

# Joint Strategic Assessment of Crime and Disorder

## Executive Summary

2016 - 17

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# Chair's Foreword

Welcome to the tenth Joint Strategic Assessment of crime and disorder for South Gloucestershire. This work has been undertaken by the strategic assessment working group on behalf of the Safer and Stronger Communities Strategic Partnership in order to provide an evidence base for the Strategic Partnership's decision making for 2017/18.

The first Joint Strategic Assessment was published in 2008 and marked an important milestone in the development of a JSA programme for crime and disorder for South Gloucestershire. The assessments provide South Gloucestershire with a high level evaluation of the issues impacting upon the various agencies working in the area and assist in identifying current trends and hot spots to influence service provision in areas such as crime, anti-social behaviour and substance misuse. They help us to make the area safer and protect people from harm.

The data, information, knowledge and evidence about each area has been drawn from partners' data and intelligence and has provided a picture of the key issues and challenges facing communities and service providers. It will also help local communities decide priorities for action and where decisions about local matters need to be made. I fundamentally believe that the needs of the local community are at the heart of what we do.

This year we have continued our excellent collaborative working between local partners. These include South Gloucestershire Council, the Voluntary Sector, Avon and Somerset Constabulary, Avon Fire & Rescue, Public Health, Merlin Housing and Avon & Somerset Probation Service.

The priorities identified in this strategic assessment are of concern to partner agencies and the communities we serve. They are: antisocial behaviour, a focus on a 'hotspot' approach to dealing with issues, violent crime (including domestic abuse), hate crime and neighbour nuisance and substance misuse. We also identified two ways of working on which we would like to focus in 2017/18: the sharing and use of data between partners, and shifting to a more operational partnership approach.

I would like to thank everyone who has been involved in the development of the Joint Strategic Assessment. I hope the data and information within it will enable South Gloucestershire community area to deliver a first class service, keep people safe and make a real difference to people's lives.



**Mark Evans, Local Police Area Commander, Avon & Somerset Police**



In light of the current programme of spending cuts (and bearing in mind that the cuts are likely to continue in the coming years), agencies are faced with the significant challenge of how to continue to provide services to a standard expected by residents. Parts of South Gloucestershire face rural isolation, with limited access to services and transport of particular note.

This document aims to assist agencies with prioritising resources to tackle crime and disorder.

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# Executive Summary

The South Gloucestershire Safer and Stronger Communities Strategic Partnership is comprised of a mixture of statutory and voluntary agencies working together to tackle crime and disorder to improve community safety for local residents.

The Partnership has a legal duty to undertake an annual strategic assessment, which is used to inform the annual partnership plan. The plan contains details on how the Strategic Partnership will tackle community safety and priority crime as identified in this assessment.

Each year the JSA working group, acting on behalf of the partnership, identifies areas of joint concern that will be a priority for the coming year.

This year, those areas of joint concern are:

- Antisocial behaviour
- Hotspot approach
- Violent crime including domestic abuse
- Preventing hate crime and neighbour nuisance
- Substance abuse
- Sharing and using data
- Shifting to an operational partnership approach

The evidence base which has been used to identify this list of priorities is given in restricted appendices.

A summary of this evidence base is given on the following pages. The summaries have been written on the basis of the data submissions provided by the various contributing agencies, and seek to explain why these themes have been identified as joint priorities for participating agencies.

Each priority has some suggestions for actions that the partnership could take to deal with that priority.

## Evidence base – Antisocial behaviour (ASB)

Antisocial behaviour continues to be a priority for many agencies and communities across South Gloucestershire, both in terms of the costs of dealing with incidents and also the effect it has on victims and their families. Nuisance behaviour reports have fallen slightly but many of them are linked to disputes or incidents between neighbours; a 92% take-up of victim support services for those victims involved in neighbour disputes points to the fact that while these types of complaints are often referred to as being low level in nature, they may have significant impact on quality of life.

The volume of ASB-related crimes recorded has fluctuated but has not significantly decreased. While recording changes may have had a part to play in the changes in numbers, it once again demonstrates the importance of dealing with this type of disorder. The issues reported over the previous year are of a more diverse nature than those in previous years, covering issues such as vehicle crime, hate crime, fly tipping, vandalism and fly grazing.

The geographical area experiencing the largest proportion of ASB-related incidents continues to be Kingswood, although it should be noted that significant improvements have been made. Downend, Rodway, Siston, Patchway, Filton and Staple Hill have all been highlighted as part of this strategic assessment process as being areas with higher than average levels of ASB. There are also links to the night-time economy with areas like Chipping Sodbury experiencing issues related to disorder on weekend evenings, and there has been a slight increase in deliberate primary fires across the South Glos area (although many of these are attributable to deliberate fires in prisons).

Similar to previous years, our communities have expressed their concern about antisocial behaviour via the Community Engagement Forums, with both rural and urban areas citing antisocial behaviour as the major priority for them locally. Specific locations continue to cause community concern, for example the Barrs Court area in Longwell Green.

We have had some successes tackling antisocial behaviour in the past 12 months and should look to continue building on these. The success of planned multi agency working to tackle the night time economy in Kingswood and ASB issues in Aspects/Parkwall in 2015/16 provides evidence of this type of collaboration being an effective model for dealing with issues and achieving successful outcomes. Joint promotions have taken place between agencies to raise awareness of such initiatives as Neighbourhood Watch, allowing residents to take an active role in combating issues raised at their community engagement forums.

## Evidence base – Hotspot approach

The hotspot areas highlighted in this year's analysis are broadly consistent with those identified in previous years, although good progress has been made with offending in Kingswood when compared to the rest of South Gloucestershire. For this reason, the working group considered that it was appropriate to maintain a focus on hotspot areas rather than moving away from this approach.

Our priority neighbourhood areas remain an area of focus and featured in a number of agency submissions. Hate crime hotspots were identified in Patchway, Filton and Kingswood, and Kingswood has overtaken Patchway as the area which sees the most antisocial behaviour and domestic violence reports from Merlin housing tenants. Patchway, Kingswood and Filton also recorded the highest number of ASB-related incidents and crimes per 1,000 population and many of these ASB cases were complex in nature.

Levels of domestic violence on the Probation caseload were disproportionately focussed in Patchway, Yate, Kingswood, Staple Hill and Mangotsfield. There were higher than average levels of alcohol-related hospital admissions in all priority neighbourhood areas apart from Yate and Dodington, and higher than average alcohol-specific hospital admissions in all six priority neighbourhood areas. The Young People's Substance Misuse service received the highest level of referrals from Dodington, Kings Chase and Frenchay & Stoke Park wards.

Dealing with these issues in hotspots is not easy, but the strategic assessment working group identified that a partnership focus on these areas has proven successful in recent years. Following on from a multi-year joint approach to tackle issues in Kingswood for example, police data has shown that offending levels in Kingswood are significantly better than for South Glos as a whole (a 36% reduction in dwelling burglary in Kingswood for example, compared to a 32% increase in South Glos as a whole).

# Evidence base – Violent crime including domestic abuse

Violent crime is a priority for the partnership not only because of the costs incurred by partner agencies who deal with it, but also because of the severe physical and mental impacts it can have on victims and perpetrators. Levels of recorded violent crime have risen across South Gloucestershire in the past 12 months and although changes in how violent crimes are recorded will have played a part in that rise, there is also an ongoing challenge in terms of how to deal with the many different types of violent offences occurring across the district. Levels of domestic and sexual violence offences reported to the police have risen by 40%, for example, and while we are encouraging reporting of these offences there is of course a huge concern over the number of victims that this represents.

A partnership approach has been shown to be effective in dealing with violent crime, with the reduction in night-time economy reports in Kingswood showing that results can be achieved when agencies work together to tackle the problem. The closure of BarCelona on Kingswood High Street (which has contributed to the reduction in offences in Kingswood but a possible increase in Chipping Sodbury) was a multi-agency effort. The pilot project to support medium-risk domestic abuse victims who are below the MARAC threshold but at risk of escalation will be important going forward.

Many different types of people are impacted by violence, with some vulnerable victims experiencing violence multiple times and young people being the most likely victims of other young people perpetrating violent offences. Our night-time economy still remains an issue of concern, with the interplay between alcohol and violence being considered and discussed in detail by the strategic assessment working group. The highest number of night-time economy-related calls to the police were recorded in Chipping Sodbury, Kingswood and Patchway, although it's worth noting that Kingswood saw a fall of 24% (n=-71) over the past 12 months whereas Chipping Sodbury saw an increase of 58% (n=+31).

This priority includes domestic abuse as a particular focus because of the severe impact on victims and their families. A worrying downward trend has been identified in the detection rate for domestic abuse offences, as well as a reduction in the number of cases being fully resolved. Referral levels to Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) have reduced by 3% compared to the previous year and the loss of the MARAC annual report has resulted in a number of gaps in data that the strategic assessment has previously relied on. This issue is discussed in more detail in the 'Data' section of the assessment. There has been an increase in domestic abuse reports from housing tenants, with Kingswood being identified as the area with the highest number of reports, and the probation caseload has seen increasing levels of domestic violence.

# Evidence base – Preventing hate crime and neighbour nuisance

Hate crime is an area which has historically been difficult to quantify. Underreporting is an identified issue with the National Crime Survey 2015/16 suggesting that only one in four hate crimes are reported to the police; local intelligence suggests that this is also an issue locally and a lot of work has been done to try to make reporting as easy and accessible as possible. Data collected for this strategic assessment period shows a disconnect between what has been reported nationally and within Avon and Somerset since the EU referendum, and what has been experienced locally in South Gloucestershire. The Avon and Somerset police force area reported an increase in reported hate crime of 31% between 2014/15 and 2015/16, however reports logged on the South Gloucestershire council database saw a slight decline in mid-2016.

Many hate crime cases in South Gloucestershire are complex and multi-faceted in nature, and need a multi-agency approach to ensure the best outcomes are achieved. The numbers of hate crime offences recorded are similar across most police beats in the area but the highest levels (and highest numerical increases) were seen in Patchway, Filton and Kingswood over the past 12 months. The Police and Crime Commissioner has promoted a campaign to encourage people to have the confidence to report incidents of hate crime and this work is important to continue encouraging victims to come forward and report to any of our partner agencies. A stated aim of partners is to increase reporting from minority groups in particular, from which disproportionately low numbers of reports are being received (e.g. Gypsy and Traveller communities, LGBT and disabled people). Community tension mapping figures for 2015 show the areas with the highest number of race- and faith-based incidents to be Kingswood, Yate and Filton- the same 'hotspot' areas identified in other themes of this assessment.

The new hate crime database which has been commissioned to pull together and cleanse data from multiple different reporting agencies is integral to our efforts to combat hate crime going forward. It is a demonstration of the impact we can have when data flows between partners and offers a useful model for consideration when looking at other areas of partnership work.

Neighbour nuisance and nuisance behaviour accounted for 51% of all reports to the council's antisocial behaviour team, and data provided by the specialist Victim Support Service shows that 51% of victims reported that they were a victim of harassment from neighbours. Work is needed to strengthen tolerance and understanding between neighbours and ensure that South Gloucestershire communities remain strong as well as safe during the changes that are coming over the next few years nationally. Currently, 66% of respondents to the Viewpoint Citizen's Panel survey on community resilience considered that people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area; efforts will continue to increase this proportion.

## Evidence Base – Substance misuse

Substance misuse is once again recommended as a priority in the 2017/18 strategic assessment. The previous strategic assessment identified Novel Psychoactive Substances (NPS, or legal highs) as a priority however the number of service users accessing treatment for NPS use has notably reduced following the NPS ban under the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016. This year's assessment therefore focuses on a broader understanding of substance misuse, recognising the impact that alcohol as well as drugs can have on residents and communities.

Drug- and alcohol-related offending in South Gloucestershire increased 38% in the past 12 months compared to the previous year. Nearly half of the offences related to assault occasioning actual bodily harm, common assault and battery. Of the 171 drug users on the criminal justice caseload in the past 12 months, 66% were in structured treatment. Looking at the success of treatment overall, 95% of all opiate and crack users engaged in the local treatment system were effectively engaged which helps ensure that they use less or abstain from using drugs, commit fewer crimes, and improve their health and quality of life. The number of clients in treatment for alcohol misuse rose 15% compared to the previous year, with 51% of services users successfully completing their treatment against a national average of 39%.

Looking at the health impacts of substance misuse, the trend of alcohol-related hospital admissions in 2014/2015 recorded the highest level of increase in South Gloucestershire since 2008/2009, with 2004 persons per 100,000 of the population admitted to hospital. All priority neighbourhood areas registered above this average rate with the exception of Yate and Dodington. The majority of the admission causes related to mental and behavioural disorders following alcohol use. Mental health issues were once again noted by several partners and should remain an area of concern for the partnership, although mental health has not been selected as a priority in its own right.

Young people are impacted by substance misuse, and 78 young people received a care planned treatment intervention in South Gloucestershire last year with 95% citing cannabis as problematic; cannabis was also prevalent in the drug-related offences recorded in the Youth Offending cohort. Most drug-related criminal offences recorded by the police and related to young people were linked to possession of cannabis for personal use. NDTMS data has identified that young people accessing treatment within South Gloucestershire start using substances before the age of 15 and that 79% are using two or more substances.

Dealing with substance misuse issues is a true multi-agency effort, with everyone from treatment services, enforcement services, licensing and housing having a role to play. All of the Priority Neighbourhood forums (with the exception of Cadbury Heath) consider substance misuse as one of their top priorities and it's an issue of concern to residents which is recommended as a priority for the partnership going forward.

# Evidence Base – Sharing and using data

Data, and the availability and quality of data shared between partners, has been included in previous strategic assessments and is again highlighted as a priority this year. Where data flows between agencies we consistently see a more efficient service provided by partners and better outcomes for our residents; where data doesn't flow or is unreliable, partners struggle to grip and deal with issues and our effectiveness is much reduced.

The implementation of new databases and procedures has had an impact on recording practices for antisocial behaviour, and without robust and reliable data, meaningful analysis for future strategic assessments will continue to be challenging. Challenges also remain around the recording of hate crime, with inconsistent recording of crimes as opposed to incidents and variable treatment of the crossovers between hate crime and antisocial behaviour.

Data can also be lacking because of a lack of public willingness to report incidents. The recent Kingswood crime survey told us that almost three quarters of respondents who said that they had been a victim of crime in Kingswood within the last 18 months had not reported it; where incidents have been reported we also need to ensure that we have robust sharing mechanisms in place to make sure all relevant agencies are informed.

We also need to ensure that we use the data available in the most effective way, for example the loss of the MARAC Annual report has resulted in a large gap in performance data. The report would include a detailed picture of victim and perpetrators and this data was extremely useful in understanding where to direct resources and identify areas of unmet need. It is worth noting that this was a resource-intensive exercise however, and it may be unrealistic to expect this report to be produced again; it's recommended that alternative sources of information should be explored.

Some data-sharing initiatives have proven very successful, for example the creation of a centrally monitored hate crime database. This is beginning to provide reliable, duplicate-free data with which to form the local evidence base for designing interventions, targeting resources, commissioning opportunities, and informing equalities impact assessments. Similarly, the 'Scaled Approach' used by the Youth Offending Service means that those young people needing the most help should attract an enhanced and priority service from all youth justice and welfare agencies in a bid to reduce/stop their risk and improve their outcomes. These types of initiative show how important good datasets and data-flows are to effective partnership working.

# Evidence Base – Shifting to an operational partnership approach

The Safer & Stronger Partnership brings agencies together and facilitates joint working on issues where we can have the most impact together: this strategic assessment identifies those issues. The way that the partnership operates is also worthy of examination however, to make sure that we're as efficient and effective as possible.

The working group discussed issues around resources (and the lack of them), and how we can move more quickly to deal with issues as and when they arise. The group felt that moving to a more operational partnership approach would be beneficial to ensure that we are constantly using current data to take appropriate decisions and to make sure we don't lose opportunities whenever they may arise. It is recommended that this can be best achieved by becoming more 'tactical', with the groups responsible for delivering activities working to deal with issues outside of partnership meetings.

Given the issues around data availability and sharing noted in the previous section of this assessment, this aim will of course be challenging. New and innovative IT software programmes can help facilitate the physical flow of data between agencies but the way that we work together as partners and as members of the partnership will be just as crucial.