

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

Community Safety Partnership Strategic Assessment 2023-24

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Introduction

The Strategic Assessment produced for the Tunbridge Wells Community Safety Partnership (CSP) helps establish priority themes for the 2024/25 Partnership Plan.

Legislation

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 gave statutory responsibility to local authorities, the police, and key partners to reduce crime and disorder in their communities. Under this, and subsequent legislation, Community Safety Partnerships are required to carry out annual audits and to implement crime reduction strategies.

The Police and Justice Act 2006 introduced scrutiny arrangements in the form of the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee, as well as introducing several amendments to the 1998 Act including the addition of anti-social behaviour (ASB) and substance misuse within the remit of the CSP strategies. Reducing reoffending was subsequently added by the Policing and Crime Act 2009. The Crime and Disorder (Formulation and Implementation of Strategy) Regulations 2007 set out further revisions to the 1998 Act.

The aim of the Strategic Assessment

The analysis of data provided by partners enables the partnership to set clear priorities for the coming year.

Part 1 analyses police and partner data for last year's priorities covering the period January to December 2023, unless otherwise specified.

Funding for these priorities is provided, in large part, by the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner in accordance with the priorities set out in his plan for *Making Kent Safer 2022-25*.

Part 2 draws some conclusions from the data and recommends the priorities for the partnership for the forthcoming financial year.

It should be noted that some of the data provided in this document is provisional and may undergo further revision.

Part 1 – Analysis

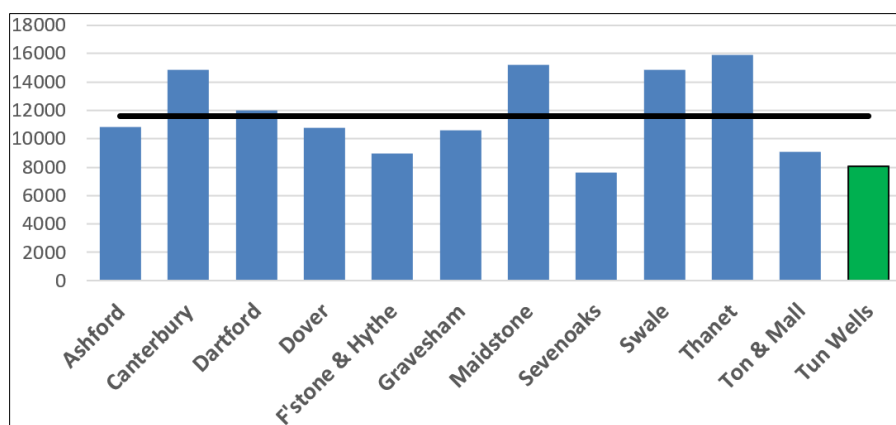
All recorded crime

Current figures for the 12-month period January 2023 – December 2023, unless stated.

Level of Crime: 8,059 (previous period 7,815)

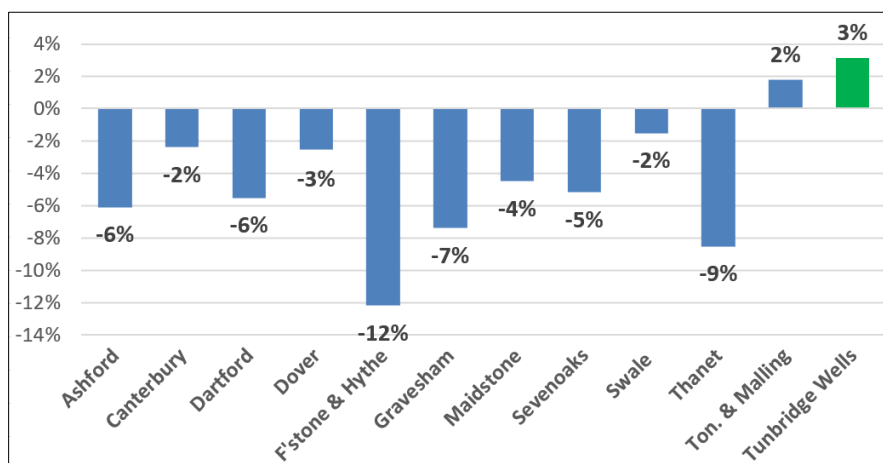
Peer Comparison: Second out of 12 Kent areas by population and volume

Annual Change: An increase of 244 crimes (+3%)



Kent comparison, 2023

A 3% increase in 'all crime' in Tunbridge Wells.



Percentage change in crime rates, 2022-2023

A 2% rise last year was followed by a 3% rise this year. Still amongst the safest places in Kent. The topline figure is broken down in the table on the next page to show more specific increases or decreases and our county position.

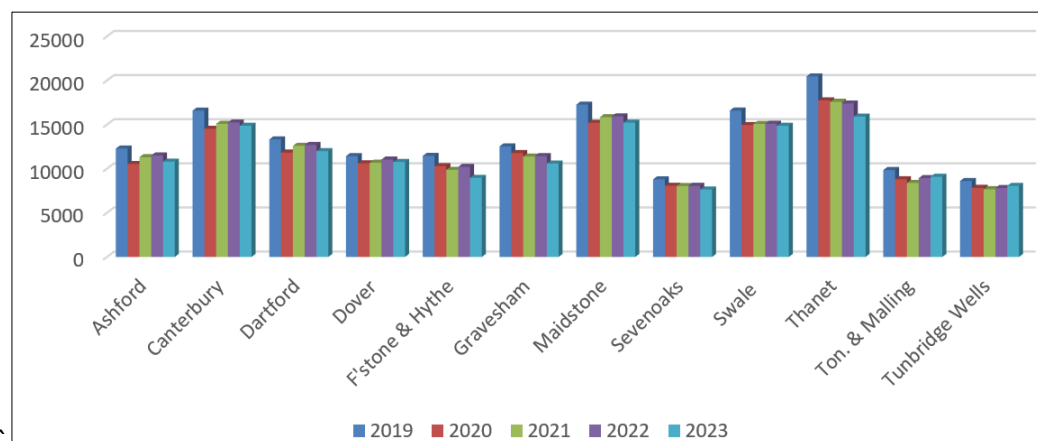
On this page

Crime Type	This Year	Last Year	% Change	Number change	2022	2023
All Crime	8059	7815	3.1%	244	1	2
Victim Based Crime	7011	6736	4.1%	275	1	2
Violence Against the Person	3383	3277	3.2%	106	2	2
Sexual Offences	282	293	-3.8%	-11	2	2
Hate Crime	241	253	-4.7%	-12	6	3
ASB Incidents	1447	1090	32.8%	357	3	3
Residential Burglary (Home)	131	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Res. Burg. (Unconnected Bldg)	61	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Criminal Damage	915	861	6.3%	54	1	1
Drug Offences	252	236	6.8%	16	3	5
- Drug Trafficking	96	105	-8.6%	-9	7	4
- Drug Possession	156	131	19.1%	25	3	3
Robbery	41	40	2.5%	1	2	4
Shoplifting	879	690	27.4%	189	6	5
Theft from Motor Vehicle	200	202	-1.0%	-2	1	3
Theft of Motor Vehicle	159	173	-8.1%	-14	3	2

Noticeable in this data:

- A 33% increase in reports of anti-social behaviour
- A 27% increase of shoplifting offences
- A drop to second place in Kent for 'all crime'

Further details on key crime types and a ward breakdown are provided later in the report.

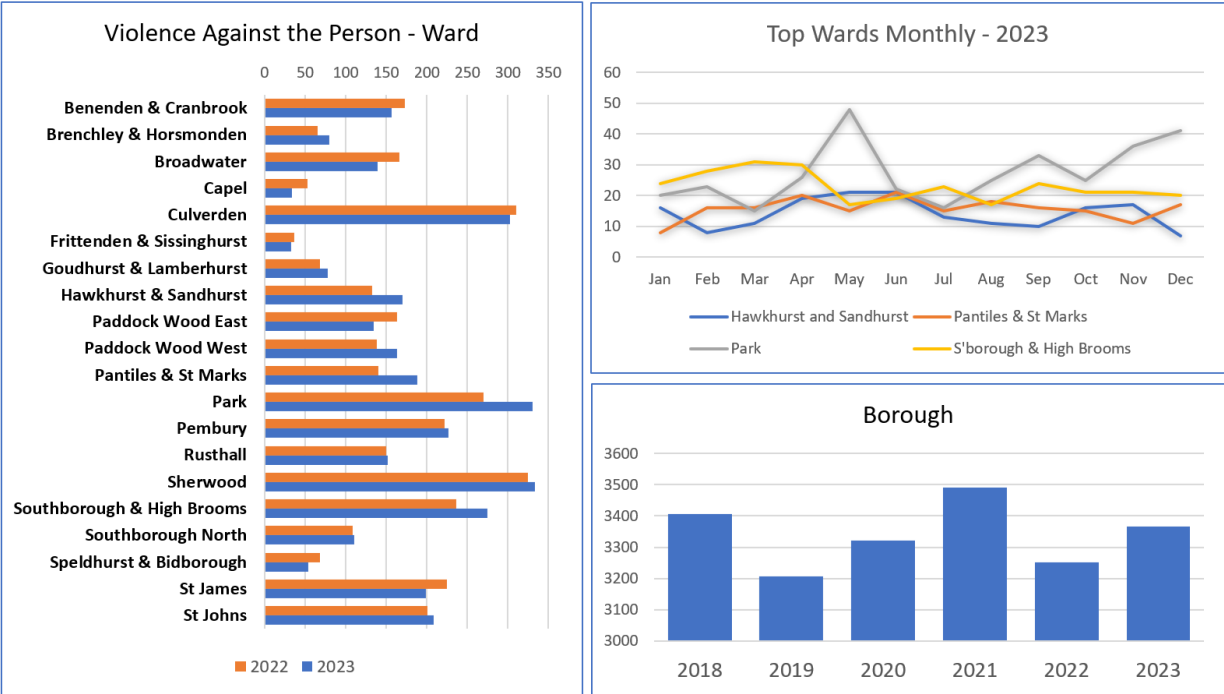


All Crime - Five-year trend

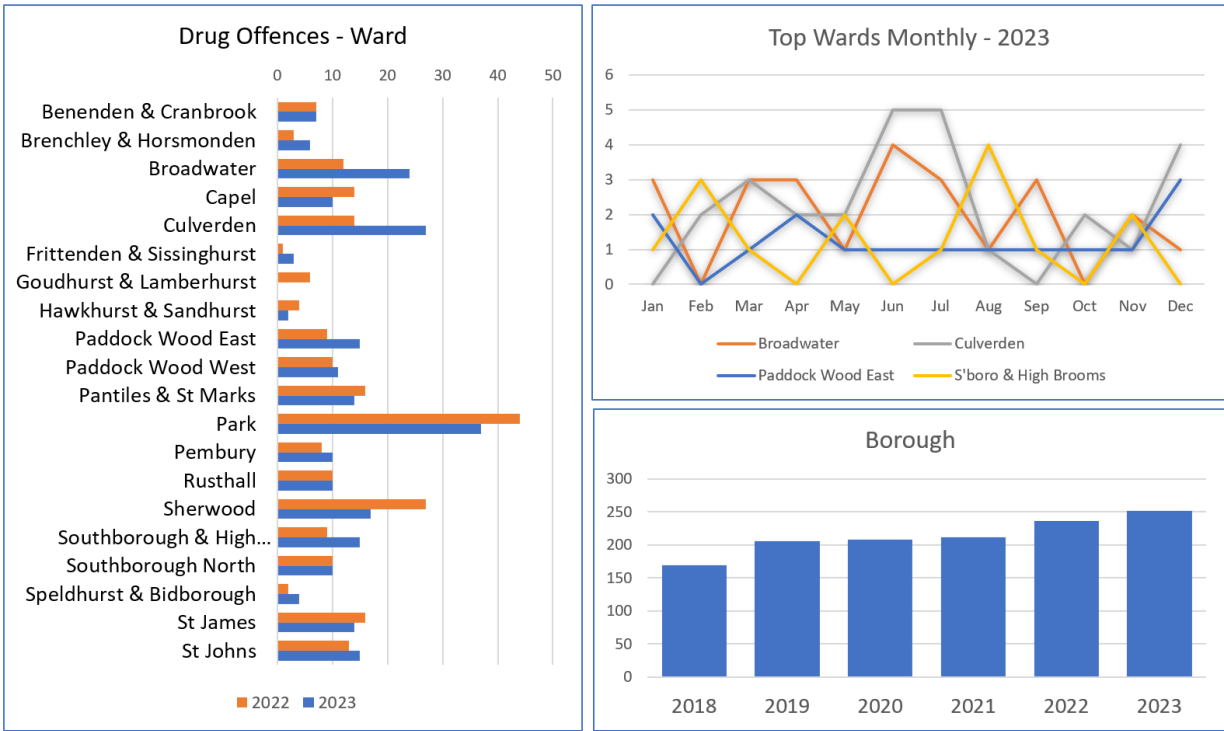
The leftmost column, 2019, is the last clear year before lockdown restrictions came into play between March 2020 and December 2021. Some graphs in this document omit the years 2020, 2021 when they're unlikely to be helpful.

Twelve wards experienced increases in **Violence Against the Person** offences during 2023. Park and Southborough & High Brooms saw the biggest increases. It's worth noting that VAP includes common assault with no injury.

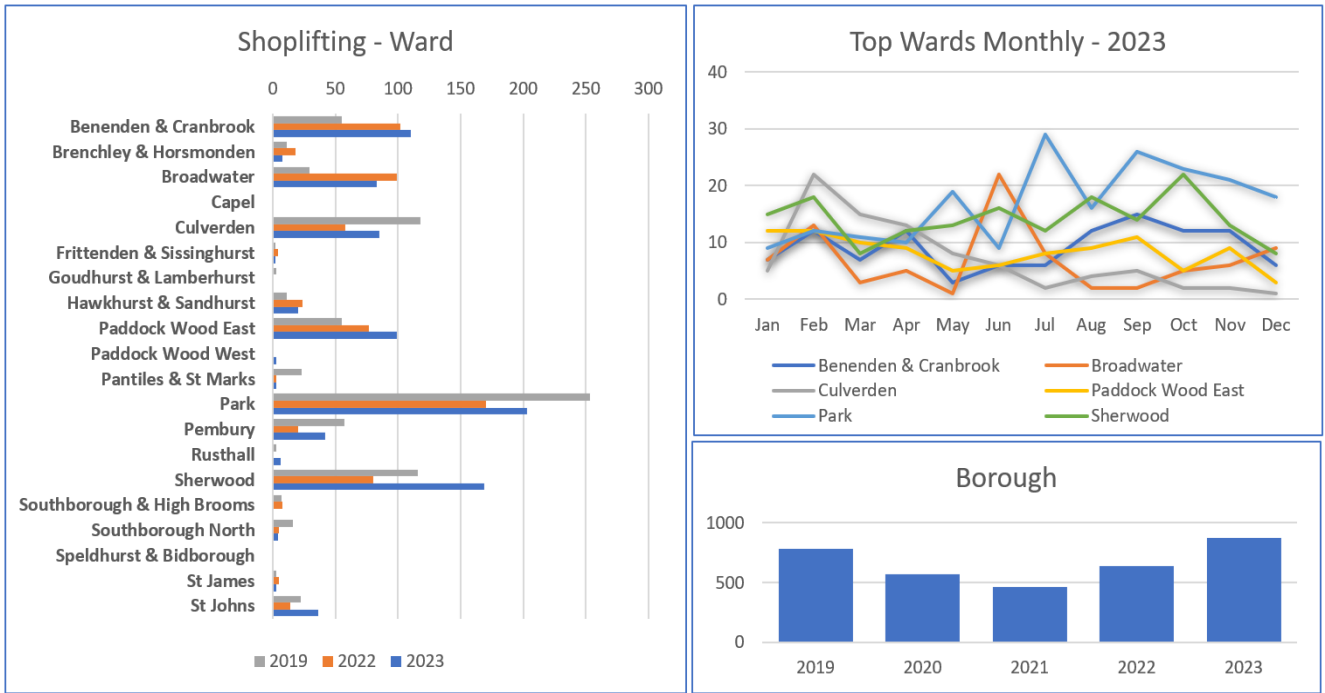
Aside from Park in May there were no clear temporal spikes that may suggest events (weather, holidays, football etc) had a clear and obvious influence.



Combined **Drug Offences** (possession and trafficking/dealing) have continued to steadily increase across the borough and across the county, despite holding to 2019 levels during the lockdown years. Summer months tend to bring this issue more into focus in public areas.

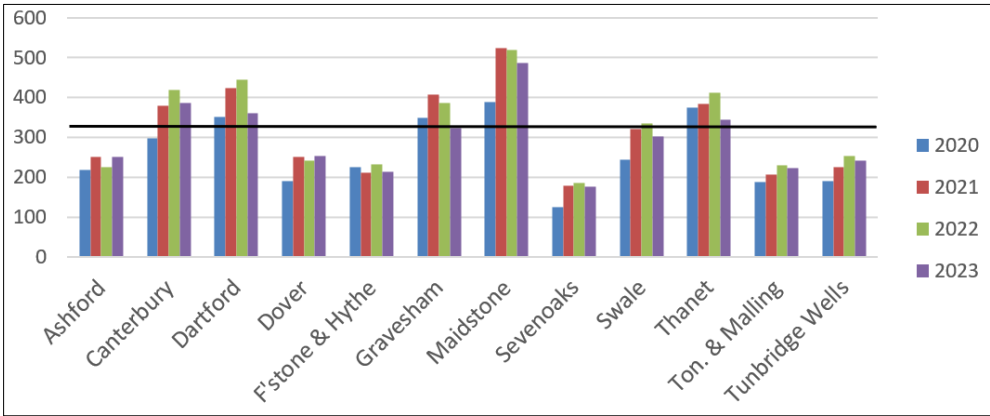


Shoplifting is one of the few crime types that has already risen above 2019 levels. The biggest increase was seen in Sherwood (+89). Culverden, Paddock Wood East, Park, Pembury and St John’s all experienced increases of 20 or more incidents.



Hate Crime

Chart showing a four-year trend of Hate Crime offences across Kent.



The table below breaks down hate crime offences into various strands. As consistently reported, race remains the predominant factor in reported incidents. Disability and sexual orientation are also significant factors, followed by religion/faith.

Calendar Year	Race	Disability	Religion/faith/belief	Transgender	Gender	Sexual orientation
2019	128	32	10	1	0	29
2020	140	35	12	1	0	35

2021	170	39	14	2	5	38
2022	196	42	8	8	0	34
2023	188	34	13	8	0	44

Hate crimes are reviewed by Kent Police's Community Liaison Officer (CLO) for suitable interventions or further signposting.

In respect of the religious belief offences, five were related to the Jewish religion, and nine to Islam. Three reports were generated in response to a single incident and two others relate to one victim. All incidents involved school-aged children, both victim and perpetrator, but happened outside of the school setting on the way to and from school. There are four named suspects.

Reports from Pembury Hospital have increased with respect to abuse on staff and security guards, as well as police officers dealing with patients at the location.

Town Centre issues involving young people, widely reported elsewhere, have also included hate crime abuse to shop staff. Further, there have been instances of seemingly motiveless incidents of school-aged children being randomly abusive to members of public and each other.

In the NTE, issues have involving customers abusing door staff, bar staff and taxi drivers. Parking attendants may also face racial abuse in the course of their daily work.

Here's a snapshot of the issues raised (some sanitised):

Colebrook Road – 1x report

Pembury Hospital – 23x reports – Range of abuse towards staff, security guards and police officers

Greggs Wood Road – 1x report – Group of youths abusing.

Hotel, Mount Ephraim – 1x report – customers being abusive.

Commercial Road, TN12 – 2x reports – Train station abuse by youths.

Aura – 1x report – Door staff being abused by rejected customers.

Wetherspoons, Mount Pleasant Road – 1x report - Known male being abused.

Mount Ephraim – 1x report - Parking issue abuse.

Greggs Bakery, Grosvenor Road – 1x report – customers abusing each other.

Sherwood – 1x report – known suspect creating multiple social media accts.

Cranbrook – 2x reports – DA related.

Primary School – 4x reports – online school kids abusing.

Upper Grosvenor Road – 1x reports – abuse at bus stop.

Cranbrook – Social media related, repeat victim.

Pembury Hospital – 1x hospital worker abused.

RVP – 2x reports Ukrainian school child abused.

Five Guys, Mount Pleasant Road – 1x youth related.

Goods Station Road – 1x Neighbour dispute.

Showfields – 1x known victim report.

Good Station Road – 1x road rage.

Shop, Camden Road – 1x abuse from customer.
Mount Pleasant Road – 1x police officer abuse.
Calverley Road – 1x shop worker abuse.

A number of engagement events have taken place at Pembury Hospital this year to try and raise awareness of hate crime and the importance of reporting. This, in turn, may have generated an increase in reports (23 in 12 months).

Other engagement events included Pembury Church, Nottcuts Garden Centre, Camden Centre, the Mosque and Tesco's.

Within the next financial year, it is expected that a revitalised Independent Advisory Group (IAG) will play a part in ongoing community engagements, such as VAWG and Hate Crime events, as well as working on other projects within the borough to address this important theme.

Significant incidents were tracked locally, through Community Impact Assessments, to ensure we were prepared for any unintended consequences. Some examples below:

22 Jan – Chinese New Year

27 Jan – International Holocaust Remembrance Day

6 May – King Charles coronation

29 June – Courts rule plan to deport asylum seekers to Rwanda is illegal.

7 Oct – Hamas launches a major air and ground attack on Israel from Gaza.

Op Tarlac begins for Kent Police – monitoring all calls/reports/tensions within Jewish & Muslim communities.

While most of these incidents had little or no local impact, community tensions were assessed, and partners were kept up to date at various briefings and meetings. Hate Crime remains a standing agenda item at monthly Vulnerability Board meetings to inform attendees of any trends, repeat locations or significant victimisation. Incidents may also be discussed with partners at twice-weekly morning briefings.

Domestic Abuse

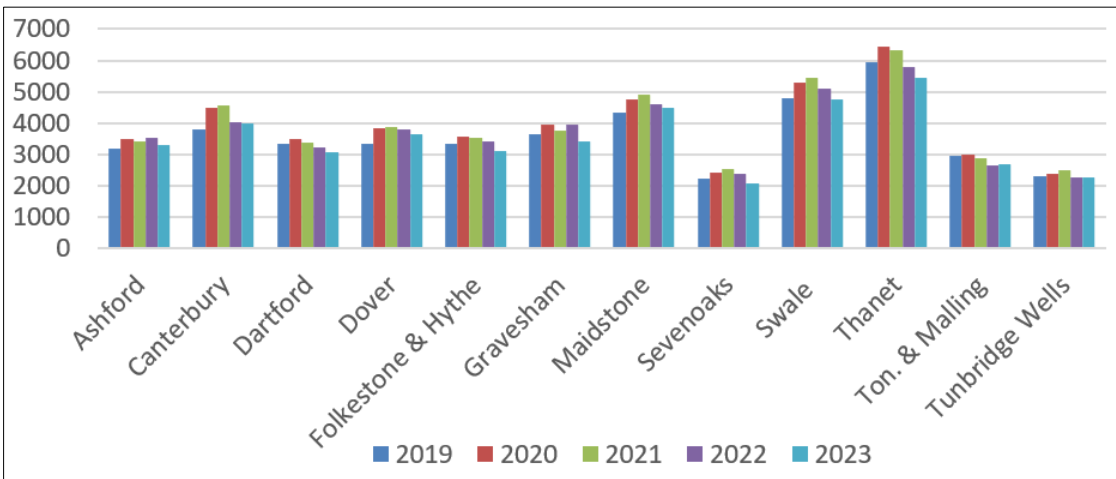
Current figures refer to the 12-month period from January 2023 – December 2023

Level of Crime: 2,251 crimes (last year 2,263)

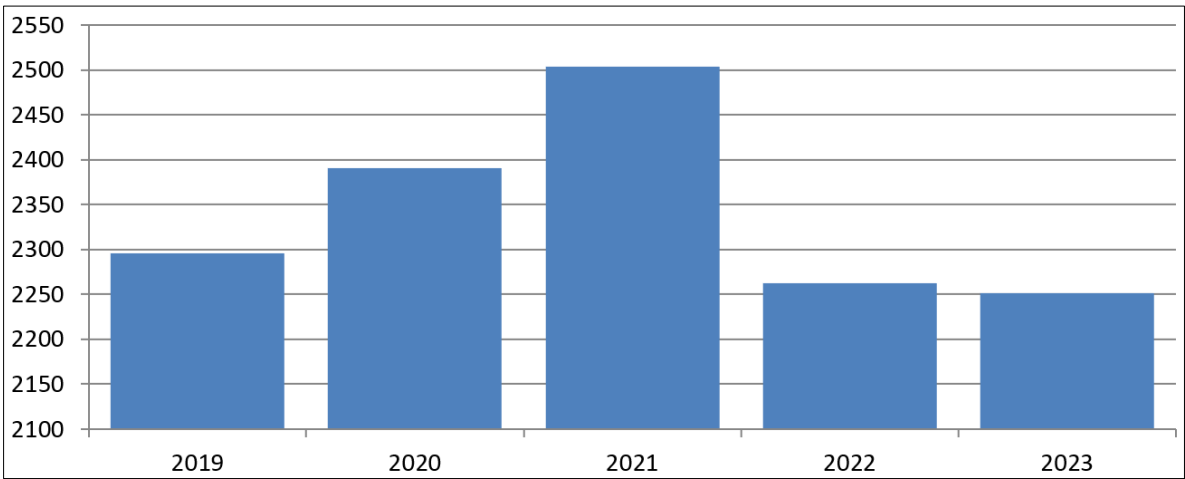
Peer Comparison: Second lowest in Kent

Annual Change: A reduction of 12 reported incidents

During 2023 Kent Police recorded 2,251 incidents of domestic abuse in Tunbridge Wells, a reduction of 12 incidents over 2022. This follows a reduction of 241 in 2022 over 2021.



Kent Comparison 2020-2023



Tunbridge Wells, 2019-2023

A further breakdown of domestic abuse reporting in Tunbridge Wells is shown in the table below.

	This Year	Last Year	% Change	No. Change	2022	2023
Non-Crime Incidents	841	803	4.7%	38	2	2
Crime	1410	1460	-3.4%	-50	2	2
- Violence Against the Person	1135	1144	-0.8%	-9	2	2
- Stalking/Harassment	330	310	6.5%	20	2	2
- Coercion & Control	107	138	-22.5%	-31	1	2
- Sexual Offences	53	55	-3.6%	-2	2	2
- Other	222	261	-14.9%	-39	1	1
Intimate	884	981	-9.9%	-97	2	2
Non-Intimate	420	378	11.1%	42	2	3
Repeat Victims	323	322	0.3%	1	2	2
% Repeat Victims	22.9%	22.1%	n/a	n/a	3	6
Charges	102	87	17.2%	15	-	-
Cautions	18	18	0.0%	0	-	-
Community Resolutions	8	4	100.0%	4	-	-

DAVSS saw a slight reduction in Tunbridge Wells referrals, with more high-risk cases being directed to KIDAS and medium/low risk coming the other way. This brings us closer to pre-covid levels of service. The table below refers to Q1-Q3.

	2022-23	2023-24
Referrals (TW)	279	241
Helpline Calls (WK)	3980	2210
High Risk Cases (TW)	65	27

Helpline calls are reduced due to mid-year changes in the way calls are recorded and reported. This is part of a wider reporting change that will see more accurate or more granular reporting going forward.

DAVSS repeat rate for Tunbridge Wells clients was 8.3%, up from 5% last year.

Funded and other outcomes

Provider: Domestic Abuse Volunteers and Support Service (DAVSS)

Funding: £18,000 (PCC, TWBC)

Service: Provide domestic abuse support services to men and women at all levels of risk. Encourage early reporting by promoting the helpline and available services. Provide workshops and training to raise awareness and promote prevention.

Outcomes:

Q1

This quarter DAVSS received 235 new referrals requiring full multi agency support alongside a significant number of advice only queries from new and existing clients. Our repeat victimisation remains low at 8%.

We are currently reviewing our monitoring and evaluation processes with a view to implementing a new casework management system. We have been successful in securing £199,960 from the Access to Justice Foundation to continue to provide high quality Support to Court assistance.

Seven volunteers moved on in quarter one. Four left due to family reason, two to take up full time employment and one volunteer joined DAVSS as a full time DA Caseworker.

Q2

Referrals to DAVSS have remained consistent level in the last quarter with a significantly high number of high risk referrals. With the support of our network of partner organisations, our dedicated volunteers and staff we have continued to provide high quality wrap around support services to clients with at all levels of risk including those with multiple complex needs.

DAVSS currently has 33 volunteers, with three having moved on to take up full time employment, education and/or caring responsibilities. In addition to several staff vacancies DAVSS have commenced their annual volunteer recruitment campaign.

In the first three quarters DAVSS volunteer model contributed 22,012 hours of volunteering time in West Kent.

Q3

Referrals remained consistent during this quarter when compared with previous quarter, with a 5% drop compared to the same quarter last year. The way in which DAVSS capture and report on helpline numbers has changed and therefore the drop in reported numbers is not to be considered a concern. From this quarter onwards DAVSS will only report on calls into the helpline, rather than calls in and out as this is more accurate, simpler and less likely to be impacted by external factors.

Having reviewed stored data and reports, DAVSS were receiving on average 20 helpline calls per week in 2020. The average is now 25-28. Levels of High-Risk DA are where DAVSS would expect them to be as an overall %.

Based on last quarter and last year, Sevenoaks has remained consistent as a % with Ton & Malling and Tunbridge Wells having more swings in variance and this is something DAVSS will monitor for any themes or trends. As service provision is not based on the outcome of the risk assessment DAVSS provision levels and capacity have not changed.

In October DAVSS implemented a new structure and operating model which has seen more of our volunteers take on casework responsibilities. Volunteer numbers remain static and as DAVSS broaden their volunteering opportunities we are optimistic that we will see growth over the next financial year.

The following West Kent Group programmes were run up to third quarter:

Adult Freedom Programme: 14 women attending in Q1, 17 in Q2, 17 in Q3

Children Freedom Programme: Seven attendees through both quarters

Own My Life (2 courses): 43 attendees over three quarters

DAY Programme DA workshop at schools: 360 attendees

Children ACE Recovery Toolkit: 8 attendees

Support to Court figures (West Kent):

Support to Court Processes	Q1 to Q3
Legal options advice (hrs)	1003
Civil court cases	37
Criminal court cases	2
Non-Molestation Orders	62
Prohibitive Steps Order	5
Occupation Order	2
Child Arrangement Orders	25
Undertakings Agreement	1
Restraining Orders	6
Witness Care Contacts	1
Solicitor meetings	55
Other prison	6
Specific issue	1

DAVSS Client quotes (taken from anonymised case studies, available on request)

“Since I have been supported by you, you have turned my life around. I am so happy now, my life has changed so much.”

“I’d highly recommend you to anyone who is having these issues. Everyone has been brilliant. There’s so much care from whoever I’ve spoken to. You have reinforced how I was feeling is OK. You have made me feel stronger and feel that I could cope with it knowing you were on the other end of the phone. The thing that really impressed me was that all of you rang me regularly without me having to contact you. I wouldn’t have known what to do or how to get through it without you. You are all very kind and knowledgeable”

Volunteers

At the end of Q3 DAVSS had around 38 volunteers, with six new starters in Q3, and one moving one. Across the three quarters DAVSS volunteers contributed around 22,000 hours of service.

In October DAVSS implemented a new structure and operating model which has seen more volunteers take on casework responsibilities. Volunteer numbers remain static and as DAVSS broaden their volunteering opportunities there is optimism for growth over the next financial year.

Provider: Community Domestic Abuse Programme (CDAP)

Funding: £3,000 (PCC)

Service: Provide support to male perpetrators of domestic abuse to change their behaviour through the Community Domestic Abuse Programme (CDAP)

Outcomes:

So far, this FY CDAP have received no referrals into their service from the borough.

CDAP tell us that referrals from Social Services are essential. CDAP's CEO presented to Tunbridge Wells Social Services in 2023 but so far no referrals have been forthcoming.

We are now looking to further promote CDAP through leaflet/poster drops into key local agencies and businesses, such as Probation, dentist and doctor surgeries, A&E, churches, sports centres, male football and rugby clubs, and HR departments of key or large businesses.

Area	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Total
Sevenoaks	2	1	0	2	0	1	0	3	4	2	16
Tonbridge	2	3	1	1	2	6	5	2	4	6	33
Tunbridge Wells	5	12	0	2	6	1	7	3	1	0	41

Kent Integrated Domestic Abuse Service (KIDAS)

Innovation Funding

Look Ahead continue to work on a number of initiatives with KIDAS partners to strengthen the offer and ensure consistency across Kent. This includes streamlining training so that partners will receive the same offer across the county. We are also working on a Champions Programme for partners, businesses and the community.

Look Ahead continue to provide Sanctuary support, emergency accommodation for those that need to flee and cannot access a refuge space and welfare for items for community and refuge clients.

Standard Move-on packages are now available in-house equal to the support previously available through KSAS and all customers can expect to receive furniture, furnishings and equipment to assist and ease the transition into independent housing depending on their individual circumstances.

These funds are available to clients from both within the refuges and the local community when people are referred in by partner agencies.

Sanctuary referrals now go to the new countywide SAFER service for all KIDAS referrals, while Look Ahead continues to provide this service for partner agencies until the Victim Support single point of access for SAFER goes live this year (2024).

Refuges

The Refuges welcomed a new Manager in 2023 and Look Ahead employed a fourth Support Worker.

A Housing Advice Worker is supporting families to overcome complications with move-on (from refuge) and for community clients who have received Look Ahead's Sanctuary offer.

Look Ahead turned 50 in 2023 and took the opportunity to celebrate the occasion with parties and get-togethers for refuge families.

Three move-on flats were handed back to Moat in Q3 due to an ongoing risk to the building. Look Ahead's Service Manager has been consulting with our Housing Services Team to help mitigate any negative effects.

Survivor Programmes

Look Ahead run Own My Life and Phoenix programmes with successful outcomes throughout the year. Sixteen attendees completed the programme in Q3

Domestic Abuse One Stop Shops

Early in 2023 Look Ahead were operating a One Stop Shop (OSS) in two locations; weekly in Tonbridge for West Kent, and fortnightly in Cranbrook.

Work undertaken countywide in 2023/24 to provide a consistent OSS offer should provide some benefit this year with a review of our own provision in the West. The Community Safety Manager will present a report to the WK DA Forum by the end of the FY 2024.

It is worth noting the biggest issue is staffing, both in-person and on stand-by at the end of a phone or video link. Various models will be looked at.

With that in mind, Look Ahead are also in discussion with Protection Against Stalking to see how both issues might be covered at one OSS.

Victim Link Service / Healthy Relationships and Cobi

Funding from the PCC is providing support for victims whose perpetrators are attending the Interventions Alliance Healthy Relationship or Cobi programme. This will now run until at least March 2025. Referrals are increasing and Look Ahead, Kent Police and Interventions Alliance are carrying out presentations across the county to raise awareness of the project.

Look Ahead have employed a Victim Link Step Down Worker to support clients who need ongoing support once the perpetrator intervention has ended and the risk has reduced.

Cyber Stalking Clinic

Look Ahead fund the Cyber Clinic in partnership with Protection Against Stalking and the Cyber Helpline.

These 45-minute pre-booked sessions allow an expert to understand the issues, identify risk, produce a safety plan and provide immediate advice on how to improve a client's cyber security.

The clinic is held virtually.

Training

Look Ahead have recently delivered training to the Witness Care Team to go through the referral processes and have made contact with Adult Social Care Teams. Presentations are booked to be delivered to the new locality teams.

Hospital IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advocate)

Look Ahead received funding to deliver a Hospital IDVA service and this commenced on 19 June 2023, covering Tunbridge Wells and Maidstone Hospitals.

The HIDVA has made referrals to the Tunbridge Wells Vulnerability Board, chaired by Kent Police and TWBC, for additional support for their clients.

Childrens Support

Salus have the contract to support children in refuge and other safe accommodation. Referrals into the service went live in August. The service covers therapy and activities for children while the refuge will continue to provide daily support and school access etc.

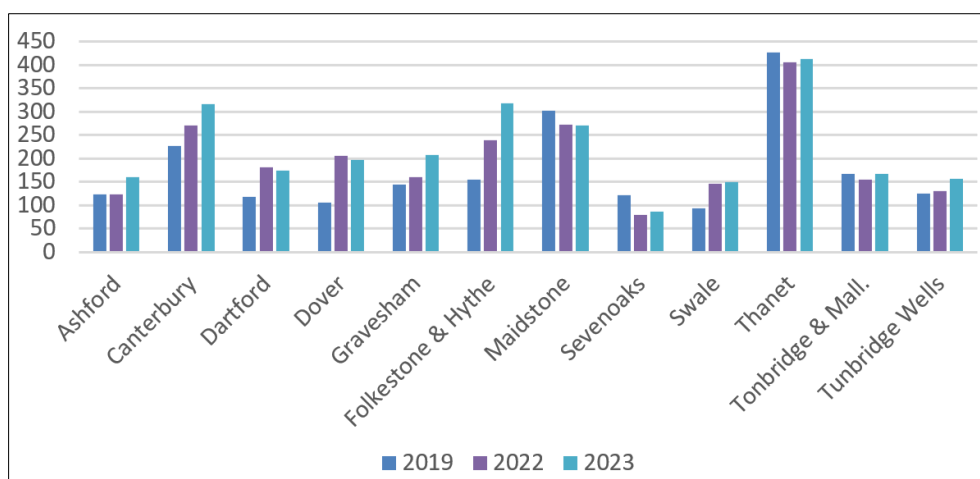
Substance Misuse and Supply, and Alcohol-related Behaviour

Current figures refer to the 12-month period from January 2023 – December 2023

Drug Possession: 156 incidents (last year 131)

Peer Comparison: Third (by volume), same as last year

Annual Change: Up 25 (19%)

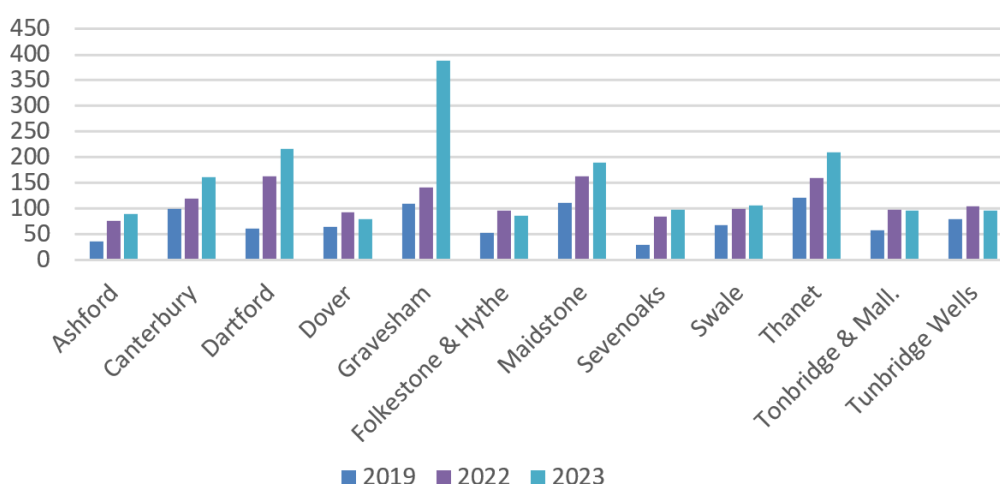


Three-year Pre and Covid Trend – Possession offences

Drug Trafficking: 96 incidents (last year 105)

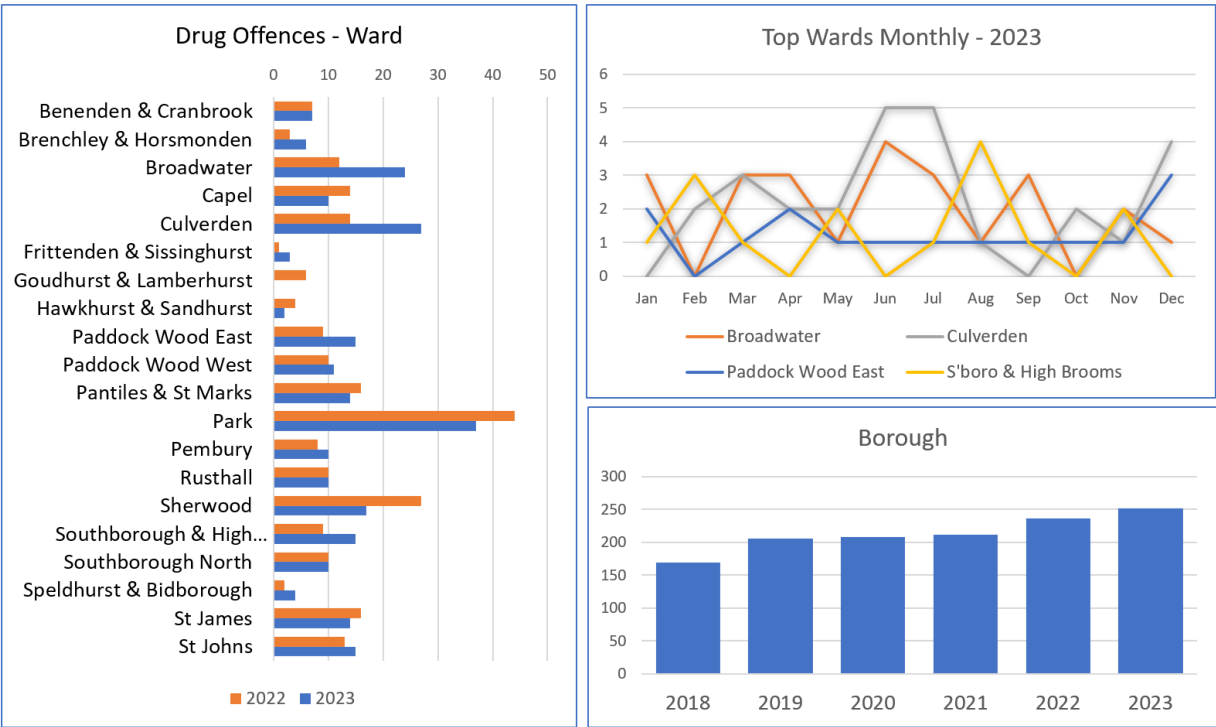
Peer Comparison: Fifth by volume, third in 2022

Annual Change: Down 9 (-8%)

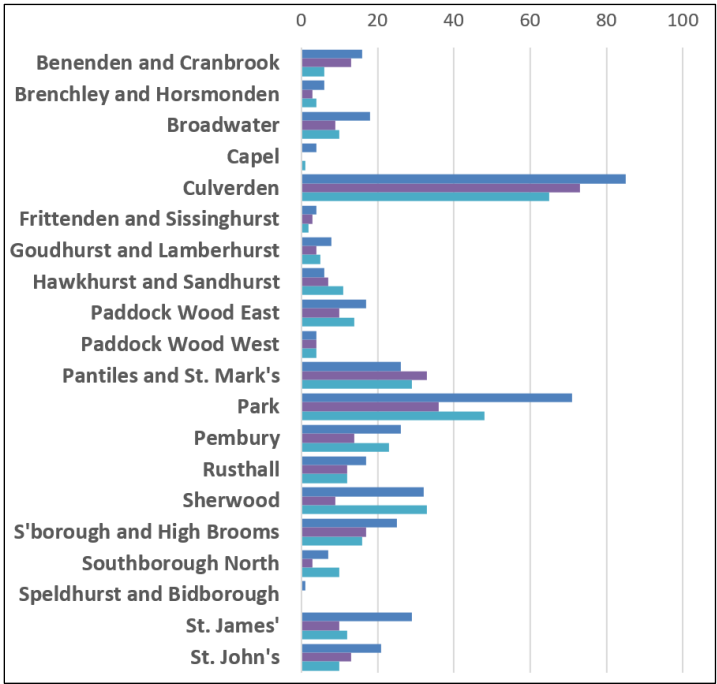


Three-year Pre- and Post-Covid Trend – Trafficking offences

Between January 2023 and December 2023, there were 2.12 recorded **drug offences** (combined possession and trafficking offences) per 1,000 population, placing us fifth out of 12 local authority areas. The county average is 2.84.



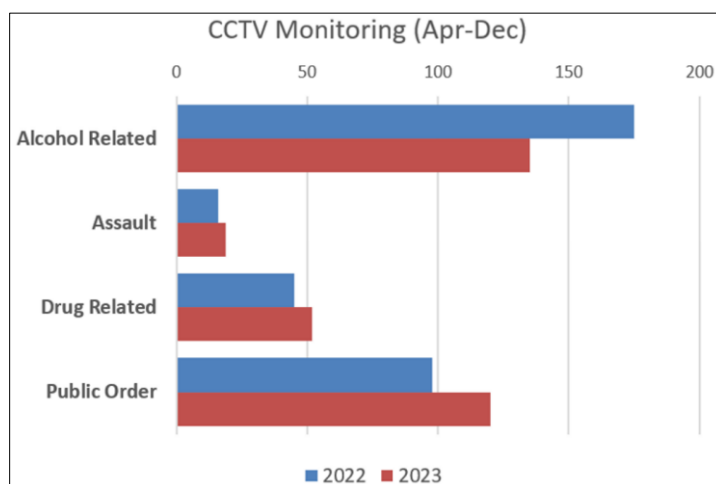
Drunken or rowdy behaviour, most typically associated with the night-time economy, also occurs in other public spaces, such as Sherwood where the lake saw an increase in alcohol-fuelled disorder during the summer and early fall:



CCTV

When comparing data captured by CCTV Operators between April and December there was a reduction in alcohol-related incidents in 2023 over 2022. Assaults increased, as did drug-related incidents, which are typically related to customers attempting to take substances into venues.

The number of incidents monitoring by CCTV, but which may not have reached the threshold for an offence, also increased, as below:



Funded and other outcomes

Provider: Kenward Trust

Funding: £7,020 (PCC)

Service: To deploy substance misuse workers to hotspots within the borough to carry out 1:1 and group work with adults and young people.

Outcomes: Kenward Trust continues to engage with young people in open spaces delivering positive life-choice messages and information on substances misuse.

Q1

The team had 409 engagements with young people across the district. Mainly in Tunbridge Wells town centre and nearby parks. The issues mainly focused on were vaping and nox, which are becoming more of an issue.

Kenward are going into schools and delivering on subjects related to this as well as signs that a young person may be getting caught up with county lines culture.

Kenward have put into process an intervention program for each West Kent district to provide extra help for those who get caught up in substance misuse and are at risk of school exclusion.

Q2

Quarter two engagements: 506. Vaping and cannabis being the most common topics focused on, as well as changes to the laws around nitrous oxide possession, purchase and use. Young people have been receptive to the information shared and we have had good interactions during school visits. Our schools administrator will contact schools in areas of concern offering talks so we can reach a wider audience. This leads to better conversations in outreach settings.

Q3

Engagements this quarter reached 606. "We are seeing larger numbers of young people across the district and this is being seen across West Kent. Alcohol becomes an issue at this time due to the supply from the home. Nitrous Oxide is still being used and the team focuses a lot on the changes to the law especially as some are young drivers. Vaping is our biggest substance issue, and how these can be abused for other use is a concern also. We continue to go to areas highlighted by the safety partnership including Calverley Grounds, other town centre car parks, Pembury and Cranbrook."

Schools are asking for more talks on Vaping as this is an issue in many schools. Think Differently school-talks are focused on current issues of substances and county lines grooming.

Cannabis is very present in the groups we meet with no regard to or fear of the law around this. The team continue to focus on county lines gang culture explaining the issue this leads to. Our worker explores prison and addiction issues through past experiences, ensuring young people are clear in the knowledge that the choices they make now will affect their futures.

Areas visited across the three quarters: Calverley Grounds / Great Hall, Tunbridge Wells train station, St John's Park, The Grove, Town Centre (generally), multi-storey car parks, Pembury Rec, Cranbrook High Street.

Provider: Tunbridge Wells Churches Together Street Pastors

Funding: £2,500 (PCC)

Service: Provide a positive presence in the night-time economy.

Outcomes: The Tunbridge Wells Churches Together Street Pastors provide a late-night presence in the NTE in support of CSP priorities focused on providing a safe environment for residents and visitors enjoying town centre restaurants, pubs and clubs. They are also a useful link to emergency services and carry a Safe Town Partnership radio to maintain contact with CCTV Operators and premises door staff.

Q1: Engaged with 37 women and 76 men. 125 volunteer hours

Q2: Engaged with 38 women and 56 men. 123 volunteer hours

Q3: Engaged with 74 women and 106 men. 149.5 volunteer hours

Pastors committed to almost 400 volunteer hours in the first three quarters of 2023 engaging with 230+ men and 149 women. There were no calls for medical assistance during this period

but they did engage with CCTV operators on six occasions while safeguarding individuals assessed as vulnerable.

Police were contacted on at least two occasions for support and Pastors remained in close contact with CCTV operators and door staff via the Safe Town Partnership's Radio Scheme.

In addition, two Street Pastors were out along St John's Road in September as a taster for 'afterschool patrols.' The Safe Town Partnership provide free radios so they may stay in touch with the CCTV Control Room for reassurance and advice should an incident occur (there are no CCTV cameras along St John's Road). Safe Town Partnership have also provided radios to key schools in the area so that heads or deputies can contact each other or the Pastors when they are on duty.

They started near the clock area in town, heading along St John's Road at 2.45pm and were out until about 4.30pm.

There were only two schools at kick out time (3.20) as Skinners, St Greg's and Bennett all had open evenings so had finished early.

Pastors spoke to a teacher from Skinners Grammar who was happy to see them there. They also briefly spoke with the Bursar from TWGGS, where the Senior Leadership Team take it in turns to come up to the main road to see what is happening and help when needed.

The Pastors found the patrol useful and were encouraged by the feedback. They are now looking to secure volunteers with the intention of making these patrols a more regular feature of their work in the town.

Measure	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
People					
Volunteer Hours	125	123	149.5		397.5
Engaged with					
Men	76	56	106		238
Women	37	38	74		149
Gave Out					
Flip Flops	1	0	4		5
Bottles of Water	2	7	9		18
Foil Blankets	0	0	1		1
Lollies	126	206	93		425
Disposed of					
Bottles	71	29	56		156
Glasses	41	28	73		142
Cans	76	14	15		105
Broken Glass	4	1	11		16
Service Opportunities					0
Asked for prayer	3	2	1		6
Prayed for	3	6			9
Faith based conversations	9	12	17		38
Contact with others					0
Calls to Ambulance	0	0	0		0

Calls to Police	0	0	2		2
Contacts with CCTV	4	1	4		9

Local Policing Teams continue to target local drug dealers and cultivators. County lines suppliers who would more often like to bring Class A drugs, weapons and misery into the borough have for many years faced strong resistance because of the persistent focus given to this issue by Tunbridge Wells policing teams.

Some successes of note

May 2023

Weapons and drugs seized in Tunbridge Wells

Police seized imitation guns, knives and drugs following a warrant served on a Holmewood Road property being used in the production of cannabis – 36 plants were seized and destroyed.

Two men pleaded guilty at Maidstone Crown Court and received prison sentences.

December 2023

Drug dealer's parking roused suspicion of Tunbridge Wells officers

A drug dealer has been jailed after officers patrolling the streets around Tunbridge Wells spotted his car parked in an unusual position.

In July 2023, constables in plain clothes were in Rusthall, when their attention was drawn to a man sitting alone in a Nissan.

The vehicle was stopped in a remote area. Officers approached on foot. Suspensions were further raised when the nervous driver told them he was waiting for his girlfriend but couldn't recall where she lived.

The driver was detained for a search and officers seized 23 wraps of cocaine, a mobile phone and a small amount of cash.

The man was arrested and taken into custody. The drugs were found to have an estimated street value of around £2,000.

The defendant, of no fixed address, was later charged with possession of class A drugs with intent to supply. He pleaded guilty at Maidstone Crown Court and in December received a 20-month prison sentence.

January 2024

Nine arrests after three kilograms of cocaine seized near Aylesford

Nine people were arrested in connection with the seizure of more than three kilograms of cocaine near Aylesford. Officers also recovered at least £80,000 in cash, as well as weapons including a firearm, knuckle duster and Taser device.

The arrests were made during a co-ordinated operation in Burham, and included searches of a Vauxhall Astra, a Jaguar and eight properties.

An investigation is being led by the Kent and Essex Serious Crime Directorate and three of the suspects have now been charged.

Two men, both aged 25 and with a Tunbridge Wells address were charged with conspiracy to supply Class A drugs. They were detained pending a February court hearing.

We Are With You, a charity providing free and confidential support to young people experiencing issues with drugs, alcohol or mental health issues continues to deliver specialist treatment to Tunbridge Wells residents.

They report that South and West Kent are the busiest areas in general and the waiting list for support in West Kent is around 6 weeks. They are in the process of recruiting so expect the waiting time to reduce from March.

Figures for Kent show their service had 116 young people in structured treatment at the end of Q3, with a further attendances 400+ at group sessions.

Brief Interventions, of typically 1-4 appointments (rather than 6-12), offer harm reduction information for clients with lower levels of need. They average around 20 referrals a quarter

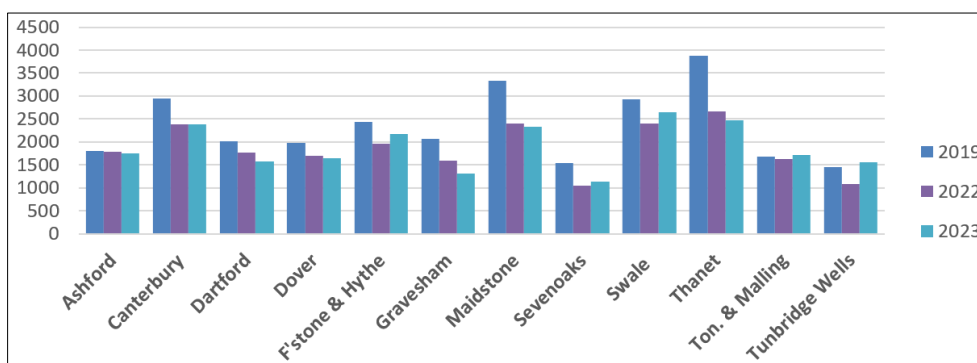
Anti-social Behaviour

Current figures refer to the 12-month period from January 2023 – December 2023

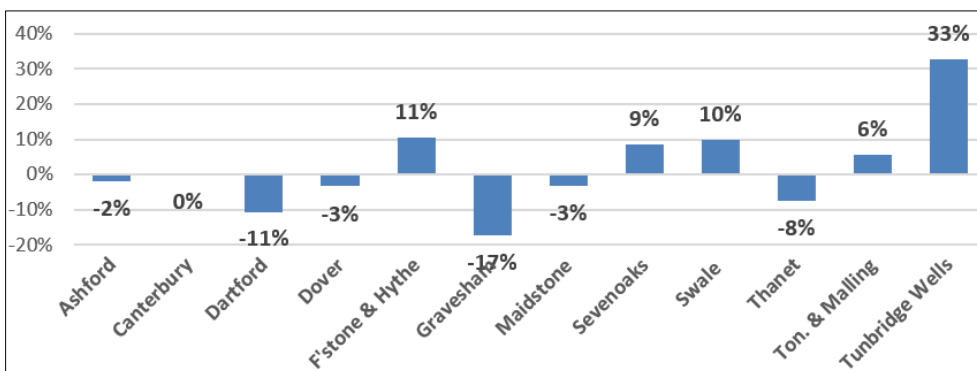
Reporting levels: 1,447 (previous period 1,090)

Peer comparison: Third out of 12 Kent areas (third, last year)

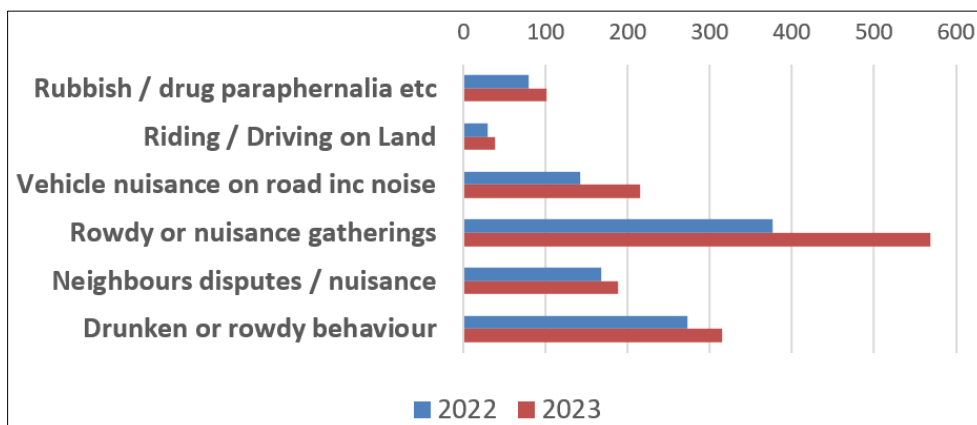
Annual change: Increase of 309 reports (33%)



All ASB graded incidents 2019, 2022-2023



Percentage change 2022 to 2023 calendar year

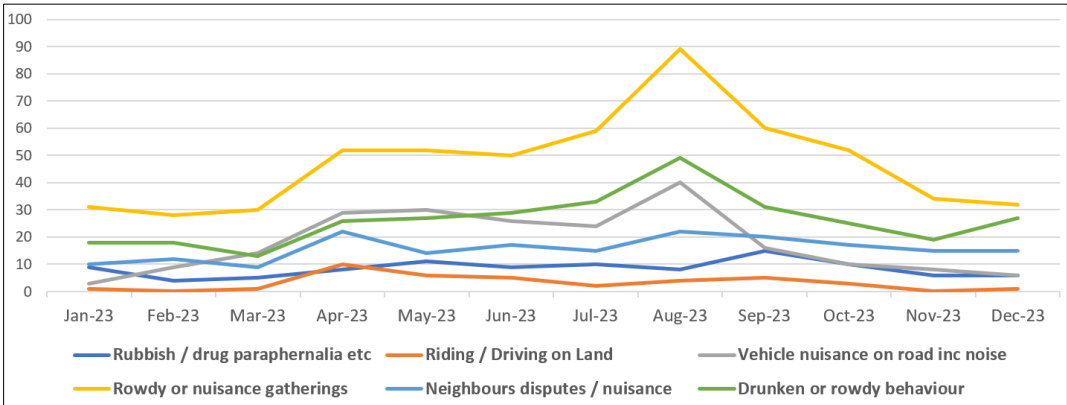


Key ASB Types, 2022 and 2023

Tunbridge Wells endured as 33% increase in reports of anti-social behaviour in 2023, bringing us back to pre-covid levels. While not alone we experienced by far the biggest increase across Kent.

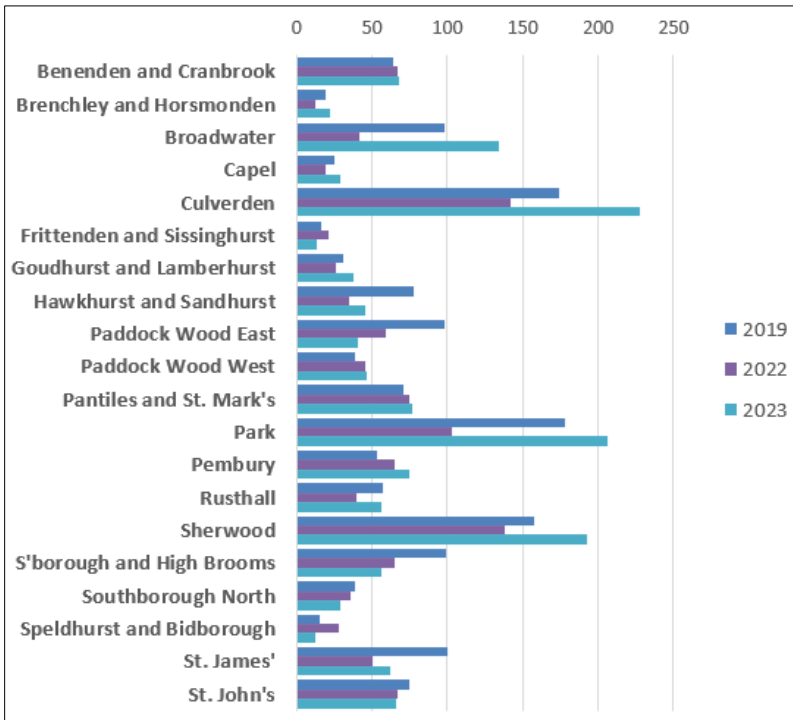
Anti-social behaviour includes a broad range of behaviours from noisy neighbours and nuisance vehicles to rowdy gatherings and drunken behaviour.

The following chart expands on the above to show the time of year when the biggest increases occurred.

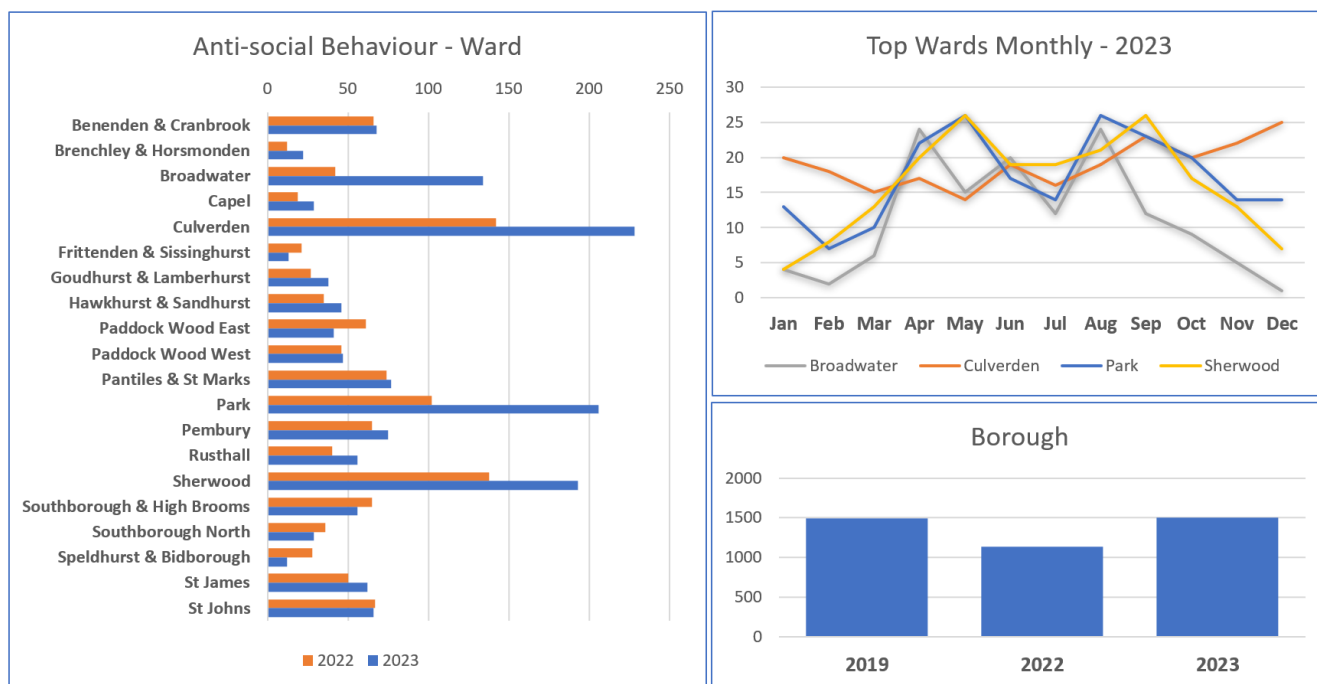


Ward reports

This is how the overall ASB category is broken down by ward, with two comparison years:



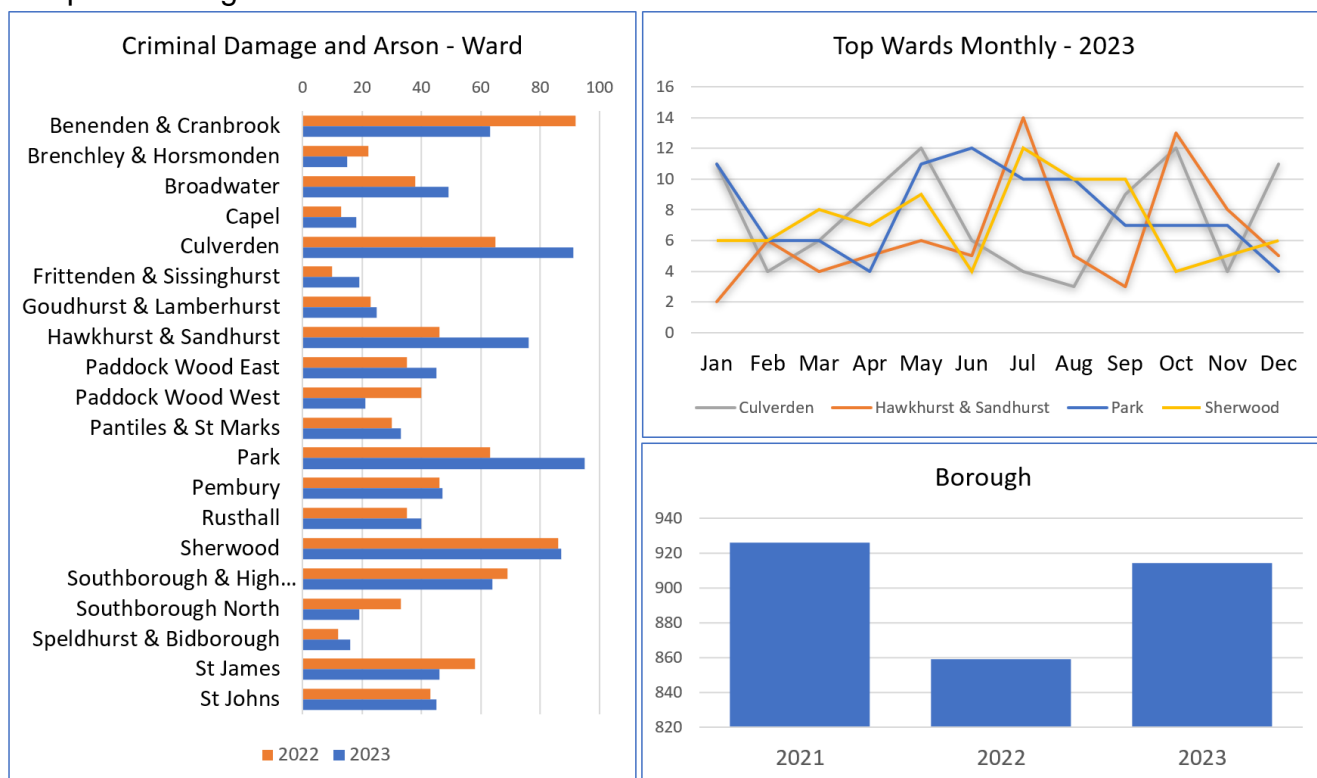
Ward comparison - calendar year breakdown, 2019, 2022-2023



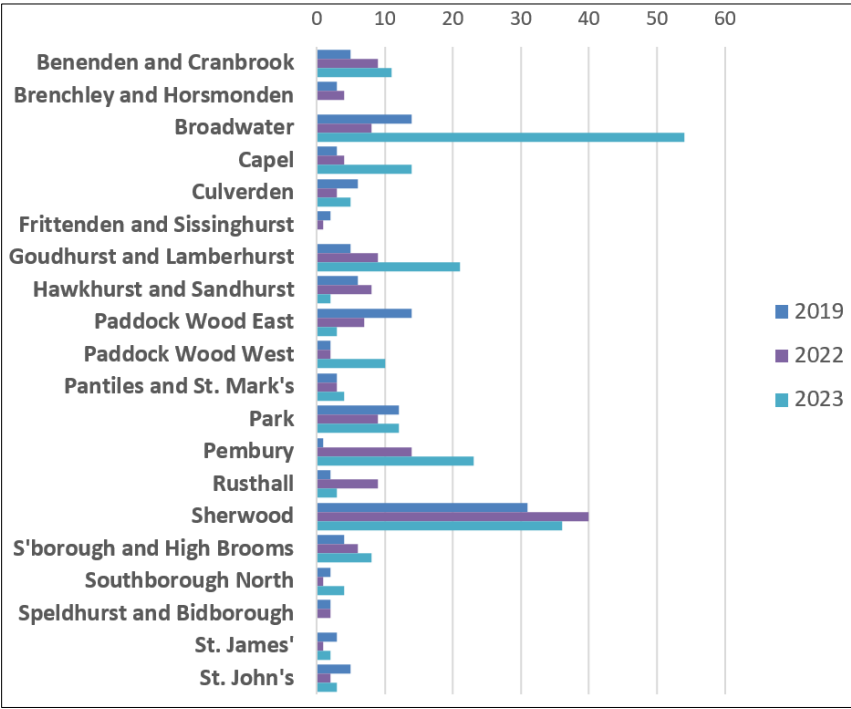
The calendar year 2019 is included on this chart for a longer-term context along with a comparison of 2022-2023.

Culverden and Park show an expected spike. Add to this the substantial rises in Broadwater and Sherwood and it's clear where the 33% increase originates.

Criminal Damage, often but not always associated with anti-social behaviour, also saw a steep rise in some areas, Including Hawkhurst and Sandhurst with young people and catapults driving some of that increase.

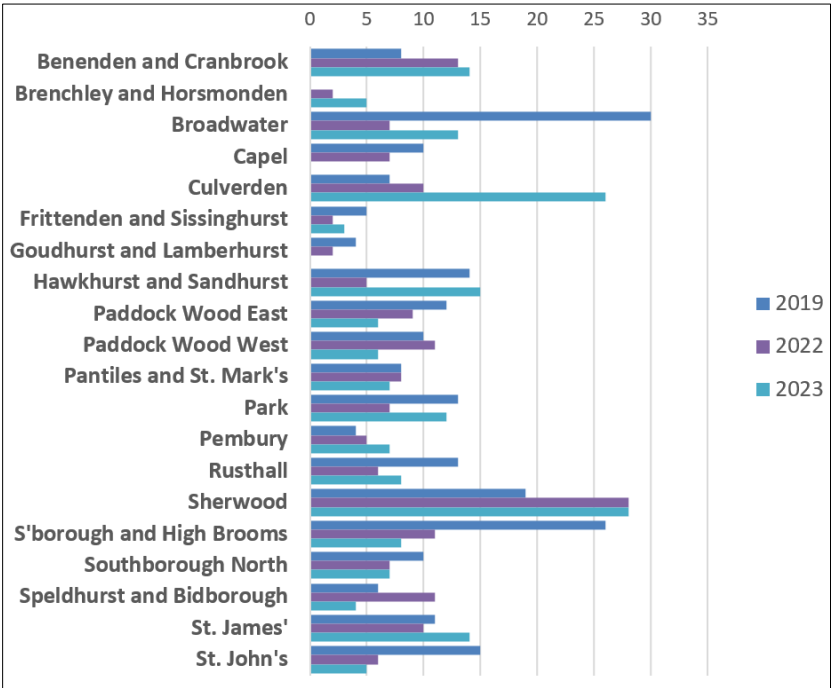


Motor vehicle nuisance increased in some areas of the borough with some of that rise coming from late night cruising events on the A21 and more locally, nuisance motorcycles in Showfields and Ramslye, ‘trotters’ on the Whetsted Road, and disturbances from the station car park at Paddock Wood.



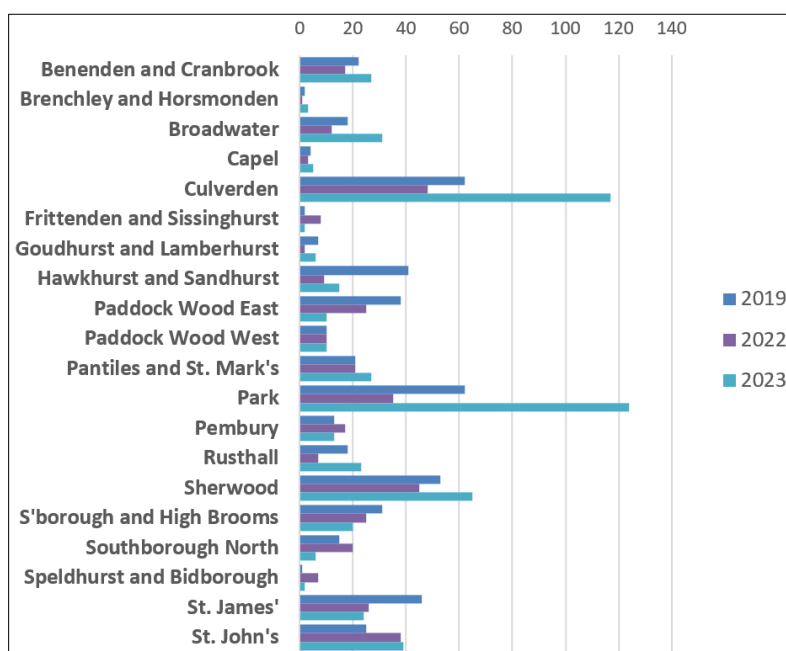
Motor vehicle nuisance on road, including noise

Neighbour disputes or nuisance also increased in some areas compared to 2022



Neighbour Disputes

Rowdy or nuisance gatherings saw the biggest increases across wards that converge on the Tunbridge Wells town centre.



Rowdy or Nuisance Gatherings

The increase in anti-social behaviour in the 'town centre wards' is clearly rowdy or nuisance gatherings as experienced by numerous businesses, residents and visitors to our town.

The range of behaviour varies widely. Here's a flavour:

Sainsbury's Mount Pleasant reports large group of youths running in and out of store, unsure if stealing goods from confectionary display.

The Range reports youths in store throwing items at other customers and refusing to leave.

Railway Station reports youth causing issues in ticket lobby is a missing person. CCTV inform police and guide them to him. He is detained then taken home.

The Range reports youths throwing eggs from top level of Torrington car park.

CCTV monitoring group of known youths at 5-Ways. One youth is using a cannabis grinder. CCTV request police on Safe Town Partnership's Shop Safe radio. Officers attend and items seized.

Poundland reports youths stealing vape products.

GDK Grosvenor Road reports youths in their venue dancing on tables and being very rude to people.

Security at The Great Hall Car Park reports youths drinking and smoking cannabis and refusing to move on. Police attend after seeing images on camera link, one young male smoking cannabis known to police. Youth to be interviewed.

Youths riding bikes into oncoming traffic, doing 'Wheelies'.

Waterstones reports a youth in rear delivery bay with toy gun scaring staff.

There are many instances of shoplifting for petty items as well as vapes, energy drinks and, seemingly to a lesser degree, alcohol.

The age range has been younger than we might typically have expected for public anti-social behaviour of this type.

Criminal damage to public property was particularly widespread and of significant value. A baby changing room, toilets, pavilions, a bowling green, town centre car park infrastructure, all seriously damaged, a cost and inconvenience to the public.

And there were more serious offences. A smaller cadre of young males persistent in their anti-social behaviour, and widely causing criminal damage, had amongst them a few who were capable of violence, and demonstrated it randomly on innocent people; low occurrence, but nonetheless unacceptable.

A significant number of less serious issues also contributed to the apprehension that many businesses felt as young people started to gather after school. But within these groups there were noisy melees that left other town centre users alarmed and distressed.

And it wasn't just the town centre that saw an increase in anti-social behaviour during 2023, Broadwater and Sherwood wards also experienced more anti-social behaviour than the previous period. The former CSU Inspector extracted the following comparison data in anticipation of further local attention this year:

Broadwater

122 ASB calls (2022 totals in brackets)

Parking/nuisance:	3 (0)
Vehicle nuisance:	54 (8)
Driving/riding on land:	16 (0)
Rowdy/nuisance gatherings:	31 (12)
Neighbour nuisance/noise:	13 (7)

A total of 73 calls relating to vehicle nuisance, mainly on Showfields Road, Hunters Way, and Summervale Road. The main areas for nuisance gatherings were Showfields Road and Rowan Tree Road.

Sherwood

168 ASB calls (2022 totals in brackets)

Parking/nuisance:	2 (0)
Vehicle nuisance:	36 (39)
Driving/riding on land:	10 (7)
Rowdy/nuisance gathering:	66 (45)
Neighbour nuisance/noise:	28 (28)

A total of 48 calls related to vehicle nuisance on the A21, Longfield Road, and in the area around Oak Road. Nuisance gatherings being principally around Sherwood Lake and Brook Road, and nuisance neighbour reports from Greggs Wood Road.

Paddock Wood endured some persistent anti-social behaviour from a smaller number of young people, some of whom lived outside of the borough but had strong local links. Damage was caused to public property during the early summer and local businesses experienced harassment, and verbal and physical abuse while trying to address the disorder directly. On occasion, eggs, flour and other produce was thrown around shops while customers were present.

Cranbrook, Hawkhurst and Sandhurst also experienced periods of disorder with dangerous catapulting incidents and harassment of residents.

Agencies were engaged in responding to the above by deploying resources to many of the affected areas, as well as meeting regularly throughout the year at the District Contextual Safeguarding Meeting (DCSM).

Early Help offered weekly youth engagement in Market Square, and this was followed up later in the year by parking a 'youth van' at the back of the Millenium Clock area (after whitelisting the van with Parking), again weekly.

Early Help also deployed youth workers and services to both St John's Park and Calverley Grounds weekly, where boxing, skateboarding and football sessions were running.

Early Help also deployed to the Ridgeway in Southborough while boxing sessions were running weekly in Showfields.

Kenward Trust were directed to key locations, as highlighted elsewhere in this report, as much for their presence as their skills in engaging young people on the subject of substance abuse and how the choices they make now may affect their future.

British Transport Police and Kent Police (Tonbridge and Malling and Tunbridge Wells) ran a combined op to tackle young people travelling between both towns.

Other 'ops' were run through the summer and autumn, with funding provided by the Safe Town Partnership (STP), the Business Improvement District (BID) and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council. These 'hi-vis' patrols, using SIA accredited local officers with good knowledge and a sound approach, were welcomed by businesses and other town centre workers.

One such operation, 'Op Hamelin', which ran during August and was funded by STP and BID, is described below:

Op Hamelin - week 1

Monday, we [STP Business Crime Manager and JS Secure] introduced ourselves to a fairly large group who were causing some issues near the Great Hall. Some were known to us. We engaged and advised them about their behaviour and the effect it has on businesses and members of the public.

Advised them that loitering in the car park was prohibited by a Public Spaces Protection Order which carries with a fixed penalty of £100. The young people left the area.

We came across the same group several times again during the day before finally dealing with them after an incident in the Amelia Scott building. Hamelin officers left them under no illusion about the consequences that will come their way such as Warning Letters and Exclusion Notices if their unacceptable behaviour continued.

The rest of the week was very peaceful. There were still plenty of youths around but they were more engaging and, on the whole, better behaved. We spoke to them about climbing on the roof of shops in Newton Road where significant amounts of graffiti is regularly found. A young male who fell and broke his wrist while climbing in places where he should not have been, was present and seemed to express how lucky he was not to be more seriously injured. They also told us who had set a fire above one shop.

Saturday was by far the busiest. Two groups (approx. 20 children) were having issues with each other after two males had had an argument and one had threatened to retaliate with his mates. Hamelin officers spoke to them both parties, with one young male responding that he wouldn't let the issue go because that's not what their family does. An officer sat with him and had a non-threatening/supportive chat, seemingly getting him to see reason.

Others in the groups were very boisterous, play fighting, swearing and shouting at each other. They were advised that using such strong language as they were, was both offensive and an offence. The strong language stopped enabling further conversations about the effects of their behaviour on shoppers, to be had. Clearly many young people do not understand how intimidating their behaviour can be. They all calmed down and after about 30-40 mins, went their separate ways.

END

Should we wish to continue to deploy this form of visible responsible adult presence in and around the town centre JS Secure, who are familiar with many of the faces, the hotspot areas and the agencies that work together, will consider attaining Community Safety accreditation as an extra layer of assurance that the approach we are taking is an appropriate response to the issues we are facing.

A focussed deterrent

Partner focus moved between several fluid groups of a dozen key individuals, rising to 20 or so 'names' who may or may not be active. By active, we mean, causing a nuisance, and this might be for one day or one week, or six times in six locations on one day and disappearing for a month and then returning and repeating the same.

Some young people were subject to regular home visits having received (in some cases) youth cautions. Other work was undertaken with them by Early Help, the Youth Offending Team and others.

The monthly DCSM is attended by officers from KCC (Youth offending, Hubs/support, social care, education), Kent Police, TWBC, Violence Reduction Unit and other support agencies. The meeting looks at hotspot areas in the borough, the risks to the young people in those areas and the individuals themselves.

The DCSM looks to effect long term change for a young person, through immediate positive actions, be that support or sanction. It's a meeting that could overrun no matter how long you book. Many of the young people causing issues for the wider community, the ones we seek to sanction (if appropriate) and support have a lot else going on in their lives.

These complexities are the reason why there are often no easy answers for a small, but not insignificant, number of our young residents and their families. Chaotic homelives can make it a challenge to motivate a young person to change. Family circumstances often make parenting orders problematic, and likely ineffective, as a tool.

However, eight young people, 13 and 14 years of age, signed Acceptable Behaviour Agreements offered by the Child Centred Policing Team. These Agreements were drafted to address repeat anti-social behaviour with conditions not to behave anti-socially, not to commit damage and thefts, not to purchase or ask others to purchase vapes, and not to associate with others who are causing anti-social behaviour.

Partners liaised with the schools in and around the St John's area to mitigate lunchtime and after-school issues. The Head from the nearby Pupil Referral Unit was also fully engaged in measures to address anti-social behaviour from attending pupils.

Some of the known, repeat or suspected offenders may not have been in any regular school environment but such may not always fall foul of truancy laws due to their status set by their assigned school.

Safe Town Partnership provided radios to various new businesses in town and continue to look for opportunities to ban over-14s from members premises for anti-social behaviour.

Safe Town also engaged with their own members, and others through BID, and with Kent Police to ensure as many businesses as possible received advice on dealing with nuisance youths in their premises.

Safe Town Radios were also provided, free of charge, to the schools around St John's so they may keep in touch with each and inform wider partners of issues they may be aware of that may extend beyond the school day.

Other frontline resources

Additional officers, including Specials, were directed to areas where youth-related issues were occurring, such as St John's Park and the town centre, in part as a function of Kent Police's Op Grip.

Op Grip funding secured additional police attendance in areas where violence has occurred. Aside from violence related to the night-time economy, Op Grip areas were in great part, coterminous with anti-social behaviour hotspots so received extra attention on many Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays from late afternoons; through the summer. 28% of the district's ASB in 2023 was in the Grip hotspot area (the highest concentration of any Grip area in the force).

Grip was first implemented for serious violence, but for 2023 anti-social behaviour is being included.

Ops also ran during Local & Live, which had experienced issues in 2022, on GCSE results day, on or around Halloween and Bonfire Night, half terms.

The most recent Hamelin-type operation ran once or twice a week from mid-October to mid-February and included visits to areas covered by Public Spaces Protection Orders. Locations and times of patrols were very dynamic due to the nature of the issues we've been experiencing as well as data from CCTV operators who log town centre anti-social behaviour.

As shown by the monthly chart above, the nuisance peaked in the summer but it took some time to tail off despite the additional close attention of support agencies and as many frontline patrols as were available and could be deployed.

This type of anti-social behaviour is by no means gone. There were issues later in the year, at the Ice Rink, for instance, and on one evening in January 2024 a pavilion window was catapulted and, not for the first time, a baby changing room destroyed, literally.

Community Protection Notices

The Council's Community Safety Officer, who joined us in 2023, has served 21 Community Protection Warnings (CPW), five Community Protection Notices (CPN) and two Fixed Penalty Notices on individuals causing nuisance or annoyance. Most have been served as part of a solution to address neighbour nuisance, others have been served on individuals causing a nuisance in public, such as at Sherwood Lake.

CPWs/CPNs are available for people aged 16 and over, FPNs at TWBC currently can be served on people aged 18 and over. The two-year gap in CPN and FPN is an issue the Community Safety Team is appraising in light of recent youth anti-social behaviour in anticipation of further conversations with Heads of Service and Portfolio Holders. It is worth noting that most of the young people known to have been causing issues in Tunbridge Wells town centre over the past year or so were under-16.

Community Protection Notices formed part of the response to nuisance in Showfields during 2023. A mobile camera was also installed to gather evidence of motorcycle nuisance and other anti-social behaviour near the community hall, nursery, café and library. This installation was quickly sabotaged and required a further visit by technicians to restore power from the column to the camera. The installation was funded by Town and Country Housing, the repairs by TWBC.

In January 2024 a motorcycle used anti-socially in and around the town centre and elsewhere, was seized by police.

Police, Town and Country Housing and the Council's Community Safety Officer worked diligently to resolve the issues in Showfields and we have since been able to return the mobile camera to St John's Park.

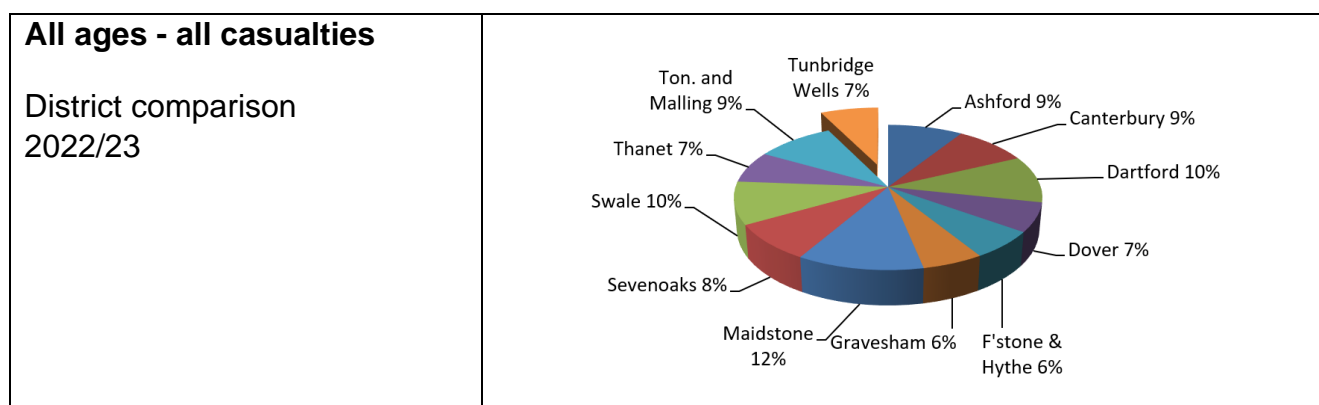
Road Safety

Current figures refer to the 12-month period from July 2022 – June 2023 unless stated.

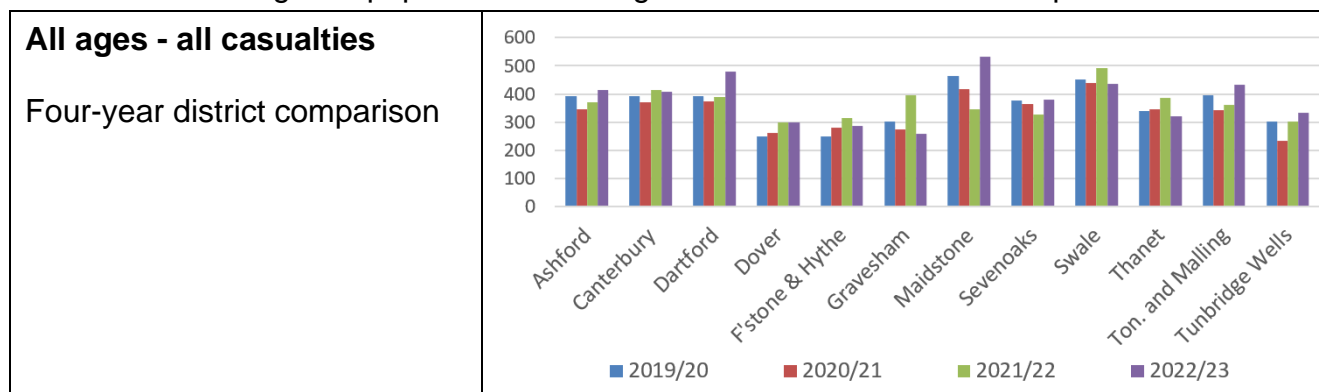
Level of Concern: 333 Casualties (previous period 303)

Peer Comparison: Fifth in Kent (previously second)

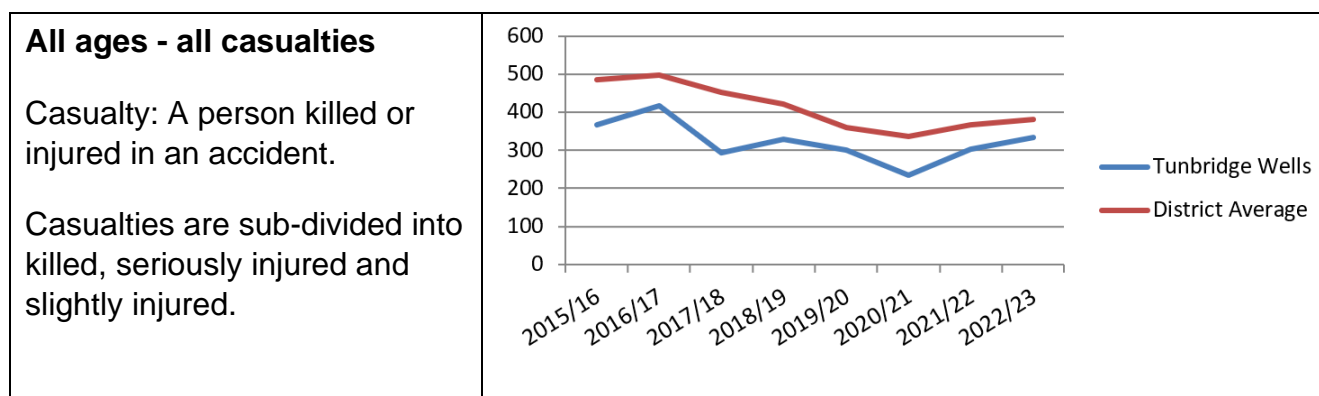
Annual Change: 30 more casualties (increase of 10%)



When calculated against population Tunbridge Wells saw 2.88 casualties per 1000 residents,



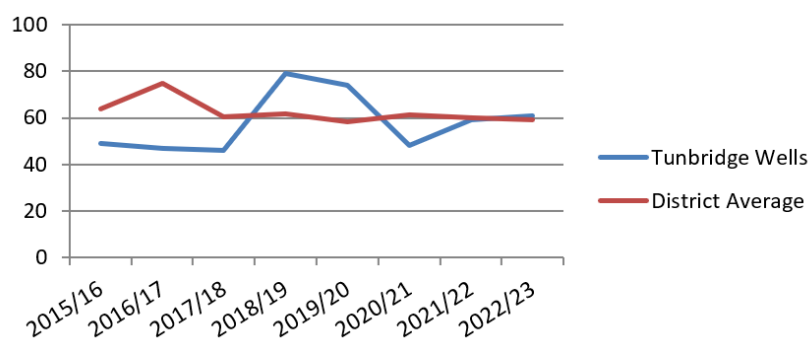
putting us close to the Kent average of 2.91.



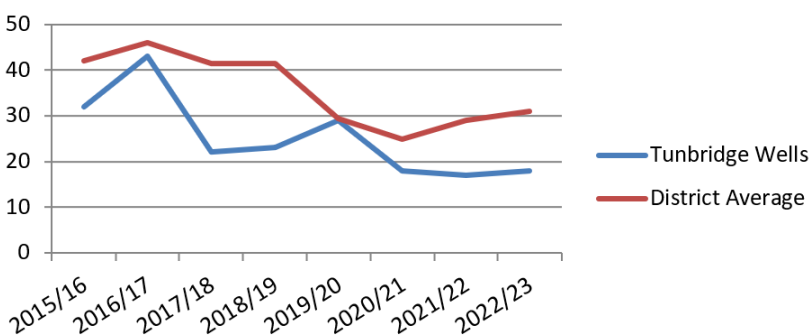
All ages - killed or seriously injured (KSI)

Examples of serious injury are:

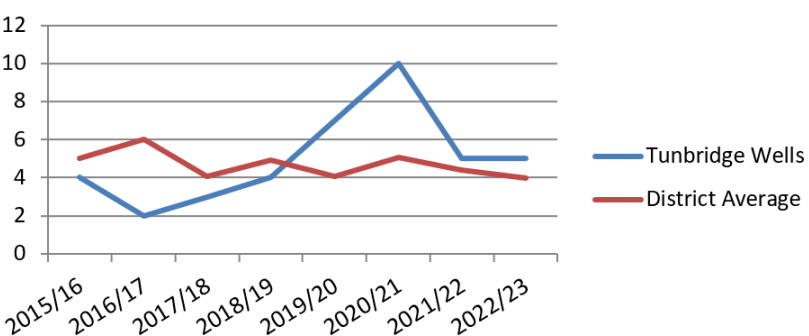
Fracture, internal injury, severe cuts, crushing, burns, concussion, severe shock requiring hospital treatment.



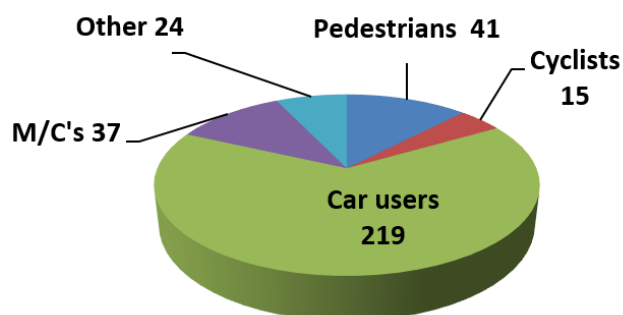
Children under 16 years of age - all casualties

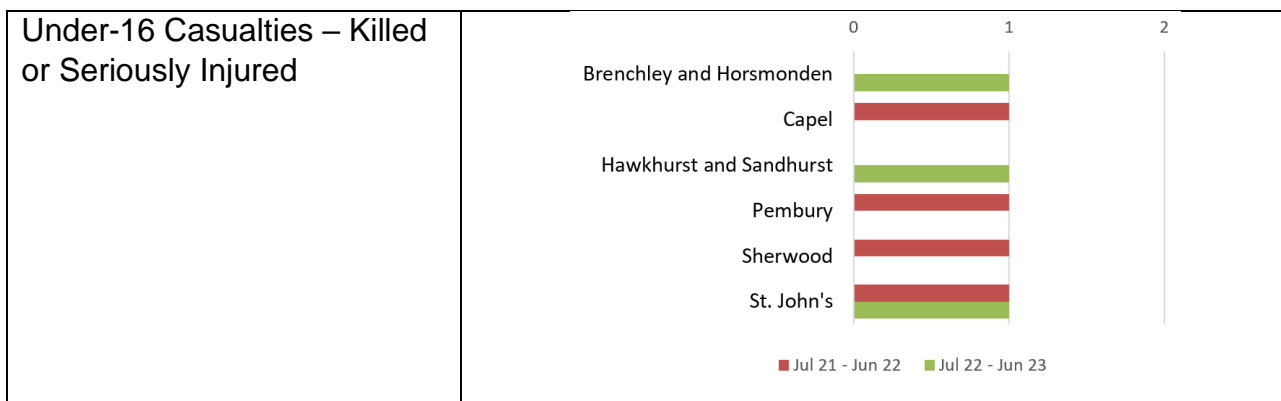
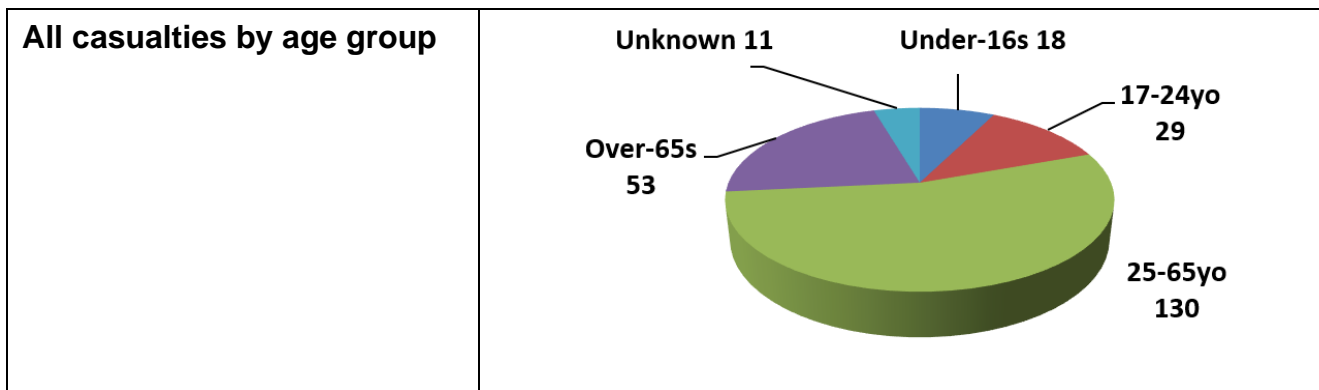


Children under 16 years of age - killed or seriously injured



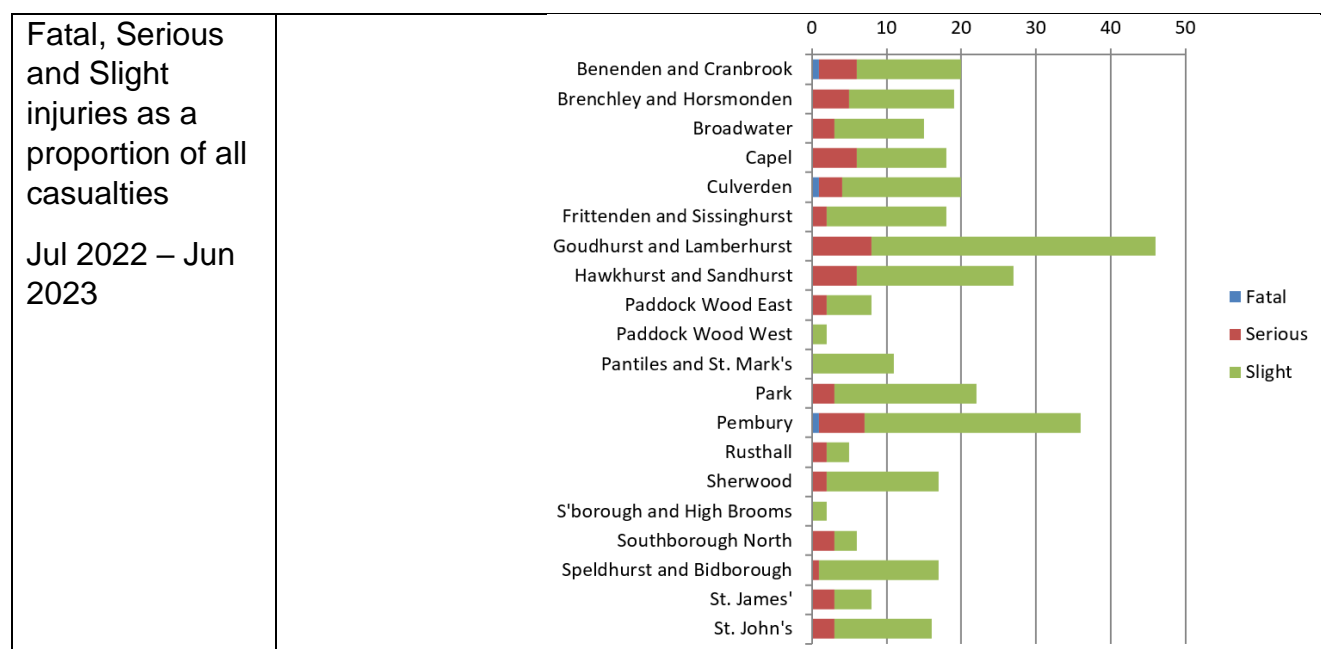
All casualties by road user



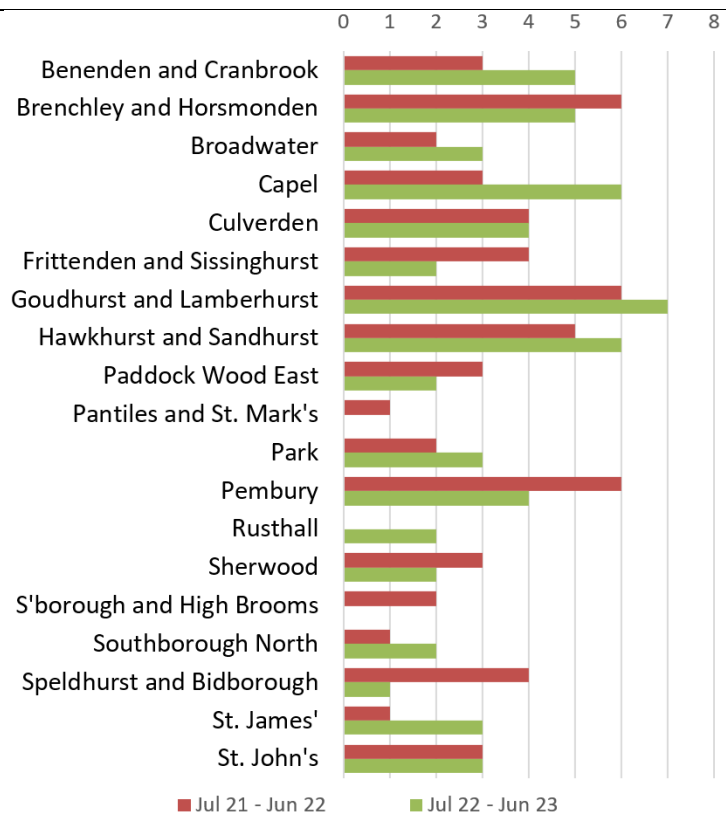


Ward reports

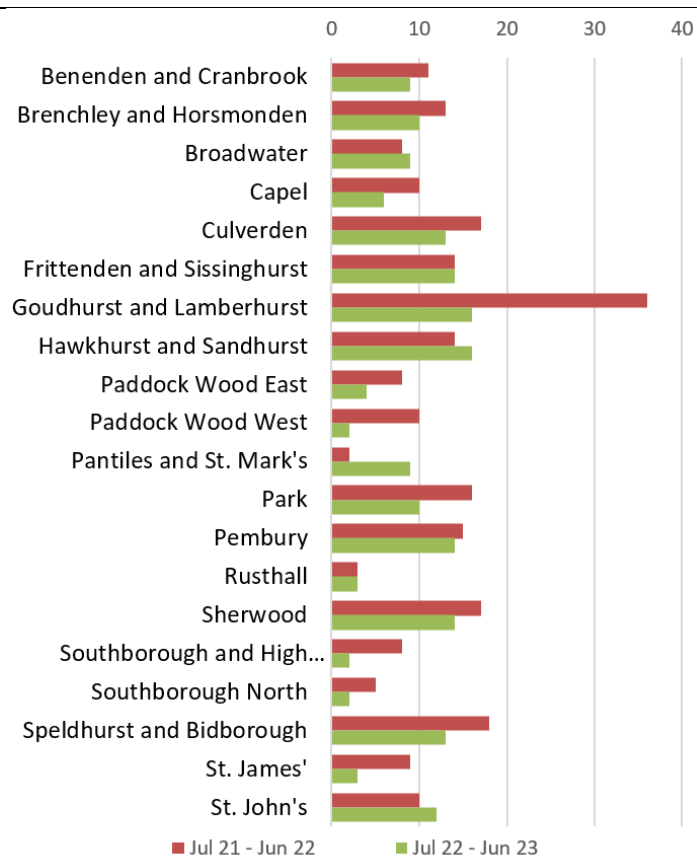
The charts below show the proportion of Fatal, Killed or Seriously Injured, and Slight Injuries across the borough in 2022-23.

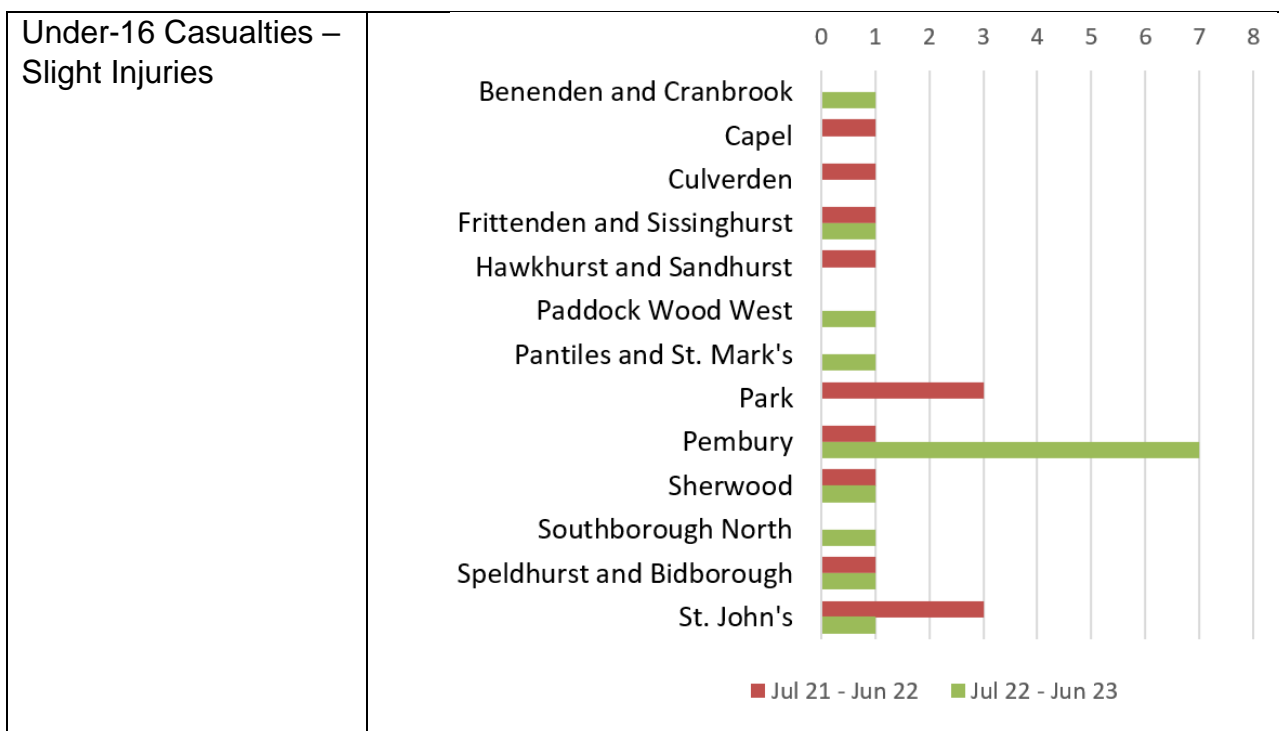


All Age Groups – Killed or Seriously Injured



All Age Groups – Slight Injuries





The seven child casualties in Pembury were injured in four collisions. One collision resulted in three casualties, and another in two casualties.

The collision that resulted in three injuries happened on the A21 when a vehicle stopped instead of merging at a junction (going London bound) and was hit from behind. The three casualties were in the front vehicle.

The collision that resulted in two casualties was on Tonbridge Road, where a vehicle, having just exited the A21, veered onto the wrong carriageway and collided with a second vehicle. Both casualties were in the first vehicle.

All but one of the injured were in the rear seat.

Funded and other outcomes

Provider: Safety in Action (Project Salus)

Funding: £1,500 (PCC)

Service: Safety in Action has been running in Kent since the early 1990's, with several thousand children from Maidstone, Dover, Folkestone and Hythe, Tonbridge and Malling and Tunbridge Wells, Tunbridge Wells and more taking part. It is supported by many organisations including Tunbridge Wells Borough Council through Police and Crime Commissioner funding.

Safety in Action is a series of educational and fun interactive events that provides an opportunity for Year 6 children to learn about some of the dangers they may face as they prepare for transition to secondary school. Issues addressed include road safety, drugs and alcohol, emergency first aid, internet safety, gangs and exploitation, peer pressure, healthy relationships, personal safety and school attendance.

Salus report an increase in students from West Kent school in 2023, including 16 Schools (546 pupils) from Tunbridge Wells.

North Farm Vehicle Nuisance

In December Police Officers and the Council's Community Safety Officer met with a landowner who had raised concerns about car meets in his public car park. Discussions were had around serving Community Protection Warnings on event organisers and/or Section 59 notices on attendees and their vehicles for 'nuisance', if indeed nuisance can be evidenced. Also discussed, potential multi-agency (Police and various Council departments) operations if nuisance persists.

Officers also raised opportunities for the landowner, such as ANPR camera timings being changed from a three hour wait time to a one hour wait time between 20:00-06:00 (as an example). Other options available to the landowner include civil enforcement, security (as previously used to reasonable effect at Knights Park) and liaising with businesses on other solutions to negate longer term and wider community impact. And of course, signage prohibiting car meets.

The above meeting, which was very positive and shows the benefits of partnership working and landowner engagement, will be followed up in the Spring.

Police do run operations in the area and have done so this year when, either when resources have been available and calls have come, or when open-source research has shown a meet is planned, such as in Crescent Road car park on two occasions last year. On those occasions police implemented dispersal orders, but few if any vehicles turned up.

Police have also met with an organiser and given stern advice regarding nuisance behaviour. It was mutually respectful and the advice was well-received.

The Council's Community Safety Team is gathering evidence for a potential Public Spaces Protection Order to address car meets in the borough, and abuse of the A21.

Speedwatch

Over 6,000 vehicles were validated and speed-checked by Speedwatch groups during 31 sessions across 50 locations in 2023. This resulted in over 1,000 letters being sent to registered owners. 32 letters were hand delivered, and six drivers faced enforcement.

There was a reduction in some groups across the borough; age being a key factor. This is repeated across the county.

Results show overall reductions in speed other than 40mph limits, again this is countywide.

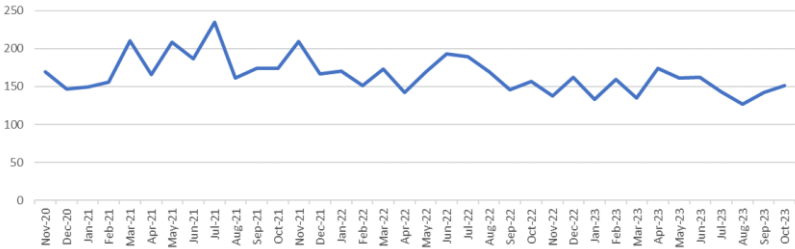
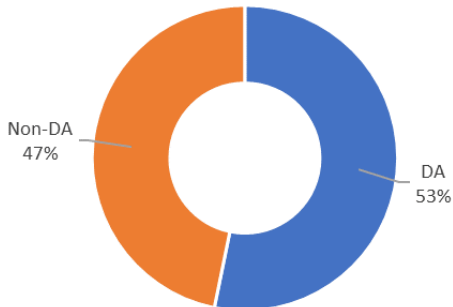
Near Miss Reporting Tool

The top issues are:

Issue	Count
Dangerous driving / speeding	89
Undue care – driver	56
Obstruction by parking	54
Driving on pavement	20
Danger at junction	14
Wrong way on a one-way street	13

Clearly, this level of categorisation is non-scientific and will require some further work to better understand the issues involved. After all, driving on the pavement or the wrong way on a one-way street is also ‘undue care’, and a dangerous junction may be dangerous because of the way it is approached by a driver.

Violent Behaviour, including Violence Against Women and Girls

Level of incidents (VAWG)	1787 total incidents (2035 last year)
Peer Comparison	2nd of 12 districts (15.5 per 1000 population)
Annual change	-12.2%, -248 offences
3-year trend Nov 2022 to Oct 2023	
Breakdown of type (proportion) Nov 2022 to Oct 2023	

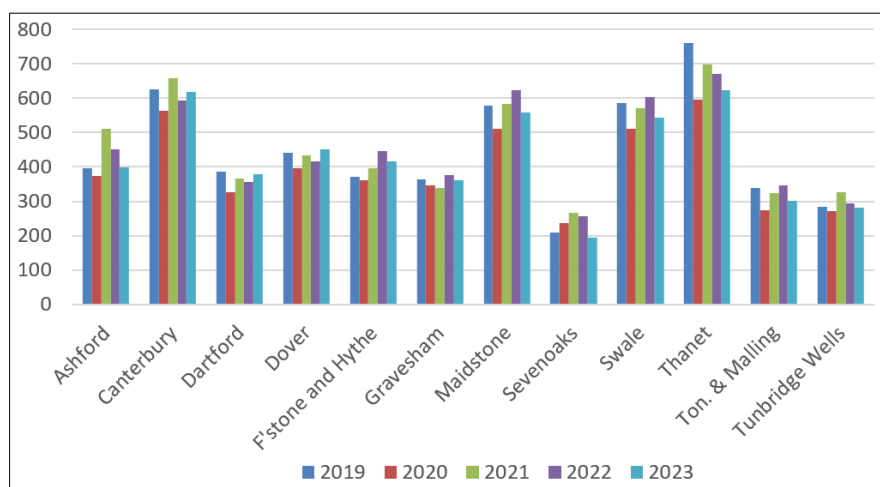
Direction and annual comparison:

	This Year	Last Year	% Change	No. change	21/22	22/23
Total VAWG	1787	2035	-12.2%	-248	2	2
DA-related	951	1036	-8.2%	-85	1	2
Non-DA related	836	999	-16.3%	-163	2	2

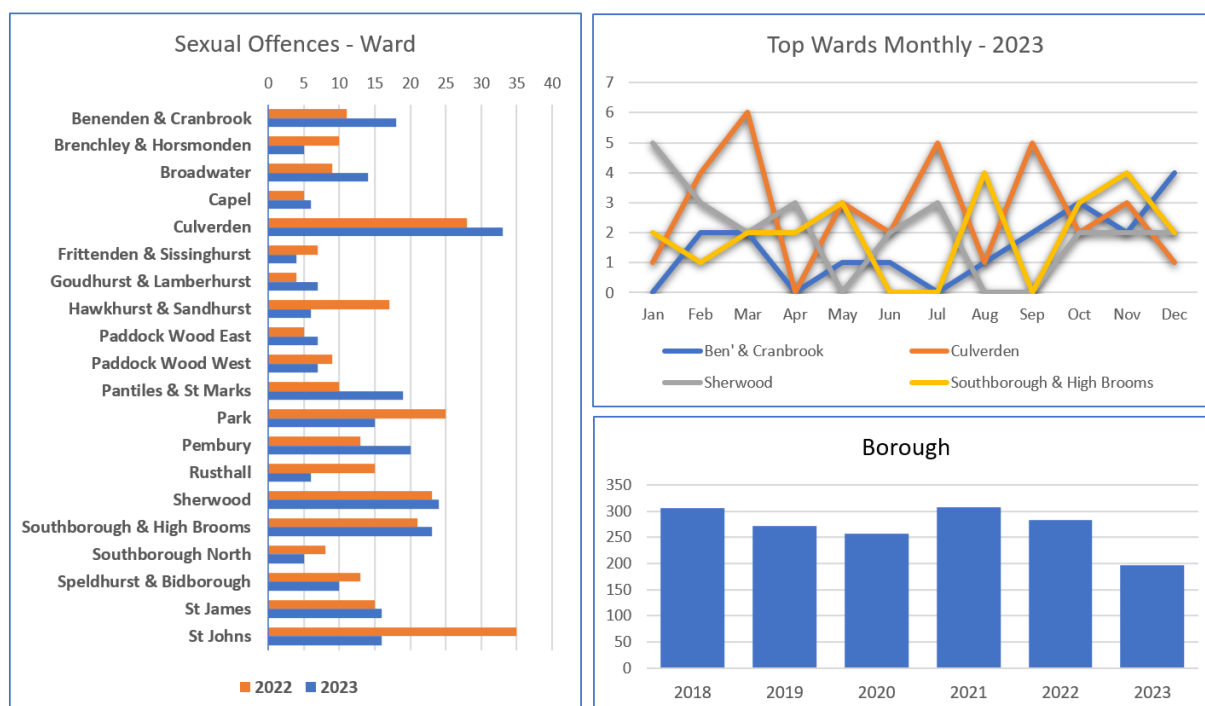
The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) provides the best available estimate of prevalence for a number of violence against women and girls crimes, namely: domestic abuse, stalking, rape, indecent exposure and unwanted touching. Data shows that the prevalence of these crimes has remained broadly the same since 2008/09.

The latest national statistics can be found at crimesurvey.co.uk

Sexual offences across a five-year period, Kent:



There were 11 fewer **Sexual Offences** in the borough in 2023 over 2022. Welcome reductions in some areas were offset by increases elsewhere but the overall picture has improved.



All stalking and harassment, Tunbridge Wells:

Recorded Crime	This Year	Last Year	% Change	No. Change
Coercion & Control	110	141	-22.0%	-31
Harassment	447	417	7.2%	30
Malicious Communications	263	359	-26.7%	-96
Stalking	204	191	6.8%	13

Outcomes

Violence Reduction Unit

Data and analysis on Serious violent Crime (SVC) within open spaces and venues which is provided monthly by the VRU. For the 12-months ending June 2023 Tunbridge Wells was well placed in terms of county comparison, including for 'most serious violence crime', along with our West Kent neighbours.

Location

'Road' is most prevalent location across all age groups where violence occurs, followed by 'dwelling'. The third ranked location is 'park' for U18s and 'licensed premises' for all other age groups.

Roads and venues are specified in the data product shared by the VRU, with Church Road, Mount Pleasant Road, Grosvenor Road and the High Street featuring strongly. Calverley Grounds is the only park mentioned in the latest report but, we are aware of other incidents that may have occurred outside of the report timeframe.

Temporal

The 'all' category for SVC in the U18 age category shows a peak on a Thursday afternoon and mid-evening on Friday and Saturday.

This intel is shared with partners and discussed at District Contextual Safeguarding Meetings to ensure our resources are directed to where it is most needed.

Safe Town Partnership

The Tunbridge Wells Safe Town Partnership (STP) excludes individuals from members' premises upon conviction of violence offences.

As of Q3 2022 three people were excluded from member premises for violence, down from three in Q1.

Regular promotion of Ask for Angela takes place with venues, and posters are distributed through Pubwatch meetings.

Performance of door staff at various venues and their communications with CCTV operators is regularly reviewed by the CCTV Manager, the Business Crime Manager and more broadly at morning briefings where such communications are often part of discussion in response to events brought to partner attention.

Best Bar None

The Council's Community Safety Team were trained in 2023 to undertake BBN evaluations. The Community Safety Manager assisted Police Licensing in re-assessing Pitcher and Piano for 2023, and the other six venues were also completed, all of them passing the strict criteria for Best Bar Not accreditation.

VAWG Engagement

In October and December public VAWG engagement events took place in Tunbridge Wells town centre and Commercial Road, Paddock Wood, respectively. Officers and workers from a wide range of agencies set up a gazebo as a hub and for two hours reached out to members of the public to capture their views on public safety while out and about in town or travelling to/from work or leisure venues; and in particular for women and girls.

During December and into early January TWBC ran two extensive surveys to capture the experiences of women and girls (men could take part too).

One survey was generated by the West Kent VAWG Forum, which is currently establishing an action plan for 2024/25, and ran across the three local authority areas (SDC, TMBC and TWBC).

The other was a local survey called 'safe travels' and focused on the journey between home and work, or school, or pubs and clubs etc.

The Council's Insight Officer led on the local survey while strongly supporting the West Kent effort; for which our West Kent neighbours are extremely thankful.

Overall, between the online surveys run by TWBC and the VAWG F2F events led by Kent Police we have gathered over 1,000 views on safety for women, girls and others using our open spaces. These results will drive the WK VAWG action plan as well as our own Partnership Plan for this year and beyond.

VAWG input at Schools

In January 2024 the Tunbridge Wells Child Centred Policing Team met with Safeguarding Leads from various secondary schools in Tunbridge Wells, Paddock Wood and Cranbrook to outline an idea of providing schools with a joint Police and Partnership VAWG & Sexual Offences Input. Schools responded very positively so this new provision will be pursued this year.

Part 2 Conclusions

It is disappointing to lose the *safest place in Kent* tagline, but as often stated in previous assessments the margins for some local authorities, especially in the west, are small.

Crime figures are, as always, presented with a number of caveats and data may undergo revision.

In addition to the priorities given below, the Community Safety Partnership will facilitate multi-agency (and cross-department) conversations around:

- Poor mental health in respect of the part it plays in many of the issues we seek to address, and the provision and availability of suitable support.
- Fly tipping in rural areas.
- Ward boundary changes and how it affects multi-year data comparisons.

Domestic Abuse

The effects of domestic abuse on individuals and on society are damaging and costly, and too often tragic. **We recommend Domestic Abuse is retained as a priority** for Tunbridge Wells, as it is elsewhere. We are committed to working across district boundaries to offer the best support for victims and survivors, and a strengthening focus on perpetrators.

Substance Misuse and Supply, and Alcohol-related Behaviour

While *We Are With You* and *Change. Grow. Live* work to support many clients who may never come to the attention of community safety partners, alcohol and substance misuse in public spaces continues to be linked to anti-social behaviour and increased risk for younger age groups. We have seen this in our parks and car parks, on the common and wherever we have displaced them, such as allotment sheds. This is reflected perhaps by the increase in reports of drug paraphernalia.

The multi-agency Serious Organised Crime Panel continues to track emerging groups, trends and novel enterprises, from both within and without the borough. The well attended monthly meeting, led by Kent Police enables lawful information sharing with a range of partners, who often take actions of their own as a consequence of attendance.

We recommend **Substance Misuse and Alcohol Abuse** is included in our priorities with action plans appropriate to both the **night-time economy** and **public spaces**.

Anti-social Behaviour

Aside from Tunbridge Wells town centre, other parts of the borough saw an increase in anti-social behaviour in 2023; some modest, but others exceeding 2019 levels.

We recommend **keeping Anti-social Behaviour as a priority**, and to provide additional focus on Tunbridge Wells town centre we recommend a separate **action plan for specific business-related issues**, to include youth anti-social behaviour, shoplifting and graffiti.

Road Safety

Road safety is important to residents across the borough, and with 350+ submissions to the near miss database now categorised we are in a position to dig further into any repeat issues and locations to assess for projects which may improve safety.

We recommend **Road Safety** is retained as a priority.

Violence, including Violence Against Women and Girls

While Tunbridge Wells has a low occurrence of Serious Violent Crime, we are not immune from violence, with a thriving night-time economy and busy public spaces. We recommend **Violence, Stalking and Harassment** and **Violence Against Women and Girls** are made priorities.

Recommended Priorities for 2024/25

1. Domestic Abuse
2. Anti-Social Behaviour
3. Substance Misuse and Alcohol Abuse, NTE
4. Road Safety
5. Violence, Stalking and Harassment*
6. Violence Against Women and Girls*
7. Business and Environmental | Town Centre Issues (Youth ASB, Shoplifting, Graffiti)

*single action plan