

# Safer Harlow Partnership achievements 2021 to 2022

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 antisocial behaviour 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 and Rescue Service, Hertfordshire and West Essex Integrated Care Partnership and the Probation Service) but also includes many other local private, community and voluntary sector 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 and the Chair of the Responsible Authorities Group (RAG) is the Director for Communities and Environment at Harlow Council.

In 2021 to 2022 the work of the SHP was supported by five multi-agency priority subgroups. Each subgroup has an operational action plan detailing what work will be undertaken throughout the year to help achieve the objectives of the partnership.

- Safer Harlow Partnership: Meets twice a year
- Responsible Authorities Group: Meets four times a year
- Priority subgroups: All multi-agency and meet quarterly
  - Antisocial Behaviour and Crime
  - Domestic Abuse Forum
  - Gangs Advisory Group
  - Hate Crime Panel
  - Permitted Development Housing

## Funding

Each year the SHP is awarded a Community Safety Partnership Grant by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex (PFCC) to fund activity to address identified priorities. Local priority issues are identified by the annual community safety strategic assessment and by working together with our partners and residents. Strategic objectives are also aligned to

the Essex police and crime Plan.

## **SHP priority subgroups for 2021 to 2022**

### **Antisocial behaviour and crime**

The Antisocial Behaviour and Crime subgroup utilised funding to purchase crime prevention resources to help protect people's property from theft. The group aims to tackle and reduce antisocial behaviour and crime in all its different forms across the town; promote reporting pathways and responsible reporting to help protect individuals, groups and communities from the impact of antisocial behaviour and crime.

### **Domestic abuse**

This priority subgroup is known as the Harlow Domestic Abuse Forum (HDAF). The group's 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. The group promotes behaviour change programmes for perpetrators to help reduce the number of repeat offenders and victims. The group also promotes greater use of Clare's Law which can help prevent people getting into relationships with partners that have a known history of abusive behaviour.

### **Gangs and county lines**

The Gangs Advisory Group helps raise awareness and understanding of criminal exploitation and promotes better understanding of the links between county lines, knife crime, local drug supply and serious youth violence. The group helps tackle and reduce drug driven 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**

The Hate Crime Panel helps raise awareness of hate crime and the impact it can have on individuals, groups and communities. The group arranges for local people and professionals to access training to become hate crime ambassadors, promotes reporting pathways, encourages responsible reporting and, by raising greater public awareness and understanding, seeks to reduce the number of people affected by this type of crime.

### **Permitted Development Housing**

This group aims to gain better understanding of the issues faced by people living in this type of accommodation. Members of the group work collaboratively with relevant partners to ensure effective support is provided to vulnerable residents where appropriate and possible. Member agencies aim to identify and deal effectively with crime, antisocial behaviour and domestic abuse taking place on permitted development housing sites and develop mutually effective working relationships and information exchange with landlords and partner

agencies. The Chair and lead officer work closely with Essex County Council officers to implement and monitor protocols that will ease, and eventually stop, the flow of vulnerable families into this type of accommodation in Harlow and across Essex.

## **COVID-19**

Over the last year, partners have remained focused on the ongoing impact of COVID-19. If and when appropriate, there was the option to direct resources towards new or different priorities that emerged as a result of the pandemic. The impact of government guidelines in relation to ongoing, albeit reducing, social distancing and work from home rules, meant it was inevitable that some projects planned for 2021 to 2022 would not be able to go ahead exactly as planned but despite this the annual PFCC grant was allocated through the priority subgroups and utilised to address identified priorities and ensure maximum community benefit.

As COVID-19 restrictions changed over time, crime levels continually re-adjusted and throughout the period of the pandemic Harlow experienced new challenges and has had to respond quickly to new and changing demands.

## **Achievements in 2021 to 2022**

This report highlights just some of the excellent partnership work that took place between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022. Positive outcomes from projects, awareness raising campaigns, staff training and new priority focused initiatives have all contributed towards a safer Harlow where people can live, work and visit in a safe and pleasant environment.

### **Project: Items for distribution at police community engagement events**

The project is ongoing but approximately 200 people were engaged and benefited from the distribution of crime prevention items, information, advice and signposting to support services. As a result, residents report feeling more informed and safer both within their own homes and also when out and about.

Personal attack alarms have been purchased and distributed in the community – these have been very well received. Going forward the police are looking to host an event that will be solely focused on women's safety, in particular lone females. This work supports the violence against women and girls agenda and aims to help make females feel, and be, safer on our streets, at home and at work.

### **Project: To supply and install new CCTV control hardware and software in the town centre, replacing outdated equipment**

The installation of new equipment in the town centre has allowed for greater efficiency in terms of the use of CCTV, providing evidential information to a criminal standard, thus resulting in successful prosecutions, a decrease in antisocial behaviour and increased public confidence.

Residents, including young people, report feeling safer when CCTV is present.

## **Project: Young Person's Workshop Project**

The Young Person's Workshop Project aims to give young people who have been identified as at risk of becoming involved in gangs, violence, crime, antisocial behaviour and exclusion from school, the opportunity to participate in positive activities, learn new skills and build positive relationships with peers and staff members. Mentors work with participants to focus them on positive lifestyles and future aspirations, listen to their concerns and signpost them to sustainable activities in the community whilst acting as positive role models.

The funding enabled Rainbow Services to send twelve young people aged between 14 and 17 years old on a Fire Break course run by Essex County Fire and Rescue Service. This course reinforces what the young people are learning at the workshop project about team work, communication and listening skills, effective decision making, building self-confidence and self-esteem, engaging with the community and the ability to visualise and build a positive future through identifying their own skills and linking to sustainable activities which they can continue beyond the life of the project.

## **Project: J9 domestic abuse training provided by Safer Places**

The funding allowed for the provision of three J9 training courses delivered online to groups of roughly 30 participants at each session. These courses were delivered to professionals from a range of local statutory and non-statutory agencies as well as people from local community and voluntary groups on 28 February, 15 March and 25 March 2022.

J9 training continues to raise awareness and increase knowledge and understanding of domestic abuse for staff in both public and voluntary sector organisations. During their work, these staff may come into contact with someone they suspect is a victim of domestic abuse, or a client may reveal that are suffering abuse. J9 training aims to ensure that staff are equipped to respond appropriately and effectively.

## **Project: Community engagement sessions with residents living in permitted development housing sites to encourage integration into communities in Harlow.**

Following research undertaken by Anglia Ruskin University, on behalf of Rainbow Services, it was identified that people living in permitted development housing schemes do not feel integrated within Harlow and its communities. It was not known why, or what would make them feel more integrated and settled.

These sessions were delivered by Rainbow Services' 'Engage, Let's Get Connected and Community Builder Project' in partnership with Community Embrace, United in Kind and officers from Harlow police station. The sessions gave residents the opportunity to have their say on issues that affect them and what they felt could be done to help them feel more integrated into the local community. This particular engagement approach encouraged residents to take ownership of their ideas and suggestions and offered opportunities for improved connections within the town. Residents felt that taking pride in the areas within which they live will encourage positive relationships and help to reduce antisocial behaviour which in turn will help improve the transition period for new residents being rehoused into Harlow.

## **Project: Provision of a qualified adviser to work across two permitted development sites by extending their hours of employment to provide an on-site service.**

Citizen's Advice Harlow, delivered a dedicated service to two permitted development sites in Harlow (Greenways House and Terminus House), as outlined below:

- Message line or call-back service for residents of Greenways House and Terminus House, offering a local number where residents could leave a message, asking for a call back. An adviser called them within 2 working days and provided telephone advice.
- Debt was the main advice issue with Council Tax arrears and rent arrears the main area of concern.
- These clients are now being worked with by the CAB's Money Advice Team to ensure income is maximised and debts are managed.

The worker provided advice and assistance across a wide range of issues including:

- debt
- benefits/Universal Credit
- financial services
- hate crime
- housing
- immigration
- utilities and energy

This work has increased resident's awareness of the help, support and advice that is available and increased confidence in accessing the right support, at the right time in the right place. As a result residents will feel more comfortable reaching out for help which help will prevent issues escalating therefore avoiding increasing debt and potential homelessness whilst improving residents general sense of wellbeing.

## **Project: Supporting arts and culture through Harlow Playhouse**

PFCC funding supported research around conversion therapy to inform development of a script for a theatre piece called 'Cowboy'. In the year to March 2020 in England and Wales, sexual orientation hate crimes rose by 19% to 15,835, and transgender identity hate crimes by 16% to 2,540 – averaging more than 50 reports each day. In Harlow alone transgender hate crime was up 60% on the previous 12 months and homophobic up by 10.26%. This commission provided Harlow Playhouse with a platform to use arts participation in the venue in which the LGBTQIA+ community could feel safe to participate in the arts whilst creating opportunities for active engagement with targeted audiences supporting them in reporting hate crime, providing a place of safety in the town centre as well as helping people see through their reports with support.

The funding also supported delivery of 'In Her Shoes' – an opportunity for local people to come together to share their stories around domestic abuse and living in permitted development housing sites. The production took place in an unused retail unit in The Harvey Centre Harlow which was fitted out with a set for the project as well as various information

stands. Each visitor had the opportunity to share their stories with the interactive performance leaving pictures of their shoes, lipstick marks for their most loved and their individual journeys of settlement and life in Harlow. The purpose of the project was to bring the community together to help them feel safe and signpost audiences to other organisations as a first line intervention for self-help which in turn will hopefully lead to a reduction in the need for intervention from emergency or crisis colleagues. In addition, across the weekend a J9 trained member of staff was available to offer advice and support to those affected by domestic abuse.

## **Protecting children and vulnerable people**

Each year the SHP 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 SHP**

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You can also visit the SHP page on Harlow Council's website:

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