

Safer Leysdown – responding to increased crime levels in a seasonal seaside town

Implementing a seasonal plan to reduce the number of crime incidents and protect the community from harm.

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Key details

Stage of practice	Untested
Purpose	Prevention
Topic	Anti-social behaviour Neighbourhood crime
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Region	South East
Partners	Police
Stage of implementation	The practice is implemented.
Start date	April 2024
Scale of initiative	Local

Key details

Target group	Adults Children and young people Communities
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Aim

The aim of Safer Leysdown is to:

- protect the quality of life and safety of residents to ensure seasonal pressures do not negatively impact those who live and work in Sheerness, Kent
- provide a safe and positive experience for visitors
- recognise the importance of tourism to the Isle of Sheppey and the need for reassurance-driven, visible, and intelligence-led policing

Intended outcome

The intended outcomes of Safer Leysdown are to:

- reduce the number of crimes reported
- reduce the number of anti-social behaviour (ASB) incidents
- reduce the number of domestic abuse (DA) incidents
- improve working with DA charities
- improve the signposting at holiday parks to local DA advisors

Description

Each year, Sheerness receives 50,000 additional visitors between April and September. While the influx provides economic and community benefits, it also creates additional pressure on local infrastructure, residents, and policing.

Previously known as Operation Paris, the initiative had limited scope and impact. When officers were deployed between April and September, they were tasked with patrolling holiday parks with no consistent direction, minimal analysis of demand, and no intelligence on where resources were best

placed. Deployments were routinely scheduled for weekends only, irrespective of risk patterns, and officers were frequently abstracted. As a result, the initiative lacked continuity and the ability to prevent seasonal spikes in harm. In 2023, Kent Police acknowledged that the approach was outdated and misaligned to the scale of the issues emerging across Sheppey East.

Planning process

In response, Kent Police redeveloped the initiative into Safer Leysdown. The redevelopment process began with changing the starting point of the operation. Instead of launching the initiative each April, the force revised this to February to embed early identification of threat, risk, and demand through divisional analysts, intelligence, and problem-solving partners. This ensures that the resource modelling can be aligned to periods of highest seasonal threat, with officers being positioned in hot spot areas. Deployment patterns have been refigured and no longer default to weekend only patrols. By conducting year-on-year analysis using computer assisted dispatch (CAD) records, the force identified the hours and days associated with the greatest volume of demand.

Patrols have changed from reactive attendance to proactive prevention, driven by a system of weekly intelligence products. A bespoke intelligence briefing is provided to officers before their shift via email. Each intelligence pack details:

- persons of concern
- repeat offenders
- high risk locations
- emerging trends from the preceding week
- licensing risks
- dispersal considerations
- hotspot analysis based on CAD and crime patterns

The intelligence packs have changed the way officers understand their role: instead of attending holiday parks without context, they now arrive equipped with precise and evolving intelligence. This enables quicker intervention and earlier disruption of risk.

Implementation

Kent Police have engaged with every holiday and caravan park in Sheerness, providing bystander training, signposting to DA services and setting clear expectations to sites' management before the start of the season. The force have partnered with licensing teams, domestic abuse charities, and safeguarding charities to shape early season intervention. As a result, holiday and caravan parks, particularly those historically associated with high-risk incidents are now reporting concerning behaviour at earlier opportunities.

The force have devised a structured deployment model, consisting of officers covering day and evening shifts. This ensures continuous coverage during the periods identified as highest risk of harm, especially between 6pm to 10pm. Supervisors are explicitly briefed that abstractions of officers are to occur only in exceptional circumstances.

In recognition that a significant proportion of offences linked to these locations involve suspects who remain in the area, Safer Leysdown now incorporates a focus on timely investigation. Dedicated follow up investigators are responsible for handling cases which have surpassed 24 hours, to ensure suspects can be located quickly and victims remain engaged. 'Golden hour' actions are reinforced through:

- supervision
- weekly briefings
- the use of a dedicated DA incident vehicle, known as the 'DA car'
- vulnerability investigations team
- real-time reporting through a PowerApp

Kent Police have implemented modernised governance centred around structured feedback loops, digital reporting tools, and analytical comparison between pre- and post-deployment periods. By introducing QR codes, digital returns, photo capture for media, and structured debrief mechanisms, this ensures that each week of deployment can inform the next.

Overall impact

Safer Leysdown provides Kent Police with a reliable blueprint for seasonal coastal policing, which manages population surges, protects vulnerable people and strengthens partnerships. The initiative has delivered the following outcomes:

- during 2024 and 2025, priority CAD demand reduced by 25%, with the 2025 season recording the lowest April to September demand in five years
- DA cases have continued a multi-year downward trajectory, falling to 15.4% of total crime in 2025, a 44% reduction since 2020
- safeguarding related calls, including missing persons and concern-for-safety incidents, have also decreased
- hotspot locations show increased stability, and proactive officer generated work has strengthened community reassurance and visibility

Learning

What went well

- The force have highlighted the effectiveness of the implementation of Safer Leysdown, due to forward planning, clear command ownership, and a structured approach to briefings.
- Staffing is duty planned and resourced from across the division, rather than relying solely on the local district. This ensures that there is resilience and visibility during peak demand periods.
- The force note it is essential to have a consistent and structured briefing process. Officers are provided with focused intelligence led briefings, to confirm they understand current risks, priority locations, and expected standards.
- To support officers unfamiliar with the area, the force have introduced a structured return sheet. This provides clarity on what activity is expected during their shift and captured outcomes, locations patrolled, encounters, and issues identified. These returns feed directly into the intelligence hub, allowing briefings to remain current and responsive week to week.
- Weekly reviews ensure that the initiative remains relevant and enables the force to quickly respond to emerging trends.
- The force highlight strong partnership engagement as being integral to the success of the initiative. Early involvement of partners supports a balanced approach of engagement, prevention, and enforcement.

Challenges

- The force have highlighted staffing as one of the biggest challenges. The initiative relies on officers from across the division, all completing one shift on a cancelled rest day. This creates logistical challenges, particularly where officers had limited knowledge of the Leysdown area. As a

result, officers need to invest in the briefing process to optimise effectiveness.

- Sickness has also presented a challenge, as there was limited resilience within the staffing model. This requires local sergeants and inspectors to be flexible to adjust deployments and ensure that there is core coverage.
- Another challenge faced was balancing local demand. In previous years, local demand had often been backfilled using Safer Leysdown resources. To address this, a clear order of resource use has been established to ensure Leysdown patrols are protected where possible and only abstracted as a last resort. This required close oversight and strong leadership from local supervisors.

Force recommendations

- Plan early and thoroughly – staffing planning begins each January to allow time to secure resources, partners, and governance.
- Prioritise investigations at the earliest opportunity – ensure volume crime teams prioritise early resolution to prevent escalation and repeat offending.
- Engage with partners from the outset – include licensing and local authority partners in planning and delivery.
- Brief officers - use structured briefings and return sheets to ensure officers familiarise themselves with the area.
- Promote time-effective justice options – ensure officers understand community resolutions and other disposals, particularly where offenders may leave the area or county.
- Ensure strong local supervision – local sergeants and inspectors should lead the weekend activity to maintain standards and focus.
- Review weekly – regular reviews keep the plan current and allow quick responses to emerging trends.

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