



Safer Harlow Partnership

Achievements 2020/2021

The Safer Harlow Partnership (SHP) is the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) for Harlow - a statutory partnership of agencies and groups working together to reduce and prevent crime and disorder and improve the lives of people living and working in the town. The Partnership is led by the responsible authorities (Harlow Council, Essex Police, Essex County Council, Essex County Fire & Rescue Service, West Essex Clinical Commissioning Group; and the Probation Service) but also includes many other local private, community and voluntary organisations.

Harlow is part of the West Essex Local Policing Area, along with Epping Forest, Brentwood and Thurrock.

Partnership Structure

The Chair of the SHP is the Chief Executive of Harlow Council, Brian Keane and the Chair of the Responsible Authorities Group (RAG) is Jane Greer, Head of Community and Wellbeing at Harlow Council.

In 20120/21 the SHP was supported by five priority subgroups. Each subgroup has an operational action plan detailing what work will be undertaken in order to help achieve the objectives of the Partnership.

Safer Harlow Partnership priorities for 2020/21 were:-

ASB/Crime – tackle and reduce anti-social behaviour and crime in its different forms across the town. Promote reporting pathways and responsible reporting to help protect individuals, groups and communities from the impact of ASB and crime.

Domestic Abuse – raise awareness and understanding of domestic abuse; help to ensure that professionals are trained appropriately to be able to recognise signs and signpost victims to effective support services.

Gangs and County Lines – raise awareness and understanding of gangs and better understand the links to knife crime, drugs and serious youth violence. Tackle and reduce gang crime; detect and disrupt County Lines activity and identify and tackle the exploitation of children and young people through gangs and organised crime groups.

Hate Crime – raise awareness of Hate Crime and the impact it can have on individuals and communities. Promote reporting pathways; encourage responsible reporting and, by raising greater public awareness and understanding, seek to reduce the number of people affected by this type of crime.

Permitted Development housing – to better understand the issues faced by people living in this type of accommodation and work with partners to ensure appropriate support is provided where possible. Deal effectively with crime, ASB and Domestic Abuse taking place in permitted development housing sites. Develop mutually effective working relationships and information exchange with landlords and partner agencies. Work closely with Essex County Council to develop and implement protocols to ease, and eventually stop, the flow of vulnerable families in to this type of accommodation in Harlow and across Essex.

Safer Harlow Partnership
Meets twice a year



Responsible Authorities Group
Meets four times a year



Priority Subgroups

ASB and Crime	Domestic Abuse Forum	Gangs Advisory Group	Hate Crime	Permitted Development Housing
All priority subgroups are multi-agency and meet quarterly				

Each year the SHP is awarded a Community Safety Partnership Grant by the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC) to fund activity to address identified priorities. This grant is used to tackle priority issues that have been identified as a result of working together with our partners and communities.

Over the last year, partners have also focused on the impact of COVID-19 and, where relevant and possible, resources were directed towards new or different priorities that emerged as a result of the pandemic. Due to Government guidelines in respect of social distancing and the work from home rules, it was inevitable that some planned projects would not be able to go ahead but despite this the annual PFCC grant was allocated through the priority subgroups and utilised to address identified priorities where it was most needed and would have the greatest impact.

In this report we have highlighted just some of the excellent partnership work that took place between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021. Positive outcomes from projects, awareness raising campaigns, staff training and new priority focused initiatives have all contributed towards a safer Harlow where people can enjoy living, working and visiting in a safe and pleasant environment.

ASB and Crime

The ASB and Crime subgroup utilised funding to purchase crime prevention resources to help protect people's property from theft. This included shed and garage alarms; light timer switches; purse bells to prevent older people in particular from becoming victims of theft; safety wallets to protect bank and credit cards from skimming and unauthorised use by criminals and a range of crime prevention stickers for distribution across the community.

Portable CCTV units were purchased for use by the police to help protect vulnerable households from ASB and crime and to help identify offenders and provide evidence to support successful prosecutions through the criminal justice system. Cameras have been installed at the homes of two vulnerable residents since the project began and this resulted in the ASB ceasing within the first month following installation - the residents now feel happier and more secure in their homes.

Due to an increase in ASB and crime in the town centre, funding was used for the installation of new CCTV and the extension of existing CCTV schemes to ensure better coverage in a number of areas. This investment will assist in the detection of ASB and crime; help identify perpetrators; ensure people feel and indeed are safer in the town centre and aid the successful identification and prosecution of offenders. These improvements were achieved by close partnership working between Essex Police and the Council's Community Safety Team and as a result of this work, in the first few months following installation of the new CCTV, evidence was gathered to assist action being taken against over twenty individuals in the form of Community Protection Warnings/Notices, Fixed Penalty Notices and Criminal Behaviour Orders.

The subgroup also utilised funding to deliver a 'Bang out of Order' campaign that was launched on Harlow Council's social media platforms. The campaign aimed to raise awareness of the dangers of the misuse of fireworks and the impact of ASB on vulnerable people over the Halloween and Bonfire Night period and reached over 23,000 people through Facebook; more than 2,200 on Instagram and over 5,700 people on Twitter.



Domestic Abuse

This priority subgroup is known as the Harlow Domestic Abuse Forum (HDAF). Its main aim is to raise awareness and understanding of Domestic Abuse; support professionals to access training opportunities that will help them work safely and effectively with victims and perpetrators; ensure victims and members of the public know how to report concerns about Domestic Abuse and how they can access support services.

This year HDAF utilised PFCC funding to deliver four 'Domestic Abuse Co-ordinated Community Response' (DACCR) training webinars to over 120 Harlow based professionals across a range of statutory and non-statutory agencies including police, social care, schools, fire service, housing providers and various local support agencies. Delivered online by Safer Places these Masterclasses aimed to increase professional's understanding and awareness in the following areas:

- DASH Risk Assessment
- Stalking
- Coercive Control
- A whole family approach to working with Domestic Abuse

Feedback from participants was excellent:

- DASH 63% - knowledge and understanding increased a great deal
- Stalking 100% - knowledge and understanding increased a great deal
- Coercive Control 100% - knowledge and understanding increased a great deal
- Whole family approach 43% - knowledge and understanding increased a great deal

Feedback also included the following comments from participants:

'It has given me a better awareness of how to support someone should they be affected by stalking'

'I will be able to advice and support clients a lot better'

'This has made such a fantastic difference in my knowledge. I want to learn more!!'

'I just wanted to say that I have found all of the sessions absolutely invaluable'

HDAF also saw the development and delivery of Harlow's first ever 'Blooming Strong Woman' awards as part of a range of activity during Domestic Abuse Awareness Week. These awards celebrated Harlow women who have shown great personal strength either by surviving in an abusive relationship; leaving a relationship and starting out again, often with little or no resources; working to support victims of Domestic Abuse and those that have shown great strength and courage in response to other significant challenges in their life.

The forum aims to build on this year's introduction of the award and grow them bigger and better next year. (Due to the nature of these awards the nominees are approached sensitively and the identity of all nominees and award winners is kept confidential.)

The forum continues to have a strong focus on raising awareness of the J9 domestic abuse initiative which aims to help victims safely seek help and signposting to relevant support agencies. It will also continue to focus on promoting Clare's Law, also known as the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme, which is intended to provide information that could protect someone from being a victim of abuse. The scheme allows the police, in certain circumstances, to disclose information on request about a partner's previous history of domestic violence or violent acts.

Gangs

This priority subgroup, known as the Harlow Gangs Advisory Group (GAG) was set up in response to partners growing concerns about the increase in the supply of drugs in Harlow and across Essex via County Lines and the potential for increased gang activity locally as a result. County Lines can involve gang members from London and other cities travelling to Harlow with the sole intention of grooming/recruiting new members and establishing new drug lines by exploiting children and vulnerable adults.

This multi-agency group continues to work to achieve the following -

- Better understanding of the 'local picture' and context in relation to Gangs, County Lines and serious youth violence
- Prevention of criminal exploitation of children and adults at risk
- Provision of training opportunities for professionals to raise levels of awareness and understanding and know how best to support children and young people
- Development of awareness raising, early intervention and prevention provision to reduce the likelihood of children and young people becoming involved in gangs and/or County Lines
- Effective disruption, enforcement and cross border working to reduce the impact of gangs and County Lines in Harlow and across Essex

In 2020/21 PFCC funding was utilised by the GAG to undertake the following activity:

Crucial Crew – due to the pandemic the Partnership was unable to deliver a face to face Crucial Crew event this year. Instead, Harlow Council worked with other Essex Councils and TICBOX Productions to develop and deliver a virtual event that was available to all year 6 pupils in every primary school in Harlow. Delivered in April, this year's event focussed specifically on Grooming, Child Exploitation and County Lines and consisted of a pre-recorded theatre piece depicting a child's experience of being groomed for the purposes of criminal exploitation and involvement in County Lines.

This was followed up by an interactive online workshop where, in the presence of their class teacher, pupils had the opportunity to work through some of the issues raised in the film.

Places were offered to 1,298 pupils and around 1044 were able to participate. Unfortunately some classes were in isolation so could not attend their allocated session; one school could not attend due to an amended timetable to accommodate social distancing over the lunchtime period and one school declined to participate for other reasons. Those pupils that could not attend in April will be offered a further opportunity later in the year. This year's virtual event aimed to:

- raise awareness and understanding of important exploitation issues that children and young people face today
- introduce knowledge and understanding of the signs and process of grooming for the purposes of exploitation
- prevent children becoming involved in gangs, County Lines and knife crime
- know where to go for help and support if they have any concerns about their own or someone else's situation.

Our usual face to face Crucial Crew events aim to deliver a range of important personal and community safety messages across a wide range of topics to help support children's transition to secondary school. Safety messages at these events have included topics such as first aid, on-line safety, drug and alcohol awareness, road safety, fire safety and healthy relationships. Due to the specific focus of this year's virtual event each school received a folder containing educational resources supplied by Essex County Fire and Rescue Service, HTS, Safer Places, Anglian Community Enterprise, ECC Road Safety and Sainsbury that can be shared with their year 6 pupils in the classroom at their leisure so that they do not miss out on any of the usual areas of learning at Crucial Crew.

As part of the evaluation process class teachers were asked to use three words to describe the virtual Crucial Crew experience – below are just some of the comments received:

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- *Eye opening, engaging, emotional*
 - *Informative, engaging and thought provoking*
 - *Imaginative, relevant, engaging*
 - *Informative, 'real' and thought-provoking*

The GAG also supported a youth engagement project delivered by Altern8Youth

The project aimed to focus on key areas of concern that children and young people have about the society they live in, the reasons behind some of their behaviour choices and their hopes and prospects for the future. The project would also encourage them to identify ways of working with the community to achieve this.

Key aims were to achieve a reduction in ASB/Crime and offer different ways of supporting young people away from gangs and criminal exploitation.

Key subject areas to raise awareness and understanding included:

- Avoiding exploitation
- Impact of crime on communities
- Gangs and exit strategies
- Impact of crime and gang affiliation on themselves
- Future prospects and how to work towards them
- Self esteem and mental health
- Drinks/Drugs impact and intervention.

The Partnership will receive an evaluation and outcomes report that will be disseminated to relevant partner agencies.

Hate Crime

The Hate Crime group is well known for its excellent community engagement events, particularly during National Hate Crime Awareness Week but due to Covid-19 social distancing guidelines and work from home rules the group was unable to carry out such events in 2020.

PFCC funding was utilised early in 2020 to purchase promotional resources to raise awareness and understanding of Hate Crime and ensure residents know how to report issues and access support. These useful resources will be distributed in the community when circumstances allow.

Having moved the Hate Crime Ambassador training online in response to the pandemic, the Essex Police Hate Crime Officer for West Essex delivered Hate Crime Ambassador training to thirteen Harlow Youth Councillors.

The young people said they learnt a lot from the training - in particular the affect Hate Crime can have on people and communities. Feedback included the following comments:

'I was very surprised by the information I was given about Hate Crime because I didn't know the details and how serious it is'

'From the training I have learnt how to handle a situation like that if it's either with my friends or just strangers. If I see it happening with strangers I report it to a trusted adult'

'I will definitely recommend the training to everyone, not just young people because it's very important to know what's going on in the world and how to handle it if you see it happening or if you're the one in the situation'

Youth Councillors intend to share their knowledge and understanding with other young people to help raise awareness.

Permitted Development Housing

This subgroup was set up in response to partner's ongoing and increasing concerns about the impact and issues arising as a result of the placement of families by other councils in to housing that has been developed in Harlow via Permitted Development rights. In most cases, but by no means all, these families have a range of additional support needs and by the very nature of their out-of-area placement are isolated from their family, friends and usual support networks resulting in increased vulnerability.

The subgroup is co-chaired by officers from Essex Police and Harlow Council and its primary aim is to consider and address the impact of these placements on local services such as GPs, schools, police, social care and a range of other support services both statutory and non-statutory. The group also concerns itself with the impact on the families being placed in Harlow and how they can be supported effectively.

This subgroup did not access PFCC funding this year but will continue to:

- Identify opportunities for partnership working to address issues of concern and reduce negative impact on local statutory and non-statutory organisations, community and voluntary groups and members of the wider community
- Work in partnership, in particular with landlords of permitted development housing sites, to provide direct support to residents and/or effectively signpost them to the most appropriate support agency
- Produce an annual work plan with representatives from member organisations actively working together between meetings and/or through individual Task and Finish groups to achieve identified goals
- Exercise the right to request Essex Police Fire and Crime Commissioner funding to assist achievement of desired outcomes as detailed on the work plan by submitting a funding application to the Safer Harlow Partnership
- Through the joint Chairs; provide feedback on the work and achievements of the subgroup to the Safer Harlow Partnership (SHP) and Responsible Authorities Group (RAG) meetings and Harlow Council's internal 'Permitted Development Working Group'.
- Provide monitoring information to support development and publication of the annual SHP Achievements report.

Protecting children and vulnerable people

Each year the Safer Harlow Partnership aims to align its priorities to those contained in the Essex Police and Crime Plan – one of which is 'Protecting children and vulnerable people from harm'. This theme runs through almost all of the work undertaken by the partnership and consideration is therefore given to applications for funding to support projects and initiatives that actively demonstrate opportunities to work in partnership to help protect children and adults at risk through direct delivery of services; training opportunities; awareness raising campaigns and education.



Contacting the Safer Harlow Partnership

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You can also visit the Safer Harlow Partnership page on Harlow Council's website

<https://www.harlow.gov.uk/safer-harlow>