

**Reading's  
Community Safety  
Partnership**

**Community Safety  
and Serious  
Violence Strategy  
2023 - 2026**

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## Forward

It gives us great pleasure in introducing Reading's new 3-year Community Safety and Serious Violence Strategy. This strategy builds upon with work undertaken by Reading's Community Safety Partnership since its formation.

No one agency can tackle crime, particularly in the current economic climate. In Reading, we believe that crime and its causes can only be tackled through partnership working, with a public health approach.

In addition to statutory requirements of Community Safety Partnerships to undertake strategic assessments and produce plans setting out how they will address issues of crime and disorder in their local areas, the introduction of the new Serious Violence Duty sets out further requirements for local areas to have a dedicated focus and plan for tackling serious violence. Our Partnership has already taken steps to prepare for this new Duty following a number of devastating knife related deaths in Reading over the last 2 years and the partnership is committed to tackling knife crime and ensuring the prevention of further loss of life and serious injury.

Through consultation, listening to local communities and capturing the voices of young people in a way that we haven't before, we are able to hear first-hand their concerns and what action they would like to happen in order to improve the quality of their neighbourhoods. These concerns, together with the lessons learned, the success and good practice from previous strategies, have also fed into the latest strategic assessment, ensuring that Reading's residents influence the priorities we have identified.

Superintendent Steve Raffield  
Reading Local Police Commander

Cllr Karen Rowland  
Lead Councillor for  
Environmental Services  
and Community Safety

# 1. Introduction.

## The Partnership.

Reading's Community Safety Partnership consists of Reading Borough Council, Thames Valley Police (Reading Local Police Area), The Probation Service (South Central), Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, Buckingham, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care System (BOB ICS), Brighter Futures for Children and representatives from Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust, along with a range of partners from Reading's thriving Voluntary and Community Sector.

## Our Duties.

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 place a number of duties on local authorities, the police and key partners to develop and implement strategies and plans setting out how they will tackle community safety and serious violence issues in their local areas Reading's Community Safety Partnership Executive Group oversees the delivery of these core functions and has oversight of each Community Safety Plan.

## Delivery of our duties - where we are.

The delivery of Reading's Community Safety Strategy 2018 -2022, which ended in 2022, was hampered by the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic, however, the Partnership has continued to work together to tackle issues that are of most concern to local residents.

The delivery of Reading's previous Community Safety Plans have been overseen by Reading's Community Safety Partnership Executive Group, since the partnership's formation, however, in the last 2 years, this group has not functioned as effectively as expected, due to the COVID pandemic and a several changes of the Executive Group Chair.

In response to this, the Executive Group conducted a review in 2021 of how it operates, which resulted in the strengthening of the Executive Group's Terms of Reference and the determination to embed a consistent approach to carrying out robust strategic assessments and developing and delivering outcome focussed plans to ensuring the whole partnership are involved in making Reading a safer place.

As a result of this refresh, the CSP also solidified its overarching responsibilities and oversight of the following Boards:

- **Prevent Management Board**
- **Domestic Abuse Partnership Board, including Reading related Domestic Homicide Reviews**

- Youth Justice Partnership Board
- Serious Violence Steering Group

The Partnership has also aligned itself with the following Boards to support the delivery of outcomes to address combined priorities:

- One Reading Partnership
- Health and Wellbeing Board
- Berkshire West Safeguarding Childrens Board
- Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel

## 2. What has happened across the partnership to tackle issues of crime and disorder in the last 3 years

- Installed knife amnesty bins in key locations in the town to encourage people to surrender bladed articles.
- The Council's Public Health Team commissioned a comprehensive drug & alcohol service which has ambition for sustained recovery and is visible for individuals, families and communities by working in partnership with a range of stakeholders in Reading.
- The Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Team led on the local delivery of ASB Awareness Week over the last 2 years, which now forms part of its annual programme of activities. Each week included a range of activities take place in Reading during ASB week, including Love Your Neighbourhood Events and promotional activity about how to report ASB
- Key partners, including Reading Council and Thames Valley Police introduced a Serious Violence Steering Group to implement and monitor a public health approach across the partnership to reduce violent crime in the town.
- In response to the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, Reading's Domestic Abuse Steering Group reformed to become a Partnership Board and is responsible for the delivery of the new Domestic Abuse & Safe Accommodation Strategy 2023 - 2026. The membership of this group is extensive, with representation from both voluntary and community sector and statutory partners.
- 1000 Taxi Drivers have been delivered Exploitation Training by Brighter Futures for Children
- The Community Alcohol Partnership has conducted Retailer Test purchasing and Free Training - Using these operations to check that Retailers are adhering to the Law around not Selling Alcohol to young people and offering them free training to help them be compliant.
- One Reading Children and Young People's Partnership developed an Extra Familial Harm Strategy, which set out how the partnership will respond to increasingly complex challenges that young people face outside of their home in wider contexts. This strategy has since been reproduced by the Young Voices group as a version for young people.

- Reading Borough Council, Thames Valley Police and the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner implemented initiatives to tackle neighbourhood crime in 2 areas of the town following a successful Safer Streets 2 bid.
- Op Operation Rusk is the Thames Valley Police response to several incidents of serious violence in Tilehurst. The police are working with partners to tackle street dealers, drug lines and those responsible for violent crime. This is long-term work to improve the quality of life for local residents.
- Project Vigilant is a ground-breaking initiative led by Thames Valley Police. We are using a range of tactics and working closely with other agencies, especially in Reading town centre, to tackle those perpetrators who commit violence against women and girls.
- Reading's delivery of the Prevent Duty was assessed by the Home Office to be performing well across the benchmarks of the Duty and considered it an example of good practice for an unfunded area in 2022.

### 3. Reading's Community Safety and Serious Violence Strategy 2023 - 2026.

#### Our Approach.

Reading's Community Safety Partnership has taken the decision to combine its Community Safety and Serious Violence Strategies due to the priorities and activities required to address them being so closely linked. In preparing this strategy, extensive work has been undertaken to understand crime levels and patterns and where possible, underlying causes of these issues, which have helped inform the development of the priorities for Reading's Community Safety Partnership over the next three years.

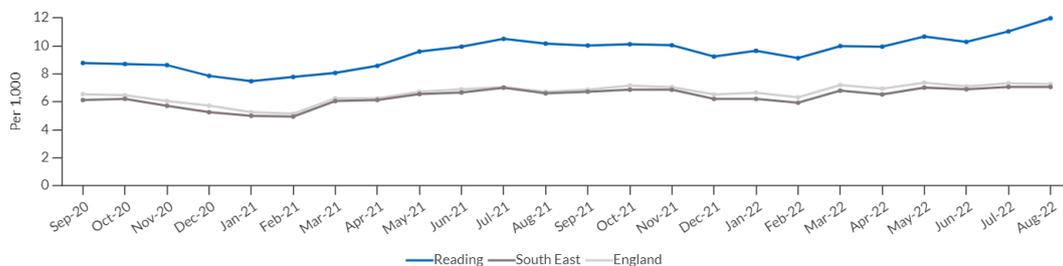
In developing our priorities, we have also taken into consideration other strategies and plans, at both a local, Thames Valley Wide and regional level to ensure that we are aligned and there is not duplication of activity and more importantly, there are not gaps in addressing the issues that we have identified as being a priority.

#### At a glance - What we know about our Borough

	<p>Total estimated population of Reading 174,200 (Census 2021)</p>
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	<p>Total estimated number of households 67,700 (Census 2021)</p>
	<p>Reading has a strong economy with a highly skilled workforce, based on technology, professional services and science. Its job density measurement in 2020 was 1.2 jobs per resident aged between 16-64.</p>
<p>Graphic to be selected.</p>	<p>10 neighbourhoods in Reading are within the most deprived 20% in England</p> <p>5 of which are within the most deprived 10%</p>
	<p>Total number of crimes (Sep-21 - Aug-22) 19,741 (122 per 1,000 persons)</p>

Crime Rates per 1000 population.



### Reading’s Community Safety and Serious Violence Strategic Assessment.

The Community Safety Partnership undertook a Strategic Assessment during the spring and summer of 2022, which has informed us about the crime and anti-social behaviour issues, trends and emerging themes, that have informed the development of this strategy.

The Strategic Assessment highlighted that crime in Reading decreased in 2020/21 by 11% compared to the previous year, reversing a previously persistent upward trend. This reduction is likely to be attributable to nationwide lockdowns and restrictions imposed in response to the coronavirus pandemic to varying degrees throughout 2020/21. However, it is

impossible to quantify the level of 'hidden' crime that occurred during this period.

Although Reading is one of the 3 top crime generating CSP areas in Thames Valley Community Safety Partnership, the CSP is consistently around average when its crime levels are compared to other similar Community Safety Partnership areas across the country, therefore, crime levels are not importunately higher compared to similar areas.

Violence against the person, despite a small decrease, is now the highest volume crime type in Reading, following continued decreases in Acquisitive crime, however, acquisitive crimes, including theft from person, robbery & domestic burglary, are still the second highest recorded crime types in Reading. Public disorder and Drugs offences are the only crime types to increase despite the coronavirus pandemic related restrictions imposed.

Serious violence incidents are also increasing year on year, with Actual Bodily Harm (ABH) and Assault without Injury incidents increasing. Although the proportion of recorded crime in Reading that is recorded as a knife crime is just 2%, the number of recorded knife crimes has increased in 2020/21.

At the time of writing the Strategic Assessment, Reading had the second highest levels of serious violence in the Thames Valley and the highest levels in Berkshire. The number of serious violence incidents recorded by the police have increased year on year, include several homicides in 2020/21, and A&E admissions due to violence have increased in Reading despite national and regional decreases.

Knife carrying among young people has anecdotally been linked to self-preservation and fear of victimization, rather than links with gangs. 24% of under 18s suspected of serious violence had been a suspect of a police investigation in the previous 2 years, while 21% of victims of serious violence had also been a suspect and had flags indicating adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).

Hate crime hasn't changed significantly, despite efforts to improve reporting and recording practices, however 80% are recorded as crimes. These crimes vary according to the targeted community, with Transgender, Black, and White British victims most likely to experience Violence than other victims.

Reading is currently designated as a low-risk area in terms of the terrorist threat in the UK. However, it is imperative to be aware that due to the nature of terrorism attacks which are most likely to be self-initiated attacks, such as the tragic terrorist attack in Forbury Gardens in June 2020, no area is risk free.

## What you told us: Community Safety & Residents Surveys.

The bi-annual Community Safety Survey was conducted between 25 October 2021 to 3 December 2021 using the online consultation and survey tool, Citizen Space. The key headlines from the survey were:

- The perception of the level of crime had increase, with 49% of the responders stating that they believed levels of crime are high or very high. This has increase from 33% in 2019 and 23% in 2017.
- 50% said they felt crime had increased over the last 2 years compared with 42% in 2019 and 34% in 2017.
- Top 5 borough-wide priorities identified by residents are
  1. Drugs
  2. Parking issues
  3. Motorbike and vehicle nuisance
  4. Flytipping
  5. Burglary.

In addition to these formal surveys, Reading's Safer Streets project team conducted a short perception survey in preparation for its Safer Streets 4 bid to determine how safe people feel in the Town Centre. Over 500 people responded to the survey with the majority of people identifying anti-social behaviour - including illegal drug activity and sexual harassment - in key hotspot areas of the town centre. Many of the respondents stated they did not feel safe in the daytime and night-time, due to harassment and intimidation. During this consultation piece, the Project Group held conversations with local businesses, many of whom said their staff did not feel safe walking alone to car parks or sometimes even through the town centre.

## Regional priorities:

### South Central Probation Reducing Reoffending plan 2022 - 2025

The South Central Reducing Reoffending Plan sets out the key objectives and outcomes for the Prison and Probation Service in the South Central region intends to deliver over the next three years to reduce reoffending. Its priorities are:

- Training, skills and work
- Drugs and alcohol addiction
- Family, accommodation and readjustment to society
- Public security through engagement and compliance

### Thames Valley's Police and Criminal Justice Plan 2021 - 2025.

Thames Valley's Police and Crime Commissioner, Matthew Barber, published his 4-year Police and Criminal Justice Plan in 2021. The Plan sets out 5 priorities that the Police and Crime Commissioner will focus on, with victims are the heart of the heart of these priorities:

- Strong Local Policing - preventing crime and protecting communities
- Fighting Serious Organised Crime - protecting vulnerable people
- Improving the criminal justice system - reducing reoffending
- Fighting fraud and cyber-crime - fighting modern crimes
- Tackling illegal encampments - enforcing with partners.

This strategy and plan align with the priorities set out in Thames Valley's Police and Criminal Justice Plan.

### **Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit.**

The Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit (TVVRU) was set up in 2019 as one of 20 across England and Wales in those areas with the highest levels of serious violence. The TVVRU has identified its core function as providing leadership and strategic coordination the local response to serious violence, working with a wide partnership across Thames Valley to do this.

### **Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Corporate Plan and Integrated Risk Management Plan 2019 - 2023.**

This plan sets out Royal Berkshire Fire Authority's high-level activity for the duration of the plan, which is underpinned by the following commitments:

- We will provide education and advice on how to prevent fires and other emergencies.
- We will ensure a swift and appropriate response when called to emergencies.
- We will provide advice, consultation and enforcement in relation to fire safety standards in buildings.
- We will seek opportunities to contribute to a broader safety, health and wellbeing agenda, whilst delivering our core functions.
- We will ensure that RBFRS provides good value for money.
- We will work with Central Government and key stakeholders in the interests of the people of Royal Berkshire.

## **4. Priorities for the next 3 years.**

Based on our needs assessment, what local residents have told us and what the wider partnership plans have set out, Reading's Community Safety Partnership has identified the following priorities for this strategy.

- Reduce crime in the top crime-generating neighbourhoods
- Improve the way the Community Safety Partnership works with communities to tackle anti-social behaviour and hate crime.
- Reduce community-based drug related activity.
- Reduce knife violence, including the carrying of blades and their use in crime.
- Tackle organised crime gangs transporting illegal drugs across Reading’s borders, also known as ‘county lines’ offending.
- Improve safety for women in public places and reduce sexually focused crimes and anti-social behaviour.
- Develop a strategy and plan to reduce persistent offending.

#### How will we tackle our Priorities?

This Strategy will be accompanied by a Community Safety & Serious Violence Plan, which will be delivered through a number of delivery groups, reporting into the Community Safety Partnership Executive Group. The Community Safety Partnership acknowledges that this Strategy is being launched at a time, when public finances are considerably impacted and when there are resourcing challenges across the partnership, both factors of which impact on its response to tackling crime and disorder across Reading. In response to these challenges, the Partnership is committed delivering a realistic and achievable plan and to ensure more effective and efficient use of the resources each agency has to tackle crime and disorder collaboratively.

Underpinning all of these priorities is the need to embed a strong communication strategy to ensure that residents feel well informed about what is happening to tackle issues of crime and disorder and promote reporting mechanisms and make best use of data available to the partnership to ensure resources are effectively utilised to achieve successful outcomes for these outcomes.

### 5. Reading Community Safety Partnership’s Approach.

As a partnership, we have refined our approach to tackling the priorities that have been identified in this strategy and our approach will be underpinned by following principles:

Public Health Approach	Reading’s Community Safety Partnership adopts the World Health Organisation’s definition of
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	<p>a public health approach to reducing violence:</p> <p>‘Seeks to improve the health and safety of all individuals by addressing underlying risk factors that increase the likelihood that an individual will become a victim or a perpetrator of violence. By definition, public health aims to provide the maximum benefit for the largest number of people. Programmes for primary prevention of violence based on the public health approach are designed to expose a broad segment of a population to prevention measures and to reduce and prevent violence at a population-level.’</p>
Improved Community Engagement and Communication	The partnership is committed to improving how it communicates and engages with local residents in relation to crime and serious violence, ensuring information about how to report crime, anti-social, what action is being taken to tackle these issues and how local communities can be part of the problem solving approach is readily available.
Effective partnership collaboration	The partnership will ensure effective collaboration and information sharing to tackle issues of crime and serious violence and have in place problem solving forums to allow for this approach.
Victim Support	The partnership is committed to ensuring victims are supported and that signposting to support services is clear and accessible.
Continuing to be a Trauma Informed Town	The partnership will continue to support the aim to make Reading a Trauma Informed Town, ensuring that staff across the agencies are aware of the wider impact of trauma and that all efforts are made to prevent the re-traumatisation of individuals in service settings that are there to support and heal clients.

Whilst we will maintain the use of delivery mechanisms, there will be more of a focus on task and finish groups to achieve our outcomes.

## **6. Governance and measuring success.**

The Community Safety Partnership Executive Group will oversee the delivery of this strategy and its associated plan. The launch of this strategy will see the introduction of a new Performance Group which will oversee the action plan and task and finish and delivery groups that will lead on their respective elements of the action plan, as well as monitor crime levels, trends and the overall performance across the work of the CSP.

The CSP will report into Reading Borough Council's Housing, Neighbourhood and Leisure Committee at least annually basis to provide an update on its activity and performance.