



Crime & Disorder Scrutiny Committee

Members of the **Crime & Disorder Scrutiny Committee** of **Gravesham Borough Council** are summoned to attend a meeting to be held at the on **Thursday, 20 January 2022 at 7.30 pm** when the business specified in the following agenda is proposed to be transacted.

S Walsh
Service Manager (Communities)

Agenda

Part A

Items likely to be considered in Public

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Minutes (Pages 3 - 8)
3. Declarations of Interest
4. To consider whether any items in Part A of the Agenda should be considered in private or any items in Part B in public
5. Domestic Abuse - Kent & Medway Commissioned Services VERBAL UPDATE
6. Tackling Domestic Abuse - Current Position and Progress (Pages 9 - 18)
7. Knife & Youth Crime Topic Review Update (Pages 19 - 24)
8. Kent Police Update VERBAL UPDATE
9. Minutes of the latest published Kent & Medway Police and Crime Panel

Below is the link to the latest published set of minutes for the Kent & Medway Police and Crime Panel:

[Minutes \(kent.gov.uk\)](https://www.kent.gov.uk/minutes)

10. Any other business which by reason of special circumstances the Chair is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency.

11. Exclusion

To move, if required, that pursuant to Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 that the public be excluded from any items included in Part B of the agenda because it is likely in view of the nature of the business to be transacted that if members of the public are present during those items, there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act. Part B Items likely to be considered in private.

Part B

Items likely to be considered in private

None.

Members

Cllr Baljit Hayre (Chair)

Cllr Peter Scollard (Vice-Chair)

Councillors: Derek Ashenden
 Helen Ashenden
 Ejaz Aslam
 John Caller
 Dakota Dibben
 Aaron Elliott
 Brian Francis
 Gary Harding
 Elizabeth Mulheran
 Leslie Pearton
 Tony Rana
 Frank Wardle

Substitutes: To be notified

Crime & Disorder Scrutiny Committee**Thursday, 7 October 2021****7.30 pm****Present:**

Cllr Baljit Hayre (Chair)
Cllr Peter Scollard (Vice-Chair)

Councillors: Derek Ashenden
 Helen Ashenden
 Ejaz Aslam
 John Caller
 Dakota Dibben
 Aaron Elliott
 Brian Francis
 Gary Harding
 Nirmal Khabra
 Leslie Pearton
 Tony Rana
 Frank Wardle

Simon Hookway
Sean Steer
Junior Dann
James Beautridge
Lorna Nolan
Steve Nolan
Julie Francis-Beard

Assistant Director (Communities)
Community Safety Operations Manager
Chief Inspector, District Commander Kent Police
Acting CSU Inspector, Kent Police
Gravesham Sanctuary
Gravesham Sanctuary
Committee Services Officer (Minutes)

15. Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was received from Cllr Elizabeth Mulheran. Cllr Nirmal Khabra attended as her substitute.

16. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 21 April 2021 were agreed and signed by the Chair.

17. Declarations of Interest

Cllr Leslie Pearton declared an interest as his daughter worked for the Prison Service.

18. Activity of the Gravesham Vulnerability Panel (GVP) (Community Safety Partnership Sub-Group)

The Chair welcomed Steve and Lorna Nolan from Gravesend Sanctuary and Junior Dann, Chief Inspector, District Commander Kent Police and James Beautridge, Acting CSU Inspector, Kent Police to the Committee.

The Community Safety Operations Manager apologised for the use of an acronym on page 11, he confirmed it stood for house in multiple occupation.

The Committee were provided with an overview of the Gravesham Vulnerability Panel meeting and discussed Case Studies.

The Gravesham Vulnerability Panel had been established through the Community Safety Partnership (CSP). The Panel was a multi-agency group and comprised of representatives from a very wide range of statutory and voluntary sector organisations. They met on a monthly basis, virtually by Teams, and the meeting was chaired by Kent Police (usually the CSU Inspector or Sergeant) and was administered by the Community Safety Unit.

The Community Safety Operations Manager informed the Committee that the Gravesham Community Safety Partnership were reviewing the Terms of Reference and an update would be provided at the next Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee.

Case Studies

The Community Safety Operations Manager introduced Case Study 1 referred to in the report and added the following:

A representative from the Gravesham Vulnerability Panel (GVP) informed the Community Safety Operations Manager that agencies had come to rely on the GVP as they gave valuable support and resources to enable adults to receive advice from other agencies and that they felt supported throughout the process. This enabled the vulnerable person to recover from their long journeys.

A short testimonial from Look Ahead:

I have come to rely on GVP for invaluable information and advice. It has proved to be a vital resource to enable me to assist my customers. To be able to have access to so many different professionals for help and advice has brought about greatly improved outcomes for the customers I support. I know that I have access to a wealth of knowledge in my continued support of this customer. These are resources that I may not otherwise have been aware of.

Acting CSU Inspector, James Beautridge, Kent Police introduced Case Study 2 and Steve and Lorna Nolan from Gravesend Sanctuary introduced Case Study 3.

Steve Nolan thanked the Council and the Committee for their support with the Gravesham Vulnerability Panel and the help with all the complex cases that had been referred, working alongside a number of other agencies.

The Chair thanked Steve and Lorna Nolan, James Beautridge, Acting CSU Inspector, Kent Police and the CSU team for their contribution to these case studies.

Following questions and comments from Members, the Community Safety Operations Manager, Lorna Nolan and Acting CSU Inspector, James Beautridge the following areas were raised:

- The Committee also thanked all those involved for all the support and guidance they provided and all the good work they do.
- The Committee discussed any prosecutions related to some of the individuals involved in the case studies and the importance of them being looked after and to stop them becoming victims and in some instances the best option is removal from the situation of the vulnerable person. Acting CSU Inspector, James Beautridge explained that all reports were investigated and were continued to be followed up included through CCTV and discussions with local residents. These vulnerable people received the same level of service as everyone else and due reports made some prosecutions have been made. The Community Safety Operations Manager explained that all additional criminal behaviour is investigated and due to the investigations, a landlord had been served with an Emergency Prohibition Order.
- Homelessness was discussed and the reasons why some homeless person would not report a criminal activity to the Police was they did not want the Police to be aware of the situation. Lorna Nolan explained that there were two types of people in this situation – the vulnerable and those that commit crime. More people have travelled through Gravesham and there were reports that some of those people had exploited homelessness people. As COVID funding finished Gravesend Sanctuary informed the Committee that numbers had increased and they dealt with more people coming straight out of prison. The Community Safety Operations Manager added there were currently weekly meetings of the Rough Sleeper Initiative and a number of sessions run by the Housing Service specialising in rehousing. This could be discussed at a further Committee meeting.
- HMO's (house in multiple occupation) were discussed and whether it was correct for a female to share if the majority of occupants were male. A team specialised in HMO's visit and check the properties on a regular basis. Was there a ratio of female/male that could live in a HMO? The Community Safety Operations Manager did not think that female/male ration could be applied, but will check and come back to the Committee on that point. The Community Safety Operations Manager has since checked and confirmed there is no requirement or ratio requirements.
- A question had been asked about Section 136 of the Mental Health Act. If someone had been vulnerable to themselves and anyone else could you use that to make sure they go into an institution? Acting CSU Inspector, James Beautridge informed the Committee that could only be used if they were out in public and they needed immediate help. Under Section 136 they could only be held for a short amount of time to allow safeguarding and to receive immediate help that would be required from the Mental Health Team or the Crisis Team and if deemed they could section the person. Under Section 136, an individual would not be removed from their own home.

The Chair thanked the Community Safety Operations Manager for the comprehensive report and all the hard work especially during this Pandemic.

The Committee noted the report.

19. Town Centre Policing Update

The CSU Inspector, Kent addressed the Committee and gave a detailed update on the Town Centre Policing.

The team comprised of 3 Constables and 2 PCSO's. Over the last 3 months 66 arrests had been made, 28 recalls to prison, 43 stop and search completed, 138 intelligence reports that fed back into seven public notices. A number of people locked up had been shoplifters, drug dealers and people exploiting the homelessness.

The team targeted shops in the Town Centre that had been selling illegal tobacco. They found 11 shops that sold illegal cigarettes. There had been a great working partnership with GBC, Trading Standards, Revenue and Customers and the Immigration Service and over 3 days – 50,000 cigarettes, 239 pouches, mobile phones, 2 cars and £1,440 cash had been seized and 11 closure orders issued. Although a closure order was for a maximum of three months, the team will continue to close these premises if needed.

Night Time Economy – footfall had increased in the Town Centre since restrictions had been lifted but no major incidents had occurred in Gravesend. Safer Streets team increased patrols on foot and continued to be visible. There had been a number of isolated knife crimes prior to start of the summer holidays. Increased Section 60 powers have been used which allowed police officers to stop and search. Patrols will be increased due to Halloween and fireworks coming up.

Arrangements are being made for a seasonal safety shop in December. The Community Safety Operations Manager to confirm more details when known. The Chair asked Councillors if any were interested in going out with the Police to contact Acting CSU Inspector, James Beautridge.

Following questions and comments from Members, the Acting CSU Inspector, James Beautridge highlighted the following:

- How many shops selling illegal cigarettes have been prosecuted? The Acting CSU Inspector, James Beautridge explained that, regarding the 11 shops that had been selling cigarettes that were closed down, they had pursued the best option which had been the closure order.
- Younger people need to be targeted to make more of an impact on how dangerous these illegal cigarettes are. A Police Officer will shortly be allocated to each secondary school in Kent to educate the children especially in knife crime. Due to COVID there had been 60 vacancies for this role. Next year, Youth Engagement Officers will work with Primary School children.
- A Committee Member asked what the Police had been doing to safeguard women in light of the current news headlines. A briefing and public engagement document from Kent Police was due out on 8 October. Actions are being planned to improve lighting, CCTV, safe areas, support from the taxi drivers and more officers out on the street.
- Out of the 43 stop and searches what was the breakdown in gender and race? The Acting CSU Inspector, James Beautridge explained that he would look at the statistics and report back to the Committee. The statistics are published on the Kent Police Website and reported to the Home Office so they are freely available.

The Chair thanked Junior Dann, Chief Inspector, District Commander Kent Police and James Beautridge, Acting CSU Inspector, Kent Police for their detailed presentation.

20. E-Scooters Update

The Chief Inspector, Kent Police, Junior Dann and Acting CSU Inspector, Kent Police James Beautridge addressed the Committee and gave a detailed update on E-Scooters.

E-Scooters are a national problem. There had been a number of seizures and prosecutions related to E-Scooters. E-Scooters were classified as vehicles and in order to drive them on the road, the user needed a driver's licence, MOT, and insurance. If they did not have those things, E-Scooters were only permitted to be driven on private land. National chain stores selling E-Scooters have been asked by the Police to inform customers of this.

There had been a lack of public awareness that E-Scooters were illegal to use on the road and that is why the officers' initial approach was to inform users when they were stopped the first time with a talk. A database had been created and if they were stopped a second time a Section 59 warning would be issued. A third time and the Police had the powers and, to date, 12 E-Scooters had been seized and crushed due to this Section 59 warning.

The number of road bike incidents had gone down but E-Scooters had increased.

Following questions and comments from Members, Chief Inspector, Junior Dann and the Acting CSU Inspector, James Beautridge, the following areas were raised:

- The safety of E-Scooters was discussed and the Community Safety Operations Manager explained that a young person had been knocked off his E-scooter and had been seriously injured. The parents had not realised how dangerous these bikes were.
- It is hard to hear the scooters approaching especially with a hearing impairment.
- Increased publicity regarding the dangers of these scooters in the run up to Christmas. Children use these E-Scooters to get to and from school so approach schools to see if an email could be sent home to parents to explain E-Scooters are illegal. The Community Safety Operations Manager explained there had been an article in the last Borough magazine, Your Borough, and some schools now do not allow them on their premises. Parents must understand the risks of purchasing them for their children.
- There are a variety of different users; the youths were riding them dangerously but there were also commuters who used them to be greener and some found them convenient instead of using a car to get to work or the train station.
- The reason why electric bikes do not require insurance and E-Scooters do is that electric bikes require pedalling to get them moving.
- An increase of crime had been linked to the use of E-Scooters – bag snatches, drug dealing and ASB.
- The Chair offered to share the notes from this Committee with other Committees and Councillors.

The Chair thanked Junior Dann, Chief Inspector, District Commander Kent Police and James Beautridge, Acting CSU Inspector, Kent Police for their presentation.

21. Topic Review Update

The Committee were provided with a way forward for the Topic Update associated with this Committee.

The Assistant Director (Communities) guided Members through the report and highlighted key points.

Due to the Pandemic, the two Topic Reviews that were selected by the Committee in January 2020 but had to be put on hold - Knife and Violent Youth Crime and Town Centre Crime, can now progress.

The Membership of the Topic Review Groups was included in the Terms of Reference. A change had been made and new membership for Knife and Violent Youth Crime would be Cllr Tony Rana (Chair), Cllr Elizabeth Mulheran (Vice-Chair), Cllr Gary Harding and Cllr Derek Ashenden.

The membership for Town Centre Crime would be Cllr John Caller (Chair), Cllr Brian Francis (Vice-Chair) and Cllr Ejaz Aslam and Cllr Frank Wardle.

It was proposed that the Knife and Crime Centre Topic Review report its finding to the next meeting of this Committee on 20 January 2022 and that the Town Centre Topic Review reports to Committee at the subsequent meeting on 15 March 2022. A start had been previously made with a 'round table' meeting on knife crime and the Assistant Director (Communities) will share notes of that meeting.

The Chair thanked the Assistant Director (Communities) for the summary of the report.

The Committee noted the report and confirmed the chairing and membership of the two Topic Reviews, as discussed above and agreed to the timing for reporting of these as proposed in paragraph 1.2.3 of the report.

22. Minutes of the latest publication of the Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel

The Committee were presented with the minutes of the Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel meeting held on 17 June 2021.

A further meeting held on 7 September took place. The minutes were not available for that meeting but are on the KCC website. Cllr Mochrie-Cox was Gravesham's representative for that meeting.

The Committee noted the minutes.

Close of meeting

The meeting ended at 9.10 pm

Classification: Public

Key Decision: No

Gravesham Borough Council

Report to: Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee

Date: 20 January 2022

Reporting officer: Strategic Manager (Community Safety Unit)

Subject: Tackling Domestic Abuse – Current Position and Progress

Purpose and summary of the report:

This report provides members of the Scrutiny Committee with an up-to-date picture of recorded domestic abuse occurring in the Borough together with the likely impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. It also considers how Gravesham's experience compares to that seen in other parts of Kent and joint work being carried out by the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) to support victims and their families.

Recommendations:

The Committee is asked to:

- i) Note the content of the report and offer any comments as appropriate.

1. Introduction

1.1 Rises in the reporting of domestic abuse over the last 18 months have been significantly influenced as a consequence of Covid-19. Extended periods of being at home for those in already difficult relationships, financial pressures and family demands, greater awareness of behaviours defined as abusive and an increase in third party reporting, have all contributed. Domestic abuse is an offence category that has for many years suffered from under-reporting. The fact that more victims are coming forward than ever before is to be welcomed as a sign of progress in breaking down barriers that may previously have prevented victims from taking action. A level of reporting that is above the average can also be an indicator of the degree of support and assistance provided to victims i.e., if service responses to victims are positive, this itself increases confidence and encourages more victims to seek help.

2. Police recorded domestic abuse crimes

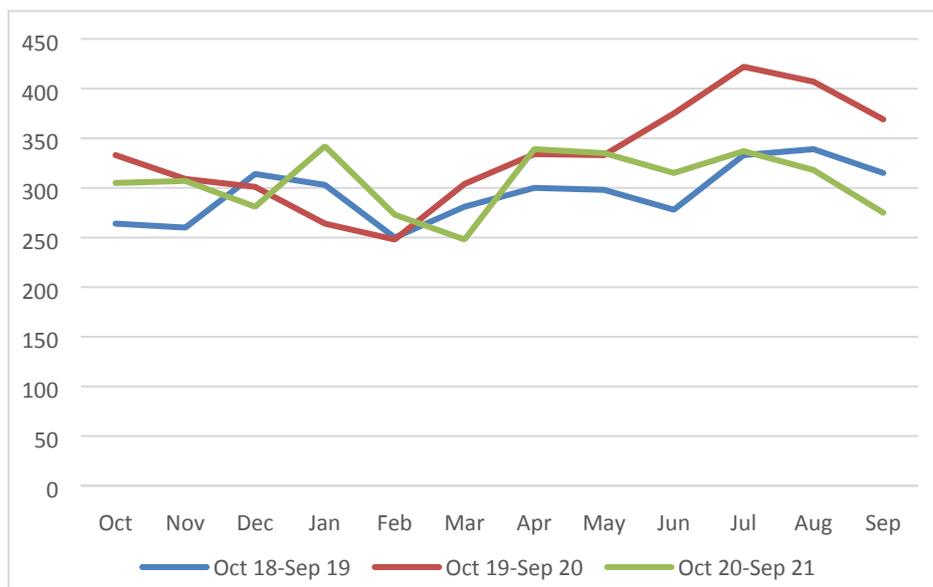
2.1 Domestic abuse accounts for approximately a third (32.7%) of all crime locally and is also a feature of many other offences. Historically, Gravesham has recorded higher than average levels of domestic abuse than most other Kent Districts and this continues to be the case despite having secured the greatest percentage reduction in recorded DA crimes in the most recent 12 months (-8.1%). This runs counter to the average increase of 0.8% seen countywide. However, it should be noted that when Kent recorded a 9.2% increase in the previous year, Gravesham's increase at that time was 13.1% therefore, the current decrease may represent in part a 'levelling off'. Gravesham's rate of domestic abuse crimes per 1,000 population at 34.4 offences is now the 4th highest in the county compared to having ranked 2nd highest at the time of last year's Strategic Assessment completed for our Gravesham CSP.

Police recorded domestic abuse crimes

Area	Oct 19- Sept 20	Oct 20- Sept 21	% +/-	Per 1,000 popn.
Ashford	3,473	3,314	-4.6	25.3
Canterbury	4,312	4,645	7.7	27.8
Dartford	3,455	3,376	-2.3	29.6
Dover	3,695	3,815	3.2	32.2
Folkestone and Hythe	3,520	3,456	-1.8	30.5
Gravesham	3,999	3,675	-8.1	34.4
Maidstone	4,632	4,830	4.3	27.9
Medway	11,081	11,294	1.9	40.5
Sevenoaks	2,408	2,474	2.7	20.4
Swale	5,246	5,363	2.2	35.5
Thanet	6,355	6,266	-1.4	44.3
Tonbridge and Malling	2,965	2,886	-2.7	21.8
Tunbridge Wells	2,318	2,507	8.2	21.1
Kent	57,459	57,901	0.8	31.0

2.2 The chart below presents the monthly pattern of domestic abuse crimes being recorded over 3 years. This clearly illustrates the peak period of reporting having occurred in July and August 2020 and throughout the most recent 12 months, a return to being closer to pre-pandemic levels. During the first lockdown period there was a national surge in contacts being made by victims to helplines and on-line services to seek some professional advice and support when reporting directly to the Police would have been very difficult indeed. The patterns suggest that once the lockdown restrictions were eased/had been lifted, victims felt better able or safe enough to contact Police.

Domestic abuse crimes – monthly pattern (Gravesham)



2.3 Types of domestic abuse crimes Data includes a breakdown of some of the types of domestic abuse crimes recorded. There were 529 offences of stalking or harassment and 298 were offences involving coercion and control amounting to 41.0% of all offences falling within the violence against the person category. Domestic abuse offences of violence against the person have reduced slightly by 6.0% (128 fewer offences) although the largest increase is in offences

of coercion and control (by 25.7% or 61 more offences). The publicity given to domestic abuse and violence against women and girls during the pandemic and to new legislation has given considerable focus to non-physical domestic abuse and it is likely the reporting of coercion and control will continue to increase for some time before stabilising.

- 2.4 Non-crime domestic incidents have fallen by 14.6%; these incidents will include third party reporting e.g., a neighbour reporting a domestic disturbance which they have become aware of due to noise/overhearing an argument. These types of incidents saw some increase during the pandemic whilst more people were working from home, some reduction may be a natural consequence of the easing of lockdown restrictions both in terms of victim experience and less opportunity for a third party to be aware of a domestic abuse situation taking place.

Domestic abuse crimes by offence type – Gravesham

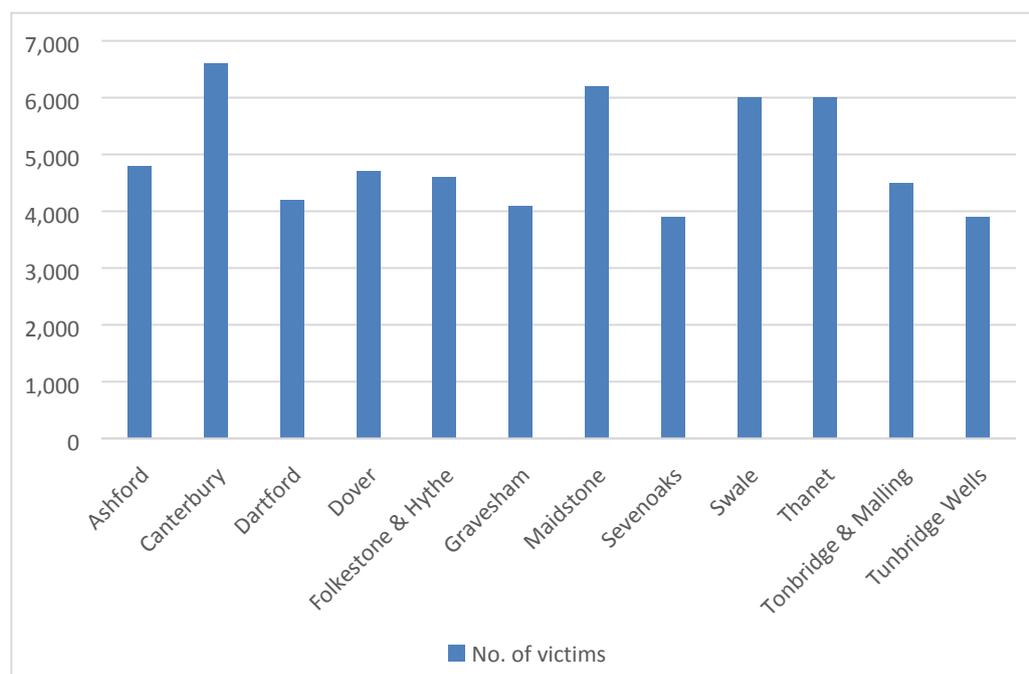
Offence category	Oct 19- Sept 20	Oct 20- Sept 21	No. change	% +/-
Violence against the person	2,142	2,014	-128	-6.0
• <i>Stalking/harassment</i>	543	529	-14	-2.6
• <i>Coercion and control</i>	237	298	61	25.7
Sexual offences	77	76	-1	-1.3
• <i>Rape</i>	48	48	0	0.0
Other crimes	437	438	1	0.2
Total notifiable offences	2,656	2,528	-128	-4.8
Non-crime incidents	1,343	1,147	-196	-14.6
Total domestic abuse offences or incidents	3,999	3,675	-324	-8.1

3. Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment 2021

- 3.1 s.4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 requires Local Authorities to assess the need for support for victims of domestic abuse and their children who may need to access safe accommodation. This includes those that require highly specialist support as well as cross-border support. The Kent Public Health Observatory have produced an updated Needs Assessment (November 2021) using ONS and Crime Survey for England and Wales data (covering those aged between 16-74 years) with some features of note:

- The estimated number of people experiencing domestic abuse at District level based on Crime Survey responses rather than Police recorded domestic abuse crimes is significantly higher in most areas across Kent but only slightly higher in Gravesham;
- Those with a household income of less than £30,000 p.a. are more than twice as likely to experience domestic abuse than those with a household income of £52,000/+;
- It is estimated that just over half (53.0%) of domestic abuse victims in Kent live in rented housing;
- Possibly higher than would be expected, around 30.0% of domestic abuse victims reporting to Kent Police each year are male;
- Nationally, most domestic homicide victims between 2017 and 2019 were female (77.0% or 274 victims) and most of the suspects were male (96.0% or 263 of 274 suspects). Of the 83 male domestic homicide victims, the suspect was female in 46.0% or 39 cases and male in 54.0% or 44 cases;

**Estimated number of people experiencing domestic abuse at District
(Kent Public Health Observatory Needs Assessment – November 2021)**



- The prevalence of domestic abuse is highest amongst younger adults (with peaks ages being between 26 and 30 years) and lower amongst adults aged 60/+;
- It is estimated that 7,600 adults with a disability in Kent experienced domestic abuse (almost 13.0% of the total) and approximately 1 in 10 refuge clients in 2020-21 (across Districts) had a disability;
- Refuge services nationally have reported that in 2019-20, 48.9% of service users experienced what is known as the 'toxic trio': mental health *and/or* drug or alcohol support needs as well as experiencing domestic abuse;
- Data in respect of victims' ethnicity is very limited and therefore no reliable conclusions or estimations can be drawn.

4. Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs)

- 4.1 Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) take place to allow partner agencies to share information and develop tailored action plans to support victims and families assessed at high risk of significant harm or homicide. Referrals are predominantly made into this process by Kent Police (92 referrals in Gravesham or just over 60.0% in the year ending 30 September 2021). The table below indicates that the rate of referrals per 1,000 population in Gravesham is close to the county average rate although the percentage of cases that involve repeat victims is just slightly higher than the average.
- 4.2 The 152 high risk cases in Gravesham involved 230 children within the affected households. In 36 cases the victims were from BME backgrounds (this appears to be directly proportionate to the demographic/population make-up of the Borough). Only 6 victims were male (approximately 4.0%) suggesting that most domestic abuse cases being handled and considered to be high risk with a specific threat of significant harm or homicide involve female victims. In terms of age, only 2 victims were under 18 years of age and no perpetrators were under 18. 3 victims were registered disabled (a factor that will potentially have increased their risk of harm).

MARAC cases – District and Medway comparison – 1 October 2020-30 September 2021

Area	No. of cases	No. of repeat cases	% of repeat cases	1,000 popn.
Ashford	128	39	30.0	1.0
Canterbury	192	56	29.0	1.1
Dartford	135	44	33.0	1.2
Dover	151	67	44.0	1.3
Folkestone and Hythe	106	34	32.0	0.9
Gravesham	152	53	35.0	1.4
Maidstone	246	55	22.0	1.4
Medway	674	214	32.0	2.4
Sevenoaks	166	44	27.0	1.4
Swale	230	64	28.0	1.5
Thanet	255	138	54.0	1.8
Tonbridge and Malling	185	35	19.0	1.4
Tunbridge Wells	173	57	33.0	1.4
Kent	2,793	900	32.2	1.5

5. Community Safety Partnership activity to tackle domestic abuse

- 5.1 Tackling domestic abuse and VAWG has been a key priority for the Gravesham CSP for many years and the Scrutiny Committee has previously received reports on a range of externally funded projects (supported by successful applications to the Home Office and MHCLG) that have helped to raise awareness as well as improve services for victims and their families and fill gaps in service provision. The Partnership's current Community Safety Strategy aims to develop this work further, particularly focussing on improving the availability and access to services for victims who are under-represented and whose personal situations or characteristics make accessing services more challenging. The following sections provide Members with an update of current and planned activity.
- 5.2 Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Partnership Board
- 5.2.1 As part of new legislative requirements introduced by the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, Kent County Council has led in establishing a Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Partnership Board. District Local Authorities are required by the legislation to cooperate and work with the Board in developing and delivering support to victims. Since the Board's creation last year, Gravesham BC has been represented on the Board by officers from both the Community Safety Unit and from Housing Services.
- 5.2.2 The membership is very broad and several sub-groups have been established to develop particular areas of work. Participation has been very helpful to the work we have been carrying out locally as it enables different Districts to effectively share their good practice and ideas, avoid duplication of effort and being to work collaboratively across areas e.g. the work carried out in Gravesham as part of the '16 Days of Action' in the lead up to Christmas 2021 (detailed below) was made possible because of the joint work undertaken between GBC officers and members of the Board's DA Media Group which provided us with a range of materials and resources that we were able to use to help raise awareness and encourage reporting.
- 5.3 Domestic Abuse Coordinator Post
- 5.3.1 Kent County Council, as the Tier 1 Authority in our area, has primary responsibility under the new legislation for ensuring that the county's commissioned DA services meet victims' needs and legal requirements and has therefore, received the necessary funding from Government to deliver this work. District Councils have received considerably smaller (yet still helpful) amounts of funding in recognition of additional burdens that the new legislation creates for us, including

the requirement to work in collaboration with the new DA Partnership Board and to help with administrative/other costs in providing support (not housing costs) to victims who are already in safe accommodation. Dartford and Gravesham have each been allocated c. £30,000 and the two Authorities agreed that it would be beneficial to pool our funds to create a Domestic Abuse Coordinator post to operate across our area. This is a very valuable resource that neither Councils have had before. As a specialist, full-time Coordinator, the postholder will be someone fully experienced in supporting victims directly and in multi-agency working, able to advise colleagues across Departments having contact with victims on the practical services available to them. They will also be expected to produce and help deliver, with partners, a domestic abuse strategy that will address how we can fill some gaps in services that we have previously identified and discussed in this Committee, including the provision of training for both staff and Members. The post is currently out to advert with interviews expected to take place at the end of January. The postholder will work across both Boroughs, spending half of their time in each, reporting through the Community Safety Unit in Gravesham.

5.3.3 Whilst the post has been advertised as a 12-month fixed term contract, our hope is that Government will confirm the level of future annual funding allocations early this year. The expectation is that the annual funding that we will receive in future will be sufficient to enable us to consider making this a permanent position.

5.4 16 Days of Action

5.4.1 The Christmas and New Year period have historically been seen as times when victims of domestic abuse feel more at risk and less able to access help and advice. This year, Gravesham fully embraced the opportunity to take part in the '16 Days of Action' to raise awareness and help everyone recognise the signs of domestic abuse and what steps to take. Working closely with colleagues at Kent County Council, the following were all delivered between 25 November (International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls) and 10 December:

- Posters and leaflets have been put on display/made available across Council offices including any public access area informing how anyone directly affected or who is concerned about someone they know being abused, can get help and advice;
- Information cards and leaflets were provided to hairdressers, barbers and nail bars in the town centre where they could be discretely picked up by or given to clients.
- The 16 Days of Action Campaign's headline message of 'Know, See, Speak Out' was flagged on the Council's website front page with links to more information. All staff were encouraged to attach the image below to email signatures throughout the 16 days;



- On each day of the Campaign all Council staff were sent an email with a link to either a short clip or text-based information on the different types of domestic abuse that might be experienced and services available.
- CSU officers ran an information stall in Gravesend Town Centre as an opportunity to engage with the public and provide information leaflets and advice;

- Digital display boards at Gravesend Railway Station were made available for the full 16 days free of charge to display 2 different posters aimed at raising awareness and encouraging reporting.

5.5 White Ribbon Ambassador Scheme

5.5.1 Some CSP partners, including Kent Police, have had accreditation to the White Ribbon Campaign for several years and this year, Gravesham Borough Council has also received its accreditation, which was publicly announced on 25 November to coincide with International Day for the Elimination of VAWG. Very good publicity was given to this just before Christmas which again provided an opportunity to raise awareness more generally and generate some discussion on various kinds of VAWG, which may/or may not involve behaviour defined as 'domestic abuse'. As an accredited member, the Council has agreed to create a Steering Group that will develop and oversee the delivery of a 3-year Action Plan that aims to help address VAWG and contribute to the objectives of the Campaign. A cross-departmental Steering Group has already been established and is meeting for the first time later this month. This work, whilst a corporate initiative for the Council, will include several very practical partnership projects to promote awareness of VAWG, encourage reporting, help challenge unacceptable behaviour and help to improve feelings of safety in the town centre NTE (not just for women and girls but for the wider public and anyone who might be feeling more vulnerable).

5.6. Public engagement

5.6.1 In December, the CSP partner agencies supported Gravesham CSU in hosting the annual Community Safety Shop in a vacant shop unit in St. George's Centre, Gravesend for one week (Monday-Saturday). This was a very good opportunity to provide usual seasonal crime prevention advice appropriate at this time of year but also was a very good base in which we were able to make best use of the information materials and resources that we had acquired as part of the 16 Days of Action and through our White Ribbon accreditation. We were able to distribute items to improve personal safety e.g., personal alarms and purse chains as well as speak to members of the public who might not have experienced domestic abuse personally but were concerned for the safety of someone they knew, providing information so that they could report as a third party and have information that they could use to signpost their colleague, friend or relative to support services.

5.7 One Stop Shop Services

5.7.1 Domestic Abuse One Stop Shops (OSS) are a multi-agency endeavour to providing access to impartial advice, information and support under one roof. OSS support is free of charge, typically available for 2-3 hours per week and accessible without pre-arranged appointments. In Gravesham the service has historically been based at the Civic Centre but now operates from Gravesend Methodist Church. Data below relates to the periods up to the end of February 2020 as OOS were not fully operational from March 2020 due to Covid-19. During the pandemic the delivery of the service had to adapt and provide a telephone-based service to still support victims whilst face-to-face contact was not possible.

3.7.2 As all OOS closed in March 2020 due to lockdown, data is comparable to previous years but for only covers 11 months in 2019-20 until the end of February. The table below demonstrates that although Gravesham experienced a sharp dip in attendance at the OSS in 2017-18 (primarily due to the unavailability of legal support) attendance has remained stable with only seen a very small decrease in the last year of available data whilst virtually all other areas across the county have seen substantial reductions. This is an indication of the value of the service locally.

3.7.3 The vast majority of OOS visitors live within the Local Authority area in which they access the service (94.5% of all visitors in 2019-20 and approximately the same figure in the previous four years) indicating that this is a service used by the local community. The most common services accessed are a domestic abuse specialist service (62.4% of visitors), legal advice (39.9%), Police (28.4%) and housing advice (15.0%). In Gravesham, approximately a quarter of visitors

visited the OSS on more than one occasion. This may reflect the availability of agencies at the time of attendance but another significant reason for returning is that the initial contact allows the visitor to better understand their options and the support that will be available to them. Once confident about making a commitment to taking the next step e.g., moving into a refuge or agreeing to another referral being made, they may need a second visit.

Number of visitors to One Stop Shops by District

District	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	No. +/- (previous Year)	% +/- (previous year)
Ashford	362	443	472	500	324	-176	-35.2
Canterbury	491	585	568	570	293	-277	-48.6
Dartford	138	149	143	134	100	-34	-25.4
Dover	188	208	166	173	76	-97	-56.1
Folkestone and Hythe	260	295	325	326	209	-155	-35.9
Gravesham	135	115	58	114	108	-6	-5.3
Maidstone	222	205	240	272	171	-101	-37.1
Medway	638	657	609	630	421	-209	-33.2
Sevenoaks	13	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Swale	375	305	237	64	55	-9	-14.1
Thanet	281	214	203	301	158	-143	-47.5
Tonbridge and Malling	70	66	63	104	41	-63	-60.6
Tunbridge Wells	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total	3,173	3,242	3,084	3,188	1,956	-1,270	-38.6

3.7.4 Gender, ethnicity, age and disabled status of visitors

- Male victims are still disproportionately low (in 2019-20, 6.0% of visitors were male) but operating hours may affect more male victims who may be working;
- Most visitors are White (over 85%);
- The proportion of visitors in the 40-59 age groups has increased by 28.6% in the last 5 years whilst the proportion of younger visitors aged between 18-25 years has reduced by 12.8% but 26-39 year olds still make up almost half of all visitors;
- 19.2% of visitors in 2019-20 were disabled compared to only 9.7% five years ago;
- In 2019-20, there were 2,705 children in households of visitors and of these 36.2% were aged 0-4 years and 63.8% were aged 5-18 years.

3.8 North Kent Domestic Abuse Forum

- 3.8.1 A considerable number of CSP partner agencies as well as voluntary sector and charities working with families experiencing domestic abuse are represented on the North Kent Domestic Abuse Forum. The Forum meets on a bi-monthly basis and allows professionals to share good practice as well as work collaboratively across the Dartford and Gravesham area. It has provided numerous opportunities over many years when we have been able to jointly fund smaller projects e.g., providing a small emergency fund for use by agencies working directly with victims for small items that cannot be covered by other means but that can make all the difference in a crisis and that would otherwise not have been possible.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 All the above hopefully provides Members with a good picture of the scale of domestic abuse in the Borough and most importantly, demonstrates the commitment of the CSP and other partners to continue to address this key priority. Whilst it has been a particularly challenging

18 months, the coming into force of the Domestic Abuse Act, the impact of the pandemic on victims and the coverage of several tragic cases in recent times, have all served to bring domestic abuse into the public spotlight. The improvement of accessibility to information and support, education to increase awareness of behaviours that need to be challenged and the acceptance that issues such as domestic abuse need to be spoken about without attaching stigma, are all positive steps to be welcomed. The development of a domestic abuse strategy for our area will be the next core objective in ensuring that support for victims and their children locally continues to improve and that those victims who remain under-represented receive the assistance they need to have the confidence to report and reduce their risks of further harm.

IMPLICATIONS	
Legal	The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 places a statutory duty on 'responsible authorities' to work in partnership to reduce crime and disorder. Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) are made up of representatives from the following responsible authorities: police; local authorities; fire and rescue authorities, probation/community rehabilitation services; health authorities (clinical commissioning groups).
Finance and Value for Money	None.
Risk assessment	Failure to work together to address domestic abuse through our CSP could negatively impact the level of protection offered to victims of domestic abuse and would run counter to the evidence gathered through the CSP's Strategic Assessment process.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	<p><i>A data protection impact assessment (OPIA) should be carried out at the start of any major project involving the use of personal data or if you are making a significant change to an existing process.</i></p> <p>a. Does the project/change being recommended through this paper involve the processing of <u>personal data</u> or <u>special category data</u> or <u>criminal offence data</u>? No.</p> <p>b. If yes to question a., have you completed and attached a DPIA including Data Protection Officer advice? N/a</p> <p>c. If no to question b., please seek advice from your nominated DPIA assessor or the Information Governance Team at gdpr@medway.gov.uk</p>
Equality Impact Assessment	<p>a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community? N/a.</p> <p>b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality? N/a</p>
	<i>In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above</i>
Corporate Business Plan	CSP activity to address domestic abuse makes a direct contribution to improving public safety and public protection linked to People and Place in the Corporate Plan.
Crime and Disorder	Tackling violence and domestic abuse through the CSP Community Safety Strategy will supplement programmes of work to improve community safety in the Borough and particularly, strengthen work to protect vulnerable people from harm.
Climate Change	None.
Digital/website website implications	None.
Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults	The safeguarding of vulnerable young people and adults is a high priority for the Council and all partner agencies embodied in the Council's Safeguarding Policy. Improving access to services and the quality of support available to victims of domestic abuse makes a valuable contribution towards the Safeguarding agenda.

Classification: Public
Key Decision: No

Gravesham Borough Council

Report to: Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee
Date: 20 January 2022
Reporting officer: Topic Review Group
Subject: Knife and Serious Youth Violence Topic Review

Purpose and summary of the report:

This report provides the Committee with the findings of the Knife and Serious Youth Topic Review and recommendations for future Gravesham Community Safety Partnership (CSP) activity in its multi-agency approach to addressing this issue.

Recommendations:

The Committee is asked to:

- i) Consider and comment upon the findings of the Topic Review Group and on the following proposed recommendations to be submitted to the next Community Safety Partnership meeting in March 2022 requesting that partners:
 - a) Ensure that statistics and supporting contextual information is available to gain a clear understanding of the level and nature of knife and youth crime;
 - b) Review and agree the best means to communicate crime issues with the local community, to keep them informed as to the reality of violent crime locally, perhaps triggered by specific incidents, to build confidence and help to maintain perspective;
 - c) Understand the beneficial role of Neighbourhood Watch and explore opportunities to support the expansion of Neighbourhood Watch within Gravesham.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Terms of Reference for the Knife and Serious Youth Crime Topic Review were agreed in January 2020. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic the carrying out of the Review was unavoidably temporarily halted. An update was provided to this Committee in October 2021 and it was agreed that this work could resume under the chairmanship of Councillor Tony Rana. A meeting of the Topic Review Group was then held on 9 December 2021 with the following Members and Council officers in attendance:

Councillor Tony Rana (Chair)
Councillor Derek Ashenden
Councillor Gary Harding
Councillor Elizabeth Ashenden
Simon Hookway (Assistant Director, Communities)
Kath Donald (Strategic Manager, Community Safety, Community Safety Unit)

2. The Topic Review Process

2.1 Prior to the meeting in December the Terms of Reference for the topic review were circulated together with the following documents:

- Note of the Multi-Agency Round Table Topic Review meeting held 6 March 2020
- Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill - Serious Violence Duty Briefing Paper
- Perceptions – press vs reality case studies

2.3 The outcome of a Multi-Agency Round Table meeting that had been held pre-pandemic was noted together with the following actions/recommendations resulting from it:

- The need for closer working with schools;
- Establishment of a multi-agency operational group of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) to which agencies could make referrals of young people coming to attention, becoming involved in ASB or who are vulnerable to being drawn into criminality to develop preventative plans for them.
- Creation of a survey/questionnaire for completion by young people to capture young people's views and what they feel would be useful preventative/signposting information for them.
- The value of detached youth work as an important means of engaging with young people on the street and that makes a valuable contribution to preventative work.

2.4 Kath Donald updated the Group on several actions that had taken place in the intervening period since that meeting, specifically:

- Kent Police have re-introduced Police Schools Liaison Officers. Officers for the Gravesham area are expected to be in post in January 2022.
- The Youth Engagement Panel (YEP) has been established as a multi-agency operational Group of the CSP and is now receiving referrals to allow for tailored interventions to be put in place for the young people raised.
- Survey/questionnaire – this could be recommended to be progressed in 2022.
- Gravesham Community Safety Unit successfully applied for funding from the Violence Reduction Unit which has enabled The Gr@nd to provide outreach workers who are directed to locations identified as hotspots by either the VRU, Kent Police or the CSU. This funding was for a 6-month period and would come to an end in December 2021.

2.5 Kath Donald outlined the Serious Violence Duty required by the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill proceeding through Parliament. That places a new duty on partners to work together to tackle serious violence. It requires the Gravesham Community Safety Partnership to develop a strategy that both fulfils statutory obligations and meets the needs of local communities when the Bill is enacted. The Kent and Medway Violence Reduction Unit is currently preparing a strategic needs assessment that will be reported to the Community Safety Partnership in March 2022. This assessment will provide additional data, including on violent youth and knife crime.

2.6 The group noted the work being prepared to assess the level and patterns of violent crime and specifically commented on the seasonal aspects of violent crime and the impact that Covid has had on the numbers of reported incidents over the last 2 years.

2.7 The group discussed what is regarded as a key issue – that of the perception of youth and knife crime and crime more broadly. It noted that this is very much a problem where the perception of crime is far higher than the incidents of crime indicate, notwithstanding the impact that those incidents that take place have on those involved. Invariably, the frequency of violent incidents is exacerbated by social media.

2.8 Examples of the reporting of knife crime incidents and the facts behind those were circulated prior to the meeting.

- 2.9 Discussion then centred on the best means to counter inaccurate or inflated reporting and the importance of engagement and better communication with communities. This included a discussion as to the role of meetings, such as PACT meetings that used to be held or alternative models of informing the public. The group requested that the issue of communication be explored further, including the potential to review methods used, especially those led by Kent Police to ensure that communities are kept informed. It was suggested that the CSP could review opportunities that could be taken to provide facts and to manage expectations in respect of what actions are being taken.
- 2.10 The group expressed the view that it is important for communities to receive information directly from the Police rather than via social media. There is a need to address that balance.
- 2.11 Kath Donald updated the review group as to the work that is currently being undertaken to prepare a Communication Framework for the Community Safety Partnership. (A final draft of this document is now due to be considered by the CSP at its meeting in January 2021).
- 2.12 Members of the group discussed the role of Neighbourhood Watch and requested information on the coverage of NW across the Borough, how the Watches operate in practice and opportunities for the setting up of additional networks.

3. Recommendations by the Topic Review Group to the Community Safety Partnership

3.1 In concluding the topic review, the following recommendations to the CSP are proposed:

- i) Ensure that statistics and supporting contextual information is available to gain a clear understanding of the level and nature of knife and youth crime.

Both the Annual Strategic Assessment (the 2021 Assessment will be presented at the CSP meeting this month) and the Strategic Needs Assessment currently being undertaken by the Kent and Medway Violence Reduction Unit, will serve to provide considerable information from across partner agencies and data sources. This will give the Partnership the best analysis of the experience and nature of violent crime that it will have had to date. It will be important to supplement the quantitative data with qualitative data and if possible, engagement or consultation with those perpetrating violent crime as well as victims should be sought. This element of building a clearer and evidenced intelligence picture will help inform the wider initiative of improving communications with the public.

- ii) Review and agree the best means to communicate crime issues with the local community, to keep them informed as to the reality of violent crime locally, perhaps triggered by specific incidents, to build confidence and help to counter a disproportionate fear of crime;

A draft Communications Framework for the CSP is now in the process of being finalised. This will be capable of including a variety of approaches to improve communication with local people tailored to best achieve engagement dependent on the subject and the target audience e.g., social media may be the most effective way of communicating with younger age groups whilst face-to-face or location-based/on-site engagement events may be more easily accessible to older age groups. There will also be a focus on ensuring that communication with local people is timely to maintain public confidence, particularly following any highly publicised incidents or series of incidents affecting a specific neighbourhood.

- iii) Understand the beneficial role of Neighbourhood Watch and explore opportunities to support the expansion of Neighbourhood Watch within Gravesham.

This work will include a mapping exercise to establish the number and distribution of active Watches across the Borough and promotional work in areas where there are gaps.

North Kent Neighbourhood Watch is already a non-statutory partner of our CSP and Kent Police have a Neighbourhood Watch Coordinator covering our area. The presence of Neighbourhood Watch can help to promote feelings of safety within local communities and Watches also a useful means of relaying information via members, effectively acting as another communication route.

4. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 4.1 Terms of Reference Topic Review Knife & Youth Crime -
<https://democracy.gravesham.gov.uk/documents/s63960/2.%20Terms%20of%20Reference%20-%20CD%20Sub%20-%20Knife%20Violent%20Youth%20Crime.pdf>
- 4.2 Note of the Multi-Agency Round Table Topic Review meeting held 6 March 2020.
- 4.3 Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill - Serious Violence Duty Briefing Paper
- 4.4 Perceptions – press vs reality case studies

Anyone wishing to inspect background papers should, in the first place, be directed to Committee & Electoral Services who will make the necessary arrangements.

APPENDIX 1

IMPLICATIONS	
Legal	The Council has a statutory obligation to work with partner agencies to address crime and ASB through the Crime and Disorder Act (CDA) 1998. In addition, the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill currently proceeding through Parliament, includes a proposed change to the CDA 1998 (in Part 2, Clause 19 of the Bill) to place a new duty on CSPs to ensure that partners work collectively to prevent and reduce serious violence as a priority.
Finance and Value for Money	None.
Risk assessment	Failure to work with statutory partners with the objective of reducing crime and ASB would mean non-compliance with our statutory obligations. The Crime and Disorder Scrutiny is also legally obliged to have review the activity of the Community Safety Partnership. Failure to meet either of these obligations would lead to lack of public trust and confidence and mean that benefits of multi-agency working to address community safety would be lost.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	<i>A data protection impact assessment (OPIA) should be carried out at the start of any major project involving the use of personal data or if you are making a significant change to an existing process.</i>
	a. Does the project/change being recommended through this paper involve the processing of <u>personal data</u> or <u>special category data</u> or <u>criminal offence data</u> ? No.
	b. If yes to question a., have you completed and attached a DPIA including Data Protection Officer advice? N/a
	c. If no to question b., please seek advice from your nominated DPIA assessor or the Information Governance Team at gdpr@medway.gov.uk
Equality Impact Assessment	a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community? No.
	b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality? Yes – resultant work will make a positive contribution in improving personal safety particularly though not exclusively of younger people who are disproportionately affected by knife crime.
	<i>In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above</i>
Corporate Business Plan	Recommendations for future work by the CSP will improve public safety and will contribute to priorities within People and Place in the Corporate Plan.
Crime and Disorder	Recommended actions will directly contribute to the CSP Community Safety Strategy in addressing the strategic priority of tackling violent crime.
Climate Change	None.
Digital/website implications	None.
Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults	The safeguarding of vulnerable young people and adults is a high priority for the Council and partner agencies; addressing violent crime and developing CSP activity to address knife and youth violence will be valuable reducing the risk of and protecting people against physical harm.

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