

A COVID-19 related update for the Partnership Plan

Since the Partnership Plan was written in January 2020 much has changed. This addendum is intended to provide an update on services during what is clearly a developing situation.

FUNDING 2020/21

Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC): £31,332

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council: £12,000

We have received confirmation from the PCC that the business case (the funding requests to support our priorities) submitted to his office on 6 April has been approved.

Our request for funding includes services that provide:

- Domestic abuse support for victims.
- Domestic abuse support for perpetrators who have accepted responsibility for their behaviour.
- Training and awareness of stalking for agencies and organisations, including retailers.
- Outreach support for young people with a focus on alcohol and substance misuse.
- Outreach/presence in the night-time economy (Street Pastors).
- Engagement with students transitioning from primary to secondary school.
- One-on-one support for young people causing significant issues in public and/or known to be 'ringleaders.'

Clearly, since lockdown conditions have been in place just prior to the beginning of the 2020/21 financial year some of these services have not been required or are unable to provide a service due to government guidelines.

I'll briefly expand on the above and offer a broader picture of ongoing CSU work.

DOMESTIC ABUSE

Calls to Kent Police:

2019								2020			
May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr
215	166	254	223	227	192	186	148	160	153	179	172

Signposting is always offered to victims of domestic abuse, either at the time of the call, by a police officer attending the scene or through Victim Support. However, not all calls result in a referral to DAVSS, the Kent Integrated Domestic Abuse Service (that's Look Ahead/Choices in West Kent) or other support agency.

Choices provide for an Independent Domestic Abuse Advisor (IDVA) for one-to-one advocacy and support for high risk victims of domestic abuse across West Kent.

They also provide advice, emotional support, safety-planning, refuge-search and a signposting service for all victims of domestic abuse across the whole of Kent.

So far this FY there has been no noticeable increase in referrals to the refuge service or the IDVA service but telephone calls to the IDVA helpline increased 30% during April.

Domestic Abuse Volunteer Support Services (DAVSS)

General support service for Tunbridge Wells residents: Although face-to-face engagement is not an option currently, the helpdesk is now open for six-hours-a-day (up from three hours a day), five days a week.

Referrals are still being accepted and although the numbers have not increased the risk-assessment process has shown that many cases of a high need:

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr
Referrals	30	17	15	14

Apr. Refs	Female	Male	Std/Med R	High R	High Need	HBV	% High R
14	14	0	6	8	11	4	57%

Other issues of note:

- Face-to-face contacts are now handled online and by phone
- Support to Court is being managed by secure email and direct contact with courts and judges
- Group meeting are on hold
- Facebook peer support is still available
- Non-Molestation Orders and Forced Marriage Orders are still being sought and granted

Freedom programme: The PCC contribution is for creche facilities for one 12-week programme. We expect the Freedom Programme will run later in the year.

Volunteer training: Fourteen volunteers were being trained (in Town Hall committee rooms) when the lockdown was imposed. DAVSS expect volunteer training to resume at some point during this financial year. In respect of funding, volunteers expenses may be reduced but this likely will be offset by an increased workload at the end of the lockdown.

DAVSS have a COVID-19 Risk Register in place and this is reviewed daily by management, and fortnightly by the Board of Trustees.

Community Domestic Abuse Programme (CDAP)

The programme's weekly evening group sessions are now being delivered 1-1 by phone, supported by additional internet-based resources. Men have a workbook that they are required to complete and send to the co-ordinator to ensure they're on track.

Four Tunbridge Wells men were active on the 27-week awareness programme at the end of FY 2019/20. Referrals to CDAP have changed little over the past two months. Five males (three from Tunbridge Wells) have contacted CDAP about the programme this FY and three of these (one from Tunbridge Wells) have been accepted onto the programme.

Men already on the programme have been asked to forward words of encouragement to the three new referrals who joined during the lockdown. This is an important function as the opening sessions often generate a group dynamic that brings accountability, acceptance and a knowledge that behaviour can be changed.

The White Ribbon charity invited CDAP to be part of a worldwide video 'Zoom' conference 'Working with Perpetrators during COVID-19 crisis' while their Women's Safety Worker has taken stock of 'lockdown lessons learnt' from both Italy & USA where perpetrator programmes have also been affected ahead. There's also a stronger focus on safety and risk as abusive partners remain in close proximity.

Protection Against Stalking (PAS)

PAS has been around for some time but last year made a renewed push to restructure and seek further funding. PAS workers have been operating out of the CSU and they've applied for funding for three awareness/training sessions in Tunbridge Wells during this FY. As of 15 May 2020, PAS still expect to deliver on this training.

Referrals into PAS have increased steadily over the past 12-months and may have increase further, more recently. Referrals now stand at 40 per month across West Kent (up from 20). Overall, 50% ex-intimates; 50% strangers, friends, neighbours etc

While it's not yet clear if COVID-19 has specifically contributed to this increase, there has been a noticeable rise in anonymous emails and calls for advice about stalking, some of which may go on to become referrals into the service.

Current cases are being kept open longer due to the lockdown and waiting lists for counselling services have also increased. Both factors are impacting PAS volunteers and the level of care they can provide for each individual referral.

There has been an increase in cyber stalking calls and referrals. Plans are underway for a cyber-stalking clinic to be run once a month for a full day in Tonbridge to serve West Kent. Additionally, PAS have a technician within their ranks who can check victims' devices for 'backdoors' and other vulnerabilities and means of access. PAS are also liaising with the Kent Police DA Specialist to facilitate cyberstalking input to schools.

PAS are working with Kent Police to secure Stalking Protection Orders and better data. Helpfully, Kent Police are now able to provide PAS and the CSP with meaningful stalking data. Stalking data was previously bundled with harassment and did not present a clear picture.

So far, PAS has secured 11 non-molestation orders and seven more applications are underway. These are facilitated by telephones calls with the court and the judge. It

was 'a bit wobbly' to being with but it's working better now. No application has yet been turned down.

SUBSTANCE AND ALCOHOL ABUSE, ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Kenward Trust Outreach

Outreach workers are obviously deployed less than usual but they are still attending some key areas across West Kent. In April in Tunbridge Wells they occasionally 'patrolled' our town centre car parks and found some youngsters taking the opportunity to skateboard in relative safety and during some warm spells there was small groups of young people sunbathing and playing football on the top level of Great Hall.

In Paddock Wood Recreational Ground outreach workers came across small groups of young people, some smoking cannabis. The outreach worker states, "They did have enough respect to move on after we had spoken to them".

As the lockdown continues funding for Kenward may be adjusted but as we only fund 26 sessions throughout the year we might still expect to fully utilise the service during Q2-Q4.

Street Pastors

Not deployed at this time. Co-ordinator has been furloughed until at least 31 May. We will discuss funding with the church management team when the service resumes.

Clean Slate Counselling

We have applied for funding for 3 x 24 weekly counselling sessions over a six-month period; slated for Q1 and Q2 but now delayed. If this funding is granted we would expect this to be delivered.

Safety in Action

Safety in Action typically runs during Apr/May but was quickly postponed until June. We would expect a further postponement until later in the year.

LOOKING FORWARD: Post-Lockdown Considerations

Domestic abuse service providers are aware of the potential for an increase in the need for support that may come about when victims or their perpetrators are afforded greater freedom from the family home.

Similarly, young people may be seen in greater numbers in public spaces and exuberant behaviour – or excessive anti-social behaviour – may result from the extended lockdown and from being separated for some time from their friends and social groups.

What's not clear at this time is how sudden this may come about.

Domestic abuse

The Borough Council works closely with service provider DAVSS and will link in with the Board of Trustees with more regularity over the coming weeks and months to better understand the expected pressure on their service as the lockdown eases.

DAVSS provides a service for the three West Kent local authorities and we jointly chair a West Kent DA Forum. We cancelled April's Forum as agencies worked hard to put in place work plans for the lockdown period. We plan to bring forward the next Forum with a focus on post-lockdown resources and initiatives.

In January 2020, the CSU Inspector drafted an OSARA document to look at repeat victimisation and reduce the number of occasions when victims do not support police investigations. An OSARA document is a problem-oriented approach to policing and stands for "Objective, Scanning, Analysis, Response, Assessment".

The initiative was parked while partners grappled with new working and living conditions but the objectives and focus of the OSARA document are as relevant today as they were in January. In June, the data that drove the initial objectives will be reviewed and the CSU will set up a local working group to run alongside the West Kent DA Forum, meeting more frequently and ultimately feeding into the Forum for the benefit of our West Kent neighbours.

Young People

All service providers have been working virtually, with some outreach to engage with groups of young people who chose to ignore the lockdown rules or who now, since the early-May rule change, might be congregating more than the regulations would allow.

The CSU's Youth Diversion Forum (YDF) has been meeting (Skyping) weekly since early April. The YDF includes attendees from KCC's Early Help, Project Salus, Kenward Trust, St Giles Trust, YMCA, KCC Education, Kent Police and more recently, the Community Alcohol Partnership Co-ordinator. The focus has been on service provision during lockdown and the wellbeing of some key difficult-to-reach and difficult-to-management individuals.

A small number of these individuals were causing significant disorder in Tunbridge Wells town centre during January and February drawing large numbers of followers resulting in frequent weekend Dispersal Orders being imposed on the town centre. Several of these young people continued to struggle as the lockdown began but have since been moved out of our area through voluntary social care arrangements.

The partnership meeting, which also links into the Social Isolation Group, will continue to meet weekly for the foreseeable future, though we expect the agenda to change over the coming weeks to encompass recovery and increased opportunities for face-to-face engagement.

The Community Alcohol Partnership (CAP), which was launched in December 2019 was mostly set aside while the strict lockdown regulations were in place but work to engage with schools continued. Now, as the town returns to some form of normality there will be greater opportunities for young people to gather in public spaces and this will undoubtedly see the return of some underage drinking and cannabis use.

The CAP team, including Kenward Trust, are ready to pick up where they left off following a review of the action plan by key agencies.

Through the YDF, Kent Police Youth Engagement Officer will lead on two 'All Out events' in July and August (23rd and 20th, respectively, have been pencilled in). These events allow agencies to engage with young people and seek their thoughts on how life is for them and how local services could support them, while at the same time allowing us to gathering intelligence and trends that we can use to focus our resources.

The Early Help Youth Hub will be offering support Mondays and Wednesdays, through outreach, with flexibility on days if needed.

Salus will run their projects through the summer, with a focus on the rural areas.

To ensure we're addressing West Kent cross-border issues we will work with other Sevenoaks and Tonbridge CSU's and involve British Transport Police and Rail Enforcement Officers (primarily on the 'All Out days').

Fearless (Crimestoppers for kids) will hopefully be able to offer the AdVan event in the summer which was meant to take place during Easter, this is to be confirmed. They have offered support to Early Help, with group sessions and workshops.

Kent Police are hoping to run a number of bike marking events which can run alongside youth provisions in target areas.

We're also looking at commissioning Somerset's Escape Cell double-decker bus to engage with young people in Tunbridge Wells and rural areas. We would look to tie this in with advice on substance misuse and knife crime.

Substance Misuse and Alcohol Abuse

The key drivers for this CSP priority are the safety and wellbeing of vulnerable people and the associated crime that often results from dependency.

There are support pathways helpful for both adults and young people through Kenward Trust, 'We are With You' (formerly Addaction) and 'Change. Grow. Live' (CGL).

In terms of adult vulnerability and crime we work closely with CGL to provide support for the small minority of their cohort who cause issues in public or for their neighbours. This partnership continued during the lockdown with CGL linking in with the Community Hub to ensure prescriptions were fulfilled and safeguarding was continually evaluated.

The monthly Vulnerability Board (VB) has continued to meet via Skype with good attendance from the majority of key agencies. Through the VB we have addressed key concerns for repeat and vulnerable victims as well as repeat offenders living in the community or due for prison release. The thrice weekly morning briefings have also continued throughout the lockdown period providing good updates, intelligence and anecdotal reporting on known individuals and addresses.

Prior to the lockdown a regular operation was run through the Vulnerability Board whereby officers from TWBC, KFRS, Kent Police and TCH (Town and Country Housing) would visit between ten and twenty households known to be vulnerable to cuckooing or reported as a source of anti-social behaviour in their local area. These operations were suspended in April but will be resurrected when conditions allow.

In Summary

Despite the difficulties we've all faced since late-March partner engagement and support of the 'community safety' agenda has been very positive.

There's a universal recognition that some issues will likely be exacerbated when the lockdown is lifted but a general easing of the strict conditions will help avoid a sudden spike in unusual behaviour which would further strain service providers.

To ensure we're sighted on the changing landscape:

- Weekly multi-agency youth meetings will continue throughout the summer.
- Safe Town Partnership, RTWT and CSU are discussing the funding of 3-4 weeks of street marshals as more and more businesses open.
- Police DA Specialist, DAVSS and CSU will Skype weekly to evaluate levels of need and assess interventions for perpetrators.
- CSU and CGL (substance abuse) will speak weekly from June to understand any emerging trends.

The CSP is fortunate in having an underspend which may be used to fund extra services and resources if it becomes apparent that an increase in various anti-social behaviours, domestic issues or drug-related harm needs to be quickly addressed. Additionally, I have left an additional 3% of our PCC funding unallocated this year to allow for a little more flexibility this financial year.