Section 17
Crime and Disorder Act

What it means to you?

Training & Development
KENT COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP
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It is the County Council’s policy to ensure that Kent residents and their families can live their lives in security and safety by reducing crime and the fear of crime. Such policy clearly lays out what we must do to help improve the quality of life for the people of Kent. An additional obligation is also placed on the County Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 which directs that we must have community safety embedded into our planning, our policy and our operational day-to-day activity.

This handbook explains for you what this means in practice.

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Leader of the Council
Kent County Council

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Community Safety is a broad term. It refers to the protection of local communities from the threat and consequence of criminal and anti-social behaviour by achieving reductions in relation to both crime and the fear of crime.

It entails involving the community in identifying the threat and the crime, the problems and the solutions. Community Safety encompasses anti-social behaviour and disorder (including behaviour adversely affecting the local environment) and the misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances.
Kent County Council’s contribution to Community Safety

KCC has a vital and crucial role in contributing to the Community Safety Agenda.

As well as specific departments such as the Youth Offender Service, Trading Standards and our Community Wardens, the majority of County Council front line services may affect in some way or another community safety and quality of life. The more obvious are dealing with truants, protecting and assisting vulnerable children and adults, services for people with addictions, Education and Youth Services to name but a few. The less obvious include our Passenger Transport fleet, the work we do in educating ex-offenders and Sports Developments initiatives.

Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs)

Comprising of a wide range of partners – Police, District and County Authorities, Health, Fire, Probation and others – CDRPs are legally tasked with identifying the crime and disorder problems within their area (including drink/drug abuse and environmental crime) and with taking joined-up action to address these.

The County Council is a key stakeholder in these partnerships.
Kent Community Safety Partnership

The partnership between Kent County Council and Kent Police was established in 2001 to meet the policing and community safety needs of communities in Kent by:

Introducing additional resources to provide a highly visible uniformed presence to increase public reassurance and assist in the prevention and reduction of incidents of crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour, so promoting community safety and reducing the fear of crime.

Introducing Kent Community Wardens and Partnership Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) as part of the extended Police family for policing and working with the community on crime and safety issues.

Key activities of the partnership

- To identify, with the Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnerships, those areas in Kent, both rural and urban, that report high crime, anti-social behaviour and deprivation levels.
- To reduce crime and anti-social behaviour in those areas by providing a more conspicuous policing presence.
- To tackle anti-social and nuisance behaviour.
- To address problems, which impact on communities’ feelings of safety such as physical damage, fly tipping, abandoned vehicles and graffiti.
- To improve communication between the public and the Police, the Council and other public bodies.
- To encourage community support and engage local residents in addressing community safety issues in their area.
Kent County Council employ and deploy to identified and agreed target areas Kent Community Wardens. Their role is to improve community relations by working with local communities, the Police and other agencies. In this way solutions to problems giving rise to crime and anti-social behaviour can be identified.

Kent Police deploy Partnership PCSOs in identified and agreed target areas. They also deploy Police Constables and other officers to support the operational effectiveness of Kent Community Wardens and the Partnership PCSOs in delivering the aims of the Partnership.

How is crime prevented?

Three elements need to be in place for a crime to occur namely location, offender and victim.

By manipulating any one of these three elements (in addition to enforcement measures), it is possible to change or remove the factors that lead to the offence taking place and prevent the crime.

For example, by removing an offender from the area, or by changing features of the location (e.g. locks and bolts) or by altering a victim's route or method of transport, then a crime that would have been committed can be prevented.

It is important that Section 17, in practice, reflects local priorities and takes on board a location, offender and victim focus.
A legal responsibility

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, as amended by the Police and Justice Act 2006, requires responsible authorities to consider crime and disorder (including anti-social behaviour and other behaviour adversely affecting the local environment); and the misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances in the exercise of all their duties, activities and decision-making. This means that in all policies, strategies and service delivery there is a need to consider the likely impact on crime and disorder.

This responsibility affects all employees of the council.

‘Without prejudice to any other obligation imposed on it, it shall be the duty of each authority... to exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area’.

The Home Office issued guidance that describes the legal responsibility in plainer language:

‘... a general duty on each local authority to take account of the community safety dimension in all of its work. All policies, strategies, plans and budgets will need to be considered from the standpoint of their potential contribution to the reduction of crime and disorder’.

How Section 17 affects you

Every day, responsible authorities (and the list includes Local Authorities, the Police, Fire Authorities and Health Authorities) are required to provide a range of services. They each have a key statutory role in providing these services. In carrying out their core activities, they have a significant contribution to make to the living and working lives of communities. Section 17 defines that their contribution must have embedded in it a focus on reducing crime, disorder and the fear of crime and improve the quality of life in the area.

It applies to all departments.

 Authorities have to ensure that departments within their organisation can show that crime and disorder issues have been considered.
To enable the organisation to comply, it is important for all staff to contribute to this process.

Your contribution to a safer Kent

It is expected that all Council staff consider their own work in the context of Section 17 and to identify within their department all existing and planned activity that may have an impact on crime and community safety.

The following examples are a checklist of goals that should be considered when formulating departmental service and business plans within the council.

Each example demonstrates a potential contribution to a safer Kent.

- Assist in the reduction of crime, anti-social behaviour and disorder.
- Assist in the reduction of the fear of crime.
- Increase public confidence.
- Assist in the prevention of crime and anti-social behaviour or disorder.
- Assist in reducing the impact of crime.

Each example supports and integrates with the work of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships in Kent.

All plans should include targets so that performance can be managed.
There is considerable activity already underway in Kent County Council, which positively impacts on crime and the fear of crime.

Your participation in and contribution to this process matters.

Below are some examples of how you can contribute to Section 17:

- Ensuring adherence to Section 17 requirements for all local authority departments.
- Recording all incidents of vandalism, damage and graffiti on council property.
- Incorporating community safety into business/service plans.
- Incorporating Section 17 awareness into Induction Training.
- Promoting healthy living initiatives.
- Ensuring all staff have an awareness of community safety and crime prevention, so that they understand how their role contributes to safer communities.
- Being aware of incidents and fear of crime levels, and promoting the council's profile positively in high fear/crime areas.
- Promoting crime prevention initiatives.
- Promptly reporting anti-social behaviour and other criminal activity.
- Providing crime prevention training and advice to staff and vulnerable clients.
- Target harden and ensure the security of property stock (e.g. locks, bolts, door entry schemes and strengthened glass in buildings).

The above list is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive but hopefully will help you understand more clearly how you, as an individual, can participate in fulfilling the requirements of Section 17.
The Kent Community Safety Partnership will deliver a comprehensive Section 17 awareness programme.

Priority tasks include:

1. Delivering a comprehensive programme of staff training.

2. Circulating a Staff Handbook, DVD and updating KNet with Section 17 guidance.

3. Through various training and development mediums, assist all staff to consider the Community Safety dimension in their work, in order to meet the terms of the Section 17 legislation.

‘This handbook is intended as a reference guide for all Kent County Council employees and other relevant persons (i.e. Members). It is important that you read and refer to the document when necessary.’
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For further information and additional copies of this handbook please contact the Training Unit.