

Medway Community Safety Partnership

Strategic Assessment 2024



Contents

Item	Page
Medway Community Safety Partnership	3
Introduction	4
Community Safety Plan	5
Overview	6
The Crime Picture in Context	7-8
Benchmarking	9-10
Progress of priorities	11-21
• Priority 1 – Tackle Anti-Social Behaviour	11-13
• Priority 2 – Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)	13-15
• Priority 3 – Tackle Drugs and Alcohol	15-18
• Priority 4 – Reducing Reoffending	19-21
Wider work by Community Safety Partners	22-26
Community Safety Partnership Survey 2024	27
Conclusion	28
Background and Data Information	29
Glossary of Terms	30
Appendix 1	31

Medway Community Safety Partnership

The Community Safety Partnership (CSP) brings together the key agencies involved in crime prevention and community safety work, namely:

- Medway Council
- Kent Police
- The Probation Service
- Kent Fire and Rescue Service (KFRS)
- Kent and Medway Integrated Care Board (ICB)

To ensure we effectively address crime, ASB, and reoffending issues which impact on Medway we:

- Conduct an annual Community Safety Strategic Assessment to collate and analyse data and crime patterns.
- Listen to the views and concerns of Medway residents and undertake consultations to ensure we address the issues that matter the most to residents.
- Review and monitor performance and delivery against objectives.
- Strive to build and maintain strong relationships between partner agencies to ensure a cohesive approach to tackling crime and ASB.

The purpose of the strategic assessment is to provide an analysis of the levels and patterns of crime and disorder. The assessment analyses any changes since the previous assessment and will review the possible causes as well as assessing the implementation of the previous Community Safety Plan. Consideration will be given to the views of Medway's residents and what they identify as priorities together with the analysis of crime and disorder to identify the key matters that the Partnership should prioritise.

This report is a summary of the key findings of the Partnership's Strategic Assessment 2024. It will reflect upon the work that has been undertaken to support the priorities outlined in the Community Safety Plan. It will also identify gaps or future aims for the CSP.

Introduction

I am pleased to introduce Medway Community Partnership's annual strategic assessment for 2024, my first as Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Highways and Enforcement. This year the Community Safety Partnership has once again been provided with a strategic assessment to review performance against its aims and objectives. The Partnership are then able to consider whether the current priorities are the right ones and whether any changes or additions are required. The strategic assessment is a partnership document that takes account of the priorities of partners, views of the community, current trends, volumes of crime, and future projections.

Our partners work together to deliver to keep our residents, and those visiting Medway, safe. They work to deliver our statutory duties and initiatives aimed at reducing crime and anti-social behaviour as well as providing support to victims and anyone who is impacted by incidents that occur.

This is the first strategic assessment since the refresh of the Community Safety Partnership's Community Safety Plan 2024-2027. The partnership continues to prioritise the tackling of anti-social behaviour as well as aiming to reduce violence against women and girls. Further priorities include tackling drugs and alcohol and reducing reoffending. By identifying these four areas as ones to focus on the Community Safety Partnership are able to create aims and objectives with resources shared more efficiently and effectively.

Throughout this document you will see examples of the hard work taking place by partners. It also sets out some of the activities planned for the coming months and some of the concerns agencies have. I am confident the Partnership will continue to work extremely hard to ensure Medway is an even greater place to live, work, learn and visit for years to come.



Councillor Alex Paterson

Chair of the Community Safety Partnership

Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Highways and Enforcement

Community Safety Plan 2024 – 2028

In line with the Community Safety Plan 2024-2028, the priorities of the CSP are:

Priority 1: Tackle Anti-Social Behaviour

Priority 2: Violence Against Women and Girls

Priority 3: Tackle Drugs and Alcohol

Priority 4: Reducing Reoffending

Overview

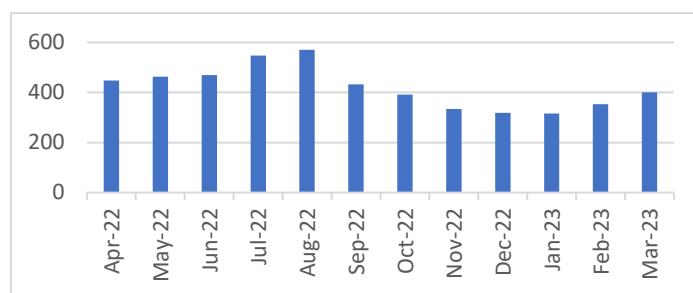
Priority	What we have been doing
Tackling anti-social behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A dedicated Neighbourhood Team of over 50 officers and staff including beat officers with 29 officers covering all wards in Medway, working in partnership with the Medway Council's Community Safety Team, Housing Providers and other partners. • Implementing best practice utilising bespoke problem-solving plans, increased patrolling and innovative projects such as Clear, Hold, Build. • Focused operations; ensuring PSPO's in place for nuisance vehicles with targeting by police in partnership with Medway Council's Community Safety Team. • Kent Fire and Rescue Service created the Aspire Program aimed at positive engagement following incidents in derelict buildings.
Violence against women and girls (VAWG)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing innovative practice such as Project Vigilant, where officers in non-uniform patrol, continues for the nighttime economy. • A focus on public spaces to keep them safe for all, with venues across Medway encouraged to sign up for 'Best Bar None' accreditation. • A series of engagement activities took place including walk and talk events with specific activity during National Stalking Week in April 2024. • Child Friendly Medway have held a number of events for women and girls funded by Safer Streets funding.
Tackle drugs and alcohol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medway Local Drugs Information System (LDIS) established in January 2024 to receive, assess and share information on dangerous substances. • The treatment service Hub was successfully relocated from Chatham to Gillingham with satellite services in Chatham and Rochester. • The 'Forward Connect' peer-led support group has been set up ensuring lived/living experience is at the front and centre of service delivery. • Work continues in partnership to target supply chains and those involved at all levels.
Reduce reoffending	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A larger programme, CFO (Co-Financing Organisation) Evolution, has been established which combines prison and community elements to be a more end to end service. • North Kent Probation Delivery Unit have continued to train officers and look forward to welcoming newly qualified officers in December 2024 • Partners are working together to ensure services are prepared for the consequences of the prison early release scheme.

The Crime Picture in Context

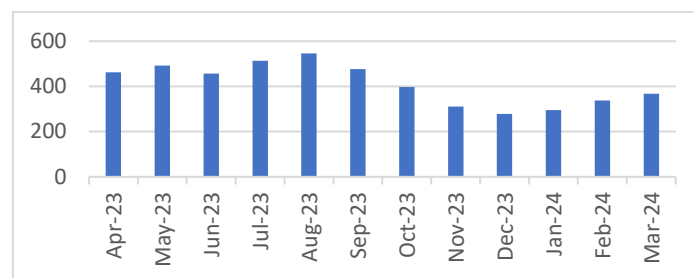
To allow for consistency and due to the way that data is collected, this strategic assessment will reflect on crime and ASB data from April 2023 - March 2024.

Following on from last year's 4% decrease in recorded crime there has been a further decrease by 9% between April 2023 and 2024. It is extremely positive to see a continued decrease occurring, particularly against a backdrop of a cost-of-living crisis.

Although only slight, it is positive to once again see that cases of ASB have declined in the 2023-24 period, falling by 3%. Initiatives to tackle ASB have continued and are highlighted within this document. The top 5 wards for ASB once again account for a significant amount of all cases, 42%, but there has been a change in wards which is likely affected by the inclusion of the new Ward boundaries introduced in 2023. The top 5 wards are Chatham Central and Brompton, Gillingham South, Rochester West and Borstal, Strood North and Frindsbury and Hoo St Werburgh and High Halstow.

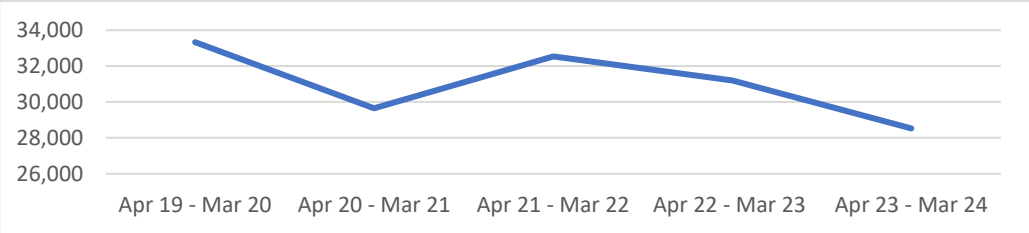
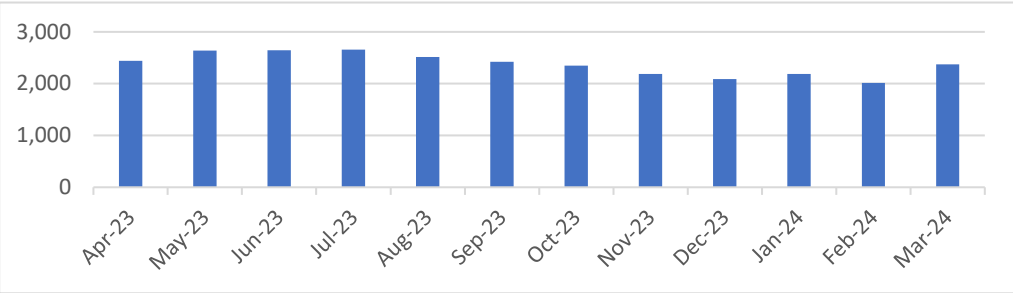
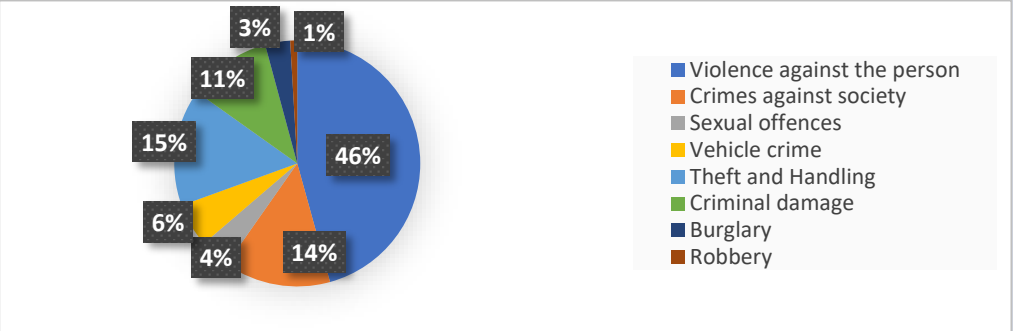


ASB Reports Seasonality 2022-23



ASB Reports Seasonality 2023-24

The Neighbourhood Model established by Kent Police has continued to develop with Beat Officers for every Ward in Medway as well as a Child Centred Policing and Neighbourhood Task Force Team. This has seen greater partnership links with Beat Officers able to establish effective relationships with key stakeholders in their areas, improving communication and the sharing of intelligence.

Level of Crime	28,526 recorded crimes (April 23 – March 24, Kent Police Data September 2024). 99.9 per 1000 people (Based on the population of 282,700, data used at Office of National Statistics (ONS) website.
Peer Comparison	21st highest number of recorded crimes for Unitary Authorities (63 responding authorities, Iginform.gov.uk) (Down from 18 th previously)
Annual Change	9% decrease (Based on final figures of 31,198 for 2023-2024)
General Trend	
Seasonality	
Breakdown of Crime Types	
Top 5 Wards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • River • Gillingham South • Gillingham North • Chatham Central • Luton and Wayfield <p>These 5 wards account for 47% of recorded crime in Medway.</p> <p>*Note: Crime data available at the time was still under the old Ward areas.</p>

Benchmarking

Previous benchmarking was made with CSP's belonging to the Home Office's 'Most Similar Group' and using the Office of National Statistic (ONS) Crime Severity Score (CSS) to calculate harm. The data was experimental in nature but was published to help users develop it further. Unfortunately, the data set has not been updated since August 2023 which has meant that benchmarking has been more difficult this year. This year we have used the same authorities in the previous 'Most Similar Group' and have taken data from the Recorded Crime Data by Community Partnership Area data set available on the [ONS Website](#).

CSP	Recorded Crime Rate per 1000 Population (Excluding Fraud)	% change April 2022 – March 2023 and April 2023 – March 2024
Medway	99.9	-9%
Basildon	98.0	-7%
Bolton	110.8	-8%
Bury	103.4	-4%
Dartford and Gravesham	99.0	-4%
Gosport	81.5	-11%
Havant	80.6	-7%
Kirklees	100.5	-8%
Nuneaton and Bedworth	82.9	-1%
Peterborough	105.2	-7%
Stevenage	76.1	-12%
Tameside	106.3	-11%
Thurrock	90.6	-5%
Wigan	104.5	-6%

The first table shows the rate of recorded crime per 1000 people in the local population for year ending March 2024. The average rate per 1000 people is 95.7. This means Medway is only very slightly above the average for these areas. All areas have seen a decrease in recorded crime which is very positive with Medway showing a 9% decrease, over twice the decrease of neighbouring CSP Dartford and Gravesham.

CSP	Violence against the person Rate per 1000 Population	% change April 2022 – March 2023 and April 2023 – March 2024
Medway	45.7	-11%
Basildon	39.8	-9%
Bolton	46.2	-7%
Bury	41.1	-1%
Dartford and Gravesham	38.2	-8%
Gosport	36.9	-15%
Havant	35.8	-11%
Kirklees	44.1	-9%
Nuneaton and Bedworth	34.1	-2%
Peterborough	41.3	-5%
Stevenage	29.6	-10%
Tameside	45.3	-9%
Thurrock	32.2	-5%
Wigan	44.3	-2%

This table shows the rate of violence against the person offences per 1000 people in the local population for year ending March 2024 along with the percentage change between April 2022 – March 2023 and April 2023 – March 2024. The average rate is 39.6 with Medway the second highest out of the 14 areas. However, whilst all areas are showing a decrease in violent crime it is encouraging to see Medway having one of the larger decreases out of the areas.

Progress on our priorities

Priority 1: Tackle anti-social behaviour

There has been an increase in Beat Officers, The Community Safety Unit (CSU) includes a team of 29 police officers covering all wards in Medway, a dedicated Child Centred Policing Team of 8 staff and a Sergeant, a Neighbourhood Task Force with 13 members of staff and a Sergeant and 2 Community Liaison officers. These officers work with local partners such as Medway Council's Community Safety Team, Housing providers and others to tackle anti-social behaviour and identify opportunities for prevention. This is further complimented by the 'Partners Weekly' meeting on Wednesdays where problems can be highlighted and directed to Beat officers. The team uses a Problem-Solving approach to tackle identified Anti-Social behaviour with dedicated hot spot patrols and bespoke operations to tackle problem issues and areas. Between June 2023 and May 2024, the unit were responsible for over 600 arrests.

The Child Centred Policing Team have created many contacts with both with Schools and other agencies, sharing information and intelligence and feeding back to Beat Officers where needed. Part of their role included planning for school holidays, providing advice and warning to children and patrolling hotspot areas after school, all with the aim of reducing anti-social behaviour.

The Neighbourhood Task Force has provided hi-visibility and engagement during patrolling within neighbourhoods. This includes Chatham's Clear Hold Build area. Clear Hold Build (Op Neighbourhood) has been running since 5th March 2024 working in Bryant Street, Church Street and Whittaker Street with the objective of identifying the sources of crime and antisocial behaviour and also robustly dealing with issues using police powers and partner agencies for quick and effective interventions. There is also a strong presence in the area to prevent individuals involved from returning to the area. Overall, the project aims to restore confidence to residents in the area and give residents physical tools and useful information so that they can protect themselves from future crime and anti-social behaviour. There have been multiple arrests, Community Protection Warnings issued, and a Closure Order amongst other multiagency work, such as Licencing and Trading Standards checks in the local area.

In the Strood and Cliffe area of Medway, the Community Safety Unit have undertaken a number of operations to tackle anti-social behaviour. This has also included the use of drones to support some of the work to deal with nuisance bikes. Beat Officers worked with the Parish Council and completed site visits supporting them and providing advice. New target hardening items will also be in place soon such as pinch gates. Across Medway a total of 21 Section 59 notices (used if someone drives or rides a vehicle in an anti-social manner, they can be 'warned' and issued with a notice) were given out in Medway during 2023 and 239 vehicles were seized for having no insurance.

Medway Council's Community Safety Team renewed the alcohol control Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO). Work is ongoing to enforce these orders, such as a recent operation

where 5 FPNs (Fixed Penalty Notices) were given out in the Gillingham High Street alcohol control PSPO area. The CSU are focused on enhancing activity in Town Centres and improving visibility and safety. Funding is in place to enhance patrolling in areas linked to ASB and Serious Violence.

Following the introduction of a new Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) in April 2024, Community Safety Officers have been working in partnership with Kent Police to target the drivers of nuisance motor vehicles which are being used for activities which contravene the PSPO. Following an initial period of educating drivers who were contravening the PSPO, proactive joint patrols with Kent Police in marked police vehicles resulted in 36 Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) being issued. Pro-active patrols continue to be carried out and these are intelligence led, targeting identified hotspot locations for vehicle gathering at weekends.

Medway Council are also moving ahead with a PSPO focussing on issues that arise as a result of people failing to exercise proper control of dogs in public places. This PSPO includes controls on dog fouling, defining areas where dogs are not permitted – such as playgrounds; and requiring dogs to be on leads in some public spaces.

Public engagement has also been a key feature with partner agencies attending public events to speak with members of the public about concerns they may have and provide reassurance. There is also a greater use of My Community Voice, an online platform which allows engagement with local officers. There are now around 3,000 members of the public engaging with the platform.

Derelict buildings have proved an issue of concern for multiple partners. Several have been accessed by young people who are causing damage or setting fires. Kent Fire and Rescue are working with all districts in Kent and Medway to look at best practice to prevent further issues. Risk information has been shared by KFRS with other agencies due to concerns about the safety of those entering buildings that are often in poor condition. Drones and virtual reality have been used to help look inside buildings in a safe way.

The Community Safety Unit (CSU), working in partnership with partners, plan and address seasonal issues such as Halloween and Fireworks night and increased summer demand. During the summer Kent Fire and Rescue ran the Aspire Programme. This involved several planned days for young people held at Rochester Fire Station. These were positive days of action aimed at talking to young people about their aspirations and how behaviours could impact these. The first Fire Cadet cohort in Medway has been success in the ability to engage with young people. This has included proactive prevention work around deliberate fires by engaging with young people at Barnfield Recreation Ground. A reduction has been seen which is hugely positive.

Medway Youth Service continue to provide a number of opportunities for young people with positive engagement. One such project includes the use of Escape Room events which encourages young people to use problem solving skills and to be creative. There has also been strong engagement over various holiday projects including teenagers involved in HAF projects (Holiday Activities and Food programme). Good partnership working within Medway Council Teams and with external partners has developed a greater understanding of what is happening in certain areas, allowing location assessments, contextual safeguarding and some positive work with schools.

Medway Council's HRA Housing Team held a number of events during ASB Awareness Week in November. These included a partnership event, discussions with victims to understand the impact of anti-social behaviour, the launch of an ASB survey for tenants, a celebration of those nominated as community heroes and a young person's events. The Team also launched new ASB packs for tenants that report anti-social behaviour. The packs will provide diary sheets and useful information, as well as leaflets and details of support services and safety items. It is hoped the packs will help those reporting ASB by keeping everything in one place and making it easier to store lots of different information they may be given.

Aims and items to note for the CSP

- Work to tackle derelict buildings, particularly with those who own such buildings, is required to help prevent ASB and the risk of injury to young people and emergency service personnel. Issues in derelict buildings are resource intensive and take resources away from other concerns.
- Positive engagement with young people needs to continue with programmes such as the Aspire programme giving young people activities to take part in whilst providing an educational opportunity.
- Feedback on the Housing ASB packs would be useful once they have been used for several months, to understand their impact and whether they may be something that others may wish to roll out in future.

Priority 2: Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

The Neighbourhood Policing Team continue to play a key role in tackling Violence Against Women and Girls supporting the wider force and specialist departments. Relentlessly targeting those who offend and making numerous arrests and offering specialist support to victims. There has been a large amount of engagement and an increase in visibility in key areas with a focus on making public places safe for all to enjoy. This will continue as part of an intelligence led approach.

This has included Walk and Talk Events arranged by Kent Police with partners also in attendance. This gives members of the public the opportunity to engage with the team and find out more about the actions being taken giving them reassurance. Project Vigilant, where officers that are not in uniform are used to spot any issues, has also continued in public spaces as this was highlighted in the media as an area of concern for the public. Project Vigilant, which is the policing of the nighttime economy and protection of vulnerable females, continues with operations taking place frequently. Officers in the Neighbourhood Team have recently had training around Project Vigilant to assist with engagement activity over the summer and into the coming months.

Work has also continued around the 'Best Bar None' project. This project involves bars working to get accredited for the steps they take to prevent crimes and certain behaviours. Supported by the Home Office, the comprehensive accreditation assesses against four main themes, Venue Management, Staff Training and Care, Customer Safety and Welfare and Customer Service and Community.

Operation Lemur continues to be Kent Police's deployment response to indecent exposure and stalking offences. Reviewing intelligence daily and targeting relevant areas and suspects ensures that quick time identifications and arrests are made. There is also patrolling around risk areas such as schools and other vulnerable locations. These actions have raised awareness both with the community, the Community Safety Partnership and wider policing departments. A significant number of arrests and charges of predatory individuals have resulted making the streets of Medway a safer place to live and visit.

During National Stalking Week in April 2024, engagement activity took place in Rochester, Strood, Chatham and Hempstead shipping areas. These events included partners such as Victim Support, to raise awareness of stalking and promoting the Hollie Guard app. The Hollie Guard app can be downloaded to your phone and can contact an emergency contact if activated as well as ensuring you check in on a planned journey and other features aimed at keeping you safe. Kent Police also visited business such as hair salons, nail salons, cafes and coffee shops in Rochester, Strood, Gillingham and Chatham to promote the Hollie Guard app and raise awareness around safer spaces.

Medway Council's Housing Team, in partnership with a number of other agencies, continues to run the award-winning Ladies' Night Project. Over the past 12 months there has been a growth in the number of women attending the events. The project continues to focus on women who are sex working and/or sleeping rough, though other vulnerable women do attend. Recently this has included women who are fleeing domestic abuse, needing wounds dressed or those requiring welfare support from the Department for Work and Pensions. Its very encouraging that positive word is spreading and that the team have managed to build up a level of trust in the community that allows vulnerable women to come forward without the fear of judgement to hopefully gain the help and support they need. The events are also

helpful in providing a voice about the issues vulnerable women face in Medway and this intelligence can help inform services in their approach going forward.

Child Friendly Medway has run events throughout the year for women and young girls. Events have included creative workshops and theatre performances. These activities provide a safe space for discussions around personal safety and about fears and concerns that women may have. Activities were funded by Safer Streets funding for use on initiatives to reduce and prevent violence against women and girls.

The Medway Safeguarding Children Partnership (MSCP) have been working in partnership to tackle violence against women and girls. A key focus of MSCP work has been on the development of guidance and learning opportunities for practitioners. This is to ensure that professionals across Medway are aware of the different services for children and young people and that they also understand harmful sexual behaviour pathways.

In Medway, there is work being undertaken to integrate the Signs of Safety model into every aspect of Children's Social Care and Family Solutions. In every assessment there will be mapping of harm, complicating factors, strengths and safety. This approach is useful where there may be signs of a young person showing aggression against women and girls, tackling any negative beliefs or attitudes by identifying positive influences or relationships to build upon. The key is that families are given every opportunity to come up with and apply their own solutions first, empowering them to tackle negative behaviours before professionals offer or impose theirs.

Aims and items to note for the CSP

- Identify opportunities for funding projects or further joined up working which may keep projects running through shared resources.
- Ladies Night has been very successful, partners should continue to support it where possible.
- The Signs of Safety model could be used as a basis for tackling ASB, and this could be explored further.

Priority 3: Tackle Drugs and Alcohol

There has also been a challenge in the number of deaths from drug misuse. Drug deaths have been increasing in England and Medway is significantly above the national average with a steeper increasing trend from 2017-2019. In June 2024 there was a significant increase in drug related incidents in Medway with no determining evidence currently available to indicate what caused this. Nitazenes have been seen in recent overdose/deaths in Medway and a 4P plan (Pursue, Prevent, Protect and Prepare) is being drawn up in collaboration with Kent Police to respond to this.

This priority is largely focussed on the work of the Medway Combatting Drugs Partnership (CDP) which is now well established. The National strategic outcomes are reducing drug use, reducing drug related crime and reducing drug related deaths and harm. The priorities are:

1: Breaking drug supply chains

- 1.1 Improve intelligence gathering and data sharing
- 1.2 Understand how partners can support delivery of the Police strategy
- 1.3 Reduce dependency forming medicines prescribing rates
- 1.4 Use contextual safeguarding approaches
- 1.5 Restrict the supply of drugs into prisons.

2: Delivering world-class treatment services

- 2.1 Review, evaluate and strengthen drug and alcohol treatment services with particular focus on:
 - a) Transition pathways between young people and adult substance misuse services
 - b) Pathways for people who have co-occurring conditions
 - c) Transition pathways between residential and community settings.
- 2.2 Coproduce, deliver and evaluate training for the wider workforce
- 2.3 Improve workforce recruitment and retention

3: Achieving a generational shift in the demand for drugs

- 3.1 Deliver education (prevention and early intervention) programmes
- 3.2 Improve communication between partners
- 3.3 Apply tougher and more meaningful consequences
- 3.4 Support young people and families most at risk of substance misuse or criminal exploitation
- 3.5 Conduct a meta-narrative analysis

4: Working together as a Combating Drugs Partnership

- 4.1 Embed more Lived and Living Experience voices
- 4.2 Finalise the outcomes framework to measure and monitor impact
- 4.3 Increase visible recovery and celebrate success
- 4.4 Learn lessons by ensuring that action is taken
- 4.5 Ensure that regular meetings and annual conference are organised.

The key to success for the partnership has been working together as a system. An example of this has been the establishment of Medway Local Drugs Information System (LDIS) in January 2024 (previously Kent and Medway). LDIS was established to receive, assess and share information relating to any dangerous substance, regardless of its legal status. The LDIS

process takes a Public Health approach to reducing harm and preventing deaths due to drugs by ensuring that there is a system-wide and evidence-based response to concerns raised and that information reaches the right people quickly. The LDIS consists of the Professional Information Network (PIN) and Alerts Panel and aligns with the Medway Drug and Alcohol Related Deaths panel reporting to the CDP and Community Safety Partnership. To date three LDIS Alerts Panels have been called in 2024, one for opiates, one for vapes containing substances other than nicotine and one for suspected contaminants in cocaine. These have resulted in a coordinated harm reduction response, with no wider drug alerts issues.

From April 2023 the Forward Trust have been delivering the adult community substance misuse service in Medway. The RIVER service consists of a core treatment service delivered by The Forward Trust with a recovery service delivered by Open Road. There have been several key successes including the relocation of the treatment service with the main hub moved from Chatham to Gillingham in March 2024 with satellite services offered from Chatham and Rochester alongside outreach work. The recovery service continues to be delivered from Chatham. There has been an increase in harm reduction activities which includes a greater distribution of Naloxone and more needle exchange services.

There has been a strong focus on partnership working which has seen an increase in opportunities for training, education and employment all of which supports recovery. There has also been work with people who have lived or living experience who have been placed front and centre of service delivery. The 'Forward Connect' peer-led support group has been introduced, ensuring a recovery community is visible in Medway. Individual Placement Support has meant the delivery of an evidenced approach that aims to support people who are in treatment to find paid, sustained and competitive employment to further aid their recovery.

Whilst there is a very positive amount of work being undertaken, there are also concerns particularly around funding. There is a risk of service loss as both the Supplementary Substance Misuse Treatment and Recovery Grant (SSMTRG) and Rough Sleepers Drug and Alcohol Treatment Grant (RSDATG) are due to end in March 2025. If lost without replacement there could be issues with delivering key CDP projects including additional treatment and recovery staff, inpatient detox, residential rehabilitation and future CDP Conferences. Partners continue to work to embed services where possible to ensure continuity and work to explore funding opportunities. Funding issues can have a detrimental effect on recruitment and retention. Across the system there are delays in recruiting staff and some issues with retention. In the treatment and recovery service this has led to some use of temporary agency staff which is costly however this is starting to improve with most agency positions now filled with permanent staff which will provide greater consistency.

The early prison release schemes have put significant pressure on the Probation Service and an impact on external services who support resettlement, including housing, healthcare and substance misuse providers. The Early Custody Supervision Licence (ECSL) scheme ended on

9 September 2024. This is due to a legislation change with the introduction of the Standard Determinate Sentence Changes (SDS40) legislation whereby eligible prisoners will be released at 40% of their sentence. Two tranches are planned for this with tranche one beginning 10th September 2024 (less than 5 years sentence) and Tranche 2 from 22 October (over 5 years sentence). This is being managed in a partnership approach including prisons, Probation and community partners. The Kent and Medway Continuity of Care Group oversees this, reporting to Medway's CDP. Learning will be captured, including any opportunities or issues raised, between the tranches and this will support with the transition to business-as-usual.

The CSU continue to target those involved in supplying drugs. This includes enforcement activity in relation to Organised Crime and County lines, working in partnership with the Force's Serious Crime Directorate and the local Proactive Investigation Team. Between July and September 17 lines were closed and 38 significant arrests made. Using all tactics available this focus will remain. The CSU supports intervention and diversion schemes to work with those people that are vulnerable and at risk in this area. The Medway Vulnerability Panel has seen nearly 200 referrals have been considered and supported since its inception in 2022.

The Community Safety Team (CST) has replaced the outdated PSPO signage relating to alcohol consumption within the High Street areas and surrounding streets that fall within the alcohol PSPO zone for street drinking. Not only is street drinking seen as anti-social, but it also often leads to other negative behaviours and has a negative impact on an individual's health. Whilst joint patrols with Kent Police Beat Officers to enforce the PSPO's have taken place and resulted in warnings and FPNs issued, there has also been referrals to other teams and agencies such as the Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI).

Aims and items to note for the CSP

- Partners should work together to find solutions to keep services going where funding may decrease or be withdrawn, this may include mapping existing offers from public sector, charities and other organisations.
- Where funding opportunities exist, joint bids to maximise resources should be considered.
- All agencies should support the 4P Plan for tackling Nitazenes which have been seen in several overdoses/deaths. This includes ensuring information is shared with the relevant partners in a timely manner.

Priority 4: Reducing Reoffending

The new Regional Probation Director has set out key priorities for the service moving forward. These include:

- People – Including recruitment and retention of staff, diversity and inclusion, learning and development and zero tolerance to bullying, harassment, discrimination and victimisation.
- Quality of practice – This includes having the appropriate blend of rehabilitation and public protection, delivering the best outcomes and not hitting the target and missing the point.
- Partnerships – Developing relationships with internal and external stakeholders and working together – every role is critical.
- Capacity – Working more effectively and efficiently and creating more capacity.

The business plan for North Kent for 2025/26 will be reflective of these priorities and a plan on how to achieve them.

These priorities come against a backdrop of challenges in the prison and probation services. Prison capacity is at an all-time high, and schemes have been used to try and improve the situation. The ECSL (End of Custody Supervised Licence) scheme has now ended and been replaced with the SDS40 Early Release Scheme. The latest scheme is a stopgap measure to ease the pressure on the overburdened prison system. It sees a reduction in the time served in prison for certain people serving Standard Determinate Sentences (SDS) from 50% of their sentence to 40%. With the previous scheme criteria was applied to assess each release but as this is a legislative change, there is no discretionary ability to hold prisoners back if they are eligible in policy. This has brought cases back into the community at an earlier stage and with existing staffing issues this has given an extra challenge over the past few months. North Kent PDU have continued to train staff and look forward to welcoming newly qualified officers in December 2024.

Interventions Alliance were commissioned by His Majesty's Probation Service, on behalf of the Ministry of Justice. They run the CFO Activity Hub in Chatham and in the first quarter of 2024 there has been significantly high rates from probation colleagues and enrolled over 60 people on programmes. The contract came to an end in July and is being replaced by a bigger version called 'CFO Evolution'. This new program will combine prison and community elements so it's a more end to end delivery. The Shaw Trust will deliver this program in Medway.

Seetec's Personal Wellbeing Service was well received during an Operational and Systems Assurance Group inspection. The team delivering the service work alongside colleagues in Probation to deliver a fully integrated and holistic service with support for participants structured and relevant to everyone. There have been many examples of great impacts with

those taking part expressing gratitude for the support they have received. Seetec have also successfully mobilised an additional part of their accommodation contract which sees the service now available to men in prison who have not been sentenced. This enables timelier prevention work to be undertaken in relation to housing sustainment.

The impact of the ECSL Program (end of custody supervised license) where people who meet the criteria are being released 60 days earlier has had an impact on services. This includes those providing support with accommodation as people are coming out of prison quickly and most have some level of housing need.

The Medway Local Drugs Information System (LDIS) has also been working on improving the continuity of care from prison to the community. A self-assessment tool was completed by partner agencies in January 2024 in line with Kent and this formed the baseline to measure progress against. Following this, a multi-agency project group was established which included representation from commissioners, treatment providers the Prison Service, Probation, health and justice and public health. This project group aims to understand the barriers to engagement in treatment following individuals release from prison, to develop an integrated care pathway from prison to the community to support recovery from substance misuse and finally to reduce reoffending among people leaving prison by improving outcomes and reducing inequalities.

The National Youth Justice Board continue to rate the submission of Youth Justice Plans and Medway's 2024-25 Youth Justice plan has been rated as 'Good'. In early November 2024 HM Inspectorate of Probation issued their new criteria for the inspection of youth justice services, 'Achieving positive change and keeping children and communities safe'. The new framework continues to emphasise the importance of local youth justice partnerships. New inspections will commence from March 2025 onwards and LAs can expect either a 2 week 'Inspection of Youth Justice Services' or a weeklong 'Inspection of Youth Justice Work with Children and Victims'.

The extra emphasis on work with victims is new for this inspection cycle. Ensuring youth justice services in Medway can meet the expectations of HMIP's new inspection framework will be a big focus for the youth justice partnership this year. In August 2024 an external review of youth justice was commissioned based on the draft guidance for this new framework and all youth justice partners are working towards improvements based on this review. Management capacity in the Youth Justice Team (YJT) is being increased based on these findings and the continued complex needs of the children worked with.

There is continued focus on the aim that children's work with the YJT leads to them gaining a formal accreditation using the AQA framework. Within the period covered by the 2023 / 24 Youth Justice plan – 138 children have gained AQA accreditation linked to work that they have undertaken. This represents the majority of the children who have worked with the YJT.

Data tells us that in Medway we have a rate of first-time entrants to the criminal justice system that is higher than the national average, whilst looking at our data 'family' figures we see more similar figures to Medway. There is continued worked in partnership with Kent police on the continued introduction of Outcome 22 deferred prosecutions. Children offered an Outcome 22 are provided with a robust package of support to divert them away from offending. All youth justice and partner staff will receive joint police/youth justice training on this area of work in early 2025. We continue to have an extremely low rate of use of child custody in Medway.

It has been identified that in Medway have some issues of disproportionality in our youth justice population and as such our partnership management board will further explore this area looking at data around all protected characteristics as available. The 2024-5 Youth Justice Plan was produced in consultation with children and this participatory approach will continue.

Aims and items to note for the CSP

- Partners should continue the good communication regarding releases under the Standard Determinate Sentence Changes (SDS40) to try to prevent issues such as homelessness and reoffending.
- Support should be given by agencies to the project group aiming to develop an integrated care pathway from prison to the community to support recovery.
- Ensure partners engage with the training offered in early 2025 around the Outcome 22 and this area of work.

Wider work by Community Safety Partners

Violence Reduction

The Kent and Medway Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) reports reductions in public place serious violence involving those aged under 25 across the County which have been sustained since 2021. The reductions that have been seen in Medway are around 15% which is very positive. It is a reflection of the partnership work that has been and continues to be undertaken. Partner agencies have provided feedback which identifies that the VRU has been helpful in, sharing data that supports a strong understanding of the local context, or mapping of individuals to enable targeted and coordinated responses to groups as well as providing the link between organisations to drive a coordinated approach.

There have been several initiatives to further reduce violence and to support young people. This includes a 'safe spaces for young people' pilot which has taken place in Medway. Places such as fast-food restaurants have signed up to be safe spaces and have received training on how to understand the issues that young people face. There has also been ongoing work at Medway Maritime Hospital which offers support to children and young adults admitted due to serious violence or associated risks. The team of youth workers are funded by the VRU and support approximately 80 individuals a year.

Despite all the positive work the VRU has some challenges. The placement of children within Medway by other local authorities has created challenges as some placements are not sufficiently monitored, and the failure to support children effectively by the placing authority has left either the child or property at risk of being involved in drug supply or violence. There are also challenges in how agencies can collaborate when there are networks of individuals involved or when children are not open to statutory services as there is not sufficient capacity within sectors to always provide the necessary levels of support. Perhaps most concerning is the risk in the future of the VRUs funding beyond March 2025 has not yet been confirmed. This creates a challenge for future planning and risks both the services commissioned by the VRU or the team itself losing staff to other organisations, with reductions in what can be delivered until such a time as funding can be identified or decisions made as to the future of the VRU.

Exploitation, Modern Day Slavery and People Trafficking.

In July 2024 a Child Exploitation Multi Agency Group commenced having been developed by Kent Police and partner agencies. The meetings take place monthly. The group work together to ensure there is a collective response to the prevention and disruption of child exploitation in Medway and Kent. Themes are identified during the meeting, identifying common trends

seen across the different agencies involved. There is also an opportunity to share good practice and drive change.

The Community Safety Team (CST) has been working closely with Adult Social Care, Social Housing Providers and Kent Police to safeguard and resolve reports of cuckooing and anti-social behaviour, whilst supporting the named occupier who is frequently found to be a vulnerable victim at risk of exploitation. A holistic approach has been adopted, with referrals to the Medway Vulnerability Panel, external partners and Housing to support the victim and to rehouse to other wards within Medway when a significant safeguarding concern has been identified.

Domestic Abuse

A new joint Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Strategy 2024-2029 was launched in March 2024. A delivery plan has been developed with colleagues in Kent County Council to meet the objectives set out in the strategy which includes a Power BI dashboard of activity indicators to monitor progress/ The strategy's aims were developed with key stakeholders following a public consultation which included speaking with those with lived experience of domestic abuse. The areas of focus include early intervention and prevention, immediate needs and recovery.

A new MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference) Hub Model has been developed and a new staff team are in post. The MARAC project group is currently developing new MARAC training, which will include training on the new ways of working, alongside additional domestic abuse and risk assessment training for MARAC referrers and partners. The new Case Management System is in the final stages of procurement with an expected 'go live' date in early 2025.

MARAC Stages

Referral

- All agencies can make a referral via the online referral form
- This is sent to the MARAC Hub Team to review and approve
- Once approved it will be assigned to an Area MARAC, an alert will be sent out to members, and available to all members to view

Research

- All participating agencies will gather and submit relevant, proportionate and necessary information regarding victims, including children, and the perpetrator(s).
- All research will be visible to all members of the MARAC via the CMS.
- Research must be submitted weekly.

Action Planning

- Action planning conversations happen via the CMS.
- Actions are identified and taken by all members of the Area MARAC.
- SMART actions are logged against the child and adult victim, or perpetrator, and progress/completion is updated on the CMS weekly.

Meeting

- MARAC meetings are for the discussion of incomplete actions and to identify any necessary further action.
- There will be 6 meetings held: Monthly (Kent) and Fortnightly (Medway)

Medway Council's Housing team have been working with commissioned domestic abuse services to identify areas of further development and training. Multiple areas of development have been identified, such as the impact of intersectionality, multiple disadvantages and engagement with perpetrators. A training package is being put together with the voices of survivors of domestic abuse and professionals, for Medway Council Housing staff. This will also contribute towards Medway Council's Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation.

Concerns have been flagged by Domestic Abuse Services regarding some victims/survivors who may not be informed of their perpetrators release as the perpetrator was sentenced for other crimes that were related to domestic abuse but not a conviction of domestic abuse. This is particularly pertinent given the further early release schemes. This may create challenges in the work done with victims/survivors as it reduces time for work to be done with them before the perpetrator is released.

Prevent

In October 2024 the Prevent Team, in partnership with Medway Council and Kent Police, hosted a gaming bus session in front of the Pentagon Shopping Centre in Chatham to raise the profile of Hate Crime Awareness Week. Many people were spoken to with some not keen to answer but approximately 30 people were happy to fill out a questionnaire about their understanding of hate crime, online safety and gaming use. To maximise the use of the gaming bus it was also taken to a Children's Home within Medway where young people who have not been afforded the opportunity to use a gaming bus were able to spend some time playing games and talking to professionals in a relaxed environment. On the day the team received 5 disclosures around hate crime, domestic abuse, bullying, radicalisation and drug use. The Prevent Team are working to identify the next location to prioritise for the gaming bus.

The Prevent Advisory Group (PAG) plays a crucial role in enhancing community safety and resilience against radicalisation. The diverse composition of the group which includes local community and voluntary sector organisations, charities, faith groups and statutory partners, ensures that a wide array of perspectives and experiences inform the local Prevent strategy. By providing valuable advice and guidance, PAG helps to shape initiatives that not only address the current landscape of radicalisation but also remain adaptive to emerging threats. The collaborative approach with both Medway and Kent communities fosters strong relationships within the community, promoting trust and transparency in the implementation of Prevent related projects.

The Prevent Education Officer (PEO) continues to have good engagement with Medway schools and education partners. The PEO attends the Medway DSL meetings hosted by the Safeguarding Education Officers. These meetings provide an opportunity to deliver timely updates to education settings. The Counter Terrorism Local Profile was delivered to Medway education settings supported and organised by the Education Safeguarding Officer. There are also great links with the Medway Child Centred Policing Team.

Homelessness

Homelessness continues to be a challenge in Medway. This includes those that are rough sleeping as well as those that may be sofa surfing. The demand for homelessness and related services has been outstripping the capacity of services to meet those needs. There has been an increase in those approaching as homeless though fleeing domestic abuse and there has also been an increase in the numbers of people sleeping rough. Here has also been an increase in the levels of vulnerable people sleeping rough and/or approaching with a variety of complex needs including mental health issues alongside substance use.

Whilst these issues provide enough of a challenge there are also concerns that there have been no announcements on future funding from Central Government which means potentially that the Rough Sleeper Initiative and commissioned Domestic Abuse Services are at risk of reduction or even ending. Given that this could be in a short period of time, less than 6 months, services are obviously concerned about their future provision. This is also unsettling for staff working in this sector which may cause people to seek employment elsewhere, which gives a further challenge.

Water Safety

In July 2024 a Water Safety meeting was held with several partners covering Kent and Medway in attendance with a view to discuss the potential formation of a Kent and Medway Water Safety Partnership. This was held in response to concerns raised about a lack of an overarching partnership despite Kent being among the counties with the highest frequency of drownings. It has also been identified that water safety messaging has been varied in approach between agencies, and partner services handle water rescue calls in different ways.

Following highly useful conversations several key challenges were identified including, the lack of public awareness and education about tides, risks and locations, concerns over water quality, and specific dangers like tombstoning and alcohol consumption. Following this meeting next steps will include a short survey to understand what is already happening and identifying best practice in other areas.

In addition to this Kent Fire and Rescue (KFRS) ran their latest Water Safety campaign, 'Make the Right Call' which aims to educate the public and ultimately reduce the number of drownings across Kent and Medway. The main message was about how by making the right call if you see someone struggling in a lake or river can save valuable time. For inland water rescues in Kent or Medway people should call 999 and ask for the fire service. For rescues at sea, it's the Coastguard. The campaign ran until September and is primarily aimed at runners, walkers and recreational river/lake users as they're most likely to spot someone in trouble in the water. The message was promoted through social media channels and online as well as through physical signs in key locations.

Fire Safety

Kent Fire and Rescue Service (KFRS) have run several campaigns for fire safety. Firstly, the Our Smoke is No Joke campaign is about advising everyone to close doors before going out or going to bed, when you're less likely to be aware of a fire in the property. It's particularly important to close the kitchen door, where we know a fire is most likely to start, or the door closest to the kitchen for open plan homes. When a fire starts, smoke and flames can spread rapidly, but closed standard internal door can hold it back for at least 30 minutes – giving people time to get out of the property swiftly and safely. It also protects the home and reduces the level of damage caused by the fire.

In 2022 KFRS responded to more than 200 accidental kitchen fires however new research suggest the true number was even higher as some residents don't call 999. In response to this, KFRS launched the 'Hook it, Don't Cook it' campaign. The aim is to reduce kitchen fires across the county by encouraging people to hook or store their tea towels at least 50cm away from their hob. The campaign will be particularly focused in targeting areas of Medway, Thanet and Swale during the colder months as this was indicated as areas of most risk from research.

Community Safety Partnership Survey 2024

The Community Safety Partnership Survey was launched in September 2024. The results of the survey are as follows:

69% feel very safe or fairly safe in Medway during the day however this falls to only 26% who feel very safe/fairly safe in Medway during the evening with 50% reporting that they feel very unsafe/fairly unsafe during the evening.

The top issues that are felt to be a problem in Medway were:

- People using or dealing drugs (80%)
- People fly tipping (73%)
- People driving carelessly or too fast (71%)
- People being drunk or rowdy in public places (66%)
- People dropping litter (60%)

The top five issues that respondents felt should be addressed as a priority in Medway were:

- People using or dealing drugs (70%)
- People fly tipping (44%)
- People being drunk or rowdy in public places (40%)
- People driving carelessly or too fast (39%)
- Sexual offences (36%)

The top three suggestions respondents felt would have the most impact on making people feel safer in Medway were:

- Visible and effective policing (79%)
- Well maintained public spaces and infrastructure (52%)
- CCTV (49%)

Respondents were most likely to feel able to share their concerns about local safety/personal safety issues with:

- Kent Police (55%)
- followed by Medway Council (36%)

59% of respondents were aware of how to raise concerns under Prevent

54% of respondents were aware of how to raise concerns of racist and extremist graffiti

Conclusion

There are many examples of the wealth of work going on across all agencies to keep Medway safe. It continues to highlight the dedication of all agencies to work together to achieve the best outcomes for those living, working or visiting Medway. Whilst progress is made against the four priorities identified in the Community Safety Plan, this document also highlights the wider work taking place.

Statistics on crime and anti-social behaviour show some improvement but it is the contextual information supplied by agencies that gives a better picture of what is happening. Work such as that on the PSPO's to prevent nuisance and dangerous behaviour by vehicles in Medway shows that both Medway Council and Kent Police are working to reduce the issues that are highlighted by the public. Not only is the work aimed at tackling the issue but also at preventing the issue in the first place.

Whilst there are lots to be positive about there are some concerns and challenges that many agencies and projects are facing. The common theme appears to be the challenge of ongoing financial support. The Violence Reduction Unit is awaiting confirmation of its future funding with the current funding expiring in March 2025, a similar challenge faced in the domestic abuse sector with safe accommodation services funding in place to March 2025 with no current confirmation that this will continue. These much-needed services are effectively in limbo, unable to effectively plan for the coming months. It is also difficult for statutory services who are waiting to find out if they may need to fill voids left where funding doesn't continue.

A key point that stood out amongst the information provided by partners was in the key priorities of the Probation Service, 'Not hitting the target and missing the point'. Whilst there are many occasions where the agencies working in community safety must use statistics, gather data, and meet targets it is clear than this is far from a tick box exercise. The ongoing work aims to get to the roots of issues, identify gaps and work to lessen their impact as much as possible. Despite the challenging times facing all partners and colleagues across the many agencies involved in community safety, it is hoped this document provides reassurance that they all remain committed to keeping Medway a safe place to live, work, visit and socialise.

Background and Data Information

Annual strategic assessments of crime and disorder are carried out to satisfy the requirement under Regulation 5 of the Formulation and Implementation of Strategy Regulations 2007.

The assessment is based upon information that has been made available by partner agencies and information available in open-source material. The data will have some limitations; it is not always possible to get the same time frame from every source as Partners measure their data in different ways. It should also be noted that not all data has been cleansed due to the large volume.

The following is a list of departments and data sources used to inform the strategic assessment.

- CSP Action Plan 2024-2027 / 2023 -2024 Quarterly Updates
- Interventions Alliance
- Kent and Medway NHS
- Kent and Medway Prevent
- Kent and Medway Public Health
- Kent and Medway Violence Reduction Unit
- Kent Fire and Rescue Service
- Kent Police ASB data and published crime data April 2023 - March 2024
- Local Government Association – LG Inform Database
- Medway Council – Child Friendly Medway Initiative
- Medway Council – Community Safety Team
- Medway Council – Housing Team
- Medway Council – Power BI and Ward Profiles
- Medway Council – Public Health
- Medway Council – Youth Service
- Medway Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
- Office of National Statistics
- Public Health England – [Local Health Website](#)
- The Probation Service

Glossary of Terms

ASB	Anti-Social Behaviour
CCPT	Child Centred Policing Team
CCTV	Closed Circuit Television
CDP	Combating Drugs Partnership
CFO	Co-Financing Organisation
CR	Community Resolution
CSP	Community Safety Partnership
CSS	Crime Severity Score
CLGT	County Lines and Gangs Team
DRR	Drug Rehabilitation Requirement
EET	Environmental Enforcement Team
EHB	Enhanced Housing Benefit
HMPPS	HM Prison and Probation Service
HRA	Housing Revenue Account
IAG	Information, Advice and Guidance
IDVA	Independent Domestic Violence Advisor
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
KFRS	Kent Fire and Rescue Service
MARAC	Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference
MMDN	Medway Multiple Disadvantage Network
NHS	National Health Service
NTF	Neighbourhood Task Force
OHID	Office for Health Improvement and Disparities
ONS	Office of National Statistics
PCC	Police and Crime Commissioner
PEO	Prevent Education Officer
PDU	Probation Delivery Unit
RDC	Rapid Deployment Cameras
SEG	Strategic Executive Group
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls
VRU	Violence Reduction Unit
YJT	Youth Justice Team

Appendix 1

Figure 1: Breakdown of Crime Types shown in All Crime Summary

Violent Crime
- Violence Against the Person
- Homicide
- Violence with injury
- Violence without injury
- Most Serious Violence
- Sexual Offences
- Rape
- Other sexual offences
Robbery
Burglary Dwelling
Burglary Other than Dwelling
Burglary - Residential
Burglary - Business and Community
Vehicle Crime
- Theft Of Motor Vehicle
- Theft From Motor Vehicle
Vehicle Interference
Theft and Handling Exc VI
- Shoplifting
- Theft of Pedal cycle
- Other Theft
Criminal Damage
- Arson
- Criminal damage
Crimes against society
Drug Offences
- Trafficking
- Possession of drugs
Possession of weapons
Public order offences
Other crimes