivery of the strategy with activities that help us identify signs of modern slavery. This can encourage reporting and improve the support available to victims.

We also appreciate that people who are rough sleeping, homeless or threatened with homelessness can be particularly vulnerable. They often present with health

conditions (mental and/or physical) and frequently with substance misuse issues that can exacerbate their situation and increase their risk of harm. Partner agencies will continue to work together with colleagues from the charitable and voluntary sector to try to reduce homelessness in our Borough. This is done by ensuring that those subject to this issue can be directed to and are supported in accessing services to provide them with assistance.

For more information about how we are going to prioritise Protecting Vulnerable People and Strengthening Communities visit our [Priority 4 - Protecting Vulnerable People and Strengthening Communities page](#).

Priority 5 - Communication and Engagement

Communication with and the engagement of local people in what we do is essential. Whilst the focus of partner agencies on a day-to-day basis will need to be getting a job done we need to ensure that we keep local people informed of the progress we are making. Too often residents tell us that they have voiced their concerns but are unsure of what steps have been taken to address them. Many are not aware of the existence of Community Safety Partnerships, their responsibilities and how local communities can engage with and work alongside them. Perceptions of community safety are vitally important to building resilience and creating a sense of ownership and responsibility. This way we can all have a part in improving our local environment and in keeping ourselves, our neighbours and homes safe.

For more information about how we are going to prioritise Communication and Engagement visit our [Priority 5 - Communication and Engagement page](#).

7. Partnership Contacts

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