

# CHAPTER 4 - STRONG, SAFE & COHESIVE COMMUNITIES

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## Included in this section

- Tackling the ASB and crime that matter most to our local communities
- Reducing the impact of crime on the vulnerable
- Preventing serious crime
- Preventing domestic abuse
- Reducing youth offending
- Creating a strong and effective third sector
- Promoting participation in cultural activities and raising aspirations

## Further reading

A Safer & Stronger Staffordshire, 2008/09

The Impact of Recession on Safer & Stronger Communities, 2009/10

Road Traffic Casualties in Staffordshire 2007

Our Shared Future: Community Cohesion in Staffordshire (March 2008)

Community Safety Partnership Strategic Assessments 2009

A Profile of Poverty and Financial Inclusion in Staffordshire 2009

## Future reading

A Safer & Stronger Staffordshire Strategic Assessment 2009

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## Key Findings

- Anti-social behaviour is the top priority issue for the residents of Staffordshire.
  - Just over a quarter of respondents to the Staffordshire Place Survey feel that the police and local council are dealing with the crime and anti-social behaviour that matters to them in their area.
  - There is a direct correlation between areas with high levels of deprivation and areas with high levels of crime. One in 5 crimes recorded across the County during 2008/09 occurred within an area in the top 20% most deprived nationally.
  - The gap between the highest and the lowest crime areas is reducing.
  - The most disproportionate group of victims is young males aged between 16 and 25 years. The rate of victimisation within this demographic group is twice as high as may be expected based on the population of Staffordshire.
  - Analysis of road traffic collisions has identified three key vulnerable groups; children, young people (16 to 25 years) and motorcyclists.
  - Serious violent crime and acquisitive crime has remained fairly static during 2008/09, although the impact of the recession may cause certain types of crime to increase over the next 12 months.
  - During 2008/09, just over 28% of referrals to MARAC had been reviewed previously.
  - The Community Resolution Initiative has significantly reduced the number of first time entrants to the Youth Justice System, although the current recession may make it harder for young offenders to find suitable education, training or employment.
  - 18.8% of respondents to the Staffordshire Place Survey had taken part in formal volunteering at least once a month during the previous 12 month period.
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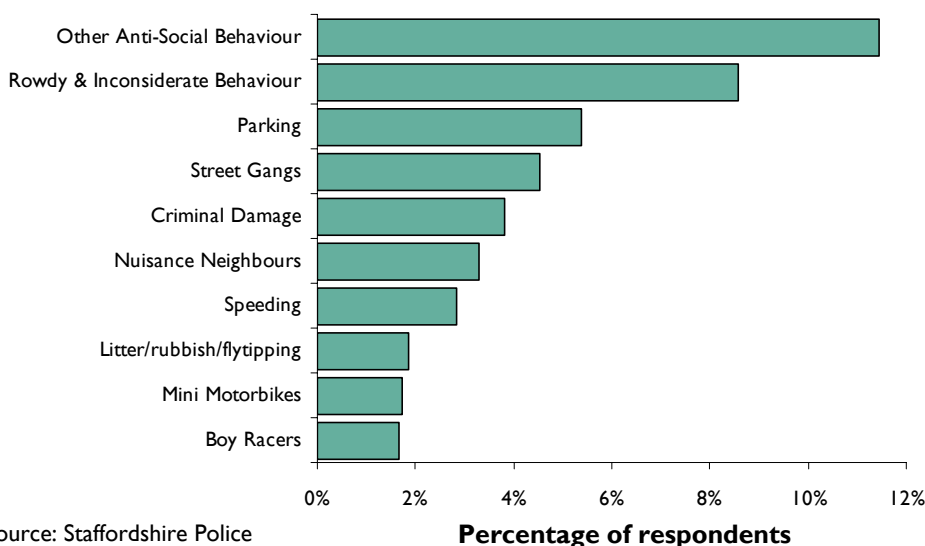
## 4.1 Tackling the anti-social behaviour and crime that matter most to our local communities

Tackling crime and anti-social behaviour is one of the public’s top areas of concern, regardless of age, gender or ethnicity and is of equal significance whether people live within a rural parish of Staffordshire or in a more urban environment. This reflects the significantly damaging effect that these issues can have on people’s quality of life which can undermine the social fabric of an area, the level of confidence that people have in their elected representatives and their public services, and significantly damage their sense of well-being.

The Place Survey 2008/09 for Staffordshire identified that the level of crime (63% of respondents) and clean streets (49% of respondents) were the two most important factors in making somewhere a good place to live.

Citizen Contact Records (CCRs) conducted by Staffordshire Police ask respondents to name the top priority community safety issue in their local area. Interestingly, over a third of respondents stated that there were no issues of concern in their local area. The following graph shows the top 10 issues highlighted by respondents in Staffordshire between June 2008 and April 2009.

**Figure 4.1 - Top 10 issues (excluding ‘no issues’) raised through CCRs in Staffordshire, Jun-08 to Apr-09**



Source: Staffordshire Police

Within the top ten issues raised, only one is a crime (criminal damage), with all other issues relating to types of anti-social or nuisance behaviour. In total, just over 37% of respondents highlighted an anti-social behaviour issue as their top priority (57% of the total if those answering ‘no issues’ are removed).

Dealing with local concerns about anti-social behaviour and crime by the police and local public services (National Indicator 21) is a priority for Staffordshire County and is included within the current Local Area Agreement. Delivery of this outcome is dependent on partnership working with local agencies and can measure, to some extent, confidence in local agencies to tackle community safety issues that matter to local people. It is an indicator of people’s views about those issues which are important to their quality of life. Results obtained from the Place Survey for Staffordshire County highlight that 25.5% of respondents felt that the police and local public services were dealing with the anti-social behaviour and crime issues that matter in their local area. Older respondents and females are more likely to agree that issues are being dealt with, along with people who are satisfied with how the council runs things.

**Table 4.1 - Percentage of respondents who agree that the police and local public services are dealing with crime and anti-social behaviour, by satisfaction with how the council runs things**

	Satisfaction with how the council runs things			
	Base	Satisfied	Neither	Dissatisfied
Agree	25.5%	42.8%	16.1%	10.4%
Neither	29.9%	22.8%	41.2%	22.2%
Disagree	25.7%	16.8%	24.3%	53.9%
Don't know	18.9%	17.6%	18.4%	13.4%

Source: The Place Survey 2008/09, Staffordshire County results

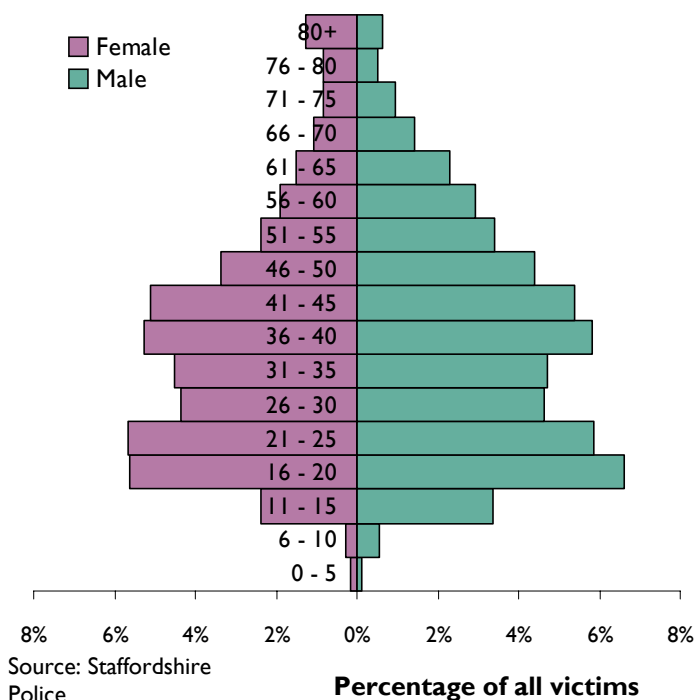
Interestingly, nearly half of respondents were sitting on the fence, answering ‘neither agree or disagree’ or ‘don’t know’. Further consultation is being undertaken in partnership with Staffordshire Police, to understand why a large proportion of respondents have no significant views.

## 4.2 Reducing the impact of crime on the vulnerable

Recorded crime in Staffordshire has shown significant long-term reductions. The rate of crime has decreased by 18% over the last 5 years, equal to around 12,000 fewer victims of crime. During 2008/09 there were 67.4 crimes recorded per 1,000 residents in Staffordshire, which is below the rate recorded across both the West Midlands Region and England & Wales, and represents a decrease of 6% (3,529 crimes) when compared with the previous year.

Analysis of the Indices of Deprivation 2007<sup>1</sup> highlights a direct and significant correlation between areas with high levels of deprivation and high levels of crime. One in 5 crimes recorded across the county during 2008/09 occurred within an area in the top 20% most deprived nationally, although these areas contain less than 9% of the Staffordshire population. However, the gap between the highest and the lowest crime areas is reducing. During 2008/09 there was a difference of 224.5 crimes per 1,000 residents between the rate of crime recorded in the 50 most deprived Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) and 50 least deprived LSOAs; this is a reduction of 4% when compared with the previous year.

**Figure 4.2 - Age and gender profile of victims recorded in Staffordshire (where details known), 2008/09**



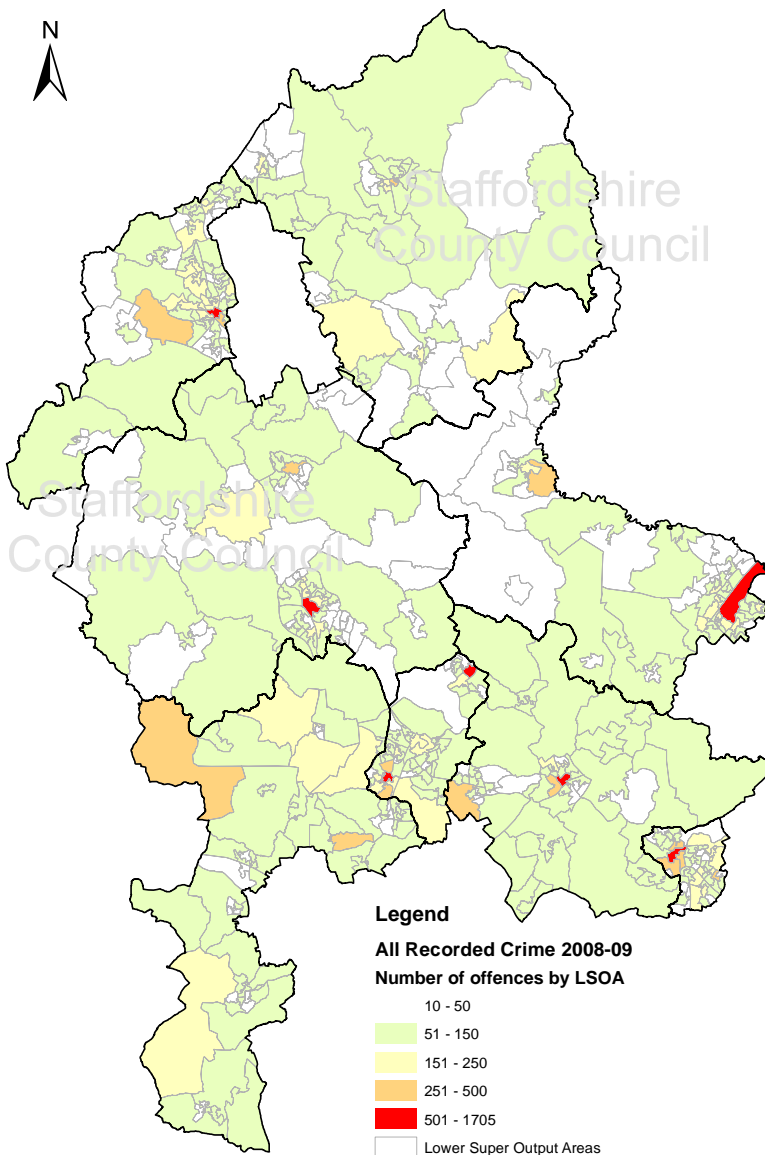
Levels of victimisation also vary considerably by age and gender. The most disproportionate group of victims is young males aged between 16 and 25 years. The rate of victimisation within this demographic group is twice as high as may be expected based on the population of Staffordshire. Higher than average victimisation is also experienced by young females between the age of 21 and 25 years.

The most vulnerable groups vary by crime type. For example, males between the age of 18 and 25 are most likely to experience violent crimes, females are more often victims of domestic abuse than males, and older females above the age of 75 years are most vulnerable to distraction burglary. Understanding the most vulnerable groups of society for each of the priority issues in Staffordshire is important in order to prevent crime and reduce repeat victimisation.

<sup>1</sup> Source: The English Indices of Deprivation 2007, Communities and Local Government <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/indicesdeprivation07>

Analysis of road traffic collisions in Staffordshire has highlighted three key vulnerable groups: children below the age of 16 years (as passengers, pedestrians and cyclists), young people aged between 16 and 25 years and motorcyclists. The number of children killed or seriously injured in Staffordshire has decreased by 19% during 2008 when compared with the previous year, to 17 casualties - the lowest number recorded in over 20 years. The number of casualties aged between 16 and 25 years has also seen a considerable reduction, with 256 fewer casualties (reduction of 18%) recorded during 2008; although this age group still accounts for almost a third of all casualties recorded. The number of motorcycle casualties recorded has fallen by a total of 10%, although the number killed or seriously injured has decreased at a much higher rate, with 63 casualties recorded during 2008 compared with 83 in the previous year (a reduction of 25%).

**Figure 4.3 - Distribution of crime across Staffordshire County by Lower Super Output Area, 2008/09**



The majority of Staffordshire's residents experience very low levels of crime, however certain areas record a relatively high concentration of offences. The map in figure 4.3 shows the distribution of crime across Staffordshire by LSOA, and highlights areas where the number of crimes recorded is considerably high when compared with other areas. Nine out of the top ten LSOAs are all within town or city centres, and crime recorded in these ten areas accounts for 16% of the County total. It is important to remember that crime is more likely to occur in town centres due to high concentrations of people and a large proportion of victims may live outside of the area.

The level of crime recorded shows considerable variations between urban and rural parts of the county. The rate of crime recorded in urban areas is 73.8 per 1,000 population, compared with 49.5 across all rural areas. The level of crime recorded in urban areas is 9% higher than would be expected if crime was proportionately distributed across rural and urban areas.

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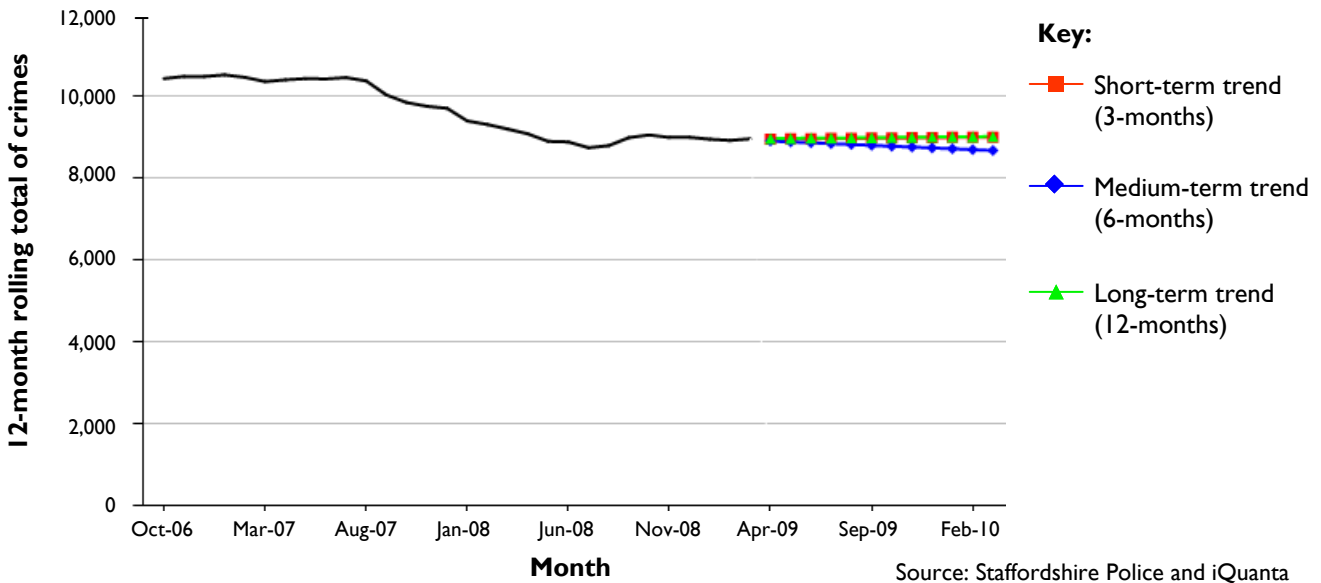
### 4.3 Preventing serious crime

Serious acquisitive crime<sup>2</sup> (National Indicator 16) made up 16% of recorded crime in Staffordshire during 2008/09 and therefore represents a significant proportion of all crime. The level of offences recorded has remained fairly static at around 10.8 per 1,000 residents, decreasing by just 2% over the last 12 months. The most prevalent type of serious acquisitive crime is theft from motor vehicles, although this has decreased at a slightly higher rate than other types of acquisitive crime (reduction of 3% over the last 12 months).

Although there have been long-term reductions in serious acquisitive crime, the rate of reduction is beginning to slow down. Research commissioned by the Home Office in 1999 revealed that rates of property crime growth are closely tied to economic growth; when consumption is growing quickly, property crime growth tends to slow down or reverse and the opposite is true during economic recession. The explanation for this is one of motivation - as people feel better off, as indicated by their spending, they are less likely to be attracted to criminal methods of obtaining goods.<sup>3</sup>

The following graph shows that the projected direction of travel for the next 12 months is fairly constant, based on the last 3, 6 and 12 months performance. Acquisitive crime may increase further over the next 12 months due to the impact of the recession.

Figure 4.4 - Serious acquisitive crime trend and projection October 2006 to March 2009



There are proven links between serious acquisitive crime and prolific offending. The majority of prolific offenders have dependencies on drugs and/or alcohol and as such commit acquisitive crimes in order to feed their addiction. In order to reduce serious acquisitive crime across Staffordshire, a strong emphasis must be placed on targeting substance misuse within the offending community, particularly the most prolific and priority offenders.

Most serious violent crime<sup>4</sup> (National Indicator 15) is a much lower volume crime category, accounting for just 0.5% of all recorded crime in Staffordshire during 2008/09, equal to rate of 0.3 per 1,000 residents. Staffordshire County has also recorded the second lowest rate of serious violent crime in the West Midlands. Despite the low volume of offences, serious violent crime can have a

<sup>2</sup> Serious acquisitive crime (National Indicator 16) includes Theft from Motor Vehicles, Theft of Motor Vehicles, Burglary of Dwellings (including attempted offences) and Robbery of Personal and Business Property.

<sup>3</sup> Trends in Crime Revisited (Home Office Research Study 195) <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs/hors195.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Most serious violent crime (National Indicator 15) includes murder and attempted murder, manslaughter, wounding, grievous bodily harm and death by dangerous driving.

significant impact on victims and communities, and contributes to people’s perceptions of crime and feelings of safety. Over a quarter of serious violent crime occurred in town or city centres, suggesting a link with the night-time economy and specifically alcohol related offending. However, there is also a link with domestic abuse as around a fifth of all serious violent crime recorded during 2008/09 was domestic related.

**Table 4.2 - Categories of violent crime recorded in Staffordshire, 2008/09**

<b>Violent Crime Category</b>	<b>Number of Crimes</b>	<b>Percentage of total Violence</b>
Assault with Less Serious Violence	5,929	43.8%
Assault without Injury	3,421	25.3%
Other Violence against the Person	3,247	24.0%
Sexual Offences	663	4.9%
Most Serious Violent Crime	281	2.1%
<b>Total Violence</b>	<b>13,541</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: Staffordshire Police

Most serious violent crime made up just 2.1% of all violence recorded in Staffordshire during 2008/09, with the majority of offences involving less serious injury or no injury at all. By targeting the most serious violent crimes, the LAA partnership seeks to significantly reduce levels of overall violence within Staffordshire. It is largely only the level of injury that is the

determining factor between whether an offence falls within the ‘serious violent crime’ category or not, with all other circumstances of the offence being identical to the much greater volume of assaults with less or no injury. As such, delivery plans to tackle this issue address all aspects of violent crime, including those ‘lower level’ categories which, if left, have the potential to escalate into more serious offences.

#### **4.4 Preventing domestic abuse and reducing its impact on individuals and families**

Domestic abuse has been identified as a priority for Staffordshire and all eight Community Safety Partnerships across the County, due to the acknowledgement that this type of crime can seriously affect the lives of victims and their families. During 2008/09 there were 3,893 domestic violent crimes recorded in Staffordshire, although national research indicates that in reality this figure is likely to be much higher as many offences go unreported.

The dot-plot in figure 4.5 shows the level of domestic violent crime recorded in each Staffordshire district, measured as a rate per 1,000 residents. It is apparent that this rate varies considerably by district, as does the change recorded between 2007/08 and 2008/09. During 2007/08, Tamworth, Cannock Chase and Staffordshire Moorlands all recorded a rate of offences that is above the Staffordshire average (4.7 per 1,000 population). Staffordshire Moorlands also recorded the biggest increase in domestic violent crimes, however this is not necessarily a negative result as partnership awareness raising initiatives may lead to an increase in victims reporting abuse for the first time.

**Figure 4.5 - Domestic violent crime recorded by local authority district, rate per 1,000 population 2007/08 and 2008/09**



Source: Staffordshire Police

**Table 4.3 - Summary of domestic abuse cases referred to MARAC and IDVA in Staffordshire, 2008/09**

	2008/09 Total
Number of MARAC Cases	643
Number of MARAC Repeats	182
<b>Percentage of MARAC Repeats (NI32)</b>	<b>28.2%</b>
Number of Children Subject to MARAC	978
Percentage of cases referred by police	83.4%
Number of referrals to IDVA service	413
Percentage of referrals high/very high risk	81.8%
Percentage of referrals engaging with service	65.1%

Source: Staffordshire Police and IDVA services

Initiatives to target domestic abuse in Staffordshire are strongly linked to plans aimed at reducing repeat victimisation through Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC). The aim of MARAC is to jointly construct and implement a risk management plan that provides professional support for those most at risk. This in turn reduces the risk of harm and consequently repeat victimisation. During 2008/09 there were 643 cases reviewed at MARAC across Staffordshire and 182 had been reviewed within the previous 12 months, resulting in a repeat rate of 28.2% (National Indicator 32). Domestic abuse affects whole families as well as individuals, and over the last 12 months the MARAC process has identified 978 children as being in the household (roughly 1.5 children per case).

MARACs and Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs) have been highlighted as the central focus for action to address domestic abuse in the coming years, along with the continued development of Specialist Domestic Violence Courts (SDVC).

Over the last 12 months, 413 referrals have been made to the IDVA services across Staffordshire, with 82% of these being identified as high or very high risk. Less than 1% of the individuals referred to an IDVA were male.

The recession may also have an indirect effect on the level of domestic abuse occurring across Staffordshire. Unemployment and increasing financial pressure may lead to family breakdown and the potential for domestic abuse. Relate, Britain's largest relationship counselling service, has identified a rise in couples seeking help over the last few months particularly over financial matters, with two-thirds of Relate centres seeing an increase in demand for counselling services.<sup>5</sup> Tensions within the family about debt and unemployment may also cause an increase in drug and alcohol misuse, which could lead to domestic violence. Emotional situations and shock are known to be contributory factors of alcoholism, which could easily be prompted by financial pressures. Research carried out by the Home Office in 2000 identified that 44% of domestic violence victims said that their attacker was under the influence of alcohol.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Source: Relate [www.relate.org.uk](http://www.relate.org.uk)

<sup>6</sup> Source: Alcohol Concern [www.alcoholconcern.org.uk](http://www.alcoholconcern.org.uk)

## 4.5 Reducing Youth Offending

During 2008/09, 367 young people aged between 10 and 17 years old entered the Youth Justice System for the first time, equal to around 0.4% of Staffordshire's population within this age group. However, this number represents a significant reduction of over 70% when compared with the previous year, which can be attributed to the Community Resolution Initiative. The Community Resolution Initiative is a joint programme between Staffordshire Police and the Youth Offending Service aimed at young people who are arrested for the first time for a relatively minor offence. The initiative offers the young person an intervention which aims to prevent reoffending as well as including a restorative justice approach to address victim satisfaction and confidence with the system.

Three-quarters of all first time entrants to the Youth Justice System in 2008/09 were male, although this proportion varies by district. Over 80% of first time young offenders were male in Stafford Borough and Cannock Chase, compared with around 61% in South Staffordshire and Lichfield District.

Two-thirds of female offenders committed crimes of violence or shoplifting, whereas these offences make up less than half of all crimes committed by males. Male young offenders were much more likely to commit criminal damage and motoring offences than female young offenders.

Young people not in education, training or employment is seen as one of the main contributory factors to youth offending and therefore support in this area is essential if reoffending is to be reduced. Over the last 12 months 79% of young offenders were in some form of education, training or employment, however this means that over a fifth were not.

**Table 4.4 - Percentage of young offenders not in education, training or employment, 2008/09**

	<b>2008/09 Total</b>
Statutory school age (10 - 15 years)	88.6%
Above statutory school age (16 - 17 years)	75.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>79.0%</b>

Source: Staffordshire Youth Offending Service

This figure varies by age, with children above compulsory school age (those aged 16 and 17 years old) less likely to be in education, training or employment; 75% compared with a total of 79%. This situation is likely to be made even more challenging by the current recession, as young people struggle to find work.

## 4.6 Creating a strong, effective and influential third sector

A vibrant, diverse and independent third sector is a vital part of a fair and enterprising society. It can help communities to be more cohesive and inclusive, and help individuals to have more say over issues that affect them. The third sector is also able to help statutory agencies address a wide range of community concerns. In particular the sector often has links into parts of the community that statutory agencies can struggle to engage with, and the sector is especially good at providing holistic solutions to complex or deep-rooted problems.

The 2008 National Survey of Third Sector Organisations revealed that 14.6% of respondents in Staffordshire thought that the local statutory bodies in the local area influenced their organisation's success in a positive or very positive way (National Indicator 7). The aim of the strategic group responsible for this outcome is to increase this result by around 4 percentage points by 2010/11.

#### **4.7 Promoting participation in cultural activities and raising the aspirations of children, young people and communities**

The development of cohesive communities requires the active and willing engagement of people within a participative community. By engaging in voluntary activities people build social capital and are more likely to feel part of their community, and so this is one of the best ways of building cohesion. The importance of volunteering has been increasingly recognised by government over recent years and this is reflected in the inclusion of a target within the Local Area Agreement for Staffordshire to increase the levels of volunteering. Results of the Place Survey conducted in December 2008 show that 18.8% of respondents<sup>7</sup> had taken part in formal volunteering at least once a month during the previous 12 month period.

Levels of volunteering are expected to increase during the current recession as demand for voluntary services (such as the Citizens Advice Bureau and domestic abuse services) increases and the number of people available to volunteer due to unemployment also increases. Volunteering also has the potential to contribute to economic recovery. It can provide a route to employment for many people, helping the unemployed to gain the skills, experience and confidence they need to get back into work.

It is important to give members of our communities a say in how services are delivered in their local area. This is an important part of community cohesion and relates to people feeling that they have control over their life chances. If residents feel that they have some amount of power they will be content with the knowledge that there are possibilities for change and development in their local area. This means that they are able to have their thoughts and opinions heard and play a role in decisions that affect them, their families and their local communities. Staffordshire County's Place Survey also explored if residents thought that they could influence decisions in their local area. It is concerning to see that only 25.2% of residents surveyed in Staffordshire agree that they can influence decisions in their local area, which represents no change from the results of the Best Value Survey conducted two years earlier (2006). This is therefore a key area of development for strengthening community cohesion and raising the aspirations of local residents.

<sup>7</sup> Respondents to the Place Survey conducted on behalf of Staffordshire County, December 2008.

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## Implications for service delivery

- There is a potential for the recession to have a negative impact on safer and stronger communities issues in Staffordshire, specifically around acquisitive crime, domestic abuse and youth offending. However, the recession could also offer some opportunities; levels of volunteering are expected to increase which could help unemployed people gain the necessary skills and confidence to get back into work, thus contributing to economic recovery.
- Although the gap is beginning to close between the highest and lowest crime areas in Staffordshire, there is still a significant difference between the two. Further analysis should focus on 'hotspot' localities and vulnerable groups.
- Considerable reductions in the prevalence of crime in Staffordshire have been made, particularly with regards to vehicle crime. Domestic abuse is now much more prevalent than acquisitive crime, despite the known level of under-reporting, and addressing this should be a priority.
- Young men are most likely to be perpetrators of, and victims of, crime and involved in other forms of harm. Around three-quarters of young offenders are male and aged between 14 and 17 years old. Young men are most likely to be involved in road traffic collisions. Young people, and particularly young men, should be the focus of interventions to reduce harm caused to people in Staffordshire.

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## Indicators in the Staffordshire LAA relevant to this area

- NI 4: Percentage of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality.
  - NI 6: Participation in regular volunteering.
  - NI 7: Environment for a thriving third sector.
  - NI 15: Serious violent crime rate.
  - NI 16: Serious acquisitive crime rate.
  - NI 21: Dealing with local concerns about ASB and crime by the local council and police.
  - NI 32: Repeat incidents of domestic violence.
  - NI 45: Young offenders' engagement in suitable education, employment or training.
  - NI 110: Young people's participation in positive activities.
  - NI 111: First time entrants to the Youth Justice System aged 10-17.
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