

Community Safety Strategy 2014 - 2016

Our vision

When we think of community safety, we often think of anti-social behaviour. Anti-social behaviour affects people's everyday lives. We want to do everything we can to prevent anti-social behaviour before it starts and will work proactively with residents and partners to prevent it and reduce it when it occurs. Yet community safety is more than anti-social behaviour. It's about preventing and tackling criminal offences, hate crime, domestic abuse, and environmental crime. It's about communities feeling a sense of safety, security and a connection with where they live, and who they share their community with. It's about promoting a sense of belonging, shared space, and clean, safe, green neighbourhoods where people want to be.

Our vision is to be a leading partner in supporting local communities to be clean, safe and green. In practice this means:

- Preventing problems before they occur
- Encouraging reasonable behaviours through targeted work
- Promoting resident responsibility
- Working in partnership with others
- Enabling individuals and communities to report issues and feel listened to
- Supporting vulnerable households, or identifying those most at risk of harm
- Providing opportunities for those causing harm to change their behaviours.



We want to be valued for our capability and commitment to play an active role in partnership work that contributes towards our vision.

We want to be known for our professionalism, honesty and integrity in all we do. We want residents to have confidence in our approach; and for partners to choose to work with us.

Above all, we want to make a positive contribution to promoting community safety in communities where we have homes.

Our current approach

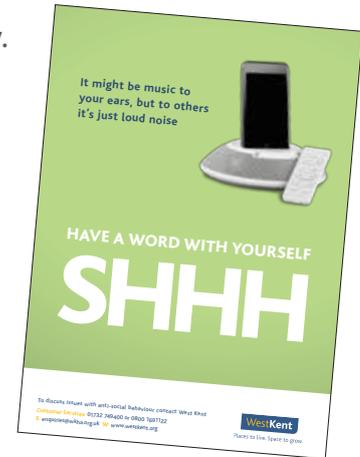
We have a strong history of working with others, and take an active role within Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) across Kent and Medway; both in terms of sharing information within agreed protocols, and contributing towards joint meetings.

We have had many successes working with local people, community groups and agencies to address and tackle problems in troublesome areas and/or households; and through regular training, and partnership support, we have built up a team of trusted and knowledgeable professionals, who residents feel able to report issues to, and who partners know they can count on.

We do this to meet key legislation and duties¹ and because it matters to us and our residents to promote community safety.

1 Housing Act 1996; Crime and Disorder Act 1998; Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003.

We take the importance of being honest with residents very seriously. There are times when residents will report problems to us such as clashes of lifestyle, and/or very low level disagreements with their neighbours that may not warrant our involvement. Our values of honesty, integrity and compassion help our staff when they provide advice about what we can do and what we are unable to do. We actively encourage residents to talk more to their neighbours and people in their communities and signpost to our partner mediation support services. To support this approach, in 2013 we developed posters and other materials to promote and encourage more personal responsibility.



This is not to say these issues are trivial; they can have a huge impact upon a person's quality of life. Unchecked, such issues can be linked to increased disorder, low level crime and fear of crime in a neighbourhood, the so called 'broken-window effect'². For us, encouraging personal responsibility is balanced with assessing the harm and risk to those affected; which is why in 2013 we introduced a new case management system to enable us to embed a practice of completing early assessments of victims against our harm matrix at the first stage of an issue being reported to us.



Where we have a role to play, we are proactive in our responses, and we believe strongly in doing all we can to achieve the right results. We have built up a number of tools to help us achieve positive outcomes, and we will take legal action where appropriate. However, our aim remains to change the behaviours of those causing harm, or at least provide the opportunities for them to do so. We cannot be the panacea to solve all problems; we have limitations with the powers we have, the role we play, and how we can influence and support the work of other agencies.

Externally, there are developments around us; the new Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Bill will go some way to bringing in new powers and approaches to streamline legal routes available to us as landlords, although with many powers still residing with local authorities and the police to take forward legal sanctions with our support and partnership working. In addition, the launch of the national Troubled Families programme is an opportunity to bring more tailored and targeted support interventions to households across Kent and Medway. We will support these changes, and have identified objectives for the next three years to develop our work further.

² The broken windows theory is a criminological theory; the theory states that maintaining and monitoring local environment in a good condition may stop further vandalism and escalation into more serious crime.

What our data tells us

During 2012 our resident satisfaction with the way we handle reports was high, with us consistently achieving above 80% at each quarterly review. 2013 has seen less survey returns, and so less reliable data to measure satisfaction. This is a focal point for us going forward. The most prominent age groups for both complainants and perpetrators is 25-39 years and 40-55 years which reflects our overall tenant profile; similarly the gender and ethnicity profiles of complainants and perpetrators reflects the same with most reports being from females and those of White British origin. The highest minority ethnic group in both complainant and perpetrator data is amongst the gypsy and traveller community. Appendix A shows the repeat locations and reported issues over the past five years; the issues most reported to us include noise; harassment; rowdy behaviour; animals and rubbish. We have used this insight to help shape our strategy, our campaigns and our preventative work.



Delivering our vision

Preventing problems before they occur

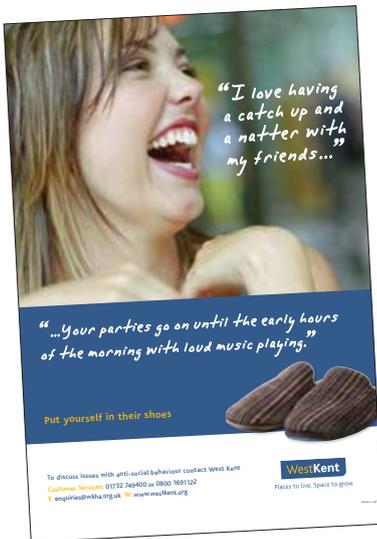
Using preventative methods to promote community safety is vital. Prevention crosses over many aspects of our work from the design of new homes and the management of our estates; through to the letting of our homes and helping people sustain their tenancy. We successfully use local letting plans; sensitive lets; neighbour respect agreements; resident charters; starter tenancies; offer support referrals; and work to Secure by Design principles where possible to achieve this aim. Our links with policies and strategies within these areas is fundamental and we aim to continue with these examples of good practice and support new projects and initiatives.

Going forward, we will:

- Work with our Development Team to contribute towards new build designs;
- Consider all new developments for local letting plans; sensitive lets; and respect agreements;
- Develop tenancy sustainment workshops in partnership with others;
- Work jointly with West Kent Extra and other partners to provide intervention and inclusion activities within our communities;
- Promote good neighbour relation through leaflet and campaign materials, tenancy sign ups, and starter tenancy visits.

The actions of individuals or groups can have an impact on the local environment and cause annoyance or nuisance to those living within the same community. For example, allowing your dog to foul on a footpath; dropping litter; or hanging around in a group can be a cause for people to be unhappy with where they live, and fails to support our vision of promoting clean, safe, green places to be.

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Over time such behaviours can cause harm to others leaving them feeling intimidated, or agitated. The impact upon a local area can be that it appears neglected, ignored or not looked after because of the actions of a few which itself can breed more unreasonable behaviour and a stigma which is hard to break.

Our campaign materials launched in 2013 were designed in consultation with victims and perpetrators and specifically challenge the attitudes of those who act unreasonably.

These materials are also designed to encourage residents to speak out, in a reasonable and rational way, to challenge those around them who may not realise the impact of their actions upon others.

To encourage reasonable behaviours, we have also developed popular events and targeted initiatives including *Responsible Dog Road-Shows*; *Love Where You Live* months; and *Bulky Waste Amnesties*.

Going forward, we will:

- Display and rotate relevant campaign materials in targeted areas; via community newsletters, postcards, notice boards, and other outdoor fixings such as fencing, walls, lampposts to reduce repeat locations;
- Encourage staff and residents to use the campaign materials to challenge unreasonable behaviours and promote a culture of personal responsibility;
- Continue to work closely with partners to promote responsible dog ownership; and encourage the take up of free and/or discounted micro-chipping to help owners meet new legal requirements being introduced from 2015;
- Identify new funding opportunities to sustain bulky waste amnesties in targeted areas by April 2015; aiming to provide bulky waste amnesties twice a year in identified priority areas;
- Identify clear measures to monitor environmental crime; aiming to reduce repeated incidents of fly tipping; dog fouling; noise; litter and graffiti year on year;
- Review and improve ways to measure resident satisfaction with their neighbourhood as a place to live; using this proactively to shape our work.

Encouraging and promoting resident responsibility

For many communities, problems which start as small annoyances can escalate into something much more if not handled in the right way at the beginning. There is overlap with our aims above, for residents to talk to each-other and take ownership of addressing low level issues, and/or addressing their own behaviours which cause nuisance or annoyance to others. We've worked jointly for many years with the West Kent Mediation service and more recently Medway Mediation to promote self referrals to help build better neighbour relations.

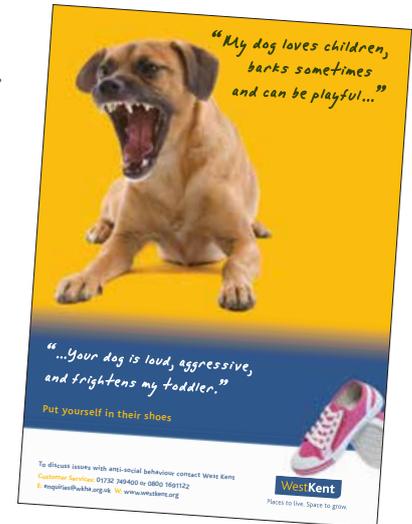
We carry out monthly estate walkabouts, promoting these each quarter as "*welcome all inspections*" and encourage residents and partners to join us.

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The take up is persistently low, but we know that residents often engage when an issue is important to them perhaps for a short while. It's difficult to measure enviro-crime through our current systems and we want to promote more local ownership of reporting, and a greater transparency with orders raised. This will help us improve the perception of local responses to issues reported; as well as reduce repeat problems.

Going forward, we will:

- Sustain and promote our partnership work with mediation services across areas where we have homes;
- Provide more interactive ways for residents to report environmental problems to us through the introduction of web based applications by 2016;
- Improve the transparency of our estate management processes; and provide better tools for staff to report and manage enviro-crime and the impact of neighbour improvements through new technology by 2016;
- Develop our internal Neighbourhood improvement Group that aims to bring together staff and budgets working to achieve clean, safe, green communities in a joined up way;
- Identify two new areas for the development of a Clean, Safe, Green charters to promote and encourage resident and partner responsibility by 2016;
- Support staff to challenge the culture of residents to take more responsibility through the use and promotion of our publicity campaigns materials and actions.



Working in partnership with others

We are active members of the Community Safety Partnership within the Sevenoaks District including key partners in daily tasking and co-ordination meetings. Our relationship has developed over many years and brings substantial benefits. In other areas we continue to build and shape new relationships where we have a growing number of homes. We regularly attend multi agency partnership meetings and work with key partners in response to specific incidents, and/or supporting individuals or households at risk of harm or who have been harmed. This may include Youth Services, Mental Health teams, Social Services, Police, Fire Service, Local Authorities, Voluntary/Charity sector and other Registered Social Landlords (RSLs). We are signed up to, and work within Kent Information Sharing Protocols and contribute towards the Kent Information Sharing Board. We recognise the importance of community involvement, working with residents and stakeholders to help us understand and record problems and the impact they are having.

Going forward, we will:

- Actively contribute to Community Safety Partnerships and supporting forums across Kent and Medway where we have homes;
- Continue to work within information sharing protocols to receive and manage sensitive and personal information;

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- Routinely support and train staff in information sharing, handling sensitive information; and partner roles;
- Be responsive to proposed changes to improve joint case management tools across Community Safety Partnerships;
- Sustain our culture of pro-actively working with others to promote community safety and address household and/or area concerns.

Enabling individuals and communities to report issues and feel listened to

We promote ways for residents to tell us about problems they are experiencing. We have clear targets in how quickly we will respond to issues reported to us, and monitor these against our performance. We survey all those who report issues to us at the start and again at the point when a case is closed via telephone and post. We use this information to check on customer satisfaction and at the end of 2012 we achieved high levels of satisfaction overall with our handling of reports.

During 2013 our response rate has been lower than in previous years. We want to find more interactive ways for residents to feed back to us. To improve, we've redesigned our survey and set up a new case management system to record problems allowing us to create flexible actions plans that are tailored to each report.

We want to encourage people to 'speak out' if they are suffering from anti-social behaviour, hate crime and /or domestic abuse and have developed literature to encourage this, explain our processes and how we work.



Going forward, we will:

- Monitor and review our new case management system to ensure it is fit for purpose;
- Work in partnership to provide opportunities for residents to find out about our work and speak with those working in their area through meetings; attendance at Partnerships and Communities Together (PACTS); newsletters; and local surgeries in priority areas;
- Introduce mobile phone and on line survey technology to improve overall satisfaction survey feedback from those who report issues to us by 2016;
- Monitor trends in resident feedback to review our services with particular focus on
- How easy it was to report a complaint;
- If the resident was kept up to date with the progress of their complaint;
- If the resident is willing to report problems again in the future if needed.

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Supporting vulnerable households, or identifying those most at risk of harm

As a result of the new case management system we can now identify vulnerable individuals, communities and environments most at risk and in need of an enhanced response before the problems escalate. This helps us to identify repeat or vulnerable victims at the point of issues being reported to us.

We complete detailed risk assessments of those experiencing problems where there is sufficient information available for us to do so and we can work with key partners to reduce the impact of harm.

We work with domestic abuse services and have created a dedicated case management workflow to record and guide staff about appropriate actions and advice. We routinely train staff in how to work with domestic abuse cases, and offer appropriate referrals to specialist advice and support for all cases. We support local Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Transgender (LGBT) forums as active members of our local Community Safety Partnership, and contribute with updates on our work or participate in consultations.

Going forward, we will:

- Identify the level of harm of repeat and/or vulnerable victims so they receive an appropriate level of response using our case manager system;
- Aim to reduce repeat victims of anti-social behaviour in partnership with others;
- Support and train staff to encourage those suffering from community safety problems to come forward;
- Establish a voluntary peer support champion scheme for victims/witnesses by 2016;
- Support the learning and development of our staff to understand the impact of harm caused by anti-social behaviour, especially to victims who are vulnerable, and to recognise the links to hate crime;
- Continue to promote and support referrals to professional and specialist domestic abuse services.

Providing opportunities for those causing harm to change their behaviours

We embrace many tools to assist us in our work to prevent and tackle anti-social behaviour and promote community safety including neighbourhood charters, local lettings plans, CCTV, diversionary activities, support referrals, mediation, restorative justice³, warning letters, Acceptable Behaviour Agreements, serving legal notices, taking out injunctions and/or issuing possession proceedings if we have the right evidence to support this.

We engage and refer cases to statutory partners including mental health and social services where individual cases become of persistent and/or of serious concern.



³ "Restorative processes bring those harmed by crime or conflict, and those responsible for the harm, into communication, enabling everyone affected by a particular incident to play a part in repairing the harm and finding a positive way forward" Definition obtained from Restorative Justice Council's website October 2013

We advise residents causing harm of options and opportunities of who to contact and will work with individuals to help change behaviours and warn them of consequences of not doing so. We increasingly see more cases of people requiring support from mental health and/or drug and alcohol misuse services and we work hard to partner with these specialist services. We want to see more access to support for these residents.

The launch of the Troubled Families programme aims to turn round the lives of the most troubled families is in its infancy and is an area of work we will support.

Where positive changes are not seen, and problems persist we will seek legal advice and take action against a person and/or their tenancy. Where cases are the result of serious incidents, and pose high risk, we will consider immediate legal action taking into account the implications of the Equality Act 2010 for all our cases.

Going forward, we will:

- Sustain our active approach to tools that encourage behavioural change;
- Seeks ways to further engage specialist services for dealing with mental health and drug and alcohol misuse;
- Roll out Restorative Justice techniques as standard by 2016;
- Work with our partner colleagues in Lifeways and **West Kent Extra** to actively support the implementation of the Troubled Families Programme and identify our various roles in helping to 'turn around the lives of the most troubled families in Kent'.
- Follow progress of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Bill and review our processes accordingly when it is finalised and ready for implementation.

Monitoring and review

A review and trend report will be produced twice a year for our People and Property Committee, Operational Management Team and Executive Team. We will review progress against objectives each year and amend accordingly in light of current changes locally or with the implementation of new legislation in this time.