

Falkirk Community Safety Partnership

# Antisocial Behaviour Strategy 2023-2028



# Foreword

Welcome to the Falkirk Community Safety Partnership Antisocial Behaviour Strategy 2023-2028.

This Strategy has involved consultation with our colleagues and partner agencies along with residents from our communities as part of our joint approach. We all recognise and understand the impacts of antisocial behaviour and agree that a multi-agency approach through a partnership strategy is key to reflecting the importance of ensuring our communities and residents feel safer.

We are providing information regarding our approach and what solutions and actions will be considered and taken over the next five years. This strategy provides an overview of antisocial behaviour in Falkirk whilst recognising different events that have impacted our residents more recently and will continue to have an effect going forward. It provides further information on our partners agencies, as well as identifying areas for us to focus on collectively. Alongside support and early intervention, this will enable integration and community cohesion so our communities can come together and thrive.

## **Co-Chairpersons of Falkirk Community Safety Partnership**

**Gail Lucas, Falkirk Council**

**Inspector Andrew Tough, Police Scotland**

**Paul Harvey, Scottish Fire & Rescue Service**

# Contents

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<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>page 4</b>
<b>National Context</b> .....	<b>page 5</b>
<b>Local Context</b> .....	<b>page 7</b>
<b>Partner Agencies and Their Roles</b> .....	<b>page 12</b>
<b>Themes</b> .....	<b>page 16</b>
<b>Strategic Aims</b> .....	<b>page 19</b>
<b>Action Plan</b> .....	<b>page 25</b>
<b>Information Sharing</b> .....	<b>page 30</b>
<b>Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic</b> .....	<b>page 32</b>
<b>Responding to the Rising Cost of Living</b> .....	<b>page 34</b>
<b>Links to Relevant Strategies and Plans</b> .....	<b>page 35</b>
<b>Key Statistics and Trends of Antisocial Behaviour in Falkirk</b> .....	<b>page 38</b>

# Introduction

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This strategy outlines our approach to preventing, reducing and resolving antisocial behaviour across the Falkirk area and has been produced in consultation with tenants and residents as well as a wide range of partner organisations with a role to play in Supporting Stronger and Healthier Communities.

The Antisocial Behaviour etc. (Scotland) Act 2004 places a duty on Falkirk Council, together with the Chief Constable of Police Scotland to prepare a strategy to deal with antisocial behaviour within the Falkirk Council area.

# National Context

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## Definition of Antisocial Behaviour

Antisocial Behaviour etc. (Scotland) Act 2004 states that antisocial behaviour occurs where a person “acts in a manner that causes or is likely to cause alarm or distress; or pursues a course of conduct that causes or is likely to cause alarm or distress to at least one person who is not of the same household.”

While there is no clear-cut definition of what antisocial conduct is, as both the definition and tolerance levels to it can vary from person-to-person, examples include offensive/menacing acts (e.g. verbal abuse, threats of violence, harassment), noise nuisance, vandalism, youth disorder, fire-raising, littering, fly-tipping and dog-fouling.

## Best Practice

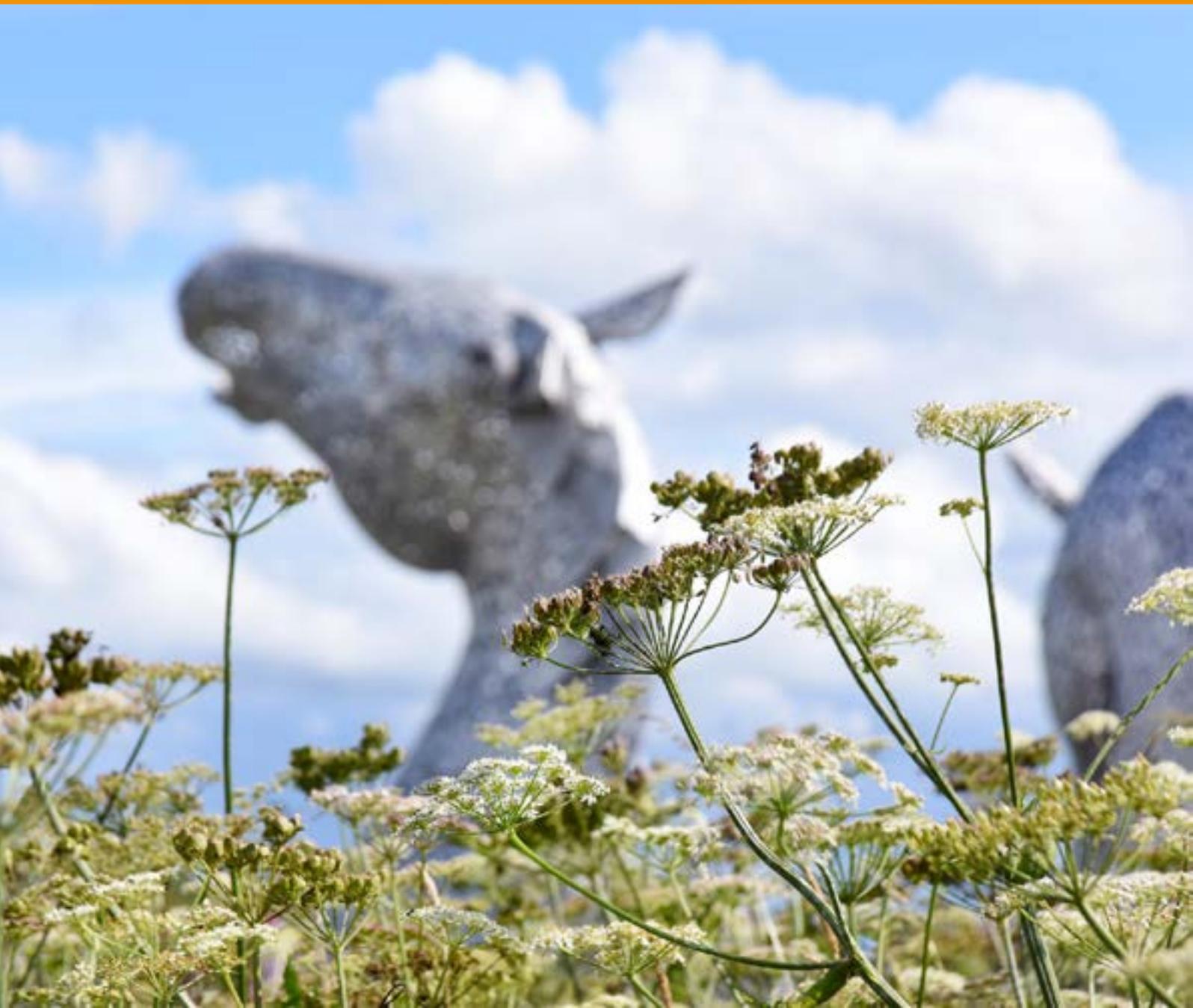
Promoting Positive Outcomes (2009) is the Scottish Government's current key framework created to tackle antisocial behaviour. It offers guidance and recommendations to local agencies in successfully targeting and dealing with antisocial conduct within a local authority's area. The framework moves away from an originally enforcement-based approach to more preventative work based on key tools of prevention, integration of services and agencies, meaningful engagement and positive, evidence-based communication with the local communities.

At the time of writing and publishing this Strategy, a review of the framework and the current National guidelines in responding to antisocial behaviour is underway.

The National Performance Framework sets out a vision for Scotland and aims to achieve “a more successful country, with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish, through sustainable and inclusive growth.” It sets out a range of economic, social and environmental indicators against which national wellbeing is measured, and highlights the need for collaborative and partnership working to achieve its goals. The framework is underpinned by 11 national outcomes which describe the kind of Scotland the framework aims to create.

Tackling antisocial behaviour places primary focus on the following outcome:

We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe



# Local Context

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Falkirk is recognised as an example of best practice for its service design with other local authorities having shaped their approaches on the Falkirk Council model. In particular, Falkirk Council was the first local authority to second a Police officer to its Conflict Resolution team. Furthermore, the Council has been renowned for breaking the cycle of offending and addressing the root causes of antisocial behaviour. The Falkirk Council Mediation Service is also held in high regard for its independent approach and success in resolving neighbour disputes.

## The Area

Falkirk has the 11th highest population of all local authorities in Scotland, with 160,890 people living in Falkirk Council area in 2019. The largest towns and settlement include Falkirk (35,900), followed by Grangemouth (16,204), Bo'ness (15,429) and Larbert (11,393).

There was an estimate of 72,994 households and 75,595 dwellings in Falkirk Council in 2020. According to the 2011 Census, 65% of all the households are owner occupied, 27% are rented from social landlords (of which 23% are rented from the Local Authority/Falkirk Council) and 8% of the households are privately rented.

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## **Brief Overview of Perceptions of safety and antisocial behaviour**

People living in the Falkirk Council areas have told us that:

- 88% of the respondents feel safe or fairly safe in their neighbourhoods;
- 6% feel neither safe nor unsafe;
- 7% feel unsafe to varying degrees. Those feeling unsafe have cited witnessing antisocial behaviour/crime in the area they live (63%), followed by hearing others' experiences witnessing antisocial behaviour/crime (52%), and lack of CCTV, street lighting and other visual prevention measures (31%) as their primary responses;
- 8.1% of individuals living in the East as well as the Central housing areas felt unsafe;
- 3% of individuals living in the West area felt unsafe;
- The biggest perceived issues in neighbourhoods were noise nuisance (13%), vandalism/graffiti (10%) and neighbour disputes (9%).

We know from our consultation (Tenant Satisfaction Survey 2021) that there are particular neighbourhoods that people felt more vulnerable in. As part of our Strategy, we will be continuously monitoring the areas along with our partners to ensure the safety of and the feelings of safety in the neighbourhoods.

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## **Falkirk Community Safety Partnership**

Falkirk Community Safety Partnership (FCSP) is a strategic information sharing and planning group intended to improve community safety and address antisocial conduct amongst other concerns. The Partnership consists of Falkirk Council, Police Scotland, NHS Forth Valley, Scottish Fire and Rescue, local business and other relevant partner agencies and services. Meetings are held on a bi-monthly basis to review and respond to community safety issues in the Council area, employing a collaborative and problem-solving approach.

Previously, the FCSP strategic assessment identified wider community safety concerns, which included the main antisocial behaviour problems in the area. To place greater emphasis on it, antisocial behaviour has been separated and given its own strategic focus. This allows for a more detailed assessment of key issues and ways to address them, with stronger input from strategic partners.

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## **Falkirk Community Planning Partnership**

Falkirk Community Planning Partnership consist of public and private bodies, third and community sector organisations providing services to the local communities in Falkirk. The Partnership has published a Local Outcomes Improvement Plan, known as the Falkirk Plan, which identifies the most pressing issues for Falkirk's residents. The framework has established priorities and outcomes to tackle inequality, reduce poverty and improve quality of life in Falkirk.

The priorities of the Plan are not directly tied to, but are relevant in tackling and developing the strategy for antisocial behaviour in Falkirk Council area, which contributes to the overarching objectives of the Partnership. The Priorities of the Falkirk Plan are:

- Working in partnership with communities;
- Poverty;
- Mental Health and Wellbeing;
- Substance Use;
- Gender-based Violence;
- Economic Recovery.

There is a wide range of statutory, private as well as voluntary agencies and organisations that are involved in and work together to tackle antisocial behaviour in Falkirk Council area.



# Partner Agencies and Their Roles

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There is a wide range of statutory, private as well as voluntary agencies and organisations that are involved in and work together to tackle antisocial behaviour in Falkirk Council area. A general overview of some of the major partners is presented below.

## **Falkirk Council Conflict Resolution Service**

The team investigates various types of antisocial behaviour and works together with partner agencies and other Council services to tackle it. It recently saw a restructuring, merging the Mediation and Intervention roles as well as Conflict Resolution Officer and Investigation roles.

Conflict Resolution Service uses a range of investigation and intervention tools and approaches to resolve cases and support witnesses, victims and perpetrators alike. These include, but are not limited to, the use of mediation and family mediation services, evidence gathering, noise monitoring equipment, as well as applications for Antisocial Behaviour Orders.

## **Falkirk Council Housing Community Estate Team**

The team aims to ensure cleaner and safer communities by improving the environmental quality of life and feelings of community well-being. It also monitors youth-related disorder and antisocial behaviour within the housing estates and collaborates with other partner agencies to resolve it. Officers have powers to investigate and issue Fixed Penalty Notices for dog fouling, litter and fly-tipping offences.

## **Falkirk Council Housing Officers**

Housing Officers address the housing needs of individuals and oversee the day-to-day management of the Council's properties. Officers provide support and advice to the Council's tenants in relation to any queries they may have and serve as a first point of contact for the tenants in terms of any issues they may experience.

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### **Falkirk Council Youth Justice Team**

Youth Justice Team offers advice, support and opportunities to young people who exhibit challenging behaviours. It aims to help young people change their behaviour and stay safe in their communities. The team works with other organisations to provide timely, specialist and individualised services and support to young people which divert them from any antisocial and offending behaviour and activities that pose risk to themselves and others.

### **NHS Forth Valley**

NHS works with other partner agencies to challenge substance use and seeks to reduce the harm and impacts of drug and alcohol-related antisocial behaviour. Amongst support and advice on addiction treatment, it works to deliver alcohol campaigns, raising awareness and educating young people on risks of alcohol consumption. The service also works to assess mental wellbeing and supports perpetrators as part of intervention and rehabilitation efforts.

### **Police Scotland**

The Police are primarily concerned with keeping people safe and increasing the feelings of safety. They use a wide variety of support and enforcement measures to detect, address, and tackle root causes of crime, disorder and antisocial behaviour amongst other emerging issues. Using a problem-solving approach in partnership with the Council and other agencies, the Police share information and examine trends of crime and disorder in areas of concern.

### **Registered Social Landlords (RSLs)**

RSLs work together with the Council and other partners to provide homes to Falkirk's residents. RSLs manage their housing stock, address the needs of their tenants and respond to any occurring issues. This includes responding to and tackling antisocial behaviour, as well as collaborating and sharing relevant information with partner agencies and services to promote safety and feelings of safety.

In Falkirk, the role of registered social landlords is fulfilled by Blackwood Housing, Kingdom Housing, Link Group, Loretto Housing and Paragon Housing.

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### **Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS)**

SFRS promotes a preventative approach towards fire safety by reducing the risk from harm and working in collaboration with partners and communities. It aims to engage with communities by delivering fire safety campaigns and work in a wide range of public safety initiatives. SFRS responds to fire-raising incidents and complaints, and promotes Fire Safety Support and Education programme to young people in order to address fire-related antisocial behaviour.

### **Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA)**

The Reporter deals with Compulsory Supervision Order referrals for children and young people. The Reporter decides whether to refer a child/young person to Children's Hearing in relation to a committed offence/antisocial behaviour. The Panel Members of the Hearing then make a decision on what support a child/young person may need and how to address their behaviour, and whether a Compulsory Supervision Order is necessary which outlines specific conditions that a child/young person must follow.

### **SACRO**

SACRO is a community justice voluntary organisation which aims to build safe communities by reducing conflict and offending. It provides a wide range of services, including Community Justice and Mediation, Public Safety, Mentoring, Youth Justice, Gender-based Violence and Restorative Justice services. SACRO works in partnership with the Scottish Government, local authorities and other statutory and voluntary organisation to support communities, offenders, witnesses and victims of conflict and crime.

### **Victim Support Scotland (VSS)**

VSS supports victims and witnesses of crime as well as their family members by providing information and practical help, emotional support and guidance through the criminal justice system. It also provides specialist support to people in cases of murder, terrorism, hate crime, sexual and domestic violence.

Other partner agencies and services include but are not limited to Community Planning Team, Forth Valley CCTV Management group, Transform Forth Valley, Falkirk's Mental Health Association, as well as Registered Social Landlords/Housing Associations and local businesses.



In line with the Scottish Government's National Framework, the approach to dealing with antisocial behaviour is designed to meet local needs and based on the following five stages: Prevention, (early) Intervention, Engagement, Rehabilitation and Communication (PIERC).

# Themes

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In line with the Scottish Government's National Framework, the approach to dealing with antisocial behaviour is designed to meet local needs and based on the following five stages: Prevention, (early) Intervention, Engagement, Rehabilitation and Communication (PIERC). Accordingly, the services in place and the methods used to respond to antisocial behaviour all follow the PIERC model, subject to the severity and the timeline of each individual case as well as the individual and community needs and circumstances.

In Falkirk we achieve this by:

**Prevention** which places focus on addressing the root causes of antisocial behaviour and preventing antisocial behaviour before it occurs. Measures include:

- A specialist mediation service aimed at helping neighbours reach an acceptable solution to resolve their disagreements;
- The use of CCTV and mobile CCTV cameras to act as a deterrent and discourage antisocial behaviour as well as improve community feelings of safety;
- The provision of diversionary and educational programmes and activities to various groups, such as youth programmes at school.

**Intervention** which promotes the use of early and effective intervention methods to address antisocial conduct at the earliest opportunity as it arises. Some of the following intervention approaches are:

- The identification of prominent, "hotspot" areas of antisocial behaviour;
- The use of mobile CCTV to further deter, detect and reduce antisocial behaviour;
- The investigation and installation of noise monitoring equipment to measure noise levels where noise nuisance complaints are concerned;
- Continuous use of mediation services to try to reconcile neighbour relationships where appropriate;
- Issuing Acceptable Behaviour Agreements to perpetrators of antisocial behaviour who agree to stop their antisocial conduct on a voluntary basis.

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**Engagement** which facilitates the involvement of local people more closely in developing strategies and solutions to local problems. Some of the engagement measures include:

- Safer Street initiative and events which aim to encourage communication and engagement between statutory and voluntary organisations and the local community, as well as provide people the opportunity to voice their concerns and get involved with the activities of various local groups;
- Street-A-Week initiative aimed at tackling antisocial behaviour in 'at risk' areas, whereby the Police and other statutory agencies work to deter antisocial behaviour, and discuss any safety issues and concerns with the local community for a short-term period;
- Assisting with the development of Community Action Plans which allow local matters to be addressed by local people through local solutions.

**Rehabilitation** which requires assessing the needs of individual perpetrators and wider communities in order to provide long-term solutions to tackle antisocial behaviour following enforcement actions. Rehabilitation may comprise of:

- The use of Short Scottish Secured Tenancies (SSSTs) after an Antisocial Behaviour Order has been granted against an individual to prevent evictions and homelessness as well as further antisocial behaviour;
- Continuous monitoring of the perpetrator's behaviour and regular reviews of the situation, arranging and providing appropriate support where and when required.

**Communication** which involves sharing positive, co-ordinated and evidence-based messages to the public. This may take the form of:

- The use of the Council's and the partners' social media to keep the public informed and promote various services, events and initiatives;
- The Falkirk Council Website, directly promoting and providing online and in-person services to the public as well as allowing people to get directly in contact with the Council.



# Strategic Aims

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The model of Prevention, Early Intervention, Engagement, Rehabilitation and Communication will be the continued approach whenever appropriate. We will apply this model with agility and proportionality to adopt a person-centred approach and meet the needs of specific situations.

Key priority areas have been identified in consultation with our stakeholders. These are:

- Strengthening collaboration and engagement with, as well as empowering local communities;
- Clarifying processes and procedures used to tackle antisocial behaviour;
- Promoting and raising awareness of existing and planned support services for victims, witnesses and perpetrators of antisocial behaviour as well as the wider range of community members;
- Breaking age-related barriers to participation and engagement, and promoting age-based inclusion;
- Promoting social participation and social responsibility;
- Clearly communicating the roles and responsibilities of the teams and partner agencies responsible for addressing antisocial behaviour to increase the communities' awareness and understanding of the teams' capabilities and limitations when managing antisocial behaviour.

There is a need for more collaboration and working with the communities, using community-led intelligence to inform decisions and approaches when tackling and resolving antisocial behaviour.



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## **Discussions with Partners and Opportunities for Improvement**

Meetings with partner agencies and services were held to better understand the main challenges and inform priority areas in responding to and tackling antisocial behaviour, as well as areas to improve upon, including new services and support tools to implement. A number of areas have been identified following the discussions:

### **Mental Health and Wellbeing**

Partners noted an increase in antisocial behaviour following the COVID-19 pandemic, coinciding with increasing and more prominent mental health issues experienced by both the perpetrators and the complainants of antisocial behaviour.

Individuals were less likely to engage with the offered support services, and in particular, mediation services. Partners identified the need to better promote the available services and encourage communities to engage with them.

### **Improving Reporting Processes**

A lack of reporting and/or using wrong channels to report antisocial behaviour was identified. Reporting is shown to be vital in establishing areas vulnerable to antisocial behaviour as well as the perpetrators involved. This helps to inform prioritisation and allocation of resources to the appropriate areas, and provide early and effective intervention as well as support for victims and perpetrators of antisocial behaviour.

### **Ownership and Accountability**

On the other hand, the promotion of social responsibility was also discussed, such as encouraging the neighbours themselves to resolve low-level neighbour disputes. Likewise, there is also a need to manage community expectations by providing realistic prospects, timelines and outcomes when it comes to preventing, tackling and resolving antisocial behaviour.

### **Operational Practices and Information Between Services**

Partners expressed the need to simplify policies and procedures in place used to tackle antisocial behaviour. Furthermore, there is also an opportunity for more joined up partnership working to determine common issues seen and experienced by partner agencies, as well as share information, practices and resources in a more effective manner. While regular multi-agency meetings take place, involving additional partners was discussed in order to bring out more expertise and strengthen partnership working.

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## **Community Engagement**

To better understand the issues of antisocial behaviour experienced by the local communities and to further inform the development of the antisocial behaviour strategy, community consultations were also carried out. Utilising focus groups, surveys and informal engagement at community open door events, questions about the main issues in a given area, the challenges in tackling antisocial behaviour as well as the opinions on the provision of current services and any new support needs for the victims and perpetrators were raised.

There is a need for more collaboration and working with the communities, using community-led intelligence to inform decisions and approaches when tackling and resolving antisocial behaviour.

### **Issues**

The main issues identified by the communities included general noise nuisance caused by neighbours, drugs & alcohol-related offences, youth disorder as well as environmental antisocial conduct, including littering, fly-tipping and dog fouling.

### **Dissatisfaction with the Frequency of Progress Updates**

Communities expressed a lack of clarity surrounding the progress of antisocial behaviour cases. There was found to be a lack of effective communication between the partner agencies in terms of responding to initial complaints in a timely manner as well as providing the victims updates on the ongoing cases.

### **Communication Between Services**

Issues of ineffective partnership working, communication and coordination of information between different partner agencies and services were also raised. Individuals found that that they would have to go from department to department to get conflict resolved and/or found that the same case could be passed around to different officers and services, depending on the stages of investigation without appropriately notifying the people involved.

### **Fear of Reprisals**

A mistrust of the Council was identified, coupled with the lack of reporting antisocial behaviour due to the fear of retaliation from the perpetrators. The need for stronger engagement with the communities was expressed, alongside the increased presence of council officers in local areas as well as regular face-to-face meetings, with stronger input from the local communities.

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### **Ambiguity of Roles and Lack of Clarity**

Ambiguity regarding the roles of partner agencies and the council departments was identified, including the changing role of community estate wardens. There is a need for more effective communication on the Council website, particularly easy-to-read, easy-to-access clarifications on the antisocial behaviour policies and practices. It has been suggested that the Council should feedback more to the communities as to the planned and implemented changes and updates in policies and procedures.

### **Issues with Online Services**

Issues accessing Falkirk Council online services were also mentioned. The MyFalkirk website was observed to occasionally crash, including the link to the antisocial behaviour reporting form. The need for better, easy-to-read, more pictorial presentation of information was reiterated, as there was found to be a 'wall of text' on the website which overwhelms the reader with information. Individuals noted that this poses accessibility issues as it disregards individual differences and abilities in reading and processing information online.

### **Digital Exclusion**

Digital exclusion issues were discussed in relation to older residents. A sense of being left behind in the dark was voiced, coinciding with the overall push for digitalisation of services. Individuals stated the need for more paper communication and appropriately manned phone lines for effective communication as not everyone is willing or able to learn and attend computer literacy classes needed to use digital services.

### **Young Persons' Tolerance to Antisocial Behaviour**

Young people expressed higher tolerance to antisocial behaviour, and a tendency of being seen and vilified as perpetrators and not as the victims of antisocial behaviour. A sense of not being taken seriously when reporting antisocial conduct was also stated, particularly due to young age. Furthermore, a lack of education was expressed in relation to recognising what antisocial behaviour within homes as well as the wider community might entail.

### **Young Persons' Support Needs**

A need for better support network for young people was expressed, both by young people themselves and other individuals in the local communities. Lack of facilities and activities for meaningful youth engagement were pointed as contributing factors for youth-related antisocial behaviour. Areas which provided extracurricular activities and positive engagement for youths, such as evening football sessions, reported reduction youth antisocial behaviour.

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# Action Plan:

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A number of different approach methods have been devised to address and target the established priority areas. As no objective sits in isolation, the set-out methods overlap across different priority areas. The priorities also link with the Falkirk Plan's priorities of Working in Partnership with Communities and Mental Health and Wellbeing, and the Council Plan priority 1 - Supporting Stronger and Healthier Communities.

## Priority Areas

### Communication

#### Actions by which we will address this

- ▶ Improving communication on the Falkirk Council website and updating the information on the relevant antisocial behaviour webpages
- ▶ Using relevant social media platforms to provide relevant updates in relation to antisocial behaviour in Falkirk Council area
- ▶ Creating a short, informational, inclusive and easy-to-read policy document for members of the public to access which summarises and clarifies the ways to report antisocial behaviour and processes of how it is going to be dealt with
- ▶ Identifying the ways of improving Falkirk Council antisocial behaviour reporting system
- ▶ Establishing a triaging system to address antisocial behaviour cases by levels of severity, taking into account timelines and different approach methods in relation to the severity

## Priority Areas

### **Collaboration with the Communities**

#### **Actions by which we will address this**

- ▶ Continuing the promotion of and engagement in community safety events
- ▶ Utilising community-led intelligence to tackle antisocial behaviour
- ▶ Promoting the visibility of council officers within the local communities
- ▶ Working in partnership with the local councillors to co-ordinate and make use of community-led intelligence provided to them, and help them direct the complainants to the right reporting channels

## Priority Areas

### **Support Services**

#### **Actions by which we will address this**

- ▶ Linking in with other departments and agencies to identify currently available support services and consider any new services to establish
- ▶ Creating, promoting and regularly updating an easy-to-access directory of available services for the members of the public to use
- ▶ Utilising the Council and partner agencies' websites and social media to promote the list of available services

## Priority Areas

### **Age-related Barriers and Age-based Inclusion**

#### **Actions by which we will address this**

- ▶ Linking in with the Community Engagement Team, targeting older communities and learning more about their needs
- ▶ Liaising with the Digital Inclusion Team to address and tackle digital exclusion in relation to older people whilst accommodating their needs
- ▶ Promoting a different image of perpetrators of antisocial behaviour, aiming to move away from youth-centric idea of a typical perpetrator
- ▶ Providing support to and educating young people on how to identify what antisocial behaviour may entail and how to report it
- ▶ Liaising with Falkirk Council Youth Justice Team and promoting available youth-based services in Falkirk Council area
- ▶ Promoting available short-term, age-appropriate diversionary and intervention programmes such as the Twilight Sports sessions

## Priority Areas

### **Social Participation and Social Responsibility**

#### **Actions by which we will address this**

- ▶ Encouraging individuals to resolve low-level neighbour disputes themselves
- ▶ Promoting engagement in currently available services, such as the mediation services
- ▶ Encouraging people to report antisocial behaviour by further clarifying procedures
- ▶ Highlighting the importance of reporting antisocial behaviour and promoting ways of safely reporting antisocial behaviour

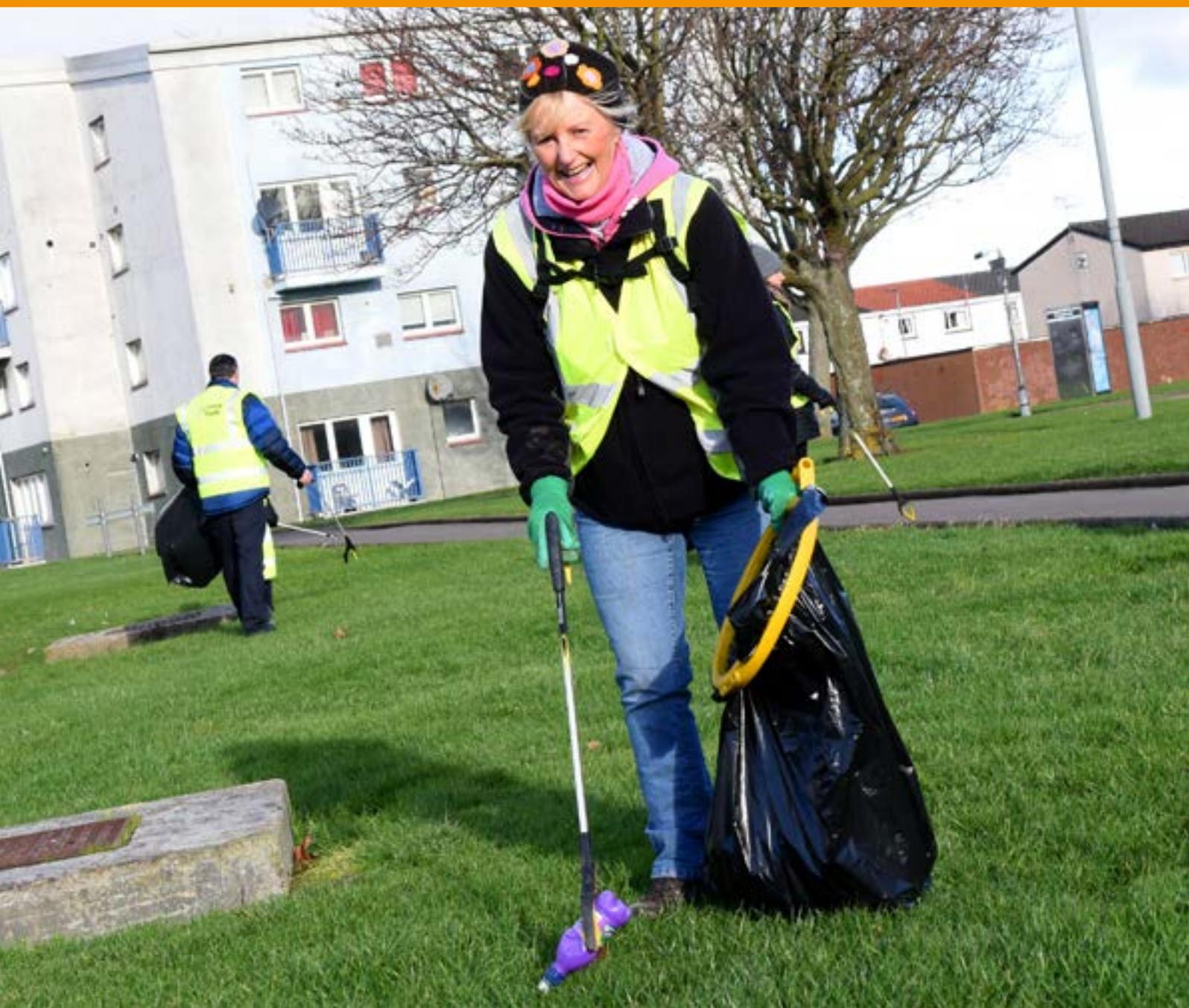
## Priority Areas

### **Managing Community Expectations**

#### **Actions by which we will address this**

- ▶ Managing and circulating antisocial behaviour policies and procedures to the general public, clarifying and advising of the precise approach to dealing with antisocial behaviour
- ▶ Improving communication with partner agencies and aiming to align and stay consistent with partner policies and procedures to provide clarity and consistency to the public

Multi-agency approach is necessary to prevent, tackle and resolve antisocial conduct within Falkirk Council area.



# Information Sharing

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Multi-agency approach is necessary to prevent, tackle and resolve antisocial conduct within Falkirk Council area. Sharing relevant information is a core part of coordinating response efforts between partner agencies. The Information Sharing Protocol (ISP) implements a standardised approach to the exchange of information between the partners and creates a framework to help meet requirements and comply with the data protection principles.

In line with the Data Protection Act 2018, the Human Rights Act 1998, section 139 of the Antisocial Behaviour etc. (Scotland) Act 2004, and other legislative and statutory requirements, the ISP sets out the scope and the purpose of information sharing, the partners involved as well as the operational procedures, including data processing principles and considerations for individual rights. The ISP is reviewed on a regular basis to ensure it is up to date and in accordance with the relevant legislation.



# Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic

The Police figures suggest that antisocial behaviour incidents are on decline following the post-lockdown period, with the exception of neighbour disputes and public nuisance. However, both the Scottish Fire & Rescue Service as well as the Council reports indicate otherwise (please refer to Appendix 1 for further information).

The figures presented suggest that the COVID-19 pandemic has heavily influenced the extent of the reported incidents. At the end of 2019/20 and throughout 2020/21, the rise in complaints coincided with the 2 lockdowns that were seen nationwide, with a continuous upwards trend seen from February 2020 to June 2020 and then from January 2021 to April of the same year.

While the Council data indicates that the number of complaints fell in 2021/22 compared to 2020/21, the 2022/23 period saw another sharp rise in comparison to 2021/22, with continuous fluctuations seen on a month-by-month basis and no clear downwards trend of incident reports. The complaints saw a decrease from August to September and from October to December, but then picked up again from December onwards, with relatively similar numbers of complaints seen at the height of the pandemic.



Figure 1. Number of Council complaints per month

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Evidently, the restrictions and the lockdowns have had a large impact on the complaints. Being contained at and working from home, alongside heightened domestic sounds and increased presence of neighbours have arguably all had an effect on people's mental health, tolerance levels and the awareness to others' conduct. Coupled with the limitations and changes to the ways various agencies and services were able to approach and deal with antisocial behaviour, this contributed to a sizeable increase in incident reports.

While certain months saw a decrease in antisocial behaviour, the 2022/23 post-lockdown, post-restriction period has yet to see a substantial decrease in numbers that could be compared to the pre-Covid figures seen in 2019.

Moving forward into the new post-pandemic landscape, it is important to monitor any newly emerging trends as well as any societal shifts in understanding of antisocial behaviour and adjust priority areas where and when required.

# Responding to the Rising Cost of Living

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The increasing cost-of-living in the United Kingdom has also presented a number of potential issues that may contribute to increased antisocial behaviour, especially comparing the 2021/22 figures with the latest statistics for the 2022/23 period. Compounding factors may include poor mental health, decrease in quality of life, turning to crime to meet basic needs, increase in amount of people entering the criminal justice system, poorly maintained environment and buildings, increased burden of and reduction in essential services, staffing capacity limitations, as well as budget constraints.

These factors call for increased vigilance and continuous monitoring of the developing situation, planning and consideration of possible new early intervention and diversion measures and activities, as well as strong and effective links with partner agencies and services.

# Links to Relevant Strategies and Plans

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The Antisocial Behaviour Strategy links to other partner agencies' plans and strategies as detailed below.

## **The Council Plan 2022-2027**

The plan sets out the strategic framework that will ensure the Council's focus remains on modernising services and improving outcomes for local people. Priorities consist of supporting stronger and healthier communities, promoting opportunities and educational attainment and reducing inequalities, and supporting a thriving economy and green transition.

**Link:** [The Council Plan 2022-2027](#)

## **Digital Housing Strategy (TBD)**

The upcoming strategy aims to create more efficient and sustainable housing solutions by using technology to improve the design, construction and management of homes. Initiatives include adopting smart home technologies to monitor property health and improve energy efficiency, and implementing digital platforms to streamline communication between landlords and tenants.

## **Falkirk Local Fire and Rescue Plan 2021**

The plan gives an overview of the local risk profile and identifies objectives and priorities for the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service within Falkirk Council area. These consist of Local Risk Management and Preparedness, Domestic Fire Safety, Deliberate Fire setting, Unintentional Harm and Injury, Non-Domestic Fires, and False Alarms.

**Link:** [Falkirk Local Fire and Rescue Plan 2021](#)

## **The Falkirk Plan 2021-2030**

A 10-year Local Outcomes Improvement Plan developed by the Community Planning Partnership which sets out priorities in order to tackle the greatest inequalities for Falkirk's residents.

**Links:** [The Falkirk Plan 2021-2030](#)

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### **Litter Strategy - A Cleaner Falkirk 2021-2026**

The strategy lays out plans to achieve a 'litter free Falkirk' with the aim of preventing litter, fly-tipping and dog fouling, minimising debris on roads as well as encouraging personal responsibility and behaviour change.

**Link:** [Litter Strategy - A Cleaner Falkirk 2021-2026](#)

### **Local Housing Strategy 2023- 2028**

This strategy will set out how the Council and partner services plan to address 23 housing issues and demands in Falkirk Council area.

### **Local Police Plan 2023-2026**

The plan establishes local policing priorities and objectives within Falkirk area, focusing on key areas of violence, disorder and antisocial behaviour, acquisitive crime, hate crime as well as road crime and road safety.

**Link:** [Local Police Plan 2023-2026](#)

### **Strategy for Community Engagement 2019-2024**

The strategy presents the plans to engage and work with the local people to improve the services and involve the community in the Council's decision-making processes.

**Link:** [Strategy for Community Engagement 2019-2024](#)

### **Towards a Fairer Falkirk 2019-2024**

A strategy for the Community Planning Partnership which aims to reduce and mitigate the impact of poverty in Falkirk Council area.

**Link:** [Towards a Fairer Falkirk 2019-2024](#)



## Appendix 1.

# Key Statistics and Trends of Antisocial Behaviour in Falkirk

Recorded antisocial behaviour incidents are major sources of data to inform the current situation and priorities in relation to antisocial behaviour in Falkirk Council area. The data can be found from separate Falkirk Council, Police Scotland, as well as Scottish Fire and Rescue incident reports. It includes all complaints that people have made, may be both directly and indirectly related to antisocial conduct, and may be of differing severity, varying from very low-level complaints to high profile incidents. The information was collected from the period of the last 4 years (1st of April 2019- 31st of March 2023) to reflect pre-Covid, Covid and the emerging post-Covid landscape.

## Council Incident Reports

The last 4 years have followed similar trends. Generally, with an exception in several categories, a sharp increase in complaints can be seen from the period of 2019/20 to 2020/21, followed by a small decrease from 2020/21 to 2021/22 and another increase from 2021/22 to 2022/23. This includes the overall figures as well as the trends for the individual categories of antisocial behaviour.

There has been a significant increase in overall figures of reported antisocial behaviour to Falkirk Council over the past 4 years, with a 32% increase in complaints from 2019/20 to 2022/23. To break this down further, however, the period of 2019/20 to 2020/21 saw a 33% rise, followed by an 8% dip from 2020/21 to 2021/22, and another 8% increase from 2021/22 to 2022/23.

Antisocial Behaviour Incidents (Council)	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	% Change 2019 v 2023
Noise Nuisance	2703	3590	3441	4423	+64%
Offensive/Menacing Acts	906	1631	1513	1220	+35%
Environmental Antisocial Behaviour	1529	1753	1372	1163	-24%
Drugs and Alcohol	350	430	407	593	+69%
Neighbour Disputes	139	197	172	100	-28%
Other Complaints	452	487	504	508	+12%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>6079</b>	<b>8088</b>	<b>7409</b>	<b>8007</b>	<b>+32%</b>

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Over the 4-year period, the main types of complaints have also remained largely the same. Noise nuisance remains to receive the highest amount of complaints. This is followed by reports of offensive/menacing acts, environmental antisocial acts (such as fly-tipping, dog fouling, litter), drugs and alcohol related antisocial behaviour incidents and neighbour disputes respectively.

Overall, there has been a 64% increase in noise nuisance reports from 2019/20 to 2022/23, followed by a rise of 35% in offensive/menacing acts and 69% in drugs and alcohol complaints. In contrast, environmental antisocial behaviour saw a decline of 11%, whereas neighbour disputes fell by 28% in the same period.

### Police Incident Reports

In general, antisocial behaviour reported to the police saw a large increase in figures from 2019/20 to 2020/21, followed by a sharp decline from 2020/21 to 2022/23. Incident reports relating to disturbance, however, have steadily fallen over the 4 years.

Antisocial Behaviour Incidents (Police)	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	% Change 2019 v 2023
Public Nuisance	2066	4088	2512	1941	-6%
Disturbance	2420	2191	2137	2028	-16%
Noise Nuisance	2197	2230	1622	1543	-30%
Neighbour Disputes	1051	1337	1170	925	-12%
Drug/Substance Misuse	1023	870	633	684	-33%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>8757</b>	<b>10716</b>	<b>8074</b>	<b>7121</b>	<b>-19%</b>

Over the 4-year period, all of the complaints have decreased, with a largest fall seen in noise nuisance reports, going from 2197 individual reports in 2019/20 down to 1543 in 2022/23 (30% decrease), as well as drug/substance misuse with 1023 complaints in 2019/20 compared to 684 in 2022/23 (33% decrease). The overall figures have also seen a 19% decline in the 4-year period.

## Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Incident Reports

There has been a substantial increase in reports of deliberate fire-setting attended to by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service from 2019/20 to 2021/22, followed by a small decrease from 2021/22 to 2022/23. With both property fire (primary) and refuse fire (secondary) figures included, there has been a 44% rise in incidents from 2019/20 to 2022/23. This has gone up steadily from 2019/20 to 2021/22 with a 16% increase from 2019/20 to 2020/2021 and another steep 31% rise from 2020/21 to 2021/22, finally followed by a small decrease of 5% from 2021/22 to 2022/23.

Deliberate fire-setting incidents	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	% Change 2019 v 2022
Primary and secondary fires	341	394	518	490	+44%

## Locality

Over the 4 years, the Central Locality has received the highest amount of complaints made to the Council (13,063 reports). This is followed by the East with 8,428 complaints and the West with 7,832 reports. This is true for both the overall figures and individually for each yearly period, except for 2022/23, where the West locality overtook the East by 54 complaints. While the Central area accounts for 34% of Falkirk Council's population as of 2019, it received 44% of the complaints over the period of 4 years. Adjusting for population, the Central Area received 238 complaints per 1000 individuals, compared to 175 complaints in the East and 135 complaints in the West.

Localities	Population (2019)	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
East	48112	1751	2422	1944	2311
Central	54785	2775	3561	3495	3232
West	57993	1524	2061	1882	2365
Not specified	-	29	44	88	99
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>160890</b>	<b>6079</b>	<b>8088</b>	<b>7409</b>	<b>8007</b>

The most common incident types for each locality reflected the general trends, with noise nuisance, environmental disorder as well as offensive/ menacing acts being the top three complaints in all three areas. While the overall complaints decreased in all three areas from 2020/21 to 2021/22, the period from 2021/22 to 2022/23 saw a sharp rise in reports both in the West and the East localities, whereas the Central area saw a continuous decrease.

Furthermore, the West and East localities saw a sharp increase in noise nuisance and environmental antisocial behaviour reports, whereas central area has remained relatively the same in relation to noise nuisance reports and saw a substantial decline in environmental disorder from 2021/22 to 2022/23. In comparison, reports of offensive/menacing acts fell in all three localities.

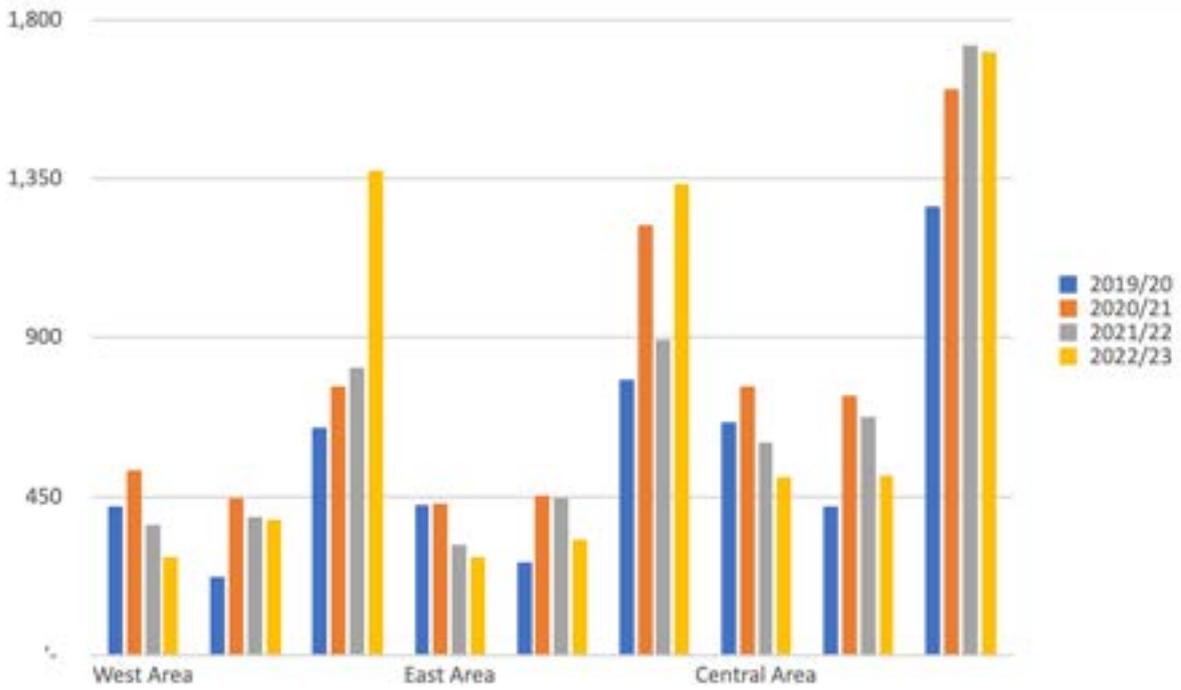


Figure 2. Incident type reports in each area

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