



east sussex
safer
communities
partnership

East Sussex Safer Communities Partnership Business Plan Refresh and Strategic Assessment Executive Summary 2025



Our Ambition

The East Sussex Safer Communities Partnership is committed to making our communities safer, more inclusive, and more cohesive. We want East Sussex to be a place where people feel safe, supported, and connected, regardless of their background, identity, or circumstances.

We recognise that community safety and community cohesion are interconnected. A cohesive community is one where people feel they belong, where differences are respected, and where everyone has a stake in the success of their neighbourhood. This means tackling crime and anti-social behaviour, and also addressing the wider conditions that affect safety, such as housing, health, education, and economic opportunity.

Our ambition is to work in partnership to **protect vulnerable people, identify those at risk of harm, and keep our communities safe**, while also fostering trust, resilience, and shared values across East Sussex.

The East Sussex Safer Communities Partnership reflects and supports the work of the five local Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs). These meet in three Partnership Boards: Eastbourne and Lewes; Wealden; and Hastings and Rother. Partners deliver a range of effective services, interventions, and community safety initiatives. Without these, the impact of the issues and challenges facing some of our residents and communities would be far more acute.

As we look ahead, we recognise the significance of the proposed Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and the development of a Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA) for Sussex. These changes present both opportunities and challenges for community safety. The Safer Communities Partnership is committed to being adaptive and responsive to this evolving landscape. Many of our functions, including domestic abuse and serious violence governance already operate effectively at a pan-Sussex level while many of the agencies involved in keeping our communities safe operate across all three local authorities. This provides a strong foundation for future collaboration and integration. Our Business Plan will remain flexible, ensuring that local priorities continue to be reflected, while aligning with wider strategic ambitions across Sussex.



Our Strategic Priorities

Protecting vulnerable people

We will safeguard those at risk of harm, including victims and survivors of domestic and sexual abuse, and victims of exploitation and hate crime.

Identifying those at risk of harm

We will use data and intelligence to identify individuals and communities at risk and intervene to prevent harm.

Keeping communities safe

We will reduce crime, anti-social behaviour, and serious violence through partnership working, prevention and community engagement.

Key Strategic Messages

Crime levels in East Sussex remain below national and regional averages; however, the conditions that underpin safety such as housing, health, and economic opportunity are unevenly distributed. Coastal towns like Hastings and Eastbourne continue to face persistent challenges linked to deprivation, housing insecurity, and health inequalities.

The Government has made tackling Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) a national priority, with a new Strategy due in September 2025 aiming to halve VAWG within a decade. This is expected to include enhanced legal protections, improved victim support, and stronger multi-agency responses. Locally, this aligns with our White Ribbon accreditation, and support for victims and survivors.

Domestic and sexual violence remain high, with women and girls disproportionately affected. MARAC referrals remain above national thresholds.

Although **drug and alcohol misuse** continues to drive harm, East Sussex exceeds national targets for treatment access and continuity of care between prison and community treatment services. Drug-related deaths for people not in treatment however have increased, highlighting the need for continued outreach and harm reduction.

Community engagement shows concern about visible and localised issues, including drug and alcohol misuse, road safety, serious violence, Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) and fly-tipping.

Shoplifting has increased significantly. This reflects both national patterns and local pressures, including the cost-of-living crisis, and demonstrates the impact of local and national focus, leading to increased reporting.

The Partnership is committed to adjusting our systems to **improve outcomes for those who have experienced multiple disadvantage.**

Resilient communities are safer communities.

Local Strategic Alignment

The Safer Communities Business Plan aims to have operational application. The Plan will inform the actions of agencies working across the community safety landscape in East Sussex. It reflects and complements the individual priorities of the organisations within the partnership. This includes the five District and Borough Community Safety Partnerships, the Probation Service, the Fire and Rescue Service, Sussex Police and the Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner's Office. The partnership collaborates with our local Adults and Children's Safeguarding Boards, and the Youth Justice Service.

Sussex Police and Crime Plan

[The Sussex Police and Crime Plan 2024-28](#) outlines the strategic direction for policing in Sussex until 2028. There are three overarching public priorities:

Public Priority 1 – Prevent crime and support victims and witnesses

- Quality victim support services
- Violence against women and girls (VAWG)
- Rape and serious sexual offences
- Partnership activity to reduce crime
- Perpetrator intervention
- Fraud and cyber crime

Public Priority 2 – Investigate crime and bring offenders to justice

- Investigations and positive outcomes
- Positive outcomes and experience
- Burglary
- Homicide, serious violence, and knife crime
- Drugs and county lines
- Tackle business and retail crime

Public Priority 3 – Improve trust in policing and build public confidence

- Local, visible, and accessible policing
- Police officers, staff PCSOs, special constables and volunteers
- Public engagement
- Anti-social behaviour
- Access to policing
- Rural crime
- Public contact and response times
- Road safety
- Abuse and coercive control
- Stalking
- Safeguard the vulnerable
- Criminal exploitation, abuse, and modern day slavery
- Elder abuse



Our Approach

The Partnership must follow statutory guidance, legislation, and policy. There are statutory requirements around Prevent and Serious Violence, the provision of support in safe accommodation, and the requirement to undertake Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews (DARDRs) and Drugs and Alcohol Related Death (DARD) Reviews. The Partnership is also required to deliver a high-quality substance misuse treatment and recovery system and to work together to disrupt the supply and demand for illicit drugs.

The Partnership takes a **Public Health approach** to community safety, recognising that crime and anti-social behaviour are not inevitable. They are shaped by wider social determinants, including deprivation, inequality, and exclusion. We are committed to **doing no harm**, and to targeting our resources where they will have the greatest impact, guided by evidence and insight.

Our work is grounded in a **whole-person, whole-place perspective**. We aim to respond to people across the entirety of their experience, promoting **equity of access** to services and targeting our resources at the chronic hotspots for harm that often exist in our most deprived communities.

We understand that our workstreams are **interconnected**. Tackling serious violence requires us to address drug and alcohol-related harm. Reducing reoffending means confronting homelessness and worklessness. Our efforts to reduce anti-social behaviour must align with our commitment to eliminate harassment and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). Across all areas, we will maintain a focus on **online safety** and on supporting individuals who face **multiple disadvantage**.

Children and young people, particularly those transitioning to adult services, are central to our approach. The Partnership includes representation from specialist Children's Services and recognises the value of **early intervention**. By supporting behaviour change upstream, we can reduce the need for crisis-driven responses later.

Change happens **locally** — in the places where people live, work, and access services. Our Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) partners play a vital role in bridging the gap between strategic ambition and community reality. Together, we will build networks of support, strengthen trust, and empower communities to take collective action. This means drawing on community assets, encouraging participation, and amplifying the voices of those most affected. There is compelling evidence to support the **co-production** of solutions, and we are committed to working in partnership with those who are most affected by local community safety issues.

The Partnership is more than the sum of its parts and views **community safety as an outcome**, not a collection of services. It relies on active collaboration at a systems level — aligning priorities, commissioning, and external funding. We will continue to share data, intelligence, community insights, and learning, and take a **data-informed, evidence-led approach** to planning and evaluation. Our annual Strategic Assessment also draws on a sample of community perceptions, alongside reports of crime, whilst recognising that many crimes are under-reported. Our goal is to build a shared understanding of **what works**, and to embed sustainable change across East Sussex.

Safer East Sussex Survey results

In May and June 2025, the Safer East Sussex Team ran an online survey which replicated the questions asked in the county council's Reputation Tracker survey which ran from 2017 to 2022. This approach was taken so that we had comparable data over time. The survey asked respondents to pick their top three community safety issues from a defined list of issues, and why they chose those issues. The survey also asked respondents to pick their top three antisocial behaviour issues from a defined list, and why they chose those issues. Finally, we asked respondents which district and borough they lived in. There were 429 responses to the survey.

Community safety

- 46% of respondents identified drug and alcohol misuse as one of their top concerns; this was followed by road safety (41%) and serious violent crime including knife crime (37%).
- Hate crime (45%) and fraud/scams (42%) directly affected respondents (or someone they know) more than other issues.

Anti-social behaviour

- Almost half (45%) of respondents identified speeding/anti-social driving as one of their top issues. This was followed by fly tipping/dumping (37%), drug dealing in public spaces (34%) and vandalism/criminal damage (31%).
- Nuisance/aggressive neighbours (63%) and noise disturbance from pubs, clubs, or vehicles (59%) directly affected respondents (or someone they know) more than other issues.

Our Strategic Objectives

- Support perpetrators of domestic abuse to change their behaviour and hold them to account.
- Improve outcomes for those experiencing domestic and sexual abuse.
- Develop and implement the Sexual Violence Needs Assessment and VAWG Strategy.
- Implement the White Ribbon Action Plan.
- Reduce adult exploitation.
- Implement year one of the Prevent Community Engagement Strategy.
- Reduce Hate Crime and increase confidence in reporting.
- Reduce drug and alcohol related harm.
- Improve outcomes for individuals who have experienced multiple disadvantage.
- Prevent violent extremism.
- Prevent and reduce serious violence.
- Reduce anti-social driving
- Tackle town centre ASB, criminal damage and shoplifting
- Ensure local planning takes account of community safety.
- Raise public awareness around fraud and scams.
- Understand and take action on locally identified priorities.
- Understand and take action on Youth Justice priorities.
- Reduce the number of people killed and seriously injured on our roads.
- Improve public confidence in the safety of their communities.

Protecting Vulnerable People

Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse

Headline Data

- National estimates show 2.1% of adults experienced sexual assault in 2024.
- Nationally 36% (67,928 offences) of sexual offences recorded by the police in YE March 2024 were rape offences. This was a 1% decrease compared with YE March 2023 (68,762 offences). This follows general increases in sexual offences over the last decade largely because of improvements in police recording practices.
- Fewer than one in six victims of rape or assault reported the crime to police.
- National data estimates 2.3 million adults experienced domestic abuse in the year ending March 2024, with Domestic abuse related crimes representing 15.8% of all offences recorded nationally.
- Nationally, approximately one in five (20.5%) adults have experienced domestic abuse.
 - 4.8% of adults experienced domestic abuse in the year ending March 2024.
 - 72.5% of victim/survivors were female.

- There has been a 5.5% increase in reported domestic abuse crimes over the past three years in East Sussex, with the rates highest in Hastings.
- 1 woman is killed by a man every 3 days in the UK, 61% were killed by a current/former partner, 80% of femicides occurred in the home of the victim or perpetrator¹.
- SafeLives estimate that the average high risk domestic abuse case costs almost £20,000 in public money, based on an assumed average number of police call outs, A&E attendances, and GP support.
- Locally, Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) at which highest risk domestic abuse cases are discussed exceed the expected number of cases discussed.
 - Eastbourne, Lewes, and Wealden exceed this by 31%.
 - Hastings and Rother exceed this by 52%.

There was a 14% increase in reported rape and sexual offences in the two years from 2022/23 to 2024/25 in East Sussex, with rates highest in Eastbourne and Hastings.

Partnership Objectives

- Sustain the delivery of interventions for those that cause harm, targeting serial perpetrators and repeat offenders.
- The SCPB will oversee the work of the Domestic Abuse Board by receiving annual performance reports and monitoring progress against the East Sussex Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse (DSVA) Action Plan through the local Domestic Abuse Management Oversight Group, including developments such as increased lived experience representation, and commissioning a response to child-parent abuse. Domestic abuse and sexual violence will be included as a standing SCPB agenda item at least once a year to maintain visibility of key issues. While avoiding duplication of the work of specialist Boards, the SCPB will ensure strategic alignment and accountability across the partnership. The East Sussex DSVA Plan will incorporate recommendations from the pan-Sussex needs assessment and Strategy alongside learning from Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews.
- Increase the number of safe accommodation spaces to 67, including 5 safe accommodation places for male and trans victims.
 - 55 standard spaces and a further 12 spaces for local women who have multiple compound needs (MCN).
- Remodel MARAC to maximise impact through targeted use of resource.
- Improve the speed at which Domestic Abuse investigations are concluded through the 'Domestic Abuse in a Day' initiative.

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

Headline Data

- National estimates show 3.1% of adults experienced stalking in 2024 and 8.7% experienced harassment.
- Local data for 2023 and 2024 shows that:
 - 90% of rape offences involved female victims.
 - 79% of other sexual offences involved female victims.
 - 66% of stalking and harassment crimes involved female victims.
 - 72% of domestic violence crimes involved female victims.
- There has been a 28% decrease in reports of stalking/harassment crime over the past 3 years.
 - *Sussex Police have been approached for clarification regarding the decrease. A formal explanation is pending, and this section will be updated upon receipt of their response.*

Partnership Objectives

- Collaborate on the development of a pan-Sussex VAWG Strategy and VAWG dashboard.
- The OPCC will draw up a multi-agency plan to address the findings of the Sexual Violence Needs Assessment and VAWG Strategy with specific actions for the SCPB.

¹ [Femicide Census – Profiles of women killed by men](#)

- Facilitate collaboration between White Ribbon accredited partners to share progress, align messaging, and promote joint initiatives. The ESCC Safer East Sussex Team (SEST) will hold at least one joint planning / reflection session annually to share learning and coordinate communications.

Modern slavery, Human trafficking (MSHT) and adult exploitation

Headline Data

- Nationally, 45% of victims referred to the Home Office were British boys under 17yrs, often linked to County Lines. Deprivation, substance misuse and family issues are risk factors²
- There has been a 39% decrease in reports of modern slavery recorded in East Sussex over past 3 years.
 - *Sussex Police have been approached for clarification regarding the decrease. A formal explanation is pending, and this section will be updated upon receipt of their response.*

Partnership Objectives

- Convene a multi-agency session to review the Modern Slavery Maturity Matrix findings and agree on priority actions.
- Ensure the SCPB maintains strategic oversight of adult criminal and sexual exploitation by receiving an annual report from the East Sussex Violence and Exploitation Reduction Partnership (VERP), highlighting progress against the Preventing Serious Violence and Exploitation Strategy and Action Plan. This includes improving understanding of the scale and scope of exploitation, increasing victim identification and support by harmonising cuckooing practice, and implementing new legislation, and supporting high harm offenders by analysing agency involvement with Habitual Knife Carriers aged 18 to 25.
- Produce an exploitation dashboard for East Sussex, collating data from across the VERP.

Hate Crime

Headline Data

- There has been a 9% reduction in hate crimes in East Sussex over the past 3 years.
 - *Sussex Police have been approached for clarification regarding the decrease. A formal explanation is pending, and this section will be updated upon receipt of their response.*
 - 58% of hate crimes are race related, followed by sexuality (19%) and disability hate crime (12%)

Partnership Objectives

- Improve partnership coordination and community engagement to prevent and address hate crime by improving information sharing, aligning local initiatives, and supporting public awareness across East Sussex.
- Deliver a joint partnership briefing on hate crime activity and engagement to the SCPB annually.

Identifying those at Risk of Harm

Drug and Alcohol Related Harm

Headline Data

- In the 12 months to March 2025 there were 2,799 adults in treatment:
 - 38% for opiates, 31% non-opiates and 31% for alcohol only.

² [CSJ-JC-Criminal-exploitation-modern-slavery-by-another-name-LoRes.pdf](#)

- There were proportionally fewer new presentations for opiate use, with 17% of new presentations compared to 38% of the treatment cohort.
 - Treatment progress for individuals has been performing better than regional and national averages.
- There were 103 drug and alcohol related deaths in 2023 in East Sussex.
 - 25 drug misuse deaths, and 78 alcohol specific mortality.
 - This is an increase of 34% compared to 2022, the increase nationally was smaller (9%).
 - This is the latest data available due to delays in Coroner report processing.

Partnership Objectives

- Work with the commissioned substance misuse treatment provider, the Harm to Hope Board, and wider partners to implement a new treatment service.
- Reduce deaths of those in drug and alcohol treatment.
 - Keep the proportion of individuals that die in treatment as a proportion of all individuals in treatment below 1.2% - this is based on the national average.
- Improve treatment pathways for people with co-occurring conditions, those with respiratory and liver disease, and prison leavers. Collaborate to secure ongoing funding to support the continuation of the respiratory conditions pilot.
- Work with the Harm to Hope Board and relevant sub-groups to implement and review pathways for at risk groups.
- Ensure coordinated oversight and response to street community issues by incorporating this work into the Harm to Hope Board's Prevention Subgroup. This includes aligning outreach services, escalating concerns through existing mechanisms, and reporting progress through partnership structures.
- Ensure that there is continuity of care between prison and community of at least 50% of prison leavers, with an ambition that 100% of relevant prison leavers are successfully engaged in treatment services.
- Operationalise the Joint Working Protocol for Co-Occurring Conditions taking into account the development of the new Neighbourhood Mental Health Teams
- Encourage people to seek help earlier for alcohol misuse support in conjunction with Public Health through the implementation of the East Sussex Alcohol Harm Strategy.

Keeping Communities Safe

Violent extremism

Headline Data

- Since February 2022, the national threat level has been substantial, meaning an attack is likely.
- Nationally the Prevent programme is undergoing significant review. In the year ending March 2024:
 - There was a 1.5% increase in Prevent referrals nationally.
 - 40% of referrals come from the education sector.
 - 40% of referrals were for 11-15 years, and 13% were aged 16/17yrs.
 - For cases adopted by Channel, 50% were aged 11-15yrs and 89% were male.

Partnership Objectives

- SCPB to maintain oversight of the Prevent Community Engagement Strategy by receiving an annual report that provides assurance on delivery, public engagement, and emerging community concerns.
- Ensure the SCPB maintains oversight of the Prevent Group's Action Plan by receiving an annual report that provides assurance on delivery and progress. This includes implementing the Prevent Communications and Engagement Strategy to build community trust and confidence in reporting, reducing permissive environments for extremism, refreshing the Community Sentiment Monitoring Framework to better understand contributing factors to radicalisation, and safeguarding individuals by applying recommendations from the national evaluation of Channel.

Public Place Serious Violence

Headline Data

- Rates of serious violence are lower in East Sussex compared to regionally and nationally. however, Hastings and Eastbourne have rates higher than the national average.
- Hospital admissions for violence are highest in Hastings:
 - There is an increase between June and August.
 - Admissions are highest on Saturday and Sunday, between midnight and 4am.
 - Main causes are assault by bodily force (63%) and sharp object (14%).
 - 77% of admissions were male and 14% were under 20yrs, 25% were aged 20-29yrs, and 23% were 30-39yrs.
- Missing education, mental health, and substance/alcohol misuse are all risk factors for being perpetrators of violent crime.

Partnership Objectives

Ensure the SCPB maintains strategic oversight of serious violence and exploitation by receiving an annual report from the East Sussex Violence and Exploitation Reduction Partnership (VERP), highlighting progress against the Preventing Serious Violence and Exploitation Strategy and Action Plan. This includes supporting the development of Youth Futures Prevention Panels, promoting system change in response to traumatic stress, continuing support for young adults involved with the Probation Service, and identifying and supporting victims through initiatives such as the Habitual Knife Carriers Project and the Whole System Approach to Child Exploitation. Serious violence will remain a standing SCPB agenda item at least once per year.

Antisocial behaviour (ASB), Retail Theft, and Street Communities

Headline Data

- National data estimates 36% of people experienced or witnessed ASB in 2024.
- There has been a 15% increase in ASB over the past three years in East Sussex. 84% of ASB is nuisance and relates to youths, neighbours, drink/drugs, noise, and vehicles.
- There has been a 142% increase in shoplifting over the past three years in East Sussex partly due to local and national focus which has resulted in increased reporting.

Partnership Objectives

- Local Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) to promote consistent and effective use of the DISC system to improve reporting and intelligence sharing of shoplifting, ASB and criminal damage.
- Ensure that the SCPB feeds into the safety and security objectives of the town deals / neighbourhood plans for Hastings, Bexhill, and Eastbourne.

Fraud and Scams

Headline Data

- Fraud and scams are the most common crime type in the UK, accounting for 41% of crime nationally.
- Locally, the latest data shows an 11% increase in referrals to Action Fraud between January and March 2025 compared to the same period last year.

Partnership Objectives

- Support the existing fraud and scam awareness campaigns through coordinated partnership working with Sussex Police, Trading Standards, local CSPs and voluntary sector organisations.
- Ensure fraud awareness materials and messaging are shared utilising existing networks and communication channels.

Reducing Reoffending

- The proportion of offenders that re-offend in East Sussex (20%) is lower than the national average (26%).
- Lewes has the highest number of re-offences.³

Partnership Objectives

- Request and consider an annual report on local work to reduce reoffending from the Reducing Reoffending Subgroup of the Sussex Criminal Justice Board (SCJB).
- Ensure the SCPB maintains strategic oversight of youth justice priorities, identifying opportunities for joint working on shared priorities. SCPB to review an annual update from the YJS Chief Officers Group and the Youth Justice Plan.
- Clarify the governance mechanisms for reducing re-offending by mapping existing sub-groups and responsibilities. Produce a governance structure document in collaboration with Probation and SCJB, to include cross-cutting themes such as rough sleeping.

Road Safety

- The number of people killed or injured on East Sussex Roads is significantly higher compared to national and regional averages. Per billion vehicle miles there are 141 casualties in East Sussex, this is 90 in the South East and 92 nationally in 2023
- In 2024 there were 1,481 fatal, serious, or slight casualties in East Sussex
 - 516 occurred in Wealden, significantly more than any other district/borough.

Partnership Objectives

- Local CSPs to integrate anti-social driving into their road safety workstreams, working with partners (Sussex Police, ESCC road safety team) to identify hotspots and co-design interventions.
- With the dissolution of the Sussex Safer Roads Partnership (SSRP) - the SCPB will consider how road safety initiatives can best be influenced.
- Explore the inclusion of road safety as a themed SCPB agenda item annually, with a summary of current activity, risks, and opportunities for collaboration across partners.

Sussex Police provided pre-publication data in March 2025 from live systems. To note that this data may change and could differ from official statistics later published by the ONS and Home Office.

³ Average Number of reoffences per reoffender 2022/23, Public Health Outcomes Framework May 2025 (most recent published data).

