



Community Safety Strategic Assessment

Executive Summary

Stafford Strategic Assessment

The Centre for Public Innovation

March 2026

The Centre for Public Innovation is a Community Interest Company that provides research, training, support and advice in the fields of health, social care, criminal justice and community development.

Our mission is to improve the outcomes of services for their users, with a particular emphasis on the most disadvantaged.

Executive Summary

Context

Under the Police and Justice Act 2006 (England & Wales) local authorities are duty-bound to 'provide evidence-based data to support Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) in their planning and duties'.

It is a statutory obligation for CSPs to produce an annual localised Strategic Assessment providing a strategic evidence-base that identifies future priorities for the partnership and evaluates year-on-year activity.

Strategic Assessments should be reviewed on an annual basis with a fuller assessment carried out every three years. This Strategic Assessment is a full review and so looks at issues in relation to crime, ASB and other factors in depth. The previous full assessment was undertaken and published in 2021/22.

Strategic Context

The wider framework for addressing crime across Staffordshire is set by the Staffordshire Commissioner's Office. The Commissioner's priorities for 2024 to 2028 are:

- An outstanding Police service,
- Supporting victims and witnesses,
- Preventing and protecting
- Impactful partnerships.

Staffordshire Police have also set a number of priorities for 2025 to 2027 which CSPs should seek to align with where appropriate:

- Ensure safe and confident communities,
- Develop an exceptional workforce,
- Develop active and productive partnerships,
- Build an outstanding organisation.

Effects of COVID

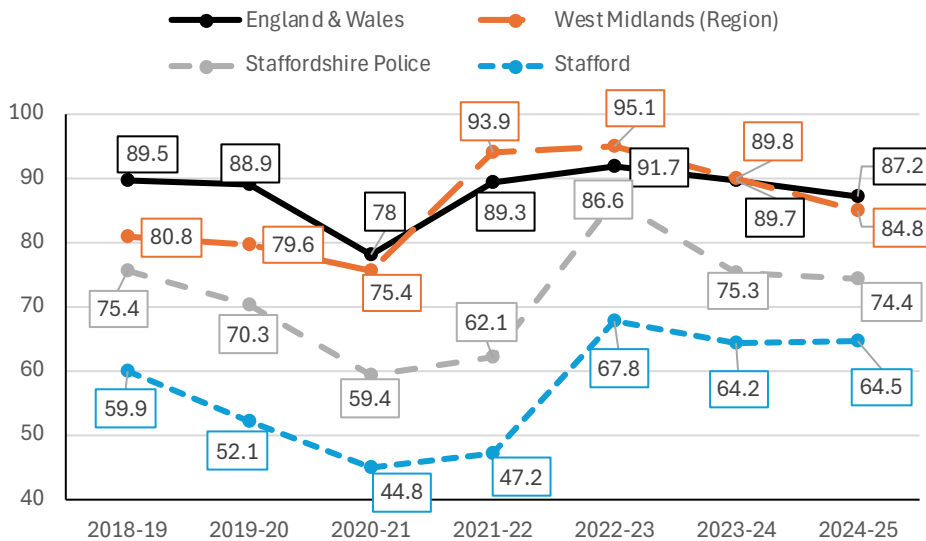
The data set out in this report reviews crime and ASB over the period 2022-23 to 2024-25. Data from the period of the COVID-19 pandemic has been intentionally excluded. As with many other facets of life

the pandemic had a significant impact on both crime and ASB meaning that the data during and immediately after COVID in no way reflected the norm hence has been excluded.

Overall crime in Stafford

Levels of crime in Stafford have fallen by 3.1% since 2022-23 reflecting a wider trend occurring across Staffordshire as a whole. The data indicates a slightly complex picture with increases in some offence types against the background of an overall decline.

Levels of crime in Stafford are **lower** than the rate for the Staffordshire Police force area as a whole and are also **lower** than the rates for the West Midlands and for England and Wales.



Data from the Police perception survey indicates that, while only 5% of residents of Stafford had been a victim of crime in the last 12 months, 24% stated that they thought that they would become a victim of crime in the next 12 months. This has risen from 21% in the previous police survey. This would tend to indicate that local residents have a greater fear of crime than actual levels of crime would suggest.

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

ASB has been on a downward trajectory since 2022-23 with a drop of 31.4%. The fall in ASB is a long-term one and numbers of incidents have been falling since 2020-21. The clear downward trend suggests that efforts to manage ASB are having a material effect on this problem.

Key areas of interest

Drug-Related Offences

Drug offences have increased by 10.5% over the last three years rising to a rate of 2.3 per 1,000 population. This brings levels of drug offending in Stafford in line with the rate for Staffordshire as a whole (also 2.3), very slightly lower than for the West Midlands (2.4) but comfortably below the rate for England and Wales (3.4).

The rate of increase needs to be caveated by noting that, in terms of absolute numbers, drug-related offending remains a comparatively small problem with 317 incidents in 2024-25 and with this offence type making up 4% of all offending in the district. By far the majority of drug offences (76%) to relate to possession.

The increase in this offence type may reflect enhanced enforcement activity but is also likely to be indicative of the issues that stakeholders were reporting including the ingress of Monkey Dust and the vulnerability of some residents.

Public Order Offences

Public order offences have risen by 24.5% since 2022-23. This gives Stafford a rate of 6.7 per 1,000 which is below the rate for Staffordshire as a whole (7.2) and Most Similar Forces (7.2) and England (7.5) but above that of the West Midlands (6.1). Public order offences now constitute around one in ten (11%) of all offences, up from 8% in 2022-23.

There is no clear explanation for the rise in this type of offending. Possibly this is due to a greater focus on public order offences by local partners.

Sexual Offences

Sexual offences have risen very slightly by 3.1%, with absolute numbers rising from 421 to 434 incidents. Sexual offending now represents 5% of all crime. The rate in Stafford (3.0 per 1,000) is at

almost exactly the same as the rate for Staffordshire as a whole (3.3) and very slightly under the rates for the West Midlands (3.5) and England (3.4).

It is possible that this rate of increase reflects improved reporting confidence and awareness rather than an increase in offending which would suggest the rise represents more victims willing to come forward. This conclusion is however highly speculative.

Theft

Theft offences represent the second-largest crime category making up 25% of total crime (2,268 incidents in 2024-25) giving an overall rate of 16.4 per 1,000 population. This represents a **drop of 6.9%** since 2022-23.

Within theft offences, **shoplifting has increased by 21.3% since 2022-23**, reaching a rate of 5.4 per 1,000 population. Despite this rise shoplifting remains below that of most comparator areas (Staffordshire 6.6, West Midlands 8.8 and England 8.7). Shoplifting now accounts for 33% of theft offences, having increased from 25% in 2022-23.

Violence

Violence constitutes the largest crime category in Stafford, **accounting for 44% of all recorded crimes** with 3,981 incidents in 2024-25. Violence now stands a rate of 28.0 offences per 1,000 population. This rate sits below that of Staffordshire as a whole (31.5), the West Midlands (33.8), and for England (31.9).

Within this category, offences of violence with injury decreased by 18.1% falling from 1,383 offences to 1,133.

Consideration of future priorities

ASB

Whilst on a downward trajectory **ASB is considered to be a priority among residents** and therefore this in itself warrants ensuring that it is an ongoing priority.

Community cohesion and tackling extremism

While **numbers of hate crimes are low** (217 in 2024-25) there has been a marked increase in this type of offence in recent years. Given this we believe there is merit in retaining this strategic priority.

Domestic abuse

The **volume of domestic crimes (over 1,821 in 2024-25)** means that an ongoing focus on domestic abuse is appropriate. If domestic crimes were crime category in their own right then they would constitute the third most common offence in Stafford. We also note that the numbers somewhat under-represent the impact of domestic crimes given that, under current legalisation, children who witness domestic abuse are considered to be victims in their own right.

County Lines

The data indicates that the **number of County Lines operating into Stafford is in constant flux** but is an ongoing presence. Data regarding drug offences shows a clear increase in levels of offending (up by 10.5%). This, along with the partnership's focus on vulnerability and concerns around the arrival of novel synthetics into the district, would suggest that there is merit in retaining this priority.

Modern Slavery/People Trafficking

Numbers of Modern Slavery offences in Stafford are very low – some three (3) cases in 2024-25 and 37 offences over a five-year period. There may therefore be value in the partnership pivoting from this area to focus resources on other areas of crime.

Fraud

While recognising that locally reported fraud is only part of the overall picture (with Report Fraud able to take reports of fraud directly) we note that **numbers of incidents of fraud in Stafford are low** and are decreasing, having fallen by 34.4% since 2022-23. Furthermore we recognise that, as noted in the previous strategy, some forms of fraud 'present a high risk to particularly vulnerable and socially isolated groups'.

Given however the rise in offending across a range of other offence types there may be value in pivoting away from this priority locally to focus attention and resources on other issues.

Vulnerable persons

Given the **clear local focus on addressing vulnerability** and recognising some aspects of vulnerability as an antecedent to aspects of crime and ASB, there is clear value in retaining this priority in Stafford. This will enable the partnership to retain its innovative relationship with colleagues in health.