

8. Safer Darlington

Darlington is a safe place to live and work. The number of crimes has decreased over the past three years. Between October 2008 and September 2009 there was a 3% reduction in total crime compared to the same period the previous year, and the level of crime is just below that of similar areas in the country.

The Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) is tackling concerns about crime as well as addressing anti-social behaviour, especially when alcohol is involved. Partners and Communities Together (PACT) is now well established in Darlington, and meetings are held monthly achieving positive results for the local community. For example, additional police patrols have been introduced in response to concerns expressed by the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender community.

Road safety has improved and there was a big reduction in the number of deliberate fires from 742 in 2007/08 to 299 in 2008/09. Local people's fear of crime is understood by the CDRP and action is being taken to target areas where crime and disorder are a particular problem. Young people are being involved in decision making, and Area Youth Forums have been developed in all areas to facilitate this.

A priority for all partners is to address domestic abuse which is a serious crime with consequences for the individual, children and society. Analysis of data from Darlington Probation Service shows that individuals who confirm they are perpetrators of domestic abuse have more needs surrounding financial, relationship and emotional wellbeing; they are also more likely to have substance misuse problems (drugs and alcohol), be at high risk of reconviction or have been victims of domestic abuse themselves.

In Darlington the MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) model of intervention was introduced in December 2008. The MARAC involves a risk assessment of all reported cases of domestic abuse to identify those at highest risk so that a multi-agency approach may be taken. Evidence suggests that this reduces recidivism (relapsing into crime) even among those most at risk. It is vital that non-criminal justice agencies are well represented at MARACs. For example, the perspective of health visitors will be different from those held by police or probation, which typically are aware of criminal incidents only.

Victim-oriented agencies, such as Victim Support, can provide information from the victim's perspective; Children's Services can provide information about children and take action on their behalf, whilst police and probation are able to offer information about the perpetrator's history, and presence of other aggravating factors, such as drugs or weapons. There is usually a wealth of information held in the community about a particular household, but it takes a MARAC type process for that information to come together in a meaningful way.

8.1 Alcohol and Drugs

Alcohol and drug related crime and disorder contribute significantly to community safety in Darlington. The Darlington Alcohol Harm Reduction

Strategy and the underpinning action plan were outlined in section 6.1.2. Some of the key performance indicators for community safety are highlighted in Table 8.1 below.

Table 8.1:** Alcohol and drug performance indicators – community safety

1. Reducing assault with injury crime rates (NI20)					
Baseline 2007/08	Target 2008/09	Actual 2008/09	% of Target	Target 2009/10	Target 2010/11
5.6 per 1,000 pop	746	600	3.60%	2% from 2008/09 (588) ¹	4% from 2008/09
2. Reducing the percentage of people who perceive ASB (antisocial behaviour) as a problem (NI17)					
Baseline 2007/08	Target 2008/09	Actual 2008/09	% Change	Target 2009/10	Target 2010/11
23%	22%	17%	5%	biennial survey	14%
3. Reducing the percentage of people who perceive drunk and rowdy behaviour as a problem (NI41)					
Baseline 2007/08	Target 2008/09	Actual 2008/09	% Change	Target 2009/10	Target 2010/11
25%	TBC	29%	4%	TBC	TBC

8.2 Casualty reduction

Darlington has a good road safety record, particularly in terms of child safety. In 2008-09 there were 264 injury producing accidents resulting in 354 casualties. This comprised 339 slight casualties, 24 serious casualties and three fatalities. There have been no child fatalities from road traffic accidents in Darlington since December 2007, and no children seriously injured in road traffic accidents in the town since March 2008. The table set out below identifies the breakdown of casualty/collision severity over the last 4 years:

¹ Taking the figures for the first 6 months of 2009 (294), we are on course to meet the 2009/10 target of 588

Table 8.2: Casualties from road traffic accidents**

		ROAD TRAFFIC CASUALTIES				ROAD TRAFFIC COLLISIONS			
		SLIGHT	SERIOUS	FATAL	TOTAL	SLIGHT	SERIOUS	FATAL	TOTAL
2006/07	No. of casualties	396	51	9	456	282	39	8	329
	No. per 10,000 population	39.86	5.13	0.91	45.90	2.84	0.39	0.08	3.31
2007/08	No. of casualties	339	24	3	366	247	22	3	272
	No. per 10,000 population	34.12	2.42	0.30	36.84	2.49	0.22	0.03	2.74
2008/09	No. of casualties	322	30	2	354	237	25	2	264
	No. per 10,000 population	32.41	3.02	0.20	35.63	2.39	0.25	0.02	2.66
2009/10*	No. of casualties	227	26	1	254	151	25	1	177
	No. per 10,000 population	22.85	2.62	0.10	25.57	1.52	0.25	0.01	1.78

*Figures are for the part year to October 2009
 Source: Durham Constabulary 2009

The Borough Council has adopted the Government target of reducing all killed or seriously injured (KSI) by 40%, child KSI by 50% and 'Slight' casualty rate by 10% from the 1994-1998 average by 2010. Current KSIs for Darlington are 34 for adults, 5 for children and 406 for 'Slight'.

Key Messages:

- Residents say they feel safer and satisfaction around community safety has improved
- There were fewer crimes committed in 2006/07 compared to 2003/04
- Domestic abuse and harm caused by drugs and alcohol remain a concern
- The Crime and Disorder Partnership has run Action Weeks and Summer Nights campaigns
- Alcohol harm related admissions to hospital are higher in Darlington than the national average
- Adults binge drinking estimates for Darlington are significantly higher than the national average
- The County Durham Fire and Rescue Service has identified that older people living alone with a form of impairment are particularly vulnerable to fatal fires

Crime and antisocial behaviour in Darlington is reducing. Darlington Partnership recognises that alcohol is an important issue and is working well to tackle crime and antisocial behaviour and improvements are likely to continue – CAA 2009