

Preliminary Results of COVID-19 and Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) Survey

14th April 2020

Over the last few weeks, SCSN have made contact with a number of CSPs and community safety practitioners to find out how they have been coping under the strain of COVID-19, the immediate effect of this unprecedented situation and the key emerging themes so far. We have managed to make contact with 20 local authorities and 5 other partners. We have, as yet, been unable to make contact with a number of local authorities, which we believe is indicative of their redeployment into front line work as well as issues around IT and system accessibility at this time. Over time, there might be implications for information flow if these important link roles continue to be deployed to the frontline for the foreseeable future. We will continue to collect as much feedback as we can in the coming weeks and update you on this changing national picture and emerging issues as they unfold. As always, we continue to offer support, assistance and help making connections at this time.

CSP functionality

- The majority of contacted CSPs have suspended formal meetings until further notice. 4 CSPs out of 20, indicated that they are operating but only on a very minimal basis – typically only responding to contacts from community members and / or partners. In general, the majority of Community Safety Partnerships are still functioning albeit in a different way. This tends to involve no formal meetings, but with regular virtual contact and lines of communication remaining open.
- Most local authority community safety teams are continuing service delivery but this is through mostly working from home via phone and email, so therefore limited in its abilities. Community safety teams continue to investigate and issue warnings, help-lines are open and some mediation is still able to be done, however teams are encouraging complainants to be more tolerant during these extremely difficult circumstances and managing expectations. Face to face contact has stopped which means fewer wardens and face to face ASB visits, curtailment of home safety visits, suspension of out of hours services. Some teams are also being affected by staff shortages. 5 Local Authorities have reported issues with accessing appropriate/up to date IT equipment to enable community safety staff to work remotely. Many have indicated that some community safety functions have been scaled back (e.g. fewer community wardens, responding to fly tipping, cuckooing).
- Most local authority community safety teams remain in normal roles but doing some additional tasks e.g. volunteer recruitment, social care and shielding, to help in the circumstances. Some have been completely redeployed to the frontline. Some warden and ASB officer roles are now concentrating on working on other crucial roles such as manning emergency inboxes, crisis centres, and CCTV. Most are still contactable to public through email and

phone and some on social media. The ability to rapidly change in an escalating situation highlights how adaptable and agile the community safety workforce is and the breadth of their skill base in supporting communities.

- The majority of CSPs have put contingency and business continuity measures in operation and are linking, often daily, with resilience partnerships. Communication and information sharing (internally and externally) is key to the success of this. Island and rural authorities in particular are noting how strong their relationship with partners already is and how this has assisted in working well across large or distributed areas. Working closely with the third sector has been of a great help to those with strong links there already.

Key emerging themes

A number of emerging community safety issues were identified by those who responded, although many noted that it was too early to assess what the key issues are and there was a general feeling that community safety issues will become more pronounced as the lockdown continues. SCSN and the Building Safer Communities (BSC) partner group are working hard to keep an eye on the changing situation through our media monitor, bulletin, regular partner meetings to share and coordinate and checking in with our members. We are also looking to research what countries that are ahead of us in experiencing this crisis have done to help us anticipate what some of the emerging issues might be in the coming weeks and months.

So far however:

- **Anti-social behaviour:** Many respondents have highlighted an increase in anti-social behaviour related issues, typically a rise in noise complaints, house parties and gatherings of young people. They are expecting an increase in ASB in summer, due to the better weather and the long term impact of social distancing measures. However, some authorities note no increase in ASB so far.
- **Social Distancing:** Some areas reported issues with people failing to abide by social distancing rules including people travelling to parks and open areas to talk walks, and general public anger and reporting of people not complying.
- **Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG):** Some areas specifically mentioned violence against women and girls indicating that there has been an increase in this issue. Other areas have not yet seen any increases in VAWG yet, but are aware that this is a possibility.
- **Fly tipping:** A small number of authorities reported an increase in fly tipping due to the closure of waste recycling sites, as well as a lack of staff to respond to complaints.
- **Other issues:** Individual areas also mentioned a general increase in opportunistic crime, an increase in falls / home safety issues, scams and

scammers and issues around the supply of illegal drugs leading to opportunities for serious and organised crime.

Further Support

- Additional funding for ICT.
- Continuing to find ways to regularly update and share information especially regarding emerging trends. For up to date information – see our COVID-19 webpage at <https://www.safercommunitiesscotland.org/covid-19-updates-resources/>
- Some like idea of CSP leads video calls for support and information exchange although many Local Authorities do not have Zoom and are not allowed to use it. We'll keep in touch with our partners and stakeholders and can provide some online support and information exchange if there is enough need and it is feasible for partners to join us in this way. Watch this space!