

Report to: People Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: 25th September 2023

By: Director of Adult Social Care & Health

Title: Annual Review of Safer Communities Performance, Priorities & Issues, and Implementation of the Serious Violence Duty in East Sussex

Purpose: To update the Committee on performance in relation to safer communities in 2022 - 2023, priorities and issues highlighted in the Partnership Business Plan 2023 – 2026 (Appendix 1), with a particular focus on the Serious Violence Duty in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 (Appendix 2).

RECOMMENDATIONS:

To consider and comment on performance across the Safer Communities Partnership during 2022/23.

To note the strategic priorities in the next three year Business Plan.

To note the implementation of the Serious Violence Duty in East Sussex.

1. Background Information

1.1 East Sussex remains a relatively safe place to live, work, and visit, compared to national averages. There are some collective challenges, most significantly the shortage of affordable, appropriate housing, which means that the most vulnerable members of our communities, for example victims of domestic abuse and prison leavers, will often be homeless or in temporary accommodation for many years.

1.2 Some communities (places and people) experience multiple disadvantage, and some are disproportionately affected by certain types of crime and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB).

1.3 The East Sussex Safer Communities Partnership (SCP) is responsible for developing a Business Plan which addresses shared strategic priorities for community safety. This enables the Partnership to make use of economies of scale in tackling priorities across Districts and Boroughs, identify regional changes in the activities and resources of criminals or vulnerable people, and better access opportunities for county-level funding.

1.4 In addition to the East Sussex SCP, which is chaired and serviced by the county council, there are four local Community Safety Partnerships in East Sussex. Each of these partnerships publish a plan to address the issues raised in their local area, as defined by their own members. These plans inform the county-wide planning.

1.5 The SCP strives to ensure community safety work is joined up across the county. Strategies and partnerships to tackle drug-related harm, domestic abuse and serious violence operate as sub-groups under the SCP which also report into the pan-Sussex Violence Reduction Partnership and the Domestic Abuse Board.

1.6 These are aligned with the work of the Adults and Children's Safeguarding Boards, the Health and Wellbeing Board, and the Children and Young People's Trust through a Partnership Protocol.

1.7 The County Council's priorities for community safety are informed and delivered by the East Sussex SCP business planning process. The SCP's Business Plan is on a three year cycle (currently 2023-2026) and reviewed annually to ensure it is on track. The Business Plan is attached at **Appendix 1**.

1.8 The SCP has three strategic priorities: protecting vulnerable people; identifying those at risk of harm; and keeping communities safe. These priorities reflect and complement the individual priorities of all members. Other priority areas, such as road safety and managing the impact of anti-social behaviour and street communities are addressed through other partnership structures, with support from the wider partnership as appropriate.

1.9 The Serious Violence Duty requires councils and local services to work together to share information and target interventions to prevent and reduce serious violence. It is only by pursuing a strategic, coordinated approach involving a range of agencies, including partnerships between statutory and voluntary organisations, that violent crime can be effectively addressed – see Appendix 2.

2. Summary Performance Highlights - Sussex Police Data 2022/23

2.1 Overall, reported crime in East Sussex remains lower than national averages. However, in line with national trends, reported crime (excluding fraud) increased by 7% in 2022/23 compared to the previous financial year. In East Sussex, the increase was highest in reports of theft (up by 20% on the previous year), burglary (up by 12%) and shoplifting (up by 32%).

2.2 In 2022/23, there were 496 Public Place Serious Violent Crimes in East Sussex. This was an increase of 13.2% compared to the previous year (438). The highest percentage increase has been in Robbery in a public place (41.8%). In Eastbourne there were also significant percentage increases in reports of possession of weapons between these years (21%) and a slight increase in Rother (7%); however, in the rest of the county (Hastings, Lewes and Wealden), reports of possession of weapons declined.

2.3 There were substantial increases in reports of vehicle offences across the county which increased by 41% on the previous year, predominantly in Eastbourne where reports increased by 107%. These offences include theft of a vehicle including motorcycles, or from a vehicle, for example of catalytic converters. Those responsible for motorcycle theft are often juveniles.

2.4 There was a 14% reduction in reports of drug offences across the county, including Eastbourne which saw a 15% decrease, and Hastings which saw an 8% decrease.

2.5 There were notable decreases in *reports* of Anti-Social Behaviour during 2022/23 compared to the previous year with almost 4,000 fewer reports of Nuisance ASB in the rolling 12 month period. However, anecdotal feedback from community safety partners suggests this may reflect a loss of public confidence in reporting this type of crime, rather than a decrease in incidence.

2.6 Domestic Abuse Single Point of Access (SPOA) Early Help referrals are increasing in the West of the County, with the highest percentage of referrals during 2022/23 from Wealden.

This may be partly attributable to the investment of service resource being focused on the larger coastal towns of Hastings and Eastbourne.

3. Community Engagement

3.1 The East Sussex Reputation Tracker Survey in Summer 2022 gathered information from a cross-section of 500 East Sussex residents. Results show that 67% of residents were satisfied with their local area as a place to live.

3.2 Residents were asked to select three Community Safety Priorities and three types of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) that they feel are most important for the SCP to tackle. These results informed the SCP's Strategic Assessment and selection of ongoing priorities.

3.3 The top three community safety priorities for residents remain: i) sexual violence and abuse; ii) serious violent crime including knife crime; and iii) online safety, harassment and abuse.

3.4 The three most pressing types of anti-social behaviour that residents would like to see addressed remain: i) drug dealing in public places; ii) underage drinking in public; and iii) and aggressive street begging.

3.5 The survey asked whether residents chose these priorities because: i) they had been directly affected; ii) it was a local issue they were aware of; or iii) they were broadly aware of the importance of the issue. The highest proportion of direct impact were road safety, fraud & scams, online safety, and domestic violence and abuse. Those seen as a local issue were domestic violence & abuse, drug & alcohol misuse, exploitation & recruitment of young people by criminals, and theft and burglary.

4. Domestic Violence and Abuse

4.1 Domestic abuse remains a significant proportion of all violent crime across the three Sussex authorities (over 30%), although there has been a slight decrease in the number of people reporting domestic abuse to police (8%) and those accessing specialist support services (2.8%).

4.2 In 2021/22, three women died as a consequence of domestic abuse. In 2022/23, one woman was murdered. All were subject to Domestic Homicide Reviews.

4.3 During 2022/23, 1,099 high-risk domestic violence and abuse cases were identified, and discussed at the East Sussex Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs). This is 18% more than the expected number of 40 per 10,000 population (benchmark by SafeLives, a national domestic abuse charity). This trend is similar in Brighton and Hove.

4.4 Repeat referral rates in 2022/23 accounted for 36% of all cases discussed in Eastbourne, Lewes and Wealden MARAC, and 40% of cases discussed in Hastings and Rother MARAC; both within the SafeLives' recommended range of 28% to 40%.

4.5 In December 2022, a MARAC triage one-year pilot was introduced to address the ongoing increase in volume of referrals into MARAC. The new process ensures a robust multi-agency safeguarding response for high-risk victims of domestic abuse that may not need to be heard at MARAC. To date, the pilot has achieved a 35% reduction in cases discussed each week. A multi-agency evaluation will assess the impact of the pilot and inform discussions about mainstreaming this approach.

4.6 Although there has been a gradual increase in reports relating to older victims of abuse, they remain under-represented in the local data (and in domestic abuse services nationally). Of 2,400 referrals to the specialist provider during 2022/23, only 37 were over 60

years old. This compares to 403 over-60s domestic abuse safeguarding referrals to ESCC Adult Social Care (ASC) in 2022-2023, a 6% increase from 2021/22.

4.7 To increase referrals of older people to specialist services, an additional Council KPI has been agreed, supported by targeted promotion activity to older people through the commissioned DVA provider and via older people's services. In addition, Hourglass are offering a specialist older people's IDVAⁱ service in East Sussex, funded by the Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner's Office (OSPCC).

4.8 There is a commitment to increase the number of refuge units in East Sussex from 37 to 55, in line with the recommended number of refuge places based on population size. The commissioned provider of refuge is contracted to replace the decommissioned Hastings refuge (which had 10 units) and are also currently refurbishing an additional 10 self-contained units in Eastbourne. These units will be available to male victims and others with Protected Characteristics who might find it challenging to live in a communal environment.

4.9 There have been significant delays with finding new premises for safe accommodation due to the difficulty in acquiring suitable accommodation in a location that is financially viable (within Housing Benefit parameters).

4.10 The then recently commissioned refuge provider started taking referrals in January 2022. During 2022/23, 136 women and 52 children were resident in refuge. 55% of placements were from East Sussex, with 45% from out of area. Statutory guidance stipulates that upper tier local authorities must meet the support needs of all victims residing in relevant accommodation including those who originally present from outside of the locality. Safe accommodation for victims of domestic abuse and their children in East Sussex is therefore provided as part of a national resource, although all vacancies are prioritised for East Sussex residents for the first 48 hours.

4.11 The vacancy rate in 2022/23 was 7%, against a target of 5%. This was due to a number of inappropriate referrals, including those where the client hadn't consented to the referral. Following engagement with housing teams and other referring agencies, along with improved referral paperwork, vacancy rates have now improved to 4%.

4.12 During 2022/23, New Burdens funding attached to the Duty to provide support in safe accommodation in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 enabled the Council to fund Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs) co-located in Housing Options teams, build capacity in the MARAC, and commission specialist women's workers for those with multiple disadvantage.

4.13 Further investment has been committed to employ a specialist Family Worker in refuge, following engagement activity with women and young people residing in refuge.

4.14 The New Burdens Duty funding has now been confirmed to end March 2025, and spending commitments have been agreed in line with the recommendations in the Pan-Sussex Strategy for Domestic Abuse Accommodation and Support 2021-2024.

4.15 ESCC became an affiliated member of the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) in 2022. Membership enables ESCC access to additional DAHA resources, best practice, and expert advice, which supports the aim and strategic objective of ESCC adopting a 'whole housing approach' to improve housing options and outcomes for people experiencing domestic abuse.

4.16 Two Perpetrator Programmes were delivered through 2022/23 funded by the OSPCC. The low-risk groupwork programme was not re-funded in 2023; however the high-harm programme received Home Office funding and will continue to disrupt the most dangerous and serial perpetrators in the county. The intention is to support this programme with the

introduction of a MATAC¹ multi-agency process to manage high-risk perpetrators of domestic abuse.

5. Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

5.1 In February 2023 the Home Secretary included VAWG within the Strategic Policing Requirement (SPR) which recognises VAWG as a national threat alongside terrorism and serious and organised crime.

5.2 During 2022/23, the Safer Communities Team and partners ran social media campaigns, hosted a Domestic Abuse Conference jointly with WSCC, developed a comprehensive training prospectus, and delivered bystander training and schools training.

5.3 During the current financial year, a new East Sussex Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Partnership will be established; open to all organisations working in East Sussex, the Partnership will provide a forum for networking and sharing best practice, alongside building capacity in local specialist 'by and for' services, which are currently under-represented in local provision.

6. Sexual Violence and Abuse

6.1 Across the county there was a 2% decrease in reports of sexual offences during 2022/23 compared to the previous year, which had seen a significant increase in reporting, likely due to the impact of the 'Me Too' movement. Lewes was the only area to see an increase in reports of sexual offences.

6.2 Specialist Rape and Sexual Violence Services are co-commissioned by ESCC and the OSPCC and provided by Survivors Network. The provider received 551 referrals in East Sussex in 2022-2023, up 10% on the previous year.

7. Drug and Alcohol Related Harm

7.1 The table below shows the data from the commissioned adult drug and alcohol treatment service for the previous two years, with successful completions from treatment comparison data for England:

Table 1		April to March 2021/22	England data	April to March 2022/23	England data	East Sussex % change
Headline Indicators						
The number of Adults in treatment for Substance Misuse in East Sussex (rolling 12 months)	Opiate	1094	-	1067	-	-2.5%
	Non-opiate only	228	-	217	-	-4.8%
	Non-opiate and alcohol	407	-	509	-	+25%
	Alcohol only	689	-	798	-	+15.8%
	Total	2418	-	2591	-	+7.2%
The number of Young People accessing the East Sussex Under 19s* Substance Misuse Service	Young People	234	-	262	-	+12%
Proportion of all in treatment, who	Opiate users	4.4%	5%	4.8%	5%	+9.6%

¹ Multi-Agency Tasking and Coordination

successfully completed treatment and did not re-present within 6 months

Non-opiate users	27%	34.5%	24.6%	32%	-8.9%
Alcohol	27.9%	36.6%	30.5%	35.4%	+9.4%

7.2 The table demonstrates that there has been a relatively stable number of people in treatment for opiate dependency in East Sussex over the last two years with increases in the number of non-opiate and alcohol users, and that the percentage of individuals completing treatment successfully, has been gradually improving through 2022/23, although is still below the national average.

7.3 With regard to unplanned exits from treatment, all drug groups (apart from alcohol and non-opiates) had improved performance between 2021/22 and 2022/23, although apart from alcohol users, there was a higher rate of unplanned exits from treatment than during 2020/21.

Proportion of new presentations who had an unplanned exit or transferred and not continuing a journey before being retained for 12 weeks (DOMES):

Table 2	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Opiate	16.9%	22.5%	20.5%
Non-opiate only	20.2%	32.7%	20.7%
Alcohol only	17.2%	20.4%	16.7%
Alcohol and non-opiate	22.1%	23.4%	26.6%

7.4 The focus during 2022/23 was to ensure a further rise in opiate users completing treatment successfully (and not re-presenting to treatment) as the highly complex cohort engaged with Project ADDER progressed through the system. As Table 1 above shows, this was achieved. This continues to be a focus for 2023/24 as Project ADDER interventions are now being delivered across the whole of the county.

7.5 Hastings had been chosen as an ADDER area due to the high number of opiate-related deaths in the town. Following the additional investment, opiate-related deaths for those in treatment in Hastings have dropped from 14 in 2020/21 and remained steady at 9 in 2021/22 and 2022/23. It should also be noted that the opiate-using population is an ageing cohort and these deaths occurred while an individual was in treatment, and not necessarily due to opiate use.

7.6 There is a robust system of review of all drug and alcohol related deaths, so that all partners can consider any learning which might help reduce deaths in future.

7.7 During 2022/23, more people sought support for alcohol usage, and for use of non-opiate drugs, such as powder cocaine. There have been fluctuations in the successful completions from treatment rates for these groups (although there was a significant rise in alcohol completions), and East Sussex is still 5-7% below the national average. This is likely due to the provider having previously focused on the needs of opiate users. The treatment provider is now developing and delivering an enhanced offer for alcohol and non-opiate treatment populations.

7.8 During 2022/23, the local authority commissioned five new recovery services offering 'aftercare' services beyond structured treatment – each on a two-year contract. This investment has seen some excellent outcomes for clients in a range of areas, notably sustaining recovery, maximising employability and maintaining stable accommodation.

7.9 Work to implement the Government's 10-year Strategy 'From Harm to Hope', continues via the work of the East Sussex Harm to Hope Board. A needs assessment was produced in 2022; this informed the development of specific action plans to deliver the three main aims of the national and local 'Combatting Drugs' strategies:

- To break drug supply chains
- To deliver a world-class treatment and recovery system
- To achieve a generational shift in demand for drugs

8. Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking

8.1 In 2022/23, 44 children (under 18) and 29 adults who were potential victims of modern slavery and human trafficking were referred by Sussex Police in East Sussex through the National Referral Mechanism (NRM). 59 of these were male and 14 female. This is up from 21 children and 23 adults who were referred by Sussex Police in 2021/22.

8.2 East Sussex continues to follow the national trend where the local authority is the First Responder (organisations authorised to refer potential victims of modern slavery). 15 children and 3 adults were potential victims of modern slavery and human trafficking were referred by the authority through the National Referral Mechanism in 2022/23, compared to no adults and 8 children in 2021/22.

9. Fraud and Scams – Operation Signature

9.1 During 2022/23, Courier Fraud/Impersonator, 'sextortion', doorstep crime and rogue traders, and dating & romance were the four most common types of fraud affecting the vulnerable in East Sussex, with people most commonly being contacted initially by telephone or in person on the doorstep. There are over 900 reports to Operation Signature a year.

9.2 ESCC and Get Safe Online (GSO) have been promoting online safety campaigns to residents, focusing on digital footprints and online child safeguarding.

9.3 The Trading Standards team significantly increased their preventative scams education and outreach work during the year with different groups of potentially vulnerable residents. They have also partnered with the Financial Inclusion team at East Sussex County Council which has significantly increased their scope of influence through newly established networks. As a result of this new approach to educate and identify victims Trading Standards have achieved 414 positive interventions in the year 2022/23 compared with a target of 200.

9.4 Trading standards continue to partner with the police on Operation Signature and have also worked to reestablish clearer protocols and refresh awareness amongst stakeholders.

10. Multiple Compound Needs (Changing Futures)

10.1 The Changing Futures Sussex Programme is funded by national government (until March 2025) to influence and improve the way services and systems work for individuals experiencing multiple compound needs (MCN). MCN is defined as those who experience three or more of the following issues: homelessness; mental health; substance misuse; domestic abuse; and criminal justice involvement. The Programme is aligned with the priorities of the Community Safety Partnership.

10.2 The Programme in East Sussex has focused on systems change priorities to improve services, enable co-ordinated and joined-up commissioning and partnerships, improve data sharing across the county, embed meaningful co-production and service user involvement within support agencies involved, and build a more trauma-informed person-centred workforce when supporting people experiencing MCN.

10.3 The Programme has helped to establish a new MCN governance board within ESCC, establish a pan-Sussex commissioning network to enable strategic partnerships, and is actively involved in several NHS Sussex workstreams within the remit of MCN including the Mental Health Community Transformation project and the Violence Prevention and Reduction workstream.

10.4 The Changing Futures workforce development strategy has seen hundreds of multi-agency staff within East Sussex, from frontline workers to those in leadership positions, trained in trauma-informed practice.

10.5 The main priority in 2023/24 is the development of a multi-disciplinary service delivery team offering intensive, trauma-informed and person-centred casework located with ASC. Five staff have been recruited, with five more in progress.

11. National Drivers influencing Safer Communities Work

11.1 Over the coming year, partners will work together to plan new strategies for community safety in response to several national initiatives:

- a) The [Beating Crime Plan 2021](#) - setting out the Government's plan to deliver the 'change that Britain needs', with less crime, fewer victims, and a safer country.
- b) The [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#) - aiming to reform how the justice system and partner agencies work with victims of domestic abuse and placing a new Duty on local authorities to provide support in safe accommodation for victims of abuse and their children.
- c) The National Drugs Strategy - [From harm to hope: A 10-year drugs plan to cut crime and save lives](#)
- d) The [Police, Crime Sentencing & Courts Act 2022](#) - placing new duties on local authorities, police, and health authorities, alongside schools and prisons to prevent serious violence.
- e) The [Modern Slavery Act 2015](#) is designed to combat modern slavery and consolidates previous offences relating to human trafficking and slavery. Councils have a key role to play including identification, referral and support of victims, providing community safety services and disruption activities, and ensuring that council and commissioned provider supply chains are free from modern slavery.
- f) New recommendations arising from an [Independent review of the Modern Slavery Act 2015](#) which concluded in 2020 and looked at the role of the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, transparency in supply chains, Independent Child Trafficking Advocates and legal application of the Modern Slavery Act.
- g) The Queen's Speech 2022 proposed amendments to the Modern Slavery Act 2015 via a Modern Slavery Bill and will potentially mandate the contents of modern slavery and human trafficking statements, require them to be published on a public registry, and also introduce civil penalties for non-compliance.
- h) The [Counter-terrorism and Border Security Act 2019](#) and the [Shawcross Independent Review of Prevent](#) which considered the UK's strategy for protecting people vulnerable from being drawn into terrorism was published alongside the [government response](#) in February 2023. The review made 34 recommendations, all of which the Government accepted in totality.
- i) Changes to the Channel management process, under the Government's Prevent anti-extremism programme, is anticipated as the Prevent Duty guidance and is updated and

aligned with the recommendations of the Shawcross review giving more responsibility and autonomy to local government safeguarding panels.

- j) The counter-terrorism strategy [Counter-terrorism strategy \(CONTEST\) 2023](#) which aims to reduce the risk to the UK and its citizens and interests overseas from terrorism, so that people can go about their lives freely and with confidence.
- k) The draft [Terrorism \(Protection of premises\) Bill](#) published in May 2023 sets out the requirements that, under 'Martyr's Law', venues and other organisations will have to meet to ensure public safety.
- l) The [Online Safety Bill](#) is expected to pass into law this year. The bill aims to establish a new regulatory framework (managed by Ofcom) to tackle harmful content online, introduce rules for social media sites and apps, search engines and messaging platforms.

12. Supporting Information – Funding and Finance

12.1 There are no specific financial implications arising from this report. Income secured for community safety initiatives in East Sussex in 2022/23 above and beyond core investment into services, is outlined in **Appendix 5**.

12.2 Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner (SPCC) funding for community safety is allocated to District and Borough Council Community Safety Partnerships through the Council.

13. Priorities for 2023 - 2026

13.1 The SCP remains focused on its three strategic priorities: protecting vulnerable people; identifying those at risk of harm; and keeping communities safe.

13.2 The Partnership's commitment is to:

- Build resilience in communities, and co-design services to improve life-outcomes.
- Identify and shape services to anticipate and respond to people and places that experience multiple disadvantage.
- Increase awareness of violence against women and girls, the support available, and the importance of reporting to police.
- Ensure the provision of safe accommodation options for victims of domestic abuse and their children.
- Collaborate to tackle Serious Violence, working to address the causes of violence in our communities.
- Disrupt Modern Slavery & Human Trafficking activity and ensure our supply chains are free from modern slavery.
- Embed better identification and referral of adult victims of violence, exploitation and abuse.
- Raise public awareness around fraud and scams.
- Ensure compliance with the legislative changes following the Independent Review of PREVENT.
- Support community cohesion initiatives around asylum seekers and migrant accommodation.
- Improve access to high quality, accessible drug and alcohol treatment services, increasing numbers in treatment by 20%.
- Reduce drug-related deaths.

14. Conclusion and Recommendations

14.1 The East Sussex Safer Community Partnership continues to focus on keeping communities safe; protecting vulnerable people, and identifying and responding to risk of harm, in the context of legislative and statutory guidance parameters. Its approach is collaborative and evidence-based, and underpinned by sound data quality, visibility and sharing.

14.2 The Committee is asked to note the performance and achievements of the Partnership during 2022/23, and its plans for 2022 to 2026 which can be found at page 11 onwards of the attached Partnership Business Plan (**Appendix 1**).

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – East Sussex Safer Communities Partnership Business Plan 2023 – 2026

Appendix 2 – Serious Violence

Appendix 3 – Serious Violence Interventions

Appendix 4 - Habitual Knife Carriers Project Evaluation

Appendix 5 – Funding
