

To: Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel

Subject: Winter of Action Initiative

Date: 23 April 2026

Introduction:

1. The government's Winter of Action Initiative (WoAI) built on the Safer Streets Summer Initiative (SSSI) that ran across England and Wales from 30 June until 30 September 2025. As members may recall, a paper summarising the SSSI and specifically Kent Polices' activity was presented at the 14 October 2025 Panel meeting.
2. The WoAI ran in over 600 town centres and related areas across England and Wales from 1 December 2025 to 31 January 2026. It was designed to sustain the momentum that was achieved over the summer while adapting to seasonal pressures in town centres - busier retail activity, festive events, increased socialising, and heightened risks of shop theft, crime and disorder as part of the nighttime economy, and violence against women and girls (VAWG) – guided by local intelligence and partnership insight.
3. The high-level priorities for the WoAI were:
 - Retail crime: Tackling theft, abuse of retail workers and organised criminality, with a clear focus on prolific offenders and partnership with retailers.
 - Street crime and antisocial behaviour (ASB): Maintaining visible patrols and public confidence, using enforcement and prevention to address persistent issues.
 - Night-time economy safety: for example, tackling alcohol related disorder, violent assault, spiking, and VAWG.Within these, the approach could be tailored to address the most pressing local issues, based on evidence and consultation.
4. The initiative encompassed a wide range of activities including that considered good practice in delivering crime reduction outcomes, such as high visibility patrolling and police enforcement. There was a focus on community engagement, including communication with the public and outreach in conjunction with local authorities and charities, as well as youth engagement through education and diversionary activity. There was also a focus on retail crime, including engagement with retailers and the targeting of prolific offenders.
5. The Initiative was a nationally coordinated, locally designed and delivered programme, led by Police and Crime Commissioners and Deputy Mayors. It was 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.
6. As with the SSSI initiative, no additional funding was provided for this activity, and the expectation was that it would form part of business as usual, building on existing local relationships and evidenced best practice.

Kent Police activity:

7. While the Home Office needed to understand where forces were targeting activity, the criteria for selecting geographical locations was wider than for the SSSI.
8. 31 town centres and retail areas were identified across Kent where it was anticipated a seasonal increase in footfall was likely to lead to local issues, including predicted increases in retail crime, street crime, ASB, and night-time economy offences. They were as follows:

North Division	West Division	East Division
Gravesend	Tunbridge Wells	Canterbury
Chatham	Maidstone	Riverside Retail Park
Chatham Dockside Outlet	South Aylesford Retail Park	Folkestone
Sittingbourne	Tonbridge	Ashford
High Street, Sheerness	Sevenoaks	Ashford Designer Outlet
High Street, Rochester		Dover
Temple Hill, Dartford		Ramsgate
Preston Street, Faversham		Dumpton Park Drive, Ramsgate
H/stead Valley Shopping Centre		Herne Bay
Bluewater Shopping Centre		High Street, Deal
High Street, Brompton		High Street, Hythe
		High Street, Whitstable
		High Street, Broadstairs
		High Street, Margate
		Northdown Road, Cliftonville

9. Attached as Appendix A is a paper prepared by Kent Police that summarises activity in support of the WoIA. This was presented and discussed at the PCC's [Performance and Delivery Board](#) on 25 February 2026.

Recommendation:

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

Chief Constable's Report
to
Kent Police and Crime Commissioner's Performance and Delivery Board

WINTER OF ACTION INITIATIVE

Wednesday 25th February 2026

Introduction

A nationwide crackdown on crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB) this winter was launched as police, councils and businesses united to protect shoppers, retail workers, and Christmas revellers. To keep communities safe over the busy Christmas period, police used hotspot patrols, quick visible enforcement, and locally tailored approaches, working closely with businesses and community groups to clamp down on shop theft and street crime across hundreds of town centres. The Winter of Action builds on the Safer Streets Summer initiative, which took place in almost 650 town centres and resulted in over 16,000 arrests and fines nationally, mostly for shop theft and ASB.

This report will focus on the winter action by Kent Police and will detail how the Force delivered sustained enforcement, strengthened partnerships and generated significant reductions in harm across the county, focussing on ASB, serious violence, violence against women and girls (VAWG), retail crime and public safety.

Tackling ASB and Serious Violence

Kent Police intensified hotspot policing, focusing resources on hotspot areas with higher levels of violence, knife crime and ASB. Officers conducted thousands of proactive patrol hours, ensuring a visible presence across town centres and transport hubs. The Force has seen a reduction in both serious violence and knife crime, with a 6.2% fall in volume of offences and a 9.0% decrease in associated harm between the rolling years of December 2024 and 2025. This reduction has also been noted within all hotspot areas which have the greatest concentrations of high harm relating to serious violence and knife crime, with a 5.5% reduction in volume and 1.4% in harm for these crime types. Some examples of this include:

- Dover street drinking intervention enabled 35 entrenched individuals to be identified, offered support and where necessary dealt with by enforcement measures including 22 preventative orders. Key premises linked to ASB were closed, reducing persistent issues and most of the identified offenders are fully engaging with support services.
- Across Tonbridge, nuisance vehicle ASB has been a persistent priority. This has been effectively addressed through joint enforcement activity under the Public Space Protection Order (PSPO). The combined efforts of police and the council have enabled robust action against those identified at vehicle 'meets'. As part of this activity, 56 Community Protection Warnings (CPWs) and 27 Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) were issued by the council, with a further nine FPNs issued over just two days in January, alongside vehicle seizures and the issuing of Section 59 notices. Positive press releases have been issued to reassure the public about the proactive joint enforcement taking place.
- Gillingham hotspot patrols delivered 561 hours of targeted patrols supported by knife arch deployments, traffic enforcement, and proactive licensing checks, helping to suppress violence, disrupt offending patterns, and increase public reassurance in a challenging hotspot area.
- In Ashford, risk offenders received CPW, CPN, and acceptable behaviour agreements (ABA) notices. The Shop Safe programme was relaunched successfully and the updated PSPO addressed issues with e-scooters and catapults.
- Significant Special Constabulary contribution, seizing 25 vehicles and issuing more than 60 traffic offence reports (TORs), showing a strong and sustained enforcement presence. Over a single weekend in mid-January, they added a further five vehicle seizures and 10 TORs, reinforcing their crucial role in maintaining pressure on persistent offenders.

- Major multi-agency operations including:
 - Operation Ratchet (Canterbury/Whitstable): 18 stop searches, six drug arrests, weapons and vehicles seizures, POCA cash seizure and stabilisation of drug-related harm.
 - Operation Sunbeam (Canterbury): 30 stop searches, 10 crime reports, and a reduction in violence against the person.
- High impact North Kent operations led to arrests, the seizure of two off-road bikes, including a high value £4,000 vehicle, alongside the submission of multiple intelligence reports and multiple drug and weapon recoveries. A drone-supported intervention also enabled officers to arrest a high risk PWITS suspect, recover 26 bags of cannabis, and seize eight illegal e-bikes and e-scooters, demonstrating fast time disruption and strong investigative impact.
- Intelligence, early intervention and education enabled the Community Safety Unit (CSU) and the Road Safety Unit to prevent a mass nuisance vehicle gathering at Cyclopark, ensuring a peaceful outcome for residents.

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

VAWG remains a core operational priority. Kent Police strengthened its safeguarding footprint through a combination of proactive patrols, targeted enforcement, community education and environmental crime prevention measures. Some examples are detailed below:

- Project Vigilant and Op Pilot deployments disrupted predatory behaviour through covert and uniform deployments in the night-time economy.
- Op Outlet in response to concerns delivered 360 patrol hours, 16 stop-searches, and 10 arrests.
- Spiking-prevention and taxi-licensing checks were conducted extensively during the Christmas and New Year NTE period as part of Op Shanty. For example, in Folkestone, patrols checked 38 taxis across five taxi ranks, delivered safeguarding awareness information, reinforced spiking awareness and VAWG prevention advice. Five licensing breaches were identified and dealt with robustly.
- Op Makesafe visits were conducted in 10 hotels to ensure safeguarding compliance and additional training provided where necessary.
- Ask for Angela messaging was reinforced across licensed venues. For example, in West Division officers visited 17 premises in Sevenoaks, Edenbridge, Swanley and New Ash Green. All venues demonstrated a foundational understanding of the initiative, with around six requiring further engagement and additional signage.
- Over 1,000 young people across Thanet received VAWG education and the White Ribbon Ambassador Scheme is expanding to 39 schools countywide.
- Walk & Talk engagement events across the county yielded real-time safeguarding interventions, including arrest of a knife suspect linked to an aggravated burglary.
- Dover CSU, acting on feedback from VAWG Walk and Talk surveys, designed, delivered and supported events including inspirational confidence-building talks and practical self-defence sessions, working alongside the NHS and local partners. These activities empowered participants, increased awareness of safety resources and reinforced strong community partnerships.
- Environmental improvements included improved lighting, CCTV repositioning and community safety pods.

Community Engagement and Partnership Work

Partnerships amplified Winter of Action impact. Joint work with councils, transport operators, retailers, volunteers and local safety groups enabled stronger interventions. Some examples are detailed below:

- The Maidstone CCTV trailer initiative successfully strengthened partnership working between Maidstone Borough Council and Kent Police, enhancing public safety and tackling ASB and VAWG in high-risk areas providing visible reassurance and improved safety during the busy Christmas period.
- Rochester Christmas Markets and Dickens Festival: 230,000 visitors supported by over 1,000 policing hours with only two arrests.
- Joint deployments with British Transport Police increased visibility and disrupted travelling criminality.
- Youth diversion activity included gaming buses, school inputs and community events tackling knives, e-scooters and catapults.

- Joint work between council and Medway CSU improved CCTV coverage across Gillingham with seven new cameras and repairs to existing infrastructure. The ongoing collaboration with beat officers is enhancing system reliability and resulted in enhanced local investigative capacity and public reassurance.
- Joint operational work included Op Leoside (food delivery driver offences), all-out days in Margate and Ramsgate hotspot zones leading to arrests, TORs and vehicle seizures.

Retail and Business Crime

Kent Police maintained a determined focus on tackling persistent offenders, protecting frontline retail workers, and supporting local businesses. Some examples are detailed below:

- Weekly joint patrols with One Maidstone Street Ambassadors and Maidstone Borough Council staff disrupted active shoplifters during Christmas period. Banning orders have also been used regularly by the Business Improvement District (BID) to reduce offending. Beat officers issued 35 Community Resolutions, conducted 135 stop-and-searches, and submitted 257 intelligence reports in the town centre during the Winter of Action period.
- Solved shoplifting increased 7.5% in Sevenoaks and Swanley with proactive engagement and DAMS sign-ups as well as banning notices for repeat offenders.
- Maidstone saw a 24% reduction in retail crime in December supported by joint patrols, proactive engagement with retailers and targeted enforcement.
- Selecta DNA has been successfully rolled out, providing a powerful boost in tackling persistent shoplifting and ASB. Retail partners in Swale, Chatham, Canterbury and Maidstone have been equipped with forensic marking sprays and product-marking kits, supported by officers using UV torches and enhanced evidence-gathering tools. With clear messaging in shops and custody suites, the initiative is helping target repeat offenders and deliver visible reassurance to businesses and the public.
- Operation Odin addressed shoplifting in Canterbury and Whitstable, leading to arrests and charges for prolific offenders and increased scrutiny of repeat offenders through monthly Criminal Behaviour Order (CBO) meetings.
- In Dover visible police uplift tackled business crime, resulting in 11 shoplifting arrests (covering 26 offences), 2 robbery arrests and increased reporting due to improved CCTV and encouragement of retailers.
- In Ashford town centre, 51 stop searches and multiple arrests including the detention of a persistent thief were carried out during this period.

Summary

The Winter of Action delivered measurable, sustained and widely felt results across Kent. Through high-visibility patrols, decisive enforcement, targeted safeguarding and strong partnership working, Kent Police reduced harm, protected vulnerable people and strengthened confidence across communities.