

**Meeting:** Overview and Scrutiny Board

**Date:** 10<sup>th</sup> September 2025

**Wards affected:** ALL

**Report Title:** Overview report for Safer Torbay (Community Safety Partnership)

**When does the decision need to be implemented?** n/a

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## 1. Introduction

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- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the O&S Board with an update on key work areas for Safer Torbay, covering progress from the last 12 months against statutory functions; and an overview of strategic priority areas and key work areas for the next year.

## 2. Strategic Assessment 24/25

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- 2.1 The most recent Strategic Assessment 24/25 was carried out to inform decision-making and prioritisation by Safer Torbay. It involves risk assessing and scoring each community safety issue.

The following highlights were identified:

- Overall recorded crime in Torbay increased by 3.4% (compared to the previous year)
- 48% of recorded crime was violent crime (including sexual offences, violence against the person, and robbery)
- 33% of violence against the person offences was flagged as domestic abuse
- The number of sexual offences reported increased by 10% compared to the previous year
- There was an increase in police reported ASB incidents of 7.9% compared to the previous year
- Alcohol and drug related harm continues to present the highest risk to communities.

In addition, community feedback is gathered throughout the year, in the form of structured surveys or more informal intelligence gathering via, for example, community engagement and complaints received. These surveys have identified that antisocial behaviour continues to be a key issue for the local community, particularly in public spaces.

A priority focus for Safer Torbay is to increase our capacity to gather and analyse data from across the partnership to gain a more dynamic understanding of the wider issues facing our communities – and get ahead of emerging risks. This remains an important gap due to the absence of sustainable funding.

### 3. Key activity 24/25

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**3.1 Prevent** The Prevent Duty was established via the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 with the aim of stopping people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. Prevent also extends to supporting the rehabilitation and disengagement of those already involved in terrorism. It sits alongside long-established safeguarding duties on professionals to protect people from a range of other harms, such as substance abuse, involvement in gangs, and physical and sexual exploitation. The duty helps to ensure that people who are susceptible to radicalisation are supported as they would be under safeguarding processes.

As part of Prevent, we aim to:

- Increase awareness of the signs of radicalisation
- Intervene early to support people at risk of radicalisation
- Tackle the ideological causes of terrorism. This will help people make informed choices.
- Enable people who have already engaged in terrorism to disengage and rehabilitate.
- Signpost parents, carers, family and friends to Prevent or other safeguarding services.
- Encourage people to be safe online so that they are less exposed to harm.

Some of the work delivered by the Prevent Partnership the following over the last 12 months has included:

- A localised risk assessment has been produced and scrutiny of partnership self-assessment feedback to identify areas of improvement.
- Review carried out into referrals numbers and processes for primary and secondary care.
- Training Strategy has been updated.
- Initiation of a Task and Finish group to look specifically at the low level of adult referrals into Channel.
- Consideration of how problem-solving approaches work locally with guidance developed to support this process and ensure learning is fed into the partnership.

Home Office Benchmarking for Prevent found that the Local Authority has evidenced that it is exceeding requirements in the core benchmark areas of the multi-agency partnership group, risk assessment, delivery planning, referral pathway and training. Benchmarking for Channel did not take place this year however informal feedback from the Home Office local QA lead is that our Channel Panel is strong and working effectively. There is good engagement in the Torbay Channel by Adult Social Care and Mental Health services.

An internal CONTEST Board for officers across Torbay Council is in the process of being set up to share information and ensure consideration of any risks that may relate the 4 pillars of the government counter terrorism strategy.

Nationally following the Southport murders and subsequent rapid learning review the Home Office took steps to clarify existing policy in relation to Prevent. This included some interim policy changes introduced by CT Policing in relation to repeat referrals and referrals categorised as ‘fascination with extreme violence or mass casualty attacks’.

An area that we need to strengthen is how we better gauge community sentiment and emerging themes by sharing intelligence regarding community tensions and understanding local risk levels. With the current global and national political narrative there continues to be the potential for escalation of extreme right-wing rhetoric, with links to anti-immigration sentiment. The result of this was seen in relation to the summer 2024 protests/riots which followed false reporting and deliberate spreading of disinformation relating to the offender. The presence of destabilising violent conflicts in the world and rise of race-centric tensions and intolerances will only serve to increase this risk.

**3.2 Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking (MSHT)** The Modern Slavery Act 2015 introduced the powers that law enforcement agencies need to pursue, disrupt and bring to justice those engaged in human trafficking, slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour. It also introduced a range of measures to enhance support and protection for victims.

The Modern Slavery Statutory Guidance (Home Office, 2020) applies in England and Wales to public authorities with a duty to notify the Home Office when encountering a potential victim and those involved in the identification of and support for potential victims. These individuals and organisations must have regard to the Statutory Guidance, with a view to developing a more consistent response to modern slavery victims to ensure they are identified and receive the available and appropriate support.

Modern slavery encompasses human trafficking and slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour.

The governance and primary delivery mechanism for work in this area is via the Devon and Cornwall Anti-Slavery Partnership (ASP). The Partnership provides multi-agency strategic direction and co-ordination in the response to modern slavery and human trafficking (MSHT) across the four local authority areas, with the strategic aim of ensuring modern slavery and human trafficking is considered as daily business.

The responsibilities of the Anti-Slavery Partnership (ASP) are to understand and share good practice working together with Children’s Safeguarding Partnerships, Adult Safeguarding Boards and CSPs. It aims to develop a consistent approach to addressing MSHT across the peninsula and use local intelligence and learning from local operations to inform policy and practice.

A requirement of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 is that organisations produce and publish a Modern Slavery Statement which demonstrates the steps they are taking to prevent modern slavery in their business and supply chains. The Statement for Torbay Council has recently been reviewed and updated and is awaiting sign off. It has been broadened slightly from purely a procurement and supply chain focus to include some additional detail on the role the local authority plays in

partnership to address modern slavery. Consideration needs to be given to the scope of the statement for the next annual review, and whether to widen it further as this document could act as the overarching corporate policy in future.

Locally police and partner activity is driven by threat assessment and intelligence submissions, in addition to delivering planned proactive operations as capacity allows.

#### **Case study - MSHT response for trafficked young person**

Linh (name changed) is 14-year-old Vietnamese female victim of Modern Slavery who fled her accommodation and walked a considerable distance to Penn Inn roundabout, heading towards Kingskerswell before she reached out to a member of the public who subsequently called the police.

She was assessed and taken to Torbay hospital by police to undergo a full medical assessment and police had the time to learn more about her lived experience in the UK. It transpired that Linh's mother was deceased, and her father was absent from her life and that she had been trafficked to the UK from Vietnam in a shipping container. She had been trafficked for the purpose of Child Sexual Exploitation. When she arrived in the UK everything was taken from her, including her phone, passport and other valuables. She was made to massage men and it is suspected engage in sexual activity in return for food and shelter.

An NRM (National Referral Mechanism) was submitted by attending officers and later MSVLO's (Modern Slavery Victim Liaison Officer) were deployed to the hospital and stayed with her during her interaction with police, where a Modern Slavery First Response Booklet was also submitted. MSVLO's built a rapport with Linh and when she was able, took her to the beach for ice cream and broke down the barriers in enabling her to feel comfortable with police. She was later confirmed medically fit by the hospital after a comprehensive examination. During the time that Linh was in hospital, MSVLO's engaged with social services and the local authority to secure Linh a placement in a safe location.

Linh did later complete a VRI but broke down during the process and could not engage. Therefore evidentially, despite fast tracking house to house and CCTV enquiries, there was no way to identify an offender. However, the result of this operation was that Linh was safeguarded and police interaction meant that it stopped her cycle of abuse. She was safeguarded and will now be supported into adjusting to a life where she can now learn English and adjust into mainstream education.

**3.3 Serious Violence Duty** The Serious Violence Duty requires 'specified authorities'<sup>1</sup> to work together to identify and respond to the kinds of violence that occur in their area. Over the last year the focus has been on continuing to deliver the Mentors in Violence Prevention programme and Violence Against Women and Girls, with an emphasis on improving safety on public transport.

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<sup>1</sup> Torbay Council, Devon and Cornwall Police, Torbay Youth Justice Service, Devon and Torbay Probation Service, Devon and Somerset Fire & Rescue Service, Devon Integrated Care Board

**Mentors in Violence Prevention programme** – funded by the Home Office Serious Violence Duty grant, this project works with primary age children. This is an early intervention peer mentoring programme that aims to create a safe and positive space to encourage positive peer to peer connection to ultimately reduce crime and violence. MVP is a preventative programme where children and young people develop leadership skills to consider their role as ‘active bystanders’, it aims to create safe and supportive learning environments by challenging bullying and abuse, building relationships and creating partnerships. MVP has continued to be delivered in several Torbay Primary schools however was impacted this year by severe delays in the announcement of Home Office funding. Work is ongoing to identify ways in which the project can be continued post 25/26 and potential embedded into wider prevention activity in education or community settings.

**SWAN (Safety of Women at Night Charter)** – the SWAN charter has been running for several years and is about supporting businesses and organisations to take practical steps together to make Torbay safer at night for women. 150 organisations are currently signed up to the Charter and we have continued to engage with local businesses to increase engagement. For the upcoming year the aim is to strengthen the offer to the network by offering additional bystander training, input from voluntary sector partners to increase awareness of VAWG – and linking more closely with the DA Champions network.

**IMABI Safer travel app** – with funding from Great Western Railway a project is being developed with the aim of improving safety for women and girls when using public transport, although it's impact will potentially be much wider. A survey of safety when using public transport identified people were unsure how to report incidents on public transport so the funding has been used to purchase access to the IMABI travel app for a 12-month test and learn project. The app will provide localised mapping and safety tools specific to Torbay – including quick incident reporting to police, Stagecoach and other partners. It was also provide information on local services, safe spaces and useful advice guides which can be edited and changed locally. It offers a method for direct engagement with local users for example for spot surveys, and provides users with virtual tracking and other safety tools.

## 4. Safer Torbay – Community Safety Strategy 25/28

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- 4.1 A key piece of work for this year has been the development of the new Community Safety Strategy which sets out the priority objectives for Safer Torbay for the next three years. The strategy has been developed against a challenging backdrop, locally, nationally and globally, recognising that the world is changing rapidly and will continue to do so. As a partnership we have recognised that we must have our eyes on the future, to help our communities build resilience and be ready to meet these emerging challenges.

This will need us to acknowledge that as a partnership we must adapt and evolve, experiment and be prepared to take risks, build trust, relationships and stronger collaborations. The strategy has an increased focus on community resilience, challenging dis/misinformation and taking a systemic approach to a complex landscape of needs, highlighting how we need to improve understanding and navigate this complexity to really make a positive difference for Torbay.

The wider context and challenges that have informed the strategy include:

- **Policy and political changes and focus on transformation:** national focus on building efficiency in the public sector with significant change in the NHS; local government reorganisation; and potential reform of policing.
- **The climate emergency and community resilience:** climate related events such as flooding, heatwaves, and infrastructure disruptions can strain emergency services and increase vulnerability, especially in already disadvantaged areas. A lack of community resilience in the face of environmental crisis can undermine social cohesion and amplify the risk of harm.
- **Pace of technical change:** rapid advances in technology including AI, surveillance tools and digital communication create both opportunities and challenges for community safety. Issues such as cyber bullying, online radicalisation, mis/disinformation and fraud – are all evolving challenges.
- **Inequality and economic pressure:** rising poverty, housing insecurity, unemployment and increasing cost of living pressures can lead to increases in acquisitive crime, exploitation and public unrest. Inequality can deepen mistrust in public services and increase isolation and alienation, particularly amongst young people.
- **Trust and legitimacy in public institutions:** declining trust can lead to underreporting, reduced engagement and increase tensions between the community and public bodies. The impact of mis/disinformation is becoming increasingly apparent, from both internal and external sources and bad actors.

The strategy places **vulnerability and complex lives** as critical for the focus for Safer Torbay. People experiencing multiple and intersecting challenges often struggle to access timely, appropriate support. Challenges include, for example, mental ill health, substance misuse, trauma, homelessness and housing insecurity, poverty, and domestic abuse and sexual violence. When these needs go unmet, people can become more susceptible to harm, exploitation, or involvement in criminal and anti-social behaviour. Vulnerable people are at increased risk of exploitation and victimisation, and these crimes are often hidden and underreported. Complex lives can be a driver of offending and antisocial behaviour, with unaddressed trauma, dependency and mental ill health leading people into cycles of offending. Many people with complex lives also fall through the cracks; and with unsustainable pressure on systems, can result in crisis driven, reactive responses. Visible vulnerability, such as rough sleeping, and public drug use can affect perceptions and increase public fear.

- 4.2 In response to strategic assessment, community feedback and the wider context above, the following strategic priorities have been agreed by Safer Torbay:

<b>Priority 1</b>	Tackling antisocial behaviour in public spaces to increase feelings of safety
<b>Priority 2</b>	Preventing and reducing serious violence
<b>Priority 3</b>	Hate crime, community cohesion; and preventing radicalisation and extremism
<b>Priority 4</b>	Protecting those vulnerable to exploitation
<b>Priority 5</b>	Tackling domestic abuse and sexual violence
<b>Priority 6</b>	Reducing the harm caused by drugs and alcohol

There are also several cross-cutting themes for the partnership:

**Reducing reoffending** - Reducing re-offending and reducing the harm caused by offenders to members of the public and preventing young people entering the criminal justice system are priorities. Across most priority areas above, there is the cross-cutting theme of reducing reoffending both by adults and young people, through prevention, support, diversion and disruption.

**Community engagement and building resilient communities** - Working with our communities to understand the issues they are facing and how we can support them to become more resilient. This underpins all priorities within the strategy. We will work to build on the existing engagement mechanisms with a wide range of groups to ensure that communities feel heard and able to actively participate in decision making and priority setting. A resilient community is one that can withstand, adapt to, and recover from adversity, whilst maintaining social cohesion and protecting its most vulnerable members. We recognise that as a partnership we have an increasing role to play as part of our community, to draw on all our strengths, to help connect and foster a sense of belonging, collectively address inequalities and build trust.

**Communication** - To support the delivery of the strategy we will develop a communication plan to raise awareness, encourage engagement and build public confidence. The key messages will be to promote the core priorities and work that is being delivered, particularly highlighting where there has been community involvement. This plan will ensure alignment and coordination across the various partnerships and subgroups to reduce duplication and make the best use of resources. Part of this work will be to grow the Safer Torbay identity and brand and raise awareness of the partnership within the community and amongst other stakeholders.

## 5. Next steps

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- 5.1 To ensure effective delivery of the Community Safety Strategy there will need to be a demonstrated commitment by all partners to the shared principles of the partnership. These have been agreed as:

**We collaborate** – this means we work together, we support each other, and we share information (where lawful and appropriate) to collectively problem solve and respond. This also means sharing responsibility and pooling resources to achieve our shared goals.

**We are trauma informed** – this means we recognise the prevalence of trauma in people's lives and acknowledges the potential effects that this can have on individuals and their families, networks, and communities.

**We take a population approach** – this means we work to really understand and address underlying drivers of crime and vulnerability rather than focusing solely on symptoms by being evidence based and using data to inform our problem solving.

**We are community focused** – this means we adopt an inclusive, listening-led, and collaborative approach which recognises the diverse voices, experiences, and needs within our communities.

Key to this will be having a strong governance and accountability framework which feeds into each partners internal governance structures, with the ability to escalate and influence decision making at

executive level. Against a backdrop of challenging financial constraints, and complex demand, this is an ambitious strategy.

- 5.2 Next steps for the partnership will be to formally sign off the Community Safety Strategy and develop more detailed delivery plans where needed. This will involve wider engagement with internal and external stakeholders including the community and voluntary sector to identify opportunities for collaboration.

In addition, further work is needed to finalise a performance monitoring and assurance framework for the partnership. This will include:

- Tracking crime, ASB and health data from police and other partners.
- Gathering feedback from the community and partners through regular consultation and informal engagement including assessing fear of crime.
- Conducting qualitative assessments of interventions.
- Maintaining an overarching risk register against delivery of this strategy.
- Conducting focussed assurance activity based on risk.
- Carrying out 'deep dives' into emerging issues or areas of concern.
- Producing quarterly and annual performance reports.
- Carrying out an annual 'health check' on how we are doing as a partnership against our stated principles.

To effectively deliver the strategy, we need much better access to and understanding of the issues we are addressing and have highlighted that Safer Torbay is an outlier with regards to analytical capability compared to other CSPs in the South-West. Work is underway to identify and secure potential funding to fill this gap including exploring opportunities for a joint resource with other partnerships.

A programme of reporting on progress into Overview and Scrutiny framework and DOM is also being finalised for the next 12 months.