

Introduction – a robust evidence base

Community safety partnerships have an extensive remit, covering a **broad spectrum of harm and complexity**, so the Partnership's work must be clearly evidence-led to ensure that resources are targeted in the right places. This is **critical to get the best outcomes** for the people and places that most need help and to ensure that services are working together effectively.

The Strategic Assessment provides a **robust evidence base** to help prioritise issues for partnership action. Since 2018, our Strategic Assessment has been structured around a threat, risk and harm assessment model called [MoRiLE](#) that brings together **data analysis with insight** from thematic specialists and practitioners.

Multi-agency workshops are used to gather information from partners and engage them in **reviewing and updating the evidence base**. Well attended, they are successful in bringing together **expertise and insight from across the partnership**, including the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector.

The combined output provides a strong multi-agency narrative around **vulnerability** factors, **community** impacts, local and national **drivers** and **effectiveness** of local services.

11 workshops were held between June and August 2024 around a range of themes – covering everything from town centre anti-social behaviour to serious and organised crime.

In developing the supporting evidence packs for the workshops, we reviewed and referenced the **full range of strategic needs assessments** that have been completed over the course of the last three-year Plan cycle.

- The statutory [Strategic Needs Assessment](#)¹ to inform Cornwall's approach to preventing violence
- The [Drugs Needs Assessment](#) to direct local delivery of the national 10-year plan to combat illegal drugs.² This is accompanied by an [Alcohol Needs Assessment](#) and [Young People's Substance Use Needs Assessment](#)
- A comprehensive [Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Needs Assessment](#) to support new tri-partnership strategies.
- The statutory [Safe Accommodation Needs Assessment](#)³ to support the commissioning of local services.

¹ The [Serious Violence Duty](#) requires specified authorities to work together to understand and tackle serious violence through a shared strategic assessment and strategy.

² [From harm to hope](#): A 10-year drugs plan to cut crime and save lives, HM Government 2022

³ The [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#) introduced specific duties on local authorities to provide safe accommodation, including a local needs assessment and a strategy.

We are starting from a challenging place...

The starting point for our new Partnership Plan is one of **escalating risk** across many facets of community safety, particularly for our most **vulnerable people and places**.

Residents are telling us that they are seeing **more anti-social behaviour** and crime, which makes them **feel less safe** in their local area.

Partners are working hard to balance the need for **appropriate enforcement** with stepped-up support through local services and more joined-up working.

Services across the system are supporting a large proportion of people with **multiple and complex needs**, who require **more intensive support** over longer periods of time by a range of services working together.

All services are experiencing **similar stresses and barriers** that make it challenging to progress the more **prevention focused and system-based approaches** that will improve outcomes for people longer term.

How did we get here?

From pandemic to cost of living crisis

As we went into the last three year cycle of the Partnership Plan, we were focused on recovery from the **economic and social disruption** caused by the pandemic.

As well as the impacts on our **health and wellbeing** and the **damage to our children's education**, for many families the pandemic meant loss of work, food insecurity, lower living standards, debt and housing risk.

In the post-pandemic period, we saw rapid rises in the costs of **food, fuel and energy**, with Russia's invasion of Ukraine increasing uncertainty to global oil and gas prices and supply.

This was coupled with a **housing shortage and escalating rents**, demands on temporary housing increased and more people were **living in poor conditions or becoming homeless**.

Cornwall – and the UK as a whole – has experienced the worst cost-of-living crisis for decades, with many **more people needing extra help** and support.

Widening inequalities of health and wealth

There are areas of **significant and multiple deprivation** across Cornwall, where residents experience a combination of challenges with respect to **living standards, crime and health inequalities**.

The impacts were greatest on households who were already disadvantaged, and this has left a legacy of **widening inequalities in wealth and health** for a generation.

During hard times when people are struggling, communities become **more vulnerable to crime and exploitation**.

A period of change in politics and the public sector

Over the same time period, we saw a lot of **change in central government**. A series of new **legislation and statutory guidance** was brought in, covering all areas of community safety, including anti-social behaviour, violence, drugs and domestic abuse.

These changes include a stronger emphasis on **more immediate enforcement measures**. We need to balance this carefully with our long term aim to seek sustainable solutions that **address the root causes** rather than the symptoms.

There has been extensive restructuring in the **Integrated Care Board** and fundamental changes in how the **Probation Service** and the **Police** deliver services to residents.

This is taking place within a **broader context of changes across the system**. Services have moved or reduced, pathways and thresholds to access support have changed. This requires **all partners to work together** to understand and respond to the impacts.

Positive progress to celebrate

Positive steps have been made in recognising the impact of trauma and embedding a **trauma-informed approach** to help break the cycle of abuse in people's lives.

We have been successful in finding new ways for people with **lived experience to influence and shape our work**.

Public sector and VCSE partners are working together more effectively to develop **creative solutions** that better support people that need help.

Prevention and service improvement

Across all thematic areas of work, we have **strengthened our approach to prevention**, aiming to identify vulnerabilities at the earliest opportunity, intervene effectively, safely and prevent escalation.

New funding streams from central government have provided opportunities to **test and learn new ways of working** and **expand existing service provision** to meet the increased demands on services, both in terms of volume and complexity of needs.

Funding challenges ahead

Our commissioned services are largely **reliant on external funding streams** (not funded through base budgets). Many are **time-limited grants** this issue is further compounded by core budgets shrinking. This has a **significant impact on service resilience**, both in the public and the VCSE sector.

Some funding will end in March 2025 and the future position of others is unconfirmed, under the new government. **Resizing and reshaping services** to fit the budget envelope requires some difficult decisions to be made.

We do not yet know the **new Government's priorities** for making communities safer or their **future strategy**. The **Spending Review** will fall within the timeframe for consultation and our own plans will need to be reviewed accordingly.

What impacts most on communities?

Our **strategic assessment** identifies the levels of threat, risk and harm to people in Cornwall of the **full range of issues** that impact on community safety.

HIGH

- Fatal and serious road traffic collisions*
- Problem drug use
- Dependent drinking
- Drug-related deaths
- Domestic abuse, including domestic abuse related deaths
- Drug trafficking and exploitation (County Lines)
- Rape (children and adults)
- Hate crime

MODERATE

- Anti-social behaviour
- Serious violence
- Alcohol-related hospital admissions
- Young people offending
- Child sexual / criminal exploitation
- Modern slavery
- Knife crime
- Preventing extremism and terrorism*
- Robbery
- Organised acquisitive crime

STANDARD/LOW

- Night Time Economy violence and ASB
- Burglary
- Other drug trafficking
- Cyber-crime
- Shoplifting
- Other sexual offences
- Violence without injury
- Stalking and harassment
- Criminal damage and arson
- Public order offences
- Vehicle related thefts
- Possession of weapons
- Drug possession
- Other thefts

*Note that the Partnership has oversight for the Prevent and Road Safety strategies but does not lead on the response.

- **High risks** – the main priorities for Safer Cornwall partners, with a focus on **what we can do collectively** to prevent and reduce risks. Our **Core Work Plan** provides the multi-agency response to tackle these in partnership; we must be confident that they **respond to the latest evidence**. Organisational strategies should reflect a commitment to their delivery.
- **Moderate Risks** – we must continue to be proactive in these areas, working together to manage the risks and prevent any problems developing.
- **Standard/Low Risks** – these areas are being managed as “business as usual” and/or not placing significant additional demand on services. We must monitor these areas to ensure that we continue to manage them well.

Our thematic analysis also identifies **cross-cutting themes**:

Trauma and multiple disadvantage

Secure, suitable and sustainable housing

Online risks, misinformation & radicalisation

Capacity for prevention vs reactive solutions

- Experience of **trauma and multiple disadvantage** and the importance of trauma-informed and shame-sensitive approaches
- **Lack of secure, suitable and sustainable housing**, particularly for those with higher end needs. **Housing is a critical factor** in providing a stable

and secure base from which to engage and support people who need help. The lack of suitable housing is **having a major impact** on people who use our services and also our staff. This is a **recognised priority** to address, with work ongoing.

- Capacity and capability to effectively **tackle on-line risks** are an ongoing challenge. Risks were **accelerated by the pandemic** and all social interactions moving on-line. Risks are dynamic and **criminal use of technology** moves at pace. The **online space is a part of the whole world experience** for young people and should not be seen as a separate environment.
- **Upstream prevention** tackles the drivers of harm and ultimately is the only way to achieve sustainable and long term change. **Pressures on budgets and resources** repeatedly frustrate this aim, pushing partners to retreat to reactive and crisis services.

The new Partnership Plan provides an opportunity to consider these thorny issues in detail, **bring all the relevant partners around the table** and put our collective problem solving power behind **developing solutions and delivering them together**.

The summary of key themes over the following pages highlight the **key changes, emerging risks and challenges** from comprehensive evidence review that we have undertaken together over the last three months. The full strategic assessment will be published in due course.

Preventing Extremism

The UK faces a **continuing and evolving threat** from terrorism. In the south west the **greatest risks** relate to Right Wing Extremism, Self-Initiated Terrorism and the online space. Whilst the potential for harm is catastrophic, early identification and **support through Channel⁴ is highly effective locally** and we have a 100% success rate.

Road Safety

Our **PCC has a national lead** for road safety. The response to reducing road traffic collisions is led at Peninsula level through [Vision Zero](#). Overall trends in Killed and Serious Injury collisions (KSIs) are relatively stable but some groups are showing a rise (young drivers, older and pedal cycle casualties). Our local contribution is primarily delivery of **education and campaigns** through the Fire and Rescue Service prevention team but most programmes have ceased.

⁴ Channel provides early support for anyone who is at risk of radicalisation, supporting terrorist organisations, or committing acts of terrorism, regardless of age, faith, ethnicity or background.



What have we seen?

Since pandemic restrictions ended in 2021, levels of reported crime have **increased year on year**.

Most types of crime are now above pre-pandemic levels, with the **highest rises seen in violent crime**, including domestic abuse, sexual violence, stalking and harassment and knife crime.

Theft offences remain **comparatively low**, despite having risen over recent years. The rate of **burglary** experienced in Cornwall continues to be one of the **lowest in the country**.

Communities & public spaces

Residents are feeling less safe



In the 2024 Have Your Say Survey, residents told us that their quality of life is affected by rising **anti-social behaviour** and other issues in their local area. **They feel less safe** and fear of crime has increased.

Experiences and views differ from one area to another but residents in several areas felt very strongly that problems had significantly worsened in their town.



A **decline in public confidence** is a contributory factor in under-reporting of anti-social behaviour and low level crimes. Negative perceptions are further amplified through adverse narratives and misinformation on **social media**.



Problems in town centres are complex

Many of our larger towns have seen a visible increase in **anti-social behaviour**, more **rough sleeping**, **street drinking** and more **groups of people** on the streets.

Reports to the police of anti-social behaviour have **continued to fall** but this is countered by feedback from communities that problems persist and have significantly escalated in some places.

Drug use and dealing has become more visible in communities, especially class A drugs. The threat from drug-related **Organised Crime Group activity has increased**. Young people and adults are being **exploited** through County Lines and 'cuckooing' of addresses.

Despite **focused efforts from partners** and investment in local initiatives through the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Home Office, there is a **public perception of little action** being taken.

Nationally thefts are rising, particularly **shoplifting**. Local trends, however, appear to be increasing at a **steeper rate**. Some towns are disproportionately affected. Retailers are also reporting more **anti-social behaviour and abuse** towards staff.

We have had a **small number of serious events** involving weapons that have had a 'signal' effect on communities, driving up fear of crime.





Hate crime and community cohesion

There has been a **fall in reports of hate crime** to the police, but communities tell us that **hate speech and abuse has increased** – particularly racism, homophobia and anti-trans behaviours.

This is strongly felt in the **online space**, fuelled by **misinformation** and targeting by **antagonists from outside** of Cornwall, and frequently outside the UK.

Most recently, although we did not experience riots in Cornwall, the **rise in Right Wing Extremism** is a significant issue for the safe placement of **refugees and asylum seekers**, and for our growing population of **international workers and their families**.

Young people

The public is now generally **less tolerant of young people gathering** in public places and often this leads to an unfounded perception that they are 'up to no good.'

A **minority of young people** commit crime and anti-social behaviour. Children involved in crime are also victims, often through **abuse and neglect in early childhood**, but also within their social networks and relationships with peers.

Young people known to treatment are more likely to **start using drugs at an early age** and to be affected by **parental drug/alcohol use**, both affect future outcomes.

Services working with young people are seeing more knife carrying, but this is **primarily for defence** or out of fear.

Challenging behaviours are becoming more common amongst **younger children**, who are more vulnerable to exploitation. Children are at **greater risk of harm** if they go **missing or are not attending school** regularly.

Multiple vulnerabilities and hidden harm

Exploitation

Modern Slavery cases are **identified infrequently** and it remains a **largely hidden area** of criminality and harm. National studies highlight issues around **rurality**, lack of **workforce training**, limited community awareness and **public attitudes** towards minority groups.

Local cases identified include exploitation and trafficking for the purposes of **labour, sexual exploitation or drugs**.

People who are exploited are often **too afraid to tell anyone** and sometimes do not recognise that they are being exploited. It requires **greater awareness** (in communities and partners) about signs and symptoms and where to refer concerns, and a more **proactive approach**.

Children who have experienced or are at risk of exploitation are **more likely to be identified** and the numbers have increased over the last two years. This could include sexual, criminal or drug-related exploitation.

We have **well-established multi-agency responses** in place for **child exploitation**, which provide safeguarding, disruption and prevention, but the pathway to support and intervention **adults is less well-defined**.



Domestic abuse and sexual violence

Violence against women and girls has been declared 'a national emergency.' This is due to **epidemic levels** of stalking, harassment, sexual assault and domestic abuse affecting women across the country, with recorded offences **growing rapidly** and perpetrators getting younger.

Key factors cited in the rise in reported crimes over the last decade include greater public **awareness** and confidence to report, and improved **recording standards**.

Domestic abuse is the main driver of harm in Cornwall, both in the context of violence experienced now and as a feature of **Adverse Childhood Experiences** with long-term impacts on future outcomes.

Raising public awareness about abuse and **more accessible and flexible services** have been successful in helping people to access support earlier. The number of **people seeking help** has risen year on year and support services have had to introduce **waiting lists** to manage demand. **Reported crimes** have also continued to rise.

Despite the rise, we estimate that **two thirds** of people experiencing domestic abuse are **not receiving support**.

Locally we have seen **child-on-child offences** and **adults reporting child abuse** contributing to the rise in police recorded sexual offences. Positive factors were also noted such as the **impact of healthy relationships education**, more awareness about abuse and how to seek help.



Drug and alcohol use

The latest estimates of **problem drug use** in Cornwall are below national levels, whereas **alcohol dependency** is estimated to be higher.

Use of **crack cocaine and heroin** are major drivers of drug-related harms, alongside the evolution of **harmful synthetic drugs** and high strength benzodiazepines.

Drug-related deaths are at record levels, both locally and nationally. Cocaine deaths have outnumbered opiate deaths since 2020. **Synthetic drugs** are the biggest concern, however, due to the **high risk of overdose**.

Engagement in **treatment is the main protective factor** in preventing harm and reducing deaths.

Our local treatment system is **effective** with high levels of engagement and **evidenced progress** in treatment.

Continued **high numbers** in services, however, combined with external factors such as a lack of **suitable housing and employment opportunities**, are increasingly impacting on positive outcomes.

More work needs to be done to **ensure that professionals screen and refer** for support as early as possible, using validated tools.

The number of **people coming out of prison** and straight into treatment is increasing but is still too low.



Services across the system are supporting a large proportion of adults and young people with **multiple and complex needs** – poor mental and physical health, homelessness, crime and a history of trauma and abuse.

This requires **more intensive support** over longer periods of time and places considerable pressures on services that are already stretched. This means **less capacity to support new cases** and move people through, and a **more reactive and less prevention** focused approach.

The system is struggling to meet the needs of very high-risk individuals



Some of **our most vulnerable people are not able to access** critical services, such as housing and mental health support, due to **high risk behaviours** that present a risk to themselves and others (such as drug use, drinking and violence).

This can often lead to their **needs and behaviours escalating**, especially if they are rough sleeping. We are particularly worried about the exploitation and abuse of **young women** in this position. Partners understand **sexual exploitation** to be a **common feature** in drug-related exploitation.

Advocacy is essential for those in crisis, who very often cannot reach out to find support on their own. **Flexibility and adaptability of approach** is needed to engage and retain the most vulnerable, including out-of-hours provision, outreach and wrap-around support.



A look at risk through a rural lens

Rural areas see less crime than urban areas but the issues faced demonstrate common themes.

The issues presenting the **greatest risk of harm** to our rural communities are domestic abuse, sexual violence, drug and alcohol dependency and exploitation. **Domestic abuse** accounts for a higher percentage of crime in rural areas than across Cornwall as a whole.

There are **additional barriers** to seeking help: **isolation** and lack of **access to specialist services**, the **close-knit nature** of rural communities increasing stigma and shame, fear of exposure and potential repercussions.

Particular challenges exist in tackling **crimes that are unique to rural areas**, such as poaching, farm theft and livestock rustling. A recent police profile on Rural Affairs Crime highlighted the heavy toll on farmers of **livestock injured or killed by dogs**.

There is also evidence of Organised Crime Group involvement in rural areas, including **organised thefts of quad bikes** and the trade in **illegal market heritage items**.

Due to poor data and under-reporting, the extent of rural crime is likely to be **far greater than police data suggests**.

MoRiLE - understanding threat, risk and harm

The **Management of Risk in Law Enforcement** (MoRiLE) programme was created in 2014 through the National Police Chiefs Council's Intelligence Innovation Group. The programme developed a process for all law enforcement agencies that provides a **common framework and language** for understanding risk, involving more than 300 UK and international agencies.

In 2016, MoRiLE became a **nationally accredited**⁵ way of working for all police Forces and other law enforcement agencies such as the National Crime Agency, to inform their Strategic Assessments. **Safer Cornwall led on the national programme** for developing the model for Community Safety Partnerships.

How it works

The process is **easy to use and understand** and allows a range of different issues to be compared fairly against each other. The process uses a **simple scoring tool** to combine individual scores given in the following areas:

- **Impacts** on the victim, the local community, and the environment
- **Likelihood** – how often the issue happens, how much and whether it is getting better or worse
- **Organisational position** – risks to the partnership's reputation if the problem is not addressed well, political pressure (locally or nationally), and the effectiveness of the local response (costs, the right number of people with the right skills).

The list of themes reflects key crime types, local priorities and wider community safety issues such as problem drinking, drug use and road traffic collisions. The process is delivered by **community safety analysts** in collaboration with thematic specialists and practitioners to provide **balance and insight**.

The final scores are grouped into **High, Moderate and Standard** level risks. High level risks typically have the following features:

- **Significant physical and psychological impacts** on victims and their families, including long term impacts on children. **Financial impacts** such as lost work time, problems getting and keeping a home and a job.
- The **more visible issues in communities** have a major impact on how safe residents feel in the local area and attract negative attention from the media and community groups. Some harms are more hidden, such as those linked to abuse and exploitation, and the community is less aware.
- Incidents **happen often** (at least weekly), some are high volume (like domestic abuse) or low volume but very serious (like hate crime). Any **escalating trends** will drive up the risk level.
- **Economic costs are long term and impact across all services**, including police, offender services, health services, community support and treatment services, housing and social care.

⁵ Police Authorised Professional Practice