# Community Safety Research 2021

**Summary report**
MainStreet Consulting – May 2021

Scottish Community Safety Network

MainStreet Consulting

# Contents

# Introduction

In early 2021, the Scottish Community Safety Network (SCSN) commissioned MainStreet to deliver four projects that build on previous research into the emerging landscape and future opportunities for Community Safety.

The four work areas were:

**Project 1** – describing the components of a modern and effective Community Safety Partnership (CSP), and the skills required to deliver it.

**Project 2** – identifying what makes a safe community and to map out how the relationships across the partners can support safer communities.

**Project 3** – exploring the use of evidence in community safety and consider what evidence-informed planning could look like in Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) of the future.

**Project 4** – understanding what people with protected characteristics (or under-represented groups more generally) think about community safety in Scotland.

Although separate initiatives, the various elements had considerable interdependencies. This document briefly summarises that work; detailed approaches, observations and implications can be found in the respective individual reports.

**NB**: It should be noted that as well as taking place during the COVID19 pandemic and its associated lockdowns, these specific research projects coincided with widespread Black Lives Matter protests and increased focus on women's safety (due to the murder in London on 3rd March 2021 of Sarah Everard). All of these gave additional prominence to community safety during early 2021.

# Approach

Work on all projects was carried out concurrently from late January through to early April 2021. Due to COVID19 restrictions, most of the engagement (1-2-1 meetings or focus groups) was done remotely – via Zoom or MS Teams.

The approach was largely as follows:

- a rapid literature review, identifying findings and recommendations for community safety (CS) policy, partnership working, modern public servant skills, data & evidence and user experiences (a bibliography has been developed to be used and developed by SCSN).

- a subsequent questionnaire, issued to all SCSN members, partners and other selected stakeholders with an interest in community safety policy or practice. That elicited a 45% response rate, with 18 separate local authority contributions across remote rural, islands, major urban and mixed rural/small towns/large towns areas of Scotland.

- several detailed focus group sessions with Community Safety Partnership lead officers from local authorities and wider Community Planning Partnership (CPP) functions. Several follow-up 1-2-1 sessions were run on specific championing evidence themes.

- for Project 4 (understanding under-represented groups or people with protected characteristics), the nature of those consultees implied different approaches to engagement. That is, respecting specific sensitivities, ensuring anonymity, being aware of triggering, recognising language barriers or digital access and exclusion issues. Many of those challenges were addressed via close working with relevant voluntary sector groups and charities, subsequently tailoring the questionnaire, and encouraging and supporting participants to lead and/or facilitate conversations themselves.

More detailed information on these approaches is set out in the respective project reports.

# Project 1: Components of a modern & effective CSP and the skills required to deliver it

Following a detailed literature review and analysis of an initial questionnaire issued to the SCSN membership and partners, the project team used a series of focus groups with CS professionals and stakeholders, to explore and expand on four key themes relevant to a modern and effective CSP.

Themes and characteristics as developed with colleagues are set out below:

| Themes | Characteristics |
|---|---|
| **Complexity** | • recognises complexity and positions community safety strategically in the local context.<br>• is not unduly focused on crime as the primary indicator of safety.<br>• is specific to each local area and may not always follow a standard pattern of 'obvious' partners e.g., work more with the Third Sector than others, involvement of NHS is very varied, some involve Community Councils extensively, others not at all, etc.<br>• often uses language of 'reducing harm' as a proxy for community safety on the basis that this often resonates more meaningfully with key partners and communities. |
| **Approach** | • understands leadership as collaborative and dispersed and identifies community leadership as a key contributor to wider leadership strength achieved through partnership working.<br>• is informed by cross-cutting issues such as poverty, isolation, wellbeing and changes to community dynamics through increased reliance on digital connectivity, the pandemic response, demographic and environmental factors, etc.<br>• is both reactive and proactive, anticipatory and responsive.<br>• prioritises meeting the needs of those at greatest risk of harm, understands lived experience and respects diversity.<br>• uses assets-based approaches; partners understand strengths and vitality of people and communities alongside needs. |

| Themes | Characteristics |
|---|---|
| | • is agile, flexible and responsive, using proactive approaches and reacting in proportionate and effective ways when facing situations where harm requires to be mitigated in timely ways.<br><br>• continuously adapts and plays to the strengths of local partners using an evidence-based approach. |
| **Relationships** | • is highly engaged with the communities it serves, helps to build social capital, strengthens community resilience and co-produces community safety activities.<br><br>• communicates effectively across partners, within communities and between a range of important stakeholders.<br><br>• has developed partnerships, collaborations and joint ventures.<br><br>• breaks silos using relationship-based models of trust and respect.<br><br>• may be organised in informal networks which are as valuable, if not more so, as formal partnership structures they sit alongside.<br><br>• builds on maximising potential represented by local partners.<br><br>• maximises the potential presented by the particular dynamics of good working relationships which may be due to the exceptional skills of key individuals at any one time. |
| **Capacity** | • harnesses resources (such as pooled budgets, knowledge exchange, skills sharing) and is multi-skilled.<br><br>• is agile and ready to focus where need is greatest, make connections between need and opportunity.<br><br>• responds positively to feedback and continuously develops. |

Further development of these themes with stakeholders suggested that the future for CS work – and especially at CSP levels – is likely to be based on:

## Engagement

- working across partner structures and within community networks to shape complex lines of communication and create a dynamic model of trust.

- working on a community-centred basis to build social capital, support individuals and co-produce solutions, often with one or more CS partners.

- harnessing the value of lived experience to engage, communicate and support people in danger of harm.

## Perception & empowerment

- understanding more about local perception of danger as well as hazards. Using this understanding to shape support that will require a process of engagement to explore and develop the local community safety narrative. The strength of these relationships may include a degree of challenge as well as support to enable collaborative action with partners and communities.

- recognising the importance of promoting and enabling agency for individuals and their communities, especially where there is a risk that some may perceive their ability to control the forces that shape their lives puts them in a position of powerlessness and hopelessness due to a devalued sense of agency.

## Strategy

- refreshing the concept of early intervention and prevention as a foundation for the achievement of important outcomes through CS work and developing shared understanding of where/how intervention is done.

> **"Turning the ship to preventative spend is not a short-term aim: it needs close collaboration including with the third sector."** CS lead

- considering principles as well as themes, services and components when designing community safety work.

- targeting resources.

## Collaboration

- greater sharing of experience, exchange of knowledge and joint action learning between partners.

- seeking economies of scale where relevant (e.g. data access and interpretation, distributing safety information, tackling online harm).

## Evidence

- considering data to a greater extent to anticipate need and shape responses.

- acting as generators of data, particularly qualitative data, and working collaboratively to evaluate and make use of evidence to change and fine-tune applying limited resources to achieve the greatest positive impact.

The second element of this piece was on the skills & learning requirements of modern and effective CSPs. Some of that was initially prompted by the questionnaire. While most respondents believe that CSPs are already sufficiently skilled, some also indicated that areas for development e.g.

- limited use of deliberative (28%) and facilitation skills (23%).

- 40% of respondents identifying performance management and self-evaluation skills as being in place.

- communication & marketing skills at relatively low levels (referenced by 34%).

- only around half of the respondents reported skills in data analysis, workforce development & training, digital communication & engagement, project planning & delivery and mediation.

Detailed discussions about skills in subsequent focus groups coalesced around three main themes:

| Theme | Commentary |
|---|---|
| **Leadership & culture** | - Recognition that 'soft' skills are particularly important in leading and managing community safety work in partnership contexts. Several references made to appreciating complexity, planning, problem-solving, analysis, showing initiative and negotiation as part of the tool kit.<br><br>**"There has been a positive shift to proactive partnership working over the last few years and where various partners are engaged at an earlier stage as part of a collaborative approach."** CS lead<br><br>- Awareness that approaches to partnership working have progressed in recent years to increase the range and extent of creative working within and across professional and organisational boundaries.<br>- Acknowledgement that the potential to engage and empower communities lies at the heart of successful community safety work and that there is potential to be more community-led. |
| **Breadth & range of skills** | - Participants spoke about the extent to which teams are increasingly multi-skilled.<br>- Aware they will be required to create, innovate, lead, manage change, and demonstrate impact.<br>- Specific discussions on data analysis where access to capacity and capability has reduced in recent years.<br>- Staff and partners recognise that using digital skills to explore trends, patterns and insights is an area of considerable further potential. |

| Theme | Commentary |
|---|---|
| | • CS professionals support strengthening deliberative, facilitative, consultative, participative skills, and other specific areas including outcomes-based approaches, reaching 'difficult to engage' people etc. |
| **Learning & development** | • Participants are keen that further work is done to facilitate and support skills and knowledge development via SCSN.<br><br>• Most focus group discussions noted significant experience in the sector that could be more shared, reflected upon and adapted for use in a wide range of local areas of Scotland. Reflective learning, action learning, mentoring and the sharing of 'best thinking' have considerable potential. This would build upon learning from recent work with Evaluation Scotland to better understand the impact of community safety activities and previous SCSN work to develop the self-assessment toolkit. |

# Project 2: What makes a safe community?

Building on questionnaire results, dedicated focus groups in March specifically sought to address the factors that cause people to feel safe in communities, perceptions of safety, underlying issues, early intervention & prevention and relationships.

Several themes are explored in depth in the Project 2 report. Broadly, these were:

- A safe community is founded upon **basic principles of personal safety and safety within the public realm**: a person can be at risk of harm due to risks they encounter within the community they live in, the relationships they have, their circumstances, behaviour, life stages, etc. Consideration of what makes a safe community should therefore aim to understand the importance of community dynamics as well as risk factors at play at various macro and micro levels including personal, local, group, online.

- **Community safety is complex** – the scope of activity is broad and deep and inter-connected. with social systems, infrastructure and actors operating at various levels including national, local and neighbourhood. But while complexity presents challenges, the focus groups also viewed complexity as an opportunity: because community safety can be understood as an integral feature of many other priorities that communities and decision makers care about, it can unite partners in the pursuit of common goals.

- **There are multiple perceptions of safety** – the process highlighted the extent to which safety means different things to different people. In general terms, there are three components:

  - *'seen to be safe'* – quality of the environment is a factor, with the appearance of local areas (dark streets, litter, graffiti, dog fouling, poorly maintained property, neglected green spaces, etc) important in making communities feel safe.

  - *'felt to be safe'* – explaining what constitutes 'real risks' in communities does not necessarily assuage feelings of anxiety, particularly in the midst of media or social media narratives about crime or harm. CS professionals suggest that more could be done to engage positively with communities to counter misinformation.

  - *'understood to be safe'* – the importance of basic information about safety within communities was noted frequently. Communities value "knowing where to go, knowing that they join-up, knowing that something will get done". The experience of COVID-19 may mean that awareness of safety locally will have increased, with implications for the longer term including mental health, domestic abuse and online crime.

- **Sense of place** – CS professionals stressed the importance of community identity and pride on local safety issues via a desire to protect, improve and enhance the local environment. Several stakeholders noted the concurrent exploration of the concept of the 20-Minute Neighbourhood (places with immediate, convenient, safe and pedestrian-oriented access to places and services people need including all shopping, school, parks and social activities) and the Place Standard Tool.
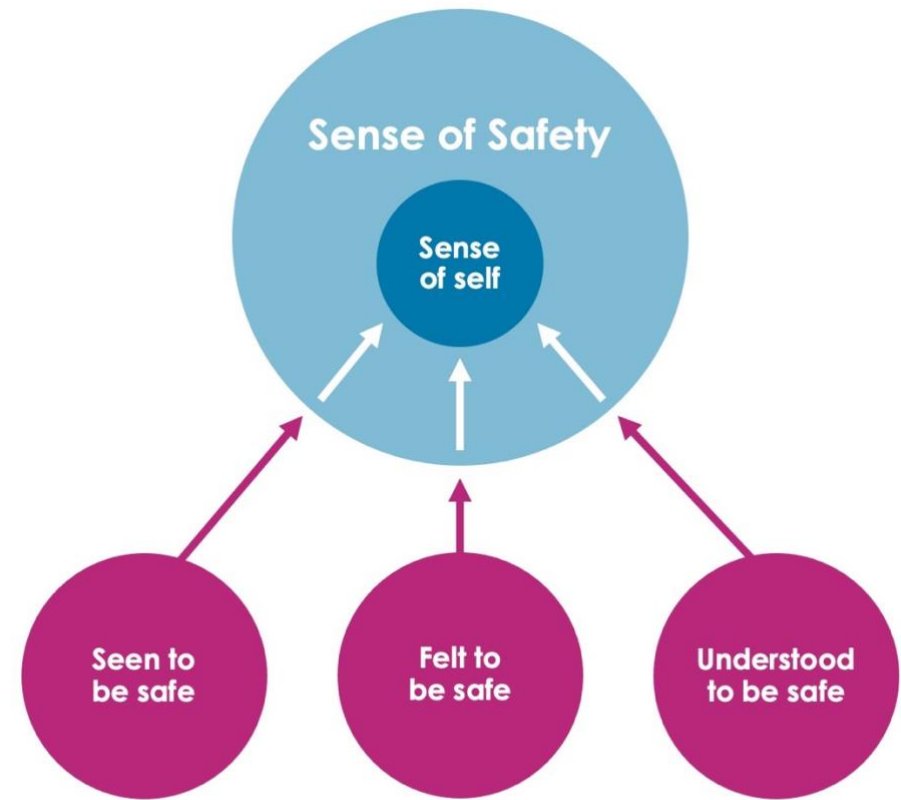


- Several interviewees made the point that **poverty impacts heavily** on community safety. A lack of income, support and advocacy locally reduces opportunities and choices to influence or participate in communities and its activities but is also causes isolation, mental health issues, susceptibility to harm or anti-social behaviour. CS professionals believe that challenging deprivation and inequality is a key community safety lever.

- **How best to engage communities** – the importance of involving communities meaningfully is well recognised but practice appears to be varied and somewhat underdeveloped as yet. The terminology – community development, engagement, resilience, empowerment, community-led practice, community-centred, lived-experience – is rooted in a good understanding of the significance of communities in stakeholder terms. However, issues remain to be overcome before the value of community involvement can be maximised. The research found little evidence of the need for an attitudinal shift to achieve this – the importance of engaging communities is well recognised – but, informed by studies to review the success of various approaches, the project identified a number of risks and constraints. These included the danger of 'community consultation' being tokenistic, the risk of giving attention to those that shout the loudest rather than those in the greatest need, lack of the resources required to involve communities using the imaginative and sustained approaches required to achieve the greatest success and relatively low levels of confidence and experience in digital communication as a tool to support community engagement. However, there are examples of good practice in community engagement which could inform a process of reflection and review across the sector to identify opportunities to embed innovative and effective approaches. This could go beyond 'sharing best practice' to identify opportunities for systemic improvement using formative evaluation, Theory of Change techniques, action learning, etc.
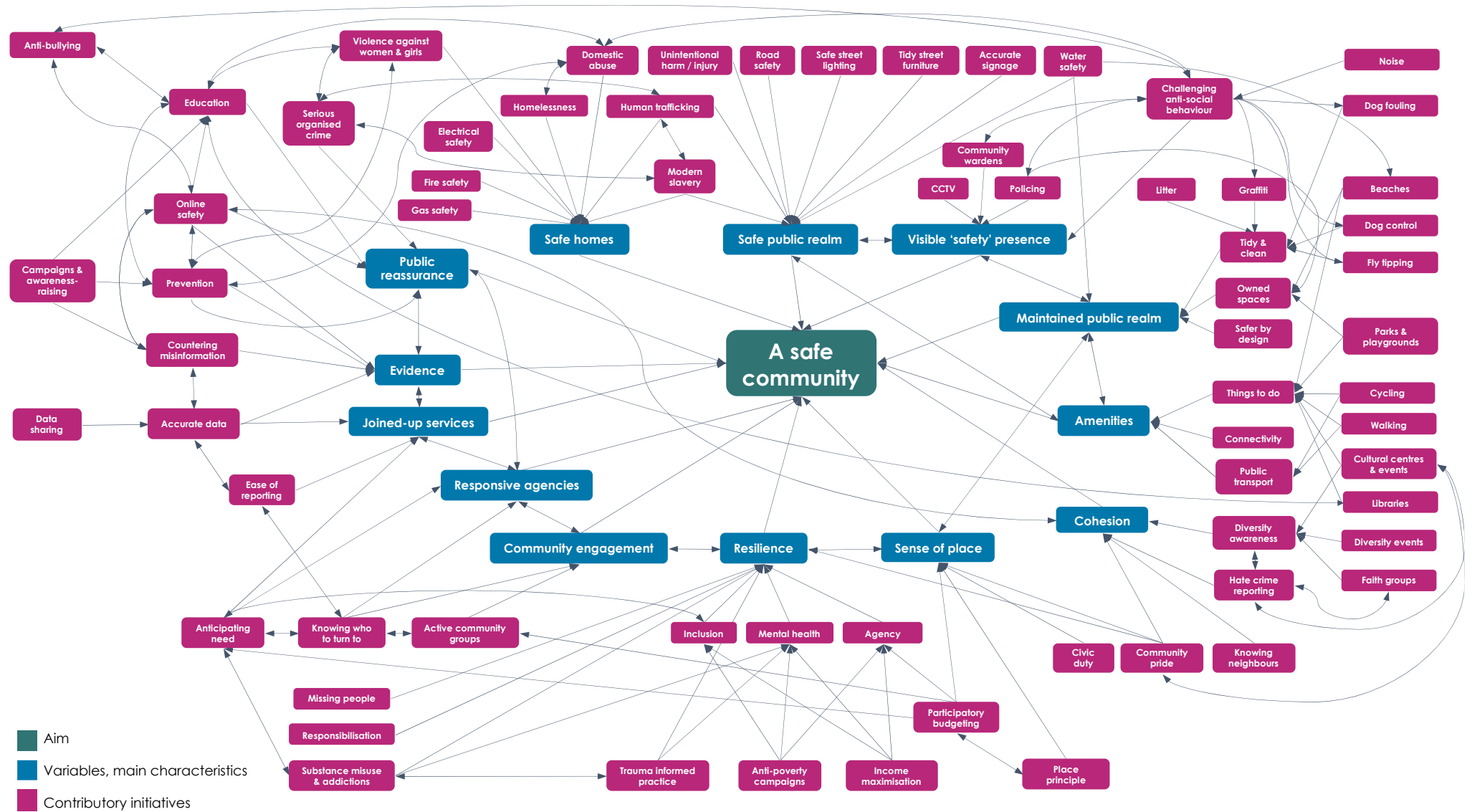
- **Digital safety** – most focus group discussions reflected on an increasing awareness of the difficulties associated with 'online spaces'. Specific and growing threats of harm were mentioned like online scams, harassment, misinformation and the danger to vulnerable women using the internet to access sex work. There is an appreciation that more attention is needed on these areas, and certainly in partnership with local and national organisations.

> **"Online is everywhere, it's not location dependent. But if you're not safe 'in your head', you're still not safe in our communities."** CS lead

One summary of these sessions and underpinning research has been set out in the accompanying high-level Systems Map. The key assumption underlying the map is that a safe community is influenced by a wide variety of factors. The system is the sum of all the relevant factors and their interdependencies that determine a "safe community" for an individual or a group of people.

**It shows that community safety is complex, and it operates in a complex environment; that collective actions are needed from multiple stakeholders to shift the system, and it highlights that influences are at local, regional, and national levels.**

# Systems Map:



**Legend:**
- Aim
- Variables, main characteristics
- Contributory initiatives

**Aim:**
- A safe community

**Variables, main characteristics:**
- Safe homes
- Safe public realm
- Visible 'safety' presence
- Public reassurance
- Evidence
- Joined-up services
- Maintained public realm
- Amenities
- Responsive agencies
- Community engagement
- Resilience
- Sense of place
- Cohesion

**Contributory initiatives:**
- Anti-bullying
- Violence against women & girls
- Domestic abuse
- Unintentional harm / injury
- Road safety
- Safe street lighting
- Tidy street furniture
- Accurate signage
- Water safety
- Challenging anti-social behaviour
- Noise
- Education
- Serious organised crime
- Homelessness
- Human trafficking
- Electrical safety
- Modern slavery
- Community wardens
- Dog fouling
- Online safety
- Fire safety
- CCTV
- Policing
- Litter
- Graffiti
- Beaches
- Gas safety
- Campaigns & awareness-raising
- Prevention
- Tidy & clean
- Dog control
- Fly tipping
- Countering misinformation
- Owned spaces
- Safer by design
- Parks & playgrounds
- Data sharing
- Accurate data
- Things to do
- Cycling
- Connectivity
- Walking
- Cultural centres & events
- Public transport
- Libraries
- Ease of reporting
- Diversity awareness
- Diversity events
- Hate crime reporting
- Faith groups
- Anticipating need
- Knowing who to turn to
- Active community groups
- Inclusion
- Mental health
- Agency
- Civic duty
- Community pride
- Knowing neighbours
- Missing people
- Responsibilisation
- Participatory budgeting
- Substance misuse & addictions
- Trauma informed practice
- Anti-poverty campaigns
- Income maximisation
- Place principle

# Project 3: Evidence-informed planning

The questionnaire issued to SCSN members and relevant partners included several prompts on the use of data and evidence in community safety activities.

The key responses were:

- when asked how community safety issues get identified and prioritised, 58% believe that's informed by analysis of data.

- 49% believe that they have data analysis skills and expertise available for community safety locally.

- when it comes to the development and delivery of community safety activity locally, while 70% state that it is fully or mostly evidence-based, only 52% say that it is planned and assessed using qualitative data (e.g. structured community engagement, focus groups, case studies, questionnaires etc).

- when prompted on 'barriers, challenges' to successful delivery, 89% referenced access to and analysis of data to inform community safety and 100% said that Information sharing is a challenge.

There is a disconnect between the questionnaire evidence above and the more detailed focus group conversations the project team led in early 2021. Questionnaire responses suggest broadly that colleagues know that data and evidence is important, more so than ever, and a majority of CSPs and partners are 'on the case' with it. Yet, follow-up discussions were more inclined to cite challenges and stalled progress.

The main themes in relation to data and championing evidence are summarised below. Often these were prompted by findings from the survey:

- The availability or otherwise of data analyst resource was a big theme across all of the conversations – **not all partnerships have access to dedicated or even shared analyst resources**. From the conversations and focus groups, only a fifth had dedicated access, a further third is able to call on resources from a wider service (or from partners like Police Scotland) and the remainder have very little capacity at all. The implication is that colleagues are, as one participant said, "basing decisions on what people think rather than what they know for sure".

> **"It's often the case of looking for the data we need, finding we can't access it or it's not even there."** CS lead

- This aligns with previous research – in 2012/13, SCSN reported that there were 23 partnership analysts split between 19 local authority areas: 80% of urban CSPs had a partnership analyst compared to 50% of rural and small town CSPs.

- The consistent view among interviewees is that **information sharing generally has stalled, is increasingly patchy, and inconsistent** across partnerships. CSP leads and partners are aware of and can nominally access a range of data for their areas, but it is still largely retained by those generating information as custom and practice.

- Police Scotland as a key partner on information exchange was subject to several conversations; much of which was around perceived centralisation of services, and recognition that data itself has been **a challenge for Police Scotland**, with ongoing work on consolidating regional crime systems beyond national criminal sets.

- But there are **examples of good practice** identified from discussions e.g.

  - Colleagues in Fife, Dumfries & Galloway and the Comhairle nan Eilean Siar mentioned that data sharing protocol within their respective Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs), which cover those CSPs, are due to be refreshed in the coming year.

  - The Scottish Borders has built on its data sharing protocols and used CPP resources to establish two Community Action Teams – joint Council and Police Scotland initiatives focussing on issues such as ASB, street safety and theft. Data sharing and analysis is a core part of that, including capturing evidence to gauge its success.

- **Data protection & GDPR** was raised many times – some of the participants suggested that the perceived stalling on data & information sharing has resulted from uncertainties around GDPR: a proxy for increased risk aversion on data protection. This is a problem that SCSN could help address, certainly in agreeing protocols. There is likely no need for amendments to legislation but an authoritative legal view on these issues may address the perception that data sharing risks running counter to the guidance.

- **Evidence-informed early intervention and prevention** - participants in the focus groups were clear that 'early intervention and prevention' must be a key part of the community safety approach (following the Christie Commission in 2011, and a conscious shift from enforcement). Colleagues did cite several examples of intelligence-led prevention activity.

- For example:

  - the Naloxone spray (overdose prevention) initiative in Glasgow is based on a range of cross-partner data insights.

  - the Comhairle nan Eilean Siar's Islands water safety plan (and SMART signs) initiative was driven by data analysis and close working with community safety partners including the Coastguard and RNLI.

  - the community safety team in Fife is clear that they interrogate historic and recent data ("what we have done") to identify trends ("where the problems are likely to be"), and this informs live workforce planning e.g. dog fouling in winter, post-Christmas fly-tipping.

  - the SFRS is developing its predictive analytics capability including around its 'safe & well' approaches. Initial evaluation suggests very significant success in predicting where accidents and fires will happen.

The Project 3 report prompts SCSN and its members and partners on how best to facilitate better generation, capture, transfer, repurposing or sharing of data/information for communities' benefit. This includes suggestions around:

- improving awareness and accessibility of what data is available and able to be shared.

- data sharing protocols.

- strengthening data skills.

- involving communities more in data generation & sharing processes.

- encouraging better engagement with data.

- making the case for dedicated data analysis skills across the partnerships (including SCSN being a useful hub for some pooled resource).

- a data hub for community safety, perhaps leveraging existing information specialists in local community libraries or universities.

# Project 4: Experiences of community safety (groups with protected characteristics)

This project builds on recent work by the Scottish Community Safety Network (SCSN), notably a report from July 2020 on Perceptions and Experiences of Community Safety, and a follow-up Experiences of Community Safety webinar in December 2020.

That particular exercise identified data gaps especially around young children; trans and gender non- conforming people; lesbian, gay and bisexual people; specific minority ethnic groups in Scotland; and people with specific disabilities.

**As a result, SCSN was keen to develop its understanding of what people with protected characteristics (or under-represented groups more generally) think about community safety in Scotland.**

The approach to Project 4 differed from the other elements. First, recognising that these groups and individuals SCSN wanted to engage with *are* typically under-represented in its research and second, because their protected characteristics meant additional sensitivities around engagement. That meant:

- much of the engagement was done via relevant voluntary sector groups and charities, with some of whom SCSN had already started building relationships.

- development and issue of a light-touch questionnaire survey, incorporating the specific accessibility requirements from the consultees or representative bodies.

- Organising follow up workshop sessions or 1-2-1 conversations with people from these groups (self-selecting or as encouraged by the representative bodies). This included suggestions that:

  - a member of the community chaired the session.

  - the session could be done anonymously or pseudonymously.

  - cameras can be turned off.

  - no recording need be made.

  - the group could run autonomously (that is, with no member of the external project team involved were that in any way sensitive or triggering.

- A light-touch consent form was issued for the focus groups and 1-2-1 sessions, setting out the purpose of the research, the approach taken and what would happen to quotes captured.

- That focus group sessions or 1-2-1 conversations were not prescriptive – merely that participants were prompted on "what's strong as well as what's wrong", their ability to be active citizens rather than passive consumers, what could have supported them to feel safe, and what communities and services could do in response to their experiences.

This was a short piece of work and as such not designed to be comprehensive or exhaustive. Instead, it is merely illustrative, used to capture reflections on the root causes of feelings of safety and unsafety and within the context of asset-based communities - exploring what's strong as well as what's wrong, active citizens

rather than passive consumers, what could be done to make them feel safe, what could services do in response to their experiences.

## Emerging survey results

The light-touch questionnaire went through several iterations. The initial focus was on developing a small set of questions that captured easily which communities and/or protected characteristics were relevant to the respondents (mainly via drop-down lists or check boxes) *and* facilitated their providing personal stories or quotes on experiences of community safety (via free text boxes).

Versions were developed with community organisations to accommodate appropriate accessibility and terminology. The final version was distributed mostly by those organisations.

As of 21st April, the survey has been filled in c 60 times (variation across the 8 questions), with representation from 18 local authority areas (again, across remote rural, islands, major urban and mixed rural/small towns/large towns areas of Scotland). A breakdown by characteristic or community is set out in the table below:

| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| I am a young person (25 and under) | 8.47% | 5 |
| I am an older person (65 and over) | 18.64% | 11 |
| I am a disabled person | 22.03% | 13 |
| I am from an ethnic minority background (Asian, Black, Mixed, White, Gypsy/Traveller, Roma, and Other) | 6.78% | 4 |
| I am female | 72.88% | 43 |
| My gender identity is not the same as the sex I was assigned at birth | 1.69% | 1 |
| I am Gay or Lesbian or Bisexual | 15.25% | 9 |
| I am homeless or have experienced homelessness | 5.08% | 3 |
| I am a victim of crime | 11.86% | 7 |
| I have been a witness to crime | 15.25% | 9 |
| I identify with a specific religious denomination or body | 11.86% | 7 |
| Total Respondents: 59 | | |

While more than 90% of respondents say they feel extremely, very, or somewhat safe, 8% of our respondents at this stage felt 'unsafe'. Although the detailed analysis has yet to be done on individual responses, most in that latter category appear to be victims or witnesses to crime e.g. *"I experienced domestic abuse as a male. Police Scotland failed to take my reports seriously, did not act, and I am still unsafe in my community"*, *"I have never liked walking late on my own. I had a bad experience when I was younger, a handbag snatch"*. However, other comments suggest other characteristics are relevant: *"Being an ethnic woman, I'm always on guard"*.

## When going about your daily life, how safe do you feel?

Answered: 59   Skipped: 3
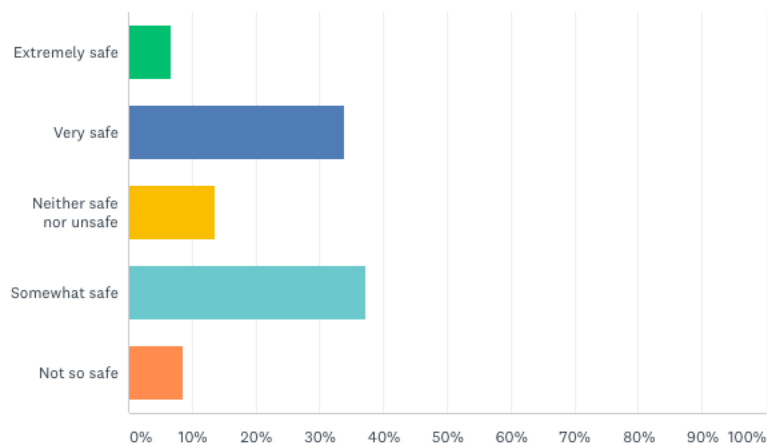


When asked 'Where do you feel safest?', most respondents referenced being 'at home' (93%) and/or 'with family or friends' (mentioned in 14% of comments) as the space or time they feel safest. 5 respondents as of mid-April 2021 mentioned the work environment as a safe space too.

While most respondents felt that their safety had improved or stayed the same over the past few years, there were still a third who believe it has worsened. Again, some of that appears to be related to being victims or witnesses to crime ("I was followed by a male whilst out running at 8pm at night in winter whilst it was dark"), but there were several comments around women's safety ("I've always felt worried being alone as a woman"; "hearing of assaults on women"; "seeing and reading about attacks on women").

## Has your feeling of safety improved or worsened over the past 5 years?

Answered: 59   Skipped: 3
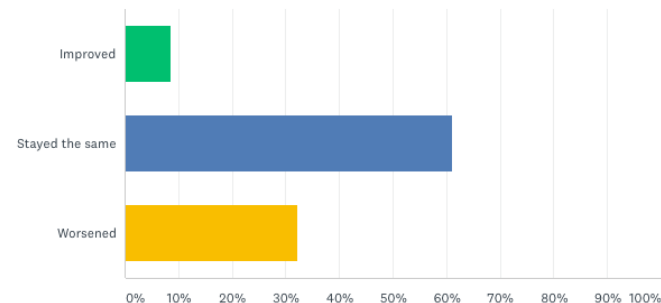
When prompted on 'what local or national changes would help you feel safer', a significant number of respondents referenced a range of services or infrastructure improvements. The word cloud below shows the main themes with frequent mentions made of "improved and more street lighting", "CCTV in park areas", "more initiatives to draw young people from the streets", "Safer roads for cyclists", "increased police presence" and "Zero tolerance for antisocial behaviour".



More specific protected characteristics comments included:

- "Raising awareness of disabilities"

- "Better awareness of visual impairment - more 20 mph zones, less street and pavement clutter, clearer signage"

- "Better reporting for homophobia", "more involvement from LGBT community"

- "Work to challenge toxic masculinity and misogyny"

- "As a young female I often felt unsafe on the late trains…better cameras / deterrent measures"

- "Much more awareness raising and tackling society's opinions of ethnic minorities esp. Gypsy Travellers is essential. Schools should include far more about these cultures into the curriculum"

- "Greater respect for difference in sections of the population".

Additional work is needed to analyse the results of the survey by SCSN and its partners.

## Focus groups sessions

As of mid-April 2021, several sessions have been organised and run with groups with protected characteristics or who have been under-represented in SCSN research. Each of these sessions was designed to be as informal as possible but would cover the same broad themes, derived from the survey:

- What does being safe actually mean to participants?

- What experiences have participants had where they have been unsafe (or felt unsafe) because of their specific protected characteristic?

- What public and community services could do more (or less) of to make participants feel safer?

- If staying safe online is a consideration?

Participants were clear that there was no expectation that the conversations would be exhaustive or comprehensive, or representative of the communities involved. They were clear too that anything used in subsequent reports from the session or accompanying survey would be anonymised.

To date, four sessions have been captured. Full notes from those are detailed in the Project 4 report, but key elements are summarised below:

| Blind or visually impaired people | People from various LGBTQI+ communities |
|---|---|
| **Convened by SightScotland, and facilitated by someone with retinitis pigmentosa** | **Organised by SCSN colleagues, facilitated by a someone from the LGBTQI+ community** |
| "Just walking around, it's comforting that people offer to help. Feeling part of a community who are looking out for you makes me feel safe." | "Being safe is when I don't need to hide my identity or be invisible…" |
| "Home is safe because no gangs no teenagers hanging around, free space, no obstacles or tripping hazards." | "Lots more judgemental comments about my sexuality in my late 50s." |
| "Being able to navigate the environment with a cane or guide dog and safe getting to bus stops or doctors etc." | "I feel safe at work too: mainly because of legal protections." |
| Guide dogs have been attacked by other dogs in the street – leaving blind or visually-impaired people more frightened and potentially unsafe. | "Have in the past been scared of groups of teens drinking." |
| "Being disabled itself makes me feel unsafe; blindness leaves me a little exposed." | Safety and comfort are not necessarily a given in LGBTQI+ friendly settings. |
| Recognise that public realm needs attention for blind & visually impaired people e.g. potholes are dangerous not frustrating. | "Visibility is not enough: it's acceptance." |
| | "Need to raise awareness of LBGTQI issues…provide opportunities to listen and act on issues." |
| | "Transphobia online is constant; reinforces feeling that 'outside' is not safe." |
| | "We need to make more use of remote reporting." |

| Children and young people | Victims & witnesses of crime |
|---|---|
| **Organised by 6VT (charity providing services to Edinburgh's young people incl highest risk and most marginalised individuals)** | **Organised by Victim Support Scotland, in a closed session. Notes transcribed by the Service User Engagement Officer** |
| "I feel safe when I don't need to be alert all the time"<br><br>"Avoid spaces with gangs of teenagers hanging around"<br><br>"Police do not necessarily make me feel safer – maybe they're there because there's been trouble"<br><br>"Street lighting is an issue…certainly avoid dark areas"<br><br>"I'm on edge when I'm on a bus or when I'm by myself…aware of lots of bampots and weirdos on the buses"<br><br>"Unpredictability of people drinking in groups makes me feel unsafe"<br><br>All had some 'strangers' as 'friends' online - "maybe we see things different from in real life"<br><br>"I feel safer online because I have more control over what happens there" | "Being safe means staying alive without fear of impending violence that could end our lives or the lives of our family."<br><br>"..how unsafe we feel when parole hearings come up"<br><br>[Re parole:] "it's the not knowing that is very, very scary"<br><br>"It's very worrisome, especially now with lockdown as to how they are managing criminals in the community. I don't feel that's at all safe"<br><br>"Been times that justice system or community police have let the system down, let the community down"<br><br>"Can't count on the authorities when we need them"<br><br>"Community Police Officer did make me feel safe for quite a while…and other security measures do make you feel better…but it does make you feel confined to the house"<br><br>"We don't have the Community Police Officer any more, and I don't know if we have anyone else"<br><br>"We've asked for better monitoring in the community…we do not feel safe while they are walking the streets"<br><br>"I've made it difficult to find me online...social media all locked down to private...we turn location services off" |

By definition, there is a wide range of stories and observations from these groups and the supporting survey – some of which will be specific to individual groups (e.g., street furniture obstacles for blind and disabled people, LGBTQI+ awareness raising across public sector practitioners) and some of which is common across many consultees (street lighting, intimidating anti-social behaviour or group alcohol use, safe public transport). SCSN and its partners will reflect on both elements.

## Project 4 next steps

This piece of work was not necessarily designed to identify conclusions, but instead to capture stories and experiences for follow-up activity with SCSN partners and other stakeholders. Some of that has emerged from the survey and initial focus groups but further activity is recommended.

## This project should be seen as 'live' with further engagement to be carried out.

Indeed, SCSN intends to follow up with other organisations that expressed an interest in participating in this exercise but for whom capacity or timing did not allow active involvement at this time – notably with older people, people from minority ethnic backgrounds, people identifying with religious communities and with groups representing Gypsy/Traveller and Roma communities. Initial contacts have been made and SCSN will make use of the process identified above.

# Implications for discussion

Taking place over a relatively short period of time, this four-part research project has attempted to take account of some key issues identified through the literature review, the views of CS professionals and other key stakeholders, individuals with protected characteristics and the SCSN.

Implications for discussion relate to community safety practice, wider stakeholder interests and priorities and SCSN as the co-ordinating organisation for the community safety sector in Scotland.

The research was developed as part of the ongoing work of SCSN to reflect, review and explore and has identified the following implications for the sector to consider:

## Community safety: general

- Where previously there may have been a general understanding that a *formal* CSP is the best model (an approach that has statutory status in England and Wales), this research has suggested that agile partnership working can be supported by an informal partnership structure or a formal structure. Arguing for certain aspects of community safety work to be made statutory may still be important but would not need necessarily to focus on a call for partnership structures to be made formal.

- The Systems Map presents community safety using a spoke and hub model with 'A Safe Community' at its centre. The sector may wish to consider how some 'spokes' can be considered as 'levers' able to be activated to achieve influence / action / change. When seeking to achieve the goal of 'A Safe Community', can the systems map help facilitate a whole system approach by providing the starting point for a community safety framework?

- SCSN has a strong track record of commissioning research, presenting information about community safety issues and facilitating debate within the sector and across the policy spectrum. The researchers found a wealth of information on the SCSN website but some of this information was somewhat 'hidden away' within the website, a point made by other consultees. SCSN may wish to consider how the value of this work can be maximised to remain 'live' using interactive

digital communication tools to support ongoing access to these resources and foster debate online as well as through one-off discussion events.

- The rapid literature review undertaken by this project has generated an interesting range of documents including a review of areas of literature (such as community co-production, skills development, place-making, etc.) that have been useful to consider in relation to community safety. SCSN may wish to consider maintaining this bibliography on an ongoing basis and finding ways to make use of this resource as part of its future work.

  - The research report indicates the value of community safety to wider important agendas for government policy. Articulating this value is a significant feature of SCSN's work. There remains an important need to support local and national arguments for adequate resources to be assigned to maximise the positive impact of the work of community safety. This is particularly relevant for achieving the significant benefits required using early intervention and prevention principles which is a national project that has yet to be fully realised.

## Data & Evidence

- The research uncovered some perceived difficulties concerning data access and information sharing. It would seem that uncertainties around GDPR for both CS professionals and partners has increased risk aversion on data protection. This is a problem that SCSN could help address, certainly in agreeing protocols. It seems likely that there is no need for amendments to legislation but an authoritative legal view on these issues may address the perception that data sharing risks running counter to the guidance.

- Another area with potential for a strategic intervention on the part of SCSN would be in relation to data analysis, interpretation and utilisation. The creation of a data intelligence interface operating between national and local level (in terms of data sharing as well as skills development and sharing) is referenced also in Project 3.

## Digital safety

- The research uncovered concern about how the digital sphere is affecting community safety generally and how online safety needed to be considered more broadly than just as an education advice project for children and young people. SCSN may wish to consider how the complex safety issues associated with the online space can be better understood and provide leadership on this on behalf of members.

## Learning

- SCSN has a strong track record of identifying the need to facilitate learning and skills development on specific topics. This research would suggest some specific topics could be covered in future SCSN work such as how to use social media to engage communities and the further development of deliberative, facilitative, consultative and participative skills.

- In addition to specific learning and development topics, the sector would benefit from being supported by SCSN to be continuously learning through a process of knowledge exchange, sharing 'best thinking', mentoring, action learning, reflection on the use of techniques such as Theory of Change, etc. and other forms of collaborative learning. The research found that the sector particularly welcomed the opportunity to reflect and review and it seems like that a SCSN working group of CS professionals would be able to design a valuable learning and development programme.

- A new learning and development programme would benefit from being informed by the work started through this research to understand 'best thinking' for community safety in the academic field, in other parts of the UK and internationally. Continuing to look also to academic and policy work in related fields such as community development would also be valuable when designing and continuously refreshing a collaborative learning programme.

- SCSN may also wish to consider how it maintains continued links with academics to support the ongoing development of community safety practice. The creation of a forum to discuss what research is currently being undertaken and how this links with practice on the ground (and vice versa) could be very beneficial.

## People and communities

- Engaging and involving communities in meaningful ways will be central to the future success of community safety. It would seem that levels of confidence and degrees of success in relation to this vary considerably across Scotland. Developing this aspect of community safety work could be progressed through the collaborative learning programme.

- It would also be useful for SCSN to liaise at the national level with professionals in other parts of the public and third sector that have community engagement at their heart to facilitate further CS sector learning. This could include, for example, community learning & development, social work, voluntary sector health.

- SCSN should also consider how the work undertaken through this project to engage under-represented communities and people with protected characteristics can be continued and further progressed. Community engagement is a matter for geographic communities at a local level but also for communities of interest. SCSN is well positioned to liaise with communities of interest to support the learning of CSPs and inform local planning.