

## 13 SAFE CITY

### Where we are

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Reducing crime is a high priority for people and businesses in Birmingham – more than half the city's residents think it the most important improvement needed in the city. Crime is also a major concern for businesses, which want to see a safe environment for their employees and customers.

Anti-social behaviour is a concern in parts of the city; environmental degradation and environmental crime, such as fly-tipping and graffiti, also undermine people's sense of security. Violent crime undermines everyone's feelings of safety. Gun crime, though on a small scale, contributes to fears and harms the city's reputation. Hate crime, which is often directed against black and minority ethnic communities, is a problem in certain parts of the city. Domestic violence has a major impact on families and must be tackled.

Levels of crime in Birmingham are generally falling – and at a faster rate than nationally. Birmingham's Safer Neighbourhoods Project is internationally recognised for its success in crime prevention. But overall levels of crime remain above average, and rates are worse in more deprived parts of the city. As elsewhere, falling crime rates have not reduced people's fear of crime. Improving perceptions of personal safety and security – providing reassurance - remains a priority.

Young people are particularly at risk of getting involved in crime, though many quickly stop offending. The city's Youth Offending Service organises a range of activities to engage young people in purposeful activity and divert them from offending. Work with those who offend shows positive results and has reduced the risk of re-offending. A range of general activity for young people is one way in which the risk of offending can be reduced (see *Local sport, leisure and culture*, page 32).

Young people are also at greater risk of harm. They are more likely to be victims of crime and to suffer from bullying. The Youth Offending Service has taken the lead in initiatives to promote personal safety for young people, and inter-agency arrangements are in place to protect children from abuse or neglect. Keeping children and young people safe must remain a priority for the city, where the city is establishing a new Safeguarding Board in line with statutory requirements.

Drug misuse is a major factor in criminal activity; it also wrecks the lives of addicts and their families. Treatment to reduce use of and dependency on drugs is vital, and is a key opportunity to reduce the likelihood of re-offending. There has been a considerable expansion in capacity for drug treatment in Birmingham in the past few years, but further expansion is needed –

especially through shared care services from GPs – to meet the demand for treatment.

Death rates from accidents in Birmingham are above the national average. However, the city has been successful in reducing deaths and injuries from road accidents and fires. This needs to be continued.

## **Where we want to be**

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We see Birmingham as a city where people feel safe, whoever they are, wherever they are, whatever their age. We see Birmingham as a city that recognises the problems of crime and acts promptly to tackle problems at source. We see Birmingham as a place where drug misuse is minimised and people receive prompt and effective treatment.

## **What we will do – Key Actions**

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### **SA 1 – Safer and cleaner neighbourhoods**

We will provide reassurance to people and businesses through a co-ordinated approach to crime, safety and environmental improvements, so that neighbourhoods look and feel safe. New Local Delivery Groups will co-ordinate multi-agency activity and work with communities to prevent crime, to catch and convict offenders, and to tackle anti-social behaviour. We will work with local communities to develop new ideas to help keep localities clean and safe. Environmental professionals and the police will work together to tackle environmental crime, such as fly-tipping.

### **SA 2 - Reduce re-offending**

We will tackle criminal activity at its roots by reducing the risk of further offences by those already convicted of crime. We will identify priority offenders and focus our work on them, improving their access to drug treatment and to opportunities for education, training and employment, and housing.

### **SA 3 - Cutting violent crime**

We will work with local communities to reduce levels of violent crime. Our priorities will be gun crime and gangs, domestic violence and hate crime.

### **SA 4 - Safeguarding children**

Children and young people are entitled to safety and security. We will work to reduce the likelihood of young people being the victims of crime. We will continue to improve systems for safeguarding children and young people and supporting their families. We will work with schools to reduce the incidence of bullying and poor behaviour, making schools safe environments in which to learn.

### **SA 5 - Work with young people**

We will work with young people at risk of offending to offer them constructive alternatives to crime. We will modernise youth work to improve young people's opportunities for purposeful activity – for example, through leisure, sport and culture – and we will encourage voluntary activity by young people. We will also work with young people to improve understanding between generations.

### **SA 6 - Reducing drug and alcohol misuse**

We will tackle drug abuse through targeted interventions to reduce the supply and availability of drugs in the city and through expansion of treatment for those dependent on drugs. We will work with young people to discourage them from experimenting with drugs and alcohol. We will reduce the problems and damage of excessive drinking.

### **SA 7 - Accident prevention**

We will continue to reduce deaths, injuries and losses from accidents in the city. Our approach will be based on preventing accidents occurring, better protection to reduce the impact of accidents, and rapid response to incidents. Our priorities will be fire safety and road safety.

## **How we will get there**

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The separate implementation framework for this Community Strategy will set out how we will take these actions forward. Most key actions in this section reflect the Community Safety Strategy for Birmingham 2005-08, for which the city's Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) is responsible. Members of the CDRP include West Midlands Police, Birmingham City Council and West Midlands Fire Service. Responsibility for safeguarding children will be co-ordinated through the new children's trust arrangements for the city and the Children's Safeguarding Board, led by the City Council.