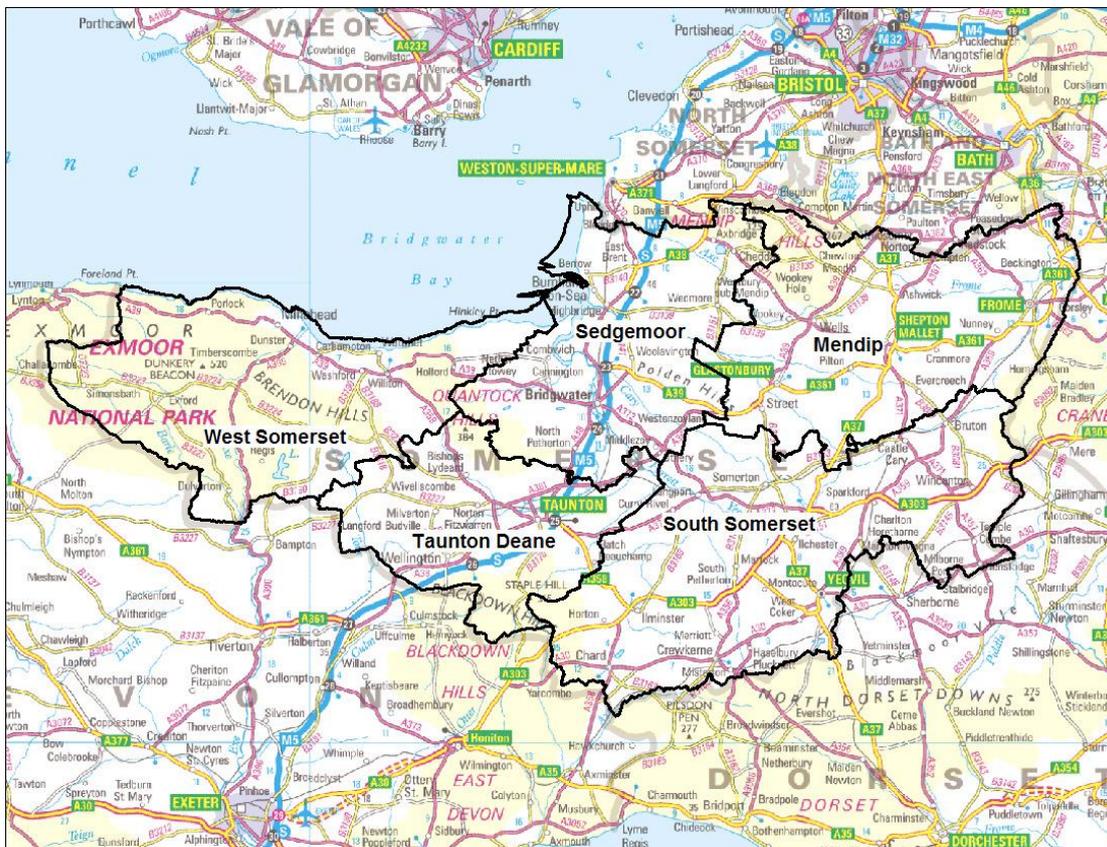


A Briefing Paper for PCC Candidates: Somerset

1. Introduction

This briefing summarises key data, threats, and priorities in Somerset Local Authority area to help inform Police and Crime Commissioner Candidates 2021.

1.1 Somerset: the local context:



The county of Somerset covers 3,453 kilometres (1,333 square miles) and is divided into 4 Districts; Mendip, Sedgemoor, Somerset West & Taunton, and West Somerset.

- 54 County Electoral Divisions
- 138 District electoral wards
- 330 Parishes (excluding Taunton, which is 'unparished')
- 276 parish or town councils

1.2 Demographics:

Demographic data will soon be updated with Census 2021 information. However, until this is available, latest data suggests:

- An estimated 562,225 people live in Somerset (June 2019) (NOMIS MYE)
- The population rose by an average of 4,000 per year over the last 5 years (June 2019) (NOMIS MYE)
- 48% of the population live in a Rural area (England: 18%) (Census 2011)
- 17.6% of the current population are children (0 to 15 years) (June 2019) (NOMIS MYE)
- Almost 1 in 4 of the residents of the county are over the age of 65 (24.6% in 2019) (NOMIS MYE)
- West Somerset has the highest % of people aged 65+ in the UK (33.7% in 2017) (NOMIS MYE)
- There were 5,224 live births in Somerset in 2018 (NOMIS MYE)
- 6% of Somerset residents (31,761) were born outside the UK (Census 2011)
- Apart from the UK, the most common country of birth was Poland (Census 2011)
- Between 2016 and 2019, 9,131 migrant workers applied for a National Insurance number (Stat-Xplore)
- In the year to June 2019, 3,548 more people moved to Somerset from elsewhere in the UK than left the county. However, amongst those of university-age (18-20), there was a net flow out of Somerset of 902 (ONS)
- 539 Traveller caravans were counted in Somerset in January 2020 (GOV)
- 27% of Somerset people claimed no religious affiliation in 2011 (Census 2011)
- Approximately 150,000 residents volunteer at least once a month (Community Life Survey 2016/17)

1.3 Determinants of Health:

- There are two district hospitals (Yeovil and Taunton) and a further 12 Community hospitals and 74 GP practices.
- 47,806 Somerset people live in one of the 20% most deprived areas in England, but 61,253 live in one of England's 20% least deprived areas. (This compares to 40,000 and 74,000 in 2015) (IMD)
- There were 4,919 Somerset patients on GP registers in 2018/19 diagnosed with a mental health condition (PHE Fingertips)
- About 14% of the adult population of Somerset currently smokes (2019) (PHE Fingertips)
- 65.8% of adult Somerset residents are overweight or obese 2018-19 (PHE Fingertips)
- 22.3% of Somerset reception children and 31.5% of children in Year 6 are overweight or obese (2018/19) (NCMP)
- 14.5% of Somerset children under 16 were considered to be living in poverty in 2019 (GOV 2020)

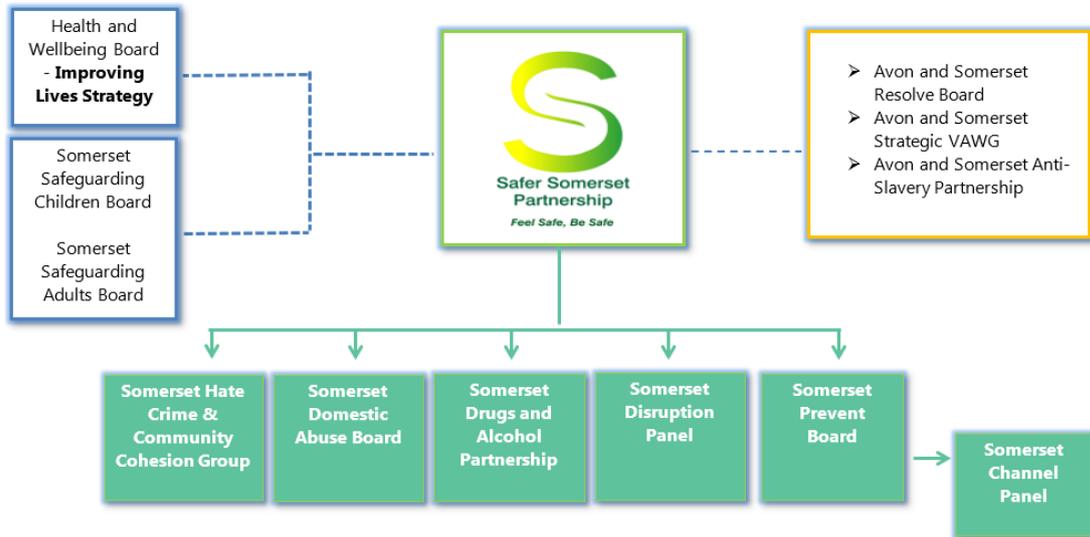
- There are 475 looked after children in Somerset (at 31 March 2017) (Somerset Intelligence)
- 14,234 adults received a package of care in 2015/16 (Somerset Intelligence)
- 53% of clients with a Learning Disability are able to live in their own home or with family members (2017/18) (SCC Adults Social Care)
- 82.7% of people aged 16-64 are employed (2019) (NOMIS)
- 19,744 people claim Housing Benefit (Feb 2020) (Stat-Xplore)
- Lower quartile house prices in Mendip are 10 times the lower quartile earnings (England: 7 times) (2019) (ONS)
- A total of 265 households were accepted as being homeless and in priority need, with a further 339 identified as being threatened with homelessness (Oct-Dec 2019) (GOV)

2. Community Safety in Somerset:

Crime and Disorder in Somerset, compared to the national average has been consistently low in recent years and generally, new, or increased threats are dealt with well in the multi-agency arrangements we have in place. The premise of shifting focus towards prevention, and the to consider the wider determinants of health remains a priority in Somerset.

2.1 The Safer Somerset Partnership

The community safety partnership landscape has adapted over the years to reflect local requirements and structure. Today there is a single Community Safety Partnership; The Safer Somerset Partnership, which includes all Responsible Authorities. It comprises of a single Partnership Board, plus a number of subgroups as illustrated below. Terms of Reference and any other related papers are available upon request.



2.2 Current Priorities:

The Priorities of the Safer Somerset Partnership have been developed jointly with the Avon and Somerset Police and crime Commissioner's office and are outlined in Our Plan

<https://www.avonandsomersetplan.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/avon-and-somerset-police-local-crime-plan-somerset.pdf>



The Safer Somerset Partnership monitors performance against these priorities on a quarterly basis, presented in a dashboard which is available upon request.

3. Crime Trends



Crime rates in Somerset can be found in the latest Police and Crime needs Assessment and Plan.

3.1 Police data from the period 01.04.20 -15.03.21 demonstrates a reduction overall recorded offences of 29720, compared to 35620 offences for the previous year.

This equates to

- £54,127,590 estimated cost to agencies
- £2753 estimated cost per victim (Somerset VRU, 2021)

3.2 What follows, is a breakdown of data of Somerset’s highest volume cases, with an overall comparison in table 0.1.

Table 0.1

High Volume Offences

(recorded offences SOMERSET 2020, compared to same period last year)

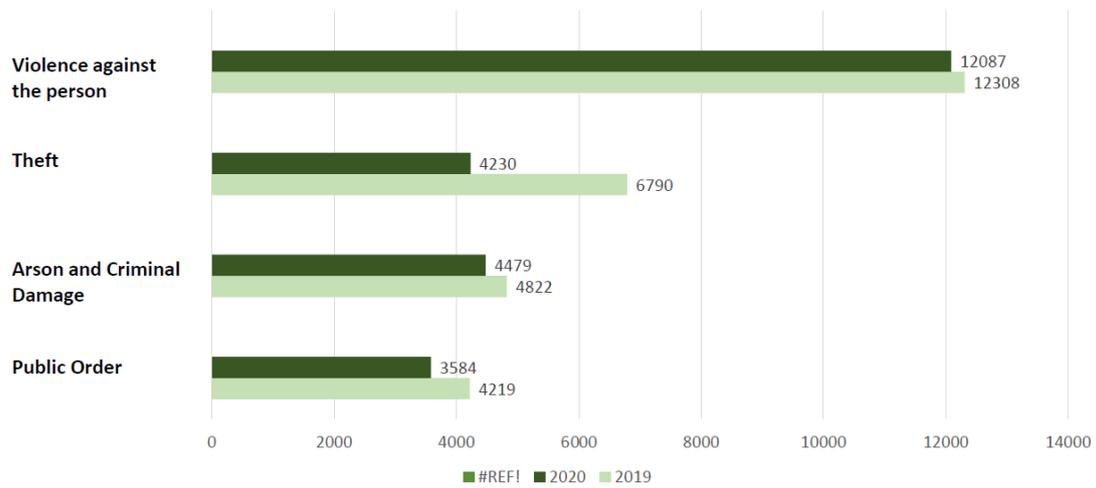


Table 0.2

Violence against person

(recorded offences SOMERSET 2020, compared to same period last year)

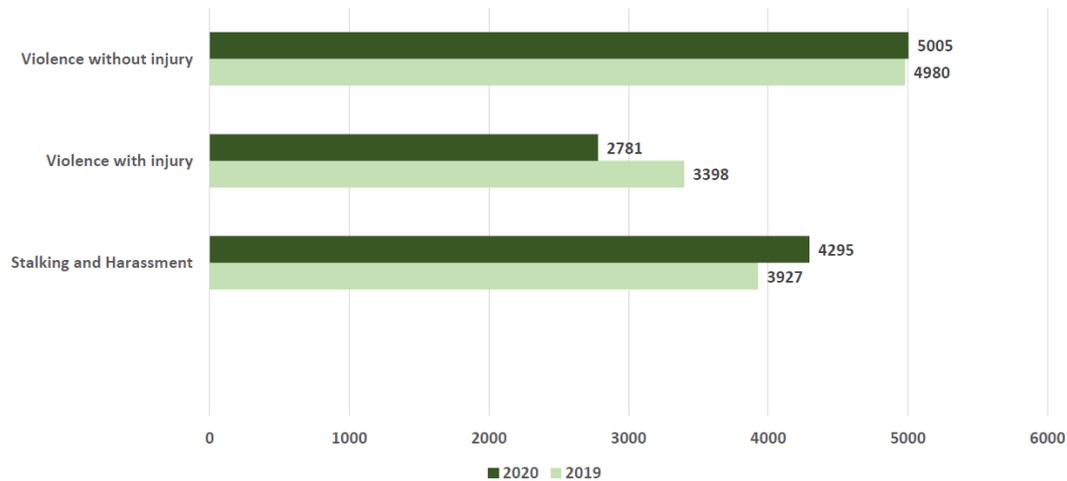


Table 0.2 demonstrates the categorisation of Violence Against the person. This offence is constituted from a large number of crime types including domestic abuse. With domestic abuse making up approximately 80% of Somerset's violent crime, it is not surprising that Violence against the person is a high volume crime category.

4. Emerging threats and key work streams

4.1 Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence

Domestic abuse reporting remains consistently high year on year. The impact of the coronavirus was a significant and immediate concern since March 2020, which is discussed in more detail in section 5.

Domestic Abuse remains a high priority for Somerset County Council commissions the Somerset Integrated Domestic Abuse service (SIDAS), currently delivered by YOU First. It is a service that includes a variety of services for victims, families, and perpetrators through a single point of access.

Domestic Homicide Review notifications are regularly received by the Partnership. Each review costs between £3,000 and £6,000 currently resourced by all Statutory Authorities in the Partnership. The Safer Somerset Partnership is now considering its 37th case since 2013 with a noticeable increase since February 2020 in victims aged 60 and over.

Currently, a priority for the Partnership and in particular, Somerset's Local Authorities, is to prepare for the new and additional duties that will come with new legislation outlined in the Domestic Abuse Bill. Activity is underway to:

- Engage local Partnerships and stakeholders in planning and implementation
- Ensure standards are met for provision within Housing Authorities and registered housing providers as set out in the Bill
- Scope existing support provision and plan for any new service elements or enhancements
- Refresh terms of reference of the Somerset Domestic Abuse Board
- Undertake Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment to inform a new Domestic Abuse Strategy.
- Design of new training platform for professionals.

4.2 Serious Violence

Alongside our neighbouring Authorities in Avon and Somerset, Somerset's Violence Reduction Unit is now entering its third term in a bid to prevent and reduce serious violence. Since April 2020, 30,000 offences have been recorded in the County, of which 3,200 involved violence, sexual offences, or robbery. A third of all violence in Somerset can be attributed to domestic abuse (Somerset VRU (2021)). Somerset Violence Reduction Unit aims to prevent harm from violence and exploitation by targeted resources to areas of need. This year the unit has supported over 1000 people at risk of violence through support, mentoring and early intervention programmes. In addition, the VRU carried out awareness raising and campaigns for wider reach through professionals and to our communities specifically around county lines, domestic abuse, and healthy teenage relationships.

Delivery of VRU interventions (projected to March 2021)



4.3 Child Exploitation

Child exploitation has become a priority area of work which spans the agenda of all our Strategic Partnerships and multiple strategies including community safety, violence reduction, county lines and existing safeguarding strategy. In 2019, Somerset County Council was successful in a bid for dedicated support for Research in Practice to support local partnerships in developing an improved framework for tackling child exploitation. The project resulted in an action plan which includes:

- Revitalising the Somerset Child Exploitation Subgroup of the Somerset Safeguarding Childrens Board
- Carrying out a Child Exploitation Needs Assessment and create a robust data dashboard
- Design a consolidated support service for victims of child exploitation, paying attention to those who transition from children's to adults services
- Consolidate existing strategy and gain clarity of governance arrangements.

The Safer Somerset Partnership is a key stakeholder in this work and will continue to help lead this agenda.

4.4 Preventing Radicalisation and Extremism

The revision of the Prevent and Channel duty in 2020 has ensured that Prevent remains high on the community safety agenda with new responsibilities placed upon Local Authorities. The Safer Somerset Partnership has now taken on the governance responsibility for Channel, to ensure Somerset aligns with new duties, whilst the Channel Panel has a refreshed core membership, and reporting has become more

robust. In terms of prevalence, cases adopted by the Channel panel have remained stable at an average of 7 cases per year, but a noticeable increase in referrals for under 18s and for those with no/mixed/unstable ideology.

4.5 Hate Crime

Hate crime continues to be a priority for the Partnership, and in 2019, the community safety team commissioned a Hate Crime Needs Assessment to help understand the demand profile and consider whether support services were meeting this appropriately. Main findings included:

- The overall counts of reported Hate Crime increased from 350 cases in 2015 to 707 cases in 2019: an increase of 357 cases. This indicates a rise in over double the total number of cases during the 5-year period.
- Further assurance is required to clarify how incidents of Hate Crime are recorded and victims are supported across Avon and Somerset.
- There appears to be a variance between SARI and police data in relation to the numbers of recorded disability hate crime.
- due to the population of disabled people in Somerset, it is felt the rate of reporting of disability hate crime is low. Therefore, work is required to encourage reporting.
- It is suggested that a more holistic preventative model of intervention is required to stop vulnerable people becoming victims in the first place.
- There is a gap in the system regarding strengthening communities to prevent hate crime, regarding understanding, encouraging to report and tolerances.
- A potential consequence of Somerset's size, rurality (access to the internet and public transport) and demographic (aging population and potentiality isolated communities) may result in difficulties in accessing some specialist services and community-based peer support.

This work informed the new Somerset Hate Crime and Community cohesion group, who met for the first time in January 2021. It also enabled Somerset commissioners to evidence the support needs in Somerset when determining the service specification for the new hate Crime Support Service funding application to the Big Lottery.

5. The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Community Safety in Somerset

In general, the restrictions associated with the coronavirus resulted in reduced recorded crimes, with reporting increasing once restrictions lifted. As Partnership, our concern has focussed on

- a) The impact of coronavirus restriction on victims and families experiencing domestic abuse. A dedicated covid-19 'cell' was stood up to consider data collected weekly to help understand the trends in reporting and ensure

services were appropriately equipped to deal with surges in demand. Investment was made in awareness raising campaigns and additional capacity for Somerset Integrated Domestic Abuse Service.

- b) The impact of school closures on young people at risk of exploitation. Over the summer period, the Violence Reduction Unit worked with Childrens Social Care and other local agencies to offer additional diversionary, training, and educational interventions for targeted young people.
- c) The impact on school closures on young people who come to the attention of Channel. For these cases, agencies worked together to ensure that young people were offered interventions aimed at improving their wellbeing and social integration.
- d) The impact of the nighttime economy once restriction lift in 2021. This is a force wide concern with partnership across the force coming together to consider planning in relation to community engagement, licensing police, enforcement, and prevention.
- e) Homelessness and inequalities of health were highlighted during the pandemic. National Initiatives such as the 'All in' programme helped to secure accommodation at pace, for those who required and wished to be housed. This was complemented by the cold weather provision over the winter months. Somerset's Housing Authorities worked tirelessly, demonstrating excellent collaboration in a dedicated 'cell' to make communities safe and ensure this vulnerable population received appropriate care to remain covid-safe through testing and access to support. This improved partnership working will continue in the long term, with a newly appointed Homelessness Reduction Board commencing in the Spring 2021 which will deliver on a shred commitment across local government, health, social care, and housing sectors across Somerset to improve the lives of vulnerable people.

6. Conclusion and looking to the future.

The past 12 months has bene unprecedented for all sectors with community safety being no exception in terms of business as usual and additional activity as a result of the pandemic. The agenda is ever-changing for agencies responsible for delivering the community safety agenda and are busy planning for new legislation and requirements. Looking to the future, Somerset will be prioritising specific topics such as domestic abuse, preventing extremism, child exploitation and serious violence and in addition, a will to improve data systems to enable the Partnership to better assess current and emerging trends in order to ensure strategy remains relevant and meaningful.

6. References:

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