

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

Community Safety Partnership Strategic Assessment 2020-21

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Community Safety Partnership sign-off: 4 February 2021



Introduction

The Strategic Assessment produced for the Tunbridge Wells Community Safety Partnership (CSP) helps establish priority themes for the 2021/22 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 2020 – December 2020, unless otherwise specified.

Funding for these priorities is provided, in part, by the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner in accordance with the priorities set out in his *Safer in Kent: The Community Safety and Criminal Justice Plan*.

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

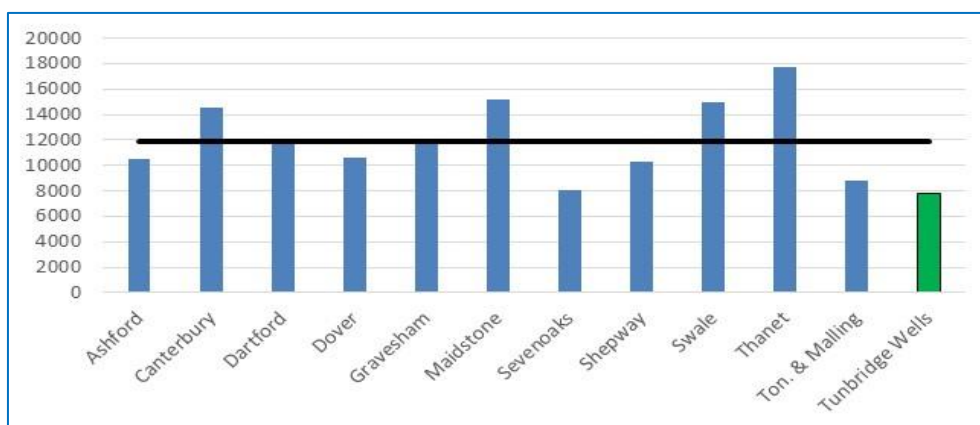
All recorded crime

Current figures for the 12-month period January 2020 – December 2020, unless stated.

Level of Crime: 7,830 (previous period 8,608)

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

Annual Change: A reduction of 778 crimes (-9%)

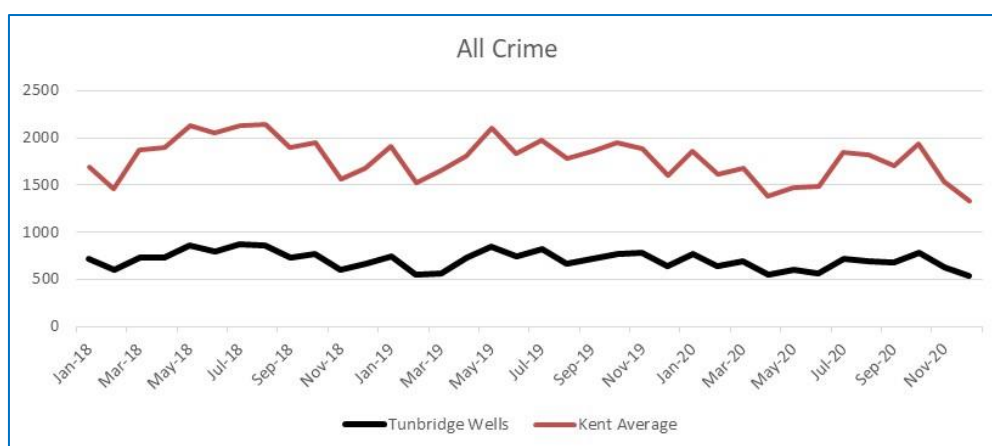


Kent comparison - per 1000 residents

Tunbridge Wells had the lowest overall crime rate in Kent for the given period, marginally ahead of our West Kent neighbours Sevenoaks and Tonbridge and Malling.

A reduction of 778 crimes builds on the reduction of 345 crimes during the previous calendar year (2019).

From the metric of 'all crime' Tunbridge Wells is the safest local authority area in Kent.



Three-year trend – per 1000 residents

The table that follows shows a breakdown of reported incidents, the increase or decrease since the last reporting period, and our county position. Subsequent pages provide further details on key crime types and a ward breakdown.

Crime Type	This Year	Last Year	% Change	Number change	2019	2020
All crime	7,830	8,608	-9.0%	-778	1	1
Victim-based crime	6,652	7,466	-10.9%	-814	1	1
Violent Crime	3,662	3,571	2.5%	91	2	3
Sexual offences	272	284	-4.2%	-12	3	3
Hate Crime	191	185	3.2%	6	4	3
ASB Incidents	2,354	1,490	58.0%	864	1	2
Burglary Residential	281	361	-22.2%	-80	3	1
Criminal damage	948	1,055	-10.1%	-107	1	1
Domestic abuse incidents	2,391	2,296	4.1%	95	1	1
Drug offences	219	206	6.3%	13	4	3
(Drug Trafficking)	66	80	-17.5%	-14	--	--
(Drug Possession)	153	126	21.4%	27	--	--
Robbery	39	67	-41.8%	-28	1	1
Shoplifting	564	759	-25.7%	-195	6	4
Theft from a motor vehicle	229	301	-23.9%	-72	3	1
Theft of motor vehicle	123	138	-10.9%	-15	3	4

Noticeable in this data:

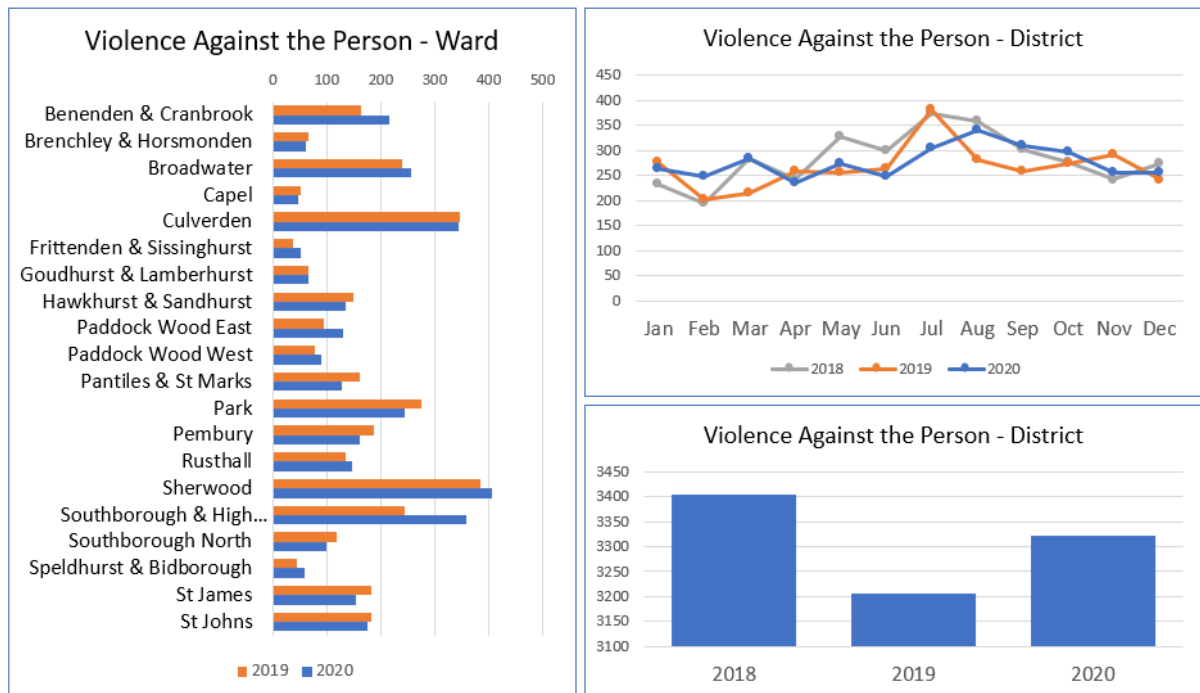
- A small increase in violent crime
- A smaller than expected increase in reports of domestic abuse
- A sizeable increase in anti-social behaviour

Clearly, data for this period will have been influenced by the changes we have had to make to our daily lives as a result of the pandemic and the various lockdown and post-lockdown situations our residents have endured.

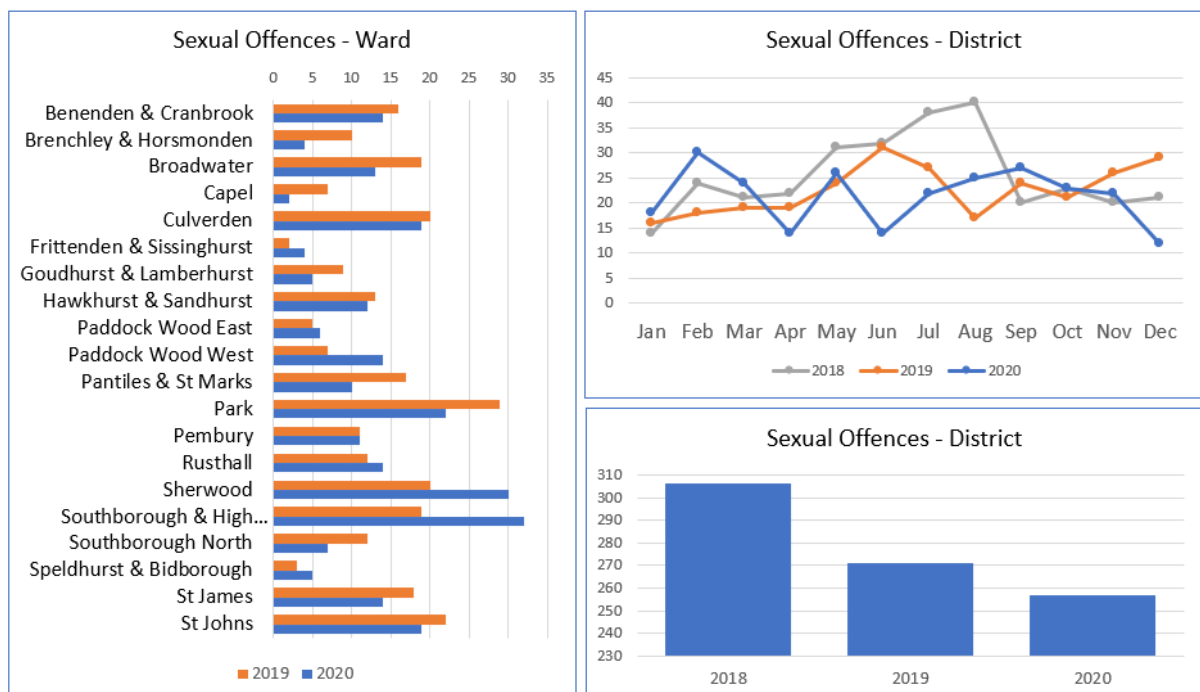
While anti-social behaviour increased by 58% a great many of these reports were related to perceived breaches of COVID-19 regulations. Violent crime increased by 91 incidents (2.5%) over the preceding period following a reduction of 7.5% in 2019. Domestic abuse reports increased by 4.1%. That's half the increase we experienced in 2019 and lower than many domestic abuse professionals expected.

Given the changeable conditions we were all living with in 2020, I thought it might be helpful to present some monthly data alongside district and ward data for key crime types.

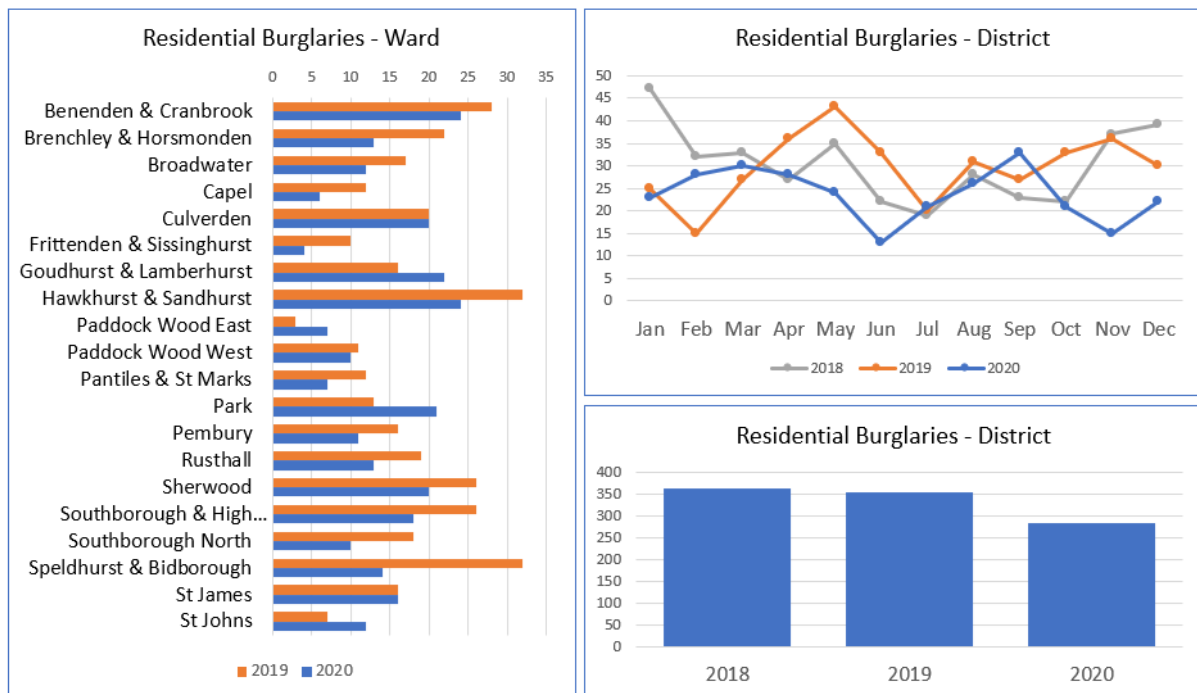
Small changes in **Violence Against the Person** offences in town centre wards but noticeable increases in Paddock Wood East and Southborough & High Brooms, with summer months showing the biggest increases across the three-year period.



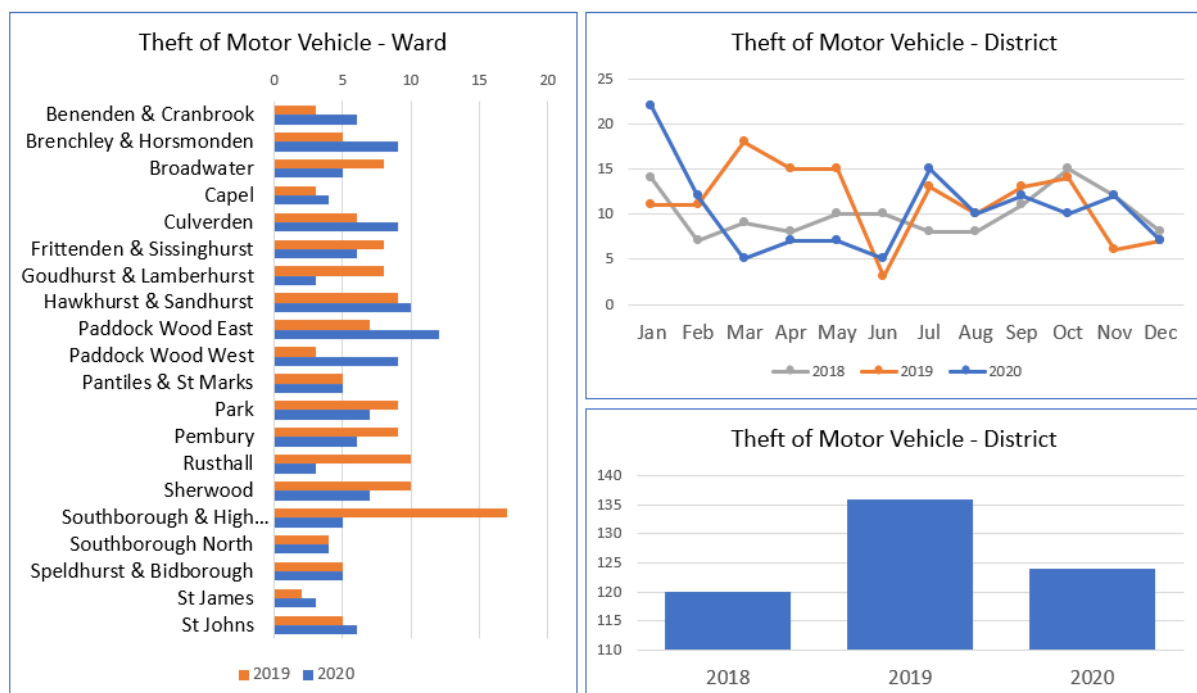
There were 12 fewer **Sexual Offences** in the borough in 2020 but Paddock Wood West, Sherwood and Southborough and High Brooms experienced increases of 6, 12 and 14 respectively.



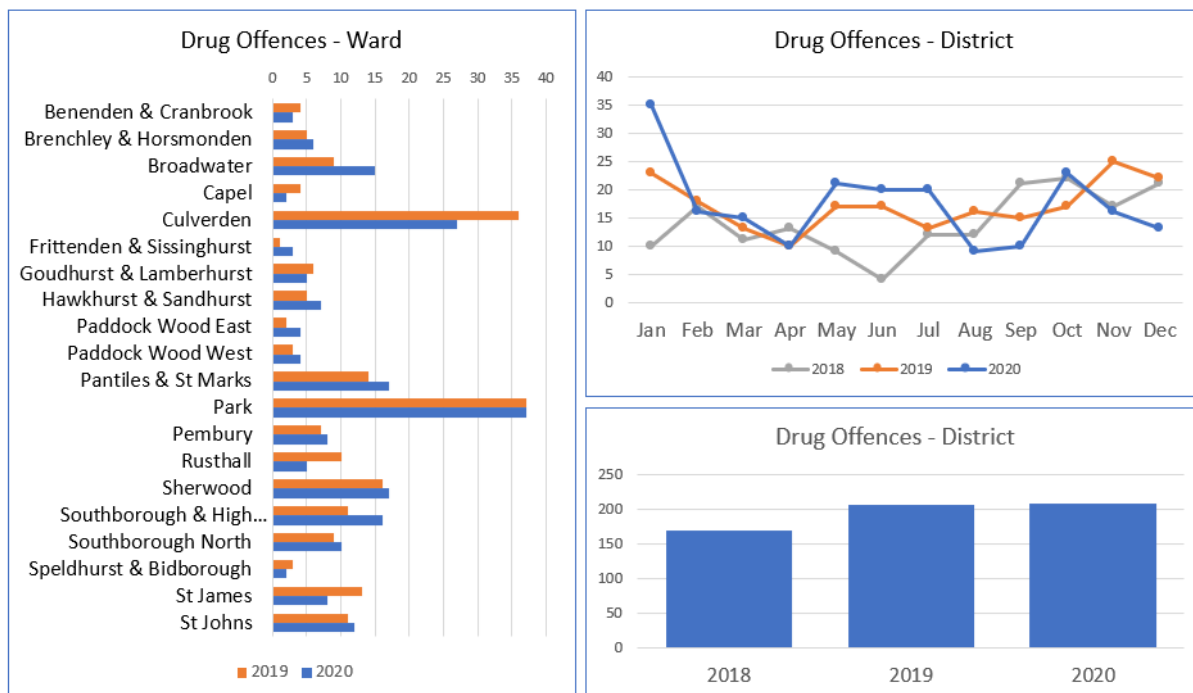
Most wards experienced reductions in **Residential Burglaries** in 2020 with a range of similar reductions seen countywide as perhaps expected this year.



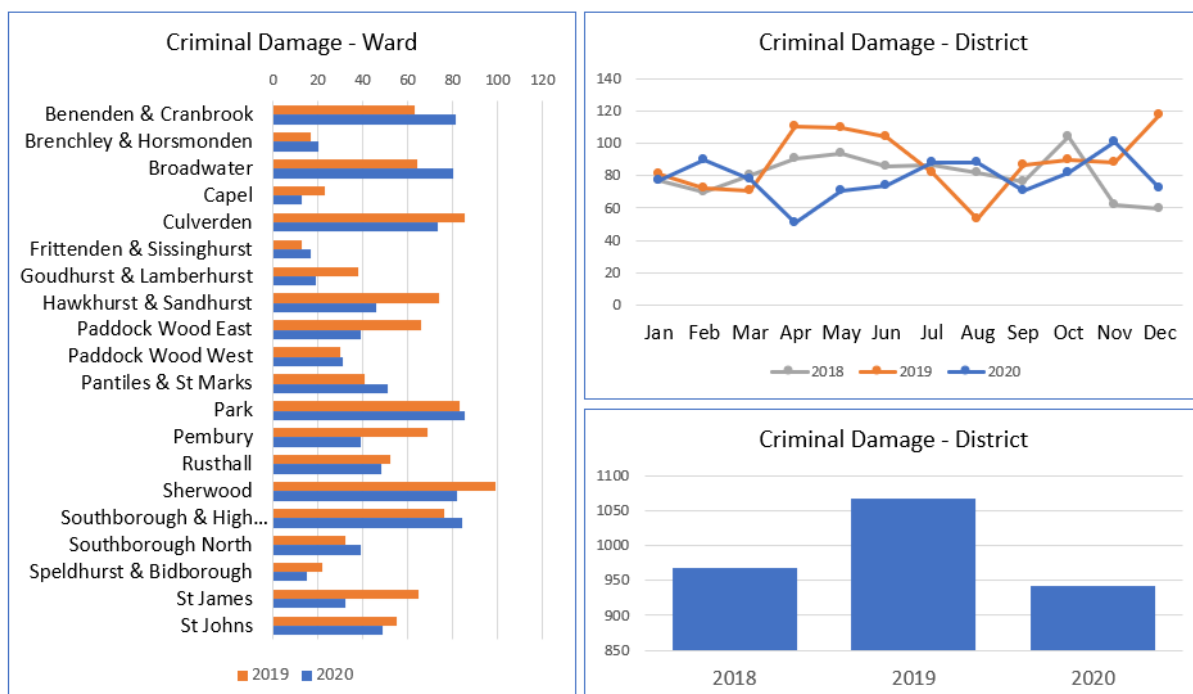
Small reductions in all motor vehicles offences this year, including **Theft of a Motor Vehicle**, Theft from and Interference with a Motor Vehicle with a sharp decline during the first lockdown.



Drug Offences, which includes *possession* and *possession with intent to supply* fell away during the first four months of the year and through August but as a borough we are marginally above last year's number.

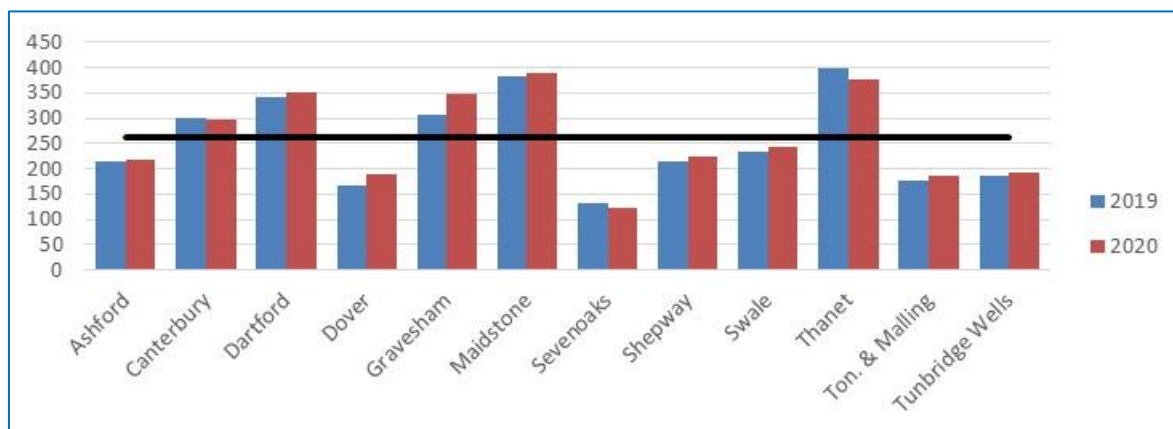


As the first lockdown came into play resulting in many empty streets, parks and open space, **Criminal Damage** offences dropped by half, before slowly creeping up again during early summer.



Hate Crime

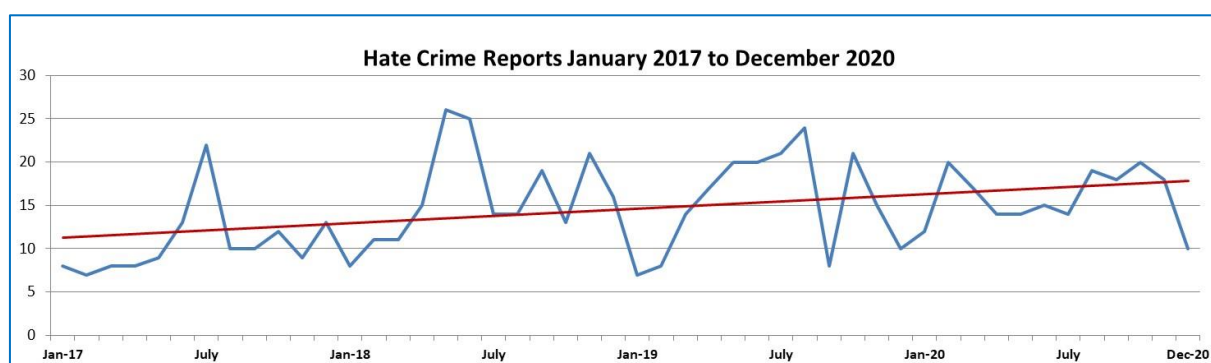
The chart below shows the level of hate crime countywide across two calendar years. The black horizontal line is the county average for 2020.



The table below shows race to be the predominant factor in hate crime reports. Disability and sexual orientation are also significant factors and a smaller number of reports involve multiple motivations. As well as hate crimes being directed at members of the public people in authority, such as traffic wardens, taxi drivers, security guards, police officers and shop workers are also abused because of certain characteristics.

Calendar Year	Race	Disability	Religion/ faith/belief	Transgender	Gender	Sexual orientation	Age
2020	140	35	12	1	0	35	0
2019	128	32	10	1	0	29	1
2018	132	24	12	0	9	26	6
2017	103	17	6	0	0	12	1

All hate crimes are reviewed by Kent Police's CSU-based Community Liaison Officer (CLO). Contact is often made with victims if suitable interventions and signposting can be put in place beyond the safeguarding advice that may already have been offered.



A hate crime against any resident with a protected characteristic is always unacceptable and efforts are always made to support victims and prevent a repeat occurrence. Much of this

support was undertaken by phone and video conferencing last year. There were few opportunities for public engagement and other public-facing initiatives in 2020.

International and nationally-significant incidents were tracked locally to ensure we were prepared for any knock-on effects. Some examples below:

Spring 2020

- Animosity towards Asian community following the outbreak of COVID-19.
- A far-right extremist opened fire in a shisha bar in Germany killing at least nine people.
- Caroline Flack's suicide attributed, in part, to bullying and harassment on social media.

Summer 2020

- The US president threatens to employ the military to quell protests across the country sparked by the death of George Floyd in May.
- Three American police officers charged in connection with the above.
- Black Lives Matter protests gain traction across the UK.
- Former police officer who shot Rayshard Brooks in Atlanta, USA charged with his murder.
- Three men stabbed to death and three others injured in a terrorist attack in Reading.
- Saudi Arabia bans visitors from making Islamic Hajj pilgrimage due to pandemic.

Various reports, including a December 2020 Home Office Briefing Paper suggest Anti-Asian hate crimes increased in 2020. Victims identified as 'Oriental' experienced a five-fold increase in racist crimes from 20 recorded crimes in January 2020 to 101 in March 2020. There was also a trebling of cases where the victim self-identified as 'Chinese' from January to March 2018 to January to March 2020. This is very likely an undercount.

Hate crime is a standing agenda item at the monthly multi-agency Vulnerability Board meeting and some incidents are discussed at thrice-weekly morning briefings.

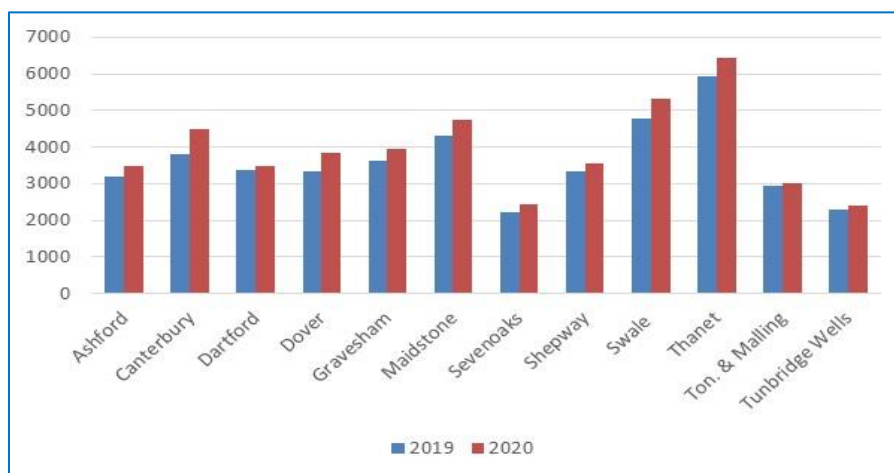
Priority 1: Domestic Abuse

Current figures refer to the 12-month period from January 2020 – December 2020

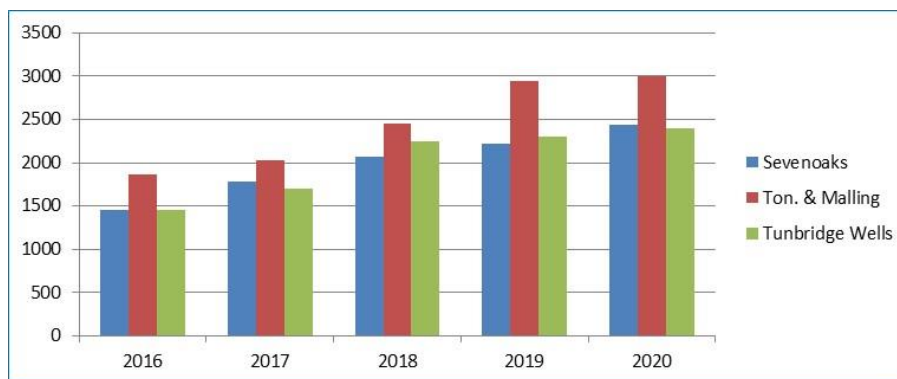
Level of Crime: 2,391 crimes (last year 2,296)

Peer Comparison: Lowest in 12 Kent areas

Annual Change: Increase of 95 reported incidents (+4%)



Kent Comparison 2019-2020



West Kent Comparison – Five-year trend

During the 12 months from January 2020 to December 2020, there were 2,391 recorded incidents of domestic abuse in Tunbridge Wells reported to Kent Police. This is an increase of 4% against a 9% increase during 2019. All districts in Kent experienced an increase in police recorded domestic abuse offences over the 2018/19 period.

Repeat victim data has not been available since an upgrade to Kent Police computer systems in November 2018. There was some indication from the central analytic team that this data would be available from November 2020. The wait goes on, but we are hopeful that good progress has been made and the data will be made available soon.

The repeat victimisation rate for DAVSS clients in West Kent was around 9% during 2017/18 and 6% during the first three quarters of 2018/19. This had reduced to around 4% in early 2020, as the three-year centrally funded Violence Against Women and Children programme ended. The repeat rate rose to 6% during Q3 2020.

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: For Tunbridge Wells, DAVSS received 269 referrals during calendar year 2020 against 335 referrals received across 2019. Calls to the helpline increased from 1,293 in 2019 to 1,665 in 2020.

Since the COVID-19 lockdown in March DAVSS doubled the availability of their telephone helpline hours to 10am-4pm weekdays and transitioned from face-to-face support to providing on-going telephone support for victims of domestic abuse, with a named volunteer working from home.

Helpline calls during April-December 2020 increased markedly over the same period in 2019 with victims often isolated at home, with the perpetrator until the situation becomes so extreme that they feel the need to contact agencies for help. Support workers reported an increase in the frequency and intensity of abuse experienced by victims, and an increased urgency for safety planning and other options for action.

Referrals increased in complexity with many referrals graded as high risk and/or high need. Many individuals who were seeking help were at crisis point requiring immediate multiple interventions to prevent a worsening escalation. Additionally, over half of new clients are presenting with issues such as anxiety, depression, poor mental health, suicidal ideations, as well as the pandemic-related concerns we were all experiencing.

DAVSS experienced a significant increase in partner agencies and organisations accessing their domestic abuse services throughout 2020.

During the first half of 2020/21, the repeat victimisation rate for clients supported by DAVSS was 4%, this had risen to 6% in Q3. In 2017, Kent Police recorded a repeat rate of between 24-26% countywide. We believe this demonstrates the effectiveness of DAVSS 'beyond crisis' approach supported by the additional helpline hours made available during the lockdown period.

DAVSS currently has 45 volunteers. Ten volunteers moved on during Q3. For most of these volunteers, COVID-19 has affected their and their families' personal situation, with some pursuing paid employment or taking up increased or new caring responsibilities for family

members. It is hoped that an active recruitment campaign during Q4 2020 will help to bring in new volunteers to start their accredited training programme in March 2021.

Volunteers contributed a significant 28,599 hours during Q1-Q3, which provided a cash equivalent of £418,117 calculated at the Kent average earnings rate. This is a 30% increase on the preceding period.

During Q1-Q3 DAVSS 'Support to Court' provision supported 550 clients, providing the following (across West Kent):

- 1,027 legal advice sessions
- 97 attendances to court (94 Civil Court and 3 Criminal Court)
- 66 Solicitor meetings
- This support work has achieved Protective Orders as follows:
- 95 Non-Molestation Orders
- 9 Prohibited Steps Order
- 33 Child Arrangement Orders
- 8 Restraining Orders
- 9 Occupational Orders
- 2 Forced Marriage Protection orders
- 10 Prison sentences or other punitive measures
- DAVSS liaised with Witness Care on 8 occasions

In November, we applied for additional funding of £2,838 from the PCC's 'tactical pot' for the Own My Life course for up to eight women who have been in abusive relationships. The 12-week course helps victims to make sense of their experiences and build resilience.

The course started in February 2021 for twelve women from Tunbridge Wells.

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: By Q3 of 2020/21 15 men were active on the 27-week programme, six of whom are from Tunbridge Wells. Of the six, two are in the age range 20-44, while the other four are in the age range 45-64. CDAP also picked up several self-funded clients in areas outside West Kent.

CDAP secured additional funding from Co-Op for a presence on the Web, with a website launch imminent. COVID-19 restrictions saw CDAP move to 1-1 telephone sessions with clients before more recently moving towards group sessions via Zoom.

CDAP business cards are now in custody suites.

Here is some feedback from a man who recently completed the course:

What have I learned from CDAP?

The course has heightened my awareness of the impact of negative behaviour, not just on my partner but also on children and others and the long-lasting permanent damage that can be wreaked upon a relationship, resulting not only in its dissolution but continuing detriment on those involved as well as on future relationships.

I have learnt a number of techniques to increase self-awareness of potentially escalating situations, to identify danger signs much earlier, as well as coping strategies to mitigate my behaviour and to effectively de-escalate.

What behaviours have I changed?

Replace negative thoughts and blame with active listening and positive self-talk.

To take responsibility for my behaviour.

To consistently be aware of the impact of poor behaviour.

What would you say to men who are considering attending CDAP?

The course is a 'wakeup call' for those in denial as to the damaging impact of their behaviour not just on your partner but also on others.

It helps to crystallise, relating through real examples, sharing experiences with the group, often very painfully but in a deliberately reinforcing structure, to land the very real impact of abusive behaviour.

What has been the effect of CDAP on your relationship?

Unfortunately, despite my full commitment to the 27 week course and very open transparency during group and during 'COVID' 1:1's with CDAP's 'K', plus keeping communication channels open and supportive both emotionally and financially, my partner decided to file for divorce after a year's separation.

Whilst acknowledging the commitment and steps that I have taken post our separation. She did not feel comfortable at even attempting reconciliation. Reality!

One Stop Shop

Look Ahead are leading on the One Stop Shop (OSS) virtual offer. Clients can access the OSS through Zoom where a co-ordinator will then direct them into a 'breakout' room to consult with various professionals.

Three organisations are running the sessions on a rotational basis as the expert agency. These are Protection Against Stalking (PAS), Domestic Abuse Volunteer Support Services (DAVSS) and Look Ahead.

More partners are expected to be involved including Crosslight (West Kent Debt Advice), Clarke Kiernan, CAB and Social Housing providers.

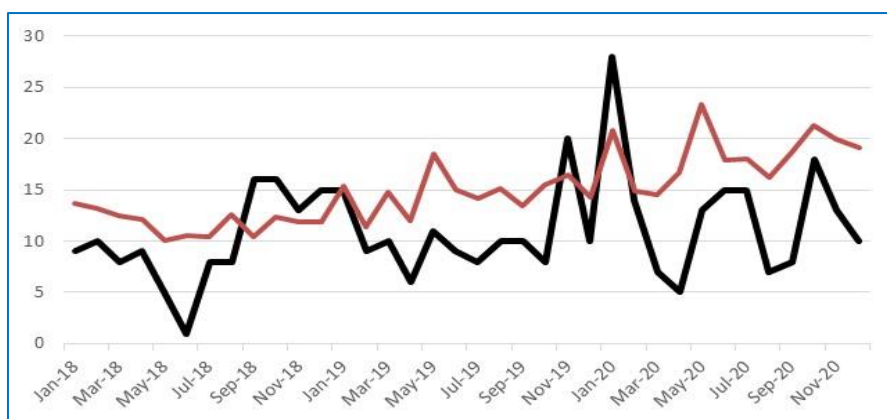
Priority 2: Substance Misuse and Alcohol Abuse

Current figures refer to the 12-month period from January 2020 – December 2020

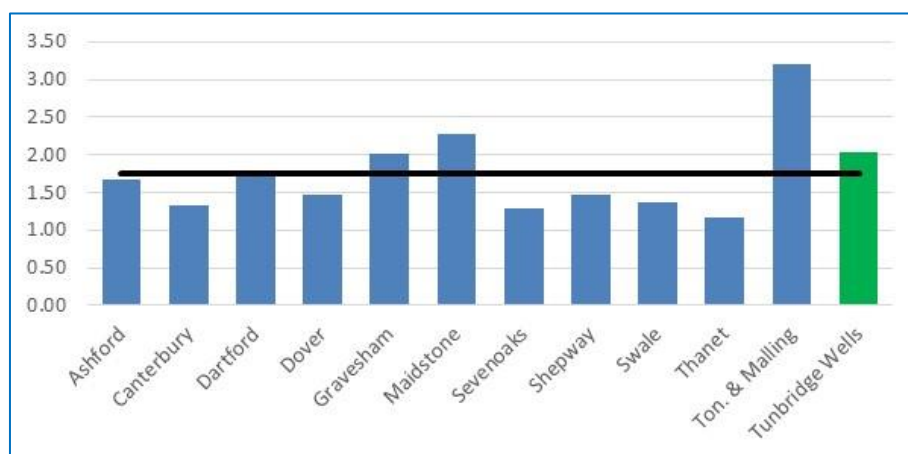
Drug Possession: 153 incidents (last year 126)

Peer Comparison: tenth by population (previously tenth). Second by volume.

Annual Change: Up 27 (21%)



Three-year monthly trend – black line Tunbridge Wells, red line county average

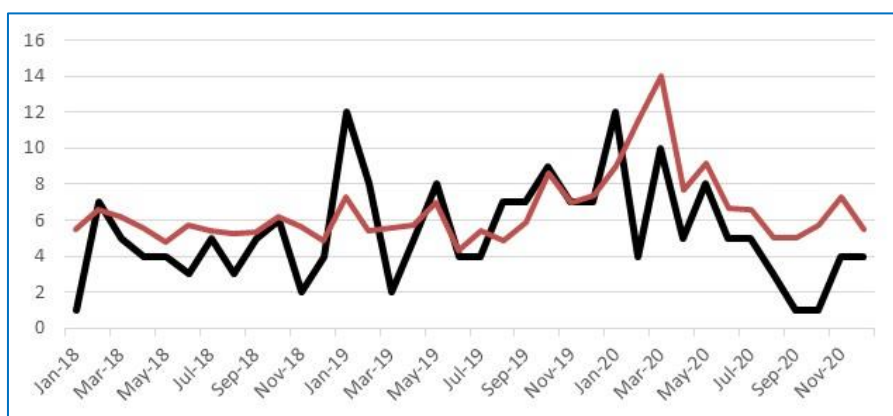


County comparison 2020, black line county average

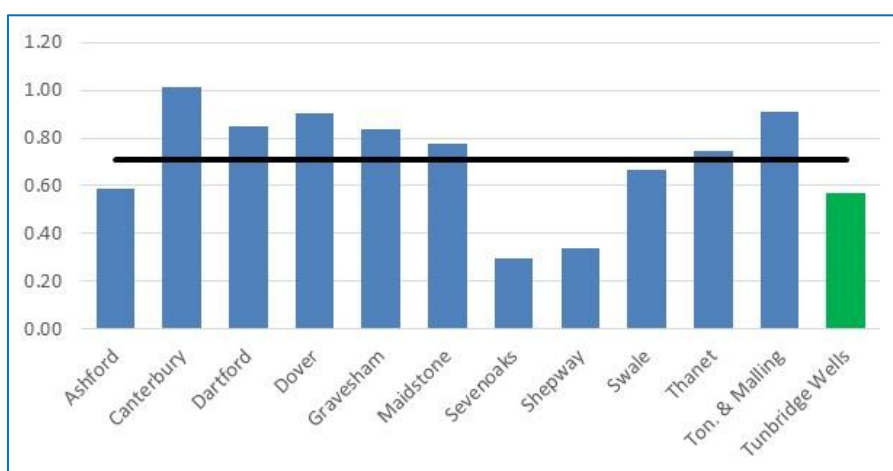
Drug Trafficking: 66 incidents (last year 80)

Peer Comparison: Third lowest by population (previously eighth). Third by volume.

Annual Change: Down 14 (17.5%)



Three-year trend – black line Tunbridge Wells



County comparison, black line county average

Between January 2020 and December 2020, there were 1.9 recorded drug offences (combined possession and trafficking offences) per 1,000 population in Tunbridge Wells (up from 1.7), placing us third lowest in Kent (previously sixth). The Kent district average for the same period is 2.4 (up from 1.9).

Tunbridge Wells was one of only two districts to see a reduction in trafficking incidents in 2020.

Of the ten local authority areas which saw a rise in possession offences during the calendar year, Tunbridge Wells recorded the smallest rise overall.

Our pro-active Community Policing Team continues to target local drug dealers as well as those who would set up county lines to supply cocaine from gangs based in London and elsewhere.

Officers affected arrests in Tunbridge Wells town centre involving local men and out-of-area Albanians while others arrested in 2019 were sentenced in 2020 for supply of drugs and various motoring offences.

Two suspicious vehicles stopped in Tunbridge Wells in January this year (2021) resulted in drug-related arrests that will likely lead to substantial sentences.

In terms of reducing possession through education and engagement Kenward Trust were deployed during the year, and throughout the lockdowns in line with government COVID-19 restrictions, to offer advice to young people and young adults and to provide a presence in key locations in Tunbridge Wells and Paddock Wood. St Giles Trust were also out-and-about at key times and engaged well with many youngsters, some of whom were really feeling the stress, particularly during the first lockdown.

Outcomes

Provider: Kenward Trust

Funding: £7,000 (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: Outreach workers provided 64 sessions during Q1-Q3, netting 600+ engagements with young people in the age range 14-22, including 100+ young people on the evening of 20 August in Calverley Grounds and the surrounding area.

Key areas and topics of conversation, below:

Tunbridge Wells: The Grove, Calverley Grounds, Great Hall car park, Torrington car park, Grosvenor skate park, High Street, St Johns Park.

Paddock Wood: Train Station and car park, Commercial Road and surroundings, St Andrews Recreation Ground.

The team look to engage with young people during two periods; immediately after school and early evening. However, during this unusual year they varied their outreach days and times, occasionally out a little earlier and on Saturdays.

The team also visited Pembury Recreation Ground on two occasions and spoke with a small group of young people.

Aside from drug-related advice, a key topic of conversation was, of course, the pandemic with outreach workers stressing the importance of social-distancing and keeping themselves and their families safe. An outreach worker with an interesting 'prison life' story was also captivating to many, it would seem.

Provider: Tunbridge Wells Churches Together Street Pastors

Funding: £2,500 (PCC)

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

Outcomes: Typically, the Tunbridge Wells Churches Together Street Pastors would provide dynamic safeguarding and advice to town centre revellers, as well as being a useful link to emergency services. However, they found late night opportunities few and far between during the year.

They were able to undertake some NTE operations, but we also used them as Street Marshalls during the town centre reopening. They excel at non-judgemental engagement with the public, and unsolicited compliments were received during the time we deployed them as the town centre daytime economy reopened, and later when hospitality venues could trade, albeit under shorter hours.

They also responded positively to our requests for their services for patrolling of car parks, parks and other open spaces to try to engage with young people. However, we were unable to schedule any outreach of note due to the fast-moving nature of the various restrictions and health concerns for some of the volunteers.

We are sad to lose Vicky, who has served as the Street Pastor Co-ordinator for as far back as I can remember. She has been a brilliant interface between their team and ours but we welcome Katy and look forward to future partnership endeavours that increase safety in Tunbridge Wells.

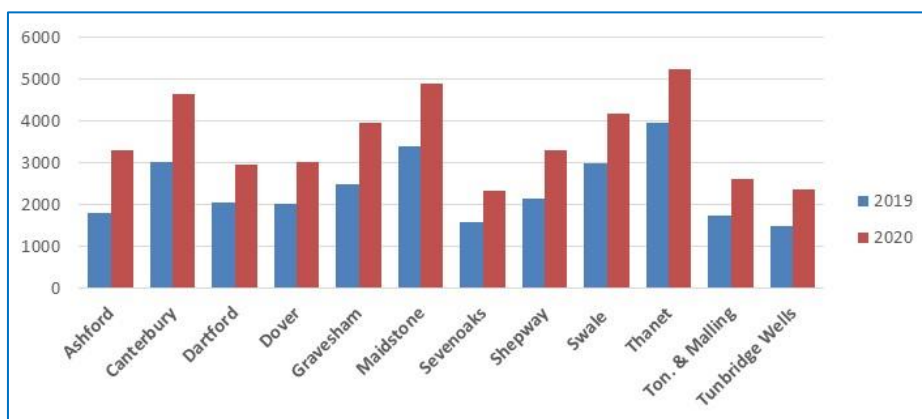
Priority 3: Anti-social Behaviour

Current figures refer to the 12-month period from January 2020 – December 2020

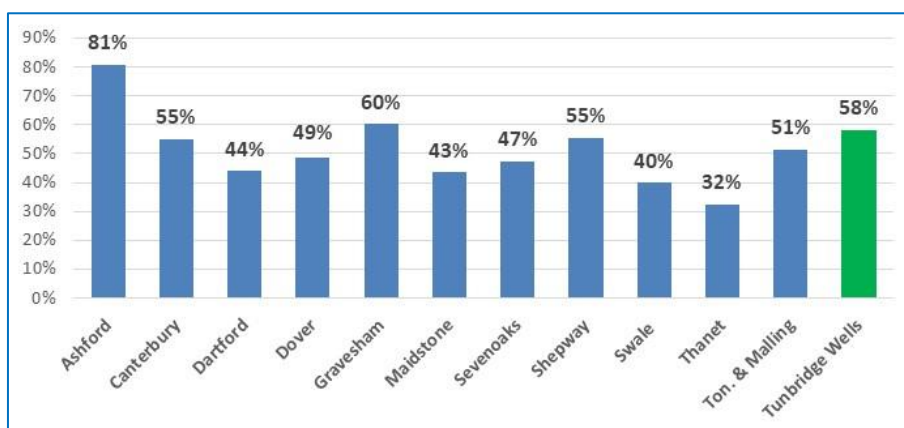
Reporting levels: 2,354 (previous period 1,490)

Peer comparison: Second best out of 12 Kent areas

Annual change: Increase of 864 reports (58%)



All ASB graded incidents 2019-2020



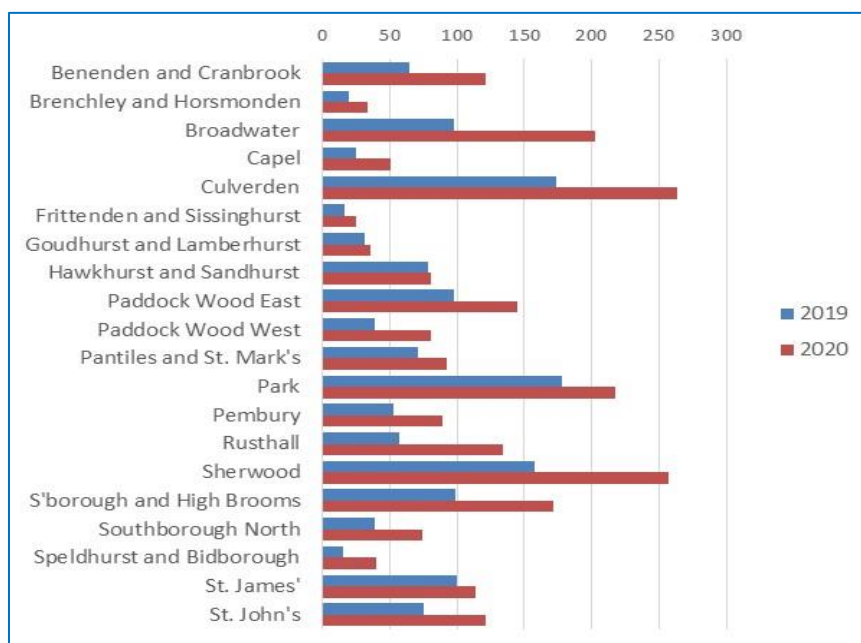
Percentage change over the preceding calendar year

Tunbridge Wells experienced a 58% increase in anti-social behaviour over the preceding calendar year. In any other year that would be of great concern, but a breakdown of the data showed that a large proportion of the reports relate to residents reporting perceived (or real) breaches of COVID-19 regulations.

For example, *rowdy or nuisance gathering in public* is a sub-category of anti-social behaviour and police reports given this category increased by 429 (110%) in 2020. However, 377 of these were given a COVID-19 tag by the call taker.

While there may well have been associated rowdy or nuisance behaviour it is unclear how many of these reports would have been made if COVID-19 was not a factor.

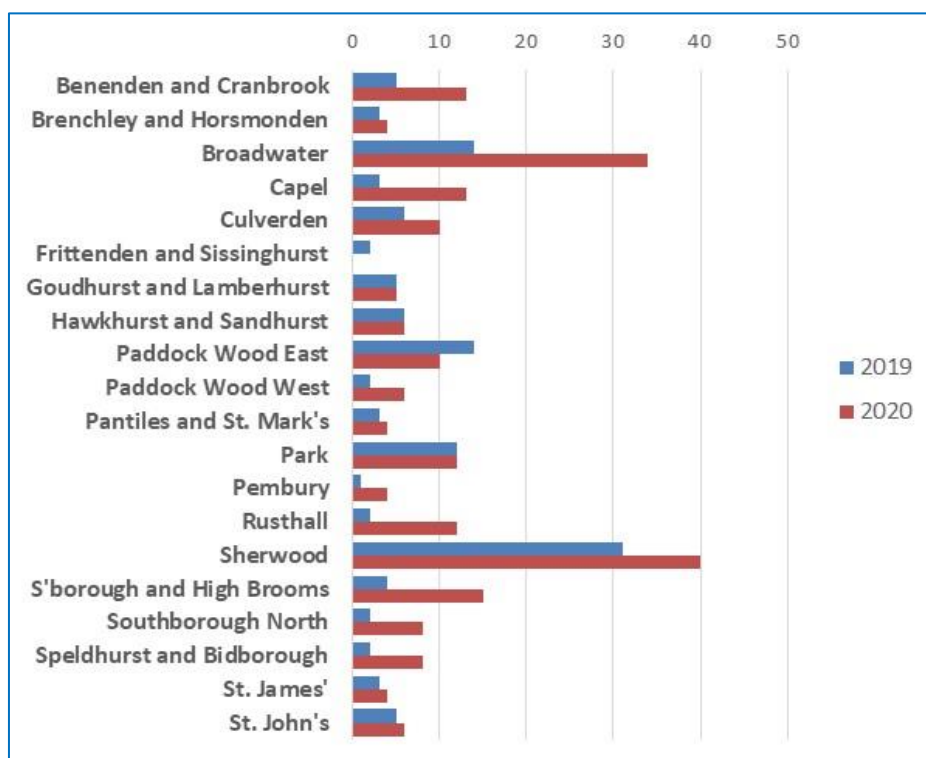
For the overall ASB category Tunbridge Wells is second best in Kent, marginally behind Sevenoaks (by 20 reports). This is how the headline figure is broken down by ward:



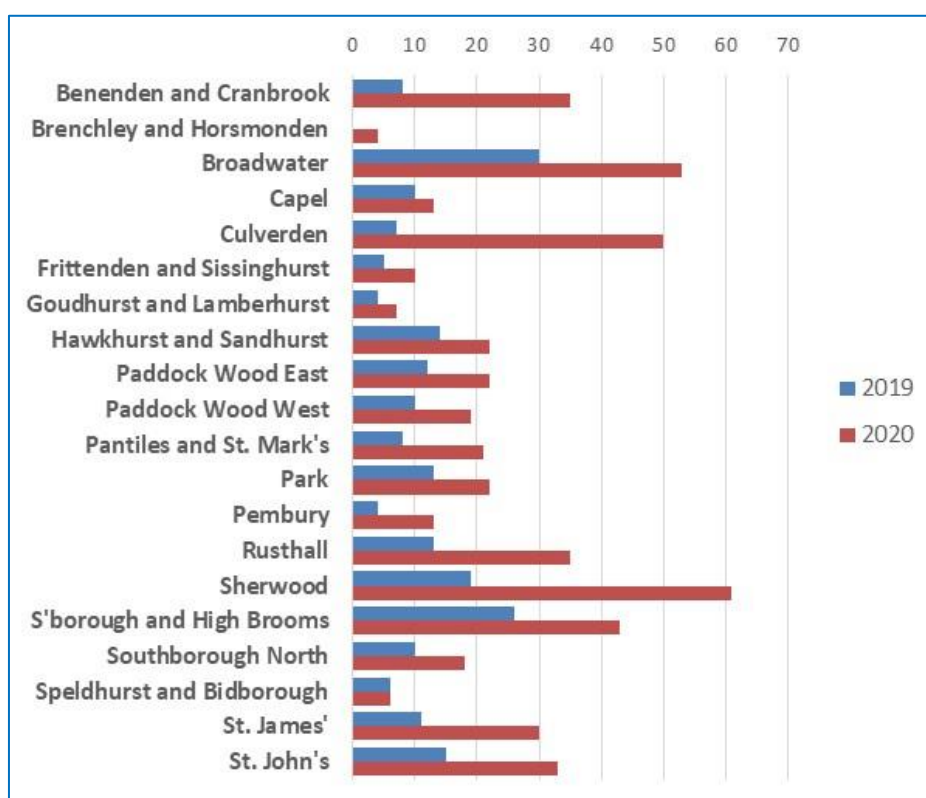
Ward comparison - calendar year breakdown

As mentioned above, ASB covers a range of nuisance behaviours. The charts below are a selection of these subcategories, broken down by ward.

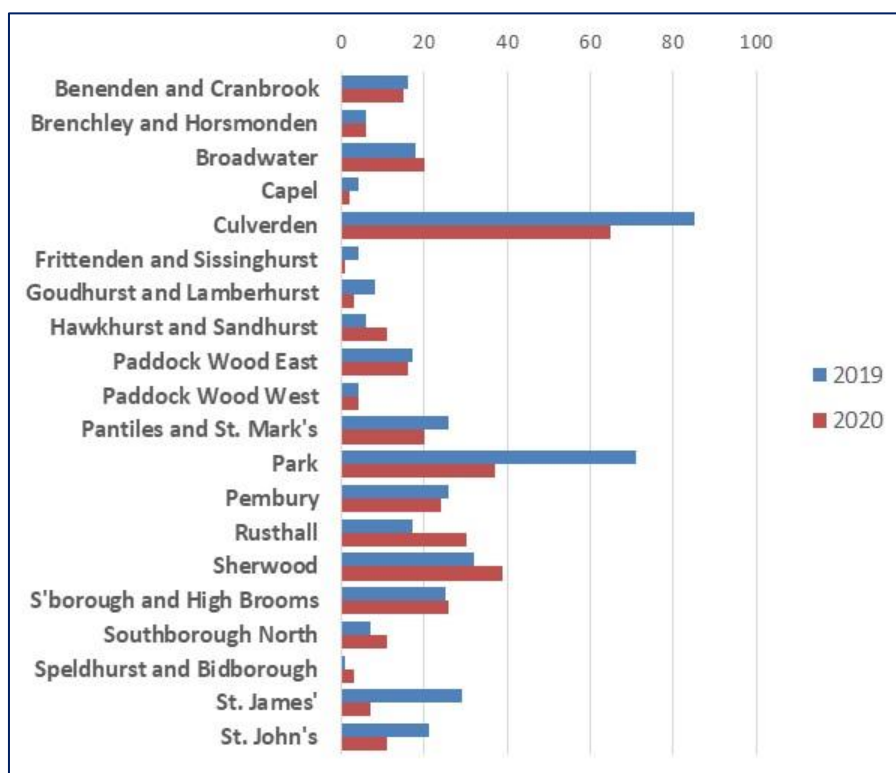
A small number of **nuisance/noisy vehicle** reports (14) were tagged as 'COVID-19 related' but from information shared at morning briefings and provided by local residents, it is likely people were meeting in car parks and residential areas throughout the year. We certainly saw that first-hand at Knights Park and we're also aware of anti-social activity related to young adults parked up in vehicles in Showfields where we have now placed a camera.



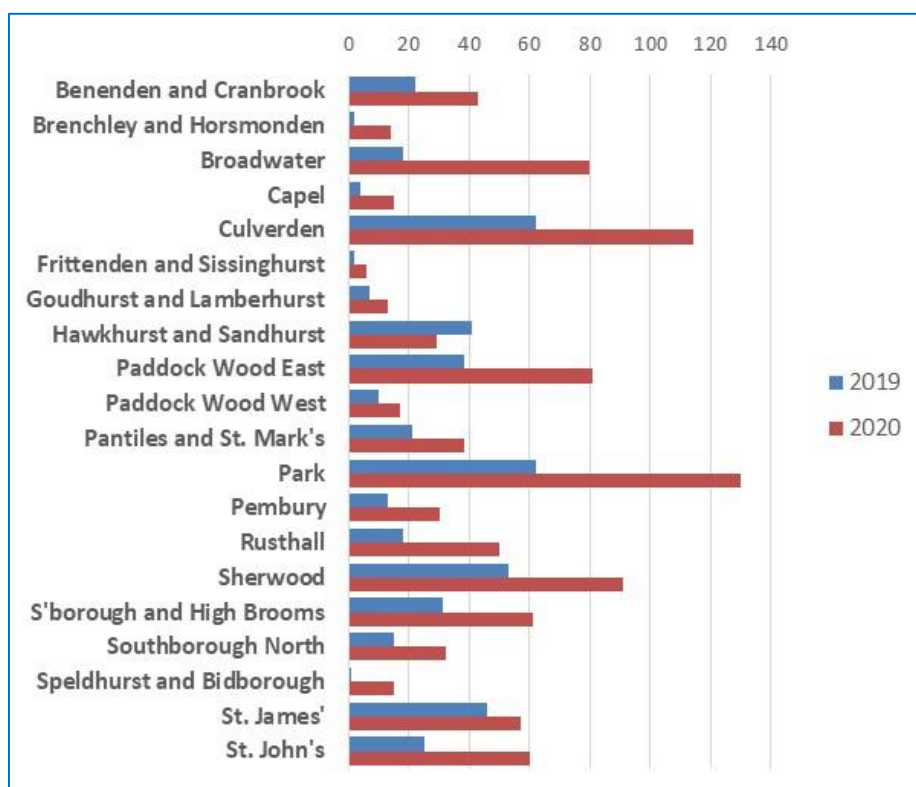
Motor vehicle nuisance on road, including noise



Neighbours - disputes / nuisance incl. noise (not noisy parties)

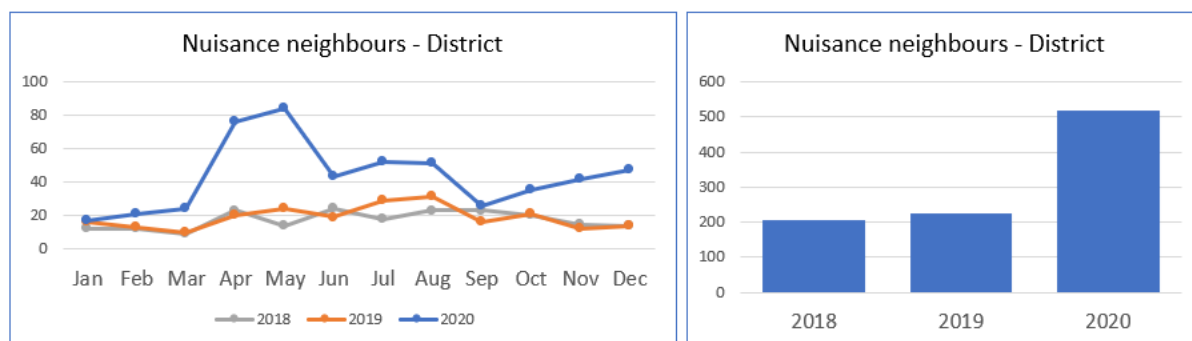


Drunken or rowdy behaviour

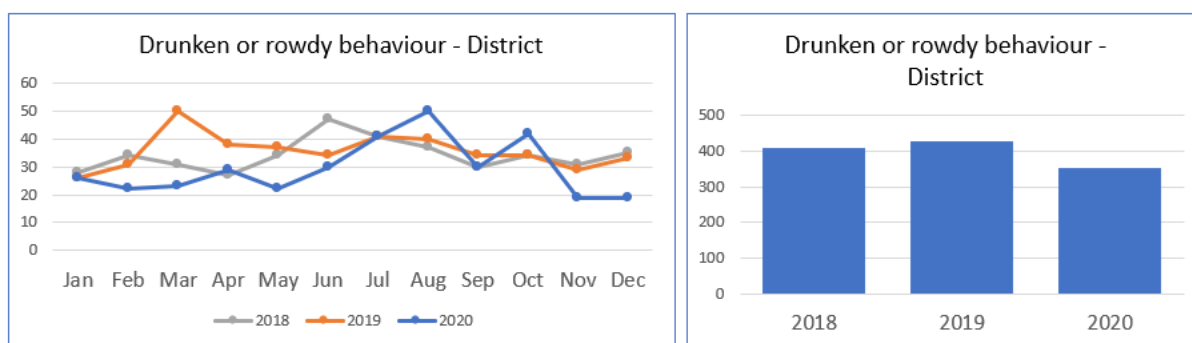


Rowdy or nuisance gathering in public / impeding public access

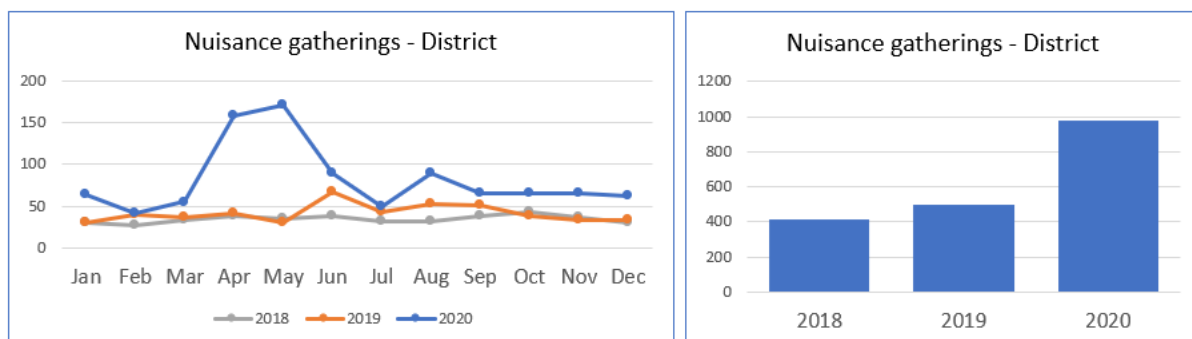
As one might expect calls related to **nuisance or noisy neighbours** increased dramatically in 2020 with more reports made than the two preceding years combined. Close to half of the increase were calls tagged as 'COVID-19 related' and this is reflected in the monthly graph below.



Reports of **drunken or rowdy behaviour** decreased during this 12-month period, though for this call-type perhaps not as much as we might have expected, but it's clear to see in the graph below a rise in calls, above previous levels, as the first lockdown eased. Just 32 calls in this category were tagged as COVID-19 related.



Clearly, there was a huge rise in **rowdy or nuisance gathering in public** in 2020 with calls relating to COVID-19 breaches making up the bulk of the increase, as mentioned above. The rise cuts across residential and retail areas but with town centre wards seeing the biggest increase. The graph below shows a clear up-tick at a time when gathering in public became an 'offence' and later, in August, when gathering in numbers was restricted.



Despite the restrictions, the Community Safety Team and the wider partnership maintained a good level of engagement with those residents who reported issues they were experiencing

or locations they felt were being abused during lockdowns and changeable restrictions related to public gatherings.

Other actions and activities of note undertaken during the year:

- Secured additional funding for Safe Town Partnership Christmas operation to tackle seasonal shoplifting and town centre anti-social behaviour.
- Secured additional funding to resolved nuisance vehicle issues at Knights Park through CCTV, police patrols and engagement with the landowner.
- Deployed cameras in several other key locations, including Dudley Road (fly-tipping), Showfields (vehicle nuisance and drug use). We also had load bearing test completed on a number of lamp columns for future CCTV deployment.
- Begun the process of resolving long-time issues at Sherwood Lake.
- Managed four unauthorised encampments (three in Paddock Wood and one in Southborough) following government 'remain in place' guidance. Three were eventually moved on by Kent Police, one left of their own accord.
- Two smaller 'all out' multi-agency evenings in Tunbridge Wells and Paddock Wood, in between lockdowns.
- Served a total of 21 Community Protection Warnings (CPW) for anti-social behaviour and related nuisance.
- Escalated one CPW to a Community Protection Notice for serious anti-social behaviour.
- Supported Kent Police in their pursuit of a Civil Injunction which has now been served on a known female.
- Uses JS Secure to patrol car parks and open spaces to good effect.
- Used St Giles Trust to engage directly with young people who were breaching lockdown rules.
- Working with Early Help initiated District Contextual Safeguarding protocols for protection of young people and open spaces.
- The three community safety team members also acted as Street Ambassadors during the summer reopening.

Worked with event organisers and key enforcement agencies to ensure events did or did not go ahead as conditions determined.

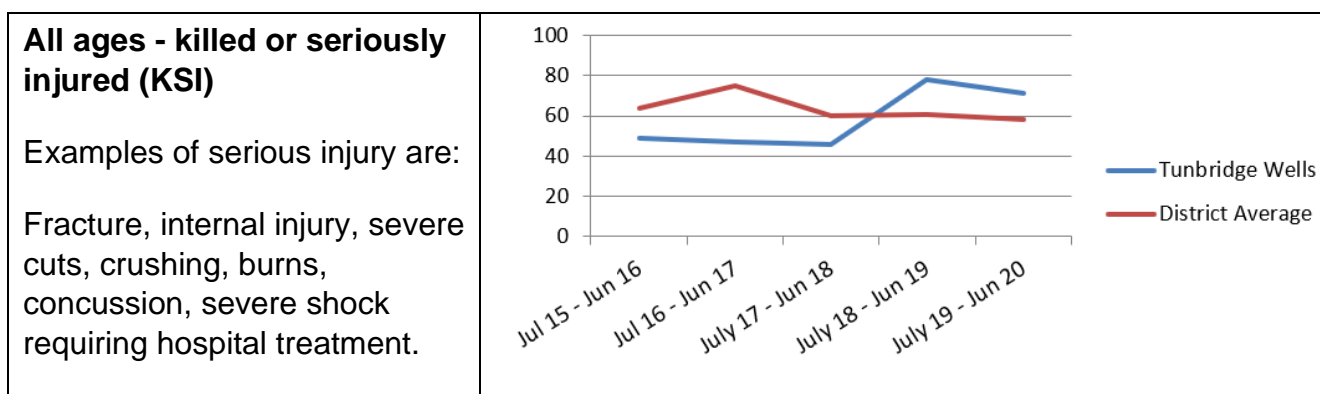
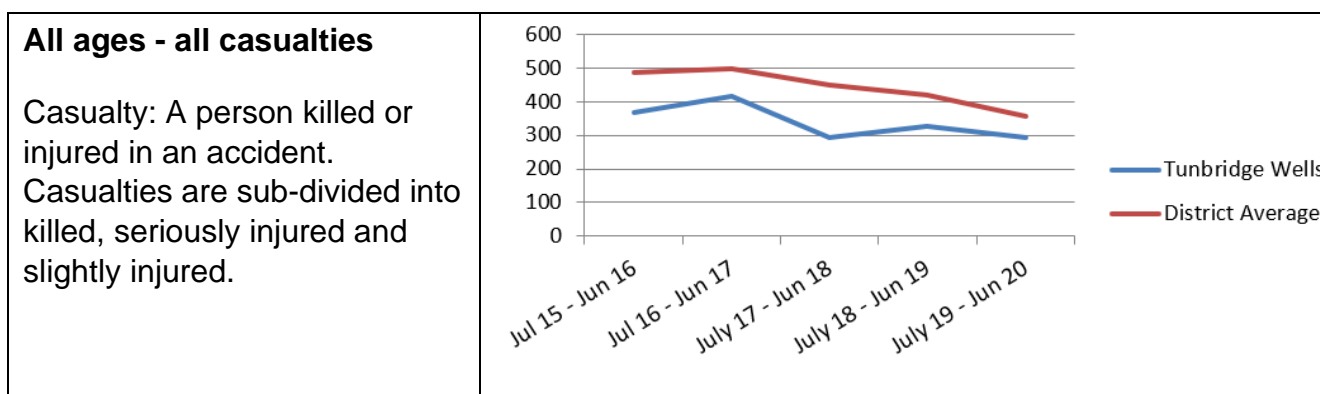
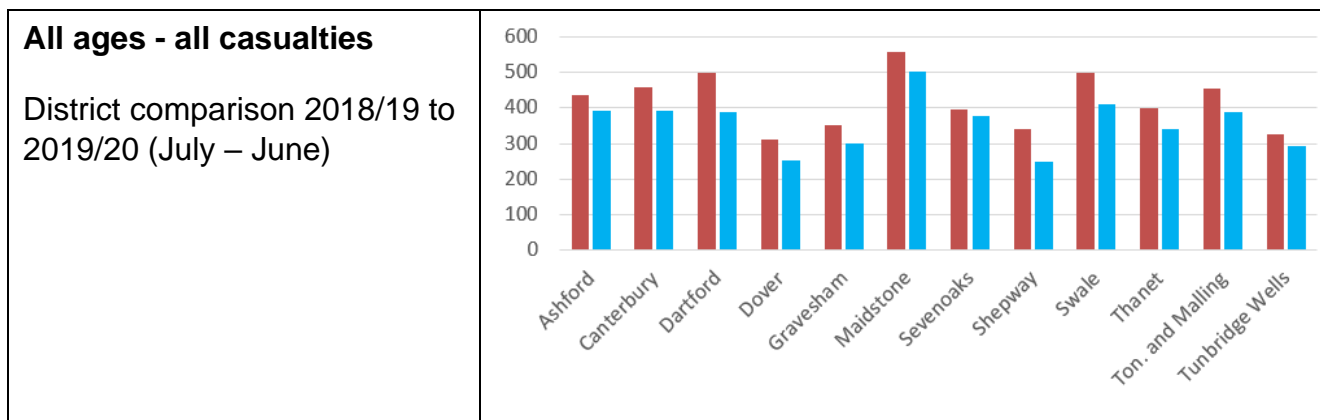
Priority 4: Road Safety

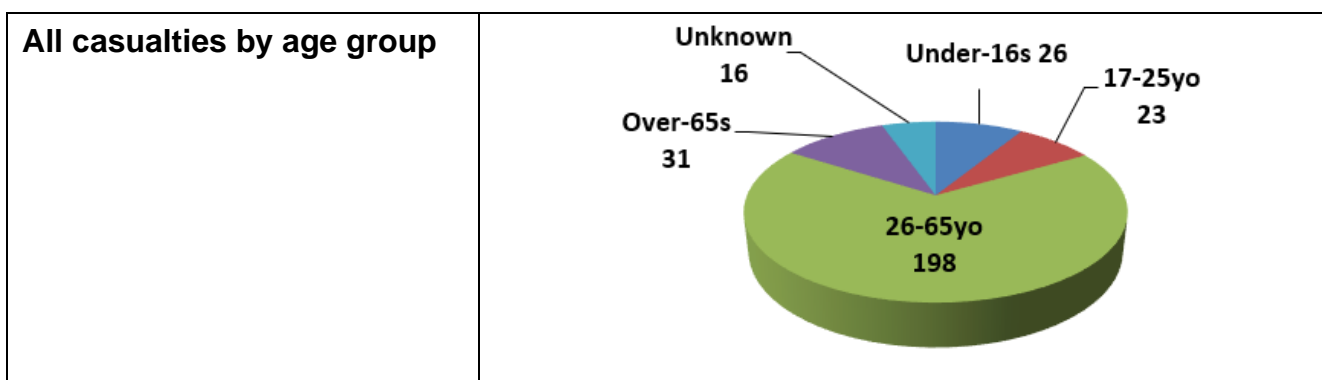
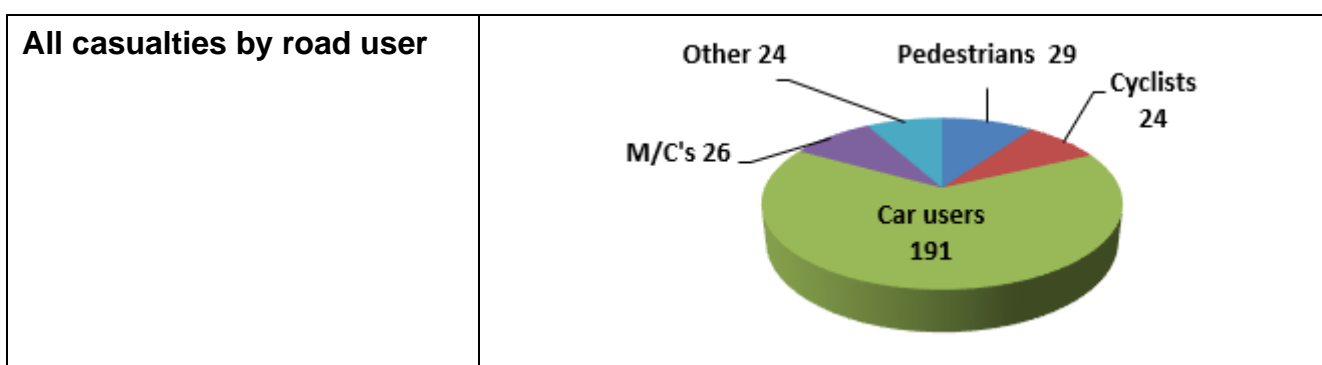
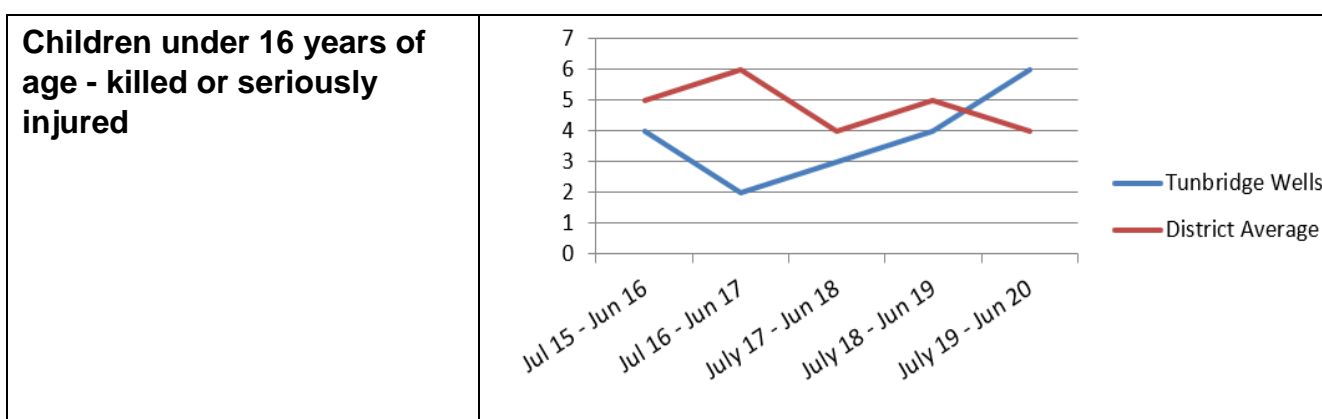
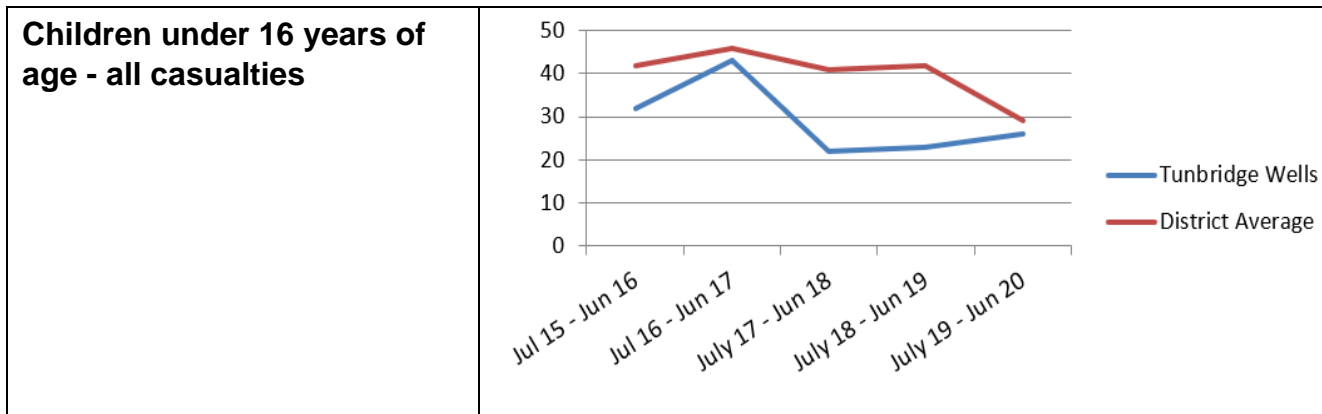
Current figures refer to the 12-month period from July 2019 – June 2020 unless stated.

Level of Concern: 294 Casualties (previous period 326)

Peer Comparison: Third best out of 12 Kent areas by volume

Annual Change: Decrease of 32 casualties (10%)



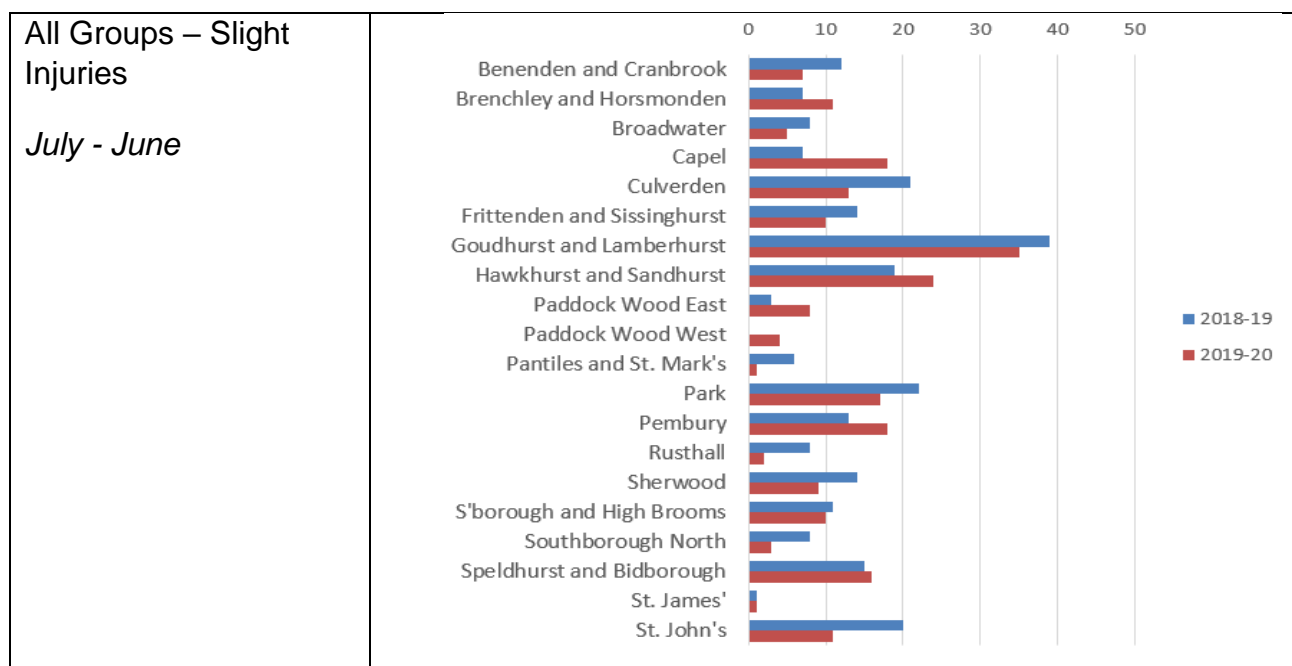
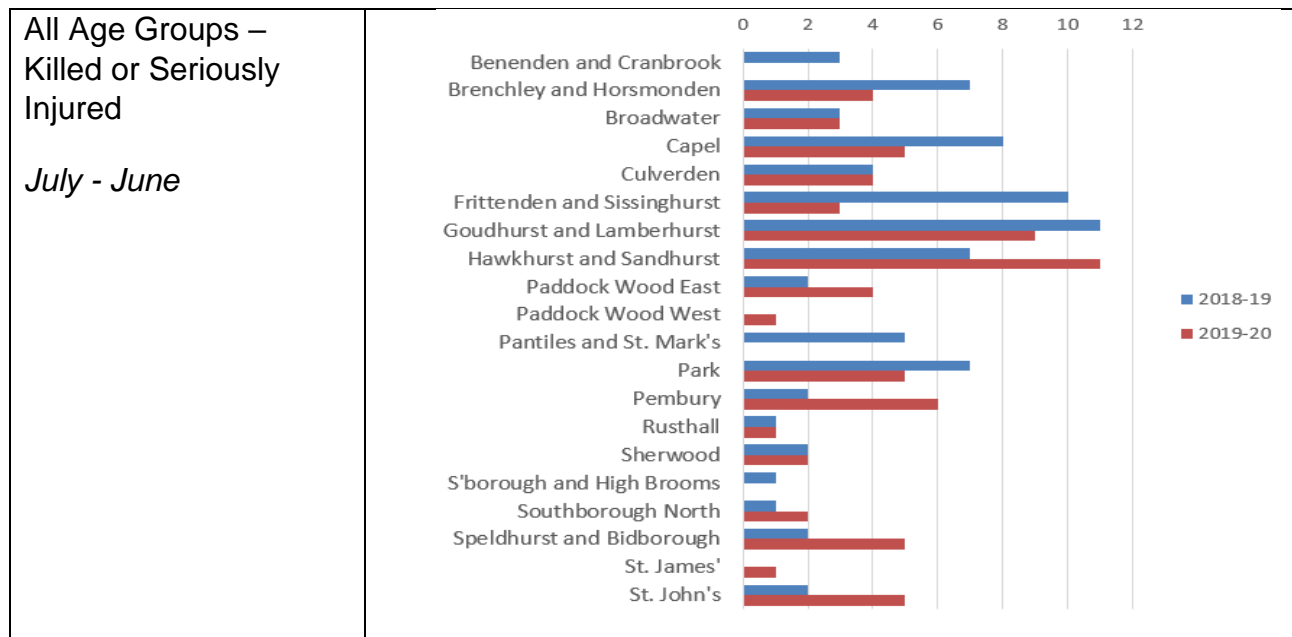


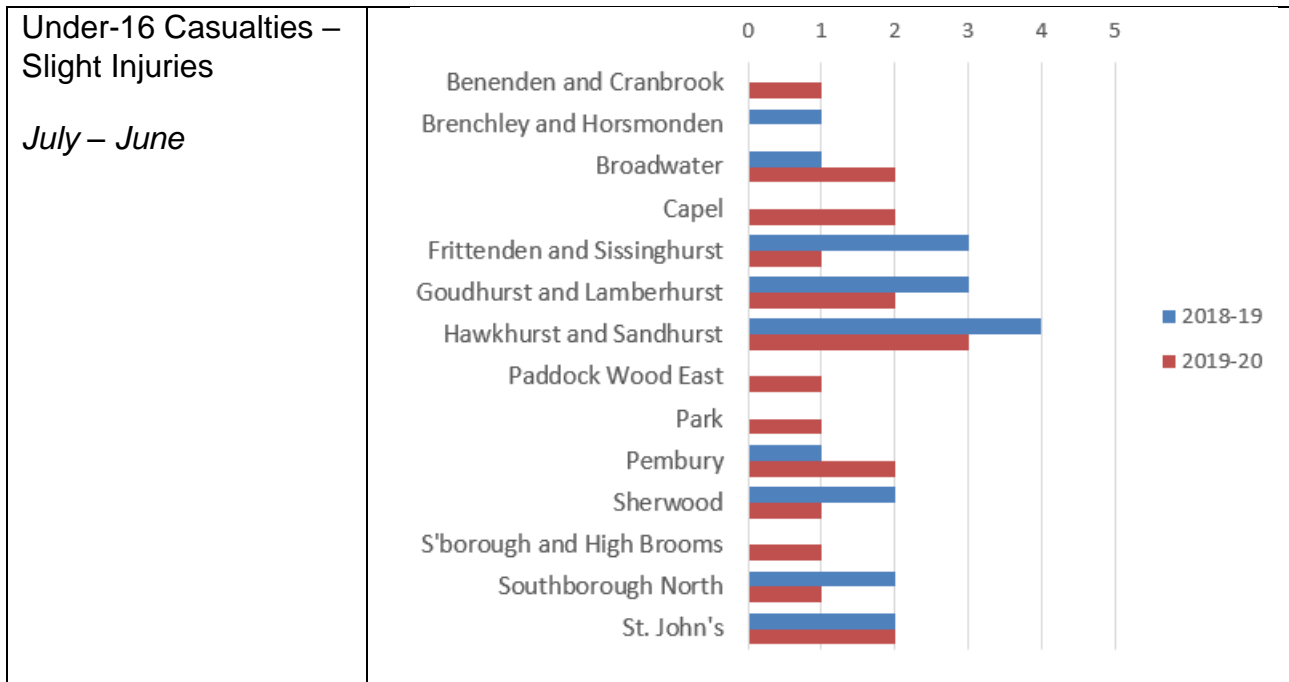
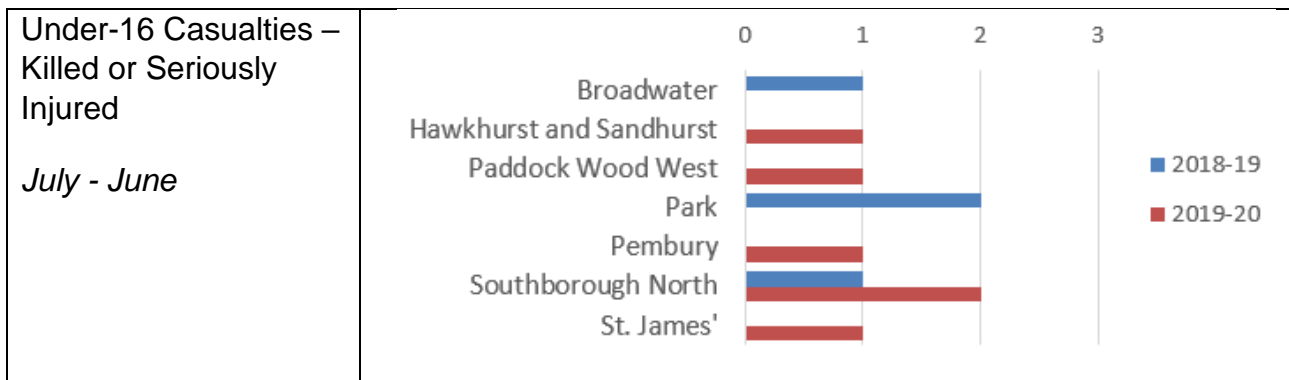
All Kent districts saw a reduction in casualties during the period July 2019 – June 2020 with the first strict lockdown likely contributing significantly to the reduction.

When calculated against population, Tunbridge Wells, returns to 2018 levels with 2.53 casualties per 1000 residents (previously, 2.8). The Kent average is 2.83 (previously, 3.34).

Ward reports

The charts below show the distribution of Killed or Seriously Injured and Slight Injuries across the borough over a two-year period. Where a bar or ward does not exist the count was zero.





Engagement opportunities were limited in 2020 with Salus' Safety in Action day cancelled and the annual Captain Safety theatre event unable to go ahead.

Some police enforcement did go ahead though, with all Tunbridge Wells Police Community Support Officers now trained to use speed detection devices. In December, with the county Road Safety Team, operations were run in Five Oak Green, Sissinghurst, Matfield, Brenchley and on Langton Road. Twenty-two Traffic Offence Reports (TORs) for exceeding the speed limit were generated during these operations. All TORs are evaluated by the traffic summons team who then decide whether to issue a penalty notice, a summons or other action (e.g., send driver on a speed awareness course, etc.).

Part 2 - Conclusion

This strategic assessment sets out the priorities that the Community Safety Partnership should focus on in 2021/22 and helps us to determine what services should be funded.

Crime figures are, as always, presented with a number of caveats, particularly with respect to long-term trends. This year especially we need to be mindful of the effects the events of 2020 had on some crime and anti-social behaviour data, as well as expected seasonal trends. However, we are fortunate to live in a low crime area and we're pleased the data shows Tunbridge Wells to be the safest place in Kent; albeit by small margins over our West Kent neighbours.

The year ahead will also present some challenges. High need domestic abuse cases are likely to continue to feature for some time, putting extra strain on support workers and service providers. Financial, academic and mental health difficulties will make matters worse, particularly for families with school-aged or younger children.

Poor mental health will also play a part in how some of our younger generation are able to return to normal behaviour, and this may have a negative effect within the household, school, college or within the public realm.

Our public spaces are likely to be 'flooded' with young people as soon as conditions allow, as we saw in late summer 2020. It's important for us to prepare for this with support from partners such as Kenward Trust, St Giles Trust, Project Salus, KCC Early Help, the Community Alcohol Partnership team, and of course Kent Police in terms of reassurance and enforcement.

Our one and only nightclub, in Newton Road, has closed its doors for good, which is unfortunate, but may enable a smoother reopening of the NTE – and is likely to be replaced in time. We still have several venues with late night / early morning licences so we can be hopeful that Tunbridge Wells will again become a late night focus in the West of the county.

In terms of the seriously negative effects on our residents from outside the borough, Organised Criminal Groups and County Line issues have been somewhat muted over the past twelve months. As of February 2021 there are no notable OCGs operating in the borough, or at least none that we are aware of, it should be added, as the Serious Crime Directorate expects such a vacuum is not a true representation.

Of the three OCGs that were being worked on most recently, two have seen a combined total of five members of their groups receiving substantial prison sentences while other members are no longer active in Tunbridge Wells. The third group, a South London drug-supply OCG are believed to have targeted areas other than Tunbridge Wells.

This is testament to a very pro-active and highly effective Community Policing Team. As recently as 12 February 2021 five members of an Albanian OCG aged between 23 and 35 received sentences ranging from three to seven years for conspiracy to supply cocaine.

More broadly, people struggling with substance or alcohol addiction before the pandemic are likely to have found new habits or new ways of coping which again will change as we come

out of lockdown – change for some people who will have found new coping mechanisms will not be welcomed.

By way of example, one morning in early February 2021 all the events or incidents (four) that were collated for the morning briefing were mental health related. In one incident a person was en route to the train station to “throw [themselves] under a train”. They were located by patrols and went voluntarily with the crisis team to Priority House. Another person claimed to have taken a dozen paracetamol and was walking near Cranbrook wanting to end their life. Another person claimed money had been stolen from their property while in hospital and believed police were involved in the break in. The final call was from a person who had self-harmed and had called a friend rather than wake up their partner and three-year-old child.

The CSU Sergeant has worked hard to form links with the Community Mental Health Team at Highlands House to ensure regular attendance at monthly Vulnerability Board meetings. This will be vital if we are to bring relief to victims suffering from episodic or worsening mental health issues and for others who will be affected by this, such as neighbours and residents using our public spaces.

In respect of homelessness, or more specifically, rough sleeping, our Housing Team have done an incredible job engaging with very hard-to-reach individuals who were determined to maintain their lifestyles during pre-pandemic times. Managing such individuals in temporary accommodation, including local hotels etc., has taken a Herculean effort from a multitude of agencies to good effect. However, it would not be a surprise if, as COVID-19 related provisions and restrictions are reduced, we see some hardy individuals return to rough sleeping and begging in the town centre.

This year we must renew our Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs) which expire in September. Orders last for a maximum of three years before they are either extended for a further three years or varied or discharged. We will begin this process early and with the benefit of a previous implementation.

Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse calls to Kent Police were initially expected to rise significantly. While this did not happen calls to the DAVSS helpline, which often were complex and ‘high need’, did increase by just under 400 across the calendar year. A moderate increase in caseloads were also graded as high need and was replicated in Sevenoaks and Tonbridge and Malling, where DAVSS also provide a point-of-crisis service.

While calls to police did not increase significantly, a study in a London borough by the Centre for Economic Performance published in November 2020 showed abuse by current partners and family members *did* increase by 8% and 17%, respectively. Within the same timeframe ex-partner abuse *declined* by 11%, suggesting the average change in domestic abuse reporting during lockdown is likely misleading.

The report goes on to show that almost all the increase in domestic abuse calls to the police was driven by third party reporting, with the lockdown likely to have trapped many victims with their abuser not giving them the opportunity to report abuse.

If such metrics can be applied elsewhere then we may expect a further increase in reports of domestic abuse during 2021/22 as the country returns to some form of normal. It is perhaps timely, then, that the new DA Bill will place a greater emphasis on support for victims of domestic abuse in refuges and applications for temporary accommodation.

We recommend Domestic Abuse is retained as a priority for 2021/22.

Drug Offences

As often mentioned in these assessments our position within Kent for drug offences has never looked very impressive on paper, but it is important to note that our Community Policing Team retains a strong focus on tackling drug use and local production, as well as those wishing to traffic class A drugs into the borough from other locations, the so-called County Lines or “going country”.

We will continue to deploy outreach workers to engage with young people in open spaces and key locations in Tunbridge Wells, Paddock Wood and elsewhere. While partner agencies CGL and We Are With You (formerly Addaction) are commissioned to address drug addiction with referred adults and young people. Kenward Trust also work on our behalf in schools in respect of drug use and underage drinking.

While the risk of being a victim of violence or knife crime in this borough is very low, incidents of violence are closely linked to drug supply and alcohol abuse. We’ve included violence-related issues and knife crime in the substance abuse priority as there may be opportunities this year to put in place some actions and activities to raise awareness within schools, the night-time economy and the general public.

A 2020 report for the Home Office (‘Review of Drugs’, Professor Dame Carol Black) provides a detailed analysis of the challenges posed by drug supply and demand, including the ways in which drugs fuel serious violence.

The report highlights a series of complex issues including the long-recognised strong associations between young people being drawn into county lines and increases in child poverty, family breakdown, the numbers of children in care, school exclusions and mental health needs. Funding cuts to treatment, youth work and frontline policing over the past decade have also played a key role.

This phase one report was commissioned to inform the government’s thinking on what more can be done to tackle the harm that drugs cause. It will be interesting to see how the policy phase develops, particularly in light of funding challenges brought about by the pandemic (the report was published in February 2020).

We recommend Substance and Alcohol Abuse is retained as a priority for 2021/22.

Anti-social Behaviour

Tunbridge Wells experienced a 58% increase in anti-social behaviour over the calendar year. A breakdown of the data showed that a large proportion of the reports relate to residents reporting perceived (or real) breaches of COVID-19 regulations. For example, rowdy or nuisance gathering in public is a sub-category of anti-social behaviour and calls to police increased by 429 (110%) in 2020. However, 377 of these were given a COVID-19 tag by the call taker.

Anti-social behaviour in town centre areas is often linked to excess alcohol intake or drug use in parks, car parks and other open spaces. Coupled with sensible use of deployable CCTV, visible outreach resources such as Early Help, Salus and St Giles Trust play a key role in maintaining Tunbridge Wells as a safe place to live, work and visit.

We have included violence-related issues in this priority to ensure we are sighted on the risks to the public, and young people themselves, of anti-social behaviour escalating to more serious public disorder, particularly with the high number of teenagers and young adults who frequent town centre open spaces. The potential for violent episodes to emerge from innocent gatherings must be considered in all our plans to tackle low-level disorder or when sending outreach workers to engage with young people and young adults wherever they choose to congregate.

We recommend Anti-social Behaviour is retained as a priority for 2021/22.

Road Safety

All areas of Kent experienced a reduction in casualties over the preceding period (July-June) as perhaps expected due to the restrictions placed upon travel to and from work as well as recreational travel.

The Community Safety Partnership works to educate young people, pedestrians and other road users through school engagements, theatre and social media. We engage with Community Speed Watch who attempt, with varying degrees of success, to encourage drivers to stay within speed limits in known 'hotspot' areas and to enforce compliance, where possible, with police assistance.

Opportunities to engage with older residents and for partnership work with KFRS may return this year, and perhaps by Road Safety Week in November we can make use of the theatre for a performance of Captain Safety for our younger residents.

Although the data does not necessarily support Road Safety as a particular priority for Tunbridge Wells, it is a concern for residents and there may be actions we can take to try to influence people's behaviour. It is also possible that the soon-to-be introduced near-miss register will generate opportunities for localised awareness-raising campaigns.

We recommend Road Safety is retained as a priority for 2021/22.

Recommended Priorities for 2021/22

1. Domestic Abuse
2. Substance Misuse and Supply, and Alcohol Abuse (inc. violence-related issues and knife crime)
3. Anti-social and High-risk Behaviour (including violence-related issues)
4. Road Safety