

Community Safety Strategy 2024-28

Foreword

As the Chair of Gravesham's Community Safety Partnership, I am very pleased to introduce this Community Safety Strategy 2024-28 on behalf of all the Partnership's statutory partners and other agencies and organisations who work collaboratively to make Gravesham a safer place.

This Strategy has been created following the completion of a detailed local assessment of crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour (ASB) in the Borough and takes into account the findings of a Community Safety Public Consultation that was carried out between October and December 2023. In the last three years there have been a number of new Government policies and strategies as well as legislative changes, some of which have placed additional duties on community safety partners. In addition, we have all had to deal with unprecedented challenges including the Covid-19 pandemic, a number of welfare reforms, considerable reductions in public sector funding that has impacted many services and continuing changes to criminal justice policy. We are also now dealing with a cost-of-living crisis which is particularly affecting our poorest communities. All of these factors mean it is more important than ever that we work together effectively as a Partnership so that we can make the very most of the resources and expertise that we have to protect public safety. This new Strategy explains how we want to ensure that both the impact of national developments and local issues are addressed through the use of multi-agency projects and initiatives.

Our approach will see an increased focus on tackling both violence and ASB in recognition of the level of harm, impact on quality of life and fear that these bring to communities. It is also a reflection of the prioritisation of serious violence and ASB at a national level and the responsibilities given to statutory partners through the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022.

Protecting vulnerable people, children and families, will remain at the centre of our approach. We will continue to develop our work to address issues such as modern slavery, exploitation, hate crime and tackling extremism. By working more closely with local residents and businesses we will also be strengthening community cohesion and building resilience within our neighbourhoods so that we can have safe living, working and socialising environments.

Whilst this Strategy outlines our priorities, we understand the need to be flexible so that we can meet new challenges and the changing needs of local people. As such, we will be reviewing this Strategy on an annual basis, monitoring the impact of our activity to ensure that we are delivering against our priorities and that they accurately reflect public concerns. We are approaching the next four years from a sound foundation of achievement and we believe that we have a strong and effective Partnership that is up to the task of taking a long term approach to tackling the underlying causes of crime, identifying ways in which we can prevent and reduce offending and support victims and families affected by crime and ASB in order that they can positively rebuild their lives.

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. 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, stronger and more confident Gravesham for current and future generations.



Councillor Shane Mochrie-Cox
Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Strategic Environment
Chair, Gravesham Community Safety Partnership

What is the Community Safety Partnership?

Gravesham Community Safety Partnership (CSP) brings together the key agencies involved in crime prevention and improving community safety in our Borough. Its members include Gravesham Borough Council, Kent Police, Kent Fire and Rescue Service, National Probation Service, National Health Service, Kent County Council and the office of the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner and a range of other public, private and voluntary sector agencies.

The aim of the Partnership is to ensure that Gravesham is a safe place to live, work and visit, to protect local communities from harm and help people feel safer. Each year the Partnership completes a Community Safety Strategic Assessment which analyses levels of recorded crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB) and completes a public consultation in order that we can better understand the experiences and concerns of local people and the issues that they feel are most important within their own neighbourhoods. Finally, each of the following factors are also considered before deciding what our priorities need to be:

Volume – The level of offences as a proportion of total crime.

Level of harm – The impact that offences have on victims and communities.

Community concern – The level of priority that local people attribute to a particular type of offence.

Partnership-added value – The extent to which multi-agency working can enhance the ability of agencies to tackle a particular strand of offending behaviour.

Trend analysis – Giving due consideration to patterns of increase or decrease in an offence type.

Kent Police Control Strategy and the PCC's Policing and Crime Plan – To ensure that we take as unified an approach as possible and maximise the opportunities to pool our resources to achieve the greatest impact.

Horizon-scanning – To take into account social and economic factors that could influence patterns of crime and ASB as well as any anticipated national events and legislative changes that may create new responsibilities or obligations for statutory partners.

This document identifies the priorities for Gravesham's CSP over the next 4 years and explains why these priorities have been chosen. Historically, most CSPs priorities do not change substantially from year to year as they are addressing long-term trends, however, this new Strategy also reflects a refocussing of efforts in response to emerging or changing trends in crime and ASB, the impact of previous interventions and learning gained from earlier multi-agency initiatives, new legal obligations and duties now placed upon CSPs and external national factors. We also recognise the need to respond to changing demographics – essentially understanding that not everyone's experiences or perceptions of crime and ASB are the same and that our approach needs to be tailored to meet the needs of diverse communities.

Key legislation supporting the work of the Partnership

Key pieces of legislation have both created a number of responsibilities which our CSP has to fulfil and introduced tools and powers available to statutory partners to improve their ability to tackle crime and ASB. These have a bearing on the priorities within this Strategy and therefore, due consideration has been given to the following:

Crime and Disorder Act 1998, Police and Justice Act 2006, Policing and Crime Act 2009

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 introduced a statutory responsibility for local authorities, the police and key partners to work together to reduce crime and disorder in their communities. The

responsible authorities, now commonly referred to as Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) were required to complete audits of crime and disorder every three years and to implement crime reduction strategies. The Police and Justice Act 2006 introduced amendments, including the addition of anti-social behaviour (ASB) and substance misuse within the remit of CSP strategies, the sharing of evidence-based data to support the work of Partnerships and that Partnership activities must be open to scrutiny via a Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee. Reducing reoffending was added as a priority issue by the Policing and Crime Act 2009.

Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014

The Act requires CSPs to make use of statutory powers to address ASB e.g., Public Space Protection Orders, Community Protection Notices and Warnings and measures to empower victims of ASB e.g., the ASB Case Review process.

Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2014

In the exercise of its functions, a Local Authority is required to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism and ensure that there is a multi-agency panel in place to which referrals can be made (Channel).

Modern Slavery Act 2015

First responder agencies have a responsibility to notify the Home Office of any individual that is identified as a suspected victim of slavery or human trafficking.

Serious Crime Act 2015

The Act introduced a duty to work alongside law enforcement agencies to address serious crime by sharing intelligence and working together to make best use of legislative powers.

Domestic Abuse Act 2021

Gravesham Borough Council has a duty to cooperate with and support Kent County Council (as our Tier 1 Authority) in delivering services to support victims of domestic abuse.

Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022

Statutory partners have a legal responsibility to work collectively to prevent and reduce serious violence as a priority (including assessing the level of serious violence locally, the formulation and delivery of a Serious Violence Strategy, completing annual reviews and providing monitoring returns to Central Government).

Taking into account the findings of the Strategic Assessment 2023, the responses of local people to our public consultation, legal responsibilities and other factors detailed above, we feel that the approach taken in this Strategy will ensure that our CSP is well-placed to work towards its mission of:

- Continuing to improve community safety in our Borough and make it a place in which people want to live, work and socialise
- Working collaboratively with statutory and voluntary sector agencies and most importantly, with local communities, to deliver initiatives that address crime and disorder
- Delivering local, regional and national priorities to fully meet the Partnership's statutory responsibilities.

What does our Borough look like?

Population size – There are 107,000 people living in Gravesham, the smallest population size of any Kent District and approximately 41,700 households.

Age profile – Gravesham has a younger age profile compared to the county average with a higher proportion of people in most age groups under the age of 50.

Diversity – 31.7% of Gravesham's population is classified as of an ethnic minority, making it the second most diverse population in Kent.

Unemployment – In February 2024, Gravesham's unemployment rate was 4.5% (the second highest in the county) and up by 10.9% against the previous year.

Average gross earnings – in 2023, the average gross workplace full-time weekly earnings in Gravesham was £764.70 – the greatest in the county.

Deprivation - Gravesham was the 5th most deprived District in Kent (Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2019) and the 119th most deprived LA area in England.

Life expectancy – Life expectancy is 77.7 and 82.7 years for males and females in Gravesham compared with 79.0 and 83.0 years on average in Kent.

Health – 81.6% of Gravesham residents described their health as good or very good (Census 2021) compared to 82.0% on average across Kent.

Crime – Total crime fell by 8.3% to 10,665 offences in Gravesham in the year ending 30 September 2023 – the third greatest decrease in Kent.

What did consultation with our residents tell us?

146 responses were received to our Community Safety Public Consultation between mid-October and mid-December 2023. Respondents were asked to prioritise 5 different issues based on the impact that they felt these most had on community safety. 46.3% of respondents identified ASB as having the most significant impact and 32.4% selected ASB as their second choice, making this very clearly the primary concern. 27.9% of respondents selected town centre safety as their first choice and 23.5% made this their second choice. This tells us that what takes place in the town centre permeates across Gravesham i.e. a town centre that is perceived to be unsafe affects people's overall impressions of the Borough as a desirable place to live, work or visit irrespective of low levels crime and ASB in the location of their home.

Whilst nationally and locally, public surveys generally suggest there are growing concerns about violence, particularly violence involving young people and weapons, a smaller percentage of respondents (15.4%) selected violence as their first choice for impacting community safety. Respondents were not generally fearful of being a victim of violence, instead they felt unsafe and intimidated because of people (individuals and groups) behaving in an anti-social manner or causing a nuisance.

Although drug use/drug dealing was frequently referenced in survey responses, only 7.4% selected this as their first choice in having a primary impact on community safety although, drug use and drug dealing was very clearly seen as being strongly associated with ASB. Only 2.9% of respondents selected property crime as their first choice.

Key Principles and Cross-Cutting Themes

Public Health Approach

Ensuring that there is a primary focus on early intervention and prevention, taking into account the wider determinants of crime and community safety such as social inequalities, employment, skills, health, housing and the environment.

Safeguarding

Recognising that some people may be more susceptible to harm through personal characteristics (including factors such as age, disability, gender, religion and belief, or sexual orientation) and implementing measures to protect vulnerable people from harm as best we can.

Involving local people

Working with and involving local people in finding solutions to community safety issues in their area.

Increasing collaboration

Building the membership of our Partnership to improve the sharing of data, intelligence and expertise and provide opportunities to pool our resources to maximise benefits.

Supporting victims

Ensuring that there is a concerted effort to improve and strengthen support for victims of crime and ASB, reduce repeat victimisation and recognise that some individuals may simultaneously be perpetrators and victims.

Community Safety Priorities 2024-28

This Strategy sets out the 5 priorities that our Partnership will focus on and address over the next 4 years with the overarching objective of ensuring that local people feel safer in their neighbourhoods and when out socialising, that our town centre is welcoming and attractive to visitors and that crime and ASB are effectively tackled. This is the shared commitment of all our CSP members.

Priority 1 – Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

Why is this a priority?

Preventing and tackling persistent ASB is identified as a key priority by local people because of the impact it has on quality of life within their neighbourhoods and their concerns are evidenced by a high volume of reporting.

As the heart of the Borough, the detrimental effects of ASB concentrated in Gravesend town centre spread beyond the negative impact on local businesses and those living immediately within the area; it discourages other residents and visitors from outside Gravesham from accessing what the town centre has to offer and dissuades future investors because of poor perceptions.

Tackling ASB is resource-intensive and benefits significantly from multi-agency working, particularly where the ASB is intrinsically linked to drug and alcohol misuse or personal characteristics affecting behaviour e.g. mental health issues, when effective solutions require the input of all partner agencies. Certain pockets of the Borough also clearly experience ASB and environmental crime disproportionately and these areas, in which problems have persisted for lengthy periods of time, require a dedicated Partnership response.

The facts (figures relate to the 12 months ending 30 September 2023 unless otherwise stated)

- Virtually all parts of Kent have recorded reductions in Police recorded ASB incidents this year. Gravesham is one of the exceptions with ASB incidents showing an increase of 11.4% compared to a Kent-wide average decrease of 2.0%.
- Gravesham rate of ASB per 1,000 population is the highest in Kent and significantly above the county average rate (21.0 offences compared to 15.3 offences).
- This increase should not necessarily be interpreted as negative. Very considerable efforts have been made locally during the year to raise awareness, encourage reporting, simplify reporting processes, ensure that successful action taken against offenders is well-publicised and a message of zero tolerance to ASB has been heavily promoted. The increase seen may in part be a positive outcome of this work and greater public confidence in the validity of reporting ASB.
- Monthly pattern analysis indicates that whilst levels of ASB this year have largely remained below pre-pandemic levels, there was a clear rise in reports between May and August 2023.
- Noise complaints have increased by over a third this year with the most common complaint relating to disturbance caused by loud music (over 30.0% of the total complaints received).
- Fly-tipping remains a serious issue despite having been dealt with very effectively by the Council's Environmental Enforcement Team which, in the year ending September 2023, carried out 378 investigations, issued 271 CPWs/CPNs and 45 FPNs and submitted 25 cases for prosecution.

What will be our focus?

- To identify those areas within Gravesham that experience the highest levels of ASB and take a multi-agency approach (working with local people) to carry out preventative work.
- To reduce ASB incidents by considering underlining issues and contributory factors that need to be addressed and that may be affecting behaviour e.g. drug/alcohol dependency, mental health issues that may be responsible for the ASB/reports of ASB.
- To fully utilise legislative powers available to Councils and other partners to combat ASB.
- To continue to prosecute and take formal action as appropriate against identified individuals engaging in ASB.
- To develop intelligence and identify potential activity to reduce ASB caused by nuisance vehicles including off-road bikes.
- To reduce environmental crime including the number of deliberate and accidental fires in hot spot locations and fly-tipping.

What will we do?

Prevention and Community Involvement

- Establish a multi-agency ASB Delivery Group as an operational Group of the CSP to coordinate activity to address ASB in key locations through a problem-solving approach.
- Increase community involvement/community action in repeat locations for ASB and environmental crime.
- Deliver awareness-raising/educational activity in conjunction with partner agencies to reduce deliberate and accidental fires.
- Improve our understanding of ASB to deliver a more informed approach to tackling the underlying drivers of unacceptable behaviour.
- Working with Licensing and Trading Standards Teams to tackle irresponsible business practices that result in ASB.
- Ensure that effective plans are in place to address seasonal ASB e.g. Halloween and Bonfire Night.
- Consider cost-effective target-hardening methods and 'designing out' ASB options in hot spot locations.

Early Identification

- Undertake proactive operations/days of action in partnership with the police and other agencies early on in areas beginning to see increases in levels of ASB.
- Monitor the effectiveness of early intervention measures used to establish 'what works' (particularly in respect of schemes and projects to divert young people away from ASB).

Supportive Intervention

- Working in partnership to support victims of ASB and raising awareness of services available to them.
- Identify repeat callers and assess what interventions may be necessary to improve their situation/address any underlying factors that may be contributing to their need to repeatedly report ASB e.g. mental health issues.
- Address cases of vulnerable victims and inadvertent perpetrators of ASB through referral to the Gravesham Vulnerability Panel.

Enforcement/Formal Action

- Make full use of enforcement powers and take formal action against those who persist in causing ASB as appropriate.
- Effectively publicise successful prosecutions and/or other outcomes of formal action against perpetrators to act as a deterrent to others and to build public confidence.

What do we want to achieve by the end of this Strategy?

- Reduction in ASB incidents recorded in the Borough and specifically in identified hot spot locations.
- Reduction in environmental crimes, particularly deliberate fires and fly-tipping and the number of cases requiring formal action in key locations.
- Reduction in the repeat victimisation of those experiencing ASB.
- Reduction in the percentage of people reporting that ASB is the primary factor for their feeling unsafe either in their local neighbourhood or in the town centre (through annual public consultation exercises).

Priority 2 – Reducing Violence (including Serious Violence, Domestic Abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG))

Why is this a priority?

Despite reductions, violent crime continues to account for the largest proportion of all crime in Gravesham and the physical safety of people has to remain our greatest priority. Whilst recorded Domestic Abuse (DA) crimes have begun to reduce locally, this and VAWG remain national and local priorities and together with tackling serious violence, are issues which CSP partners have statutory duties to address.

Levels of violence experienced in Gravesham are considerably below those seen in London Boroughs and in many other parts of the country, but they remain above the Kent average. In addition, violence, and serious violence occurring in *public spaces* is locally very heavily concentrated in Gravesend town centre. The impact of this on a relatively small town centre and a Borough with the smallest District population in the county is significant: it affects public perceptions of Gravesham as a whole, both of local people and of those outside the area, influences business investment and negatively affects ambitions to grow and develop a strong local economy.

Vulnerable adults and young people are at greater risk of experiencing violence. Vulnerable adults are often targeted specifically because of their perceived vulnerability e.g. adults with learning

disabilities, and they are less likely to report the crime or abuse they have experienced or to seek help. Younger vulnerable people are at greater risk of being exploited e.g. as part of drug trafficking activities or being drawn into organised acquisitive crime which can involve violence. CSP partners have a statutory duty to try to safeguard both vulnerable adults and young people from harm. Working with local residents and communities to build confidence in reporting and to encourage them to work alongside us will also be central to achieving longer-term and sustainable change.

The facts (figures relate to the 12 months ending 30 September 2023 unless otherwise stated)

- Violent crime has fallen by 11.5% (year ending September 2023) in Gravesham compared to an average Kent-wide reduction of 9.0%.
- Gravesham's rate of violent crime per 1,000 population is the fifth highest in the county.
- Over 90.0% of violent crime relates to violence against the person offences but just over 45.0% of these are offences **without** any injury having been sustained by the victim.
- Most Serious Violence offences remain rare and have fallen by 17.9% in Gravesham (the greatest reduction recorded in any Kent area and significantly higher than the average countywide reduction of 5.0%).
- Stalking and harassment offences have continued to reduce but these offences still account for 28.0% of all violent crime.
- Sexual offences have reduced by 6.5%, the rate per 1,000 population locally now being just below the county average rate.
- Robbery offences have decreased by 26.0% in Gravesham compared to an average countywide reduction of 16.9% although the rate per 1,000 population locally at 0.9 offences is slightly higher than the county average rate of 0.6 offences.
- Violent crime is heavily concentrated in Gravesend town centre, with key areas being the transport quarter (bus hub and Gravesend railway station).
- Domestic abuse crimes and serious incidents have reduced in Gravesham by 12.3% compared to a Kent-wide decrease of 7.5%.
- The rate of domestic abuse crimes and serious incidents per 1,000 population locally remains the third highest in the county.

What will be our focus?

Taking a unified approach to addressing different forms of violence, whether that be most serious violence, domestic abuse or VAWG, we will have a strong focus on:

Prevention – building our intelligence picture of violence (where it is most prevalent, the nature of the violence, those most vulnerable to victimisation and perpetrator behaviour) to reduce its occurrence.

Supporting victims – developing the confidence of victims to report their experiences, ensuring that they are aware of services and support available and how to access them.

Dealing effectively with perpetrators – working together to pursue and bring those perpetrating violence to justice.

What will we do?

We will tackle violence by delivering multi-agency activities that concentrate on the following specific areas:

Places and Spaces

- Targeting activity in high harm locations for violence (both town centre and local neighbourhood hotspots).
- Evening/NTE economy violence and key premises/locations.

- Cross-border activity – working with neighbouring Boroughs to improve intelligence-sharing regarding perpetrators of violence operating across Borough boundaries.
- Tackling violence facilitated by the use of online spaces, particularly where these are used to target vulnerable adults and young people.

Domestic Abuse and VAWG

- Continuing to target activity to increase reporting of DA from under-represented groups and overcome barriers to accessing support.
- Addressing gaps in services to support perpetrators of violence to change their behaviour and prevent reoffending.
- Support work with children and young people affected by DA to counter the normalisation of violence and prevent cyclical violence.

Youth Safety

- Protecting young people from violence and exploitation (including online activity).
- Supporting families, parents and carers in safeguarding children and young people from violence.
- Working to prevent offending and reduce reoffending by young people persistently involved in crime and prevent their behaviour from escalating to violence (recognising young people involved in violence may be victims as well as offenders).
- Using Prevention, Identification, Engagement, Diversion, Support and Enforcement/Prosecution in delivering the above.

Adults

- Protecting vulnerable adults from being targeted by perpetrators of violence particularly safeguarding them against practices such as cuckooing, online exploitation, radicalisation and modern slavery.
- Whilst holding adult offenders of violence to account, working collaboratively to identify drivers of their behaviour to support adult offenders to move away from violence.
- Working across Partnership agencies and with the third sector to improve access to support available to adults who have been victims of violent crime, particularly those with vulnerable characteristics, to protect them against repeat victimisation.

Organised Crime

- Working collectively to tackle organised crime involving violence and the use of weapons e.g. drug-related crime, organised acquisitive crime, robberies and exploitation.
- Whilst Police will by necessity lead work to tackle organised crime, partners can assist in identifying hotspots, building intelligence and supporting enforcement activity to disrupt criminality.
- Safeguarding local residents in neighbourhoods in which organised crime involving violence is more prevalent by empowering communities to work with agencies to support local people at-risk.
- Providing tailored support and positive opportunities for young people who have been drawn into organised criminality to leave.

Drugs as a driver of Serious Violence

- The illegal drug market drives many issues related to violence and safety. Profits from drug dealing often facilitate other criminality whilst drug use/dependency can often result in cycles of re-offending.
- Partnership work in this area should be built on:
 - Reducing demand through prevention and early intervention

- Reducing supply through enforcement and disruption
- Reducing harm by supporting recovery from dependency and reintegration back into local communities
- Reducing drug-related crime through wide engagement with local communities to increase information-sharing and reporting.

What do we want to achieve by the end of this Strategy?

- Reduction in violent crime categories recorded in the Borough.
- Increased reporting by all victims of domestic abuse (tackling under-representation) and a reduction in repeat victimisation.
- An increased awareness and uptake of services available for those affected by different forms of violence.
- Improvement in the detection rate of violence with injury offences (non-domestic).
- Successful monitoring and behaviour change of known offenders through the Integrated Offender Management Programme.
- Sound intelligence picture of hot spot locations for violent offences in public and online spaces and identified measures to mitigate against the risk of harm.
- Reduction in violent offences in hot-spot locations and particularly within the town centre.
- Improved feelings of safety within the town centre (monitored through public consultation exercises).

Priority 3 – Preventing and reducing offending

Why is this a priority?

Preventing and reducing 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. It also understands that people offend for a great variety of reasons. Some offenders have life experiences or complex needs that contribute to their behaviour such as mental health problems and drug and alcohol dependencies. Reducing reoffending is an issue that all Community Safety Partnerships have a legal duty to try to address and The HMPPS Reducing Reoffending Plan 2021-2024 acknowledges the importance of partnership working to provide services and interventions at the critical time when repeat offenders want to change their offending lifestyle.

Reducing reoffending is also a cross-cutting theme as it affects all areas of the Partnership's work and has an impact on all statutory partners' resources. In order to achieve longer-term changes in behaviour, the Partnership will need to also aim to take a full problem-solving approach taking into account causal factors contributing to offending behaviour. This includes both factors directly related to individuals themselves as well as physical environments that are repeat locations for offending e.g. subject to available funding, preventative target-hardening measures such as CCTV, may help to reduce opportunities for offending.

The facts (figures relate to the 12 months ending 31 March 2023 unless otherwise stated)

- Just over 90.0% of Gravesham Probation clients are male and the most common age range of all clients is between 30-39 years.
- The most common offences committed by clients, both in the Gravesham and Kent cohorts, concern violence (approximately a third).
- Gravesham has a smaller proportion of Very High and High Risk clients compared to the Kent average, a similar proportion of Medium Risk clients and a greater proportion of Low Risk clients.
- Of Gravesham's clients, approximately half have received a Custodial Order and half a Community or Suspended Sentence Order.
- In Gravesham, only 0.6% of 10-17 year olds are offenders within the criminal justice system.

- The proportion of female young offenders has been increasing in recent years (from 18.2% in 2020-21 to 36.1% in 2022-23).
- Data suggests female young offenders begin offending at an earlier age than males; the most common ages at outcome for females are 13 and 15 years compared to 14 and 17 years for males.
- The most common offences committed by young people remain violence against the person, theft and handling stolen goods and motoring offences.
- First Time Entrants (FTEs) to the criminal justice system are very few in number (increasing from only 14 to 17 young people in Gravesham in 2022-23).

What will be our focus?

The focus of partnership activity will aim to disrupt those involved in Serious Organised Crime, prevent reoffending perpetrated by adults and prevent and reduce youth offending (particularly where drug-related and linked to county lines). The primary offence committed by both adult offenders managed locally and those on the Integrated Offender Management Programme (IOM) is violence, therefore, reducing repeat offending of those involved in violence (all ages), including domestic abuse will be a key target.

Within this priority a firm focus will be specifically maintained on:

- Building our intelligence and increasing our understanding of factors contributing to offending behaviour that affect repeat locations and developing interventions to counter these.
- Reviewing, improving and extending, as far as possible, support available to offenders to reduce their risk of reoffending e.g. access to training/employment, debt recovery, referral to and completion of drug and alcohol recovery programmes etc.
- Early intervention for young people involved in ASB/crime to minimise the risk of their behaviour escalating and their becoming part of the criminal justice system.

What will we do?

Within this Priority we will concentrate on 4 key elements:

Prevention and Community Involvement

- Continue with a multi-agency approach to disrupting Serious and Organised Crime using powers and authorisations that are available to different agencies.
- Carry out target-hardening and other work in geographical hot spots, working with and involving local stakeholders, where offending is persistent.
- Support victims of crime and offer tailored advice to those coming to our attention to protect them against becoming a victims for a second time.
- Support local communities to build resilience through participation in schemes such as Neighbourhood Watch and My Community Voice so that they can have a more active role in protecting each other and their neighbourhoods against crime.

Early Identification

- Identify and provide interventions to young people first coming to the attention of Police/other agencies as being at risk of being drawn into ASB/crime.
- Deliver training for frontline staff of Partnership agencies to develop their professional curiosity to identify 'warning signs' and be in a position to confidently signpost those at risk of becoming involved in crime to appropriate support and services.

Supportive Intervention

- Support the Youth Justice Team in delivering specifically tailored interventions to reduce the risks of reoffending by young people and prevent their offending from escalating.

- Work with Community Payback Teams to encourage changes in behaviour and simultaneously provide activities that will also benefit local communities.
- Increase awareness of and improve accessibility to services that may be able to support offenders with housing, training and employment, debt recovery and review any opportunities to improve referral rates to drug and alcohol services.
- Assess what measures are in place to support past perpetrators from reoffending, particularly in respect of domestic abuse and consider possible intervention programmes that could assist.

Enforcement/Formal Action

- Work with Probation and law enforcement colleagues through offender management programmes to moderate the behaviour of those that have been known to offend/reoffend.
- Enforce against persistent/prolific offenders who misuse drugs/alcohol as well as working to disrupt and prevent serious and organised drug-relating crime to reduce the impact of its resulting social harms on communities and residents.
Protect the public through Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA).

What do we want to achieve by the end of this Strategy?

- Reduction in crime recorded in the Borough.
- Reduction in reoffending rates (both for adults and young people).
- Continued reduction in First Time entrants to the criminal justice system.
- Reduction in repeat victimisation of those experiencing domestic abuse.
- An increase in the number of offenders accessing and completing drug and alcohol treatment programmes.
- Improvement in the detection and disruption of Organised Crime Groups.
- Successful monitoring and behaviour change of known offenders through the Integrated Offender Management Programme and the work of the Probation Service.
- Sound intelligence picture of the key offences committed by prolific offenders operating in and around Gravesham and increased identification of locations of risk and high criminal activity.

Priority 4 – Tackling hate crime, guarding against extremism and strengthening community cohesion

Why is this a priority?

Gravesham is a diverse Borough with a strong history of community harmony where people treat each other with dignity and respect. However, our rapidly changing (and set to grow) population does mean that we need to monitor risks to community cohesion and be proactive in establishing a zero-tolerance stance against the behaviour of those few who do not share our values and who perpetuate hate. The use of social media and online platforms to incite hatred and promote negative narratives becomes more sophisticated and grows on a daily basis - our response and efforts need to move in line with changing tactics that are being used, often targeting vulnerable and isolated people.

As statutory partners of the CSP, we also have legal responsibilities to fulfil our duties under Prevent, which is primarily about keeping people and our communities safe from the threat of extremism and terrorism. Protect or Protective Security is also part of the Government's Counter-Terrorism Strategy and as a CSP we are expected to have a role in ensuring the safety and security of crowded spaces and at public events through preventative and physical measures.

The facts (figures relate to the 12 months ending 30 September 2023 unless otherwise stated)

- Gravesham has the third highest rate of recorded hate crime per 1,000 population across Kent Districts and Medway.
- Hate crime motivated by racial prejudice accounts for 69.7% of all hate crime in the Borough.
- Recorded hate crimes targeted at people with a disability (including mental health) remain quite small in number but have increased from 43 to 48 (11.6%) (September 2023 compared to the previous year).
- In terms of counter terrorism and extremism, Far Right Wing Extremism appears to be an ongoing threat of which we need to be particularly mindful.
- Online tension monitoring suggests that hostile narratives and commentaries are focusing on migrant arrivals in Kent. The accommodation of asylum seekers in the Borough necessitates both the close monitoring of any community tensions and safeguarding planning for arrivals who may be vulnerable.
- The number of Safeguarding (SG) Concerns reported in Gravesham has increased by 18.3% this year compared an average increase seen across KCC Districts of 34.5%.

What will be our focus?

Our key focus will be to improve and extend our partnership approach in addressing hate crime by working more closely with local people within their communities and with voluntary sector organisations that have the experience and knowledge to provide additional support. Officially recorded hate crime and incidents, as is the case with certain other crime categories such as domestic abuse, are known to be affected by significant under-reporting. Many victims of hate incidents may still feel that, for example, verbal abuse targeted at them that is motivated by a prejudice against a person's race or because of a physical disability, is not sufficiently serious to be reported to the police or other agency and will suffer in silence. We will work to reassure victims (and third parties who witness hate incidents) that we will treat all reports seriously, encourage victims to seek help and support and promote a clear message of zero-tolerance against any manifestation of hate which we know can be so damaging to the health and well-being of individuals and families who experience it.

We will continue to work with our Prevent and Counter-Terrorism South East colleagues and monitor local risks posed by extremism and signs of community tensions in order that we can provide a timely collective response before issues escalate. We will also develop how we share information between our Partnership agencies and with local communities so that we can build resilience and improve understanding of extremism and radicalisation, particularly with partners such as schools, colleges, frontline staff, community groups, venues and parents.

What will we do?

- Work to increase the confidence of victims and third parties to report incidents of hate crime.
- Ensure partner agency staff are trained to understand the different strands of hate crime, how to report it and available services to which they can signpost victims.
- Encourage more members of the public witnessing hate crime to be supportive bystanders.
- Safeguard those at risk of radicalisation and continue to develop community engagement events in collaboration with Prevent colleagues.
- Ensure frontline staff are trained in the Prevent Duty and the referral process.
- Support and help maintain community cohesion activities promoting the positive benefits of diversity in our population.
- Work with Prevent and Police Counter Terrorism Advisors to improve the resilience of our built environment.
- Improve the safety and security of crowded places and points of interest in the Borough through preventative, physical measures where possible.

What do we want to achieve by the end of this Strategy?

- Improved confidence to report hate crime (particularly from victims who may be underrepresented).
- Increased support and protection for victims of hate crime.
- Increased training and awareness of hate crime within communities.
- Stronger cohesion and resilience within local communities.
- Ensure that people know what to do if they are concerned about someone they believe is vulnerable to radicalisation or that they think may be being radicalised.
- Achieve a reduction in the repeat victimisation rate of those experiencing hate crime.
- Improve the sanction detection rate for hate crime offences.

Priority 5 – Improving public confidence and trust

Why is this a priority?

Communication is key to building public confidence and trust and essential to tackling crime and ASB. Having a meaningful dialogue with local people will be crucial if we are to improve perceptions not only of community safety in the Borough but also of the commitment of partner agencies to provide the best response we can when addressing concerns reported to our agencies. We also need to continue to develop clear messaging in order that local people understand what our different partner agencies are able to do (and what we are not) so that issues can be raised with the appropriate agency as early as possible and that we make communication with us as accessible as we can.

The facts

In the last 2 years, Gravesham CSP has significantly increased the level of public engagement activity delivered across the Borough with a wide range of events supported by partner agencies, voluntary sector organisations and community groups. Considerable efforts have also been made to raise awareness of work being carried out by the CSP through regular publications e.g. in Your Borough magazine, messaging via social media platforms and by making information and advice much more readily available via the partner websites.

We believe that this work has contributed to the increases that we have seen in reports of, for example, ASB and fly-tipping – if people feel that reporting can be done simply, is worthwhile, see action being taken and are kept informed of the outcome, the expectation should be one of increased reporting.

What will be our focus?

This Strategy places a strong focus on improving the confidence and trust that local people have in the work of the Partnership as a whole – it is in fact a core outcome of the work we will be developing in the other 4 priority areas. We understand that perceptions of crime and safety can be easily influenced by factors over which we may not be able to exercise control. However, we are able to improve the ways in which we communicate the reality of crime and ASB in the Borough to our residents and how we respond to the issues that they identify as being of the greatest concern in their neighbourhoods. We will continue to build our community engagement activities and as far as possible, run these not just in the town centre but take our events into local neighbourhoods to make them more accessible.

What will we do?

- Regularly and widely publicise successful CSP action taken to tackle crime and ASB – both to act as a deterrent to potential offenders and to reassure individual victims and communities affected.

- Ensure that more targeted information is provided to communities relevant to the crime and ASB strands most prevalent in their area.
- Ensure that the public have access to information on how to report crime and ASB through a variety of mediums, that they are encouraged to report early on and there is clarity on what they should expect as a response.
- Hold an Annual Community Safety Partnership Public Meeting, ensuring that CSP partners are public facing and that residents have an opportunity to speak directly to agency representatives.
- Ensure that Ward Members are regularly updated with information regarding crime and ASB or CSP activity in their area in order that they are well-placed to respond to issues raised with them by their constituents.
- Continue to develop campaigns on key issues and concerns and deliver a full programme of community engagement, ensuring reach is Borough-wide.

What do we want to achieve by the end of this Strategy?

- Increased awareness of the CSP and the range of projects that it is delivering.
- Increased confidence in local people that agencies are working together to address issues in their neighbourhoods (through the annual Community Safety Public Consultation process).

Governance

Gravesham's Community Safety Partnership (CSP) has responsibility for coordinating the delivery of this Strategy. Having identified the priorities upon which multi-agency activity will need to concentrate, the structure of the Partnership has also been reviewed to ensure that it has the capacity to function effectively and that partnership initiatives are properly resourced and supported. 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. A representative from each of the Partnership's operational groups, as outlined in the CSP Structure diagram below will be required to attend Partnership meetings to report on progress being made.

Gravesham's CSP is chaired by the Council's Elected Member with Community Safety in their portfolio (or their delegate) to ensure 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.

All CSP partners are able to place specific items on the Partnership's meeting agendas and external partners, organisations and voluntary groups may be invited to attend. This recognises that 'crime is everybody's business' and that there will be occasions when people with expertise operating outside the statutory partner agencies will be able to make a valuable contribution to our work.

Meetings are administered by Gravesham Borough Council's Community Safety Unit in order that full records are maintained of decisions taken and progress being made and the Partnership's performance in fulfilling its legal responsibilities is taken into account by Gravesham's Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee which meets no less than twice yearly.

The chart below shows the structure of the CSP but this will also be reviewed each year to ensure that we are able to meet any new and emerging community safety issues and challenges.

