



# Annual Report 2021

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# Epping Forest District Community Safety Partnership Foreword

This is my second year as Community Safety Partnership Chair.

Over the last year we have encountered new challenges and new areas of focus. It is important that we adapt as organisations and agencies to the emerging trends to ensure we are supporting the residents and community of the Epping Forest District.

Throughout the challenging Covid-19 pandemic officers have adapted to working in a flexible, innovative way to ensure we are still meeting our commitments to keeping communities within our district safe.

This year saw our Crucial Crew go virtual, something that has proved to be successful and a welcome change as we embrace a more modern way of working and interacting.

The content of Crucial Crew has changed to ensure we continue to address areas of concern. County Lines and drug dealing are a big problem nationally and Epping Forest District, so we must ensure we are getting key community safety messages out to children and equip them with knowledge and skills as they transition through their teenage years. We have seen an increase in young people being involved in drug running, so it is paramount we are giving early intervention awareness and advice to Year 6 students so they are well equipped to make informed decisions.

Violence and Vulnerability has been a priority for us this year and the work under Operation Synapse has supported these priorities.

Joint work with police, council, social care and mental health teams has helped us recognise properties that have been identified as being 'cuckooed'.

It is crucial for officers to work together and share information to ensure our vulnerable residents are safeguarded and the perpetrators involved in criminal activity dealt with appropriately. Officers have worked quickly to apply for multiple Closure Orders at properties, working innovatively and utilising all powers available to them.

Going forward into 2021-22 our priorities will change to ensure they are still relevant to the ongoing demands, they will be:

- To reduce crime, re-offending and the fear of crime
- To protect vulnerable people
- To continue effective partnership working in order to meet emerging local threats and issues

The strategic priorities will enable us to continue to protect our most vulnerable residents, detect and deter crime and work effectively with our partners, continuing to share vital information.



**Cllr. Holly Whitbread**

Community and Partnership  
Services  
Portfolio Holder

## Community Safety Partnership

Community Safety Partnerships were first introduced nationally in 1998 to provide a multi-agency response to crime and the fear of crime within communities. They support the work of the police and other statutory agencies and are widely considered as the most effective approach to finding joint solutions to local community safety issues.

In Epping Forest District, the responsible authority group is made up of Epping Forest District Council, Essex Police, Essex Fire & Rescue Service, Essex County Council and The National Probation Service. It has a statutory responsibility to:

- reduce crime and disorder
- protect the community
- reduce reoffending
- combat the misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances
- help people feel safe

However, the delivery of the community safety agenda is not restricted to the agencies identified as responsible authorities, and the partnership includes and works with other agencies and voluntary sector groups including Neighbourhood Watch and Voluntary Action Epping Forest (VAEF).

The work of the CSP does not replace the work of the police or the day-to-day business of the organisations involved, instead it is a channel for agencies to work together, delivering against agreed priorities, co-ordinating resources, achieving efficiencies and value for money.

The Strategic Board of the partnership meets on a quarterly basis and much of the work emanating from the CSP is undertaken and led by the various departments in the Council including the Community Safety Lead, Community Resilience Team and the Community and Wellbeing Team.

### **Strategic Assessment**

Each year the CSP is required to produce a Strategic Assessment (SA) about crime and disorder levels in its area. This year we do not have the services of police analysts so we have instead provided an overview of the district's performance including key partners data. This will be attached to the CSP annual report.

Strategic Priorities identified for 2020-21 were:

- Violence
- Vulnerability
- Serious Acquisitive Crime

CSP Funding 2021

Organisation	Funding received
<b>Police Fire Crime Commissioner (PFCC) - core funding</b>	<b>£19268</b>
<b>Police Fire Crime Commissioner (PFCC) – Community Safety Development Funding (CSDF) Gates High Beech (City of London Corporation)</b>	<b>£9910</b>
<b>Epping Forest District Council Community Safety Budget</b>	<b>£14000</b>
<b>Overall total</b>	<b>£43179</b>

# Performance Summary Highlights

## 1. Engagement

### 1.1. *Crucial Crew*

Crucial Crew has been taking place in the Epping Forest District since 2004. Prior to Covid-19 it was delivered in person with a variety of sets for year 6 students.

This year there was a county-wide approach to Crucial Crew with all local authorities in Essex commissioned to

Tic Box- an award winning theatre company. They delivered a virtual theatre production called 'Lines'. Which dramatically unravels the story of a young boy groomed and criminally exploited by a gang.



Child exploitation linked to gangs and county lines is an issue affecting young people across Essex. Incidents of violent crime are on the increase across the county with intelligence suggesting a rise in the number of young people carrying a knife.

Child exploitation and county lines is prevalent across Essex so it's important to educate young people to look out for the signs and give them the knowledge to make better decisions throughout their lives, especially through the crucial transition from primary to secondary school.

1,300 Year 6 pupils from 23 primary schools across the district participated.

#### **Feedback from teachers:**

"If it's going to be virtual, then this is the way to go!"

"The film was very good and straight to the point. John and Dean were very good in the interactive session too"

"Thank you for a great workshop!"

"Many thanks for making this happen this year and I hope that the original format can return as soon as possible or that there is a way of covering the original topics online if necessary"

“It is good because you are finding out what our children need to know about”

**What 3 words would you use to describe the experience to someone else:**

“Topical, relevant, appropriate”

“Educational, Informative, Realistic”

“Engaging, relevant, thought provoking”

“Eye-opening, Immersive, Thought-provoking”

“Powerful, eye-opening, realistic”

Overall the feedback from schools was positive. A consistent message from the evaluation is that although, under the circumstances, the virtual production and workshop was good, the majority said they would prefer the performance to be live and in person.





## 1.2. *Stay Well Events*

The Community Health and Wellbeing Team has continued to work with the Community Resilience Team in promoting the wellbeing of residents in Epping Forest District. During the last year they have collaborated on a Senior Safety initiative, Crucial Crew, Community Awareness Days and most recently the Stay Well this Winter event - attended by the Community Resilience Team - which provided face-to-face engagement of 120 Epping Forest senior residents.

Moving forward the Community Health and Wellbeing Team will be piloting Safe and Social events working with the three key emergency services, police, fire and ambulance, who will be making short presentations to local communities. These events will be promoting key messages on how to stay safe in and around the home.

## 1.3. *Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Awareness week*

19-25 July 2021 saw the first national ASB awareness week. Hundreds of housing associations, councils, police forces, charities and other agencies – along with government departments came together across the country to take a stand and work together to make communities safer.

In Epping Forest District we had a number of engagement days as well as arranging training for internal staff members promoting increased knowledge and awareness of tools available to us when investigating ASB complaints, this in turn provides a better service for our residents.

There were three days of actions in identified hot spot areas:

- The Broadway, Debden
- Hillhouse, Waltham Abbey
- Blenheim Square, North Weald

The three hot spots were identified by analysing ASB data from both the police and council systems.

Officers from Epping Forest District Council worked with Essex Police and housing associations to provide high visibility in the areas, carryout visits to properties, deliver leaflets on how to report ASB and give out crime prevention materials to local residents. The days were really successful and local residents said how good it was to see all agencies working together to tackle ASB issues they had reported.

Hillhouse, Waltham Abbey:



The Broadway, Debden:





Bleinham Square, North Weald:



#### 1.4. *Community Trigger (ASB case review)*

Community Triggers (ASB case reviews) were introduced in the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014. The purpose of Community Triggers is to give victims and communities the right to request a review of their case where a local threshold is met, and to bring agencies together to take a joined-up, problem solving approach in order to find a solution for victims. Authorities responsible for a community trigger are; councils, police, clinical commissioning groups in England and registered social landlords.

Community Triggers can be requested via the Epping Forest District website, the link can be found here:

<https://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/crime-and-safety/request-a-community-trigger/>

This table shows how many Community Triggers received in the last 12 months:

Community Triggers received	Have met the threshold	Have not met the threshold
6	3	3

Where a case does meet the threshold, a case review meeting with partners has been undertaken and recommendations for cases made.

## 2. Prevention

### 2.1 Horizons Project- Phoenix Futures

The Horizons project supports clients identified as suffering from significant multiple disadvantage- substance issue, offending behaviour and homelessness.

The cohort is limited to a maximum of 10 clients at any one time, enabling practitioners to spend as much time with the client as they need. They bring experts from a range of services to the table with the aim of providing a wraparound support service to each client. Agencies meet on a regular basis (every 6-8 weeks) to discuss the cohort and make plans to move each individual forward with their needs. Here are two case studies that have been provided by Phoenix Futures:

#### Case study 'R':

R has been homeless for a number of years, living in a tent on someone else's land with his two dogs. He reports drinking alcohol at a relatively high level which he feels is escalating due to his lack of accommodation. Although he is not openly committing crimes, he admits to "doing what he needs to do to survive".

R was referred into the Horizon Project by a number of partner agencies who were growing increasingly concerned about his declining mental health. He was discussed and accepted onto the cohort unanimously by the panel.

Our initial contact with R was over the telephone as we were unclear of the exact location of his tent. Once this was established a joint visit with EFDC was carried out to finalise his homeless approach to the Council. The main issue with accommodation was the fact that R was reluctant to be placed anywhere without his dogs. Many discussions took place

around the possibility of having the animals placed into foster care until he was accommodated where he could take them.

With R's agreement, Full Circle contacted an animal charity who were already aware of the dogs and were waiting for confirmation that R had agreed to this approach. Within 48 hours the dogs were collected and R was offered temporary accommodation which he accepted.

Work is still in progress with regards to finding R permanent accommodation but he continues to be supported by Full Circle and EFDC to find a solution. R's GP has been contacted to establish whether the dogs are classed as emotional support dogs which opens up further avenues of accommodation to explore.

R reports to be in a "much better head space" and is looking forward to being able to make proper plans for his future – something he did not think he would have a few months ago.

### **Case study "C"**

C had been homeless for eight years predominantly due to his PTSD and poor engagement with services. He served for many years in the British army and saw conflict both in the UK and abroad. To manage his PTSD he turned to drugs and alcohol, which led to the breakdown of his marriage, the loss of his home and his eventual homelessness.

We were contacted by Project Nova (a veterans' charity) asking if there was anything we could do to assist them in supporting C. He was signed up to our Horizons Project as he was sleeping and begging aggressively in the local High Street. He had no benefit claim in place, was not engaging with any services and was being supported by members of the local community who were in fact enabling him to remain homeless.

We carried out a number of outreach appointments both before and during the initial Covid lockdown. These were done by the same practitioners each time to ensure C became familiar with people and gave continuity to his case.

We provided C with some PPE to ensure he was able to keep himself and the public safe whilst he was homeless.

C was assessed by the Homeless Team at EFDC and was offered temporary accommodation. Once he was able to prove his links to the Armed Forces, he was moved into a more stable temporary address. He was assessed as having a priority need and moved into his accommodation with support from partner agencies.

C continued to engage with support after he was housed and although he still has ongoing physical and mental health issues, he is engaging with services in a more effective way and will continue to be supported for his longer term issues.

The joint work between Full Circle, Project Nova and EFDC was the driving force behind the successes achieved. This was a client entrenched in a chaotic lifestyle with a deep mistrust for professionals who he perceived as letting him down in the past.

## Changing Futures

Changing Futures is a new programme that Phoenix Futures will be running, it has been commissioned for three years, funded by Government and National Lottery. The aims of the project are to:

- Change outcomes for people experiencing multiple disadvantage (three or more of; homelessness, substance misuse, poor mental health, contact with the criminal justice system)
- To improve systems
- Improve the systems' ability to respond to complexity

There are six core delivery principles for the project:

- Work in partnership across voluntary and community sectors a strategic and operational levels to design and implement an improved approach to tackling multiple disadvantage
- Co-ordinate support, and better integrate local services that support adults experiencing multiple disadvantages to enable a 'whole person' approach
- Create flexibility in how local services respond to adults experiencing multiple disadvantages
- Involve people with real experience of multiple disadvantages in the design, delivery, and evaluation of improved services and in governance and decision making
- Take a trauma-informed approach across local systems, services and in the governance of the programme
- Commit to drive long-term, sustainable system-change, alongside a commitment to sustain the benefits of the programme beyond the lifetime of the funding.

## 2.2 *Sanctuary scheme*

The Sanctuary Scheme is a victim-centred service installing security measures in and around properties to enable households at risk of domestic abuse to live safely in the property of their choice. Many victims of domestic abuse are reluctant to move home, away from their support networks. To move often means their children have to change schools and leave their friends. Sanctuary schemes aim to make it possible for victims to remain in their own home and feel safe.

The Sanctuary scheme in Epping Forest District supports all residents regardless of their housing tenure.

Safe Partnership are commissioned by Epping Forest District Council to deliver the Sanctuary scheme for the district.

Safe Partnership was founded in 1987 by John McCarthy and has been working hard to help victims of domestic violence and sexual abuse in England and Wales

On behalf of Epping Forest CSP they secure the homes of victims of domestic abuse and vulnerable victims of crime.

### 3. Enforcement

#### 3.1 Operation Synapse

On 5 March 2021 there was serious assault in an EFDC property, the property had been 'cuckooed'\* by county lines drug dealers. This instigated work by Epping Forest District Council and Essex Police to proactively deal with vulnerable tenants being 'cuckooed' and disrupt the behaviour of organised criminals.

\*Cuckooing is a term used to describe someone's home being taken over by drug dealers or county lines. This has happened within the district, particularly within the Waltham Abbey area.

A problem-solving group was set up with officers from EFDC and Essex Police for Operation Synapse. The aim of the group was to:

- Gather intelligence and share data and data sharing
- Identify vulnerable locations and possible targets
- Identify victims and strengthen victim safeguarding
- Reduce harm and minimise exploitation

Operation Raptor and the Community Policing Team were running a simultaneous but separate operation to target known offenders. The purpose of this operation was to target locations and victims (as per Routine Activity Theory).

Officers utilised their Closure Order power under the Anti- Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 to quickly close down a property where there had been evidence of serious nuisance and disorder.

Closure Order applications are presented at magistrates courts and it is to the magistrates discretion, based on the evidence presented, whether the order is granted.

To date, through Operation Synapse, the Community Resilience team has successfully achieved seven Closure Orders (inclusive of extensions) since May 2021.

### *3.2 Corporation of London*

In April 2021 the CSP was approached by the City of London Corporation- which is responsible for Epping Forest – for support and assistance in tackling historic anti-social behaviour (ASB) around High Beech. This had increased in line with pandemic restrictions in Spring 2020 which displaced entertainment venues to open unmanaged spaces.

A proposal was tabled to install gates at Manor Road, High Beech to restrict night-time access. The gates' function was to deter and disrupt ASB and associated crime, but would also impose travel access issues.

The 'Make High Beech Safe Campaign' had the support of residents directly affected and additionally 7760 members of the public signed a petition to seek action to address the problems within the location.

The CSP agreed a funding contribution of £2500 and successfully made an application to the Police Fire Crime Commissioner's Community Safety Development Fund for additional funding totalling £9910.

Robust consultation was carried out by officers from City of London Corporation in mid-March 2021, including a letter drop to residential properties most likely to be impacted. In response to the letter a total of 27 responses were received, 16 in favour, 8 against and three undecided and requiring some further clarification. This represents 59% of respondents in favour of the scheme and 30% against and 11% neither for nor against it. The majority of respondents acknowledged anti-social behaviour in the area and welcomed measures to tackle it.

Comments in support included: looking at the entire forest, tackling verge parking, stopping rat run driving through the forest, improving traffic signage, considering vehicle free zones and extending the proposed gates a bit further into Manor Road.

Objections to the proposed scheme included comments like: displacement traffic and parking in the surrounding roads especially Wellington Hill, Pynest Green Lane, concern that diversion through Pauls Nursery Road from Avey Lane would increase traffic, a suggestion to close Hangmans Hill to vehicular traffic and install CCTV systems and more Red Routes in the forest.

The undecided respondents sought some clarifications: the level of road signage for diverted traffic, start date of the scheme, concerns that a Resident Parking Scheme may be in the pipeline, why other options like ANPR and remodelling of the highway have been discounted, concerns around opening and closing times as opening at 7:30 could impact those who drive for dog walking.

In November 2021 the CSP commissioned Crime Pattern Analysis to consider the impact of the gates on anti-social behaviour in the area



Highlights of the report were that since the installation of the gates in April 2021 there have been two reports of ASB, in contrast with 38 between April 2020 and October 2020 - a decrease of 89% (34 Incidents).

# Epping Forest Community Safety Team

## Policing Hub Activity

The Epping Forest District Council-funded police team became officially operational on 20 July 2018. The team consists of one sergeant and two constables.

The team is tasked every two weeks, aligned to the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner's (PFCC) Policing Plan priorities and the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) local priorities as identified in the annual strategic assessment.

The funded police team continues with the following primary functions:

- 1. Supporting functionality of Epping Forest District Council departments/teams**
- 2. Providing 'added value' to the district in supporting the Community Policing function**
- 3. Targeting action against criminality in the district**

Some highlights from the team:

- Providing support to Environmental Health Officers with enforcement visits at a number of business premises across the district to ensure compliance with COVID legislation. This included beauty salons as well as a number of licensed premises which were identified as having been problematic throughout the initial period of the pandemic. This ensured the safety of EFDC staff.
- For ASB Awareness Week in July, the team worked in partnership with a number of council teams at three separate community engagement events in Waltham Abbey, Debden and North Weald. These were 'days of action' where officers from both organisations met with the public, gave out crime prevention advice and materials and conducted joint patrols in the local area to highlight and address concerns raised by residents.
- Working in partnership with Licensing and the Environmental Enforcement Officers, the police team applied for and executed a search warrant under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 for a banned breed whose exemption certificate had expired. Whilst this would not routinely be a job for the police team, Sgt Ross was aware of the premises through earlier conversations with EFDC officers around noise and unlawful activity.

When an enforcement opportunity presented itself, the team picked up the task from other police teams. The team continues to work with EFDC officers to secure prosecution for this matter.

- A member highlighted that a particular ‘theft from vehicle’ crime trend was present around Honey Lane, Waltham Abbey. The team researched recent crimes and intelligence to identify key days and times. This resulted in a pursuit with a vehicle seen in this area. One person was arrested and two further prolific thieves have been linked to the case. As a result there was a 30% decrease in this crime in that area.
- The team provided additional resilience for Halloween this year working alongside EFDC CCTV officers. Any patches of disorder were quelled quickly with the use of dispersal powers and there were fewer incidents than in previous years.
- The team provided oversight of the district elections in May, which were spread over three days. Sgt Ross was involved in the planning stages with the team providing cover at polling stations and count locations.
- Following numerous reports of public nuisance from a rough sleeper, EFDC obtained a Criminal Behaviour Order (CBO). Following numerous breaches, the team was able to enforce this order on behalf of the council and arrest the person. He was later detained under the Mental Health Act and remains in care. This was a difficult case for both council and police so the presence of the team in enforcing the CBO was invaluable.

Whilst the team’s priority remains focus upon the first two primary functions there have been a number of ‘self-generated’ activities this year.

- The team was nearby when reports of a fraud in progress were received. The victim had been called by a ‘police officer’ and tricked into providing bank details. The criminals then use taxis to collect the victim’s bank cards. Our officers identified the vehicle involved and traced it to the motorway. The car was stopped safely and the perpetrator arrested. This was a significant arrest as sadly there is often little tangible evidence to go on but on this occasion, thanks to the intervention of the team, the offender was caught ‘red-handed’.
- Following a series of high value watch thefts, the team observed a car in Epping which appeared to be scoping out victims. Acting on instinct the team stopped the car and the occupants matched the description of offenders. They were arrested by the

funded officers. The female perpetrator was charged with a number of offences across SE England and is currently on remand awaiting trial.



**Sgt Neil Ross**



**PC Tom Baggley**

Vacant post- currently being recruited.



**Epping Forest District dedicated Police Community Safety Team**



Sgt Ross at Debden Broadway during ASB awareness week  
**Epping Forest Community Policing Team**





Community Safety Engagement Officer- PC Karen West



PC Karen West is the Essex Police Community Safety Engagement Officer who works within the Community Safety Hub, supporting the Community Policing Team and Community Safety Partnership. The role aims to strengthen information sharing between agencies and ensure a more joined-up operational approach is taken to crime reduction, problem solving, public safety and enhancing community trust and confidence. The role

seeks to capture community intelligence, build trust and improve confidence with our communities, including those from hard to reach, diverse communities, by way of public engagement activities and social media interaction.

## Community Safety Partnership Priorities for 2021-22

Each year our CSP priorities are set based on analysing crime and anti-social behaviour data. This allows us to look at any emerging trends and highlights where our areas of focus need to be.

For 2021-2022 our CSP priorities will be:

- To reduce crime, re-offending and the fear of crime
- To protect vulnerable people
- To continue effective partnership working, to meet emerging local threats and issues