



This report outlines the work of Police and Crime Commissioner Matthew Scott's Violence Reduction Challenge (VRC), including various recommendations on how the police and partners can work together to prevent crime committed by the most violent against the most vulnerable

# Violence Reduction Challenge

Updated September 2019

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Office of the Kent Police and Crime  
Commissioner

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# Foreword

## Matthew Scott, PCC for Kent

Kent is a safe place to live, work and visit. This is in part thanks to the untiring work of all those in our emergency services, local authorities, wider criminal justice partners and those in the third sector. They all deserve our greatest thanks and our unwavering support. However, there is always more that can be done to make our communities across Kent even safer.

As Kent's directly elected Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), one of my central aims is to be a voice for victims, the vulnerable and the voiceless – whilst also being a champion for residents and businesses. I am also responsible for ensuring that victims of crime receive the best possible service.

Fundamental to my approach has been assisting Kent Police by providing the force with the resources it needs to be as visible as it possibly can be. It has therefore been my priority to help Kent Police undertake the biggest ever recruitment drive. There will be 450 more police officers serving the people of Kent by spring 2020 than compared with when I took office in spring 2016.

In summer 2018, in response to the Government's Serious Violence Strategy, I launched my own local Violence Reduction



Matthew Scott

Challenge (VRC). Bringing together valuable partners from across Kent and Medway, we sought to better understand the existing problem of violent crime across the county, and build upon the excellent work already being delivered.

I wanted to draw together the collective experience and expertise which exists across Kent, and see what more can be done to protect people and reduce the prevalence of violent crime. Ultimately, I wanted to play my part in helping protect the most vulnerable from the most violent.

This report highlights some of the work undertaken during the VRC. It includes a number of recommendations, and outlines some of the progress made since the VRC concluded. It also includes a continuing commitment from me that dealing with violent crime remains one of my priorities.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Scott', written in a cursive style.

**Matthew Scott**  
**Kent Police and Crime Commissioner**

# Chapter 1 - About the Violence Reduction Challenge

Launched in June 2018, the Violence Reduction Challenge (VRC), was the response of the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) to HM Government's Serious Violence Strategy.

The aim was to see what could be delivered locally to tackle violent crime, particularly crime committed by the most violent against the most vulnerable.

In order to achieve this, the PCC convened meetings which brought statutory agencies, partner organisations and voluntary groups together to consider violent crime as a whole across Kent.

VRC discussions were centred on four overarching areas:

- Prevention;
- Education and Engagement;
- Enforcement; and
- Rehabilitation.

The overall aim was to make a real impact in tackling the perpetrators of violent crime; alongside protecting victims, and working to prevent Kent residents from becoming victims of violent crime in the first place. The VRC sought to consider how partners across Kent could collaborate more closely in future to achieve these goals.



Matthew Scott (second left) hosted a Violence Reduction Summit in Maidstone in February 2019

A core steering group was convened, led by the PCC and comprising of community safety leads from Kent and Medway and also representatives from the National Crime Agency. Running concurrent to this group was a larger advisory panel made up of a wider network of organisations which came together at multiple locations to discuss issues under the broad umbrella of serious violence.

There was also a public call for evidence; a large-scale survey of young people; a countywide VRC summit where over 70 organisations were represented; and a significant review of 16 years' worth of historic violent crime data. Discussions from these meetings and events, and the evidence gathered, formed the basis for the recommendations included within this report.

# Chapter 2 - What was already being delivered by the PCC?

The PCC's Police and Crime Plan is a statutory document which sets out the priorities for Kent Police. It stipulates that 'tackling abuse, exploitation and violence' must be a priority for the Chief Constable of Kent Police to deliver. The Chief Constable reports back to the PCC on a quarterly basis at the PCC's Performance and Delivery Board.

At the conclusion of the VRC in spring 2019, the PCC committed to enabling Kent Police to increase officer numbers by a further 180. This would mean there would be 450 more officers by spring 2020 compared with 2016.

The PCC has continued to support the Volunteer Police Cadets in Kent, investing £40,000 from his commissioning budget in 2019/20 on top of £40,000 in 2018/19. A significant number of these Cadets are drawn from backgrounds where they may be at risk of getting involved in criminality themselves, or where they need the opportunity to build their confidence or self-esteem.

The PCC has also provided a number of funding interventions across Kent. For example, Refocus in the north of the county has received funding to aid them working with young people in order to help them get their lives on track and away from crime.

Talks by Reform, Restore, Respect in schools in the west of the county have also been supported. These inputs highlight the risks attached to gangs and violence and the consequences of being involved in them.

Funding has also been provided in the past for diversionary work delivered by Youth Resilience CIC, Thanet Community Development Trust, Folkestone Youth Project, Tables Turned and the Pipeline Youth Initiative.

The PCC has continued to protect funding for council-led youth offending teams, substance misuse programmes and drug and alcohol action teams. This is in addition to increasing funding for Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) by 10 per cent in 2018/19 so they can support more programmes locally.

The PCC's Victims Specialist Services Fund has also been used to provide counselling and support for particularly vulnerable victims of crime across Kent.

Since 2017, in order to prevent young people from being groomed into a life of drugs, crime and exploitation, the PCC and the Home Office have been working with the St Giles Trust on a pilot to support young people. Additional investment of more than £800,000 over three years to enable the charity to continue this work was announced at the Violence Reduction Summit in early 2019.

This means the continuation of a mentoring service which aims to help vulnerable children and adolescents affected by county lines drug dealing turn their lives around. Additional educational work in local schools will also seek to prevent at-risk young people from being exploitation.

# Chapter 3 – What was already being delivered by Kent Police?

The Chief Constable of Kent Police's Control Strategy recognises that violence is an operational priority; and the force has already developed its own Serious Violence Strategy.

Kent Police's Missing Child and Exploitation Team has already seen a vast reduction in the number of times that some children have been going missing, approximately 64 per cent – and the team continues to engage with those children in order to minimise their risk of exploitation.

There has also been the setting up of Operation Raptor teams, who are police officers dedicated to tackling county lines and gangs across Kent.

Vulnerability Investigation Teams provide a specialist investigative response to domestic abuse and vulnerable people. They provide a consistent, bespoke specialist service to safeguard and improve the safety of victims and their families. Within these teams, Sexual Offences Liaison Officers have been created to improve victim/survivor services and ensure victims of serious sexual violence receive the highest standards of care and support throughout the investigation.

And Kent Police has also developed Youth Engagement roles – 20 Police Community

Support Officers (PCSOs) working with schools and young children on crime prevention, engagement and education.

Further to this, Kent Police has supported Operation Jump, an Ashford-led project which has seen knife crime talks delivered in schools and Volunteer Police Cadets giving out leaflets in town centres. Indeed, the efforts of Kent Police in preventing and investigating violent crime are in no way limited to the specialist teams listed here. Officers and staff working across the county in Local Policing Teams, for example, understand and support the PCC and Chief Constable's priority to put victims first and consistently demonstrate this in the work they carry out. Community Safety Unit officers have been undertaking proactive work on local organised crime groups, working closely with partners including the local borough council and neighbouring police forces.

In March 2019, recognising the increased risks his officers face when working to protect the public, the Chief Constable announced that all officers who wish to carry a Taser device, and who are able to pass the necessary training, will be able to do so. This roll-out will not only protect Kent Police officers and staff but the wider public too, and has the PCC's full support.

# Chapter 4 – Building on the work already being delivered

## Recommendation 1: Introduction of the £1 million Violence Reduction Fund

It was continually agreed at all of the VRC events, including the Violence Reduction Summit that additional investment is required in prevention and engagement. The Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel has also expressed this view.

Therefore - to further capitalise on the themes of prevention, engagement, enforcement and rehabilitation - at the conclusion of the VRC in spring 2019 the PCC announced he would create a Violence Reduction Fund worth £1million.

Funding opportunities would be made available for organisations, charities, voluntary, and community groups to bid to deliver projects which align to the themes of the VRC.

Representatives of groups already being commissioned by the PCC to deliver services across Kent had made the case that funding should ideally be guaranteed for beyond 12 months. The PCC, having listened to those views, took the decision to commit to providing funding over a longer period than just one year.

The Violence Reduction Fund (VRF) will cover three years. This will enable funded

projects to deliver over a longer timeframe, and achieve sustainable changes. However, as this is taxpayers' money, there will be extra scrutiny to ensure that their cash is being well spent in return for this extra level of trust and sustainability.

It was anticipated that the £1m VRF would enable the delivery of around 10 projects across Kent, with bids being capped at £35,000 per project per year. Examples could include engagement with schools, awareness campaigns, prevention initiatives, supporting rehabilitation, reducing re-offending, and diversionary activities. Collaboration and match funding of cash from other sources would be welcomed.

**September 2019 update:** Details of the VRF bid criteria, application process and timescales were made public on 5 April 2019. Applications were accepted up until 17 May 2019.

Nine successful projects were chosen, with details published on the OPCC website in July 2019. These projects will receive funding up to 2021/22 provided they evidence taxpayers' money is being used effectively and in accordance with the OPCC's monitoring processes.

## Recommendation 2: Investing in local schemes to prevent violent crime

Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) are an integral element of keeping local neighbourhoods safe. They are made up of representatives from the police, local authorities, the fire and rescue service, the health service, probation, as well as many other agencies. Their purpose is to make their community safer, reduce crime and the fear of crime, reduce anti-social behaviour, and work with businesses and residents on the issues of most concern.

The PCC grants more than £500,000 per year to CSPs, to support projects based on the priorities set out in Safer in Kent: the Community Safety and Criminal Justice Plan. But to further improve these multi-agency and co-located partnerships, the VRC identified a potential for all CSPs to better ensure their projects directly deliver upon growing areas of concern. Going forward, the local knowledge and expertise of CSPs will form an important part of the work undertaken across Kent to tackle violent crime.

The PCC decided to direct the funding he provides annually to CSPs so that this money focuses more on preventing violent crime. In 2019/20, it was expected that all CSPs' plans should include:

- Raising awareness amongst professionals and members of the public, including young people;
- Night-time economy-related projects;

- Town centre initiatives;
- Diversionary programmes;
- Multi-agency response projects, targeting particular areas;
- Community engagement and reassurance activities; and
- Drug and alcohol related projects.

CSPs across Kent responded positively to this change in priorities, focusing on schemes which achieve the PCC's objectives around violent crime.

For example in Medway, funding is being used to pilot a Housing First project to support rough sleepers who have complex needs, with the aim of reducing anti-social behaviour and associated crime.

Folkestone and Hythe, like many CSPs, is using its money to fund the delivery of training to young people and professionals around gangs and associated exploitation.

In Ashford, a project has been delivered with their Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities to empower and educate women and young girls. The project covers issues such as domestic abuse, female genital mutilation, and mental ill-health.

**September 2019 update:** In accordance with their funding conditions, CSPs are required to submit monitoring returns at the end of the financial year.



## Recommendation 3: Commissioning a bespoke stalking and harassment service for Kent

The Violence Reduction Summit heard that stalking and harassment has been emerging as one of the most underreported crimes; with stalking only becoming a specific criminal offence in 2012. The Suzy Lamplugh Trust's research has suggested that stalking-like behaviours have played a role in 94 per cent of domestic homicides.

The Office for National Statistics, in 2018, showed that 4.9 per cent of women and 2.4 per cent of men experienced stalking. This equates to approximately 1,136,000 individual victims nationally. However, during the same period – just 4,156 cases of stalking were recorded by the police across the UK. The VRC found there were 11,000 or so requests for help received by the National Stalking Helpline.

This means that the number of stalking cases being reported to the police represents less than an estimated 1 per cent of the incidents which take place.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) and the HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate produced a joint report in 2017 on both the police's and the Crown Prosecution Services' approach to tackling crimes of harassment and stalking. The report concluded that there was still a significant amount of work required at every level in order to improve the experiences of harassment and stalking victims, and to

ensure that victims are provided with a consistent high-quality service.

It is therefore expected, given this institutional focus, that reports of stalking will continue to rise. This is to be welcomed, however with an increased awareness of what stalking and harassment is, victims must also be provided with the confidence to report their experiences to the police. This means there is an imperative to ensure that support exists for them in the criminal justice process.

The VRC found that Kent did not have a bespoke stalking advocacy service for victims and so recommended that work be undertaken by the PCC to commission a service which will provide victims with the necessary, appropriate and professional support they require.

**September 2019 update:** The OPCC has been working on a proposal with the charity Victim Support. This will draw on the good work and best practices of other OPCCs, such as Sussex where a service is delivering positive results for victims, and will empower victims to come forward and ensure they receive the support they require.

This is being supported by the recruitment of police officers in 2019/20 dedicated to investigating stalking offences and supporting victims.

## Recommendation 4: Recruiting additional officers and increasing town centre policing

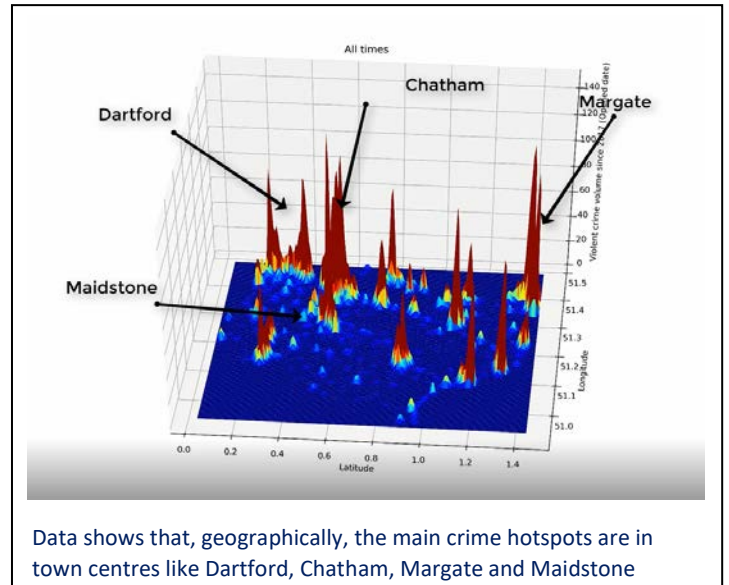
Since May 2016, the PCC has worked hard to ensure that Kent Police is provided with the resources it needs to fight crime and catch criminals while maintaining visibility in towns and villages across Kent.

However, while Kent Police's officers, staff and volunteers continue to work hard – doing a difficult and dangerous job to keep the people of Kent safe – there is no denying that Kent needs additional numbers. This was a common opinion expressed by the public and partners throughout the VRC and also in the PCC's Annual Policing Survey.

Therefore, following the decision by the PCC to raise his element of the council tax precept in 2019/20, Kent Police began planning to invest directly in frontline policing services. The Chief Constable was able to seek to recruit a further extra 180 police officers.

This was not about just replacing those police officers who leave, but continuing with the biggest recruitment drive in Kent Police's history.

This increase means that, by spring 2020, there will be 450 more police officers working across Kent compared with spring 2016 - to provide an even greater focus on catching criminals; targeting gangs and violence; boosting visible policing; and providing help to victims.



Data shows that, geographically, the main crime hotspots are in town centres like Dartford, Chatham, Margate and Maidstone

Central to this is increasing the number of police officers dedicated to policing Kent's town centres, where most offences occur.

From the uplift of 180 police officers, the Chief Constable determined to dedicate 38 of them to town centres. They will work to proactively prevent crime such as violence and organised business-related criminality.

These officers will also provide a visible presence in crowded places, and work to identify and safeguard vulnerable children and adults. Part of their role will also include developing and expanding important existing partnership initiatives such as Shop Safe and Pub Watch – enhancing the Police's relationships with local businesses.

**September 2019 update:** Further to the ongoing efforts to recruit the additional 180 officers, the Government has announced funding for 20,000 additional officers across the country over three years.

## Recommendation 5: Boosting the Chief Constable's Crime Squad

Supported by the PCC, the Chief Constable has created a new dedicated proactive investigative team.

Launched in late February 2019 at the conclusion of the VRC, the Chief Constable's Crime Squad consists of more than 30 police officers who are bringing investigative expertise to a number of high-harm crime types, in particular burglary.

Each division across Kent has its own investigative team and offenders who continually commit these serious offences will be targeted by this new team who will work alongside their existing divisional colleagues. This ensures that Kent Police continues to provide a policing service that is both first class, and brings offenders to justice.

The Chief Constable's Crime Squad is directed by and reports directly to the Deputy Chief Constable, and has the flexibility and expertise to focus on areas of harm, for example violent crime.

This allows for further visibility of uniformed officers within high crime areas with a focused approach for targeting prolific offenders to reduce serious acquisitive crime.

The Chief Constable's Crime Squad utilises a uniformed presence within the team to assist investigators with outstanding warrants, searches and out of county

enquiries to reduce demand on divisional uniformed teams.

The Chief Constable's Crime Squad also works to reduce the burden of existing local intelligence departments by becoming self-sufficient, with a dedicated research and development capability to allow for research and support on targeted operations.

As a result of the uplift in police officer numbers in 2019/20, a further ten police officers will be recruited to join the Chief Constable's Crime Squad, boosting their capability further.

**September 2019 update:** At the latest meeting of the Performance and Delivery Board, the Chief Constable updated the PCC that his Crime Squad had already made 82 arrests, executed 28 warrants and had secured 131 charges in its first two months.

This included an offender being charged in relation to an armed robbery at a bookmakers in Gravesend where £8,000 was stolen. Within 16 hours of the robbery taking place, the suspect was identified through extensive CCTV enquiries and arrested where he was found to be in possession of £7,700 cash.

The Chief Constable has made it clear that Kent Police is committed to targeting those prolific offenders who commit residential burglary offences.

## Recommendation 6: Implementing Kent Police's Serious Violence Strategy

Published in October 2018, Kent Police's Serious Violence Strategy aims to ensure that Kent Police not only meets the growing challenges of violent crime but also that, alongside its partners, it is better prepared to meet future demands as well.

The strategy acknowledges that crime is changing, and that violent crime is increasing nationally. Therefore, Kent Police is clear that all police officers and staff have a part to play in enabling Kent Police to ensure each strand of violent crime is reduced.

The VRC noted that policing cannot arrest its way out of a problem, and enforcement alone will not reduce violent crime. However, enforcement will still see that perpetrators of serious violence are brought to justice - and that must continue to play a part in making our communities even safer. As part of one of many areas of work to combat violent crime, in March 2019 Kent Police supported the nationwide Operation Sceptre campaign. This resulted in around 60 people being arrested and 30 knives being seized in a single week.

Kent Police then backed this up with additional intelligence-led enforcement specifically targeting knife-enabled crime, violence and drugs which was linked, in part,

to county lines gangs travelling to Kent from London and other cities.

Going forward, the Chief Constable said he would not tolerate violent crime and said he would do everything within his power to tackle it. This would include empowering his officers to make use of stop and search where it is proportionate and intelligence-led, to disrupt and prosecute offenders.

**September 2019 update:** At the latest meeting of the Performance and Delivery Board, the Chief Constable revealed that the first four weeks of knife crime activity in the spring has yielded 240 arrests.

This activity was then continued for a further six weeks, thanks to £1.7million 'surge funding' from the Home Office's Serious Violence Fund. Officers from across the force were brigaded to form a Violent Crime Task Force (VCTF) supplementing the ongoing activity. Ten officers per division were aligned to the teams with the VCTF focussing their activity in Medway, Thanet and Maidstone but providing the ability to deploy to any location in the county when demand or intelligence dictated.

Further coordinated took place in early August, leading to dozens more arrests.

## Recommendation 7: Creating a multi-agency Medway Task Force

The award-winning multi-agency Thanet Task Force is a collaborative team which works to improve life across targeted areas in the Thanet district. It brings together 14 different agencies, co-located within Thanet District Council, including:

- Thanet District Council;
- Kent Police;
- Kent Fire and Rescue Service;
- Kent County Council; and
- Job Centre Plus.

It is distinct from other teams in that it delivers front-end, fast-track interventions jointly at street level on a daily basis.

From the outset, a focus of the VRC became how the principles of the Thanet Task Force could be expanded to other areas of Kent. Medway district was identified as an area which would benefit.

In January 2019, an initial Medway Task Force steering group was held, and attended by representatives from:

- Office of the Kent PCC;
- Kent Police;
- Medway Council;
- Kent Fire and Rescue Service;
- Department for Work and Pensions;
- Victim Support; and
- Medway Clinical Commissioning Group.

Kent Police agreed to take the lead in the initial process of developing the Medway Task Force, and would be prepared to

provide an investment in terms of an additional Police Sergeant and six Police Constables over and above the current resources in Medway.

It was further suggested that the Task Force should include representatives of:

- Medway Community Safety Partnership;
- UK Border Agency; and
- South East Coast Ambulance Service.

**September 2019 update:** A Medway Task Force co-ordinator has been appointed to bring the partners together. This role will initially be funded by the PCC's office.

The strategic aims and objectives of the Medway Task Force are:

- Reduction of crime and anti-social behaviour;
- Reducing the risk to vulnerable people;
- Diversion through early intervention;
- Reducing the escalation of offending;
- Adopting a partnership approach to problem-solving through scanning, analysis, response and assessment;
- Ensuring a child-centred approach with the child's voice being heard in every contact;
- Enhancing data-sharing arrangements amongst all partners to improve interventions and safeguarding; and
- Crime prevention and the improvement of community cohesion.

## Recommendation 8: Ongoing holding to account meetings to be held regularly

PCCs can be the golden thread that runs through a victim's journey in the criminal justice process.

They have a role to play in working with agencies to prevent violent crime; setting the police force's priorities; commissioning victims' services; holding the police to account; and through effective engagement of other agencies via bodies such as health and wellbeing boards, fire and rescue authorities, and criminal justice boards.

The publication of this report should not be viewed as the end of the PCC's commitment to reduce violent crime across Kent. The bringing together of partner agencies and organisations, from the public, private and third sector has been essential to building the fuller and truer picture of violent crime across Kent, and must continue.

The PCC is keen to convene regular meetings whereby partners can get together again to discuss their ongoing work and agree actions going forward. By doing so, the PCC can ensure that the outcomes of the VRC do not sit gathering dust on a shelf, and that the VRC remains a working programme aiming to reduce the prevalence of violence committed against the most vulnerable across Kent.



The Violence Reduction Unit meetings will build on the collaborative work seen at the PCC's Violence Reduction Challenge advisory panel

**September 2019 update:** In August 2019, the Home Office approved an application from the PCC for £1.1m to create a multi-agency Violence Reduction Unit (VRU).

Work is now underway to staff this unit - which will comprise representatives of Kent Police, the NHS and local councils. It will work to help lift vulnerable young people out of a life of crime. Regular VRU meetings will ensure that the PCC's commitment to engage with partners and agree actions on tackling violent crime will continue.

In addition, the PCC has committed to hosting an annual event for wider partners including those who were involved in the VRC. This will allow for ongoing communication and for examples of best practice to be shared.

# List of recommendations

## Recommendations for the PCC

- Recommendation 1: Introduction of the £1m Violence Reduction Fund
- Recommendation 2: Investing in local schemes to prevent violent crime
- Recommendation 3: Commissioning a bespoke stalking and harassment service for Kent

## Recommendations for Kent Police

- Recommendation 4: Recruiting additional officers and increasing town centre policing
- Recommendation 5: Boosting the Chief Constable’s Crime Squad
- Recommendation 6: Implementing Kent Police’s Serious Violence Strategy

## Recommendations for wider partner agencies

- Recommendation 7: Creating a multi-agency Medway Task Force
- Recommendation 8: Ongoing holding to account meetings to be held regularly

# Safer in Kent: The Community Safety and Criminal Justice Plan

The following graphic shows the PCC’s Police and Crime Plan ‘at a glance’. The full document is available at [www.kent-pcc.gov.uk/plan](http://www.kent-pcc.gov.uk/plan)

**Safer in Kent 2017-2021: The Plan on a Page**

**Leadership:**  
Strong ethics, transparency and integrity at all times

**Guiding principles:**

- People suffering mental ill health need the right care from the right person
- Crime is important no matter where it takes place
- Vulnerable people must be protected from harm

**Kent Police & Crime Commissioner**

**My priorities, for the Chief Constable to deliver are to:**

- Put victims first
- Fight crime and anti-social behaviour
- Tackle abuse, exploitation and violence
- Combat organised crime and gangs
- Provide visible neighbourhood policing and effective roads policing
- Deliver an efficient and accessible service

**As the Police and Crime Commissioner, I will:**

- Hold the Chief Constable to account for the delivery of Kent Police’s priorities
- Enhance services for victims of crime and abuse
- Commission services that reduce pressure on policing due to mental health
- Invest in schemes that make people safer and reduce re-offending
- Make offenders pay for the harm that they have caused
- Actively engage with residents in Kent and Medway

**Opportunities for the future:**

- Calling for more criminal justice powers for Police and Crime Commissioners
- Lobbying for a fairer funding settlement for Kent
- Further collaboration with other organisations
- Oversight of the police complaints process
- Developing new crime prevention and diversion practices
- Backing volunteering

Version: Spring 2019