



Strategic Assessment 2019-20

Conclusions and recommendations

Nationally, **crime reported to the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) has been fairly stable over recent years**, following a sustained reduction since levels peaked in 1995. Meanwhile, crimes recorded by the police nationally have increased slightly, which may still be due to improvements in recording practice. Overall police recorded crime for Portsmouth was also found to be stable and this is reflected in the findings from our local community safety survey.¹ However, detailed analysis shows that this stability doesn't apply to all crime types. Some types of crime have decreased since 2018/19, **particularly acquisitive crimes, while others have increased, for example stalking & harassment, public order, robbery and drug offences.**

Domestic abuse continues to be the most common known driver of assaults, but while the proportion of assaults between spouses/partners/ex-partners has remained fairly constant (30%) over the last seven years, **the proportion of assaults between family members has been increasing.** It is now double what it was in 2012/13 (9% compared with 4.3%). Meanwhile, the **number and proportion of assaults taking place in the main night-time economy areas has reduced** by 22% (n163) since 2016/17.

Serious violence had seen an upward trend locally since 2014/15, but has been fairly stable overall for the last two years. 'Most serious violence' has reduced by 12%, knife-enabled serious violence has reduced by 3% and possession of a weapon offences have remained stable. However, **robbery (which makes up 16%, n54 of serious violence) has continued to increase since 2018/19 (by 14%, n32) and the subcategory of knife-enabled robbery has increased by 16% (n9).** Three quarters of victims of serious violence were male, and the peak age was **18-24 years.** Young males were more likely to be assaulted by a stranger or acquaintance than in a domestic setting. The reverse is true for females; **two thirds of female victims of serious violence were victims of domestic violence, including 25% by ex-partner** (compared to 3% of male victims). **Most offenders were male and the peak age groups were 10-17 and 18-24 years.** Analysis has found that perpetrators of serious violence in Hampshire had often been convicted of at least one prior offence, been a victim themselves (on average at 14 years of age) **and two thirds had either experienced, witnessed or perpetrated domestic abuse.**

While 40% of Portsmouth residents who participated in the CSS 2020 thought knife crime was a problem, most were basing this on what they had heard from friends or in the media. **Just over one in ten had seen someone carrying a knife, 3% (n26) had witnessed someone being threatened or attacked with a knife and 1% (n11) had been threatened or attacked themselves.** These findings indicate that **knives are visible in the community** and is anticipated to be even more of an issue for more vulnerable groups who are less likely to have engaged with the survey.

¹ Community Safety Survey 2020



The CCS 2020 found that that **fewer than half of crimes reported to the survey had been reported to the police or other agencies**, often because they felt the crime was not that serious or a belief that the police would not do anything because they did not have the resources.

Anti-social behaviour recorded by the police has also been on a downward trend both locally and nationally. The Office for National Statistics report that these figures should be treated with caution as **improvements in police recorded crime could mean that incidents that would have been recorded as 'anti-social behaviour' are now being recorded as crime**. Conversely, complaints reported to the noise pollution team are increasing, and our local survey also found that more people were witnessing and experiencing anti-social behaviour. This indicates that **anti-social behaviour is likely to be increasing, but that residents may be increasingly reluctant to report incidents to the police**.

Drug use is becoming more of an issue in Portsmouth. More residents reported people **using or dealing drugs** to the residents' survey and this has become the **most commonly witnessed/experienced type** of anti-social behaviour for the first time. The **number of drug possession and supply offences has been increasing**, and was the only crime type not to dip in April when the UK lockdown measures were the most restrictive. While drug markets appear to be stable, there has **been a slight increase in County Lines** (which tend to supply the majority of heroin & crack), although the number of young people known to be linked to drug networks doesn't appear to have increased. There has also been an **increase in the proportion of year 10 pupils reporting that they use cannabis**, which is often thought of as a gateway drug, exposing young people to dealers where they may be able to procure other substances. Finally, the **number of people in treatment for dependence on drugs has increased, but the number successfully completing treatment hasn't**.

The rate of **First Time Entrants to the youth justice system has increased, along with the rate of re-offending** and both are higher than the national average, and the average for similar areas. However, there has been a notable reduction (28%, n203) in the offences committed by young people that resulted in a substantive outcome, which should result in the rate of reoffending reducing for the 2019/20 cohorts.

Despite the reduction in police recorded trafficking offences for children and young people, **children considered at risk of criminal exploitation has almost doubled since 2018/19**. And while there have also been fewer episodes of young people going missing, **the number of missing reports for young people in care have not reduced**. Local analysis has continued to **highlight the links between these high risk children and young people and their home environment**; for example, the majority of the children considered at high risk of criminal exploitation had either witnessed domestic abuse or directly experienced abuse or neglect. Due to the focus early intervention for serious violence, it is recommended that the risk and protective factor framework (designed as part of the violence reduction work) is populated so that other areas of concern relating to other aspects that could be linked to young people becoming a victim or perpetrator of crime can be addressed. 📖



Consultation with residents via the Community Safety Survey and the Building Safer Communities workshops found that the priorities for participants were to **increase the presence of police or wardens** in the community, and to **focus on early intervention activities and groups with children and young people** to keep them engaged and occupied. In addition, some participants in both consultation exercises also felt that **community 'spirit' or cohesion was the key to a safer community**.

The lockdown and social distancing measures introduced to limit the harm caused by Covid-19 pandemic has had far reaching effects on our society, particularly from a mental health and financial perspectives, and researchers have also warned of a predicted rise in suicide rates for young people (15-29years) as a consequence of increased food and housing poverty. These measures have changed behaviour patterns, and **almost all types of crime experienced lower levels during April, followed by a gradual return to pre-lockdown levels**. However, there was a higher level of public order and possession of a weapon offences, often relating to social distancing measures. Reports of antisocial behaviour have also increased substantially during this period. **Drug possession and supply offences have continued to increase**, while county lines have remained active by adapted their model to bypass restrictions. There is also concern about the possibility of increase adulteration of substances to keep up with demand. There has also been a slight **increase in domestic abuse offences**, although this is a continuation of the current upward trend. It is **possible that the levels of domestic abuse have been higher than the reported crimes suggest but that lockdown measures have meant that people experiencing domestic abuse have had less opportunity to seek support or engage with services**.

1.1. Recommended priorities

Whilst many of the main themes have remained the same for a number of years, with the changes in partnership structure and the amalgamation of the Safer Portsmouth Partnership into the Health and Wellbeing Board, there is a need for a clearer focus on fewer priorities.

It is recommended that the following are key priorities for the partnership:

- **Tackling violent crime; continuing to focus on domestic abuse, serious violence, and knife-enabled violence**
- **Tackling drug misuse in the city**
- **Early identification of and interventions with children and young people at risk of exploitation or abuse, of misusing substances and of perpetrating anti-social behaviour or offending**

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