

SAFER WEST SUSSEX PARTNERSHIP
COMMUNITY SAFETY
AGREEMENT



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FOREWORD

West Sussex continues to be a safe and resilient county, with crime rates lower than the national average. However, the landscape of crime and disorder is constantly evolving, shaped by both local and national challenges. This community safety agreement sets out how we will continue to work together in partnership to improve the lives of residents, businesses and communities across West Sussex.



The Safer West Sussex Partnership (SWSP) is our strategic community safety partnership which brings together councils, police, health, fire and rescue, probation, and other key partners to jointly address risks that impact the safety and wellbeing of residents.

As Vice-Chair of the Safer West Sussex Partnership (SWSP) I am proud to present our latest community safety agreement which takes effect from 1st April 2025. I am very pleased to report that much progress has already been made over the last few years, as evidenced in our most recent strategic intelligence assessment. This latest community safety agreement recognises the continued development of our partnership focus and activity.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognise and thank all our partners for their support, dedication and focus to protect vulnerable people, look after each other and reduce harm in our communities.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stuart Hale', written in a cursive style.

Chief Superintendent Stuart Hale
Sussex Police Divisional Commander &
Vice Chair of Safer West Sussex Partnership

INTRODUCTION

Under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (as amended by the Police and Justice Act 2006), it is a statutory duty for two-tier authorities to work in partnership to consider crime and disorder in the delivery of all their duties. Across West Sussex we achieve this through our Safer West Sussex Partnership and our shared vision of making West Sussex a safer, more resilient, and inclusive place for all.

This community safety agreement not only fulfils our statutory duty to inform communities of how we intend to work but also serves to complement local community safety partnership plans and strategies. Within these pages is our strategic framework documenting how agencies in West Sussex work together to tackle crime and promote community safety through a series of strategic priorities and shared commitments for 2025-29.

As a large geographical area¹, we recognise that community safety issues do not always respect district or borough boundaries. As such, working together to tackle crime and disorder can afford us economies of scale and lead to more effective outcomes. To ensure we are prioritising our work where it is most needed, we draw insight from [strategic intelligence assessments](#) which are produced annually by our partnership analyst.

Within the lifetime of this agreement, we will continue to develop even more joined-up approaches to public service delivery to maximise effective and co-ordinated strategic planning across partner agencies and ensure our work sustainably delivers meaningful and lasting outcomes.

¹ West Sussex is 769 square miles and home to over 900,000 residents and businesses

LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships were originally introduced under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. Subsequently renamed Community Safety Partnerships, these partnerships are formed of key responsible authorities including, but not limited to:



County, district & borough councils



Police



Fire & Rescue



Health



Probation & Youth Justice

Community Safety Partnerships work together to formulate and implement strategies to tackle crime, disorder and antisocial behaviour. Since their inception in 1998, a wealth of other legislation, duties and policy have facilitated and enabled community safety partnerships to collaborate (including the legal sharing of information) to address community safety issues.

The overarching goal of community safety partnerships, and the legislation that enables them, is to create safer, more resilient communities where residents, businesses and visitors feel protected and have equal opportunities. Legislation mandates multi-agency working and community engagement to ensure our strategies are relevant and responsive to local needs, are proactive and address the underlying factors that can make some people more likely to experience crime and disorder either as a victim and/or perpetrator.

For a chronological overview of key community safety legislation and its impact on local Community Safety Partnerships such as ours, please refer to [appendix 1](#) of this document or refer to the Legislative Context chapter of the [strategic intelligence assessment](#).

COMMUNITY CONTEXT

The community safety landscape in West Sussex continues to be shaped by complex social, economic, and political issues, many of which have both national and local dimensions. Understanding these dynamics, some of which are outlined here, ensures our partnership work is responsive and targeted.

International Conflict & Migration: Global crises and international conflicts² have contributed to net migration into the UK. West Sussex, like many areas, has supported migrant communities from Ukraine and Afghanistan, with 4000 people living across the county under three different immigration pathways³. International conflict also contributes to community tension and have impacted global commodity prices which have driven up the cost of living. Community tensions linked to global conflicts and migration remain closely monitored across Sussex.

Extremism, Hate Crime, and Civil Unrest: Following the Southport attack in July 2024, many towns across the country experienced civil unrest, including protests, disorder, vandalism and hate crime, exacerbated by the spread of misinformation targeting marginalised communities. As the perpetrator was known to several agencies, a Prevent learning review was undertaken, a new Independent Prevent Commissioner for England & Wales appointed, and a public inquiry launched.

Cost of Living Pressures: While inflation has stabilised, higher living costs continue to impact many local communities in West Sussex with households facing a significantly higher cost of living compared to 2021. Rising food and energy costs have impacted financial vulnerability for some, and have been plausibly linked to increases in shoplifting, fraud, online scams and exploitation, as evidenced in recent strategic intelligence assessments. Pressure on household budgets has also exacerbated issues such as mental health challenges, debt, and housing insecurity, with voluntary and statutory services reporting increased demand. Financial pressures are not just impacting individuals but also businesses, public sector organisations, and the voluntary sector which are heavily relied upon to support service provision.

² Including the ongoing conflict in Ukraine which entered its third year in February 2025

³ Two-thirds have settled under the 'Homes for Ukraine' pathway

Violence Against Women and Girls: In July 2024, the National Police Chiefs' Council highlighted a 40% increase in violence against women and girls since 2018/19. This includes domestic abuse, sexual offences, stalking, misogyny and online-enabled violence. West Sussex has seen rising demand for support services and continues to prioritise multi-agency approaches under the Domestic Abuse strategy and Serious Violence workstreams.

Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation: In December 2024, the UK Government published a white paper on devolution⁴, encouraging two- tier areas to consider local government reorganisation to improve service delivery and accountability. Additionally, Sussex will have a newly elected Mayor from April 2026 as part of the mayoral combined authority. A number of powers and responsibilities will fall under the Sussex Mayor and these new models of local governance could reshape community safety partnership structures in the coming years.

KEY IMPLICATIONS FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY IN WEST SUSSEX

- Increased demand for safeguarding and support services.
- Greater focus on early intervention
- Continued need for partnership work addressing exploitation, domestic abuse, financial vulnerability and fraud prevention.
- Monitoring of community tensions linked to migration and geopolitical events.
- Planning for potential structural changes to local government and partnership governance.

⁴ English Devolution www.gov.uk

LOCAL GOVERNANCE

The Safer West Sussex Partnership Executive board oversees this agreement and is responsible for the delivery of the strategic community safety priorities set out within this document. Board membership taken from senior officers across the responsible authorities including:



District & Borough Councils



The Partnership links to other strategic boards and locality partnerships and is supported by various thematic subgroups, whose remit is to effectively and efficiently deliver the priorities outlined in this agreement and to comply with statutory responsibilities. These groups include:

To read out more about partnership accountability, see [appendix 2](#).

STRATEGIC WORKSTREAMS & PRIORITY GROUPS

Whilst West Sussex is a safe place to live, work and visit, some people will experience crime and disorder in our county. We know that children and young people, working age adults and older adults experience crime and disorder differently because risk of harm is contextual; varying according to the places and spaces people spend time, who they are with and what they are doing.

We also know that crime has a significant effect on more than just those who experience it first-hand. It also affects their families, the economy, health and criminal justice systems. As such, we are committed to increasing community resilience by reducing the drivers of crime experienced by priority groups.

To help us establish community safety priorities for West Sussex, our Partnership Analyst undertakes an annual strategic intelligence assessment drawing insight from a wide number of local and national datasets. This comprehensive analytical review also considers community insights and other needs assessments.

Over time, the priorities and themes outlined in Community Safety Agreements—and adopted by the Safer West Sussex Partnership—have evolved beyond a sole focus on crime and disorder. Today, they reflect a broader range of issues that affect community safety, recognising the complex and changing nature of risks faced by individuals and communities.

This wider focus includes safeguarding concerns, such as protecting vulnerable children and adults from harm, and addressing the risks posed by gangs and organised crime groups.

The Partnership also works to tackle various forms of exploitation, including modern slavery, child criminal exploitation, and other practices that put people at risk.

Cybercrime has become an increasing concern, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic, which saw a rise in online scams, fraud, and digital exploitation. The impact of such crimes is now more widely understood, and tackling cybercrime is a key priority for the Partnership.

Additionally, the partnership recognises the growing links between mental ill- health, repeat victimisation, and crime. Ensuring that those affected by these issues receive the right support is central to local efforts to reduce harm, improve wellbeing, and create safer, more resilient communities.

Accordingly, the following priority themes have been adopted by the partnership as key areas of focus:

- Community Cohesion
- Digital Safety & Fraud
- Domestic and Sexual Violence & Abuse
- Preventing Radicalisation & Violent Extremism
- Substance Misuse
- Violence & Exploitation



Acknowledging and addressing the ways these issues impact children and young people, working age adults and older adults, means we can better respond to the needs of our communities. Our strategic commitments are further outlined overleaf.

COMMUNITY COHESION

Community cohesion describes a way of responding to the changing dynamics, often related to diversity, in local communities. The practice and policy of community cohesion requires work to foster contact and interaction between diverse groups to break down perceived or real barriers to connection, undermine the narratives of prejudice, challenge stereotypes and address the grievances, divisions and potential for living 'parallel lives' whilst living and/or working in the same geographical area.

Regional, national and international events have had an impact on cohesion in the county, as in many areas of the UK. International conflicts have brought new populations to West Sussex via government resettlement schemes and through asylum routes. Significant and in some cases, unexpected, immigration has long been a factor in declining community cohesion, especially where national or local economic conditions lend themselves to narratives focussing on unacceptable difference and preferential treatment.

Therefore, a struggling UK economy and some of the divisive sentiments which began around Brexit have added to a sense of injustice in some areas.

The Covid- 19 pandemic encouraged more people to spend more time online, and to use social media to create and sustain relationships and associations. This development brought more people into contact with simplistic but divisive populist views, sometimes driven by extreme conspiracy theories.

Some of the effect of this could be seen in the fall-out of the Southport murders in the summer of 2024, which extended to pro and anti-immigration demonstrations in and close to West Sussex. Political change in the UK and the US is also shaping popular opinion, with protectionist themes resonating strongly, perhaps especially in areas where the common perception is that health, educational and economic outcomes lag behind.

Levels of hate crime reported in West Sussex suggest continued victimisation and harassment relating to perceived racial and faith-based differences, and a growing intolerance in relation to the LGBTQ+ community.

DIGITAL SAFETY & FRAUD

In today's increasingly digital landscape, residents, businesses and organisations of West Sussex are more reliant than ever on the online space to deliver and access essential services, manage data, and communication. This digital shift brings enormous benefits, such as improved efficiency, accessibility, and responsiveness. However, it also brings increased risks and dangers which can be complex and constantly evolving.

For children and young people there a significant and growing threat with AI technology being used to produce child sexual abuse material (CSAM) and also concerns in relation to sextortion as a rising fraud type both in West Sussex and nationally.

For working-age adults, digital safety often intersects with economic security and access to essential services, whilst for older people data has consistently shown that over 50% of fraud victims are aged over 75, with many victims and repeat victims of fraud residing alone or being socially isolated. For these reasons, digital safety and fraud prevention are a continued priority, to ensure the wellbeing of our communities.

Digital safety is inextricably linked to inclusion and access to the digital world, as lacking the means and the fundamental knowledge and skills to navigate the internet can raise the risks of online harm and crime.

West Sussex Digital Access, Inclusion and Safety (DIAS) Partnership therefore provides the strategic direction in this thematic priority.

DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE & ABUSE

Domestic and sexual violence and abuse (DSVA) continues to present a significant and complex challenge across West Sussex. These forms of harm have far-reaching impacts, damaging lives, families, and communities. Abuse is most often hidden, occurring in private settings and behind closed doors, whilst there is also a rise in public place abuse including Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). While anyone can be a victim, DSVA remains a highly gendered crime, with women and girls disproportionately affected and more likely to experience repeat, severe, and life-threatening harm.

This workstream is a strategic priority of the Safer West Sussex Partnership and is delivered in alignment with the Pan-Sussex Domestic Abuse Strategy 2025-2028 and the Sussex Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Framework.

Our local approach is informed by a whole system, whole society commitment, where tackling DSVA is recognised as the shared responsibility of statutory agencies, specialist services, community groups and every individual.

Domestic Abuse Related Death Review (DARDR)

The Safer West Sussex Partnership leads the statutory review of domestic abuse-related deaths under the new **Domestic Abuse Related Death Review (DARDR)** framework. This replaces the former Domestic Homicide Review (DHR), expanding its scope to include domestic abuse related deaths where there is a suspected suicide, or another death which is directly linked to prior domestic abuse, such as an overdose or alcohol related death.

The purpose of DARDRs are to:

- Prevent future deaths
- Improve agency responses to victims, survivors, children and perpetrators
- Strengthen partnership learning and accountability

Action plans from reviews will be monitored through the Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Steering Group and fed into safeguarding boards, criminal justice partners, and commissioning teams. Learning from DARDRs is triangulated with Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SARs), Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPRs) to embed shared learning across the system.

We are committed to placing families and friends at the heart of the review process, recognising them as essential partners and experts in their own experience. This work will continue to shape local service development and inform our prevention strategies, helping us identify missed opportunities, strengthen system interfaces, and improve outcomes for individuals affected by domestic abuse.

PREVENTING RADICALISATION & VIOLENT EXTREMISM

Most referrals into Prevent, locally and nationally, involve extreme right-wing influences. In West Sussex we continue to see graffiti linked to these ideologies as well as transphobic narratives and anti-migrant/anti-refugee activity, particularly, protests and leafletting targeting hotels hosting refugees.

The risk of online radicalisation continues to be high, particularly with young males and is a more significant risk than the location they live in. Both extreme Islamist and Extreme Right Wing groups/individuals use online spaces (particularly gaming and social media platforms) to spread their narratives and disinformation, and to identify, influence and recruit vulnerable people.

In 2025, a 19-year-old male from Horsham, was sentenced to six years in prison for encouraging the suicide of a child, possessing terrorist materials, possessing indecent images of a child, and potentially planning to kill a homeless person. This provides illustration of the extent to which our strategic themes over-cross as some extremist radicalisers from the 764-group linked to the facilitation of child sexual exploitation.

SUBSTANCE MISUSE

Substance use and the drug markets can be a significant driver for crime and disorder both locally and nationally. For this reason it is identified as a priority theme and is delivered through the West Sussex Drug and Alcohol Partnership. This brings together key stakeholders across sectors to support delivery of the national drug strategy ambitions: increasing numbers in treatment and successful outcomes, tackling supply, and reducing demand.

The Partnership provides oversight of and supports a broad range of activities including building the capacity of treatment services, promoting harm reduction and the local response to new synthetic opioids, tackling drug supply with a focus on county lines, supporting early intervention and health promotion around alcohol and drug related harms, and improving the alcohol environment through licensing activity.

The West Sussex Drug and Alcohol Partnership has produced a comprehensive needs analysis of local data, which shows detailed links between the harms of substance use and dependency, and local vulnerable groups and communities. Although there are significant service demands across West Sussex, five key geographic areas were identified as having most demand: Bognor Regis, Littlehampton, Worthing, coastal Adur, and west Crawley. This included the frequency of substance use concerns as a driving factor in Early Help and children's social care referrals.

The West Sussex Drug and Alcohol Partnership focuses on bringing partners together to promote positive behaviour change, and sustainable recovery and reintegration, by ensuring accessibility of local treatment services and the reduction of drug and alcohol related crime. Our vision is to: *Reduce the demand for drugs, and lessen the harms caused by drugs and alcohol for both adults and children living in the county.*

VIOLENCE & EXPLOITATION

Violence and exploitation are priority themes for the Safer West Sussex Partnership because they represent some of the most serious threats to individual safety, community wellbeing, and public trust. These issues complex are deeply impactful, whilst often being strongly linked to the other priority themed areas for Safer West Sussex Partnership. Tackling violence and reducing exploitation, including criminal, sexual, and modern slavery, requires coordinated multi-agency responses and robust intelligence sharing. By prioritising these themes, the partnership aims to protect those most at risk, disrupt harmful behaviours, and build safer, more resilient communities across West Sussex.

Partnership activity to address violence and exploitation is coordinated and monitored by the West Sussex Violence & Exploitation Subgroup as well as the Safeguarding Children Partnership and Safeguarding Adults Board. Our work directly links to the Sussex Violence Reduction Partnership, with close collaboration and co-ordination to make best use of funding and strategic direction.

MONITORING PROGRESS

In 2024, our Partnership Analyst developed a dedicated performance dashboard containing over 1,500 data points from agencies across our partnership. This dashboard helps us monitor progress, track trends, and quickly identify emerging community safety issues.

Alongside this, the various strategic boards and subgroups that oversee the partnership draw valuable insight from their own reporting processes, as well as from lived experiences shared by local communities. Strong engagement and participation in partnership meetings ensures we can effectively monitor activity and respond promptly when patterns of crime and disorder begin to change.

To further support this work, the Partnership Analyst produces an annual strategic intelligence assessment. This is used by the Safer West Sussex Partnership Executive Board to review and understand the main threats, risks, and areas of harm facing our communities. It also supports and informs the District and Borough Community Safety Partnerships.

This Community Safety Agreement will be reviewed and updated each year, or sooner if needed, to ensure it reflects emerging risks, changes in legislation, or any necessary adjustments to local priorities.

KEY PLANS & STRATEGIES

Safer West Sussex Partnership is underpinned and supported through a number of strategies and key plans:

West Sussex Children and Young People's Plan

Sussex Violence Reduction Partnership Serious Violence Strategy

West Sussex Drug and Alcohol Partnership Strategic Plan

Pan-Sussex Domestic Abuse Strategy

Sussex Police and Crime Plan

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: PRIMARY LEGISLATION FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIPS

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 established a clear legal framework for reducing crime and anti-social behaviour by creating Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships, now known as Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs). Under this legislation, responsible authorities must carry out intelligence-led assessments to better understand crime-related risks and develop strategies to tackle them. The Act also allows for the sharing of information between organisations where it is necessary to prevent or detect crime.

The Children Act 2004 whilst primarily focused on child protection and safeguarding, also plays a key role in promoting community safety. It highlights the importance of prevention and early intervention in protecting vulnerable children and adults from neglect, abuse, and exploitation. By encouraging agencies to work together, the Act supports safer communities and strengthens the safeguarding of individuals at risk.

The Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 requires Community Safety Partnerships to conduct Domestic Homicide Reviews whenever a person dies as a result of domestic abuse. From 2024, following changes introduced by the Victims and Prisoners Act, these reviews will be known as Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews (DARDRs), continuing the focus on learning from serious incidents to improve local responses.

Several other laws have shaped the role of Community Safety Partnerships. **The Police and Justice Act 2006** expanded their responsibilities to include anti-social behaviour and substance misuse, while **the Policing and Crime Act 2009** added the duty to reduce reoffending. More recently, the **Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022** introduced a specific duty for CSPs to help prevent serious violence. These laws have broadened the scope of CSPs to ensure they address the full range of crime and safety challenges in local communities.

The Crime and Disorder (Formulation and Implementation of Strategy)

Regulations 2007 introduced new requirements for Community Safety Partnerships, replacing the previous three-yearly audits with annual strategic assessments. These assessments help to identify emerging issues, while statutory Community Safety Agreements for two-tier areas ensure a coordinated county-wide approach.

The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 introduced elected Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs), giving local communities a stronger voice in policing priorities. The Act also established a duty for PCCs and local agencies to work together to improve community safety. In addition, PCCs manage government funding that supports projects to reduce crime, assist victims, and enhance public safety.

The Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 placed a duty on local authorities and Community Safety Partnerships to take action to prevent terrorism and extremism. This includes creating a local Prevent strategy, holding Channel Panel meetings to support individuals at risk of radicalisation, and producing local Prevent action plans to strengthen community resilience.

The Modern Slavery Act 2015 requires public authorities, including councils and the police, to identify and report suspected victims of modern slavery and human trafficking. Organisations must refer cases through the National Referral Mechanism (NRM). In 2025, West Sussex has been chosen by the Home Office to take part in a pilot programme, allowing local authorities to make decisions about whether a child is a victim of modern slavery, rather than the decision being made centrally.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 introduced a statutory duty for Community Safety Partnerships to support local authorities in delivering services for victims of domestic abuse. This often includes working through a local Domestic Abuse Board to coordinate multi-agency responses and improve support for victims and survivors.

The Serious Violence Duty 2023 places a legal requirement on specified public organisations to work together to prevent and reduce serious violence. This includes adopting a 'public health' approach—addressing the root causes of violence through early intervention, education, and coordinated support services.

Looking ahead, it is reasonable to expect that the **Crime and Policing Bill** will influence partnership activity.

The bill is a key part of the government's Safer Streets Mission, which aims to halve knife crime and violence against women and girls within the next decade and improve public confidence in policing and the wider criminal justice system.

The Bill includes new measures such as 'Respect Orders' to tackle anti-social behaviour and the creation of a specific offence for assaulting retail workers. The Bill represents a broad approach to tackling crime and safeguarding communities by focusing on both prevention and enforcement, it aims to make streets safer, protect vulnerable individuals, and give police and criminal justice agencies greater ability to address a wide range of crime-related issues.

APPENDIX 2: SAFER WEST SUSSEX PARTNERSHIP ACCOUNTABILITY

The Safer West Sussex Partnership Executive Board is accountable to West Sussex County Council's Environment and Communities Scrutiny Committee and the Office of the Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner, which distributes community safety funding from the Home Office. This ensures that public funds are used effectively to improve community safety across the county.

The Executive Board works closely with other key strategic boards, including the Health and Wellbeing Board, the Children's Safeguarding Partnership, and the Safeguarding Adults Board. These partnerships are guided by a formal agreement that clearly outlines how the boards collaborate, their governance arrangements, and their shared responsibilities to protect and support children and adults throughout West Sussex.

A Partnership Tactical Tasking and Coordination Group meets every month to review emerging risks, threats, and vulnerabilities across the county. This group uses a multi-agency performance dashboard to monitor trends and identify areas of concern, enabling swift and coordinated action to address crime, anti-social behaviour, and other issues affecting community safety.

Local Community Safety Partnerships, led by district and borough councils, play a crucial role in delivering on-the-ground solutions. They focus on priorities shaped by crime trends, community concerns and identified risks, ensuring that action is targeted where it is needed most to reduce harm and improve safety in local neighbourhoods.