



Rolling Action Plan 2025 / 26

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Introduction

The Ashford Community Safety Partnership (ACSP) brings together a range of statutory and voluntary sector services to jointly determine how they can work together to reduce crime, fear of crime and anti-social behaviour. The aim of the ACSP is to **make Ashford a safer place to live, work and visit**. The overall decision-making body of the ACSP is the ACSP board.

Under the Crime and Disorder Regulations 2007, district and borough CSPs in England and Wales are required to:

- Produce an annual strategic assessment.
- Produce a three-year rolling partnership plan setting out partnership priorities, with actions to deliver these priorities.
- Have a dialogue with communities to both inform these processes and explain the outcomes.

Our Rolling Action Plan 2025/26 has been developed following on from our annual Strategic Assessment, as well as in consultation with stakeholders. This year, we have also considered the findings and plans related to the new Serious Violence Duty, as outlined in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022.

A subgroup of the ACSP will take responsibility for the delivery of each priority identified by the strategic assessment and rolling action plan. They will take the top-level action plan contained within this document, build and develop it into a SMART action plan and ensure delivery against it.

The action plans created by the subgroups are approved by the ACSP board and progress against them is assessed at each quarterly meeting. A performance group is responsible for monitoring progress against our key crime and fear of crime indicators, following on from subgroup intervention.

The membership of the ASCP board is:

- Ashford Borough Council (responsible authority)
- Kent Police (responsible authority)
- Kent Fire and Rescue Service (responsible authority)
- Kent Probation Delivery Unit (responsible authority)
- Kent and Medway Integrated Care Board (responsible authority)
- Kent County Council – Community Safety Partnership (responsible authority)
- The Head Teachers’ Forum chair
- Ashford College
- The Department of Works and Pensions
- Chairs of the ACSP subgroups

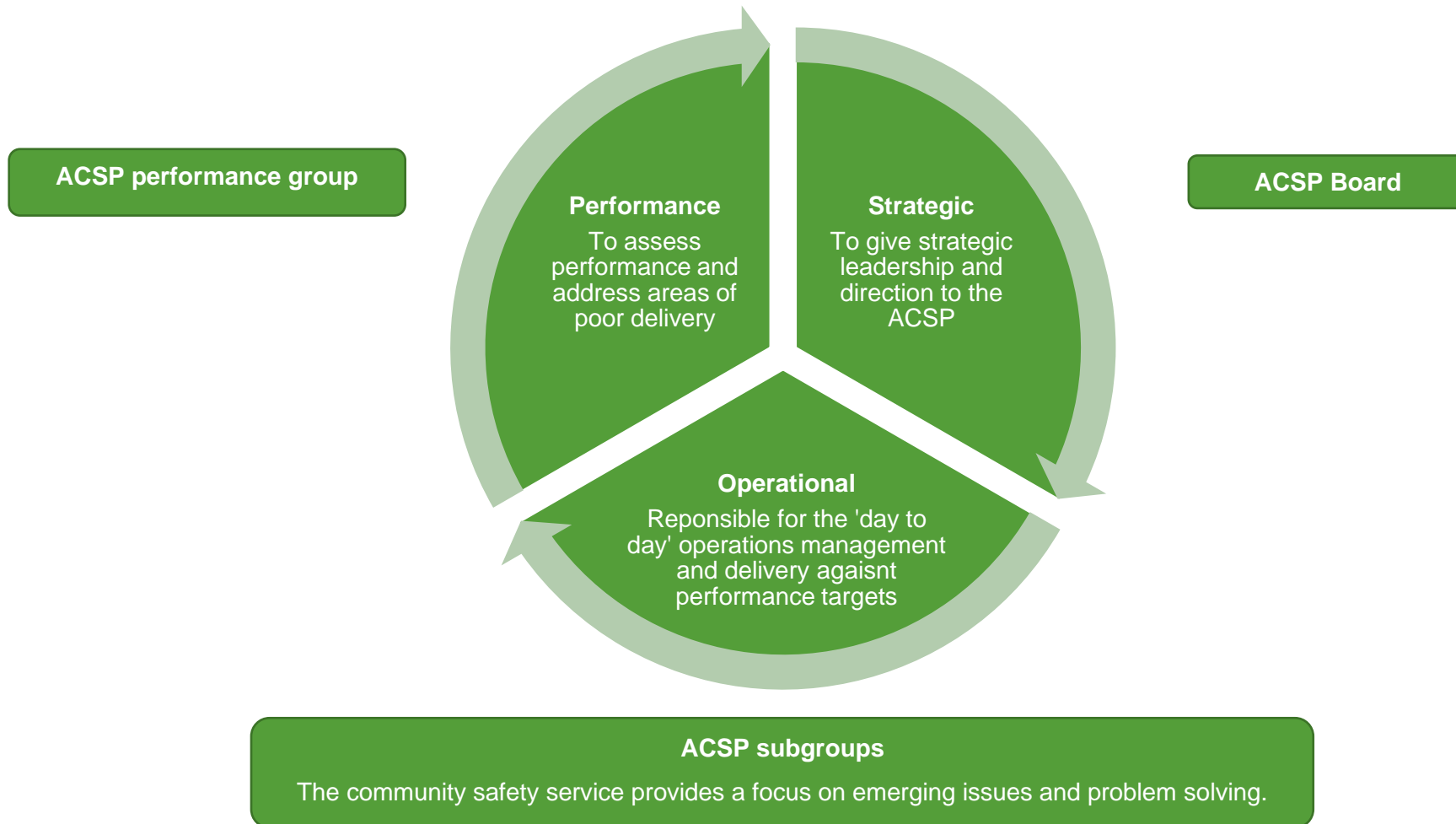
The ACSP will ensure that the priorities, actions and targets that we have identified in the rolling action plan will be delivered through a multi-agency approach by having:

- Strong strategic management
- Tasking our joint resources through well-established partnership operational structures, including identifying, managing and reducing risk
- Strong performance management. We need to know how well we are performing and whether our interventions outlined in the action plans above are making a real difference. To do this, the Board and subgroups have set targets under each of our thematic priorities to ensure achievement of the outcomes detailed within this Rolling Action Plan, as well as within individual strategies and plans e.g., the Town Centre Violence Strategy 2025 - 28. These will be monitored on a regular basis.

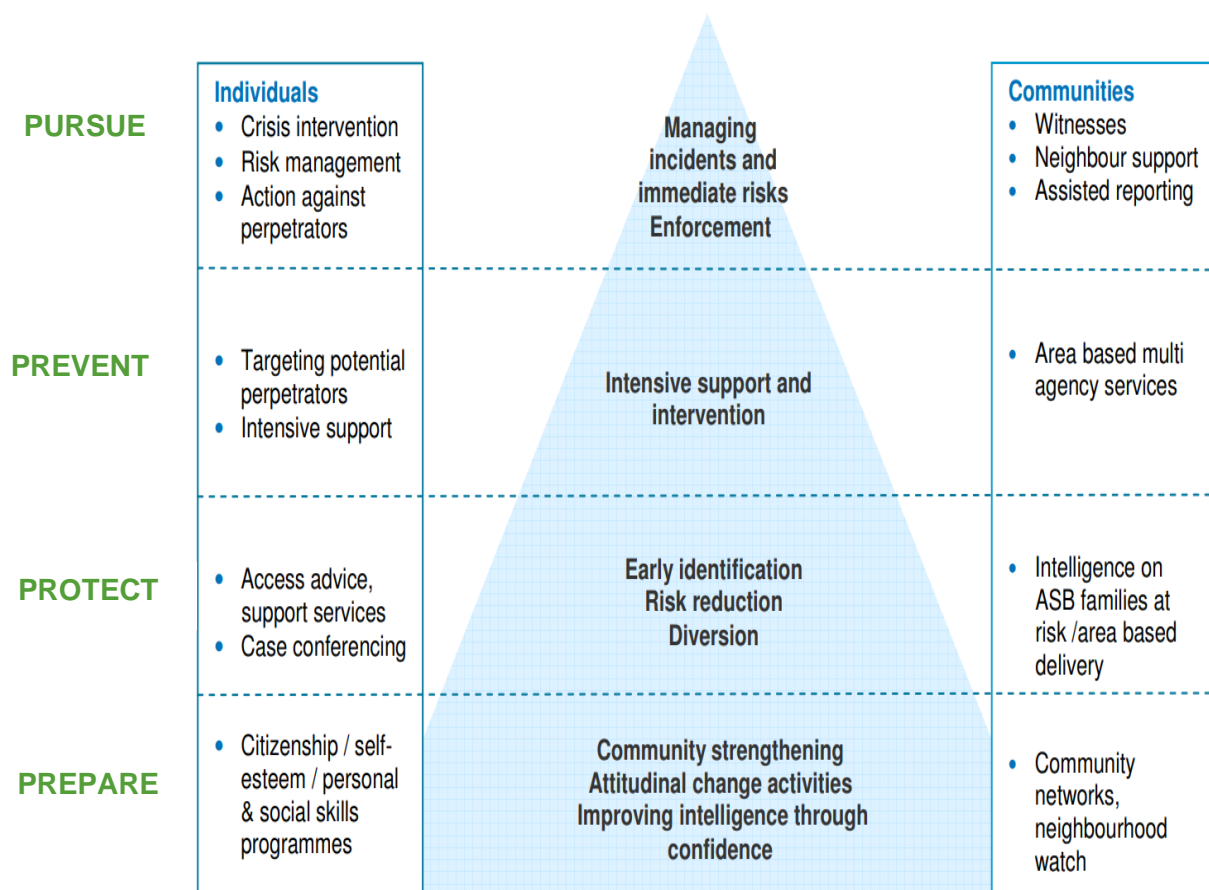
We will continue to invest in an approach which will allow us to assess priorities and priority crime types and build a detailed picture around the victim offender location triangle for each priority. This will enable targeted action to be devised and delivered by the partnership, as well as providing a useful tool for individual agencies to mainstream into their wider organisational business planning processes. This should translate into increased activity focusing on real changes to key crime trends and levels. This data will also inform commissioning partners and grant giving decisions moving forward. We will continue to work hard to keep all communities in Ashford safe.

ACSP governance

The governance of the ACSP has three key levels of decision making – strategic, operational and performance.



Our approach



The ACSP has a whole systems approach to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour. The diagram opposite illustrates the four tiers of intervention.

Our experience tells us that investing in one type of intervention alone does not resolve the problem. For example, enforcement is most effective if it is supported by local communities and other activity is taking place to change behaviour.

The triangle of intervention is applied when we are looking at any type of crime or anti-social behaviour issue that requires the engagement of a range of services, voluntary and community groups to find long term solutions.

Our whole systems approach is based on four tiers:

- Prepare
- Protect
- Prevent
- Pursue

Considerations in Developing the Rolling Action Plan 2025/26

Our Progress in 2024/25

The ACSP made significant progress in delivery of the plans set out in the rolling action plan 2024/25. Achievements include:

- A new Town Centre Violent Crime Strategy was agreed. The strategy was based on a detailed assessment of available data, with a number of priorities developed. The new strategy and the related action plan will be overseen by the ACSP Board.
- Cases where our CCTV capabilities have been crucial, including an Ashford Monitoring Centre (AMC) operator reviewing footage to link a person to a vehicle that was involved in the hit and run of a Kent Police officer. This evidence allowed us to prove who the driver was, resulting in a 10- year prison sentence.
- Ashford Refuge is the largest in Kent and has 16 self-contained flats. Any children housed in the refuge are supported by staff who provide play therapy, after school clubs and social events. All children have their own individual support plans. Adults are supported by refuge staff, including support to move on to a permanent new home.
- Kent Police and Ashford Borough Council staff attended the Ashford College Freshers fair and Ashford Pride. During these events they provided advice to the public and supplied them with personal safety equipment. Safety equipment was also taken along to the Eat Well, Spend Less Roadshows.
- The Police Cadet programme is available to young people aged 13 to 17 who live in Kent, irrespective of background or financial circumstances, including those vulnerable to crime or social exclusion. The cadets undergo training and participate in voluntary work with the police in their local community. They develop essential life skills and enhance opportunities for further education, training and employment – whether within the police service or another profession. The Ashford Cadets has continued to expand significantly during 2024/25.
- The Charlton Athletic Community Trust (CACT) has worked with 29 high risk young people who were in danger of being criminally exploited. This has resulted in a reduction in ASB and crime, alongside improved school attendance and relationships with peers and parents.

A Changing Environment

There have been several changes to the landscape the ACSP is part of and works within. The ACSP considers all these changes within the strategic assessment and uses this analysis to support and inform priority setting. Some of the key changes to our environment are outlined below:

[The Kent Police and Crime Plan](#)

On 1 April 2025, the 'Cut Crime, Support Victims, Build Trust: Kent Police and Crime Plan 2025 – 2029' will come into effect, replacing the Making Kent Safer plan. It will be published on the Office of the Kent PCC website. The plan sets out a framework for delivering the PCC's manifesto commitments, with the priorities centered around four key areas, Protecting People, Protecting Places, Protecting Property and Productive Partnerships.

[Knife crime and young people](#)

As part of the Plan for Change, tougher sanctions will be brought in to combat content circulating online that advertises deadly and illegal knives and other offensive weapons to young people – or which glorifies or incites violence. A greater range of online platforms will be liable under these new laws to also include online search engines as well as social media platforms and marketplaces, to capture all online providers which might currently be failing to remove content. The move bolsters further measures set out by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, and Ofcom, to protect children from a broad spectrum of harmful online content including pornography, suicide and self-harm under the Online Safety Act.

[The cost-of-living crisis](#)

The cost-of-living crisis remains an issue. The cost-of-living crisis is putting more people at risk of crime. This includes those being exploited by criminals (for example young people being groomed to carry drugs, used to launder criminal money, or sexually exploited). Acquisitive crime often increases in periods of economic downturn.

[The devolution white paper](#)

Reforms in this white paper will have a significant impact on every council and community. The Government will facilitate a programme of local government reorganisation for two tier areas in order to improve delivery of sustainable and high-quality services for residents. The Government will deliver this process as quickly as possible, including through legislation where it becomes necessary to ensure progress.

What The Strategic Assessment Told Us

Further information from the strategic assessment is included in the following sections, but key highlights are:

- In Ashford between the period November 2023 to October 2024 there were **10,261** recorded offences/incidents by the Police (compared to **11,013** for the same period the previous year, a reduction of **-6.8%**, n = - **752**). This was the sixth lowest volume of crime recorded across the Kent districts.
- There was a reduction in almost all crime types. When comparing this strategic assessment period to the same period the previous year, sexual offences increased by **4.8%** (n = **20**), burglary (business and community) increase by **3.2%** (n = **4**), drug offences increased by **12.0%** (n = **30**), and other miscellaneous crimes increased **5.6%** (n = **19**).
- Violent crime has seen a **-4.0%** decrease (n = - **197**) in Ashford when comparing February 2024 – January 2025 (n = **4,747**) to February 2023 – January 2024 (n = **4,944**). The **-4.0%** decrease in recorded violent crime is broadly in line with the Kent wide decrease of **-4.8%**. Most violent crimes have decreased, but increased have been observed in death or serious injury by unlawful driving, stalking and harassment, and within sexual offences sub categories.
- Violence Against the Person has seen a **-5.10%** decrease (n = -**229**) in Ashford when comparing February 2024 to January 2025 (n = **4,265**) to the same period the previous year (n = **4,494**). The peak ward for Violence Against the Person is Victoria (n = **733**). For the data period February 2024 – January 2025, **17.19%** of VAP offences in Ashford happened in Victoria ward. More detail is contained within Town Centre Violence Strategic Assessment and Town Centre Violence Reduction Strategy 2025-28.
- When analysing police data for the period November 2023 to October 2024 for domestic abuse flagged incidents, there were **3,130** domestic abuse incidents, compared to **3,278** for the same period the previous year - a reduction of **4.5%** (n = -**148**). There has been an increase in higher risk notifiable incidents and non-crime incidents when comparing this strategic assessment period to the last.
- The MARAC data shows that there were **147** cases from Ashford considered at the MARAC, compared to **183** in the previous strategic assessment. **24%** of these were repeat referrals, a sharp decrease from **41%** from the previous strategic assessment. The number of children at the MARAC has also dropped from **257** in the previous strategic assessment period to **151**.
- levels of ASB reported to the police between December 2023 and November 2024 compared to all Kent districts. There has been an **-8.5%** reduction in ASB reported to the Police in Ashford, compared to a **-3.8%** reduction Kent wide.
- Kent Fire and Rescue Services data shows total fires in Ashford during the period October 2023– September 2024 decreased to **222**.
- When looking at data from Kent commissioned substance misuse services for the period October 2023 – September 2024 there were **487** people accessing services who live in Ashford, and increase when compared to the previous strategic assessment period (n = **417**). Most of them are aged between 35 – 44 (n = **146**).
- When analysing the period December 2023 – November 2024, Ashford's decrease in hate crime (**-23.9%**, n = -**62**) was in excess of the Kent average (- **18.3%**).

Priorities and Values for the Rolling Action Plan 2024/25

Based on the findings of the Strategic Assessment and engagement across the ACSP and communities, the following priorities are agreed:

Reducing Serious Violence

including youth violence, weapon enabled crime, organised or group related crime.

Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls

including domestic abuse, stalking and harassment, sexual offences

Reducing Anti-Social Behaviour and Concerning Behaviours

including drug and alcohol related behaviours

Tackling Hate Crime and Extremism

including Prevent

The ACSP will also adopt a cross cutting value that informs the work of all priority areas:

Restoring Confidence, Supporting Communities

including increasing public confidence, reducing offending and reoffending

The ACSP Rolling Action Plan 2024/25 has been formulated to tackle the key issues identified within these priority areas, including our cross-cutting priority theme.

Reducing Serious Violence

Our Strategic Approach

We know that serious violence is made up of a number of distinct crime types and causes. These include youth violence, county lines, violence associated with the night-time economy, violent extremism, and others. Our existing strategic assessment approach will ensure we understand each distinct type of violence and that we respond according to the scale of individual problems. This will be supported by the new needs assessment undertaken as part of the new Serious Violence Duty.

The ACSP understands that there are a number of risk factors that contribute to the likelihood of being impacted by violence, and that activity can be undertaken on an individual, family, community, and societal level to prevent it. A public health approach is therefore used, to ensure we understand drivers, disproportionalities, and inequalities in our work.

We work to ensure we have a range of interventions, ensuring both our help offer and our enforcement approach are robust and targeted. We also know that a key part of this work stream is our ongoing communication and dialogue with our communities, ensuring they understand the crime profile in Ashford and that we work closely with them to manage perceptions and fear of crime.

Our Progress in 2023/24

- Safer season operations have had a continued focus on the night-time economy with dedicated foot patrols during peak times.
- Close working with Ashford Partnership Against Crime (APAC) has led to several exclusions being issued to perpetrators of violence within the night-time economy; a powerful tool for businesses to send a message to those intent on violence that it is not acceptable and has consequences.
- The Ashford Street Pastors provide additional visibility and assist the police and the Ashford Monitoring Centre (CCTV) in identifying situations that can escalate into violence. The number of Street Pastors increased significantly in 2023/24.
- The Best Bar None scheme was formally launched in November 2022, and a number of premises in the town centre successfully gained re-accreditation in 2024.
- The Ashford Serious Organised Crime (SOC) Panel continued to meet monthly. This is an effective problem-solving forum disrupting Organised Crime Groups (OCGs) based in or operating within Ashford.

What The Strategic Assessment Told Us

The strategic assessment revealed:

- The peak month for recorded Violence Against the Person in Ashford is July (n = **413**). The lowest months for recorded Violence Against the Person were November (n = **313**) and April (n = **316**).
- Most Serious Violence in Ashford decreased by **-6.7%** (n = **-4**) when comparing March 2024 – February 2025 to March 2023 – February 2024. This is higher than the Kent wide decrease of **-1.3%**.
- Robbery in Ashford decreased by **-34.6%** (n = **-18**) when comparing March 2024 – February 2025 to the same period the previous year. There was a Kent wide decrease of **-11.2%**.
- Violence with injury decreased by **-7.9%** (n = **-83**) when comparing March 2023 – February 2024 to March 2022 – February 2023. This is in line with the Kent wide decrease of **-7.6%**.
- Violence without injury decreased by **-8.9%** (n = **-184**) when comparing March 2023 – February 2024 to March 2022 – February 2023. This is against the Kent wide decrease of **-4.6%**, and is the fourth highest reduction across Kent districts.
- Possession of weapons in Ashford increased by **2.0%** (n = **2**). This is compared to a Kent wide increase of **8.2%**.
- When analysing the Kent wide Youth Justice Serious Violence Cohort:
 - **61%** had a less than 90% attendance rate.
 - **51%** had a fixed or permanent exclusion.
 - **28%** were a Child in Need and **9%** had a Child Protection Plan.
 - **50%** had an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or Special Education Need (SEN) support at some point in their school career.

Action Plan

Lead agency – Ashford Police

Key Areas	Key actions	Key outcomes and performance measures
Prepare	Deliver the actions outlined in the new Town Centre Violent Crime Strategy 2025-28, including those targeting a reduction in the most serious violence and weapon related violence.	A reduction in most serious violence and weapon related violence, particularly those aged 25 and under (as a victim or suspect).
Protect	Develop interventions based on the intelligence within the Strategic Assessment and the Serious Violence Needs Assessment – particularly focused on the high count, high harm Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs).	Reduction in count and harm for serious violence in the identified LSOAs.
Prevent	Review interventions in place to tackle knife crime, particularly intensive interventions for those identified as at most risk from becoming involved in knife crime. Where additional funding is required, review and maximise opportunities to bid for funds.	Increased interventions, referrals to interventions, and reductions in knife crime. Number of funding applications submitted.
Pursue	Improve the use of interventions and services to manage and reduce the risk of harm from violent offenders on probation or those involved in Youth Justice.	Interventions and services reviewed and improvement work undertaken, with measures identified to track reductions in reoffending rates and the improved management of high-risk offenders.

Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls

Our Strategic Approach

Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) is a term used to describe a range of violent and abusive acts and behaviours, which are predominantly, but not exclusively, directed against women and girls. This term is used to describe abuse against all genders but highlights the disproportionate impact on women and girls.

VAWG includes domestic abuse, rape and sexual violence, sexual harassment, female genital mutilation, forced prostitution, modern slavery, stalking, forced marriage and so-called 'honour' based violence.

VAWG is a worldwide issue of epidemic proportions. Nationally, average two women are killed every week by a current or former partner and one in five women have experienced some form of sexual violence since the age of 16.

In many instances VAWG remains hidden and under-reported, but it is not inevitable and collectively we can end it.

Many different reasons are given as to why VAWG happens. These can include substance use, mental ill health, anger issues, growing up in an abusive household, and cultural, legal, and political factors.

VAWG is universal and cuts across race, class, age, sexuality, and disability. Experiences of racism, classism, ageism,

homophobia, transphobia, and discrimination against disabled people can make people more vulnerable to abuse because they face additional barriers in accessing support. We recognise the need to understand this in the work we do.

We will continue to take a coordinated approach across the partnership, ensuring all agencies work together to tackle domestic abuse, sexual offences and violence against women and girls – breaking the cycle for good.

Our Progress in 2023/24

- In 2023/24, Ashford Borough Council signed the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) to ensure a robust response to domestic abuse within the housing sector.
- Several Violence Against Women and Girls 'Walk and Talk' events were held and provided an excellent opportunity to engage with members of the public. Women and girls were able to raise concerns in relation to specific locations where they felt unsafe and were able to access personal safety equipment provided by the Community Safety Unit.
- Robust approaches to taxi licensing are in place, with two refusals, four revocations, and seven suspensions of taxi driver licenses within the period. These actions have been in the interest of protecting public safety.

What The Strategic Assessment Told Us

The strategic assessment revealed:

- When analysing police data for November 2023 – October 2024 against the same period the previous year, a **-6.7%** (n = **-176**) reduction in violence against women and girls offences can be observed. **53%** of all VAWG is domestic abuse, and **47%** is non-domestic abuse.
- When analysing police data for the period March 2024 – February 2025 for domestic abuse flagged incidents, the peak months were July (n = **311**) and December (n = **300**). The month with the lowest offences was April (n = **231**). For domestic abuse flagged incidents assessed by the police as high risk, the peak month was December (n = **30**). The month with the lowest offences was April (n = **0**).
- When analysing the period March 2024 to February 2025, the peak wards for domestic abuse are Victoria (n = **196**), Aylesford and East Stour (n = **156**) and Beaver (n = **130**).
- domestic abuse cases referred to the Kent Single Point of Access by Kent district between April 2023 to March 2024. For Ashford **1,501** referrals were received, with **1,002** assessed as standard risk, **420** as medium risk, and **79** as high risk.
- The largest referral source to the MARAC was an Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA), referring **57** cases. Police referred **40** cases, compared to **55** for the previous strategic assessment.
- Stalking and harassment in Ashford increased by **4.0%** (n = **54**) March 2024 – February 2025, compared to a decrease in the previous strategic assessment period of **-14.2%** (n = **-224**).
- When looking at police data for the period March 2024 – February 2025, rape in Ashford decreased by **-2.1%** (n = **-3**) when comparing to the same period the previous year. This is compared to a **-4.5%** decrease across Kent.
- When looking at police data for the period March 2024 – February 2025, sexual offences in Ashford increased by **9.2%** (n = **37**). This should be seen in the context of a **-10.6%** (n = **-48**) decrease when looking at the previous strategic assessment period. There was an 8.7% increase across Kent.
- The peak ward for sexual offences was Victoria (n = **66**), with an increase of **46.7%** (n = **21**) when compared to the last strategic assessment period.

Action Plan

Lead agency – Ashford Domestic Abuse Forum

Key Areas	Key actions	Key outcomes and performance measures
Prepare	Increase promotion of VAWG and our work to tackle attitudes and behaviours, using local forums, walk and talks and other events, increasing engagement and awareness, particularly across communities disproportionately impacted.	<p>Increase in reports and use of commissioned services.</p> <p>Increase in satisfaction of services to tackle domestic abuse and VAWG by survivors.</p>
Protect	<p>Deliver Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Awareness session.</p> <p>Improved violence against women and girls web-based information is available to all who need it.</p>	<p>Increased understanding of and referrals into relevant services.</p> <p>New webpages launched, number of communications to promote and website traffic figures.</p>
Prevent	Conduct a MARAC audit using dip samples – making sure all high-risk referrals are reaching MARAC and that high referral rates are appropriate.	Increased safety levels for survivors of high-risk domestic abuse. Reduced repeat victim rate, reduced repeat offender rate.
Pursue	Put in place services and interventions to increase confidence in survivors to report and pursue justice. To include a relentless pursuit of VAWG perpetrators, particularly the most chronic and persistent offenders.	<p>Increase criminal justice outcomes across VAWG offences.</p> <p>Increased multi agency working to creatively hold the most high-risk perpetrators of VAWG to account.</p>

Tackling Anti-Social and Concerning Behaviours

Our Strategic Approach

All residents have the right to the peaceful enjoyment of their own homes and neighbourhood. ASB and neighbourhood crime can have a serious impact on the wellbeing of residents and for those who work or socialise in Ashford.

Any behaviours that are regarded as a nuisance could be considered to be anti-social. This behavior can range from low level activity to incidents that are also a criminal offence. We undertake to tackle ASB, with a focus on incidents that are deemed more high risk and impactful upon communities and individuals.

We do understand that some presentations of ASB can reveal some concerning information surrounding the alleged 'perpetrator,' for example substance misuse, mental health concerns or other vulnerability or safeguarding concern. This can be especially true in children. Where this is the case, we work to tackle these underlying issues and support the person or their family to address the concerning behaviours. Otherwise, emphasis will be on ensuring that perpetrators are dealt with effectively and at an early stage before the problem can escalate.

We work closely with the police to ensure that repeat victims are identified, and that the council and police work together to support such individuals.

Our Progress in 2023/24

- In 2024 the council conducted a consultation for the renewal of the Conningbrook Lake Public Space Protection Order. No objections or recommendations for change were received and it was renewed for another three years.
- In the first six months of 2023/24, ABC housing services issued 32 Community Protection Warnings, 7 Community Protection Notices and 1 Fixed Penalty Notice.
- Kent police issued 13 Community Protection Warnings within this time. These were for a variety of ASB matters. Six of these progressed to Community Protection Notices and one progressed to a Criminal Behaviour Order (CBO). Ashford Monitoring Centre provided CCTV evidence to support the police in obtaining the CBO.
- There was one 'Community Trigger' in 2023.
- Section 34 dispersal areas were put in place on five occasions. Four of these related to preventing ASB in the town centre. One was implemented in Stanhope in June 2023 following a large disturbance in the area.
- Increased high visibility patrols were carried out during key summer months in key ASB hotspot locations, including Connington and Singleton Lakes.

What The Strategic Assessment Told Us

- When analysing the period November 2023 to October 2024, there were **1,639** ASB incidents reported to the police, compared to **1,819** for the same period the previous year. This accounts for a reduction of **-9.9%** (n = **-180**).
- There has been a **52.8%** increase in animal nuisance (n = **28**). There has been a **-19.6%** decrease (n = **-66**) in motor vehicle nuisance on road, and a **-15.9%** decrease (n = **-103**) in rowdy or nuisance gatherings in public.
- **33%** of all reports to the police were related to drunken or rowdy behaviour.
- For the period December 2023 and November 2024 has been an **-8.5%** reduction in ASB reported to the Police in Ashford, compared to a **-3.8%** reduction Kent wide.
- For the period March 2024 – February 2025, the peak months for ASB reports were April and May (n = **233**). The lowest month was December (n = **127**).
- For the period March 2024 – February 2025 the peak ward for ASB recorded by the police was Victoria (n = **440**). When comparing this strategic assessment period to the last, there has been a substantial decrease in ASB reported to the police in Stanhope (n = **200**, compared to n = **80**).
- Public order offences in Ashford March 2024 – February 2025 totaled **546** offences, as compared to **622** for the same period the previous year, a reduction of **-12.2%** (n = **-76**). This compares to a Kent wide reduction of **-14.0%**. The peak month for public order offences was August (n = **55**). The lowest number of offences was in April (n = **37**). The peak ward for public order offences was Victoria (n = **119**), with a **-23.2%** reduction when comparing to the same period the previous year.
- Criminal damage offences in Ashford March 2024 – February 2025 totaled **1,046** offences, as compared to **1,340** for the same period the previous year, a decrease of **-21.9%** (n = **-294**). This is the **second** highest reduction of the Kent districts.
- Police recorded arson offences in Ashford between March 2024 and February 2025 totaled **32** offences, as compared to **51** for the same period the previous year, a decrease of **-37.3%** (n = **-19**).

Action Plan

Lead agency – Ashford Borough Council

Key Areas	Key actions	Key outcomes and performance measures
Prepare	Deliver the actions outlined in the new Town Centre Violent Crime Strategy 2025-28, particularly those related to ASB and public order.	A reduction in town centre ASB, particularly those aged 25 and under (as a victim or suspect).
Protect	Continued planning and delivery of school holiday events and interventions to address peak month hotspots.	Reduction in ASB reported in peak months where young people are identified as the concern.
Prevent	<p>Continuance of the District Contextual Safeguarding Meeting (DCSM)</p> <p>Continue regular multi-agency patrols in and around the town centre to engage with our homeless and street-drinking population.</p>	<p>Improved safeguarding outcomes for the most vulnerable.</p> <p>Improved engagement and a reduction in ASB related to street drinking and homelessness.</p> <p>Reduction in street drink related ASB reports and in harmful behaviours.</p>
Pursue	Ensure robust enforcement against persistent offenders, including the consideration of multi-agency approaches to holding offenders to account.	Increased use of enforcement tools across partners.

Tackling Hate Crime and Extremism

Our Strategic Approach

Tackling extremism, hate crime, and building cohesion remain important issues for councils. Extremism can have a huge effect on local areas, from devastating terror attacks; to communities divided by harmful ideology, hate and intolerance. If extremist attitudes are left to fester, there can be a destructive impact on social harmony and unity, with communities living in fear, daily lives disrupted, and hatred allowed to prosper. The threats from extremism continue to change, presenting new and evolving challenges – and understanding, responding, and building resilience to these requires a dynamic and joined-up approach.

Many hate crimes are motivated by extremist ideologies, with extremist influencers often remaining on the right side of the law whilst promoting intolerance, blaming, dehumanizing, and ‘othering’ certain groups and conspiracy theories – this includes the amplification and exploitation of local issues or concerns by other (sometimes national or even international) actors, intent on stoking division. This might manifest as online support, street protest, or criminal activity.

Reported hate crime in the UK has risen every year over the past decade, from 39,000 crimes in 2013 to 114,000 crimes in 2021. Whilst an increase in reporting may be seen as a positive (e.g., there is an increased trust in us to respond to reports), short-term trends – including a rise of a third in racially and religiously aggravated offences between 2020 and 2021 – suggests a significant issue damaging community cohesion.

We know that action to address hate crime and extremism needs the following elements to be successful and this informs our strategic approach:

- Multi-agency working
- The effective sharing of information and intelligence
- Meaningful community engagement
- Co-production of responses
- Strong communication

Our Progress in 2023/24

- Extreme right-wing training was delivered to partnership staff.
- Preventing extremism is standing agenda item at the Ashford CSP meetings, at which a representative from the Kent County Council Prevent team provides an update. The Counter-Terrorism Local Profile (CTLP) is considered annually.
- ABC is involved in the county Prevent Duty Delivery Board and the newly established Prevent Advisory Group (which encourages communities to engage in this subject).
- The ACSP attends Channel Panel when an Ashford case is on the agenda. Ashford has had three cases in the first six months of 2024/25.

What The Strategic Assessment Told Us

- When looking at the period November 2023 to October 2024 there were **244** hate crime incidents reported to the police, a decrease from **346** incidents in the same period for the previous year (**-29.5%**, n= **-102**). Ashford has the **sixth** lowest volume of the Kent districts.
- **71%** (n = **141**) hate crime incidents recorded were race related.
- When analysing the period March 2024 – February 2025, the peak wards for police reports were Victoria (n = **35**) and Willesborough (n = **27**).
- Between March 2024 – February 2025, there were **419** vulnerable / repeatedly targeted callers, a decrease from the last strategic assessment (n = **558**). The peak month was June (n = **45**).
- In the South-East there were **1,106** referrals to Prevent, **173** discussed at a Channel Panel and **83** adopted as a Channel case.
- When looking at National Prevent data:
 - Those aged 11 to 15 accounted for the largest proportion (**2,729; 40%**); while those aged between 16 and 17 accounted for the second largest proportion (**892; 13%**) of referrals
 - For the fourth year running, the number of referrals for 'Extreme right-wing concerns' (**1,314; 19%**) is greater than referrals for 'Islamist concerns' (**913; 13%**); This was the first year since 2019/20 that the number of referrals for Islamist concerns have increased compared with the previous year.
 - The majority of referrals that went on to be adopted as a Channel case were for 'Extreme right-wing concerns' (**230; 45%**); while **118 (23%)** were for 'Islamist concerns' and **90 (18%)** were for those with a conflicted ideology.

Action Plan

Lead agency – Police / Ashford Borough Council

Key Areas	Key actions	Key outcomes and performance measures
Prepare	Communications and engagement targeted on the improvement of community cohesion, including review of mechanisms to report hate crimes.	Number of communications and engagements delivered, and improvements to reporting mechanisms identified are delivered.
Protect	Support community cohesion and the tackling of hate crime through effective grant giving, targeted on the hate crime types identified through the Strategic Assessment.	Additional resources brought into the ACSP through successful grant application, building community capacity.
Prevent	Review our intelligence and information sharing to ensure we are identifying and sharing community tensions, concerning ideologies and hate crimes.	Increased identification of hate crime hotspots and related actions to address.
Pursue	Identify individuals or groups with extreme or concerning ideologies and make timely referrals to Prevent / Channel.	Appropriate referrals made and accepted.



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