



Places to live. Space to grow.

Community Safety Strategy 2018 - 2022

Introduction

West Kent is committed to providing safe, clean and green communities. Since our 2014 strategy we have promoted key principles of tenant responsibility, partnership working, early interventions and providing opportunities for change to create places where people want to live. Through a mix of pro-active and targeted campaigns we have had many successes, including a year on year reduction in community safety concerns and a change in the way we deliver our service.

As we look to refresh the strategy for the next three years the key principles of our previous Strategy remain valid. We want to continue to work within these, and consolidate our existing approaches across new areas where we work. We also want to respond to emerging issues, understood from local insight of what matters to tenants, and partners in Kent.

Our vision for our 2018-2022 Strategy is to continue to consolidate the work that we do and strive further to be a valued landlord and partner, renowned for its professionalism, fairness and consistency in promoting community safety across areas where we have homes.

To achieve this, we will continue to work proactively to prevent anti-social behaviour and breaches of tenancy that can impact upon the safety of individuals and the wider community, and stop problems where they occur through advice, referrals, collaboration, support and enforcement.

Achievements over the past three years

At the end of 2016, reported community safety concerns from communities where we work have reduced by 19% since 2014.

We are proud of this downward trend particularly in the highest reported issues of noise nuisance (reduced by 34%); harassment (reduced by 24%); rubbish (reduced by 56%) and animal nuisance (reduced by 17%). In our 2014 strategy we aspired to address these specific areas to reduce complaints by 10%. We have exceeded this target through a mix of targeted actions, local campaigns and strong partnership working.

Our downward trend has been consistent since 2012, with each subsequent year seeing a reduction in reported community safety concerns. When comparing 2012 to 2016, reported concerns reduced by 41% overall. Our year end reporting for 2017 highlights a reverse of this

trend with an increase in reported concerns when compared to previous years, we will monitor this change and keep under review.

Below are a few highlights of our activity and their successes over the past few years:

- ✓ Local anti-social behaviour campaigns working across 50 different neighbourhoods to promote 'being a good neighbour'
- ✓ Bin Store Agreements issued for a total of 16 sites addressing rubbish, mis-use of bin stores and fly-tipping
- ✓ Neighbourhood Agreements for 20 new communities and 45 to all Emerald Schemes to promote community cohesion
- ✓ Consistent participation in 'Noise Action Week' during 2015 and 2016 to deliver key messages around what noise nuisance is, and promoting tenants to talk to their neighbours at an early stage using mediation support where appropriate to address noise complaints themselves
- ✓ Annual bulky waste amnesty days completed in 2015, 2016 and 2017 at specific 'hotspot' areas clearing over ten tonnes of waste reducing the impact of fly-tipping and untidy gardens
- ✓ 'Cleaner Safer Greener' Charters in three new areas engaging local partners, stakeholders and residents to work together on local environmental issues
- ✓ Winner of the The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) 'Gold Footprint Award' for four years running since 2014
- ✓ Annual 'Love Where You Live' campaigns for the months of February engaging residents and partners on specific environmental improvement projects in 2015, 2016 and 2017
- ✓ Responsible dog ownership roadshows throughout 2015 and 2016 to promote responsible dog ownership and prepare residents for changes coming into force through the Dangerous Dog Act. During our roadshows over 200 tenants accessed free information and micro-chipping. The success of our roadshows led to The Dogs Trust continuing our approach through their own service post 2016, and strengthened partnership working with animal welfare services including the The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA)
- ✓ Purchased two CCTV cameras for in-house monitoring and better targeting of 'hot spot' areas in a more cost effective and efficient way
- ✓ Community safety presentations delivered for all new community based support schemes
- ✓ Tailored newsletters and community safety surgeries for specific areas experiencing high levels of neighbour nuisance
- ✓ Twitter account for promoting community safety news active since 2016

- ✓ Introduced a new case manager system for all reported community safety concerns improving the transparency and consistency in how we responded to our customers 'first time' and manage open cases with tools to provide opportunities for change including acceptable behaviour agreements, mediation and support referrals
- ✓ Updated information sharing protocols, and ways of working to incorporate changes with the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act implemented in 2014
- ✓ Obtained and served eight injunctions, and one suspended possession order, to manage an individual's behaviour during 2014-2017; and
- ✓ Obtained and enforced six outright possession orders, two relying on Ground 7A (the new mandatory power defined within the 2014 Act) to evict tenants because of their anti-social behaviour where they did not successfully engage with opportunities to stop or change

Operating Environment

Since our previous strategy, the environment in which we provide community safety services has progressively shifted. The areas where we work have expanded as we develop homes across the County of Kent; and we have a wider portfolio of homes with a mix of housing tenures for a diverse group of residents. This includes managing existing stock, new developments, housing for older persons and vulnerable clients including learning disabilities and mental health schemes, temporary accommodation and extra care provisions.

We also connect to a wider portfolio of partner agenda's through our involvement in supporting Neighbourhood Policing, Community Safety Units, multi-agency referral task groups for domestic abuse and vulnerable persons; Social Services, Environmental Health, The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA), Kent Fire and Rescue teams and mental health teams to handle our cases and interventions in a joined up holistic way.

County agendas associated with community safety in the areas we have homes has also grown. Increasingly there is a growing focus to identify and protect vulnerable persons, stopping exploitation and preventing high impact crimes caused by gangs, extremism and terrorism.

Working across such a range of partnerships, housing provisions and mixed client needs means the nature and type of community safety concerns can be challenging to resolve with mixed abilities and tolerances from individuals involved.

We see our role as providing a service that can be flexible to meet the needs of all our residents, and partners alike, and one that can adapt and respond appropriately to each individual concern as it presents to us.

Locally, our data tells us that tenants continue to see environmental crimes as a key area of concern. Although reducing, issues of noise, harassment, pets, rubbish and fly tipping are still the highest reported issues. We have identified there is also an increasing trend in tenants reporting concerns around drug use in communities, and that the age profile of residents both reporting concerns and causing problems is shifting to an older profile¹.

¹ We currently are aware of a rising trend in reported anti-social behaviour of both complainants and offenders being from within categories of those aged 56-64 years and 64 years and over. When compared to the same period in the previous year (2016) the numbers have almost doubled in 2017.

We further identify from our local analysis that the areas with the highest reported concerns continue to come from geographical areas where we have some of our older more traditional stock. This may reflect our need to target more interventions around area investments to improve their environmental quality and provide for more ‘natural surveillance’, for example better lighting, well maintained pathways/alley-ways and storage areas for personal items such as bikes, buggies, equipment where the properties do not have the shared space for these.

Furthermore, we have seen the need for earlier targeted interventions in new scheme based communities where we have operating models that rely on partnership working to provide housing management and support. Within these schemes, we see a need to do more to promote what being a good neighbour is, and managing tenant and partner expectations about what we will get involved with, what tenants can do for themselves, and legal processes to stop problems when they occur.

Moving forwards

We believe the foundations of our approach are now firmly in place. We want this strategy to feel progressive, not a departure from what we have worked to achieve so far but to also respond to the challenges coming from emerging issues and be a part of partnership solutions to address new county agendas.

This strategy also closely connects to West Kent’s Tenancy Sustainment Strategy, and the implementation of West Kent offers such as *“Your Home Your Responsibility”*. These two pieces of work are focused very much on starting tenancies right, using early interventions to promote tenant responsibility and addressing breaches of tenancy in a proactive way.

It is our ambition within this strategy that we are delivering community safety services that compliments other work we do, so that is not simply about enforcement but prevention too.

To address these areas identified above, and new emerging issues, we have an action plan for the next five years that will be delivered through the following work-streams:

Influencing Behaviours	Encouraging Pride
Vulnerable Persons and Safeguarding	Pro-active partnerships

Influencing Behaviours

‘Your Home Your Responsibility’ is an opportunity to reinforce the conditions of tenancy agreements and the responsibilities all tenants have in keeping to the terms of these.

The start of a new tenancy is a critical time for ensuring we are aware of known vulnerabilities and any support needs a tenant may have that could impact on their ability to meet the responsibilities set out in their tenancy agreement and ‘be a good neighbour’. By promoting tenant responsibilities and influencing behaviours at an early stage, we aspire to minimise the

likelihood of future complaints relating to noise nuisance, untidy gardens, mis-use of communal areas and anti-social behaviour.

By promoting tenant responsibilities and influencing behaviours at an early stage, we aspire to minimise the likelihood of future complaints relating to noise nuisance, untidy gardens, mis-use of communal areas and anti-social behaviour

To achieve our ambition, we want to continue to ensure we are pro-active at the time of housing offers being made and lead early conversations with tenants about any known risks or concerns we would want to work with them on to manage and improve.

We appreciate this will not stop issues and that sometimes tenants do not get on and sometimes they engage in activities that are anti-social. We will not get involved in issues that residents can and should deal with for themselves. We will always promote residents to speak with one another about any problems they are

experiencing before they come to us, and we will refer residents to mediation services where we think this is appropriate. We will step in where a resident feels unable to approach another resident because of their safety concerns or the issue is serious and has caused significant harm.

Where the reported issues require us to intervene, we will speak to all sides and promote clear messages about responsibilities to encourage a swift resolution and identify any support needs if there any specific vulnerabilities affecting or causing the behaviours. We will provide warnings if behaviours do not stop or change and work with partners to address issues through acceptable behaviour agreements or support referrals.

We will encompass this approach for all tenancy breaches relating to anti-social behaviour but we will also use this strategy and its key principles of early engagement and targeted interventions to address property condition, hoarding and access as well. This is a wider remit from our previous strategy, but is part of our commitment to see more joined up and holistic actions to address tenancy breaches more closely together where they can impact upon another tenant and/or the area in which they live.

There will always be exceptions where cases are of a particularly high-risk nature and tailoring of approaches is essential to decide if we need to take steps to apply for court action immediately or not. This will always be considered on a case by case basis considering any equality concerns or issues around fairness and proportionality. The more we can do this in house will help us to reduce the costs associated with legal actions and enable us to utilise resources on more prevention activities.

Where we currently have cyclical patterns of good behaviour/breaches of tenancy we do not want to sustain an approach that sees us go around in circles with our warnings of the consequences and dips in our sustained focus on seeking the tenant to address those. This lessens confidence in our services, and is a risk to our homes not being maintained well. This strategy will therefore have a closer focus on gaining insight into repeated offenders to better target the work we do with our partners.

Learning from key issues facing our tenants over the past few years, this strategy will focus on continuing to find ways to influence behaviours around the most commonly reported concerns including noise, harassment, untidy gardens and animals.

To further our approaches to community safety under the workstream of 'Influencing Behaviours', we will:

- Identify two new approaches to refresh communication of key messages to tenants about what is considered anti-social behaviour, how to be a good neighbour, and how to handle neighbour disputes themselves with a specific focus on noise, harassment, gardens and animals.
- Reduce the number of repeat offenders by 20% through customer insight to target interventions defined by individual behaviours and needs.
- Develop neighbourhood/scheme specific neighbour agreements for all new homes including presentations from the community safety team to promote key messages about appropriate use and respect for shared spaces.
- Contribute to tenancy workshops and e-learning packages delivered as part of the Tenancy Sustainment Strategy to promote key messages around tenant responsibilities and self-managing neighbour disputes.
- Support the lettings process to access sensitive information through updated information sharing protocols around applicants to our homes to shape assessments for those with a history of anti-social behaviour or criminal activity.
- Upskill our community safety team to prepare injunctions in-house to reduce costs associated with external legal support where applications for injunctions are necessary and interventions providing opportunities for tenants to change have not been successful.
- Expand our Service Level Agreements with mediation services in new growth areas including Swale, Dover and Thanet.
- Create within our case management system a work flow for non-access cases to better manage breaches of tenancy connected to the property that can affect the safety of the areas where we have homes and prevent us from being able to fulfil our legal obligations around fire safety and gas/electrical servicing.

Encouraging Pride

Environmental crime is a key area we want to tackle. This is because it blights the appearance of communities and has a 'broken window' effect whereby one piece of rubbish encourages more unless dealt with swiftly and robustly. If left, it not only creates an eyesore but also becomes a health and safety risk.

Mis-use of communal spaces contributes to a high number of reported community safety concerns year on year. Some of these issues are due to the poor layout and design of the area in which the problem occurs meaning there is no 'natural surveillance' to deter the mis-use of communal spaces but sometimes these issues arise due to a person's lack of respect for their own surroundings.

We recognise rubbish and fly tipping is not an issue caused by tenants alone. Visitors to an area, neighbouring residents from other tenures, can also be a part of the problem. We want to ensure that our approaches to reducing and stopping mis-use of communal areas is done in partnership with local authorities and private land owners who have enforcement powers where we do not.

Since 2014, we have successfully built up campaign materials, ran events and roadshows and led partner work through neighbour agreements, bin store agreements, and community charters to promote looking after the area where you live. These have seen positive results and downward trends in the highest reported environmental concerns. However, we need to do more to take swifter legal action and publicise successful enforcements to demonstrate how seriously us and our partners take environmental crime. In 2016, we purchased in house CCTV to better manage and monitor 'hot spots' areas and going forwards we want to strengthen our surveillance abilities to take more targeted enforcement action.

To further our approaches to community safety under the workstream of 'Encouraging Pride', we will:

- Purchase an additional two CCTV cameras to improve surveillance of 'hot spot' areas
- Enforce and publicise fly tipping offences in partnership with the relevant local authority/private land owner
- Develop 'area investment plans' where the highest reported concerns come from and engage relevant local partners to improve communal spaces and increase the ability for 'natural surveillance' to prevent problems before they occur
- Run three new targeted campaigns on the costs associated with clearing rubbish and fly tipping to show the value of funds that could be better spent on other, more positive, communal improvements
- Develop an estate management work-flow within our case manager system that is transparent, and enables residents and partners to better report mis-use of communal space and track its clearance to promote wider ownership of looking after the areas where they live.

Vulnerable Persons and Safeguarding

Repeat victims of crime or anti-social behaviour is an important part of monitoring reported cases. We undertake a Risk-Assessment Matrix (RAMs) when cases are reported to us, to identify the level of harm being experienced by an individual following an incident or ongoing problem they may be subject to. This enables us to prioritise how we handle cases but also to liaise with the Police and other agencies around the need for any partnership interventions. The Risk-Assessment Matrix (RAM) we use is the same used by Kent Police. This enable us to have a consistent approach to assessing risk in the communities where we have homes. However, how good we have been in reducing repeat victims is not currently reported on and going forwards we want to improve this.

When thinking about repeat offenders, we are aware that many repeat offenders have underlying vulnerabilities and/or are experiencing problems with substance misuse that can influence their ability or willingness to engage and work with services to stop or change their behaviour. Sometimes access into services to address mental health concerns can be difficult to sustain due to changing thresholds around assessments being undertaken before referrals can be made and/or reduced resources within support generally. This is an issue recognised locally and 2017 has seen the introduction of a new Mental Health Partnership Group and Community Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) in the Sevenoaks District to try and overcome some of the barriers we, and other partners, are facing.

We have specific policies and processes in place for the handling of domestic abuse and safeguarding cases for adults and children. We work alongside multi agency partnerships in including the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) for Domestic Abuse and tailored case management meetings led by Social Services to engage with partners to manage and reduce safeguarding concerns in these cases. Together with our partners, we want to continue to ensure we can identify and make referrals that provide adequate support to any vulnerable person at risk.

New areas we are beginning to engage with include Child Sexual Exploitation, Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery. Driven by county agendas of Kent Police, awareness of these issues is growing across all agencies, albeit the signs are often hidden, making victims even harder to recognise. To date, we have been pro-active in ensuring our front-line officers are aware of the issues affecting Kent and have actively taken part of local training for our staff to recognise signs and learn where to signpost any information that could be relevant to a bigger issue known to Kent Police.

Through our continued partnership involvement within community safety units where we have homes, we will be engaged in these county agendas on a routine basis, and we want to maintain a commitment to ensuring our staff have a wider awareness of each of these issues to ensure intelligence is shared and not ignored through authorised information sharing protocols and strong partnership working. Going forwards however, we will need to ensure that our recording systems are equipped to capture such areas of work.

To further our approaches to community safety under the workstream of 'Vulnerable Persons and Safeguarding', we will:

- Develop the tools to better understand who are repeat victims and reduce by 20% through a multi-agency approach.
- Be an active and engaged partner to support the new 'Community Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)' initiative set up in the Sevenoaks District aiming to ensure safeguarding is always in place when dealing with vulnerable adults and young people. If successful promote the model to other local authority areas where we work.
- Develop in house guidance on the tiers of current provisions around mental health services to better target referral needs and empower our staff to challenge tenant access into these services where appropriate and we can see a support need. Develop this in partnership with the Local Strategic Partnership Mental Health Action Plan in the Sevenoaks District to support people to better manage long-term mental health conditions and improve signposting to services.
- Continue to raise the profile of child sexual exploitation, human trafficking and safeguarding generally, working with Kent Police's 'Control Strategy' to know the signs and how to share information.
- Expand training for customer facing staff, and publicity on support services and the legislation around illegal highs, drugs and alcohol to prevent substance misuse issues from increasing as a reported concern and signpost tenants experiencing substances mis-use to appropriate agencies.
- Work within Community Safety Units to identify signs, and target through enforcement, drug use in communities including cannabis growing cannabis and dealing.
- Add new categories into our case management system for monitoring and tracking new agendas including Child Sexual Exploitation, Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery.

Pro-active partnerships

We have a very strong track record of commitment to, and working with, partners. This will continue to be a firm foundation of our approach to handling community safety concerns within the communities where we operate.

In 2017, we completed an internal restructure that enabled us to redefine the role and focus of the Community Safety Team and identify key leads for specific geographical areas. Going forwards, as we move into new areas to provide affordable housing, we will work to maintain a consistent level of contact and engagement across all local authorities' and community safety unit's where we have homes. This places us in a stronger position to share and learn

from different practices across different areas and work to achieve our vision of being a leading reputable and engaged partner.

On wider agendas of county and national concern, housing associations are increasingly viewed to be in a unique position to see and hear information that may be key intelligence in support of identifying and responding to local threats, harm and risk. We commit within our strategy to working with our partners within information sharing protocols and the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 to support wider agendas and Kent Police's Control Strategy².

When working with our tenants to address their concerns, and / or supporting them to deal with low-level issues themselves, we see this as an extension to the general ethos of our partnership approach and want to further empower our tenants to have access to key tools and information that can provide them with the information they need for advice and guidance and to self-serve and access up to date information on a case that has been reported to us (ensuring the protection of some data of third parties where relevant and appropriate).

To further our approaches to community safety under the workstream of 'Pro-active Partnerships', we will:

- Develop through our 'Digital Plan' a customer facing tenant portal for viewing and tracking progress against a reported community safety concern.
- Review and make relevant changes to our information sharing protocol in response to changes to data protection legislations, with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) coming into force from May 2018.
- Expand our engagement within Community Safety Units for Swale, Dover and Thanet as we continue to build more homes across the County.

Measuring Success

We have been monitoring the numbers of community safety cases, by type, customer profile and outcomes of closed cases in the same way consistently over the years. Going forwards, this can be improved to help develop a more comparable way of assessing the impact of the number of concerns against the number of homes we have in each area. Furthermore, we have identified in this strategy we want to monitor more closely repeat victims and repeat offenders. We will therefore make changes to the data we record and report on to improve our customer insight and monitor trends.

Internally our Community Safety Team have been building a more collaborative relationship with our Tenancy Services teams through defined areas to better audit case management. This is to ensure we are implementing not only the themes of early intervention and tenants

² Across the county there is a specific focus from Kent Police remodelling their approach to Policing around the themes of Harm, Vulnerable Persons, Safeguarding and Mental Health. Within Kent Police's control strategy these are further defined to incorporate approaches to managing Child Sexual Exploitation; Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery; Domestic Abuse, Violence and Sexual Offences; Gangs; High impact crime including Counter Terrorism and Domestic Extremism

upholding their responsibilities but also to provide support to our colleagues learning and development in handling tenancy breaches well and keeping our customers up to date. This is an approach we wish to continue consolidating. We also want to demonstrate how we achieve value for money in providing our services.

Nationally, following the introduction of the ASB Crime and Policing Act, any work we do to address anti-social behaviour or crime in areas where we have homes, can be held to account by residents if they choose to ask the local authority to review how we have responded to any concerns raised especially if they feel insufficient or inappropriate actions have been undertaken. This is called the “community trigger”.

Alongside our own internal complaint process therefore, we remain mindful of the communities right and expectation that we will address and respond to all reported concerns of community safety (anti-social behaviour) and be clear and transparent in our reasoning for what we choose to do and /or not do and to ensure we fully meet the standard set out with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) regulatory standard for ‘Neighbourhood and Communities’.

To ensure our monitoring is relevant and enabling our service to evolve, during 2018-2022 we will:

- Evolve the wider auditing function from within the community safety team to provide for stronger performance management and increase further confidence and transparency in what we do.
- Develop new reporting by local authority areas based around cases per 1000 population to provide more comparative analysis across areas where we have homes.
- Use Version 3 of our Customer Relationship Management system to further enhance desk top and mobile case management. Creating opportunities for letters to be accessible out of the office and our categories and reports are updated to capture the actions we have committed to within this strategy.
- Provide an annual report to Community and Housing Committee on progress against the strategy actions and the following performance measures:
 - Overall numbers of cases reported
 - % cases reported when compared to number of homes in each local authority area
 - Overall numbers of cases closed
 - Customer profile of victims and offenders
 - Repeat victims
 - Repeat offenders
 - Legal Actions Undertaken
 - Preventative measures and initiatives undertaken
 - Impact upon trends in costs associated with key reported issues (fly tipping)