

Community Safety in Somerset

Lead Officer: Christina Gray, Consultant in Public Health

Author: Lucy Macready, Public Health Specialist, Community Safety

Contact Details: 01823 359146, lmacready@somerset.gov.uk

Cabinet Member: Cllr Christine Lawrence

Division and Local Member: n/a

1. Summary

- 1.1. Local Authorities have a statutory duty to give due regard to community safety in all their activities as stipulated in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. Core activities for the Council range from partnership activity, commissioning and policy development. This report offers a broad overview of the community safety function, outlining key priorities, areas of work and responsibilities, and provides a summary of what is working well, what challenges exist and finally, plans for the future.
- 1.2. Some groups and communities systematically experience poorer health than others. These are, in the main, often the same groups who experience victimisation or the impacts of crime.

The community safety agenda overlaps with health and wellbeing work streams in many areas but in particular, theme 2 of the Somerset Health and Wellbeing Strategy - Families and communities are thriving and resilient.

Community Safety services are also important for delivering on our County Plan, particularly with regard to keeping vulnerable and elderly and young people safe.

2. Issues for consideration /recommendations

- 2.1. Members are asked to note Somerset County Council's duties and responsibilities in relation to community safety and acknowledge the range and depth of the work programme.

3. Background

- 3.1. Local Authorities have a statutory duty to give due regard to community safety in all their activities as stipulated in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, a number of other duties are underpinned by legislation and is outlined in appendix 1.

Community safety is becoming more commonly seen as a public health function across the Country within local authority settings. Crime and anti-social behaviour effects health in a number of ways directly and indirectly and by influences on the healthcare system.

- Directly, through violence, injury, rape and other offences against the person
- Indirectly, through the psychological and physical consequences of injury and victimisation

- As a determinant of illness, poverty, criminality and other inequalities which increases the burden of ill health on our most vulnerable communities and increases demand on all public services.
- By causing preventable health burdens such as road traffic accidents, drug dependency and alcohol related crime.

3.2. Each Local Authority area has a legal responsibility to work in partnership to prevent crime and disorder. Somerset County Council does this through the Safer Somerset Partnership, Somerset's Community Safety Partnership, working closely with the other statutory agencies namely:

- Avon and Somerset Constabulary
- Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service
- National Probation service and the Community Rehabilitation Company
- All District Councils
- Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group

3.3. Community safety is integral to health, wellbeing and prosperity. Safer, Stronger Communities are about much more than 'crime reduction or 'crime prevention'. 'Community safety' activities aim to:

- Reduce offending behaviour and re-offending
- Reduce the harms experienced by individuals and communities because of crime and disorder
- Will seek to improve the quality of life of individuals and communities through efforts to change the wider physical and social environment
- Improve public confidence that local agencies are working to improve crime and disorder issues in local areas

3.4. Partnerships

Somerset County Council supports the Community Safety Partnership with performance monitoring, assurance reporting and the management of the Domestic Homicide Review process. In addition the County Council takes a lead role in a number of current priority work streams.

Following a review of Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) in Somerset and across the police force area, an improved model for working is currently in the planning.

2018 saw the start of Somerset's Disruption panel which is a mechanism to consider in partnership, how to disrupt the criminal activity of Organized Crime Groups (OCGs), including County Lines, who carry the biggest risk to our communities.

In recognition that there was a lack of strategic oversight across Somerset with regards to the One Team model, the Safer Somerset Partnership agreed to act as an oversight group for the teams. The Partnership employed a One Team Coordinator, managed by Somerset County Council, to help facilitate improvements in practice and procedures.

3.5. Commissioning

Somerset County Council is the commissioner for the Specialist Domestic Abuse Service and the Specialist Drug Treatment Service. The Somerset Integrated Domestic Abuse contract is now in its third year. The contract has now been

extended for a further two years with work ongoing to design and plan service requirements for the service beyond March 2020.

The public health team, working with its commissioned services and Somerset Partnership are exploring ways in which services can respond to the cumulative impacts of drugs and alcohol, mental health and domestic abuse on clients. Combined staff training and case auditing are two examples of work undertaken so far in 2018.

The Drugs and Alcohol Treatment Services are currently being recommissioned and a new service will be in place in 2019. These services are currently performing very well against a national benchmark and the intention is to continue to achieve this good level of performance.

3.6. Policy Development

Legislative changes that impact on community safety policy occur regularly. One such example is the Prevent Duty in 2015 which required the Council to embed specific changes into procurement, ICT and HR policy.

The Domestic Abuse Bill is being consulted upon, which will mean new requirements for change later in 2018. More locally, Somerset County Council has produced a Domestic Abuse Strategy on behalf of the Safer Somerset Partnership and a new Hate Crime Strategy is being implemented

Finally, for the first time, the Safer Somerset Partnership has produced a joint crime prevention plan with the Police and Crime Commissioner. The Partnership and Police and Crime Commissioner's new joint priorities for 2017- 2021 are:

1. Protect people from the harm of domestic and sexual abuse
2. Identify and prevent the exploitation of vulnerable people
3. Identify inequalities and vulnerabilities to improve health outcome and reduce harm
4. Meet our statutory duties.

3.7. What is Going well?

Community safety services and thematic work, such as prevent, domestic abuse and serious and organised crime was just some of the topics covered in this year's Ofsted Inspection. Good practice was shared and met with a very positive response. It is clear that the interface with services for children has improved in recent years. The new model for MARAC is evidence of a shared ambition to put children at the heart of service improvement.

Our Somerset Integrated Domestic Abuse Service (SIDAS) achieved the prestigious Leading Lights Accreditation from Safelives this year. In addition, SIDAS recently received recognition from the Inside Housing Awards for "Outstanding approach to meeting specialist needs" in May 2018.

The Council has been working as part of the Hinkley Community Safety Group for a number of years and has just refreshed its performance framework and strategy. Part of the role is to work with partner agencies in developing funding bids to help local communities in the affected localities.

3.8. Current Challenges

Demand for Somerset County Council community safety functions and services is increasing in relation to prevention and public protection. An example of this is the way the council has supported partner agencies to respond to hotspots of incidents and community concerns relating to rough sleeping in Taunton.

Somerset has received a number of notifications of domestic homicides in 2017 and in to 2018, resulting in an unexpected increase of Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) which all require human and financial resource. As well as resolving the resource shortage with our partners, Somerset County Council has also undertaken work to ensure systems and services are fit for purpose in the wake of these deaths.

Criminal activity evolves as technology, security and prevention of crime improves. This is most notably seen in our involvement as a council, with tackling 'county lines'. The modes of communication make it difficult to establish networks, and the severity of violence and exploitation of vulnerable people is of a level never seen before in Somerset. Whilst police can enforce and disrupt activity, a partnership approach is required to accurately target communities most at risk and help prevent repeat victimisation.

3.9. Future Plans

Services to keep people safe that the council commissions, as well as those provided by our partners, such as housing support, suffer from attrition or non-attendance, not because of the quality of the service, but because those in need are not ready to make the necessary changes in behaviour. To unpick this challenge, local partners have agreed to carry out a behaviour change seminar to consider how service principles, design and client targeting can be improved to ensure that right level of service is provided at the right time to the right people.

The new domestic Abuse Act will surely bring change to the whole system. The Council will be leading the work to embed any changes.

The 2017 Joint Targeted Inspection on domestic abuse found that more work is required to work with perpetrators of domestic abuse. The Council is working with current domestic abuse service providers in developing a new way of working with perpetrators in Somerset, based on a national pilot called Drive.

Operation Dovetail, a national pilot project wherein the responsibility of investigating and managing 'prevent' cases moves to the Local Authority, is being rolled out. It is predicted that the South West will be phased in at the end of 2018/2019. This will require additional resource for Prevent in Somerset and a robust new case management model to be agreed across Avon and Somerset. The Somerset Prevent Board, managed by Somerset County Council will lead this work.

4. Consultations undertaken

- 4.1. Consultations are undertaken for specific areas of work. For example:
- Stakeholder consultation as part of the development of the Domestic Abuse Strategy
 - Public and stakeholder consultation planned as part of the recommissioning of the domestic abuse services
 - Stakeholder consultation in the development of Our Plan 2017-21.

5. Implications

- 5.1. Somerset County Council (Public Health) invests £2000 per annum to the Safer Somerset Partnership pooled budget which is utilised for the commissioning of Domestic Homicide Reviews. The management and coordination for Domestic Homicide Reviews is undertaken by Somerset County Council community safety specialists.

Somerset County Council invests an annual budget for the Domestic Abuse Services (SIDAS)

- 5.2. Equalities Impact Assessments are carried on specific pieces of work that relate to services and our communities, however, no assessment has been conducted in relation to providing this report.

6. Background papers

- 6.1. Joint community safety plan, titled Our Plan, is now available on www.somerset.gov.uk/SSP.

Note For sight of individual background papers please contact the report author

7. Appendix 1 – List of Statutory Duties

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 stipulates that each Local Authority should give due regard to community safety in all of its activities; considering all policies, strategies, plans and budgets from the standpoint of their potential contribution to the reduction of crime and disorder.

Police and Justice Act (2006) requires statutory partners to share data and produce a Strategic Assessment of levels of crime and drug misuse in the area, and produce a Community Safety Plan

Police and Crime Act (2009) SCC as part of The Safer Somerset Partnership must take steps to reduce re-offending

Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015: The local authority gives due regard to the Prevent Duty, including training, policy development, partnership working and manage the Channel process.

Slavery Act 2015: SCC has a duty to notify the Government where we have reasonable grounds to believe that a person maybe a victim of slavery or human trafficking.
Domestic Violence Crime and Victims Act 2004 (Section 9) require the Council to participate in Domestic Homicide Reviews.