

AGENDA NO: 6a – Protecting People at risk of harm

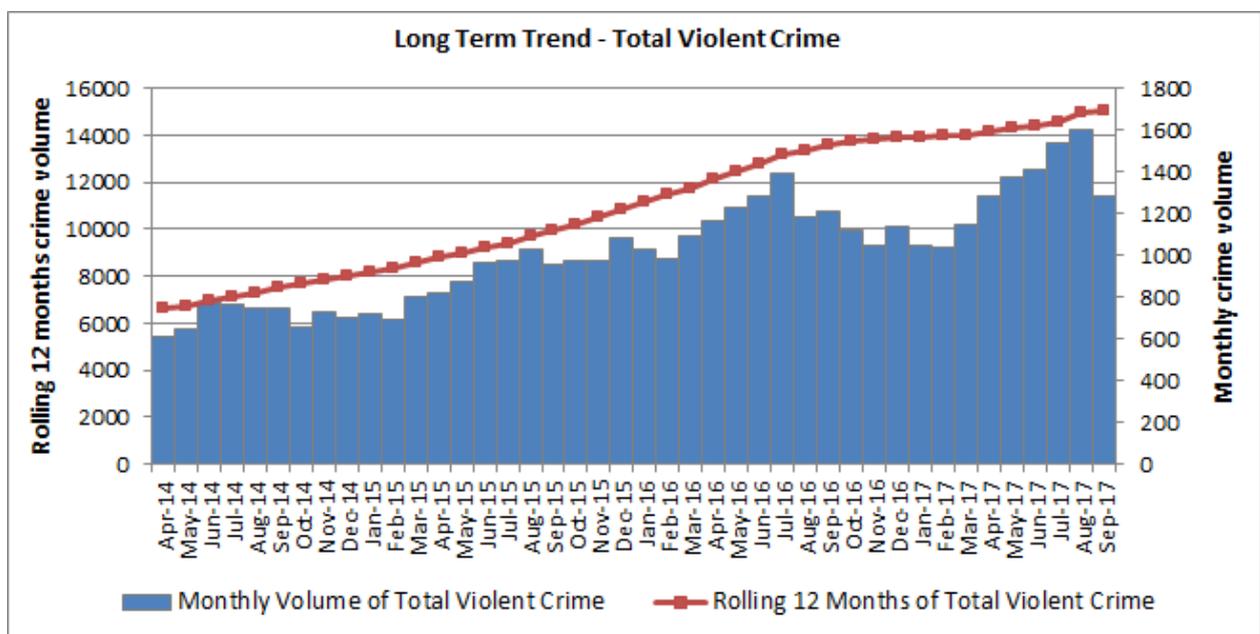
National Position

For the 12 months to June 2017, which is the latest national data available, Dorset is recorded as having the 12th lowest violence against the person crime rate.

In April, HMIC published its PEEL (Police Effectiveness, Efficiency and Legitimacy) report. The report described Dorset Police as having a good understanding of the problems affecting the people of Dorset, and working well with other public service organisations to prevent crime and reduce anti-social behaviour. It was also referenced that there is a clear priority within the Force to reduce harm and protect the most vulnerable people across the county.

Long Term trends

Total violent crime: Monthly breakdown of performance and longer term trend



Commentary on Performance

Violent crime – The rising trend in violent crime since 2013/14 has been well documented in previous reports, referencing work carried out by the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) which demonstrated that the country had not become more violent, but that the increasing national trend could be attributed to a change in reporting and recording practices for these crimes.

In the year to date, the Force is continuing to record an increasing trend in violent crime (including sexual offences), but the rate of increase is smaller than at the start of 2016/17. The increase is primarily in relation to common assault – non-injury assaults – as well as the rise in sexual offences.

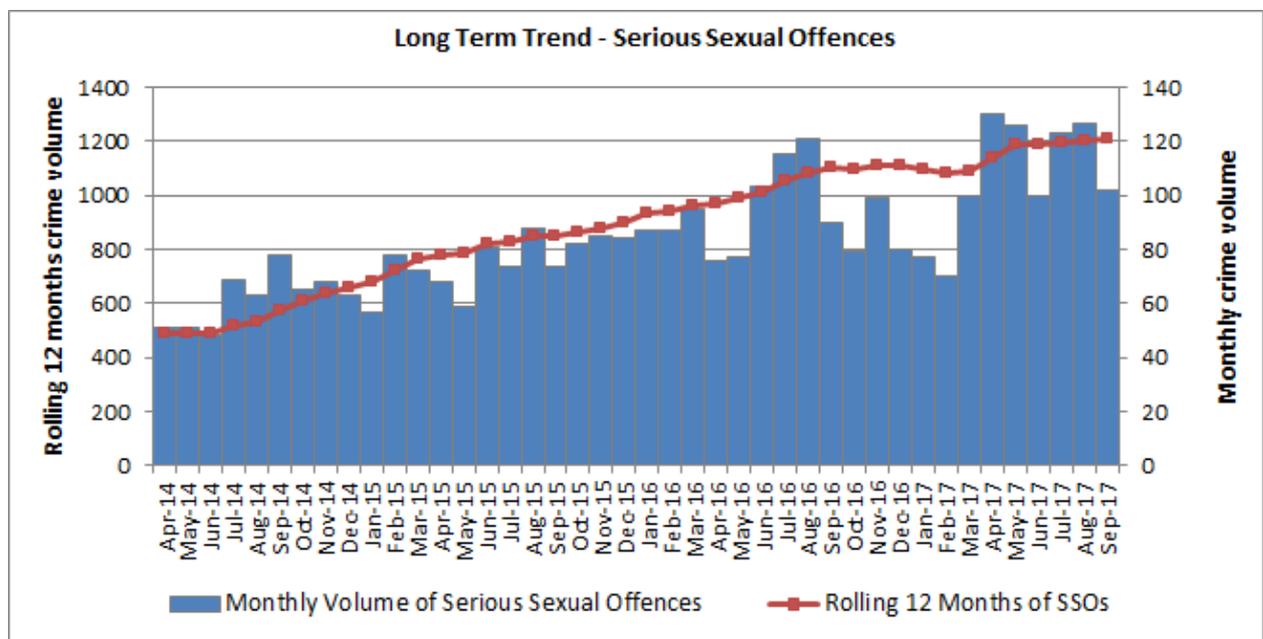
For 2016/17, a newly refined measure of public place violence was introduced in Force which helped to focus more specifically on the trends in relation to non-domestic assaults taking place in Dorset rather than blurring the picture through the inclusion of crimes of harassment and dog bites which have traditionally been included within the public place violence category.

Comparable data is now available for this new definition of public place violence and shows an increasing trend during 2017/18, again, primarily within the category of non-domestic common assaults. Part of this increase may be attributable to the Force's increased focus on crime recording compliance.

More detail on the Force's approach to tackling knife crime is provided in item 6d, at page 12 of this document.

The Force has increased its focus on Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) in recent years, with specialist teams established to deal with these investigations and recent increases in the resources made available to these teams. During April to September of 2017/18, a total of 55 CSE related crimes were recorded within Dorset, which is comparable to the same period last year. A number of children have been safeguarded as a direct result of police operations targeting high risk offenders in this area.

Serious Sexual Offences: Monthly breakdown of performance and longer term trend



Serious Sexual Offences – The upward trend in recorded serious sexual offences has continued during the 2017/18 year to date and work is underway to further the Force's understanding of the increase and will report early in 2018. It should be noted however, that at the end of March 2017, Dorset had the 13th lowest sexual offence crime rate nationally, so the current increase is not limited to Dorset.

Hate Crime – The rise in hate crime in 2016/17, which was partly caused by the EU referendum in June 2016 has now reduced, with only a moderate increase being recorded in the year to date (+7 crimes), mainly in relation to verbal abuse and non-injury assaults. It is of note that over the same period, the number of people being charged with these crimes has increased, indicating that the Force takes reports of hate crime seriously. A survey among hate crime victims shows a high level of satisfaction with how they were treated by staff.

Mental Health – Dorset Police has continued to reduce the use of custody for people detained under the Mental Health Act, with just two such detentions during 2017/18 to date, continuing to work with partners to ensure more appropriate facilities are available.

Samaritans' volunteers have also begun working in Bournemouth custody to provide a confidential and impartial support service to enhance the well-being of those people being detained. Detainees are offered the opportunity to speak face-to-face or over the phone with a Samaritans volunteer following their police interview. The support of the Samaritans is an additional service to that already provided by Independent Custody Visitors, who conduct independent, random checks on the welfare of people detained in custody.

Modern Slavery – Another area of concern is modern slavery. The Force has developed a Modern Slavery Action Plan in line with regional and national requirements, with the development of Force knowledge around this area of crime, drawing on intelligence received from both within the police and partner agencies. Between 1 April and 30 September 2017, 15 crimes relating to human trafficking and modern slavery have been recorded within Dorset.

Human trafficking especially of children is causing concern across agencies, particularly in the light of a discovery in June of seven children among 18 illegal immigrants discovered hidden in a lorry at Poole port. Dorset is supporting the national Operation Aidant, the theme of which in October is child trafficking.

Working with our Communities

National position

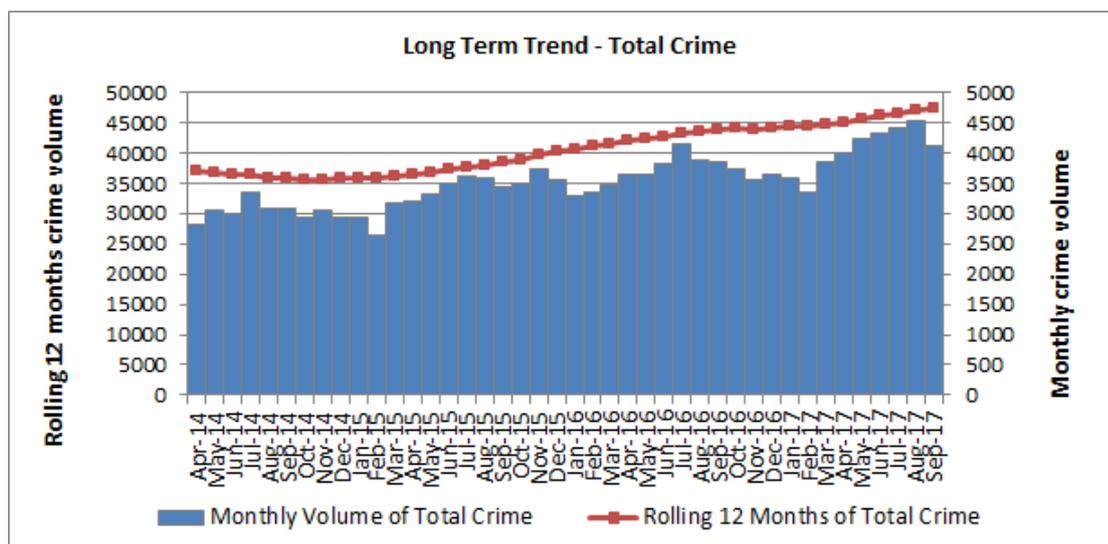
For the 12 months to June 2017, which is the latest national data available, Dorset is recorded as having the 11th lowest total crime rate nationally. In terms of dwelling burglary its position is even better, having the 10th lowest dwelling burglary crime rate nationally.

Dorset is second nationally for 'confidence in the police' and second for 'Doing a good job' (Crime Survey for England & Wales – year to June 17)

Long term trends

Figures 1 and 2 show the monthly breakdown (use right hand axis) and the longer term trends in crime and anti-social behaviour (use left hand axis) volumes.

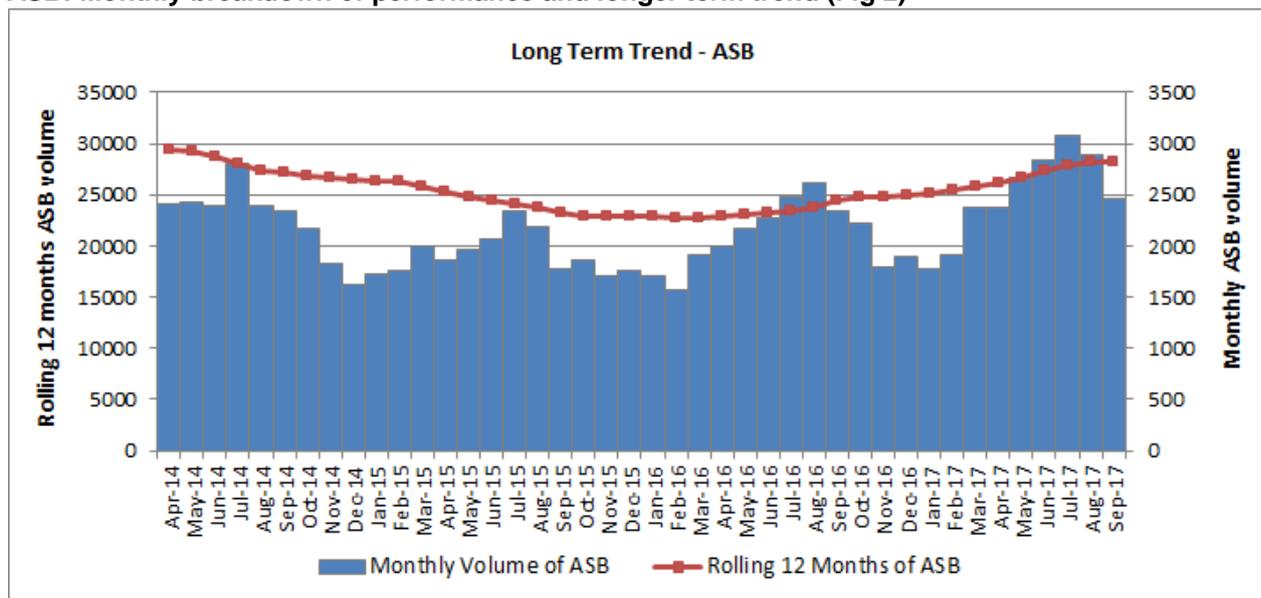
Crime: Monthly breakdown of performance and longer term trend (Fig1)



As the graph above shows, the long term trend in relation to total crime volumes within Dorset is one of moderate increase, predominantly driven by an increasing volume of lower level crimes including theft and non-injury violence. With the Force's drive to improve crime recording compliance in order to ensure that victims are receiving the service they are entitled to, a further rise in crime is anticipated, but the fact that Dorset remains 11th nationally in relation to its crime rate indicates that there is a national picture of crime increase. The force is currently predicting an end of year increase of between 10.5% and 12.1%.

Between April and Sep 2017, the Force has recorded a positive outcome rate of 19% which is top quartile nationally (12-months to June 17).

ASB: Monthly breakdown of performance and longer term trend (Fig 2)



The graph above shows that ASB volumes are continuing to increase during the 2017/18 year to date with the usual seasonal spike in summer commencing slightly earlier this year in June, which can probably be attributed to the warm weather at that time. Whilst Personal ASB volumes have increased in the year to date, the greatest volume increase relates to nuisance ASB which may require partnership involvement due to the nature of the incidents concerned which are often civil rather than criminal matters.

From April 2017, the Home Office classification of dwelling burglary, as it will be reported nationally, changed. The main change is that sheds and garages within the boundary of a residential dwelling will now be recorded as a dwelling burglary whereas previously they would have been counted as a non-dwelling burglary. The result of this change in definition will be an apparent increase in dwelling burglary volumes reported nationally although local monitoring separates out the residential outbuilding crimes from those relating to burglary of the main dwelling itself in order to provide comparisons with previous years.

A notable reduction in dwelling burglary was recorded in the first quarter of 2016/17 which is at least partially responsible for the current year to date increase being recorded. As the months progress, the increase is expected to reduce as the difference becomes less affected by below average volumes of dwelling burglaries recorded the previous year.

It is positive that over 96% of burglary dwelling victims surveyed reported being satisfied with how they were treated by Officers and staff.

Road safety – Road safety is also a consideration underneath this priority, and it is positive that the rolling annual figure for those killed or seriously injured on Dorset’s roads has been decreasing month on month for the last year.

The Force continues to target high risk road users in order to improve road safety within Dorset. In June 2017, one such motorist who had been the subject of focus by the police was sentenced to 26 weeks in prison, suspended for 24 months, with a requirement to carry out 100 hours of unpaid work as well as a rehabilitation activity and programme requirement. He was also disqualified from having a driving licence for 12 months. In addition, as part of the summer drink drive campaign during June 2017, a total of 33 people were charged. As in previous campaigns, anyone charged with a drink or drug driving-related offence during the campaign had their name and court appearance details released to the media.

Organised crime – Project Spotlight is the partnership approach to tackling organised crime within Dorset. Each of the Force’s partners shares best practice in the coordination of action taken to tackle organised crime locally through Project Spotlight. The Force continues to tackle the threat from out of county drug dealers, with dangerous drugs network (DDN) activity linked to a rise in knife crime. Positively, in their inspection, HMIC acknowledged that Dorset has an effective system for assessing the risk posed by DDNs under Operation Voltage.

Counter Terrorism – Dorset Police’s Counter Terrorism capability comes under the remit of the South West Counter Terrorism Intelligence Unit (SWCTIU). The drive from the SWCTIU and National tasking is risk-based and as a result resources and funding are directed at ports based on risk in terms of Counter Terrorism. Continued terrorist attacks both within the UK and Abroad have highlighted the very real threat of terrorism with the threat level shifting between Severe and Critical. The intelligence picture being kept under constant monitoring and review to ensure the appropriate security is in place. Although there is no intelligence or information at this time that suggests a specific risk to Dorset, nationally there continues to be a risk posed by returning fighters from Syria.

Fraud and Cyber-crime - Fraud including cyber is the biggest worry among Dorset residents surveyed through the Community Safety Survey currently, with 55% worried about it – rising from 51% last year.

A project is ongoing within Dorset Police to quantify the extent of fraud that is committed against Dorset victims, as there are a number of different routes through which fraud allegations can be received, including members of the public reporting directly to Action Fraud. As part of this work, there is a focus on identifying vulnerable victims of fraud through the implementation of a risk assessment process in order to establish appropriate preventative and safeguarding measures.

Tackling cyber-crime remains a priority for Dorset Police. In partnership with Get Safe Online, Dorset Police hosted a cyber-security event in Poole in June, giving advice and information to help keep members of the public and their data safe online. Online safety advice about shopping, finance, social media, running a business, keeping family safe online and protecting devices were all available at the event. Members of the public were able to take their devices along and discuss online safety and security with experts from Get Safe Online and other partners including banking experts, Action Fraud and Dorset Police cyber-crime unit.

Rural Crime – Dorset Police’s Rural Crime Team works proactively alongside colleagues, partners and volunteers to increase engagement with rural communities, target criminals

who offend in our rural areas and provide bespoke crime prevention advice. In May, a training course was provided to a small team of Dorset officers, educating them in the legislation concerning the protection of badgers, and the various forms of persecution of the species. In June, the Force launched a new tractor loaned to them as part of its efforts to engage with rural communities and support crime prevention activities.

Rural crime is defined as crime which occurred within one of the five main rural sections of Dorset; Bridport, Dorchester, East Dorset, Purbeck and North Dorset. Overall crime within the five rural sections has increased in the first quarter of 2017/18 by 13%, which is slightly higher than the Force overall. A large proportion of the increase relates to a rise in theft offences which is recorded Forcewide but potentially has a greater impact within rural communities due to the value of some of the agricultural items being stolen. It is possible that some of the increase is a consequence of the establishment of the Rural Crime Team who have been engaging with the rural community and encouraging the reporting of crimes to the police.

During Neighbourhood Watch Week in June, Dorset Police celebrated local groups with a series of events led by local Neighbourhood and Home Watch groups.

Supporting victims, witnesses and reducing reoffending

Victims & Witnesses – As of 1 April 2017, Forces are no longer mandated by the Home Office to conduct the surveys of victims. However, the Force recognises the value of receiving feedback from victims of crime and so is continuing to survey victims of dwelling burglary, hate crime, violence and domestic abuse in order to gauge their views on the service they have received, with a focus on higher risk crime types.

In 2017/18, the Force appointed a new Victims' Champion for Dorset, whose role ensures that Dorset Police is providing victims with the appropriate support and information they need on their journey through the criminal justice system.

Reoffending – Dorset Police has had multiple successes from its voluntary tagging scheme. The scheme provides offenders with the opportunity to be voluntarily fitted with a GPS tag for an agreed period while they are on probation or following their release from prison. The tagging initiative is generally provided to offenders who have a disproportionately negative impact on communities from committing crimes such as theft and burglary. As well as deterring offending, in a few cases where bail conditions have been breached, evidence from the tags can help in court, saving the criminal justice system time and money. Reoffending rates among those tagged have been relatively low and where the person has reoffended, the tag has been known to be used as evidence to secure a conviction.

Data relating to the Force's Prolific & Priority Offender (PPO) cohort – covering arrests of these nominals and crimes where a PPO is recorded as a suspect began to be collected from April 2016. The data helps to track any reoffending behaviour amongst this group of offenders. During the first quarter of 2017/18, 10 PPOs have been arrested at least once with a total of 51 crimes linked to a PPO as the named suspect.

HMIC have encouraged both Alliance forces to broaden the range of offences of managed offenders to include violence and domestic abuse as well as drug motivated acquisitive criminals.

AGENDA NO: 6b – Multi-Agency Working

Crime is complex, and it cannot be cut by focusing solely on catching and convicting those who have already committed crimes, vital though that is. Crime is also cut by prevention, by addressing the factors that drive crime. High incidence of mental health, drug abuse and problem drinking are prevalent amongst offenders.

Effective policing alone cannot address these problems: the difference is made when the problem of crime is addressed in its totality.

Working in partnership promotes efficiency, as through it, the individual agencies pool resources and knowledge to avoid duplication of effort and gaps in service provision. It also broadens the range of options in dealing with crime as various agencies will have various tools and powers available to them. These factors allow agencies to go further in achieving their own aims as well as pursuing the unifying aim of the partnership. The collective effort of partners is likely to result in savings to all.

PCCs play a key role in brigading effort to tackle local crime and disorder, improve community safety and victim satisfaction and protect vulnerable people. Therefore, previous reports to the Police and Crime Panel have identified the large number and wide range of strategic partnerships where the PCC and his office are regularly engaged.

Over the past several years, two major factors have further influenced the importance of the PCC's role in helping to facilitate strong partnership working between statutory, voluntary and private sector organisations, in order to deliver services effectively and efficiently. These are: (i) the consequences of austerity measures across all sectors, and (ii) the increased complexity of many of the issues that have emerged through greater levels of awareness and identification by agencies and by the public.

- (i) Without doubt, the need to reduce costs and optimise operational models to manage austerity measures has caused many organisations to concentrate their remaining resources on achieving their core (sometimes statutory) functions. An inevitable consequence of this shift in focus towards core objectives at the expense of others has caused many organisations and their leaders to focus attention 'inwards', rather than necessarily capitalising upon the wider opportunities offered by working in partnership.
- (ii) In addition, the apparent increase in the complexity of issues raised by individuals and by diverse communities as a consequence of greater identification and understanding, sometimes fuelled by national and local publicity, continues to add to the demand upon those very organisations having to operate with finite and often decreasing resources.

In addition to his statutory duties, the PCC's proactive approach to tackling crime and community safety in Dorset, requires that he and his office work very closely with a wide range of partners. This takes many forms including membership of important strategic partnerships covering key aspects of Community Safety and Criminal Justice, leading to improvement in service delivery, commissioning of important programmes that cut across a number of agencies areas of responsibility, introducing innovation, and encouraging and developing consistency across Dorset.

Successes

Despite the challenges and complexities of working in partnership, a number of important developments within the partnership landscape have been achieved during the first, and now

the second term, of office of the PCC, aimed at ensuring that every member of the Dorset public has access to the best possible service, whether as a victim, a perpetrator, or as a member of a community affected by any crime or community safety issue that impacts upon them.

Community Safety and Criminal Justice Board

Dorset has historically been notably progressive in its Community Safety Partnership (CSP) arrangements. Whereas many areas continue to have separate district and borough CSPs, in Dorset the landscape has evolved over the last decade into the current three CSPs of Dorset, Bournemouth and Poole. The consensus is that a number of the efficiencies gained by streamlining the arrangements have had a positive impact on the effectiveness of the partnerships.

In addition, the Dorset Criminal Justice Board (DCJB) has been operating very successfully for many years, ensuring that key CJ partners, many of which operate within and beyond Dorset's boundaries, are working together to improve the effectiveness of the CJ System.

However, historically the operations of these two groups were largely isolated from each other. This arbitrary delineation between community safety and CJ delivery, was not conducive to the PCC's view that the 'customer journey' should be a continuum. Therefore, the PCC has been an advocate for the development of a dedicated body to addressing some of the strategic issues that impact on the spectrum of community safety and CJ issues in Dorset. As such, the PCC's office was instrumental in helping to develop the Community Safety and Criminal Justice Board (CSCJB), which has now been running since April 2016. The inclusion of elected members representing CSPs and Local Authorities, of key DCJB members, together with other key stakeholders such as the Safeguarding Board Chairs, now provides a forum where potential hurdles and barriers to providing the public with a seamless service, can be addressed.

Local Regeneration Boards

Another example of the PCC's influence and support to partners can be seen at a more local level with the development of the Melcombe Regis Regeneration Board. The PCC's involvement with and experience of the Boscombe Regeneration Board has been of significant assistance in helping partners operating in Weymouth and Portland to cultivate good practice and develop the learning from that successful body. The Board is now beginning to make a notable difference in addressing community safety in an area of Dorset that partners recognise has particularly complex needs.

Challenges

At the same time, challenges remain that continue to affect the PCC's ability to ensure delivery of services meets the needs of the public of Dorset.

Commissioning Services

One area that adversely impacts the desire to deliver appropriate and cost effective services, is the difficulty in identifying current Dorset-wide delivery. The vast majority of statutory agencies within Dorset operate within specific geographies, which can lead to different approaches being taken across the county.

In order to make inroads into this, the PCC has recently commissioned a major piece of research and analysis work to (i) identify the needs of Dorset's communities through analysing the content of existing partnership strategies, needs assessments and reports

across all areas of community safety and criminal justice; (ii) implement an audit of current service delivery by all partners including both in-house and commissioned services; leading to (iii) identification of the current gaps in services.

Some of this work has been hampered at times by difficulties in obtaining a full picture of services, whether because of a partner agency's unwillingness to share such information, or through occasional misunderstanding within an organisation of what is actually being delivered or commissioned by that body. This has the potential to lead to resources being wasted on duplication of effort, or worse still of possibly conflicting in terms of delivery of outcomes.

Wicked Issues

It is well established fact that two of the most frequent areas of increasing demand upon services, involve people with mental health concerns and those with substance misuse vulnerabilities. A significant cohort regularly present to all public services displaying both complications and many of these people are become involved in the justice system as an unfortunate consequence. The DCJB has identified the benefits of attempting to bring appropriate organisations together concerning these two agendas, as has the pan-Dorset Drug & Alcohol Governance Board. Some key stakeholders working through one board are not systematically engaged in the business of the other, and there is currently no suitable forum in Dorset where this inter-related business is being addressed.

In the absence of a suitable existing forum and with no sign of any single agency progressing this joint agenda, the OPCC has proactively taken on the role of facilitator to bring key agencies together, with the aim of addressing the commonalities, seeking to reduce duplication, increase effectiveness and thereby reduce demand. A task and finish group has been arranged involving key commissioners from across both agendas (meeting for the first time in late November) and it is anticipated that this group will report to the Community Safety and Criminal Justice Board, as the most appropriate multi-agency body.

AGENDA NO: 6c – Neighbourhood/Community Policing and Engagement

The principle of policing by consent is, perhaps, the proudest tradition of British policing. It is recognised that police officers are citizens in uniform, and that their power comes from a legitimacy derived from a consensus of support from the population, and the continual demonstration of transparency, accountability and integrity in the exercise of their duties. Given this, the importance of local community and neighbourhood policing can never be overstated.

However, the current combination of intense funding pressures and high and complex demand, have led to a workforce that is under strain, and often struggling to keep pace with the expectations of the PCC and Chief Constable.

Operational Business Design and PRISM

In such circumstances, increasingly innovative strategies must be employed to maintain expected levels of service delivery.

Whilst this is not necessarily a numbers game, the overall levels of policing resources available to the Dorset frontline is a key indication of the service that can be provided at any point. Members of the Panel have noted that Dorset Police remains over-budget for workforce, and although the numbers of police officers have been allowed to decrease, they are still at a level which is higher than establishment.

In order to address those concerns, and to address the fact that the numbers of officers leaving through natural wastage (retirement, etc) has not been as high as expected, a proportion of the planned officer intakes for 2017/18 have been cancelled. There will therefore only be two intakes in the first half of 2018.

With fewer, albeit the correct, numbers of officers, the workload falling on said officers must be optimised, and where possible those tasks that can be carried out by other individuals should be stripped out, allowing officers to focus on those core activities that only a fully warranted police officer can perform.

In Dorset, the use of appointment or diary cars, staffed by trained PCSOs, to take on the volume demand and lower level crime types has been introduced to free up officers' time to focus on the priority areas. Elsewhere in the Alliance, a dedicated team that takes victim statements over the phone has been introduced, meaning that that frontline officers are able to move quickly into investigative and problem solving tasks.

Both of these innovations form part of the Operational Business Design (OBD) work previously mentioned to the Panel. Following the introduction of PRISM, the OBD programme now falls into this portfolio, allowing piloting, learning and best practice to be developed across the Alliance without having to be undertaken by each Force.

Wider Community Engagement

Of course, police officers are not the only way that Dorset Police engage with local communities and people. The prevention of crime, ASB and youth offending can be significantly enhanced by carrying out meaningful activity through effective partnership with internal colleagues and external partners.

The Safe Schools and Communities Team (SSCT) is a partnership between Dorset Police and the Dorset Combined Youth Offending Service, with a remit to prevent and reduce ASB, crime and wrong-doing amongst children and young people, and help keep them safe in a digital world.

The SSCT has three main areas of focus:

1. **Community Safety Education:** providing education to children and young people, professionals and parents in the following areas: online safety, alcohol and drug misuse, bullying, ASB, child sexual exploitation, diversity, domestic abuse and healthy relationships, weapons and firearms, preventing gang culture and preventing violent extremism. This also includes the BLITZ project together with Dorset Fire and Rescue, which looks at the dangers and consequences of underage drinking and ASB and the GRiP (Gaining Respect in People) road shows for year 7 students that cover diversity, weapons, preventing gang culture and anti-social behaviour.
2. **Dorset Police Triage Service:** the SSCT operates the Dorset Police Triage service with the aim of responding more effectively to school and internet incidents. Reports to the police relating to incidents involving school pupils, which take place while in an educational setting, as well as youth internet safety incidents will be referred to the SSCT to manage. The aim of this initiative is to support young people, parents, carers and their schools to deal with these incidents proportionately and effectively. Where appropriate, the SSCT officers will give one-to-one education to young people and advice to their parents/carers and professionals working with young people and their families.
3. **Youth Out of Court Disposals:** the SSCT lead on the management of youth out of court disposals (youth restorative disposals, youth cautions and youth conditional cautions). SSCT officers are trained Restorative Justice practitioners, and able to take part in Restorative Justice conferences that deal with – for example – bullying, shoplifting and possession of drugs and also in retail and drugs workshops as part of the rehabilitative conditions of youth conditional cautions.

Linked to the previous point on OBD, the SSCT officer post was historically only available to police constables, however, following a review it was recognised that PCSOs hold the kinds of skills and experience required in this role; allowing a role profile to be created that allowed PCSOs to specialise into the field of youth engagement.

During the last twelve months, SSCT PCSOs have provided educational inputs to almost 85,000 children and young people as well as dealing with almost 400 incidents that took place within a school setting (such as playground fights, bullying, low level thefts). Dorset Police remains committed to providing effective youth engagement and has recently dedicated an additional four PCSOs to this team.

The SSCT has been recognised both locally and nationally as an excellent example of youth engagement as well as a model to reduce crime and ASB, winning numerous awards including the Howard League for penal reform and Dorset criminal justice awards.

Scrutiny

The Force has an established forum for reviewing obligations under the National Child Centred Policing Strategy and Action plan, and a sub group has recently been set up to provide strategic oversight and direction to youth consultation and engagement. The ambition is for this group to take a co-ordinated and partnership approach to youth engagement and consultation ensuring that it resources reaching young people do so in a meaningful manner. A youth strategy, incorporating the national action plan, is currently under development.

Progress against this is monitored at the Force Child Centred Scrutiny Board, the work of which is monitored by OPCC, and reported to the PCC by exception through his attendance at Strategic Boards.

AGENDA NO: 6d – Knife Crime

Reducing the incidence of serious violence, and protecting vulnerable individuals from exploitation or becoming involved in violence is a national priority. Locally, the incidence of serious violence involving the use of knives or other sharp instruments has not necessitated a significant strategic response; albeit a raft of activity is constantly undertaken by both the police and by partners. The increase in the use of knives is commonly linked to an increase in so-called 'gang culture', a problem which is not apparent within Dorset.

Review

This summer, a review of knife crime across Dorset identified a significant increase in reported crime. This was informed by Force data that monitors set crimes (including attempted murder, assault with injury, sexual assaults and robbery, for example) and records instances of whether a knife, or similar sharp object such as a razor blade, was used.

The headlines from the review are:

- An increase in reported knife related crimes in Dorset during 2016/17 which represents an increase of 50% as compared to 2015/16. This is against a national increase of 26%.
- 77% of crimes were concentrated in urban areas.
- The majority of crimes involve some degree of victim/suspect relationship but the victim was sometimes unwilling to engage due to fear of the consequences, especially in drug related crimes.
- Offenders tend to openly display knives rather than covertly carrying for defensive purposes.
- A rise in premeditated attacks on known victims, e.g. collecting drug debts.

Whilst the year on year increase is significant, this should be viewed from the position of having a low baseline. Nationally, the police recorded 36,998 offences involving a knife or sharp instrument in the 12 months to June 2017, up from 29,476. This continues a trend seen in recent years, but follows a period when knife crime offences declined in the early 2010s. The Home Office state some of this rise is due to improvements in recording practices, but that in areas such as London (where there was a 47% increase) it is thought there is a genuine increasing trend. For context, there were 344 reported knife related crimes in Dorset during 2016/17.

In order to understand whether there were any specific emerging patterns of offending around one quarter of the knife related crimes that occurred during 2016/17 were reviewed in detail. A number of emerging issues were identified as a result:

- Domestic Abuse incidents occurring inside the home accounted for 24% of the reviewed crimes. These crimes typically involved an argument influenced by alcohol and resulted in either threats or injury using kitchen knives.
- In 22% of the 344 knife related crimes the victim had no known previous relationship with the offender. Further analysis of these crimes revealed that in the majority of cases the incident involved drug debt collection.
- Analysis revealed a range of different offence types that occurred in a public place. This differs to previous trends, in which the majority of public based crimes involved

low level possession offences where officers located knives on offenders after they had come to light for other matters.

- Fear of knives and of knife crime remains fairly high; with a recent Dorset school survey of just under one thousand 13-16 year olds, stating that this was their number one concern.

Strategy

In response to this review, the Force has developed a Knife Crime Strategy for 2017-20. The strategic aim is to work in conjunction with partners to identify those most at risk and those who present the greatest threat in terms of knife related crime. Work is ongoing to understand the scale and impact on local communities and individuals and additionally to ensure that effective procedures are in place to protect them from harm as well as disrupting and bringing offenders to justice whilst maintaining public confidence in Dorset Police and partner organisations.

This will be supported by six key strategic objectives, to:

1. Develop a partnership approach to identifying those who are most at risk of harm, and, through intelligence, those who present the greatest threats in the affected areas. Responding to locations at heightened risk and to reduce the risk both through diversionary pathways and target hardening whilst pursuing both civil and criminal justice options.
2. Ensure that local officers and front line staff are provided with appropriate intelligence and are aware of their policing powers to disrupt and prevent knife crime.
3. Ensure that robust action is taken along with partner agencies when reports of domestic abuse incidents have been received involving knives and that all measures, both criminal and civil, have been fully explored.
4. Ensure that a communications strategy reassures members of the public and affected communities that positive action is being taken by Dorset Police and partner agencies to tackle the issue and that it also raises practitioner awareness and professional knowledge.
5. Ensure that reassurance is provided to school children as part of a balanced approach detailing both the dangers of knife possession/crime and the likelihood of being affected.
6. Mitigate the risk by maintaining intelligence flows to officers and ensuring they are aware of tactical considerations and do not operate in isolation.

Actions

Dorset Police is taking part in Operation Sceptre, a Met Police based initiative, being followed by other forces to adopt a joined up national programme. During a fixed operational period, it follows four strands of activity, with each strand focusing on a range of tactical options. The overall plan is one of a heavy element of upfront police-led enforcement, followed by a range of supporting work. This supporting work includes specific awareness raising activity in schools and colleges. The packages aim to help young people think about the decisions they make, and the consequences of their actions with the aim of deterring them from becoming involved with violence.

This is a live operation, and so further details have not been provided. However, Dorset Police has conducted several more searches and arrests during the Sceptre period. At the

same time, the Safer Schools Team and the Firearms Teams have delivered over a dozen educational sessions in schools across the county. The educational events were very well received, with hundreds of students receiving various inputs, dependent on the particular age group involved.

Scrutiny

The PCC's staff officer attended the Op Sceptre briefing at the Home Office alongside Dorset Police operational leads to ensure the PCC is aware of the overall aims and objectives of the programme.

Progress against this strategy and action plan is being monitored at the Force Strategic Performance Board, a monthly meeting attended by the PCC and his team. Operational updates are also provided weekly at Joint Executive Board, co-chaired by the Chief Constable and PCC.