

DSP Sustainable Community Strategy

Safer Communities – Supplementary document June 2007.

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Context

The initial evidence base for Safer Communities drew heavily on the pre-existing range of priority issues that feature in current Community Safety Strategies and the LAA. These have been, and will continue to be, priorities and key issues for both local communities and central government. Community safety work in Devon has been founded on a mix of: strategic analysis of crime and disorder trends; general public and minority community concerns; and central government set targets and priorities. Any priorities we set within the sustainable communities' strategy and the subsequent LAA must continue to embrace this mix of influences.

The issues identified in the initial theme analysis are unlikely to significantly change as they have been developed with the above parameters in mind. Trajectory analysis needs to be developed more rigorously by DSP to facilitate better longer-term prediction of emerging issues (eg increased hate crime against migrant workers) but the general scope of concerns will continue to be as below.

Theme	Summary issues
Volume crime and persistent offenders	Sustaining a Devon-wide PPO scheme to reduce offending by prolific and persistent offenders and incorporating this into wider work with deprived communities, marginalised groups and drug/alcohol strategies
Domestic abuse	Developing specialist locality based Community Justice Centres that sustain and expand services for early intervention work (opening up more to marginalised groups not yet accessing services), ensure increased safety for victims and children via co-ordination of MARAC and Special Domestic Violence Courts, and tackle perpetrator behaviour.
Drug and Alcohol abuse	Priority for alcohol issues across SDP and wider LAA themes, to adequately fund alcohol treatment services and projects to minimise alcohol related harm that impacts individual health and general community wellbeing.
Anti-social behaviour	Focus attention onto geographic and communities of interest who experience high levels of ASB which adversely impacts their quality of life. Joining up of agency approaches to respond to ASB within its community and family contexts
Youth Crime Prevention	Co-ordination of agency activity into a comprehensive YC Prevention Strategy. Expansion and sustainability of early intervention programmes for children and young people at risk of crime which tackle the underlying predisposing factors Targeted evidence-led locality and theme-based activity in response to emerging issues
Fear of crime/public re-assurance	To develop a focus on geographic and communities of interest whose quality of life is severely affected by fear of crime and to bridge the gap between perception, prejudice and intolerance
Prejudice and hate crime	To increase confidence in those communities who experience prejudice and hate crime to increase levels of reported incidents To support and expand the services provided by equality organisations

Proposal

Whilst there is no indication that the above issues will decrease in their importance for communities and government attention there is a need to develop a new framework for our response to them. Direction from the Home Office on this agenda will continue to be a significant factor that we have to respond to. Allied to this the fault line in our current approach is that it tends to compartmentalise response into long-standing tram-lines of approach and resourcing.

We have had early insight into what appears to be a significant shift in Home Office thinking which is anticipated will be embodied in the new National Community Safety Plan to be published in the autumn. Although clearly too late to fit the agenda for developing the sustainable communities strategy it is suggested we build our framework on this new architecture.

What is being heralded is a shift away from sole concentration in the current PSA on overall crime reduction, measured by a selection of crime types, towards a focus on more serious violence. This is recognised to be of more public and governmental concern because of its physical, psychological, emotional and financial impact. The aim will be “to protect the public from serious harm caused by dangerous people”. The framework for activity to deal with this new priority is proposed to focus on two contexts of: a) Interpersonal Violence; b) Community Violence. How we can re-arrange our current approach around these contexts is as follows.

Government PSA contextual approach	SDP/LAA priority areas
Interpersonal violence	Domestic abuse; Sexual Abuse Resource Centres; Sexual Abuse Helplines, set within wider context of “Family At Risk” work, parenting strategy, children and young people’s plan, local safeguarding children’s oversight role. Tailored perpetrator intervention programmes for DV, sexual abuse, mental health, alcohol and drug abuse. Early intervention programmes for children and young people at risk. Early intervention programmes for minority communities with cultural factors creating high risk eg forced marriage and honour based violence Increase focus on tackling alcohol-fuelled violence, and on provision of alcohol treatment facilities
Community Violence	Anti Social Behaviour within high incidence communities Night time economy street violence and anti-social behaviour Alcohol strategy aimed at causes of group abuse of alcohol eg binge drinking Prejudice/hate crime directed at minority communities within business sector eg take-away/restaurants and those living within the general population eg people with learning difficulties, migrant workers Reducing fear of crime and creating greater public re-assurance Strategies to reduce robbery, common assault, wounding and harassment Reducing arson and other signal crimes that adversely impact communities’ sense of safety Developing common approach towards stronger communities via a community development model

It is recommended that we see this emerging context as the framework for a shift in our approach to community safety within the sustainable community's strategy and LAA. But in setting out this context now the following factors have to be accounted for.

- Government will not be publishing the final new National Community Safety Strategy and PSA until the Autumn and we will have to reflect local response to this in our LAA from 2008 onwards
- Deeper analysis of trends and potential trajectories that should influence community safety priorities is under-developed in Devon. We need to better co-ordinate current analytical capacity to facilitate the evidence base for establishing our priorities
- The SDP infrastructure to service what would be a significant shift in approach to community safety work and issues is not yet in place. A move to the framework of response being suggested would need sanctioning and commitment from DSP to enable this radical change to take place.
- The timescale for shifting approach is out of synchronisation with that for developing the sustainable communities' strategy and hence some flexibility should be built into setting safer communities priorities.

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