



# **Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour in Faversham (2019-22)**

**Final report for Faversham Town Council**

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

Faversham is a market town located approximately 50 miles from London and has a population of around 26,000 with an average age in the low 40s (KCC 2020). It has a town council and forms part of the wider Swale Borough Council area as well as being part of the Kent County Council. Faversham is also a member of the Confederation of Cinque Ports, to which the Mayor and the Town Clerk attend meetings on behalf of the Town Council. This report is funded using funds from the Member's Grant of the local Kent County Councillor, Antony Hook but draws on data from Swale Borough Council, Kent County Council and Kent Police.

The purpose of this report is to review the levels of crime within Faversham, looking at the types of crimes that typify the area and to assess the levels of crime that are present within the town. These data have also been used to develop an understanding of victimisation and offending within the town. The report draws on police recorded crime as well as testimony from those who live and work in the area. The recommendations of this report are intended for use by the Town Council and as such will not address areas beyond its control, such as policing levels. Nor will the report deal with national concerns, such as terrorism or organised crime.

## 1.1 Crime in Faversham

When comparing crime rates it is important not to take the numbers of crimes in isolation, but instead to compare levels to other areas in England that are statistically similar. A common method to compare crime is by using the Home Office "most similar groups" (MSG) category. This is a statistical measure that uses local demographics, social characteristics and economic data to draw links between towns and areas (Police.UK 2022a). By putting together groups with a similar makeup it is possible to make worthwhile comparisons in terms of criminality and to assess where there are similarities within these groups. It is then possible to determine if a particular geographical area (such as Faversham) is within the expected range for its MSG or not.

Faversham is part of the Swale Borough Council area, which means that, in terms of MSG comparisons, the crime statistics for Faversham are often difficult to disentangle from those for Sittingbourne and the Isle of Sheppey. This may lead to misconceptions of the levels of crime that are present within the town, and it is also the case that the types of crime that are present in Faversham may be different to those present in the rest of Swale.

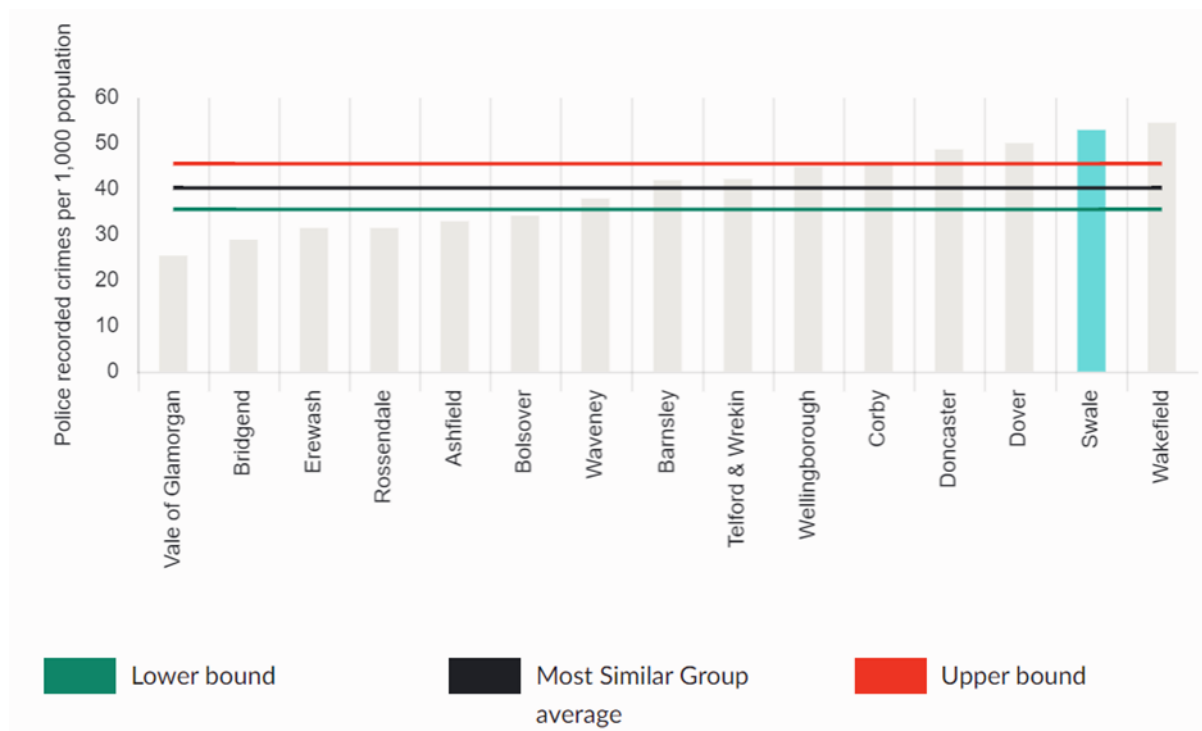


Figure 1 - Most similar group for Swale 2022 (Police.UK 2022)

As shown in figure 1, Swale is in an MSG with areas such as Barnsley and Doncaster, but also with another Kent town, namely Dover. Whilst MSG-matched to these areas through data analysis of demographics (see Police.UK 2022b for details), Swale is above average in terms of criminal activity. It is also above the upper bound of what is expected in terms of criminality, meaning that the area has unexpectedly high levels of crime compared to other demographically similar areas in the MSG.

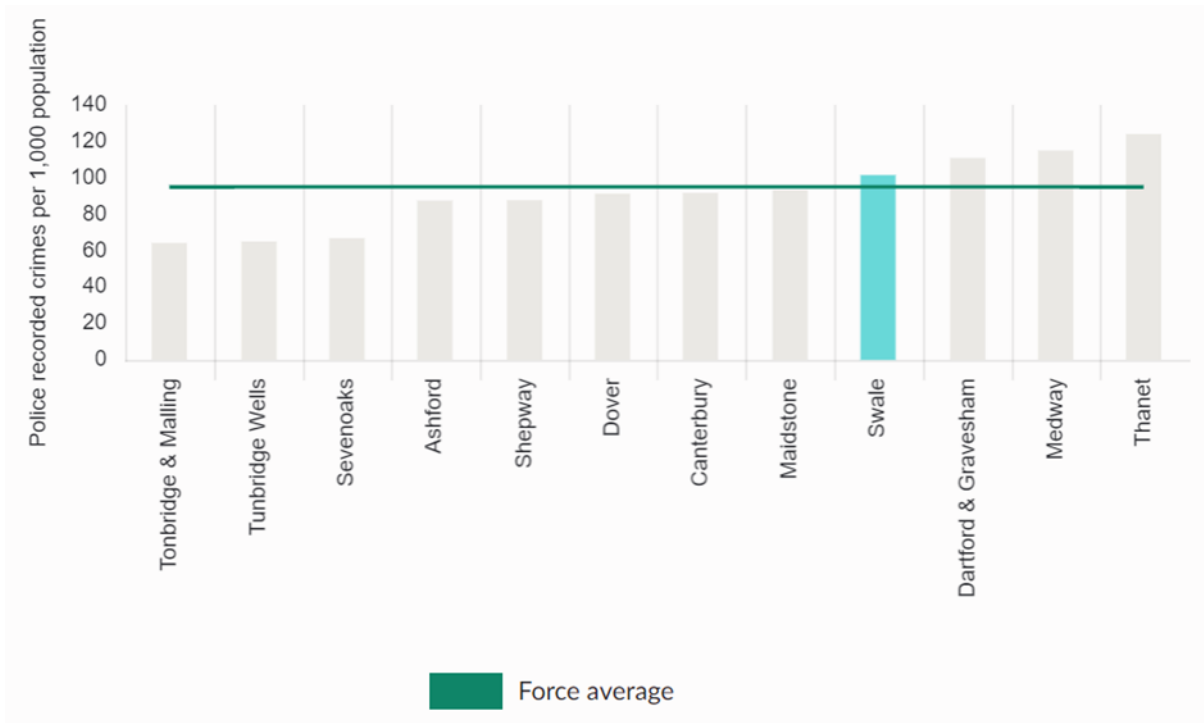


Figure 2 - Crime in Swale compared to Kent (Police.UK 2022)

When compared to other areas within Kent, Swale is above average in terms of the rate of offending per 1,000 of the population. This means that residents are more likely to be victims of crime compared to the average for the Kent Police area. Whilst this is interesting for the Swale area, it does not explain the rate of criminality within Faversham, rather it is the whole of the Swale area that is being compared. These kinds of reports can be useful for determining the levels of crime within Swale as a whole, but can give residents of specific areas, particularly geographically isolated areas such as Faversham, a misconception as to the levels of offending within their area.

In order to see what crime occurs in Faversham and the levels of crime experienced by the residents, it is vital to separate Faversham out from the wider Swale area. This research sought to do this using police recorded crime data to determine the reported crime problem within Faversham, as well as using qualitative focus groups as a method of determining the unreported crimes (often called the “dark figure of crime”) and the fear of crime that are also present within the town.

## 1.2 Faversham compared to Swale

This report drew on data supplied by Kent Police on crimes reported between April 2019 and March 2022. These data included location and temporal (e.g. dates) data, allowing us to map the crime and also track changes over time. Information was also provided on the types of offences that were carried out within the town. Included within the data were details on the suspects in the case as well as the victims, allowing a view of the people involved within the cases as well.

The data included incidents before, during and after the Covid-19 pandemic, which was important as this would allow us to show whether the lockdown policies utilised within 2020 and 2021 impacted upon the location or prevalence of criminality within Faversham. Research in this field (see Halford et al 2020 as an example) has shown that crime fell in these periods of lockdown. This was largely caused by the immobility of the population and social distancing policies implemented by supermarkets during lockdown. This report will take into consideration these changes and will analyse whether these measures changed the types, frequency or locations of crime during this time and afterwards.

## 1.3 The report

Section two of the report will outline the methods used within the report and the justifications for some of the choices made by the researchers. The findings of the phase one of report will be given in section three, whilst the qualitative **discussion** about fear of crime will be presented in section four. Crime prevention strategies that deal with the issues raised in sections three and four will be addressed in section five and the overall recommendations for the report will be addressed in section six.

## 2 METHODOLOGY

This study comprised of two parts: an assessment of the reported crimes taking place within Faversham and a qualitative study to assess whether there were offences not being reported to the police.

## **2.1 Theories underpinning the research**

This research is largely focussed on what is called “volume crime”, meaning those crimes that are commonplace and frequent. These crimes are usually acquisitive in nature and are those most commonly encountered by the public and reported to the police. This allows the report to look at those crimes and anti-social behaviour that are most likely to impact upon the residents of Faversham and as such be of most interest to the Town Council. Within these offences, the report concentrates upon those events that are most within the remit of the Town Council to address. As such, it draws on a number of criminological theories and research into these forms of crime. These are outlined below:

**2.1.1 Rational Choice Theory (RCT)** – this theory proposes that individuals work on the principle of “expected utility”, whereby their actions are based upon cost/benefit analyses. A rational actor seeks to maximise the benefits and minimise the costs of their actions, meaning that someone thinking of committing a crime would subconsciously weigh up the outcomes of their actions. This allows those wishing to protect themselves from crime to take actions that would alter this cost/benefit analysis and prevent crime. A simple example would be the presence of CCTV in a shop, meaning the potential criminal may be dissuaded by the prospect of easier identification and arrest. Their cost/benefit analysis has shifted to mean that the costs now outweigh the benefits and so the logical conclusion is not to offend (See Cornish and Clarke 2006).

**2.1.2 Routine Activity Theory (RAT)** – RAT proposes that criminal activity occurs whilst the offender is engaging in routine activity i.e. activity that they do on a regular basis, unrelated directly with crime, such as attending the supermarket or walking to work. This means that offenders are unlikely to travel to new areas to engage in criminal behaviour, but rather take opportunities (for example, to steal) that present themselves within their day-to-day lives. In order for a criminal event to occur three things must be present: a motivated offender, a suitable target or targets and the absence of a capable guardian. It is therefore possible to encourage a potential offender into **not** offending by introducing a capable guardian (this could be a police officer, but could also be a member of the public or a designated security guard), but an alternative is to remove a



likely target from the area or to demotivate the potential offender (see Cohen and Felson 1979). A common method of reducing crime is to “target harden” meaning that we provide physical security, or other dissuasive means to prevent victimisation. This could be as simple as putting a lock on a vulnerable door or as complex as redesigning the location, so as to limit unmonitored access.

By understanding the routine activities people engage in, we may be able to influence the environment to prevent crime (see 2.1.3 below) or spot patterns in offending behaviour that would previously have been hidden. Through the use of geographical data of where and when an offence occurs it is possible to determine the spatio-temporal (the influence of location and time) relationships with crime and as such, see a clearer picture as to what is associated with offending within an area, but also what can be done to reduce the threat crime poses (see Brantingham and Brantingham 1981).

**2.1.3 Crime prevention** - if we posit that a criminal behaves in a rational (albeit often intuitive) manner and engages in a cost/benefit analysis then it follows that it may be possible to use external factors to change the calculus so that it favours law abiding behaviour. Similarly, if we know the factors required for a crime to occur, then it is possible to adjust the situation so that this is less likely to occur. These are the core principles of crime prevention, the concept that we can prevent crime before it occurs and thus prevent someone, or something (e.g. a business) becoming a victim of crime. There are a number of measures that can be used to prevent crime, with design, geography and opportunity all being shaped so as to dissuade criminality. In section five this report draws on these ideas to propose options to reduce crime in Faversham based upon the issues identified within the report.

**2.1.4 Signal Crimes** – this theory proposes that citizens navigate their way through their environment taking cues from their surroundings as to the risks posed to them by crime. When evaluating the risk people will be largely unaware of the official statistics for crime or risk, and will take more notice of certain unwritten signals that they associate with safe or unsafe areas (Innes 2004). These cues can change our usage of an area that we perceive to be unsafe (thereby reducing legitimate use of the area) or normalise anti-social or criminal

behaviour. This can create a spiral where an area is perceived to be unsafe and this leads to it being adopted by those who intend to use it for criminal activity, therefore causing it to become unsafe – a form of self-fulfilling prophecy. As such, the perception residents have of an area can impact upon the actual safety of that area in the long term and is an important measure when considering the impact of crime.

## 2.2 Mapping and crime data

Using data obtained from Kent Police, we were able to determine the shape of crime being reported within Faversham i.e. the types of crime reported and the levels of reported crimes year on year. From this, it was possible to determine the numbers of crimes reported each month and year of each type and how these formed the picture of crime within the area. These data can also be used to determine if the shape of crime changes over time, for example identifying whether criminality peaks and troughs over the years or if the geographical locations alter based on seasonality. This was most important when considering the impact of Covid-19 restrictions on crime within Faversham.

This report uses broad categories for counting crimes in line with the Home Office Offence Classification Index (Home Office 2022). Under these categories, **it is** possible to count a number of related offences under one category. For example, the term “Theft” encompasses the following offences:

Crime type	Crimes included within the category	HOCR Codes
Theft	<i>Theft from the person</i> <i>Theft in a dwelling other than from an automatic machine or meter</i> <i>Theft by an employee</i> <i>Theft of mail</i> <i>Dishonest use of electricity</i> <i>Theft or unauthorised taking of a pedal cycle</i>	40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 46, 47, 49, 49A

	<p><i>Shoplifting</i></p> <p><i>Theft from an automatic machine or meter</i></p> <p><i>Other theft</i></p> <p><i>Theft - Making Off Without Payment</i></p>	
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Table 1 - Example offence categories (Home Office 2022)

Whilst these categories are useful for a broad understanding of crime in the area, there are instances where offences needed to be added to the categories (such as including theft from a vehicle to the “Theft” category above) or removed to provide clarity. In cases where this has happened within the report, we have noted the addition or removal of the offence to provide clarity for the reader.

The data included fields that were missing information or included incorrect information as a result of user error. These were amended to be correct where possible or deleted. These were small in number (fewer than 10) and have not impacted upon the accuracy of the conclusions or analysis. The data also contained instances where historic offences were disclosed to the police, meaning that offences occurred outside of the time frame we wished to cover. In these cases the data associated with these offences were also removed from the dataset.

### **2.2.1 Mapping**

It has long been known that crime can often be concentrated in geographical areas. As such, it can be insightful to geographically represent crime data, to show areas of vulnerability and to show (sometimes counter intuitive) locations that are prone to crime (Newburn 2017). ‘Crime mapping’ is commonly used by police forces to determine resource location and local priorities, but it can be used by non-police groups to attempt crime prevention measures. For this reason we have mapped crime in Faversham, with the purpose of showing areas of vulnerability to crime and to allow effective crime prevention measures to take place.

Stage one of the project used data to map the offences taking place within Faversham. The data provided by Kent Police included precise geographic locations for all offences within the time frame. This has allowed us to accurately map the frequency of offences within Faversham and to show where “hot spot” areas occurred.

The locations of offences were mapped onto a base map of Faversham (see Figure 4) as specific points using GIS software. A layer was then created that represented the point as a diffuse “heat” layer. This allowed the researchers to show the concentration of offences as a darkening cloud, with the colour changing from yellow to red as the concentration of offences increased. This approach is widely referred to as “Hot Spot Mapping” (Newburn 2017) and is a common approach to measuring the geographical risk of crime.

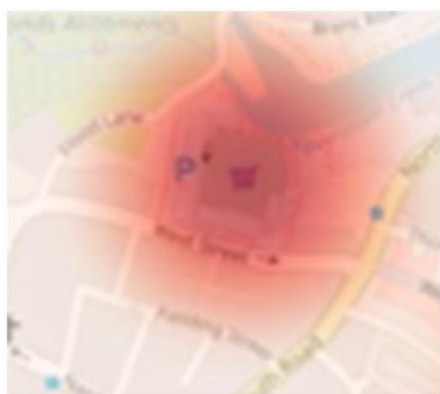


Figure 3 - Example Hot Spot

As a result of the specificity of the data, some maps needed to be amended or excluded from this report as their inclusion would have allowed the identification of victims of crime. In part, this was down to the low numbers of offences of this type, meaning that single instances of offending were represented on the maps. Their inclusion would have been counter to data protection rules as well as being ethically unacceptable to the researchers and to Kent Police, so were voluntarily amended or excluded.

Similarly, the maps were cropped to refer only to the town of Faversham. Maps of areas such as Teynham or the rural areas outside of Faversham town would have allowed the identification of specific victims. This was due to the low number of cases in these areas or the more diffuse nature of the properties in these areas, meaning that identification of specific victims was more likely. Figure 4 shows the base map used for all hot spot maps, where an additional layer was added to this map to show the hot spots.



Figure 4 – Base map

### 2.3 Measuring unreported crime

The second part of the study utilised focus groups of local residents to investigate what was felt were the main crime or anti-social behaviour (ASB) issues within the town. Focus groups are a useful tool when trying to reach a wide population, as they allow a range of voices to be present within the interview and thus more diverse experiences to be recorded.

Focus groups allow interaction between participants, with experiences being discussed outside of the individual experience. Wider considerations can also be discussed than would be elicited through one-on-one interviews, as the discussion is less focussed on one person's experiences, but on the group as a whole. The group setting can also be conducive for encouraging participation, as the group setting can feel more anonymous and less intimidating than one-on-one interviewing. For the full benefits of this approach see May (2011).

The focus groups were chaired by a researcher with experience in running focus groups in order to ensure that group dynamics were managed effectively and to limit the impact of dominant voices on the group. The focus groups were advertised using posters in the town as well as being advertised by the town council online and on local Facebook groups.

In the process of advertising the first two groups it was fed back to the researchers that the original two groups could exclude residents with full-time jobs as they were held during the day. It was proposed that another group could be added and run in the evening to accommodate those residents who worked full-time. This was added to the timetable and advertised in the same manner as the first two groups. Unfortunately, these three groups were not attended by any residents and as such yielded no findings.

Over a two-day period, interviewers spoke to local business owners and residents in an informal interview setting. Over fifty people were interviewed during this period and these interviews have formed part of the findings of this report. The feedback from these interviews informed our understanding of crime in the area and has presented a possible explanation for the lack of attendance at the focus groups.

Local service providers were contacted to offer input into their perspectives on crime in the local area. Agencies within the local area were contacted, including Kent Probation, local drug services, domestic abuse services, local PCSOs, Community wardens, Citizens Advice, Victim Support and local youth charities. Unfortunately, the majority of those contacted did not respond or declined to be part of the study. Those that chose to be part of the study will be represented within the findings of the report.

### **3 FINDINGS**

This section will outline the main themes found in the data analysis alongside some of the qualitative observations obtained during phase two. The section is broken into parts based on crime types, with overall crime being used to demonstrate the main issues found within the town.

#### **3.1 Overall Crime**

Looking at the overall crime for the area indicated a broad picture for the types of crime that are prevalent within the Faversham area. The data for Faversham was removed from the wider Swale data, with around 7.5% of the total offences in Swale being identified as happening within the Faversham area.

As outlined in section 1.1, the recorded crime rate for Swale is just over 100 offences per 1,000 residents. Whilst these figures are not directly comparable, the data comparison indicates that Faversham has a lower offending rate per 1,000 of the population than the rest of the Swale area and as such cannot be directly compared using these larger metrics.

##### **3.1.1 *Ward breakdown***

For the purposes of this report, we have chosen to divide Faversham and surrounding areas into electoral wards for analysis. The data provides the electoral ward information as well as the exact coordinates, thereby allowing us to easily divide and compare the areas. A map of the electoral wards is given below.

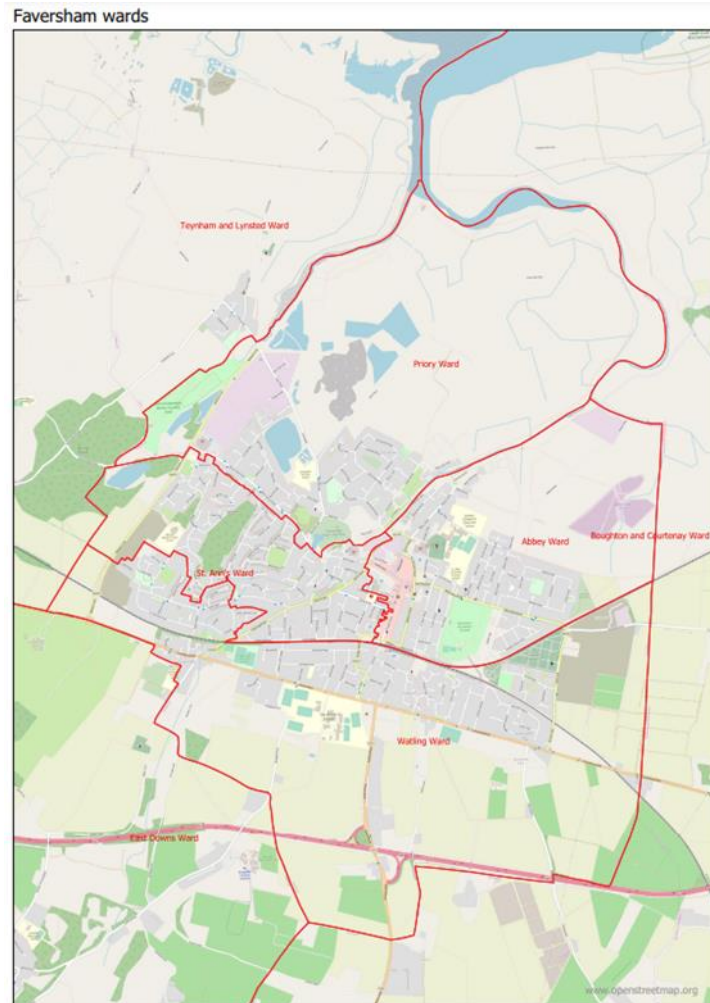


Figure 5 – Ward map (Faversham Town Council 2022)

Crime is mainly spread across five wards: Abbey (1766), Boughton and Courtney (1259), Priory (1029), St Ann’s (1177) and Watling (1614) as shown in table 2. The per capita analysis shows that despite being one of the least populous wards, Priory ward has the highest crime reporting per capita. As will be addressed in section 3.7, this can be explained by the presence of the high number of shoplifting cases close to a supermarket in the ward.

These five areas represent 94% of crime present in the data (see table 1 below). The low numbers for the East Downs ward can be largely explained by this being a mainly rural ward, and therefore it would be unexpected to find similar levels of crime as a more urban area. The low number for the Teynham and Lynsted ward is a result of the methodology used to extract the Faversham data from the wider Swale crime data, meaning that some of these crimes were lost. When



looking at the victimisation data the number of victims in this area is largely consistent with the other urban wards in the dataset, suggesting a relatively even spread of crime across the Faversham area.

Ward	Count	Count per Capita
Abbey Ward	1766	0.33
Boughton and Courtenay Ward	1259	0.29
East Downs Ward	346	0.13
Priory Ward	1029	0.36
St. Ann's Ward	1177	0.21
Teynham and Lynsted Ward	114	0.02
Watling Ward	1614	0.26
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>7305</b>	

Table 2 – Crime in Faversham by ward

### 3.2 Victims and suspects in Faversham

Kent Police provided additional data on victims and suspects of crime during the period of study. Analyses of these data allowed the report to determine traits of those who are predominantly victims and suspects within Faversham.

It is worth noting that those listed within the suspect data are suspects and not offenders. This is an important distinction as this does not require the individual to be charged, tried and found guilty in order for them to be counted. It was decided to include suspect data as this allowed the report to represent those who have had a criminal justice interaction and not just those found guilty of an offence. Additionally, this allows a real time evaluation of those within the evaluation period, with many of those arrested during this time likely to still be waiting to face trial given court backlogs.

As shown in Table 3 just over half (55%) of victims in Faversham were female. For the purposes of this count, we utilised the gender given on the crime report and compared this to the victim self-reported gender when this was given. In cases where this differed, we used the self-reported gender.

Women are more likely to report crime than men which may explain the higher rate of victimisation, but the divide is in line with UK averages for gender splits amongst victims (Buil-Gil et al 2020). Within Faversham women account for

50.7% of the population (information specific to Faversham is not available), **indicating** that women are represented as victims slightly higher than would be expected in the town.

Gender	Count
Female	4065
Male	3308
Unspecified	2
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>7375</b>

Table 3 – Victim Gender

In comparison, as shown in Table 4, only 27% of suspects from Faversham were female. This is largely consistent with the average in England and Wales, with 26% of those dealt with by the Criminal Justice System being female (Ministry of Justice 2020).

Gender	Count
Female	1533
Male	4027
Unknown	1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>5561</b>

Table 4 – Suspect Gender

This indicates that there is a gender imbalance in offending within Faversham, where women are more likely than men to be a victim of crime but are significantly less likely to be suspect. As will be discussed in section 3.6.1 this could be explained by the levels of domestic abuse occurring within Faversham. However, it should be noted that this is also UK issue and not specific to Faversham.

Within this dataset, the victim and suspect are not directly linked, where one suspect is paired with one victim. In the data, there could one, many or no suspect for each victim and suspects could relate to crimes outside of the Faversham area. These data are used to represent the likelihood of a resident being a victim or suspect within a crime report. However, this does allow us to compare these likelihoods and show that female residents of Faversham are more likely to be victims of crime than they are suspects.

In terms of geographical spread of victimisation, it is unsurprising to note that the victimisation by area matches closely with the overall spread of offending, with wards identified as having low levels of offending (such as East Downs), having lower numbers of victims than other wards. Abbey and Watling wards have the highest number of victims, much as they have the highest crime report numbers, which is in line with what is expected.

The spread of suspect location also followed a similar pattern, with suspect totals generally matching the locations of the offences. This indicates that broadly speaking crime in Faversham is against people from the local area and is caused by people from the local area. This supports the Routine Activity Theory outlined in section 2.1.2, showing that people largely offend in their local areas on their local routes. In terms of crime within Faversham, this indicates that largely speaking victims and offenders are from the local area, with no evidence provided to support the hypothesis that offenders travel to Faversham to commit offences.

From the data it was possible to determine the ages of victims and suspects, allowing a picture of the age ranges to be developed. Figure 6 shows the percentage of suspects within a particular age range, showing the majority of suspects (70%) fell between the ages of 11 and 40. Whereas figure 7 shows the ages of victims, with a similar percentage of victims being between 17 and 50.

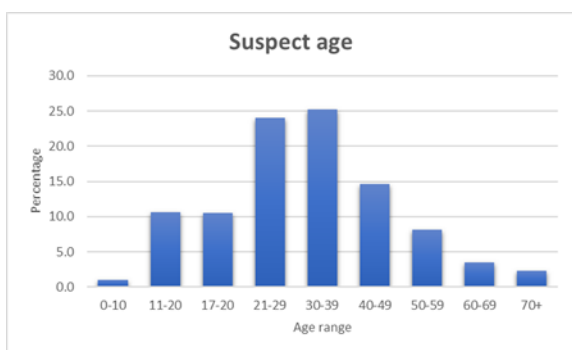


Figure 6 – Age range of suspects

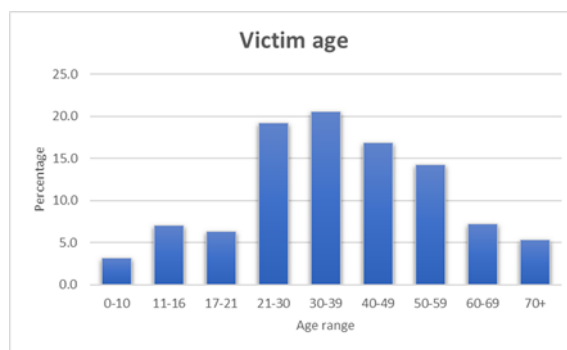


Figure 7 – Age range of victims

It is however worth noting that under 21s represent a significant proportion of the “dark figure of crime” meaning that they do not report victimisation to the

police at the same levels as older residents (Buil-Gil et al 2020). Whilst it would appear that suspects are (on average) younger and victims older, this may not be a true representation of the real figure.

The age of the suspect does match the expected “criminal career” model of offending, with offenders aging out of offending in their 30s, with most criminality occurring in the early twenties, depending on the crime (Blumstein et al 1988).

### **3.3 Repeat offending and victimisation**

Using a unique reference number within the data, it is possible to identify instances where a person was repeatedly victimised or was a suspect in multiple offences. Whilst this did not represent a large proportion of offending within the area, there were a number of individuals who were victims or suspects a number of times over the period.

Looking at those individuals who were victims of crime ten or more times over the period (representing an average victimisation of three times per year) we found twenty-nine people who matched this description. This represented 6% of all crime in the period.

Drawing on research by Farrell et al (2001) on victimisation careers, we know that repeat victims are more likely to be a victim of another type of crime (generalists) or at higher risk of repeat offending of the same type (specialists). Generalists are those individuals who, for a number of reasons both personal and societal, are more likely to be victims of a broad variety of crimes and as such are vulnerable to crime of all types. Specialists, on the other hand, are more likely to be repeat victims of the same or similar types of offences. An example of this is someone in an abusive relationship, who is more likely to be a victim of further violence from the same, but also future, partners.

Knowing the prevalence of these types of victimisation careers, allows local groups to tailor their responses to victimisation. In the analysis of the data, it was the latter category that emerged, with repeat victims tending toward being

repeat victims of the same types of crime. As recommended later in the report, this suggests that victim support should be targeted toward reducing repeat victimisation for the same types of crimes. This can be drawn on when crime prevention is considered as this will indicate the types of responses that will yield the best results.

Below is an example of a specialist victim typified by the data. In order to prevent the victim from being identified, details of the types and numbers of offences have been changed:

Crime type	Number of cases
Assault	7
Harassment	3
Theft	2
Threats	4
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>16</b>

Table 5 – Victim A

Victim A is an example of a specialist repeat victim, with the individual repeatedly reporting offences that could be related to domestic abuse. In this instance they have been repeatedly victimised via violent offending, threats and harassment. Supporting this victim via long term specialised support (such as domestic abuse groups as well as financial and legal advice) could yield a reduction in their likelihood of victimisation (McGuire et al 2017).

When considering offending, specialist repeat offenders also emerged as a theme with sixty-one residents being identified as a suspect in ten or more cases. This represented 14% of all crimes and 18% of all suspects identified.

These suspects were usually specialised in theft, almost entirely shoplifting. An anonymised example of which is given below:

Crime Type	Number of cases
Burglary - commercial	1
Burglary - Dwelling	1
Public order	2
Theft	40
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>44</b>

Table 6 – Suspect A

In the example above, the resident has been suspected of being involved primarily in acquisitive crime. This indicates that measures designed to protect future victims (such as shops) from offending would be more effective. Measures, such as a method of communication between shops would allow owners to guard against thefts from this individual.

Whilst these specialist victims and suspects are prevalent within the dataset, there are those who cross both categories, appearing as victims and suspects more than ten times in each category. These individuals are both vulnerable repeat victims, but also prolific offenders. In the cases where this was identified, the individual was usually both victim and perpetrator of violent offences and harassment, indicating repeated domestic abuse incidents. This will be revisited in section 3.6 when violent crime is discussed further.

### 3.4 Crime type

As outlined in section 1.1 we utilised the Home Office Offence Classification Index to group offences together, meaning that we could get a broad picture of the types of offences prevalent within the area. This was disaggregated down into more specific offence types where appropriate. Data supplied by Kent Police allowed the counting of offences by type and are represented in Figure 8 below.

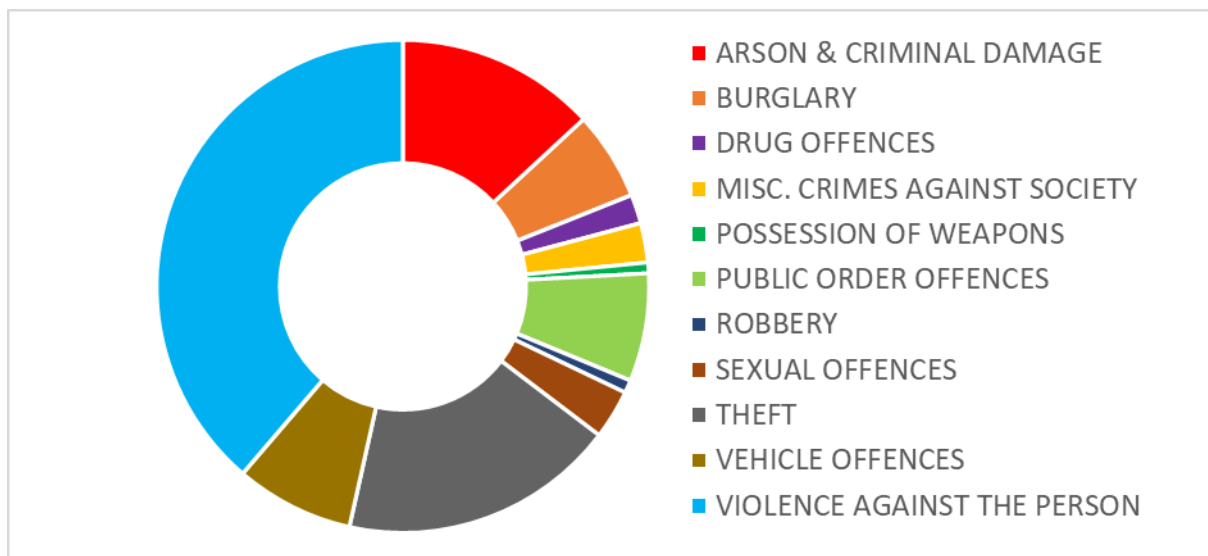


Figure 8 – Count of crimes in Faversham April 2019 – March 2022

The three most prevalent offences (Arson and Criminal Damage, Theft and Violence against the Person) represent 70% of all offences within the data. The inclusion of Public Order and vehicle offences results in 85% of all crime being represented within these five offence types.

It should be noted that whilst one of the categories is “Arson and Criminal Damage”, of the offences in this category only 97% were for criminal damage, meaning that the category largely refers to criminal damage offences. Similarly, the “Public Order” category contains similar situations and motivations as violent offences and as such could be considered alongside these offences.

By utilising these classifications, it is possible to see that the majority of crime in Faversham is in three main areas of offending: Criminal Damage, Theft and Violent crime. It is these types of offences that this report will concentrate upon.

### **3.5 Total crime map**

Figure 9 shows all crime types for the entire crime period mapped onto the base map. This shows strong clusters of criminality, with the “hottest” spots appearing in the areas most associated with commerce.

However, this is a distortion caused by the high numbers of theft offences within these relatively small areas and does not mean that crime only occurs in these areas, as it appears to show on the map. The quantity of offences occurring in these same geographical areas mean that these offences serve to drown out other forms of offending as they are stacked in close proximity, thus creating exceptionally high rates of crime in small areas.

As will be seen later in the report, once these offences are removed, it is possible to see a more even distribution of crime across the area. With crimes less densely packed into a small geographical area.

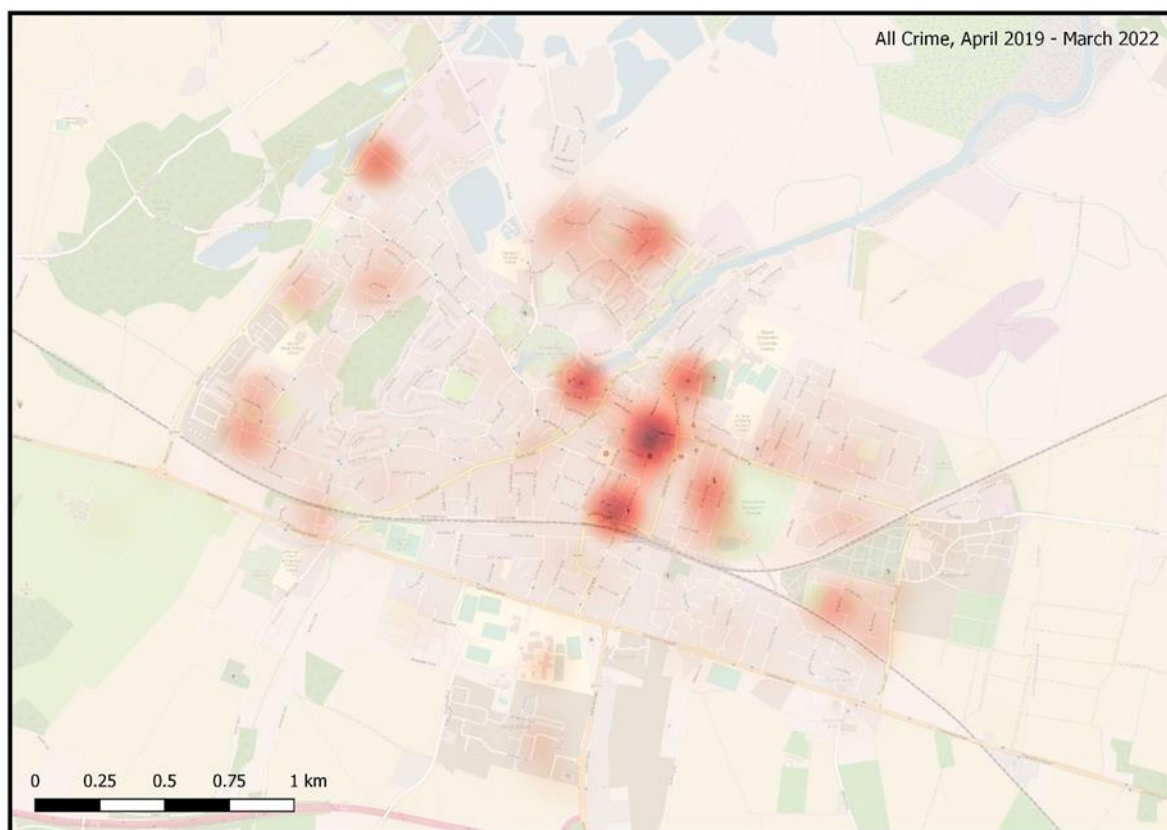


Figure 9 – All crime April 2019- March 2022

When the data is separated by year, clear patterns emerge across the years, with the main hotspot areas remaining consistent. These continue to be placed over the main shopping and recreation areas within Faversham, including out of town supermarkets.

These hot spots remain consistent throughout the lockdown period, indicating that offender activity was unaffected by the lockdown restrictions. With many of the large retail outlets in Faversham being allowed to remain open during this period, this indicates that restrictions on movement and social distancing had limited impact upon the offences committed during this time.





Figure 10 - All crime year on year April 2019 – March 2022

Whilst the spread of offending remains consistent during the lockdown periods, there are small fluctuations in the levels of crime during these periods. As can be seen in figure 11 below, there are reductions in crime for April, November and December 2020, as well as January and February of 2021. These coincide with the introduction of lockdown measures and indicate that whilst these measures did not have an effect on the location of hot spots for crime, they did impact upon offending numbers.

Similarly, there is a peak in offending in June 2021 coinciding with step three of the government roadmap to reducing lockdown. This was the period where pubs and restaurants reopened and wider social contact was allowed and as a result, a peak such as this is to be expected. Crime levels returned to normal levels in July 2021, indicating that this was an anomaly.

The mean number of offences per month for the three year period is 202, with the majority of months falling within +/- 50 crimes of this average. As can be

seen in figure 11, crime remains relatively stable throughout the period, with some reduction in crime during the early stages of each lockdown period, which is in line with national trends around the time (Halford et al 2020).

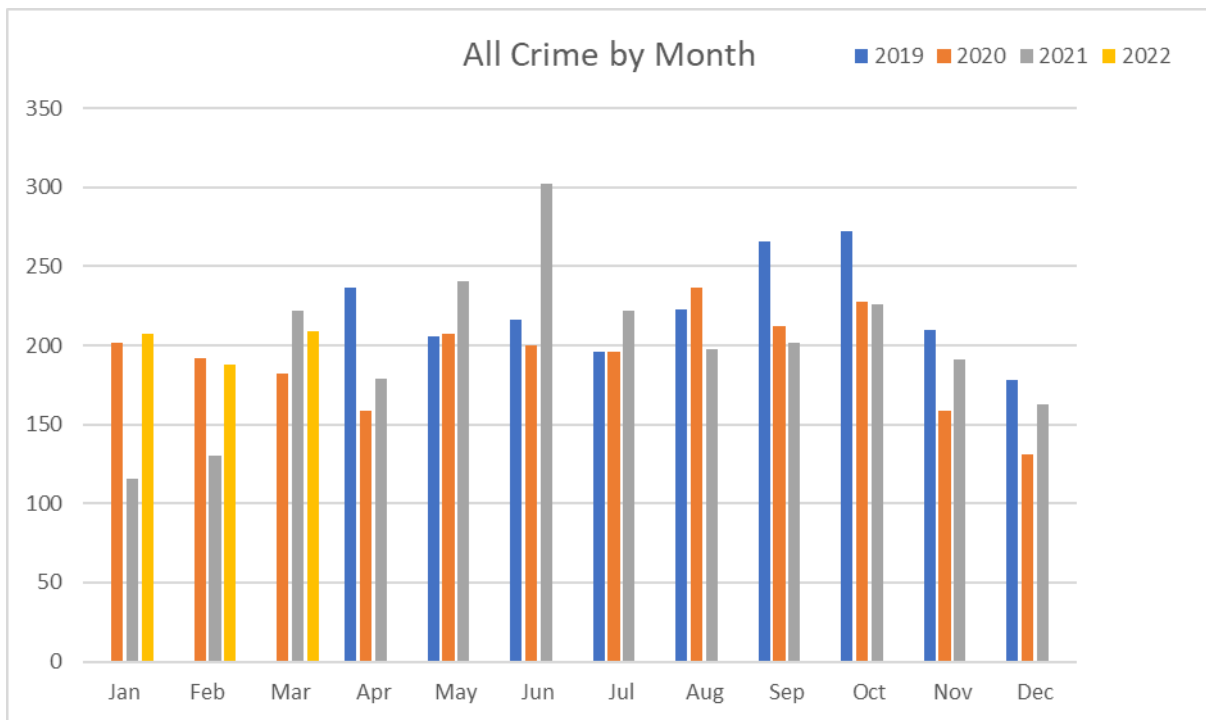


Figure 11 – Graph showing monthly crime numbers

### 3.6 Violent Crime

Violent crime can be damaging to a community in a number of ways. Public violence, such as that caused by pub brawls can indicate to a community that it is unsafe and that this type of offending is tolerated. Normalisation of this kind of offending can cause a ratcheting up of other offending and lead to a community become more criminogenic (Hope 2001). Hidden violence, such as domestic abuse, has a long term effect on communities by impacting on the lives of victims, but also children who witness the offending. Given it is a hidden offence, the average length of time that a victim stays with an abusive partner is 2-3 years and in that time they are likely to experience (on average) 50 instances of abuse before seeking help (ONS 2021). This can cause long-term harm to victims and their families if not addressed.

This study found just under 40% of all crime in the period was classified under the broad category of violence against the person. This is a broad category encompassing a number of offence types including: homicide, violence with

injury, violence without injury, stalking and harassment and death or serious injury caused by unlawful driving (Home Office 2022).

Within the dataset, three common subcategories emerged as being responsible for almost all (99.9%) offences of this type: stalking and harassment, violence with injury and violence without injury. When this was further broken down into sub-sub-category for offence type, these categories remained the largest.

### **3.6.1 Domestic abuse**

Within the dataset, certain offences were flagged as an instance of domestic abuse when reported to the police. Whilst it is outside the remit of this report to comment on the accuracy of these flags, they remain useful as an indicator of the levels of domestic abuse present within the Faversham area. Analysis showed that in around 20% of all crime cases, this flag was set as “true” meaning that it was considered an instance of domestic abuse. This amounts to slightly over (accounting for rounding) half of all violence against the person cases in the dataset.

There are higher-than-UK-average reporting rates for domestic abuse in Kent and Medway. It is estimated that as many as 92,000 people could be victims in the county, based on extrapolated victimisation rates. Approximately 40% of domestic abuse reports to Kent Police are recorded as crimes, meaning that the official statistics (including those used within this report) around this crime may give a significantly different picture than the reality of the situation. For example, in 2019 around 45,000 reports of domestic abuse were logged by Kent Police, with around 34,000 of these recorded as crimes. This represents an upward trend too, with only 26,000 instances recorded in 2017 (KCC 2020). In this Kent is not an outlier, with increased reports of domestic abuse occurring country wide. This has been in part explained by the global pandemic and resulting lockdowns, but given this is an eight-year trend, it is more likely that another cause lies at the heart of this increase and may merely be a representation of increased public awareness and reporting (ONS 2021).

In the UK, women are around twice as likely to be victims of domestic abuse compared to men and in Kent, women are three times more likely to become a victim than men. Swale has one of the worst rates of domestic abuse in Kent alongside Gravesham, Medway and Thanet. However, it is not possible to separate Faversham from the wider Swale data using publicly available data as these offences are usually collated by borough (see section 1.1). Discussions with professionals in this area stated that their perception was that domestic abuse in Faversham was not representative of the levels experienced within other areas of Swale, with the Isle of Sheppey highlighted as being the area with the most prevalent problem.

What this indicates is that whilst domestic abuse represents a significant section of the crime within Faversham, due to the size of Faversham in comparison to other areas within Swale, the perception is that it has low levels of domestic abuse. This has historically led to Faversham having fewer regular drop-in and group support sessions as it was not viable to have daily support given the number of referrals being made. However, as a by-product of the Covid-19 lockdowns, local services have moved online (as well as operating face to face sessions) meaning that women in Faversham can now access online support that previously would not have been as readily available to them.

Interviews with practitioners highlighted that domestic abuse was an issue in Faversham and whilst there were not as many self-referrals as other areas of Swale it remained a prominent issue. Interviewees from all sectors brought up the prevalence of domestic abuse in the area and how this impacted upon their clients or on victims of crime in general. Support services in the area noted that domestic abuse was a common theme in their work, with services supporting women within abusive relationships and children who live in households that contain abuse. Those in enforcement highlighted additional provisions coming into force to help protect women and girls from abuse both in public and in the home. It is clear that services in Faversham are working to help ensure victims are supported and to help young people who are impacted by domestic abuse. However, all services highlighted how difficult this is given the financial pressures of the past decade.

### 3.6.2 *Location of violent crime.*

When mapping violent crime, consideration was given to the ethics of visualising crime that significantly contained instances of domestic abuse and the possibility of the maps being used to identify victims. Attempts were made to remove these domestic incidents from the maps, but this still allowed the potential to identify individual victims of crime and this was deemed ethically and legally unacceptable. Instead, figure 12 highlights the main areas of violent crime within the town centre, primarily in the market and Preston St areas.

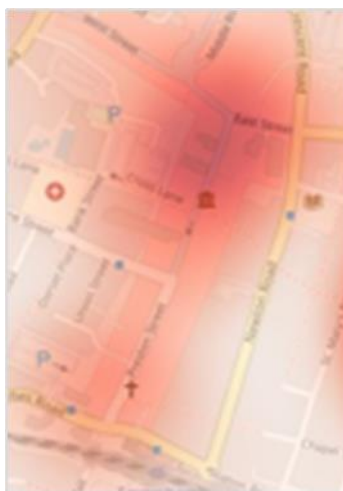


Figure 12 – Violent crime in Faversham

The prevalence of public houses within this area could indicate that these violent incidents are likely to be part of the night-time economy of Faversham. Interviews with business owners in the area supported this hypothesis, offering insight into the prevalence of violent activity caused by drinking.

Research into the night-time economy highlights factors such as public houses play a part in night-time violence (Homel and Clark 1994). Interviews with business owners emphasised that whilst violence was present in the area, almost all suggested that it was lower than they had experienced elsewhere and was largely not an issue.

Drinkers were locals who were known to the bar staff and were mostly not seen to be a cause of violence. It was posited by staff that many of the young men in the area travel to other towns on weekends to drink and as such are not present in the town centre in great numbers. The presence of young men has been

shown to increase the likelihood of violence, meaning that their absence reduces the risk of violent altercations. In this case the data seems to show this is true for Faversham (Finney 2004).

### 3.6.3 Violence as a proportion of monthly crime

In order to understand the prevalence of violent crime within the area, we studied the proportion of crime per month that is classified as violent. This revealed stability, with violent crime averaging around 40% of all crime each month (see figure 13). This is also in line with the overall stability of crime in the area.

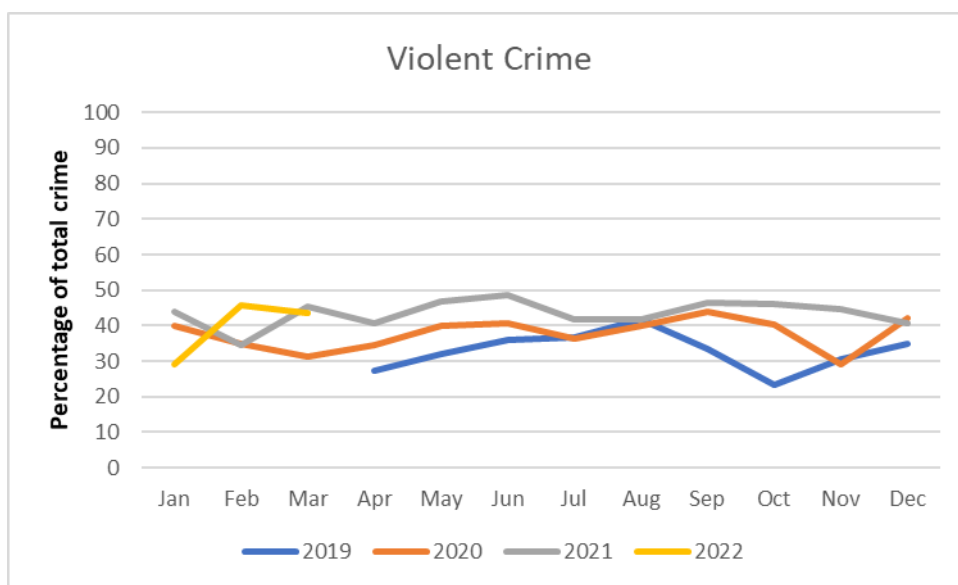


Figure 13 – Violent crime as a percentage of total crime

The stability outlined in figure 13 shows that whilst violent crime is a significant proportion of monthly crime, it is not going up nor is it subject to seasonal variation. Measures on how to reduce violence will be addressed in section 5.

### 3.7 Theft

Theft offences account for around 22% of total offences within the dataset and was the second largest crime group. Within these, shoplifting accounts for the majority of these offences, with burglary and theft from a vehicle making up the majority of the other offences.

### 3.7.1 Shoplifting

When mapped onto the base map, the prevalence of the shoplifting cases in the larger retailers dominates the map. This is because there are a large number of cases tagged to a small geographical area, meaning that the heat map will show “hottest” for those offences. Figure 14 shows the map including shoplifting offences.

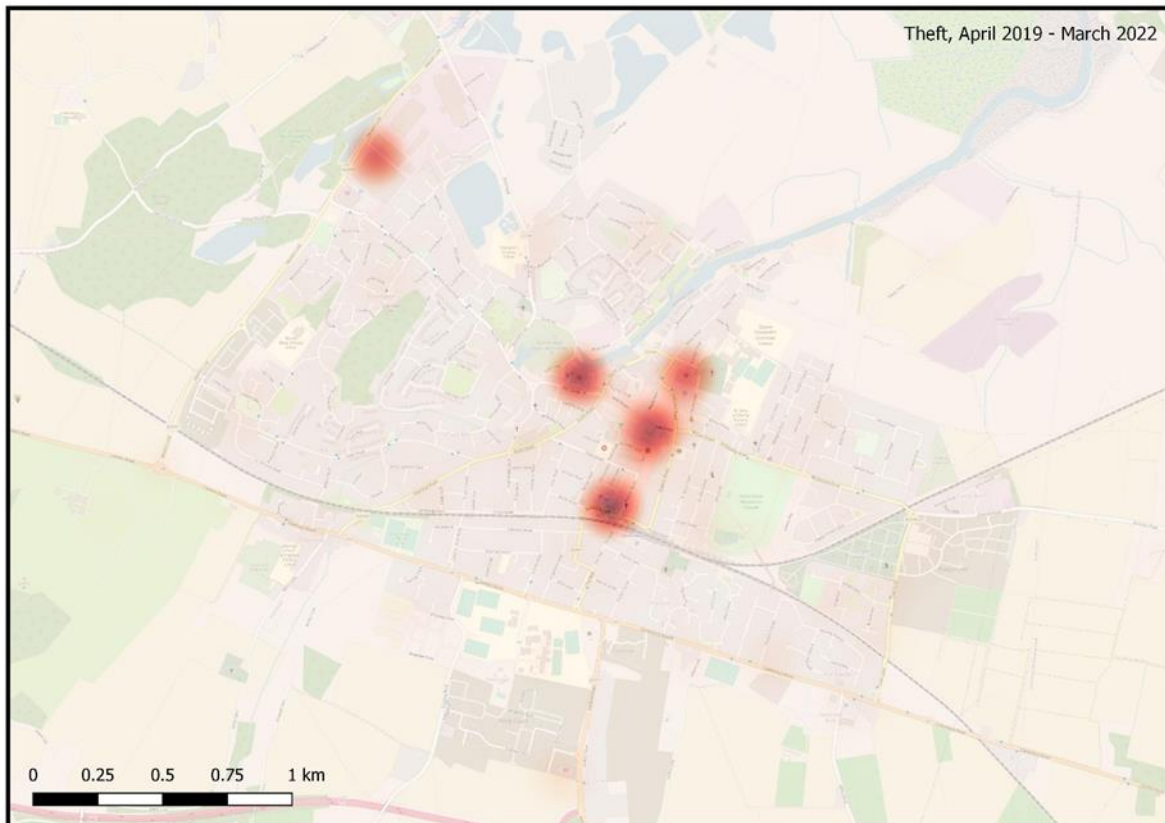


Figure 14 – Overall theft offences

These hotspots are interesting in that they show the weight of the shoplifting offences over the rest of the theft offences. Given the number and contained area of these offences, they drown out the other types of theft in the town when mapped using our methodology. They are also strongly located over shops that are owned by large companies and not the smaller locally owned shops.

When we highlight only the shoplifting offences, the picture becomes even clearer. Figure 15 shows the shoplifting offences only, showing the prevalence

of these offences occurring in larger chain stores. It also shows the weight of these offences on the overall theft map, as the two look almost identical.



Figure 15 – Shoplifting

There are six clear hot spots for shoplifting, with these centred on the largest shops (these include - Superdrug, Tesco, Morrisons, Sainsburys, Co-op and Aldi). The hot spot in West Faversham is not centred on the supermarket, but on an adjacent industrial estate. Investigation into the offences indicate that this is a quirk of the coordinates, and the hot spot should be located on the supermarket in question.

The relative “coldness” of one of the hot spots may be due to the relatively removed geographical site of the store, but is also likely to be because the store in question only opened halfway through the period covered by this study.



The hypothesis was explored that the prevalence of shoplifting in large stores was a product of the lockdown periods, due to the closing of all non-essential shops. Another hypothesis was tested, in that social distancing made shoplifting more difficult. It was found that these shops remained the focal point of shoplifting offences within Faversham before, during and after lockdown periods. This indicates that these shops are the main targets for shoplifting within the area regardless of the population control measures that were in place.

When studying the suspect data, a number of individuals were listed as being suspects in shoplifting offences more than ten times. Whereas high-volume violent offenders were found to be victims in a large number of cases as well, those who shoplifted did not present themselves in the data in this way. Instead, those who committed theft offences (greater than 10) and were listed as victims less than three times were commonly shoplifters.

An example is given below of an expected list of suspected crimes for one of these shoplifters. As before this has been fictionalised to prevent identification:

<b>Crime type</b>	<b>Count</b>
Burglary - commercial	1
Burglary - Dwelling	1
Public order	2
Theft	40
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>44</b>

Table 7 – Suspect B

This example is indicative of the type of profile given by those offending more than ten times in the measured period. Of the sixty-one people who were suspected of a crime more than ten times, 67% of them were victimised less than four times. These individuals were most likely to have committed shoplifting offences as the majority of offences in their profile. This suggests that these prolific offenders are responsible for a significant proportion of the shoplifting offences within Faversham.

In speaking with small independent shopkeepers in the town centre, it was noted that most said they had no problem with shoplifting, with one shopkeeper stating that she could not remember the last time someone stole from her shop. This matches with the data, with shoplifters seeming to target the larger chain stores rather than those independent shops run by local people, as shown by figure 15.

Shopkeepers also pointed to their interconnectivity as a reason why they are more resilient to shoplifting. A radio system previously connected shops, allowing anyone to raise an alarm if a shoplifter was identified in the town. This recently discontinued, but has been replaced with an informal system using the messaging app WhatsApp. Shopkeepers felt this was sufficient to keep them connected with one another and whilst the radio system is due to be reimplemented imminently, some stated that they would continue with their own system rather than adopt the new radio system.

The radio system allows close contact with the CCTV hub though, so continuation of this informal system would have a reduced impact on crime in the town centre. Low adoption rates for the new scheme would also impact upon the effectiveness of the scheme, as not all shop keepers could report concerns.

### **3.7.2 *Non-shop theft***

When shoplifting was removed from the data, the map showed a more even spread of offending, with figure 16 demonstrating that whilst theft was still concentrated within the town centre, thefts occurred throughout the town.



Figure 16 – Theft excluding shoplifting

These thefts mostly came from burglaries and thefts from, or of vehicles. Street robbery was not a significant component of this number, which corresponded with the results of the qualitative research from those interviewed, who felt safe in Faversham at all times of the day.

Theft from a vehicle was highlighted by the designing out crime team at Kent Police as being an area of interest, and whilst this was not a major source of overall crime, it represented around 50% of non-shoplifting thefts in the area. As shown in Figure 17, these offences are spread across the town, but smaller hot spots are present near Faversham Recreation Grounds and a supermarket car park, with the main town centre being the source of the largest hot spot.

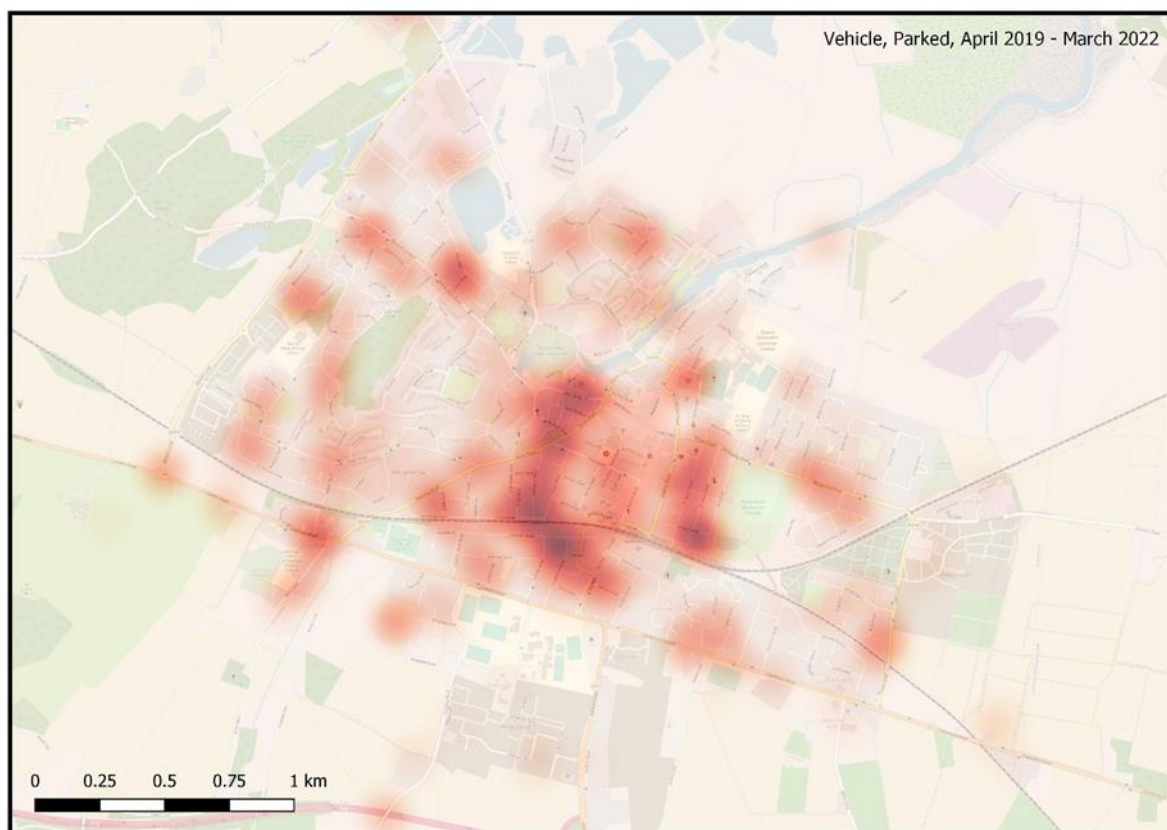


Figure 17 – Theft from Vehicle

As will be further discussed in section five, there are aspects of crime prevention that can be improved to help prevent these offences from occurring.

### **3.7.3 Theft of Bicycle**

Faversham historically has a strong relationship with the use bicycles, with an annual family bike ride, confidence bike riding classes and a cycle hire scheme promoting bike riding in the town. Whilst only a small percentage of the overall cases, bicycle theft impacts upon this process and impedes confidence in residents to cycle in the town. Figure 18 shows the location of bike thefts across the three years of the study.

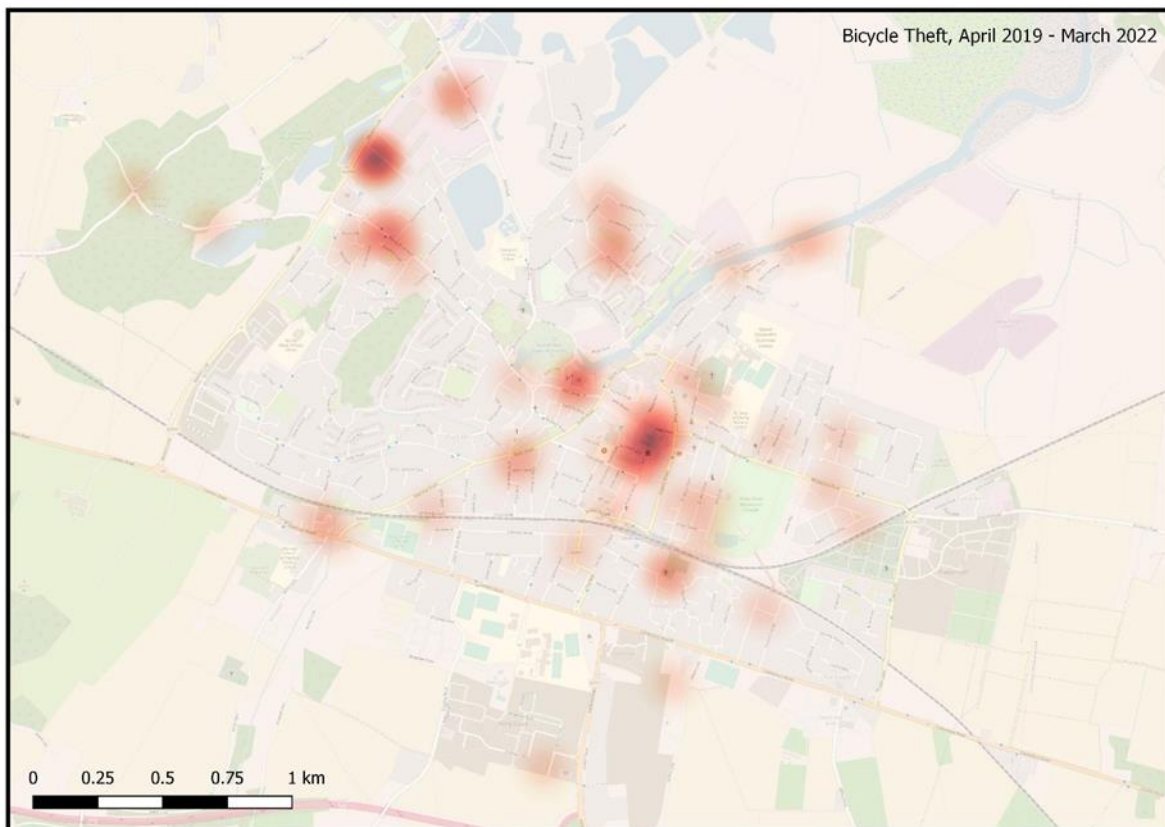


Figure 18 – Bicycle theft

The Town Council have installed bike hangars and secure bike parking in locations around the town, with the first spaces available for rent on 1/8/2022 (Faversham Town Council 2022b). These will help with reducing the rates of bicycle theft within these areas. One of which (Central Car Park) is located near to a prominent hot spot. Other hot spots include supermarkets (Morrisons and Sainsburys) and may be a good site for future secure parking sites.

One hot spot occurs near to West Faversham Community Centre, the location of local youth clubs and youth activities. Bike thefts in this area that impact upon young people would be especially harmful and as such a secure bike parking structure would help to prevent this harmful victimisation. However, secure parking that incurs a user cost may be ineffective as children are less likely to be able to afford this payment to protect their bikes.

### 3.8 Criminal damage

As noted in section 3.4, arson and criminal damage represent 13% of all crime in the dataset with 97% of these offences being classed as criminal damage.

Despite the low number of cases, there have been high profile cases such as the burning of play equipment by the leisure centre and the burning of the old forge on Canterbury Road. These high-profile cases will impact upon fear of crime and may reduce local confidence in the ability for the state to protect them from crime (See the earlier section of this report on “signal crimes”). This can give these offences an importance outside of the harms they inflict upon the residents.

Residents who used the recreation ground also discussed seeing signs of small fires which they attributed to the young people using the area at night. Whilst this report does not find there to be a significant problem associated with fire setting in the town, it is worth noting that these incidents can cause wider fear of crime in residents as discussed above.

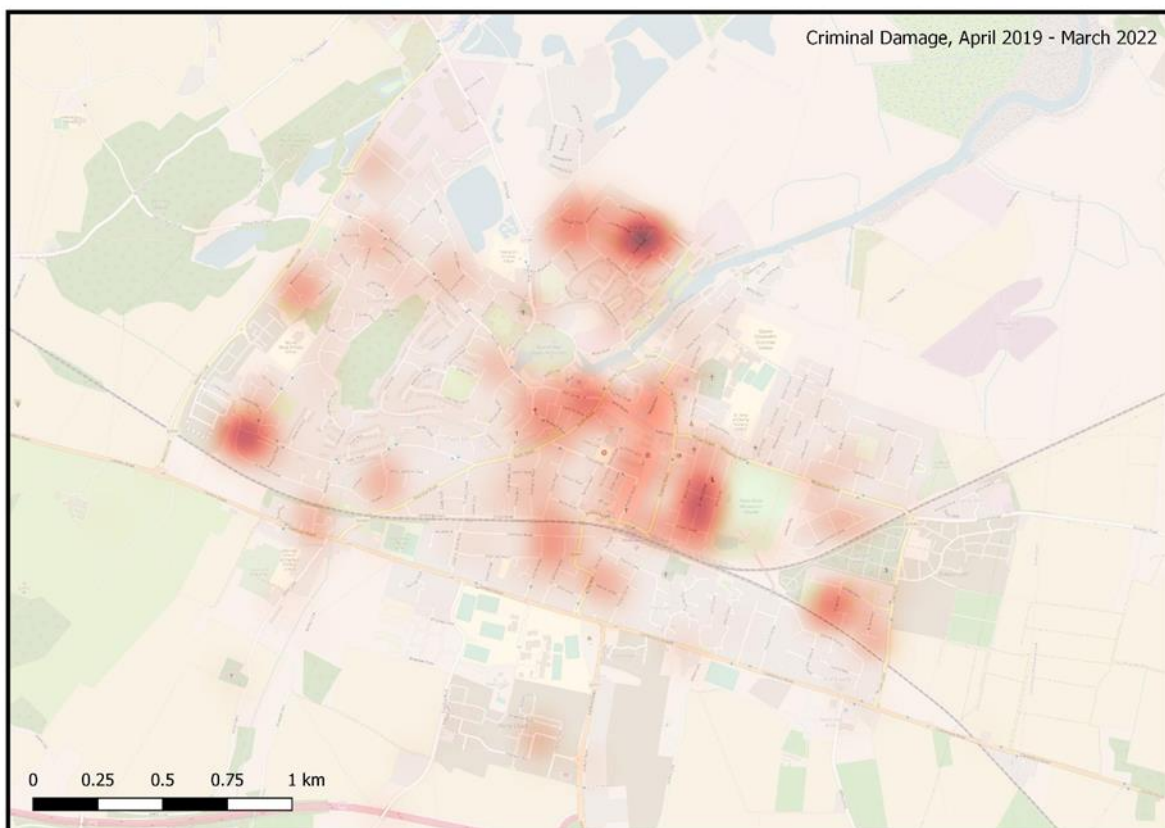


Figure 19 – Criminal damage

Three main hot spots are prominent in the map, with the area surrounding the recreation ground (Park Road, St John’s Road and St Mary’s Road) and the

Brents being notable for the concentration of incidents. These areas also overlap with other hot spots for theft from vehicles, possibly indicating that there are security issues in these areas for parked cars.

An analysis of the data showed that around a third of all criminal damage reports relate to damage caused to cars. Whilst this may be a by-product of a crime report being required to claim on car insurance (Buil-Gil et al 2020), around 12% of all crime in Faversham involves a vehicle (not including driving offences). It is therefore a recommendation of this report that the Town Council works with the Kent Police Designing Out Crime team to investigate if there are any measures that can be taken to reduce criminal damage to cars within these areas.

#### **4 FEAR OF CRIME IN FAVERSHAM**

Fear of crime can be as damaging to a community as victimisation and as such, this report sought to discuss with local residents their perspective on the risks posed by crime in Faversham.

As part of phase two of the study, local residents were asked to attend focus groups to discuss their perspectives on crime in the town. Unfortunately, no residents attended any of the three meetings. This was despite an additional meeting being offered in the evening at the request of respondents to the advertisement of the first meeting.

Due to the lack of engagement with the focus groups, researchers instead spent time in the town centre, speaking with residents and business owners about their perspectives on crime. This culminated in discussions with around 50 individuals, with the responses informing areas of this report.

In terms of fear of crime, the overwhelming response from these residents was that Faversham is a safe place to live, with crime not being part of their consideration when navigating the town. This is not to say that Faversham is crime free, nor is it intended to diminish the fear and anguish that crime causes to victims, but rather this is intended to show that for the respondents we spoke

to, crime was not considered a problem in the town. This could also be an explanation for non-attendance at the focus groups, with crime not considered sufficient a problem to warrant attendance.

The general perception was that Faversham has changed in the past decade, with criminality falling and a sense of safety on the streets growing. Residents and business owners almost uniformly reported feeling safe both during the day and at night. Business owners did not feel that crime impacted upon their businesses and even those who had been victims of crime felt this was an aberration rather than a feature of living in the area.

Analysis of long-term crime rates using UKCrimeStats.com, shows the trend for crime in Faversham from 2010-2022 is of stability in monthly crime rates. Our own data from 2019-2022 shows this too, with Figure 20 showing a three-month moving average for crime during the period.

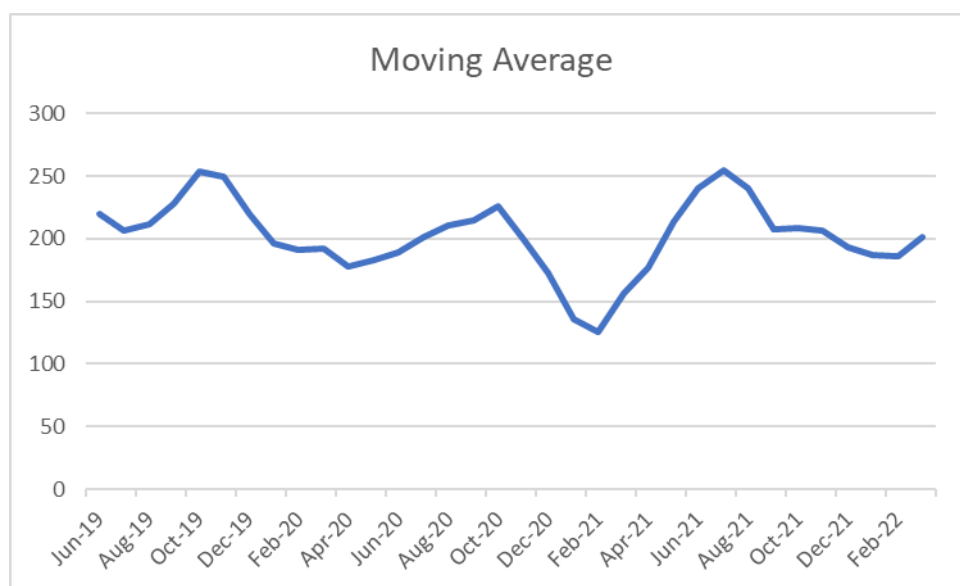


Figure 20 - Three month moving average for all crime

The overall trend in this graph is of stability in crime rate, excluding the periods during lockdown and the period immediately following lockdown, where crime dropped and grew as explained in section 3.5. What these figures demonstrate is that whilst crime has remained relatively stable since 2010, public perception is that Faversham is safer and therefore fear of crime has continued to reduce.



## **5 CRIME PREVENTION IN FAVERSHAM**

A measure to prevent victimisation is through the use of crime prevention techniques. This section draws on a literature review of successful crime prevention techniques used by other towns and cities as well as interviews with professionals that work in the crime prevention field.

### **5.1 Crime prevention**

Part of the brief for this report was to provide advice on measures that can be undertaken to reduce the impact of crime in the town. As outlined in section 2.1 a possible way to achieve this is through the use of crime prevention techniques. These techniques help to reduce opportunities for crime and often involve changes to the landscape or built environment rather than traditional methods of detection and punishment.

Crime prevention is not aimed at the complete eradication of crime, but rather recognises that this is an impossible goal and instead it is better to reduce crime in an area with manageable changes. These suggestions are often simple, cheap and unobtrusive, meaning that they do not impact upon the lives of residents, yet are effective in reducing crime in an area.

This section will look at the crime issues identified in Section 3 and provide examples of areas that could be improved or suggestions taken from a literature review of council crime prevention strategies.

### **5.2 Lighting**

The presence of good lighting and clear visibility is a core recommendation of crime prevention, with 'Secured by Design' (a country wide policing initiative aimed at preventing crime) advising good lighting as a form of security against all forms of crime (Secured by Design 2022a). This is provided publicly through street lighting and privately, with motion sensor lights being used to secure our homes. In Faversham, LED street lighting is provided in the town centre and through the majority of roads.

Maintenance of street lighting is of vital importance, as areas that are unlit or poorly lit are shown to attract criminal activity or anti-social behaviour (Farrington and Welsh 2001 & Pease 1999). But maintenance extends beyond the physical performance of the lighting and also ensuring that the light reaches the ground. Figure 21 demonstrates the problems caused by trees adjacent to street lighting, with the branches interfering with the lighting and creating darkened spots that should be illuminated.



Figure 21 – Trees blocking street lighting

The photographs in figure 21 are taken in the Central car park, an area highlighted as being a problem area for bicycle and vehicle theft in section 3. Cutting back the trees to allow the street lighting to perform its function would help to illuminate the car park and would make it more difficult for theft and criminal damage offences to occur.

In interviews with residents, areas without street lighting were deemed to be more intimidating than areas that are well illuminated. An example of this is Faversham Recreation Ground, where the exterior of the park is well lit, but the interior routes within the park are unlit. Figure 22 shows some of the interior routes within the park that remain unlit.



Figure 22 – Lighting in Faversham Recreation Ground

It was not possible to determine the exact location within the park that offending occurred, due to the geolocation policies of Kent Police linking offences to fixed points within the park. However, it is possible to see that the park remains a hot spot for violence and in theory the unlit routes into the park could be a hot spot for theft.

Without street lighting, it is impossible to see into the recreation ground from outside the park, meaning that visibility of activity is limited. As outlined in section 2.1 a “capable guardian” is a component of preventing crime in the routine activity model (Newburn 2017). Members of the public acting as bystanders are shown to reduce opportunities for crime and crime is shown to go up when visibility is low.

Faversham Recreation Ground is spread over a large area, meaning that those within it are not easily visible from the pavements outside. Similarly, it contains a number of sheltered or wooded areas, making visibility poor, especially in unlit areas at night. These factors serve to make the recreation ground feel unsafe to those who wish to use it at night, but also encourage those who wish to remain unseen to use the park. Evidence was present of small fires being set, which may have been used for light in the park at night.

Whilst the recreation ground was not found to be a hotspot for crime, it was an area that featured in most forms of criminality, meaning that it was an area with a high background level of criminality. On visiting the park, unlit areas contained greater evidence of drug use (in the form of laughing gas capsules) and fire setting than the rest of the park. Both of which will act as signal crimes to users to indicate this is a criminal area.

Currently, closing the park at night is not physically possible as there are public routes from the station or into the town centre passing through the recreation ground. Nor would it be possible with the current perimeter fence. Closing the park may also exacerbate the existing issues as it will prevent legitimate use at night, thereby further reducing the legitimate use of the space.

Instead, providing lighting and clearing sight lines through the park would allow legitimate use of the area after dark and increase the number of capable guardians within the area. This would help reduce the fear of crime, whilst also tangibly reducing crime in the park. Hulme park in Manchester attempted this in the early part of the century and whilst crime reduced by a quarter, fear of crime in the area went down and residential use of the park increased (Design Council 2011).

Another possibility is to install 'kissing gates' at the entrances to the recreation ground. This will limit access to bikes, which were mentioned as a nuisance in the interviews with residents. However, the Park Road car park will allow access for bikes and would be very difficult to fence off, so the benefits of this approach is limited. It could however be used in the bridleways in the town, preventing access to bikes and more importantly motorbikes who were listed as a problem in interviews. This would allow pedestrians to use the bridleways without interference, but would pose a significant impediment to bicycles and motorcycles.

These measures carry with them inconveniences for other users of these areas and these need to be weighed carefully before implementation. The designing out crime team of Kent Police will be able to assist with this assessment.

### 5.3 CCTV

Whilst often used as an example of crime prevention, studies have shown that the preventative value of CCTV can be limited (Newburn 2017). However, when used to target particular crimes such as acquisitive crime, CCTV can still be effective at reducing crime.

As was highlighted in section 5.1, trees can block CCTV coverage of areas, thereby limiting their usefulness in preventing crime. As such, monitoring of tree coverage in public areas covered by CCTV is vital to ensure that these areas are efficiently monitored. Similarly, assessments should be made of the coverage of CCTV cameras in areas where they are needed to monitor for criminality.

An example of this is the CCTV camera in the Central car park. This was identified as an area of vehicle damage and theft from vehicle crime and is covered by one CCTV camera. The location of the camera only allows it to monitor half of the car park at a time and needs to be manually moved by a controller if it is to cover the rest of the car park. Similarly, there are blind spots from the camera near the men's toilet block in the car park.

The toilet block serves as a natural obstruction for the camera, meaning that anything occurring near the toilet block is obscured from view. This block was identified by local residents as being a location for anti-social behaviour in the evenings and some reported the smell of drugs when walking past. The closure of the toilets, could help dissipate those loitering near the toilets in the evening, but this would obviously come at an inconvenience to those in the town centre for whom these toilets would be useful.

The installation of another CCTV camera that encompasses this current blind spot would reduce the need to close the toilets and would allow CCTV coverage of the other half of the car park. Other forms of environmental design could also be investigated, such as pink lighting to highlight skin imperfection or loud music, both aimed to dissuade loitering in an area.

In instances where additional supervision is to be installed or where measures are to be implemented to prevent loitering, the ethics of making the space hostile must be considered. Public space is designed to be used by all and as such the benefits to such measures should be weighed against the exclusionary outcomes of such measures.

#### **5.4 Bicycle theft**

Bicycle theft was identified in section 3.7.3 as being a perceived problem within Faversham and two hot spots were identified. As a form of acquisitive crime, bicycle theft can be caused by a number of motivations, all of which need to be addressed if theft is to be effectively reduced.

Johnson et al (2008) identify three main motivations for bicycle theft:

- Joyriding – those who steal bicycles to ride for either transportation or fun. Younger offenders usually fall into this category and the bicycles are usually abandoned following their use.
- Financial – bicycles are easily sold or traded and can be seen as an easy form of acquiring cash.
- To order - the bicycle is stolen to fulfil an order from someone who desires it.

These motivations will impact upon the types of crime prevention that are useful as the method of theft will change depending upon the motivation. For example, a joyrider will likely steal an unlocked bicycle, but will lack the necessary tools to steal one that is locked. Whereas those stealing to order are unlikely to be deterred by a lock and will steal the bike and the lock.

Secured by Design (2022b) state that around 40% of all bicycle thefts occur with bicycles that are unsecured. Usually this is because of a belief that the bicycle is safe, or a lack of available secure parking. The term “fly parking” can be used to describe the locking of bicycles to street furniture such as benches and railings. Bicycles that are fly parked are also at risk of theft, as street furniture is not designed to prevent theft (Johnson et al 2008).

The existing campaign of providing secure bicycle parking allows the user to park their bicycle in a secure manner and expansion of those scheme has been advised in section 3.7.3. It is also advisable to expand signage around the train station to guide bicycle users to the secure parking at the rear. Fly parking remains common in this area, meaning that users are either unable to locate the secure parking or unable to use it for another reason such as cost or time.

Faversham Town Council already provides comprehensive advice and support for bike riders in the area and encourage the use of bicycles to get around the town. However, additional advice could be given to provide bike riders with advice on how to safely mark and secure their vehicles, or guidance on how to secure their bicycles effectively.

Two supermarket car parks have also been highlighted as being hot spots for bicycle theft. The addition of more secure street furniture aimed at securing bicycles may help with reducing the risk of theft in these areas. Another example would be the expansion of the bike hangars to these areas. However, given these are more likely to be used by young people, installing secure “U-Profile” or “Sheffield” style stands would allow free bike storage to be used by all (Greater Manchester Police 2009).

Publicity of existing campaigns to reduce the risk of bicycle theft could also help reduce the risk of theft. Bike Register is a national database used by the police to track stolen bikes (<https://www.bikeregister.com>). Registration of the bike and displaying a sticker showing registration can reduce the risk of theft, especially for those stealing to joyride (Secured by Design 2022b). Registration will also allow the return of the bike, should it be found by a police officer. Publicity of this database by the council would help raise awareness and increase uptake in registration. This would help reduce crime by both impacting upon the risk of getting caught, but also reduce the resale value of the bike, meaning it is less financially beneficial to steal bikes in the area.

## **5.5 Shoplifting**

As identified within section 3.7 around 22% of all offending in Faversham is theft and the majority of these offences involve shoplifting. This study has shown that

these shoplifts largely take place within the supermarkets and not within the smaller shops within the town. As such, this limits the interventions that the Town Council can have over these offences, as these mainly occur on large privately owned sites.

Existing techniques for preventing shoplifting involve signage, restricting access to products, physical security measures, security guards and changes to shop layout. Ekblom (1997) argues that instead of attempting to enter into an “arms race” with shoplifters, we should attempt to think like a shoplifter and prevent crime before it occurs. This has resulted in research involving the perspectives of shoplifters and allowing shop owners to refine their crime prevention provisions in light of these opinions. An excellent study on this field was carried out by Lasky et al (2017) and provides a current evaluation of the state of crime prevention with regards to shoplifting.

Shoplifting poses a significant challenge for the town, as the current cost of living crisis is likely to exacerbate shoplifting rates. Shoplifting also mainly occurs only on privately owned property. This limits the level of intervention that the Town Council will be able to have and the overall impact any strategies taken will have. As such, this report proposes that the Town Council utilises their online and physical presence in order to adopt a market reduction (MR) approach to shoplifting in the town.

This approach aims to reduce the benefits of shoplifting for those attempting to steal to generate cash. By shrinking the areas that the offender can sell their stolen products, we can reduce the incentives to steal in the first place. The Town Council can utilise their online and physical presence to make residents aware of goods such as meat and clothing that may be sold in pubs and cafes by shoplifters as well as the possibility of stolen goods appearing on online platforms such as Facebook Marketplace, Gumtree and Ebay. By raising awareness that these products are stolen, the market for sales will reduce and the financial incentive for these thefts will shrink.



## **5.6 Violence**

Around 40% of monthly crime in Faversham is violent and around half of this relates to domestic abuse. Whilst crime prevention is usually aimed at changing the environment to reduce crime, there are aspects of the approach that can be applied to this form of criminality.

### **5.6.1 Violence in the night-time economy**

The drinking culture in Britain is seen as being “mixed” in that it is neither “wet” (drinking is socially integrated into all parts of daily life) nor “dry” (high levels of abstinence alongside high levels of binge drinking), meaning that binge drinking is a component of a wider drinking culture (Parker 1993). Drinking has long been established as a factor in street violence, particularly when considering violence by young men against other young men (Finney 2004). Drinking is also associated with sexual assault and other crimes against women and girls.

In terms of misuse of alcohol, it is possible to provide some crime reduction techniques that can be utilised to reduce crime within Faversham. As with shoplifting in section 5.5, much of the violence highlighted in this report is contained within private premises and as such the influence the Town Council can have on these crimes is limited.

Research from Australia (see Homel & Clark 1994) has shown that “frustrating” environments can exacerbate violence, especially when drinking. As such, locations of cash machines, taxi ranks and local takeaways can be considered as correlates with night-time violence. The pinch points for movement and service have been shown to increase chance contacts between males and therefore lead to more violence (Finney 2004). Assessing the provision for people leaving the pub, particularly in the Preston Street, West Street, East Street area could yield insight into why violent crime occurs within this area.

As shown in section 5.7 criminal damage can indicate to residents that an area is uncared for and therefore crime can occur, pubs can also indicate to patrons the levels of violence that are acceptable there. Well maintained venues are shown to reduce the levels of violence within them because they indicate that staff do

not anticipate damage to furniture caused by violence. Indicating to patrons that the pub is a family area such as through serving of food has also been shown to reduce the levels of expected violence (Finney 2004). All of these techniques are currently present within the pubs of Faversham.

Drinking games, cheap drinks and encouragement to drink to excess in establishments has also been shown to influence levels of violence, as does serving intoxicated patrons. There is no evidence to suggest that these activities are occurring in Faversham, but any reports of these kinds of activities should be considered for their influence on crime and venues that are repeatedly reported for violence should be reviewed.

### **5.6.2 *Green spaces***

The presence of green spaces has been shown to alleviate levels of violent crime, with studies showing a link between violent confrontation and access to green spaces (see Monney and Nicell 1992 & Burley 2018). Green spaces are shown to reduce stress, cognitive fatigue and promote social cohesion within urban populations. All of which help reduce levels of violence within a community, no matter to social make up or socio-economic status (Burley 2018). The mitigating effects of green spaces are shown to be even greater in groups with lower economic outcomes and as such will reduce crime in areas where the risk of crime is the highest.

Faversham already has a number of green spaces available to residents, with open recreation areas and public woods available to all. It is a recommendation of this report that access to these areas remain free and that future developments within the Faversham area consider the crime reduction properties of available green spaces.

### **5.6.3 *Domestic abuse***

As highlighted in section 3.6.1 around one in five victims in Faversham are victims of domestic abuse. Traditional crime prevention methods are largely ineffective against domestic abuse as they target public spaces and domestic abuse tends to occur in private. As such, approaches have tended to focus on

offenders through criminal sanction and rehabilitation courses or on the protection of victims through alarms and awareness schemes (Maguire et al 2017).

Faversham already has access to local community support and this serves to prevent further victimisation (Maguire et al 2017). Areas with this kind of support are shown to have a lower rate of repeat victimisation than areas where victims are unable to access community support. Victims are also shown to have a greater sense of safety the more they see a community support worker.

This support is available for residents of Swale through SATEDA (Support & Action to End Domestic Abuse), who provide support for women in the Swale area. These services are advertised to local residents within the Swale area, including Faversham.

Residents of Faversham are able to access drop-in clinics with a member of the SATEDA team at two locations: West Faversham Community Centre and Abbey Physic gardens. This has remained an in-person drop-in service and allows local women to access support in a confidential setting. Additional support services include: 1:1 support, support groups and support with legal advice and legal support for those wishing to leave an abusive relationship. Additional support is available through victim support and the local Citizens Advice Bureau, which whilst not offering tailored support to victims of domestic abuse, are involved in supporting victims through other measures.

Interviewees highlighted the need for additional support for those attempting to leave abusive relationships, with legal support highlighted as a major concern. Currently, SATEDA offers Support to Court, which provides legal support for women leaving an abusive relationship. A number of interviewees stated how valuable this service was, but also that more resources would help with running an extremely busy service.

Unfortunately, resourcing for this kind of work is limited and community groups are often underfunded and as such have to balance support levels with funds. As

was the case with other community groups interviewed, it was noted that additional funding streams are often caveated with specific considerations rather than offering additional funding that can be used by the experts where it is needed. This makes bidding for additional funding a difficult process for those local groups, as funding in a specific area may not actually produce the benefits intended and may actually require some of the core funding of the group to implement (usually through staffing).

In Faversham, support is also available from Kent Police and their specialist officers for those who are a victim of crime. There is support available for children who have witnessed domestic abuse via Operation Encompass, a national strategy designed to help identify and support children who have been victims or who have witnessed domestic abuse (Operation Encompass 2022). In the event that a child is identified as being present during an incident, Kent Police will notify a designated safeguarding lead within the child's school and this lead will offer them support and enable them to stay in school to continue studying in a safe environment. It is worth noting that domestic abuse is not solely a policing issue, with local charities, education, health and businesses involved in prevention and education surrounding domestic abuse.

There are a number of national strategies that will be available to residents of Faversham, including the "ask for Ani" and "ask for Angela" schemes. These allow victims of domestic abuse to access support within the pharmacy and pub settings by asking trained staff to speak to "Ani" (pharmacy) or Angela" (pub). Local pharmacies are also involved in the national policy of publicising domestic abuse support on the bags they use, meaning local residents are aware of support in their local area. The council could utilise their significant presence in the town centre and online to more prominently advertise local measures and to signpost victims to support services locally as residents interviewed were largely unaware of local provisions.

There are already various initiatives aimed at reducing future domestic abuse and these target women and girls who are at risk of abuse or have already been victims of abusive relationships. This is a form of crime prevention, with investment in these projects reducing the abundance of likely victims in the local

community. Interviews with local teachers highlighted the presence of domestic abuse awareness within PSHE lessons was limited and largely aimed at reducing the victimisation of young girls. Interviews with local charities indicated no local presence of domestic abuse awareness courses aimed at young boys, with the express aim of reducing future abusive behaviour. This may be something the Town Council would look to develop in conjunction with local schools and domestic abuse charities.

Kent Police are also able to help with preventing re-offending through the use of the national Sanctuary scheme. This scheme aims to help victims of abuse stay in their homes by providing them with a safe room and other features to prevent unlawful entry to a property until emergency services can arrive (Safer by Design 2022c). This helps reduce the number of repeat victims, which was identified in section 3.6.1 as an issue within the dataset.

These measures all serve to reduce the risk of domestic abuse within Faversham, but interviews with local residents showed that these services are not widely known, which limits their crime prevention capabilities. In advertising these services more widely, Faversham Town Council could take a proactive approach to domestic abuse in the town and help promote support for victims whilst helping to prevent future victimisation.

## **5.7 Criminal damage**

Criminal damage creates a number of problems for local communities. The damage caused to private property causes personal harm to victims, whilst also indicating to other local residents that criminality is present in the community and thus raising fear of crime. It also serves as an amplification for deviance, with those inclined to criminal or anti-social behaviour viewing criminal damage as a sign that the societal controls that prevent these behaviours are weaker in this area. Theorists (see Wilson & Kelling 1982 and Innes 2004) suggest that criminal damage, if unchecked will lead to further offending and even to more harmful criminal behaviour.

Historically, crime prevention has centred on the individual protecting their own property, often through increased security measures or increase surveillance

through local action such as neighbourhood watch. However, this has often served to concentrate resources within affluent areas that are likely to already have low levels of crime and anti-social behaviour (Hope 2001).

Existing advice on how to prevent crime against a property, such as through Secured by Design or the Kent Police website, advise increased security lighting, thorny bushes, anti-graffiti paint and distinct perimeters. These all serve to help prevent unauthorised access to the property and to dissuade potential offenders from attacking the property. However, these all require funds and as such are increasingly out of reach of most residents, especially given the current cost of living crisis.

As such, this serves to concentrate offending within those areas that are poorer whilst also diverting resources (such as policing) to richer areas through increased awareness of criminality (Hope 2001). If crime prevention techniques continue to be exclusively used by the wealthy, then this will have long term ramifications for the town, as outlined below.

Studies into youth offending have found that living in areas that have prevalent criminality helps to embed criminal careers, with such careers delaying desistance from crime until a later age (see Graham and Bowling 1995 and Hagan 1994). This serves to exacerbate criminality within the community, delaying improvement and creating more victims.

As such, crime prevention should take a two-pronged approach, reducing the visibility of criminality within the area so as to signal that crime is not welcome. This can be an extension of existing graffiti reporting and removal practices, preventing long term graffiti problems or repairing of vandalism in a swift manner. This serves to show that criminal damage will not be tolerated within this area and will reduce further instances of criminal damage (Innes 2004).

Support for local people to help them protect themselves and their properties is to be encouraged. This could be via awareness campaigns of crime prevention strategies, applications to national funding bodies for targeted local support,

organised community crime prevention events, or any other method of raising awareness and support for crime prevention.

Maintaining adequate street lighting will help with both personal and property security (Farrington and Welsh 2002). Regular critical assessments of the street lighting provision is also vital to ensure that the evolution of the town does not create areas that are poorly lit as this will encourage crime.

Faversham Town Council should give thought to providing more in-depth crime prevention materials on its website, through its social media presence and in physical leaflets and letters. These would serve to make the crime prevention message clear to residents and would help direct them to services that could support them with installation of crime prevention materials.

Secondly, outreach work needs to be undertaken with young people who are at risk of elongated offending careers. This is already being undertaken by the West Faversham Community Centre, with good role models, support structures and community engagement being part of their provision. This activity will have long-term benefits for the town, with criminal careers shortened or even avoided by these interventions. Further support for these activities will help to reduce crime in the area in the long term.

### **5.8 Further crime reduction**

Support for crime reduction is available from both the Community Safety Unit based in Swale Borough Council, but also the designing out crime team at Kent Police. Both of these groups have access to current crime data and are able to advise on the crime problems in Faversham as well as potential prevention methods for these issues.

There are also funds and schemes that the Town Council can apply for to help with crime prevention in the area. Examples of these funds and schemes are:

- The Park Mark scheme - assesses the safety of car parks in the local area, offering advice and guidance on how to reduce crime within the specific car parks being assessed.
- The Safer Streets Fund – particularly focussed on crimes against women and girls, but encourages bids from any projects that reduce neighbourhood crime.
- Pubwatch – a national organisation that encourages local pubs to work together to reduce anti-social behaviour and violence. In talking to local pubs, there is a Pubwatch working in Faversham but this could be reinvigorated as it was not felt that it was widely monitored by all pubs.
- Police and Crime Commissioner grants – these grants are issued to community safety partnerships that demonstrate they provide benefits in line with the Safer in Kent plan.

It is recommended that the Town Council dedicates a member to work with the designing out crime team, so that each year the needs of the town can be evaluated and a rolling plan for improvements can be devised.

## **6 SUMMARY**

Most of the crime in Faversham falls into one of three categories:

- Violence
- Theft
- Criminal Damage

These crimes pose a long-term threat to the safety of the town as they can cause the embedding of criminal attitudes and networks as well as causing fear of crime.

The perception of residents interviewed is that Faversham is a safe place to live, with improvements being made on safety from a decade ago. Local small businesses also report being unaffected by crime, but larger businesses within the town have been shown to have problems with shoplifting.



Domestic abuse causes one in five victimisations within the town and whilst there are strong local services, more can be done to reduce the risk of violence to women and girls. The cost of living crisis and a decade of reduced funding have placed these essential services under strain.

By adopting a crime prevention approach, Faversham Town Council could reduce the risk of crime within the town. Changes to the environment are shown to reduce the risk of crime and could have a material impact upon fear of crime among residents.

### **6.1 Recommendations**

- Greater visibility for victim support services including domestic abuse services – The Town Council to use their physical and online presence to advertise services available within the town that can help victims of crime.
- Funding – when considering funding for additional projects, consider whether this could be less specific in application, as broader briefs allow for local services to apply their knowledge to the proposals.
- Support for storing food/consumables for domestic abuse services – food parcels and consumables are valuable resources for victims attempting to leave abusive partners. Storage of these donations can be difficult for local support services who have limited space. The Town Council could use some of their storage space to assist with this.
- Investigate the processes and funding required to set up an education programme for schools in the local area targeting young boys and their attitudes to relationships and abuse.
- Extra support for the support to court service run by SATEDA in order to increase the number of women it can support.
- Develop a working relationship with the designing out crime team at Kent Police to help provide up to date assessments of issues within the town and solutions to these problems.
- Investigate the benefits of new initiatives to prevent crime within the town:
  - The reintroduction of the store radio system
  - Expansion of street bike hangars

- Pubwatch - discuss with local pub owners the value and benefits of Pubwatch or whether a different approach would better serve their needs
- Lighting in Faversham Recreation Ground and maintenance of street lighting.
- Gaining Park Mark accreditation for local car parks.

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