

Keeping Stevenage Safe Community Safety Strategy

2015-18





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Foreword

I am pleased to present SoSafe's Community Safety Strategy for 2015/18. It outlines our priorities over the next three years and the actions we will take to address them.

Stevenage is a safe place to live and work with lower rates of crime and disorder than the national average. Crime levels continue to fall year on year, helping people to feel safe while living and working in the town. SoSafe has played a significant part in that.

In recent years, there have been impressive decreases in crimes like antisocial behaviour, criminal damage and burglary; but the town still faces some challenges in tackling violent crime and domestic abuse. Some types of theft are a cause for concern, with an increase in recent years. Historically, these types of crime tend to increase during a recession, and could be a reflection of the economic downturn experienced in England during the last few years.

Although we have been operating within a difficult financial environment for some time, SoSafe is committed to building on the progress made in recent years, and will continue to drive down crime and disorder in Stevenage. Our partnership is innovative, and full of people who are passionate about creating safe environments for our communities.

Our aim for this strategy is to build safer, stronger and more confident communities. We will do this by decreasing crime and improving community safety. In the following pages, we have captured some of the things that we have done, are doing, and will do, in order to achieve this. I hope by reading this strategy, you will see how SoSafe is working towards this aim, for the benefit of all who live, shop and work in the town.

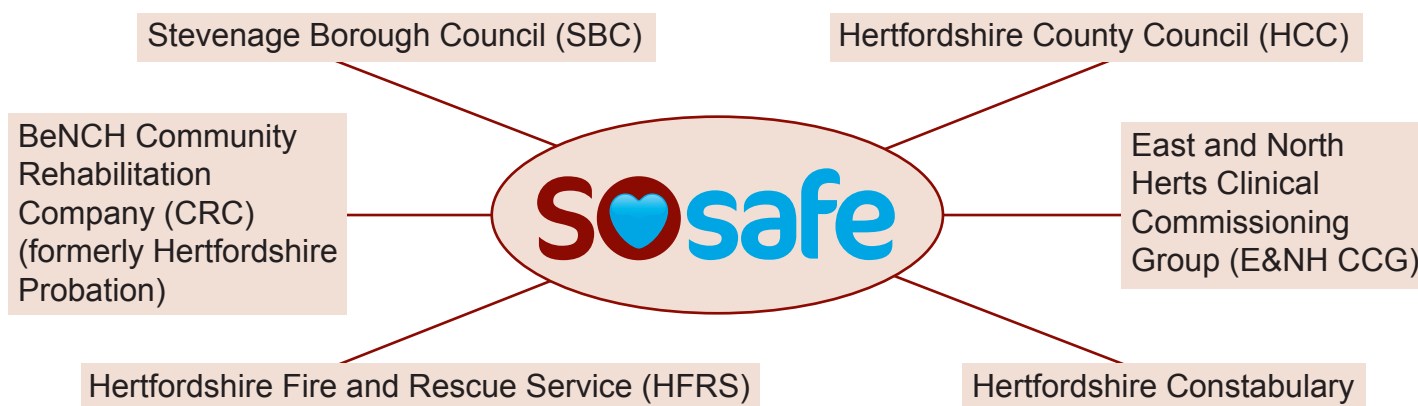
Nick Parry,
Chair of SoSafe



Introduction to SoSafe

SoSafe (Stevenage Community Safety Partnership (CSP) is a strategic partnership, working to reduce crime and offending in accordance with the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

It is made up of the following organisations:



SoSafe's work is in addition to all of the partnership agencies' day to day functions. We also work with other organisations that can help to reduce crime and disorder and make our neighbourhoods safer. Very strong relationships have developed between the member organisations, and Stevenage has been identified by Hertfordshire's Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) as an example of effective partnership working in Hertfordshire.

This strategy identifies the priorities that SoSafe will focus on over the next three years. Alongside the strategy, a detailed action plan is produced each year, which shows how SoSafe will achieve its aim and objectives. It contains specific targets and is monitored, updated and reviewed regularly.

The Community Safety Strategy has been developed with due regard to the following:

- public consultation
- national developments and changes to legislation
- Hertfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) plan Everybody's Business
- annual strategic assessment for Stevenage 2015/16
- County Community Safety Unit (CCSU) domestic abuse strategy
- CCSU alcohol strategy
- National Probation Service reducing offending strategy
- historical and current crime data.

SoSafe could not achieve its objectives without help from the public. It is the duty of all citizens to play their part in making their communities safer. People can contribute by reporting crime and disorder, supporting criminal justice agencies, and by taking responsibility for their personal safety and the safety of others. For ideas on other ways to get involved, please visit our website: <http://www.stevenage.gov.uk/about-stevenage/so-safe/>

SoSafe aims



We have established two overarching aims for the 2015/18 strategy:

- **to build safer, stronger, more confident communities**
- **to increase community safety and reduce the fear of crime.**

SoSafe objectives

Within SoSafe's overarching aims, we have established five key objectives:

1. help people feel safe
2. reduce crime
3. provide a coordinated response to domestic abuse
4. effectively tackle antisocial behaviour (ASB) together with the community
5. reduce the harm caused by drug and alcohol misuse.

Monitoring and measuring our performance

The key to delivering this strategy is effective and strong partnership working. No individual agency can deliver all of the activities that will ensure SoSafe achieves its objectives.

How we will measure performance

As a partnership, we will agree annual performance indicators that reflect the priorities and outcomes we want to deliver. We will set SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, timely), challenging targets and measure these four times a year to check that we are making progress.

How we will monitor performance

Effective crime reduction relies on an understanding about what and where our problems are. This helps us to direct partnership resources efficiently and effectively, to deliver services in the right place at the right time.

Crime trends are monitored regularly, and performance against our targets is reported to the Responsible Authorities Group (RAG). This group includes SoSafe's most senior managers and the elected councillor with responsibility for community safety. Additionally, elected councillors sit on a scrutiny committee which challenges SoSafe's performance. Hertfordshire's PCC is the public's elected representative for policing matters. As such, the PCC maintains strong links with the county's CSPs.

Objective one – help people feel safe



What will we do?

We aim to understand and act on local and individual needs, particularly in respect of people identified as vulnerable.

Working together we will support vulnerable people and help them to keep safe at home.

We will promote community cohesion by sharing information and working closely with a diverse range of people. We will raise awareness of crime, in order to help people feel confident enough to report it.

We will keep people informed about levels of crime, to counter the perception of high crime rates. We will include community safety articles in relevant publications; and provide help and advice via social media and partner websites. We will seek views and ideas from the public through surveys, events and street meets.

We will target areas blighted by environmental Antisocial Behaviour (ASB) such as graffiti, dog fouling and litter, and persistent nuisance ASB, so that people can feel secure when out and about in the town. We will continue high visibility policing and partnership work in neighbourhood centres.

We will monitor our performance using these measures:

- perception surveys about resident's feelings of safety
- feedback from Silver Street Meets
- environmental cleanliness measures
- hate crime reporting and detection rates.

What have we been doing?

Action days

We have held many action days and events to tackle environmental and nuisance ASB, based on information provided by members of the public, and supported through Neighbourhood Watch and Dog Watch networks.

Street meets and surveys

We organise regular multi agency street meets, and undertake neighbourhood surveys to discover hot spot crime areas. This helps us to build up information and evidence, which allows SoSafe to take preventative or enforcement action against a variety of crimes. We also established Silver Street Meets to help us engage with older people (see Appendix One).

Arson reduction

HFRS has achieved a very low level of house fires and arson. They work closely with young people involved in ASB and fire setting, in order to help them change their behaviour. SoSafe has supported fire related initiatives including high rise inspections, the LIFE project, fire cadets and Operation Sabre.

Objective two – reduce crime

What will we do?

We will use our partnership powers to deter and reduce all types of crime. We aim to disrupt and close down criminal individuals and groups who negatively impact on our communities, including those involved with drug dealing, child sexual exploitation (CSE) and serious organised crime (SOC). We will take a multi agency approach to these crimes, appropriate to the level of threat.

We will manage persistent offenders, ensuring that appropriate interventions are provided to them; and help them to access local services in order to prevent reoffending. We will deter potential offenders from entering the criminal justice system; and support restorative justice (RJ) to ensure that criminals take responsibility for the harm caused to victims and the community.

We will build relationships with health related agencies such as Lister Hospital, Mental Health services and local GPs, in order to help them identify the correlations between crime and health; and allow all agencies to undertake their statutory duties effectively.

We will monitor our performance using these measures:

- rate of all crime
- crime rates for burglary dwelling
- crime rates for robbery
- violent crime rate
- customer satisfaction surveys
- outcomes for offenders subject to the integrated offender management (IOM) programme.

What have we been doing?

Information sharing

We adopted the SafetyNet case management system, which allows SoSafe to share information about crime on a case by case basis. It provides an excellent way of building up intelligence, and preventing situations from becoming more serious. We can also identify vulnerable people quickly, and use our partnership networks to decide on the right action to protect them.

Tackling shoplifting

We devised a shoplifting action plan, based on information from local businesses. We worked closely with retailers to reduce shoplifting, providing advice on store security and practical crime reduction measures. An ex-offender assisted the police with this initiative – talking about shoplifting methods, which shops are targeted and why. This gave police a useful insight into how shoplifters work and helped to reduce crime.

Operation Sabre

We established Operation Sabre to tackle a variety of crimes and gather intelligence during busy seasonal periods (see Appendix One).



Objective three - provide a coordinated response to domestic abuse

What will we do?

We will continue to raise awareness, informing the public about how and where they can report domestic abuse; and empowering victims to come forward and seek safety.

We will encourage organisations to be consistent in their approach to domestic abuse through training and use of risk assessment tools. We will increase our understanding of honour based violence (HBV) and forced marriage, in order to effectively support victims.

We will have a multi agency approach to domestic abuse, focussing on early intervention and holistic work with whole families, in order to break the cultural cycle of abuse.

We will ensure that perpetrators of domestic abuse are brought to justice, and are provided with appropriate rehabilitative support; and we will focus on repeat offenders.

We will monitor our performance using these measures:

- rate of domestic abuse
- outcomes for clients referred to Herts Change perpetrator programme
- outcomes for clients referred to the Council's domestic abuse panel
- monitoring outcomes of any domestic homicide reviews (DHR), especially in relation to CAADA (Coordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse) DASH (Domestic Abuse, Stalking & Honour Based Violence) risk assessment and its use by partners.



What have we been doing?

Herts Change

We secured a county council pilot programme which works with male perpetrators of domestic abuse. The programme aims to break their offending cycle, and foster an understanding of the detrimental long term impact that their actions place on their families.

Stevenage Against Domestic Abuse

The multi agency 'Stevenage against domestic abuse' (SADA) steering group was formed in 2012. It focuses on reducing domestic abuse in Stevenage through early intervention and awareness raising. The group organised a large scale campaign to 'Break the Silence.' (See Appendix One).

Risk assessment

We worked with Victim Support, to ensure that all agencies dealing with domestic abuse in Stevenage use the CAADA DASH risk assessment, every time a crime is reported.

Objective four - effectively tackle ASB together with the community

What will we do?

We will act early and prevent problems from escalating, taking enforcement action where problems persist. We will target hotspot areas and repeat offenders of all ages, working with young people to divert them from bad behaviour and supporting positive activities for them. We will also work with whole families whose behaviour affects the wider community.

We will deal with alcohol and drug fuelled ASB, making full use of our licensing laws to improve the management of licensed premises, particularly around busy night time periods.

We will plan specific operations around seasonal fluctuations in ASB, especially around Halloween, Bonfire Night and Summer holidays; utilising multi agency bicycle patrols and high visibility partnership patrols.

We will use our powers to enforce against environmental crime offenders, including on the spot penalty notices; and proactively investigate and prosecute perpetrators of fly tipping.

We will monitor our performance using these measures:

- rates of ASB incidents
- rates of criminal damage
- rates of deliberate fire
- customer satisfaction surveys and consultation.



What have we been doing?

Youth ASB prevention

We have funded two projects:

Box Cleva, an initiative run by HFRS for young people at risk of ASB, focussing on respect, discipline and healthy lives.

Project Ex, working with young people who are already in trouble with the police and involved in the criminal justice system; aiming to develop aspirations so that the young people can identify more positive life opportunities, and turn their backs on crime.

Family Intervention Project

We support the Family Intervention Project (FIP), working with families at risk of losing their homes because of ASB. Key workers coordinate a unique team of individuals to work closely with all members of the family. The positive impact on the community, due to this intervention, can be significant. FIP clients have succeeded in setting up their own support forum, acting as mentors, volunteering for local charities and finding work. When all else fails, punitive action can be taken. (See Appendix One).

Tenant welfare days

We developed Tenant Welfare Days to identify vulnerable tenants living in the community. Information generated through these days is shared with partners to ensure that tenants receive appropriate support, help and advice. For instance, HFRS have increased fittings of smoke detectors for elderly and vulnerable people, and issues related to lack of heating and monetary worries have been identified and addressed.

Objective five - reduce the harm caused by drug and alcohol misuse

What will we do?

We will work proactively to prevent the distribution of all drug types, and use appropriate enforcement measures against premises that are being used for drug use, supply or production.

We will support educational, diversionary and preventative measures to address the issue of young people and alcohol or drug misuse; including partnership working to prevent road traffic accidents caused by illegal use of substances and mobile phones. We will undertake test purchasing for under age sales of alcohol, encouraging retailers to be responsible by enforcing breaches of the law through licensing powers.

We will support programmes that deal with a range of complex issues including alcohol and drug abuse, and manage criminal individuals through the Integrated Offender Management (IOM) programme.

We will share information with our partners about hot spot locations for alcohol related violent crime, and target resources to where and when they are most needed.

We will monitor our performance using these measures:

- effectiveness of Stevenage Pub Watch scheme and Pub Watch online
- drug related (Class A) offending rate
- outcomes for people undertaking the No More Project
- outcomes of age restricted product test purchases.

What have we been doing?

Tackling drug crime

We use many collaborative methods and shared powers to enforce action against drug use, dealing and manufacture, particularly within premises. These premises are often closed down as a result.

No More

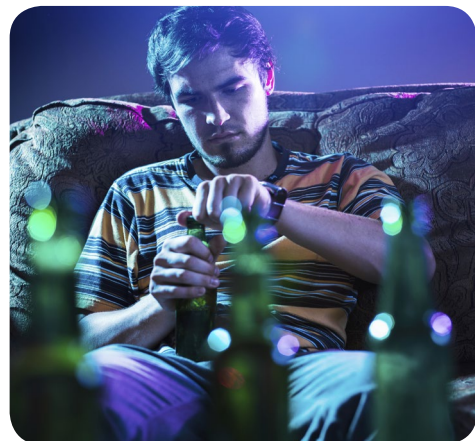
We established the No More Project, offering intensive support for alcohol and drug misusers. (See Appendix One).

PubWatch

We encouraged licensees to join PubWatch. SoSafe also funded an online PubWatch tool which has allowed licensees to interact with each other very quickly through instant messaging. This has resulted in more licensed premises joining the group, and increased intelligence gathering for SoSafe. In turn, this has decreased crime in the main night time areas of Stevenage.

Licensed premises action plans

We identified specific threats to community safety at night, and worked with individual premises to develop action plans covering theft, drunkenness and violent crime. These have been very successful in reducing crime in the busy night time areas of town.



Appendix One - case studies

1. Helping our communities to feel safe

Silver Street Meets

Stevenage police have been proactive in 'street meet' engagement for many years, encouraging partner agencies to become involved in these events. The idea behind street meets is to target hot spot crime areas, in order to provide help and advice about personal (and property) safety to members of the community. This style of engagement has proved very successful in driving down crime and antisocial behaviour (ASB) in neighbourhoods.



One of our Safer Neighbourhood Sergeants identified a gap in this model of engagement, and began to think about how we engage with vulnerable people, in particular older people living in sheltered accommodation. We know that this group, although at small risk of being a victim of crime, feel most vulnerable and may perceive crime to be higher. From local surveys, we know that older people are worried about scams and fraud, feeling safe in their home and ASB. It was felt that the street meet model could be expanded to include this group, addressing their unique issues through a multi agency approach. SoSafe agreed that a 'road show' should be taken to Stevenage's sheltered housing schemes...and so Silver Street Meets were born!

The Silver Street Meet lasts for around two hours. Refreshments are provided for the residents to promote an informal environment, and we provide personal safety items chosen for the residents' particular needs. The aim of the session is to empower older people with the knowledge and tools to keep themselves safe. There are a number of talks from various agencies:

- Crime Prevention Officer - talking about doorstep and phone scams, keeping bags, purses, wallets safe when out and about
- Herts Fire and Rescue Service - talking about fire safety in the home, smoke detectors (testing and fitting), escape routes
- University of the Third Age - talking about educational and social opportunities available locally for older people
- ASB officer - providing reassurance regarding true crime figures, low crime in Stevenage, and not all 'hoodies' are bad
- police officer - further reassurance, discussion about 101 number - what's an emergency and what's not
- local councillor - available for any issues to be raised that could be tackled through the council or community safety partnership
- Herts Help - provide help and information about trips and falls prevention, and details of free services available to older people.

As well as providing advice, the feedback from residents has allowed partner agencies to identify issues that we would not have known about before - some of which can be acted upon and resolved fairly quickly.

2. Reducing crime

Operation Sabre

Since May 2011, personnel and volunteers from Stevenage fire station have been successfully using four partnership bicycles for arson and antisocial behaviour (ASB) patrols around the town. These high visibility patrols have been run in partnership with Safer Neighbourhood Police teams.

Building on existing joint operations, Operation Sabre was an idea put forward to SoSafe by Herts Fire and Rescue Service (HFRS). Its aim was to combat youth related ASB during the Halloween and Bonfire Night period, and reduce incidences of deliberate fires. The idea was built on tried and tested HFRS seasonal initiatives, but by utilising bicycles for the first time, the following benefits were identified:

- ability to access hard to reach potential arson and criminal damage sites
- better access around Stevenage's open spaces and utilisation of bicycle path network
- opportunity to conduct joint patrols with police officers, in order to focus on ASB as well as deliberate fires
- opportunity to build up intelligence about other crime types
- opportunity to openly engage with the general public, particularly children and young people.

Operation Sabre has proved to be a very successful proactive use of joint patrols, which has helped to prevent and reduce seasonal ASB and deliberate fire incidents. It is an inventive way of targeting historical issues, during a period with a recognised need for extra patrols, without negatively impacting on resources. The operation now runs at regular times throughout the year, and has been recognised as best practice by Hertfordshire's Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC).



3. Providing a coordinated response to domestic abuse

Break the Silence

On 5 March 2014, Stevenage Against Domestic Abuse (SADA) launched the successful 'Break the Silence' campaign, which was widely promoted through local media outlets. This was a multi agency event, organised in conjunction with SoSafe, NSPCC, North Herts College, Childline and other national and local domestic abuse organisations.

The event included a demonstration march, which saw 250 young people walking through the town blowing whistles, banging drums and blowing horns in order to 'break the silence of domestic violence.' North Herts College (NHC) also hosted a market place, which was populated with stalls manned by 56 professionals from a very wide range of agencies. Over 700 students attended the market place and provided their feedback on services available, taking part in interactive surveys and activities.

The young people surveyed felt that support for victims, and help for young people and children involved in domestic abuse should be the top priorities for agencies. This echoes the work being undertaken by SADA in the pursuit of early intervention and protection for victims.

As a result of the event, several young people came forward to say that they were involved in abusive relationships; and that their interaction with agencies, and information provided to them at the event would help them to resolve their situations. SoSafe and SADA continue to promote awareness of domestic abuse, and encourage people to contact agencies who can help them.



4. Effectively tackling ASB together with the community

Rowdy Property Closure

Police and Stevenage Borough Council (SBC) worked closely with a group of neighbours who were experiencing severe antisocial behaviour (ASB) and other crime, perpetrated by a family residing in a privately owned house. Over several weeks, we embarked on an information sharing drive, to acquire as much evidence as possible from local people, in order to find a way to deal with their issues. At this point, residents' lives were being deeply affected by what they called the 'neighbours from Hell.' Offences relating to the problem family included:

- incessant noise at all times of day and night, inside and outside of the house
- criminal damage
- suspected arson
- unruly children
- suspected criminal activity
- suspected drug use
- neglect of property and environmental issues.

SoSafe undertook several actions including:

- negotiating with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), to keep street lights turned on in the neighbourhood after midnight
- installation of mobile CCTV cameras
- increased police patrols in the area
- encouraged neighbours to keep diaries of antisocial activity, to be used as evidence
- engaged in several neighbourhood meetings to discuss the issues and keep people informed
- engaged with the private landlord on several occasions, encouraging him to take action against his tenants.

From the information collected, we were able to provide enough evidence to a Magistrate for him to invoke a rowdy property closure, and the family were evicted. This is notoriously very difficult to obtain when dealing with private tenancies. However, this case is a good example of how neighbourhood problems can be resolved, when local people work in partnership with the police and local council.



5. Reducing the harm caused by alcohol and drug misuse

No More project

This project has been running for almost two years. The aim of 'No More' is to provide intensive support and focussed challenge to high need individuals and their families, where there are issues of alcohol and drug misuse. These individuals are amongst the most challenging in society, with many having chaotic lifestyles which impact on their ability to manage day to day responsibilities, successfully parent their children or sustain a regular home. Their actions may also have an impact on the community in which they live, often resulting in multiple antisocial behaviour (ASB) incidents or other crime. Many individuals are actively involved in alcohol related crime, and are often prolific offenders.



The project works with the individual and their family to bring stability to their life, prevent homelessness and provide opportunities to make change. The project aims to:

- reduce ASB and criminal activity
- prevent homelessness and provide sustainable routes back to settled housing
- improve health and wellbeing
- tackle alcohol and drug misuse and provide opportunities to make change
- improve access to training and employment opportunities
- improve family relationships
- reduce the risk of poverty
- reduce the risk of becoming a vulnerable victim of crime
- increase social inclusion
- reduce cost to agencies that interact with the client
- increase the effectiveness of multi agency working.

The project takes referrals from many partners including probation, YMCA, Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), police and some self referrals. No More works closely with statutory partners and others including Job Centre plus, local GPs and mental health services. It is saving money for all local agencies concerned, by utilising their services more effectively and reducing the client's necessity for use. Our clients are people who would normally 'fall through the gaps' in services, and are often caught up in the 'revolving doors' of the criminal justice system. The project has drastically improved the reoffending rates of those involved.

The project also works closely with YMCA Space, which provides people with a safe place to go. At least four Space clients have been referred to the No More Project, and project participants have been volunteering at Space in order to 'give something back.' Our clients feel it is important to their recovery that they contribute to the wider community.

Appendix Two Glossary

ASB	antisocial behaviour
A&E	accident and emergency
BeNCH CRC	Bedfordshire, Norfolk, Cambridge and Hertfordshire Community Rehabilitation Company (formerly Hertfordshire Probation)
BME	Black and minority ethnic
BTP	British Transport Police
CAADA DASH	Coordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse: domestic abuse, stalking and honour based violence (risk assessment tool)
CCSU	County Community Safety Unit
CCTV	closed circuit television
Class A drugs	heroin, methadone, cocaine, crack, ecstasy, LSD and amphetamines
CPS	Crown Prosecution Service
CSE	child sexual exploitation
CSP	Community Safety Partnership
DA	domestic abuse
DART	Domestic Abuse: Recovering Together
DHR	domestic homicide review
E&NH CCG	East & North Herts Clinical Commissioning Group
FIP	Family Intervention Project
HBV	honour based violence
HCC	Herts County Council
Herts Change	domestic abuse perpetrator rehabilitation programme
HFRS	Herts Fire and Rescue Service
IOM	Integrated Offender Management
LGBT	lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender
LIFE	Local Intervention Fire Education
LSP	Local Strategic Partnership
NPS	new psychoactive substances
NTE	night time economy
ODG	Operational Delivery Group
OPCC	Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner
OWL	Online Watch Liaison
PCC	Police and Crime Commissioner
PCSO	Police Community Support Officer
RAG	Responsible Authorities Group
RJ	restorative justice
SADA	Stevenage Against Domestic Abuse
SARA	scanning, analysis, response and assessment
SBC	Stevenage Borough Council
SMART	specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, timely
SNT	Safer Neighbourhood Team
SOC	serious organised crime
SoSafe	Stevenage community safety partnership
SoStevenage	Stevenage local strategic partnership