

INTRODUCTION

The North Devon & Torrington Community Safety Partnership (CSP) is a statutory body under sections 5-7 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. It is made up of representatives from several agencies involved with crime, disorder, and community safety. There is a joint CSP board between North Devon and Torrington which meets on a quarterly basis.

During the last year, the chair of the partnership was passed jointly to Phil Gilbert, Public Health & Community Safety Manager, Torrington District Council and Darren Hale, Lead Environmental Health Officer, North Devon Council.

Meetings are attended by the following agencies: Torrington District Council, North Devon Council, Devon and Cornwall Police, Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue, Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner, Devon County Council Public Health, Together (drug and alcohol support services), Fearfree, Devon & Cornwall Probation, TTVS/NDVS (voluntary services), North Devon Healthcare Trust, Sunrise Diversity, elected members from North Devon Council, Torrington District Council, Devon County Council and Town Councils.

The current priorities of the CSP are:

Priority one: Serious violence and Violence Against Women and Girls.

The first of our priorities focusses on the CSP's work with our statutory partners to reduce all crime including serious violence, this includes knife violence / crime, sexual violence, domestic violence and abuse, and will include violence against women and girls (VAWG). Following the publication of the Serious Violence Strategy, the Serious Violence Bill was announced in December 2019 and enacted on 16 December 2022. Specified Authorities had until January 2024 to put their plans in place. Officers attend Devon level working groups where this project is developed and implemented.

On a local level, we have engaged with Fearfree - provider of commissioned domestic abuse services – to develop an intervention for schools that seeks to address misogynistic attitudes with a view to preventing domestic abuse in the future. We were successful in obtaining funds for this work and is being rolled out across secondary schools in both Torrington and North Devon.

Priority two: Safer Streets & Anti-Social Behaviour. We continue to monitor, identify, and address the anti-social behaviour issues impacting our communities and seek to identify and support local preventive projects.

The ASB Steering Group, held monthly, allows both councils, police, housing associations, elected members, substance misuse services, Town Councils and representatives from the voluntary sector to come together and address specific issues relating to people and place.

We co-ordinate responses to community level anti-social behaviour by using innovative ways to work with our partners to build and sustain community resilience.

Anti-social behaviour patrols continue across both districts and individuals are escalated through Anti-Social Behaviour process in a prompt manner, often resulting in court appearances and prosecutions.

We are continuing to seek opportunities to work with the health sector to actively address and monitor risks and changes relating to substance misuse locally. We promote and utilise a partnership approach to identify, support and tackle alcohol and drug related issues within our communities. By working in partnership with specialist drug and alcohol agencies (both commissioned and voluntary), service users and their families receive a range of options to help reduce dependency, harm and support their recovery.

Priority Three: Emerging threats. To allow the CSP to respond quickly and effectively to new concerns, we review emerging issues in our communities and where necessary, set up a specialist group from within our partners to work on a specific problem. We continue to deliver key messages through partnership communications to focus on community tensions, extremism, the online space, modern slavery, and human trafficking.

At the Community Safety Partnership Meeting on 9 November 2023, it was agreed that Hate Crime will be a CSP priority for this year. This is against a backdrop of an increase in offences and incidents such as the distribution of racist material in our area. A working group has formulated an action plan and the CSP chair the Devon Hate Crime Steering Group.

Any of our partners can bring matters to the board for consideration and action. Our CSP is represented on the Safer Devon Partnership Executive Management Group through our joint chairs. Some statutory functions of the CSP are delivered at regional level, such as the production of a Crime and Disorder Strategic Assessment, regional reoffending strategy development, and the management of Domestic Homicide Reviews.

At a local level, the role of the board consists of setting and monitoring local priorities and maintaining an overview of issues affecting community safety in both districts.

2. REPORT

The Community Safety Partnership has been very active since our last report to the Scrutiny Committee and the following provides an outline of activities carried out: A significant focus of the partnership and local policing looks at identifying and analysing activities related to organised crime groups. We continue to promote the sharing of vital intelligence with our policing colleagues through the Devon & Cornwall Police's Partner Agency Information Sharing Form. In this regard North Devon & Torridge Community Safety Partnership is again the top partnership for all intelligence submissions to the Police's Force Intelligence Unit which evidences how well we promote community safety as a partnership.

The Community Safety Partnership devised and presented an event for members designed to increase awareness of treatment options for people who misuse drugs and alcohol. The session included a number of inputs from various agencies involved in services, including Police, local voluntary sector, substance misuse

agencies, public health and district and local councils. A follow-up session will be arranged in the New Year.

We have continued to focus on our trauma informed vision for Torridge and North Devon. The CSP actively involved in a 'Devon Trauma Network' which has been set up across Devon to share best practice and promote consistency in its application. Members of our CSP have also delivered presentations at the Trauma Network on 'Trauma Informed Practice in Northern Devon'

High Flow is a partnership initiative across all services with the CSP working in conjunction with One Northern Devon. All partner agencies identified and agreed the top 13 individuals putting most demand on our services and then sought to find a way to break that cycle. It leads to a High Flow casework providing additional support and putting a 'Team around the Person' to avoid the silo approach of agencies working alone. It has also seen dramatic reductions in demand and some outstanding stories of individuals turning their lives around, whilst also providing learning on how we can deal better with others in the future.

Our joint Anti-Social Behaviour Steering Group continues to develop and focus on ASB prevention and addressing local issues across Northern Devon. The multi-agency meetings take place monthly and look in detail at individuals and areas of reported incidents, with an emphasis on hotspots and emerging issues. This approach has been particularly well received in relation to the street drinking issues in Bideford and Barnstaple and has allowed for coordinated action to be taken. Membership has been extended to a wider diversity of statutory partners including elected members at district and town levels, and now includes representatives from local housing associations. This wider participation adds value through much more representative conversation around this key CSP priority.

In North Devon, an increased Officer presence has been introduced to address and prevent Anti-Social Behaviour. The Council's ASB Officer undertakes daily patrols in the town centre and issues advice, warnings and notices when required. A security operative is available should the Officer require additional assistance. The team work closely with the Barnstaple CCTV room and are linked by radio, allowing prompt action when required. These patrols offer important opportunities to gather evidence to support the ASB escalation process and prosecution if necessary.

Street Marshals continue to be active in Barnstaple following further funding being provided by North Devon Council. The marshals, provided by a local security company, are patrolling the town on a daily basis. They helped to increase feelings of reassurance amongst both the public and businesses and dealt with incidents as and when they occurred. A similar scheme has been introduced in Ilfracombe where marshals patrol on two days a week.

North Devon and Torridge have secured hotspot funding from the OPCC to help tackle anti-social behaviour. The funding is under a two tier system, Barnstaple was awarded tier one which has allowed the police to pay overtime to officers to carry out dedicated patrols within the identified hotspots. Bideford was awarded tier two and this has allowed Torridge to employ street marshals 3 days a week to patrol the hotspots within the town.

Torrige introduced a new Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) earlier this year making it an offence to consume alcohol or other intoxicating substance within the specified area. Not only does it bring it in line with North Devon, it makes it easier to enforce and clearer for members of the public to understand. Torrige officers, street marshals and the local Neighbourhood Policing Team at Bideford have been working in partnership to enforce the PSPO. To further assist TDC have delegated power to the street marshals allowing them to confiscate alcohol and issue dispersal notices when required. The street marshals have been accredited under the Community Safety Accreditation Scheme (CSAS) by Devon & Cornwall Police. This has had a positive impact and there has already been a reduction in reported anti-social behavior within the town. The feedback received from the community and local businesses has been positive.

Both Torrige and North Devon have extended the time dispersal notices remain in effect to 24hrs.

To further assist TDC officers are authorised under the Community Safety Accreditation Scheme (CSAS). Authorised Local Authority Officers are focussed on engagement, education, and enforcement of our PSPO. We were able to challenge and disrupt street drinking in Bideford town centre and provided high visibility assurance to our community and local businesses.

The CSP have supported the Night Bus Scheme that has been running late night between Barnstaple, Bideford and Ilfracombe at weekends throughout the summer. The service ran throughout the night in order for people to get home safely following nights out in Barnstaple. In total, 832 people used the Barnstaple – Bideford service and 653 travelled on the Barnstaple – Ilfracombe bus. This initiative serves to both reduce anti-social behaviour by moving people away from the town centre in an efficient manner and allowing potentially vulnerable people to return home safely. A further scheme has been scheduled in the run up to Christmas.

Torrige have been working jointly with the local neighbourhood policing team to tackle anti-social behaviour in the town with the introduction of the new Community Hub. The purpose of the hub is to allow members of the community to engage with the Bideford Neighbourhood Policing Team and officers from TDC face to face and explain what issues within the community are effecting them.

In North Devon, Public Space Protection Orders have been renewed and two small areas that have been subject to Anti-Social Behaviour have been added to the map due to an increase in incidents. These new areas are subject to regular patrols.

Community Safety at Torrige has taken over the running of the towns CCTV system, operators work closely with the police and the street marshals to highlight incidents and identify those responsible for committing offences. This approach has helped to further strengthen the PSPO and reduce incidents of anti-social behaviour. Several offenders have been dealt with robustly by means of Community Protection Warnings, Fixed Penalty Notices as a result of offences witnessed on CCTV.

Our CSP has been at the forefront of anti-hate crime work in Devon following its adoption as a priority in 2023. At a district level, we have engaged extensively with Sunrise Diversity, a charity that promotes diversity and inclusion in Northern Devon. Sunrise are now a full member of the CSP Board and an important part of our ongoing work to increase reporting of hate crime locally. At a Devon level, the CSP chair the Devon Hate Crime and Diversity Steering Group and have developed an action plan with the aim of raising awareness, increasing the diversity of CSP boards and increasing reporting by victims of such offences. The work is ongoing and we next meet later in November.

CSP representation on the Devon Anti-Slavery Partnership (DASP) and continued contribution to and monitoring of intelligence relating to local modern slavery concerns and practices across both districts. Involvement in partnership action against local businesses implicated in modern slavery practices.

CSP representation on both the Devon and Torbay Prevent Partnership and the Prevent and Education group, as well as individual representation of both districts on 'Channel panels' on cases within our own communities. Channel is a multi-agency programme which identifies and supports individuals at risk of radicalisation and extremism, and which delivers the strategic aim of the Prevent programme. Having identified an individual at risk, the Channel panel will assess the nature and extent of the risk, and subsequently develop the most appropriate support plan for the individual concerned. The standing inclusion of District Council representatives on this panel is a new requirement.

We continue to work with our local Devon & Somerset Fire and Rescue Community Safety and Engagement Teams to promote and raise awareness of free Home Fire Safety Visit Programmes to support some of the most vulnerable individuals within our community.

3. CONCLUSION

The CSP area remains as one of the safest in the UK. Crime per head of population remains very low. That said there are still areas within our CSP that experience higher levels of crime and disorder, and themes we are keen to address. The CSP remains committed to work with communities, other partners, and elected members in helping to identify and target those community issues.

The reporting year has been one of change for the CSP as the chairmanship has been passed from Devon & Cornwall Police to a joint arrangement between the two district councils. Despite this change, D&C police remain fully committed to the Partnership and the vital joint work that is undertaken daily. Our CSP remains the only partnership across the peninsula that has police officers embedded in our offices and this allows for daily, close joint working.

The North Devon & Torridge Community Safety Partnership remains active and committed to monitoring, supporting, and promoting activities in a wide range of areas that impact on community safety in our districts. This is against a backdrop of dealing with the loss of valuable annual funding from the OPCC and the ever reducing resources across all agencies as well as managing the changing threats and issues faced by our communities.

However, these challenges empower the partnership to maintain our work in an efficient and effective joined up manner. The CSP provides a basis for this approach, and this is pivotal for community safety across Northern Devon.