

Topic Paper 3: Crime

Policy Context

| Overall aim or purpose of document | Objectives / targets |
|---|--|
| <p>Somerset Crime Reduction and Drugs Strategy - 2005/08 (Somerset Drug and Alcohol Action Team and Somerset's Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships, 2005)</p> <p><i>Please note that there is no information available to indicate that this document has been updated. Therefore it has been necessary to assume that the objectives and targets within this document are still relevant.</i></p> | |
| <p>This document identifies areas where achievements can be made in reducing crime and disorder, with organisations working together at the strategic and local level. Somerset is divided into four Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership areas. Crime, disorder, and drug related information have been collated for each of these areas and, in consultation with the public and statutory bodies, a plan for tackling these problems has been developed for 2005-2008. The plan takes into consideration the Government's national targets relating to crime and disorder.</p> | <p>The strategy covers a range of priority areas to be addressed in Somerset. Those of relevance to this document are the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour.</p> <p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear of Crime (Somerset wide and West Somerset Priority Objective): to reduce the fear of crime in Somerset and reassure the public, through the creation and implementation of a multi-agency action; and to monitor the performance of the action plan to March 2008. • Anti-social behaviour (West Somerset priority objective): to reduce anti-social behaviour and the criminal damage associated with it; and to increase public confidence. <p>Targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 10% reduction in the fear of crime across Somerset by March 2008. • To reduce anti-social behaviour by 15%* Year 1: 4%; Year 2: 5%; Year 3: 6%. <p>*(Baseline: 704 criminal offences 2003-2004)</p> |
| West Somerset Sustainable Community Strategy 2007-2010 | |
| <p>The Sustainable Community Strategy sets out what the key priorities are for the people of West Somerset and sets out an action plan of how to achieve those aspirations.</p> | <p>Targets include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce crime • Reduce fear of crime |

Baseline Review

This section reviews data relating to crime and community safety within West Somerset.

Overall Crime Levels

The West Somerset Sustainable Community Strategy 2007-2010 identifies the district as a very safe place to live with crime figures below the national average. However, there is still a perceived risk of crime in West Somerset. The West Somerset Sustainable Community Strategy has the targets to reduce crime and reduce the fear of crime.

Since the original Topic Paper was published in 2006 the Home Office has launched a new web tool for interrogating crime data called Instant Atlas:

(<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/ia/atlas.html>).

Data from this web tool is shown below for West Somerset and the other districts in Somerset as a comparison. Table 3.1 shows total crime per 1000 population.

As Table 3.1 shows West Somerset has the lowest overall crime of all the districts in Somerset. The table also shows that the general trend in overall crime is down in West Somerset (although there was an increase in 2006/07).

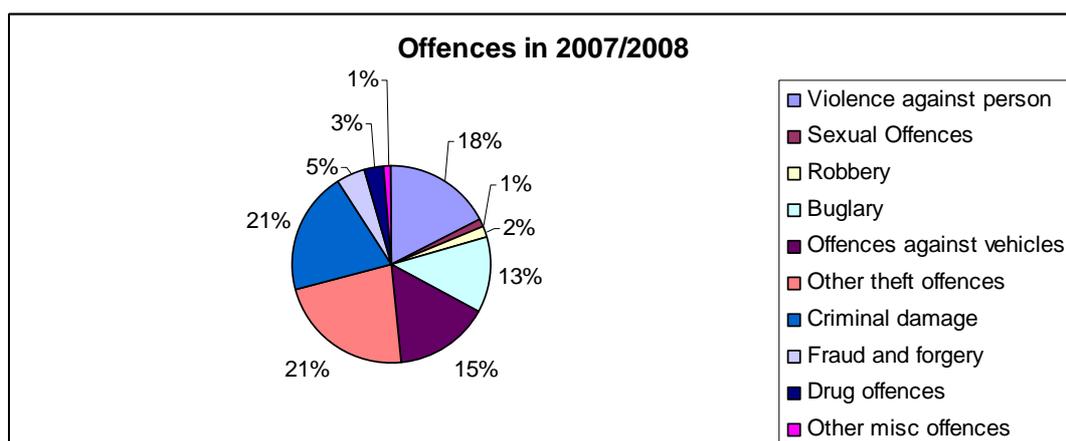
Table 3.1: Total Crime per 1000 population

| Area | 2004/2005 | 2005/2006 | 2006/2007 | 2007/2008 |
|----------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| West Somerset | 63.6 | 60.6 | 66.9 | 51.2 |
| Sedgemoor | 79.9 | 69 | 80.2 | 65.7 |
| Mendip | 77.1 | 64.4 | 67.5 | 62.3 |
| Taunton Deane | 86.6 | 73.8 | 80.4 | 76.5 |
| South Somerset | 78.2 | 64.7 | 68.7 | 64.1 |

Offences by Type

As can be seen from Figure 3.1, criminal damage and other theft offences are the most common form of crime in West Somerset accounting for 21% of crime each. Sexual offences account for less than 1% of crimes and drug offences account for 3% of crime.

Figure 3.1: Offences in West Somerset 2007/08



(Source: Home Office Research Development Statistics
(<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/soti.html>))

Drug Offences

Drug offences for West Somerset and the other Somerset districts are shown in Table 3.2. As can be seen from this table West Somerset also has the lowest level of drug crime in the county.

Table 3.2: Total Drugs Crimes per 1000 population

| Area | 2004/2005 | 2005/2006 | 2006/2007 | 2007/2008 |
|----------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| West Somerset | 1.2 | 1.2 | 1.5 | 1.6 |
| Sedgemoor | 1.6 | 2.0 | 3.0 | 2.2 |
| Mendip | 1.7 | 3.4 | 2.3 | 4.2 |
| Taunton Deane | 1.7 | 1.6 | 2.1 | 2.2 |
| South Somerset | 1.1 | 1.5 | 1.3 | 1.6 |

Domestic Abuse

In April 2003/4 there were 2710 domestic incidents recorded by the police, of which 27% were repeat incidents (Source: Somerset Crime Reduction and Drugs Strategy 2005-2008). This appears to be the most up to date source of data on domestic abuse in Somerset. Further data is required to establish the extent of the problem, as domestic abuse is frequently hidden and under-reported.

Perception of Crime

As Table 3.3 indicates, Audit Commission data shows that a high % of residents in West Somerset feel safe both in the day and after dark in the District, perhaps indicating that people are less worried about crime against the person than they are about crimes such as theft.

Table 3.3: People of residents who feel safe

| Indicator | West Somerset | UK |
|---|-------------------------------------|--|
| % of residents who say that they feel fairly safe or very safe outside after dark | 70.8% (up from 70.3% in 2003/04) | 70.18 (down from 70.35% in 2003/04) |
| % of residents who say that they feel fairly safe or very safe during the day | 97.7 (up from 96.9% in 2003/04) | 97.24 (down from 97.48% in 2003/04) |

(Source: Audit Commission 2005/2006 (latest data available) see <http://www.areaprofiles.audit-commission.gov.uk>)

Sources of Data

| | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Avon and Somerset Police | www.avonandsomerset.police.uk |
| Home Office Statistics | www.crimestatistics.org.uk |
| ODPM Indices of Multiple Deprivation | http://www.odpm.gov.uk/ |
| Crime Reduction | http://www.crimereduction.gov.uk/ |
| Audit Commission | http://www.areaprofiles.audit-commission.gov.uk |

Somerset Crime Reduction and Drug Strategy 2005-2008

Data Gaps

The Somerset Crime Reduction and Drugs Strategy 2005- 2008 (Source: Somerset County Council) has recognised gaps in the national data available. Significant gaps exist which restricts regional and national comparison of substance use and misuse in young people.

This document is also now out of date and a more up to date strategy has not yet been published.

Other data gaps include:

- The nature and extent of anti-social behaviour.
- The confidence that residents have in the local police.
- Further data is required to establish the extent of as domestic abuse as it is frequently hidden and under-reported.

Trends

The Local Policing Summary 2006/07 (the latest available) has a section on West Somerset in which crime trends are discussed. Some of the details of this report are:

- Crime levels in West Somerset are historically low and continue to be low. House burglaries are especially low in the area compared with the UK (and are down 14.2% in 2006/07);
- The Police emergency response rates are improving, despite much of Somerset West being in rural areas. In 2006/07 85% of emergency calls in rural areas were attended in less than 20 minutes; 72% in urban areas were attended in less than 10 minutes;
- There is a concern about motor vehicle theft in West Somerset as the theft of motor vehicles increased by 31% in 2006/07.

Crime issues identified

- West Somerset has the lowest overall crime of all the districts in Somerset. The general trend in overall crime is down in West Somerset (although there was an increase in 2006/07).
- Criminal damage and other theft offences are the most common form of crime in West Somerset accounting for 21% of crime each. Sexual offences account for less than 1% of crimes and drug offences account for 3% of crime.
- Audit Commission data shows that a high % of residents in West Somerset feel safe both in the day and after dark in the District, perhaps indicating that people are less worried about crime against the person than they are about crimes such as theft.
- The Police emergency response rates are improving, despite much of Somerset West being in rural areas. In 2006/07 85% of emergency calls in rural areas were attended in less than 20 minutes; 72% in urban areas were attended in less than 10 minutes;
- There is a concern about motor vehicle theft in West Somerset as the theft of motor vehicles increased by 31% in 2006/07.

Implications for the plan and the SA

Safety and security are essential elements in building sustainable communities¹. Aspects of sustainable communities which are particularly relevant to crime prevention are:

- Access and movement: places with well defined routes, spaces and entrances that provide for convenient movement without compromising security.
- Structure: places that are structured so that different uses do not cause conflict.

¹ ODPM (2004): *Safer Places – the Planning System and Crime Prevention*.

- Surveillance: places where all publicly accessible spaces are overlooked.
- Ownership: places that promote a sense of ownership, respect, territorial responsibility and community.
- Physical protection: places that include necessary, well-designed security features.
- Activity: places where the level of human activity is appropriate to the location and creates a reduced risk of crime and a sense of safety at all times.
- Management and maintenance: places that are designed with management and maintenance in mind, to discourage crime in the present and the future.

These elements should be borne in mind for the plan and the SA

Suggested SA Objectives and Indicators

| SA objectives | Appraisal questions. Will the plan lead to... |
|---|--|
| Reduce anti social behaviour and fear of crime. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A reduction in fear of crime and the level of anti social behaviour. |