



Somerset

**Violence  
Reduction  
Partnership**



# Somerset Youth Violence Hotspots

A Somerset Violence Reduction Partnership Problem Solving Plan

PS Charmaine Dyne, Early Intervention Team

# The Early Intervention Team

- ▶ Identify children at risk of serious youth violence and or exploitation using police and partner data.
- ▶ Share information and work with partner agencies.
- ▶ Identify gaps in provision.
- ▶ Global offer.
- ▶ Groups – locations.

# Overview

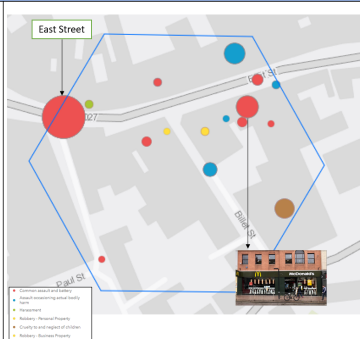
- ▶ East Street, Taunton and 3 adjoining areas in Bridgwater town centre were identified as the top hotspots for 'under 18's being a victim or offender of non-domestic violence' across Somerset
- ▶ Targeted problem-solving plans have been in place for these areas since Summer 2023 (July/August)
- ▶ Focus on reducing the impact of violence on children in the identified hotspots
- ▶ Primary objective was to reduce the frequency of violence involving under 18's in the hotspot areas
- ▶ Secondary objective was to reduce the harm\* associated with under 18's violence in the hotspot areas

*This area of Taunton, which includes East Street, has been identified as a persistent hotspot for youth violence within Avon and Somerset. Out of 143,000 hotspots, it has been ranked as the 7<sup>th</sup> most violent area in relation to youth violence. It is likely a problem-solving approach targeting this area will have a positive impact in reducing violent crime.*

East Street is located in the Town Centre and is a busy location with many retail stores and food outlets. It is highly likely violence is being fuelled by existing tensions between local youths which may escalate into physical violence given the high chance of individuals meeting each other in the street.

McDonalds, located on East Street, is a popular location for young people to hang out. It is likely groups congregating at this location is a contributing factor towards violence and possible that anti-social behaviour is leading to heightened tensions which results in the use of violence.

This area of Taunton is currently patrolled under Op Habit. The existing pulse patrols are unlikely to be having a positive impact on youth violence with both crime count and crime harm increasing. An alternative problem-solving approach is therefore needed in this area.

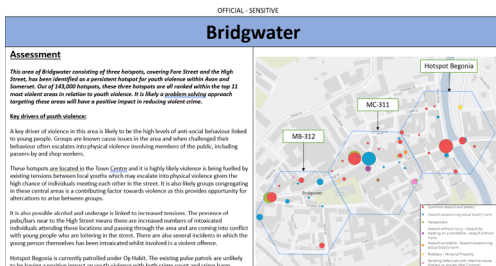


Produced by: HotSpot Analytical Team

Where (Top Problem Location)	East Street	McDonalds
Who	Where known, offenders are primarily aged 14-15 and 57% are female. Victims are primarily aged 14-16 and 59% are female.  There are no repeat offenders/victims linked to multiple offences in the same area.  Offenders are commonly known to police for drugs and ASB.	Where known, offenders are most commonly aged 16 and 66% are female. Victims are primarily aged 13-14 and 83% are male.  18% of individuals have been involved in more than one incident at this location.  Offenders are commonly known to police for drugs and ASB, and have been linked to missing persons reports.
When	Incidents predominantly take place Saturday. They most commonly take place in the evenings (18:00 to 22:00) but there is a smaller peak in the afternoon (14:00 to 17:00).	Incidents predominantly take place at Weekends. They most commonly take place on Saturdays afternoons (13:00 to 16:00) / evenings (17:00 to 23:00) and Sunday afternoons (15:00 – 17:00).
What	There are no seasonal variation in offending.  The majority of offences are either assaults occasioning actual bodily harm or common assault.  57% of offences involve those in groups. In 79% of offences, the victim/offender are known to each other. The remaining offences are between strangers.	Offending is more common in the Autumn/Winter months.  The majority of offences are either assaults occasioning actual bodily harm or common assault.  62% of offences involve those in groups. Similarly, in 62% of offences the victim/offender are known to each other. The remaining offences are between strangers.
Why	The majority of incidents include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Altercations between people or groups with existing tensions which have escalated when they've encountered each other in the street.</li> <li>• Unprovoked attacks.</li> </ul> <p>East Street is a central location with a high number of dogs and food outlets which attracts large footfall. This location means there is a higher chance of people with existing tensions encountering one another.</p>	The majority of incidents include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Altercations between groups of youths both inside and outside of McDonalds.</li> <li>• Incidents with members of the public, including other customers and security as this often stems from racial / cultural differences.</li> <li>• Altercations between individuals with existing tensions between them.</li> </ul> <p>McDonalds has become a popular place for young people to hangout. It is viewed as a 'safe space' for them to socialise as it provides shelter, cheap food and facilities including toilets and free Wi-Fi.</p>
How (MOs)	Incidents are mostly sporadic and unplanned. The majority of offences involve physical assaults, with the most common method being punching and grabbing.	Incidents are mostly sporadic and unplanned. The majority of offences involve physical assaults, with the most common method being punching, pushing and grabbing. There are also several incidents in which food items have been thrown.

# Initial Analysis

- ▶ 7<sup>th</sup> highest area for violence involving children
- ▶ Predominately female, 14-16years
- ▶ Saturdays, 1300-2300
- ▶ Limited repeat offenders at location
- ▶ Commonly known for drugs/ASB
- ▶ Offenders at McDonalds linked to Misper reports
- ▶ Majority involve groups and victim/offender are known to each other
- ▶ Existing tensions
- ▶ McDonalds ASB
- ▶ Sporadic, unplanned, not involving weapons



OFFICIAL - SENSITIVE

Hotspot MC-311 & MB-312 (High Street, Bridgwater)		Produced by: HotSpot Analytical Team
<b>who</b>	Where known, both victims and offenders are predominantly male and are primarily aged 14-17. 27% of individuals have been involved in more than one violent incident.	
<b>where (Problem Location)</b>	70% of offences are linked to the same network via accessories/offences. They are commonly known to police for ASB.	
<b>when</b>	Incidents are fairly evenly spread throughout the week. They most commonly take place after school hours (14:00 - 18:00) and in the evenings (19:00 - 00:00).	
<b>what (Main Issue)</b>	Offending is typically low intensity in the winter months (January - March). The majority of offences are either assaults occasioning actual bodily harm or common assault.	
<b>why</b>	62% of offences involve those in groups. In 53% of offences, the victim/offender are known to each other. The remaining offences are between strangers.	
<b>how (MIX)</b>	This area of Bridgwater is linked to a wide range of incidents, however the most common incidents include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Young people involved in altercations with intoxicated members of the public.</li> <li>Young people engaging in risk taking behaviour with members of the public.</li> <li>Large scale disorder involving groups of youths fighting.</li> <li>Altercations between groups and individuals who have existing tensions.</li> </ul> <p>The High Street is the main area for offending. This is a busy area with a large presence of shops, food outlets and public houses, attracting high footfall and is in close proximity to a large open space on the grounds of St Mary's Church. This provides opportunity for young people to gather in large groups and increase the chance of individuals with existing tensions meeting with one another. The presence of minor public houses also means intoxicated people are likely to be seen through the area.</p> <p>Incidents are mostly sporadic and unplanned. The majority of offences involve physical assault, with the most common method being punching.</p> <p>Weapons are rarely used.</p>	

OFFICIAL - SENSITIVE

Hotspot Begonia (Eastover, Bridgwater)		Produced by: HotSpot Analytical Team
<b>who</b>	Where known, offenders are mostly male (80%) and are primarily aged 13-14. Victims are also predominantly male (70%) and are primarily aged 15-16.	
<b>where (Problem Location)</b>	70% of offences have been involved in more than one violent incident.	
<b>when</b>	70% of offences are linked to the same network via accessories/offences. They are commonly known to police for ASB, drugs and weapons.	
<b>what (Main Issue)</b>	Incidents predominantly take place on Saturdays. They most commonly take place in the evenings (22:00 to 01:00) but there is also a smaller peak in the late afternoon (16:00 - 18:00).	
<b>why</b>	There are no significant seasonal variations in crime levels.	
<b>how (MIX)</b>	The majority of offences are either assaults occasioning actual bodily harm or common assault.	
<b>who</b>	62% of offences involve those in groups. In 39% of offences, the victim/offender are known to each other. The remaining offences are between strangers.	
<b>why</b>	The majority of offences include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Groups of young people targeting other young people known to them, either individually or as part of a group, due to ongoing issues/tensions.</li> <li>Groups of young people targeting other young people who have existing tensions with members of the public.</li> <li>Groups of youths fighting someone to each other fighting in the street.</li> <li>Unprovoked attacks.</li> </ul> <p>24% of offences involve alcohol. This includes young people underage drinking and altercations with intoxicated members of the public.</p> <p>Fore Street is the main area for offending. This is a pedestrianised area with a large presence of shops which attracts large footfall. Fore Street joins onto Eastover and Salcombe Parade which are also linked to high levels of walking. This town centre location provides opportunity for youths to gather and become in large groups, as well as a high chance of individuals with existing tensions meeting with one another.</p> <p>Incidents are mostly sporadic and unplanned. The majority of offences involve physical assault, with the most common method being punching and kicking.</p> <p>Weapons are rarely used, however in the few offences where knives have been used. There is also mention of bladed or several incidents which have either been used to facilitate the assault or used by the suspect to get away from the location.</p>	

# Initial Analysis

- ▶ All areas within the top 11 for violence involving for children
- ▶ High Street, Cornhill, St Mary Street, Fore Street

Throughout week 1600-1800 and 1900-0000

Predominantly Male, 14-17

74% of offenders linked to same network

Majority involve Groups and victim/offenders known to each other

Altercations with intoxicated adults - ASB - Large scale disorders - existing tensions

- ▶ Eastover

Saturdays 2200-0100 and 1600-1800

Predominantly male - aged 13-14 - 74% of offenders linked to the same network

Majority Involve Groups

39% previously known to each other

Existing tensions - ASB - Unprovoked attacks - 24% involve alcohol - Sporadic - unplanned

## Youth Survey

- ▶ Over 1200 Surveys completed by children and young people
- ▶ Only 10% had been a victim or offender
- ▶ Only 18% had reported the incident to police
- ▶ Concerned re threats posed by adults as much as other children
- ▶ Want more information about what to do if see or are involved in a violent incident
- ▶ Feel this should be in schools
- ▶ Police - Teachers - Parents should be sharing this information
- ▶ CCTV - Street Lighting - Community Guardians - Supervised spaces

# Responses

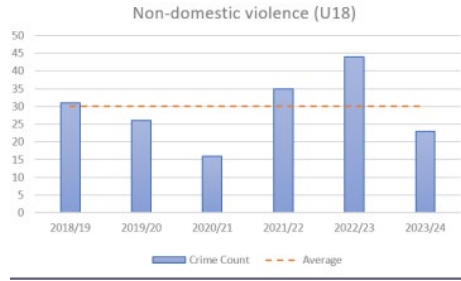
- ▶ Hotspot Patrols and Neighbourhood Policing
- ▶ Education;
  - ▶ Collaborate Digital - designed with YP in schools. Key stages 3, 4 and 5  
Rolled out across rest of Somerset via PHSE
  - ▶ Beyond Equality - Positive Masculinity - in 3 schools -  
Pilot - toolkit for wider Somerset schools
- ▶ Under reporting - Promoted Fearless (newsletters, leaflets, websites)
- ▶ ASB leaflet for Town Centre areas - ASB and links to Violence - Shared widely
- ▶ Social environment - Bystander Training for local businesses
- ▶ Built environment - ongoing
- ▶ Diversion/enforcement for street community - Local Council and Policing
- ▶ Community Guardians - delegated to local councils to deliver via Street Wardens
- ▶ Web page [Town centre safety and young people \(somerset.gov.uk\)](https://www.somerset.gov.uk/town-centre-safety-and-young-people)
- ▶ Youth Hubs

# Highlight Youth Hubs - Young Somerset

- ▶ Saturdays 1500-1700, McDonalds, East St, Taunton.
- ▶ Fridays 1500-1700, Coffee #1, Fore Street, Bridgwater - soon to move
- ▶ Improved community cohesion and crime reduction by engaging children in dialog and constructive activities.
- ▶ Safe space for collaboration between children and the wider community.
- ▶ Engaged with over 1800 children and young people.
- ▶ Advice - Signposting - Surveys to get children and young people to think about their safety
- ▶ Neighbourhood Policing Team drop in
- ▶ Positive feedback from customer and staff
- ▶ Free McDonalds drinks voucher



# Data as of April 2024 (August 2023-March 2024)



Hotspot	Location	Hexagon	Average	Actual	Change
East Street	Taunton	KP-375	10	3	-7
Eastover	Bridgwater	MD-311	9	6	-3
High St	Bridgwater	MC-311	8	8	0
High St	Bridgwater	MB-312	3	6	3
TOTAL			30	23	-7

- ▶ Violent crime involving under 18's for the 2023/24 period fell to below the 5-year average and is the lowest since 2020/21 (when there were lockdowns in the UK).
- ▶ The hotspots with a decrease in crime were also subject to regular patrols under Op HABIT.
- ▶ McDonalds is only linked to one offence compared to the average of 5.
- ▶ Despite overall reduction in violent offences, there was a slight increase in overall harm.
- ▶ All hotspots saw a decrease apart High St/St Marys St, Bridgwater which saw an increase which drove overall increase in harm.

# Data as of July 2024 (August 2023 - July 2024)

CRIME COUNT				
Hotspot	Location	Hexagon	Change (%)	Change (n)
East Street	Taunton	KP-375	-50%	-5
Eastover	Bridgwater	MD-311	25%	2
High St	Bridgwater	MC-311	37.5%	3
High St	Bridgwater	MB-312	25%	1

CRIME HARM SCORE				
Hotspot	Location	Hexagon	Change (%)	Change (n)
East Street	Taunton	KP-375	78%	-1312
Eastover	Bridgwater	MD-311	33%	273
High St	Bridgwater	MC-311	-33%	-644
High St	Bridgwater	MB-312	47%	175

- 12% reduction in the number of offences in 2023/24, across the areas compared to the previous two years.

- Harm associated with violent crime was reduced by around a third when compared to the previous two years.

- Taunton hotspot saw the greatest reduction in youth violence, both in terms of crime count and crime harm.

- Offending at/outside McDonalds remained low, despite it being a problematic location in previous years.

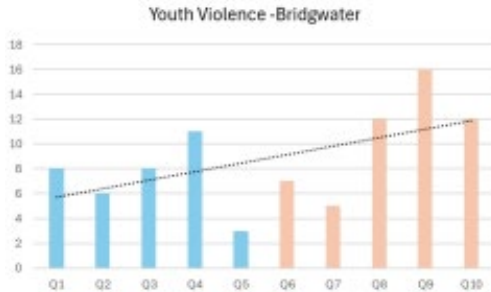
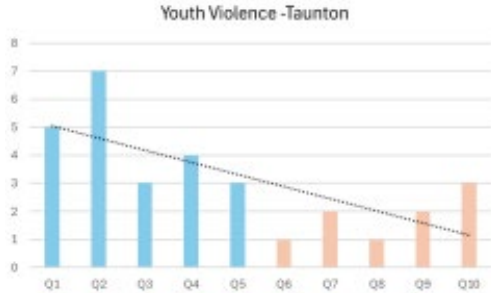
- The Bridgwater hotspots all saw small increases in offending (1-3 crimes)

- The number of children involved in violence across the hotspots were reduced by 25% in 2023/24 compared to previous years.

- Fewer children involved in violence in Taunton, whereas in Bridgwater it remained broadly the same.

- Across the wider beat areas, the number of children involved in violence remained broadly the same.

# Data as of November 2024 Crime Count



\*The period under review is August 2023 to October 2024 (15 months). The data has been split into three-month blocks and has been compared to figures for the previous 15 months

- ▶ Violent crime affecting under 18's has decreased by 59% in the Taunton hotspot.
- ▶ Bridgwater hotspots have seen a 44% increase.
- ▶ Across three hotspots in the control area, where there was no targeted intervention, violent crime affecting under 18's increased by 30%.
- ▶ In the Avon and Somerset Force area, violent crime affecting under 18's increased by 12%.
- ▶ In Taunton, all violent crime has gone up by 13%, whereas violent crime affecting under 18's has decreased.

# Crime Harm

Location	Before Intervention	% of days	Post Intervention	% of days
Taunton	21	5%	9	2%
Bridgwater	33	7%	43	9%
Control Area	43	9%	55	12%

The average harm score (per offence) in the Taunton hotspot has decreased by 56%. This reflects an overall decrease in harm of 81%.

The average harm score (per offence) and the overall harm score for the Bridgwater Hotspots has increased by 65%.

The harm associated with violence involving U18's across the force has also decreased by 15%.

# Days with a violent crime

Taunton hotspot - fewer days in which a violent crime took place - decreased from 5% to 2%.

Bridgwater Hotspots - More days with a violent crime - increased from 7% to 9%.

Control area, where there was no targeted intervention, had a 3% increase in the number of days with a violent crime.

Location	Before Intervention	% of days	Post Intervention	% of days
Taunton	21	5%	9	2%
Bridgwater	33	7%	43	9%
Control Area	43	9%	55	12%

# Numbers of Children

- ▶ Reduction in the number of children linked to violence in the Taunton hotspot.
- ▶ Increase in the number of children linked to violence in the Bridgwater hotspot. 17% of those involved were linked to violence offences before and after problem-solving began.

Location	Before Intervention	Average Age	Post Intervention	Average Age
Taunton	32	14	11	15
Bridgwater	43	14.5	54	15
Control Area	56	15	89	14.5

# Crime Displacement

- ▶ 69% reduction in violent crime affecting under 18's, in the 100m surrounding the Taunton hotspot, suggesting crime was not displaced.
- ▶ 200% increase in the areas surrounding the hotspot in Bridgwater.

# Conclusion

- ▶ Objectives of reducing violent crime affecting under 18's and the associated harm in Taunton area was met.
- ▶ Fewer children are becoming involved in violence in the area.
- ▶ No evidence to suggest that the crime was displaced.
- ▶ Increases in both volume and harm in Bridgwater.
- ▶ It is possible that a small group of persistent offenders are driving violence involving u18's in the Bridgwater area.
- ▶ There has been positive feedback from partners and the community.
- ▶ Work Highlighted by HMICFRS.

# Learning



- ▶ Need for clearly defined location/focus.
- ▶ Need for early engagement of partners.
- ▶ Communicating work to partners is more challenging than you know.

# Moving forward

Continuance of Hotpot Patrols.

Developed resources for schools, leaflets and website to remain.

Learning shared and being adopted elsewhere.

Highlight Youth Hubs will continue and expand across Somerset to East Somerset. Partners and Services are invited to join us.



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**Thank you to everyone that has  
taken part in and supported this  
initiative**



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