

To: Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel

Subject: Safer Streets Summer Initiative

Date: 14 October 2025

Introduction:

1. The Safer Streets Summer Initiative was a government initiative aimed at reducing crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB) in town centres across England and Wales. It ran from 30 June until 30 September 2025 and involved over 500 town centres and high streets.
2. The initiative focused on visibility, prevention, and enforcement, aiming to reduce criminality, shop theft, street crime and ASB and ensure town centres remain vibrant places where people want to live, work, and spend time.
3. The initiative included increased police patrols, local action to tackle high street crime, and targeted enforcement powers against troublemakers.
4. It is part of the government's Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee, which aims to tackle high street crime and restore faith in police by increasing the presence of police officers in every community.
5. The Initiative was led by Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs), supported by the Home Office in partnership with Chief Constables and other essential local partners such as councils, schools, health services, business, transport and community organisations.

Kent Police activity:

6. Fifteen town centres across Kent were selected as priority areas based on extensive analytical work using problem-solving analysis and risk terrain modelling. Criminal Intelligence and Performance Analysts, all trained through the Cambridge Problem Solving Analysis Learning Programme, conducted detailed assessments of violent crime, neighbourhood crime, and ASB to identify persistent and high-risk hotspots.
7. This academic and data-driven approach ensured that the selected town centres represented locations with the greatest need for targeted interventions. The analysis also included temporal patterns to inform when and where resources should be deployed, ensuring that police and partner agencies could address the most pressing issues effectively. Public feedback through the 'My Community Voice' platform was also used to refine the priorities and support community confidence.
8. The fifteen Safer Streets Summer Initiative locations were:
 - Canterbury
 - Tunbridge Wells
 - Maidstone
 - Ramsgate
 - Chatham
 - Gravesend
 - Folkestone
 - Ashford
 - Dover
 - Sittingbourne
 - Temple Hill Dartford
 - High Street, Sheerness
 - High Street, Margate
 - High Street, Rochester
 - High Street, Gillingham

9. Attached as Appendix A is a paper prepared by Kent Police that summarises activity in support of the Safer Streets Summer Initiative. This was presented and discussed at the PCC's [Performance and Delivery Board](#) on 16 September 2025.
10. Representatives from the Home Office also visited Medway Police Station on 29 September 2025 to observe the impact of the Safer Streets programme and Hotspot Policing initiatives being delivered across Kent and Medway. The visit showcased the collaborative efforts being made to tackle ASB and improve public safety in local communities.

Recommendation:

11. The Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel is asked to note this report.

Performance and Delivery Board 16th September 2025

Safer Streets Summer Initiative – Summary of Activity Targeted activity / enforcement

Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG)

Kent Police has placed significant operational drive on tackling VAWG and associated ASB in town centre public spaces, through collaborative efforts and innovative policing strategies.

Notably, Project Vigilant has focused on the prevention of sexual violence in the night-time economy (NTE) by identifying and disrupting predatory behaviour before it escalates into criminal offences through the use of plain-clothed officers working alongside uniformed colleagues. The project has seen positive results: one deployment in Folkestone resulted in a number of stop searches, three arrests and three people dealt with by out of court resolutions.

In Maidstone, multiple stop searches were conducted and a male identified matching the description for a historic exposure offence. In Canterbury, three arrests were made for domestic abuse and public order offences, with one offender recalled to prison. Another deployment in Rochester led to the arrest of three individuals for possession of offensive weapons. Project Vigilant has been deployed in all the major NTE locations including Tunbridge Wells, Dover and Margate. Other operational activity on this theme includes:

- In Rochester, the local beat officer has instigated monthly multi-agency NTE meetings. These meetings draw together police, businesses, local security providers and the Safer Medway Partnership, and drive the sharing of intelligence and the strengthening of a joint-agency approach in making one of Kent's major NTE town centres a safe environment.
- In Folkestone, a police operation saw sustained activity targeting sexual offenders resulting in numerous arrests, including the identification and arrest of a suspect for sexual assault on a vulnerable woman, engagement with a large number of women and the completion of 84 community surveys to further understand the public's perception of safety within the town centre and during the NTE.

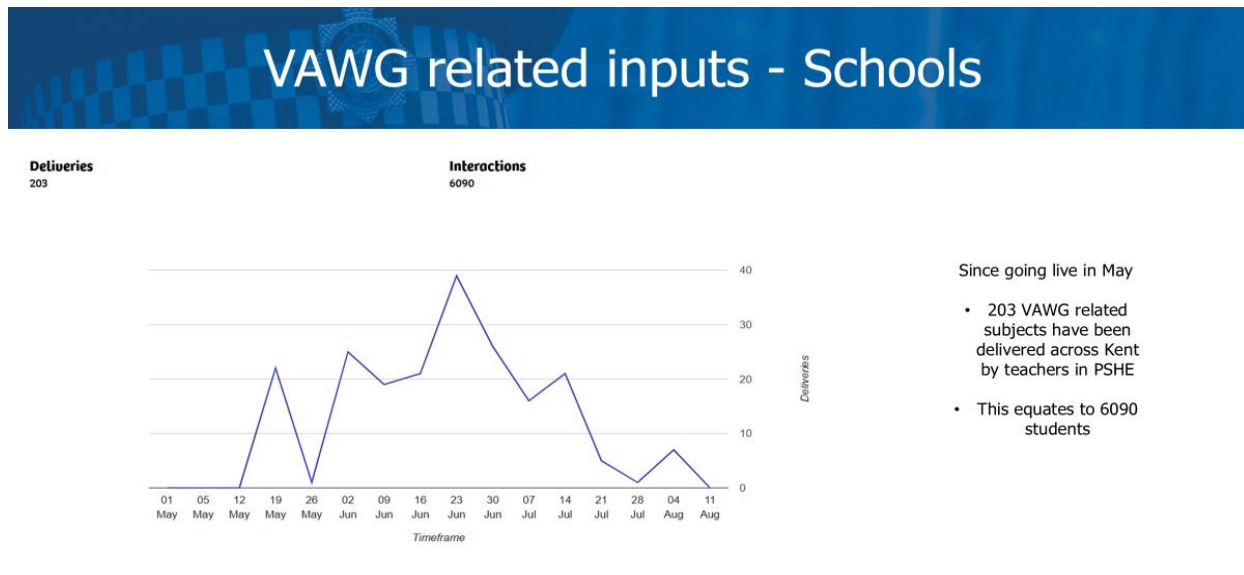
Complementing these operations is Op Pilot, a multi-agency initiative carried out in multiple districts, led by Kent Police and focusing on visiting licensed premises—such as pubs, bars and clubs—with the support of passive drugs dogs. The operation is designed to detect and deter drug use and possession in the night-time economy and enhance safety in town centre venues. Through support to venue staff and the promotion of responsible management practices, with tactics including the use of drug swabbing, knife detection and visible policing to reassure the public, intelligence has been gathered on individuals and locations linked to drug-related activity.

- In Canterbury, an Op Pilot deployment led to an arrest, seven stop searches and three out of court resolutions. Op Pilot has been run across multiple districts including Ashford, Dover, Folkestone, Tonbridge and Sevenoaks.

Other activity targeting VAWG in the NTE include VAWG '*Walk and Talk*' events. In Tonbridge town centre, a number of women voiced their concerns over taxi drivers refusing to allow them to get in the taxi for short journeys home, instead refusing their custom putting them in fear. As a response to this, Kent Police and the council worked in partnership to complete licensing checks of taxi drivers as well as education around the reported issues. The work included using plain clothes female officers trying to get in taxis for short journeys. Additionally, Kent Police has demonstrated a proactive and preventative approach through promotion of the Walksafe App, disseminating information on its use to licensed premises and youth services in Maidstone and attending multiple '*safe space*' locations.

To drive long-term prevention of VAWG, Kent and Medway Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) and Kent Police Child Centred Policing Team have collaborated to roll out an educational platform, PoEd, in schools across Kent. PoEd lessons, aligned to the different Key Stages, are created by teachers and police officers and the platform is provided at nil cost to schools.

Specifically in relation to VAWG related inputs during May-August 2025 the following use has been recorded:



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Anti-social behaviour (ASB)

Understanding the profound impact ASB can have on residents' quality of life, Kent Police is committed to tackling anti-social behaviour across its communities, working collaboratively with partners and the public to identify and address issues swiftly and effectively. Through targeted patrols, community engagement, and robust enforcement, Kent Police has focused on reducing ASB across each of the county's town centres throughout the summer period.

Kent's coastal towns, including Broadstairs, Margate and Ramsgate, face unique challenges during the summer months, with dramatically increased tourist and day-tripper footfall placing pressure on local infrastructure and policing resources. The sustained hot weather in summer 2025 led to greater than usual spikes in ASB, street drinking and youth-related disturbances. The visibility of incidents on social media further amplified public concern this year which prompted swift and coordinated responses from Kent Police and partner agencies.

- Across Thanet, a range of proactive measures were implemented in response to the rise in ASB including dispersal zones. In Broadstairs and Margate, 66 dispersal orders were issued. Officers conducted days of action, resulting in arrests, drug seizures, and community resolutions. Ramsgate saw increased patrols and 11 dispersals, alongside joint efforts with Thanet District Council to tackle street drinking and rough sleeping. Licensing agreements with local stores helped reduce alcohol-related ASB, and banning notices were issued to problematic youths. The number of dispersal orders issued across the three towns reflected a robust, multi-agency approach to maintaining public safety and community confidence throughout the busy summer season.

More widely, bespoke policing plans have been implemented in town centres to reduce ASB and address the concerns highlighted by communities.

- In Maidstone town centre, targeted activity has seen 21 e-scooters and six illegal e-bikes seized in July and August. Following an e-bike seizure a knife was located concealed on the bike and charges sought for offensive weapon. 18 Traffic Offence Reports (TOR) were issued whilst enforcing a traffic restriction on the High Street, and a suspect for careless cycling in the town centre was identified and issued a Community Protection Warning (CPW).
- Concerns raised by communities in Rochester regarding anti-social use of vehicles such as moped, e-bike and quad bikes led to a targeted police operation. This resulted in 56 TORs being issued, nine ASB warnings, 10 vehicles seized and several arrests for driving and public order offences.

- In Sevenoaks, joint operations have been held with British Transport Police, Southern Railway and Network South East over the summer targeting young people using the train network to travel between towns to commit crime and ASB. During this operation 49 penalty fares were issued along with advice around drinking alcohol and smoking at the station; this remains an ongoing collaborative operation.
- In the same town, the local hospital raised concerns regarding young people causing ASB in the evenings. Targeted activity and engagement focused on a quick response to identifying those persons involved and dealing with them appropriately through community resolutions or, where required, criminal investigations. This led to an immediate reduction in incidents, with formal recognition and thanks received from NHS partners for the timely interventions and crime prevention advice provided.
- In Canterbury, police have coordinated activity with Council Community Support agency workers who patrol during peak periods as additional public space 'guardians' to deter ASB and gather community information.

ASB associated with rough sleeping has been highlighted as a community priority in a number of areas of the county and has been tackled in partnership with a number of other agencies including healthcare providers.

- In Gillingham town centre, officers have worked in partnership with Medway Council's Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) Team on specific days of action in which tactics such as Community Protection Warnings were issued to reduce public consumption of alcohol and associated ASB, followed up with referrals and bespoke support for vulnerable individuals from partners to ensure long-term reduction could be sustained.
- An individual in Gravesend was responsible for multiple offences in public areas causing significant concern to the community whilst under the influence of alcohol and drugs. Coordinated work between Kent Police, health professionals and outreach teams resulted in the imposition of a Community Protection Notice and the individual's successful completion of a detox programme and transition into rehabilitation, preventing further offences.
- In Maidstone, eight CPWs and Community Protection Notices (CPN) were issued to address begging and street drinking.

A recurring theme through the summer period has been the identification of unlicensed or poorly regulated retail outlets selling illegal vapes and cigarettes, with associated impact on ASB in the vicinity and the harmful effects to children and young people. Joint partnership operations to tackle this issue have been carried out in Canterbury, Folkestone, Tonbridge, Maidstone, Ashford and Sheerness.

- Op Accolade, a joint operation launched with trading standards in the Tonbridge and Malling district, resulted in the arrest of two premises operators for tax evasion offences and the recovery of approximately 165,000 counterfeit and foreign cigarettes and a quantity of Crystal Meth. The main perpetrator was charged and remanded in custody with a number of offences including fraudulently evading any duty and possession of class A substance with intent to supply.

Youth engagement and intervention

Kent Police has driven multi-agency youth engagement initiatives across the county, focusing on safeguarding, diversionary activities, and proactive interventions to reduce ASB among young people.

- In August, a multi-agency youth engagement partnership event was held in Tunbridge Wells town centre, exploring safeguarding of young people and families. Diversionary activities promoted included guardianship initiatives and outreach substance misuse programmes to support and divert youths from engaging in ASB.
- Op Makesafe is a national operation designed to help assist the hospitality sector identify potential victims of child exploitation and how to appropriately report concerns to the police to ensure intervention prior to any children or young people coming to harm. Operations and intervention were conducted in 72 hotels across nine of the county's 13 districts, including in Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge and Malling, Maidstone and Dover. The initiative has been impactful, with most establishments expressing interest in further training.

- In conjunction with CSP partners a program of diversionary activities are being delivered in Ashford to build positive relationships and provide intervention to prevent further offending. A gaming bus and PANNA football cage for under 18s have been deployed during peak times in the town. Sessions have had attendances in the hundreds. This included individuals at risk of offending who have been encouraged to attend by the Child Centred Policing Team (CCPT).
- Similar interventions are reflected across the county including in Canterbury where the following have been delivered: Soccarena Events introduced in the town centre to promote positive youth engagement; Purple Partnership & Canterbury City Council delivered sports-based diversionary activities; Social Services collaboration focused on family-based interventions for prolific youth ASB perpetrators.
- In Dover, the local Child Centred Policing Officer designed, created and delivered 'Love Your Community', a week-long series of police led events & engagements involving partner agencies to address youth-related ASB, build relationships and trust in policing, and to develop respect for their community. The project aims to build stronger relationships between all involved in order to positively benefit the local community by developing a greater understanding of community needs and issues.
- Kent Police, in collaboration with Herne Bay Baptist Church and local businesses, have launched a dual-purpose initiative to support vulnerable children in Herne Bay. The Youth Hub, operated by the Canterbury CCPT, serves both as a proactive engagement space and a designated 'Place of Safety' for children under Police Protection Orders. Vulnerable and at-risk children are invited to the Youth Hub to divert them from ASB and low-level criminality. The Hub offers food, drink, and recreational activities.
- In Tonbridge, the creation of Op Lakeshot focused on youths targeting animals and property with catapults. Stop searches completed where appropriate and educational conversations took place at Community Events with CCPT and the Family Hub to assist with reducing the number of incidents being reported. Officers followed up on photos of youths provided by members of public to identify and engage with youths identified as engaging in ASB. The message regarding the illegal use of catapults was reiterated in school inputs, letters to parents and at community events. Robust action against the illegal use of catapults has been reflected around the county by Kent Police Community Safety Units with the assistance of the Rural Task Force (RTF). To drive longer term prevention, the RTF and Youth Justice Team are currently working on development of an engagement and diversion package to be delivered to children involved in wildlife crime in collaboration with partners including the RSPCA.
- Working closely with Dartford Football Foundation, a twice weekly programme allows officers the opportunity to engage with young people in a safe environment, improving trust and confidence amongst the young attendees. The events are routinely attended by around 15-30 young people each week.
- In Ramsgate, the Scripture Union Summer Camp, working with CCPT Officers, saw approximately 200 youths attend the programme, engaging in a wide range of activities including the Sports Connect Street Sports diversion work in Ramsgate town centre.
- Op Venture was created to ensure those issued with Section 35 notices issued (a discretionary power authorised at significant times to allow police to disperse individuals or groups causing, or likely to cause, harassment, alarm or distress to others through their anti-social behaviour by ordering them to leave the area and not return for a designated time) were followed up with home visits and engagement with youths involved in ASB. Approximately 50 visits have been completed to date. The Forward Trust is now using Kent Police-organised events locally to support drugs diversionary work with local youth groups.

The Kent and Medway VRU has led work on Focused Deterrence, an evidence-based approach that sees young street groups mapped and data analysed, with subsequent engagement and support from a number of partners. Through a holistic approach covering education, the family home and using various evidenced hooks and drivers, the aim is to divert the young person away from criminality and violence. Enforcement is also utilised to maximum effect as required. Over the summer period five young street groups have been actively targeted through Focused Deterrence with one group closed and work continuing with the remaining four.

The safer knife replacement scheme has seen trained professionals go to the homes of known knife carriers and exchange the family kitchen knives with rounded edged alternatives, which cannot penetrate clothing. This scheme is supported by the Ben Kinsella Trust and the Commando Chef, reinforcing the anti-knife crime message in Kent schools through cooking, education and workshops. During the summer a further 96 knives have been surrendered through this scheme, building on almost 400 previously surrendered.

The Kent and Medway VRU has promoted the “Clock it, Check it, Change it” campaign which aims to tackle the “bystander effect” and help young people become an “active bystander”. The VRU worked with young people to design the campaign which has been developed to reflect young people’s desire to know what to do in challenging or difficult situations of violence. The campaign was launched for the last weekend of the half term holiday and subsequent school breaks, which often see a spike in violent crime. The campaign had a huge reach on social media over the launch days; over 1000 hits on Facebook and 800 on X, with the VRU website which provides advice for parents, professionals and young people, receiving 1086 hits on the campaign page.

Community Engagement Events

As well as targeting those responsible for causing the most harm in the communities, Kent Police fully recognise the importance of community engagement efforts aimed at building trust and confidence, providing crime prevention advice, and strengthening relationships between police and local communities.

NHP teams have organised and participated in numerous community events including with local statutory and voluntary sector partners designed to build trust and confidence, provide practical crime prevention advice and foster positive relationships between local officers and their communities. Events have taken place throughout the summer across all Kent districts, including:

- The Swale Community Day hosted by the Swale Community Safety Unit. Over 1,100 local residents attended along with more than 50 partners supporting the event, hosting stalls to help residents access vital information such as drug and alcohol services and domestic abuse and housing support. Positive feedback was received from stakeholders including Kent’s High Sheriff.
- In Gravesend, police worked alongside partners including Kent Fire and Rescue Service, the Family Hub, The Grand, Southeastern, Cyclopark and the Sea Cadets at a Summer Safety Day. This provided the opportunity for provision of crime prevention advice and building trust and confidence in the police with a large public attendance.

Effective communication with communities

Kent Police recognise the strategic importance of social media and communications in strengthening neighbourhood policing, building public confidence and amplifying policing activity during the summer period. By actively engaging with communities through platforms like My Community Voice, Facebook, and X we have ensured timely, transparent, and accessible updates on local policing activity. This digital approach not only amplifies the visibility of neighbourhood policing officers but also fosters two-way dialogue, allowing residents to share concerns and receive reassurance. Through targeted campaigns, surveys, and real-time messaging, we are continuing to demonstrate a commitment to listening, adapting, and being present—reinforcing trust and enhancing the effectiveness of community policing.

The work of neighbourhood policing officers around the county has been widely covered on social media channels, through the use of short-form videos and press packages with the support of the newly created digital content creator role. In total, 17 videos about neighbourhood policing were posted in June, July and August on the force's Facebook, Instagram, X, YouTube, LinkedIn and Nextdoor channels. These generated an estimated total of 3.1million views, with much positive feedback received. The videos have varied in topic, from those covering arrests and court outcomes, to those documenting community events and outreach projects. For example, a video about a nuisance driver in Sheppey being jailed was viewed more than 860,000 times across all channels, while body-worn footage of officers tackling anti-social behaviour in Thanet gained more than 780,000 views. Videos about decreases in ASB in Tunbridge Wells, Swale Community Day and Sandwich Community Week were also popular, evidencing that Kent Police listens to community concerns and acts upon them. This targeted approach to communications over the summer has reinforced the visibility of community facing officers and supported the Safer Streets initiative to reduce crime and improve public confidence.

Business / Retail Crime

Kent Police is fully committed to tackling shoplifting and retail crime and supporting local businesses and communities. During the summer the Kent Police Business Crime Manager has been working with the National Business Crime Solution (NBCS), Business Crime Reduction Partnerships (BCRP) and major retailers on 'NBCS Connect', a project to reduce shop theft and assaults on staff. The scheme, which is ongoing in Dartford, Gravesend, Medway, Canterbury, Herne Bay, and Whitstable, facilitates the sharing of information on incidents and images of unidentified offenders and targets prolific offenders.

Kent Police has held three Business Crime Seminars this summer, with attendees including:

- BCRP Coordinators
- Kent County Council
- Representatives from major supermarkets
- Southeastern Rail
- National Association of Business Crime partnerships

The seminars prepared town centre businesses for new and emerging crime trends and shared local and national best practice, focusing on information sharing, working with police on obtaining Criminal Behaviour Orders (CBO) and jointly working with police locally to reduce crime.

Supported by the Kent Police dedicated ASB team, the force has targeted the most prolific retail crime offenders, using tools including CBOs, Acceptable Behaviour Agreements and CPNs to reduce shoplifting. Example of successful interventions include:

- North Kent's most prolific offender was served a CBO prior to the summer, resulting in no reports of shoplifting since.
- A male from Medway was the 2nd most prolific offender in Kent, having committed thefts at the same venue over 45 times in one year. Effective targeting resulted in his conviction for further thefts and breaches of his CBO and a sentence of 12 months in prison.
- A female from the Swale area was issued with a CBO following repeat reports of theft and violence resulting in no further offending.

Overall, the ASB team has obtained:

- 18 CBOS for individuals who have appeared in the top 20 repeat offender list
- 44 CBOS for any individual relating to retail crime

Retail crime reduction initiatives have been carried out across Kent's districts in partnership with BCRPs and Business Improvement Districts (BID), combining police enforcement activity with wider problem-solving approaches.

- Kent Police's work with partners in and around Chatham's flagship shopping centre has led to a significant enhancement in public safety and confidence among both visitors and local businesses, with a 37% reduction in the harm score within Chatham Town Centre in the past year. Comparative data from August 2024 to August 2025 shows a substantial decline in incidents within the centre, with thefts falling from 61 to 20 and ASB incidents dropping from 81 to 46. Local retailers have reported having greater confidence in the security of the area, and there has been an associated marked increase in footfall, particularly evident during the centre's 'Super Saturday 2025', which saw 5,000 more visitors compared to the same event in 2024.

Innovative Practice Examples

- *Op Odin, conceived in Canterbury and subsequently delivered across the five districts of East Kent, is an innovative plain clothed operation using the skills developed through Project Vigilant to focus on high theft volume retailers and repeat offenders. Delivered in partnership with councils, Trading Standards, business forums and others, Op Odin deployments have resulted in 22 arrests, 52 stop searches and the issuing of 13 community resolutions. The subsequent media video release received 130,000 views across all platforms with 1,100 likes on Facebook.*

- Op Ibis, in Maidstone, was born as a local response to increased levels of shoplifting and ASB relating to one particular large national store. Through engagement with the store's management and analysis of repeat crime data, a policing operation, using both plain clothed 'spotters' and uniformed strike teams supported by CCTV, was put in place resulting in multiple arrests, community resolutions and CPWs. To deliver sustainable reductions in theft and prevent repeat offending, partner agencies were engaged to provide support to offenders and target root causes for offending. Over the past three months reported shoplifting has decreased by 10% in Maidstone.
- Neighbourhood policing teams in Folkestone carried out multiple joint operations in collaboration with Trading Standards and Environmental Enforcement officers from Folkestone and Hythe District Council, targeting theft trading regulations and environmental standards. During one deployment, both plain clothed and uniformed officers were deployed in the town centre to proactively identify individuals involved in theft and locate outstanding suspects. This coordinated approach led to the identification and arrest of four offenders and a number of others dealt with by means of out of court resolutions.
- Throughout the summer, Sittingbourne High Street has benefited from a sustained and targeted policing presence aimed at reducing ASB, enhancing public reassurance and supporting the local business community. This initiative has contributed to a safer and more welcoming town centre environment, with businesses within the town centre's main shopping centre reporting zero ASB incidents during the period. Feedback from businesses on the impact of policing was positive.
- In Canterbury, in partnership with the OPCC and Canterbury Community Safety, the newly formed Community Support Team have provided high visibility presence in the retail crime hotspots, delivered crime prevention advice and training to retailers and notified police and partners when offenders have been identified.
- In Sevenoaks, daily collaborative meetings between Kent Police and the Safe Town Partnerships review crime trends and task policing and partnership activity. This allows the team to respond quickly to reports of crime, ensure the early capture of evidence and identification and arrest of suspects. The Safe Town Partnership provides support and engagement with businesses, assists with CCTV enquiries and drives the use of the shop safe radio system as a preventative tool.