

Staffordshire Business Crime Strategy

Creating a place of greater
safety for our business
communities



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Enterprise Partnership



Foreword by Sue Arnold, SCO

Successful businesses are the lifeblood of thriving communities. Thanks to the raft of support available across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, the region is one of the safest places to do business, which is not only good for them, but benefits all our communities – a safe county is attractive for inward investment.

For those businesses which are victims of crime, however, there can be a significant impact on their development. These are far from victimless crimes and can devastate companies of any size, in any industry. Small and medium-sized enterprises are particularly vulnerable; in certain circumstances, crime can even force them to close, with jobs lost as a result.

This strategy – a joint initiative between the Staffordshire Commissioner's Office, Staffordshire Police and the Local Enterprise Partnership – has been devised with and for business owners, with their voices informing our approach to tackling this very real threat.

It is only by understanding the issues from the business owners' perspective that we can improve the support available

for them, which will in turn help increase economic growth and job creation in Staffordshire.

I'd like to thank everyone from the business community and the public sector who gave their time to help us develop this strategy, which has given us an intelligence-led action plan for partnership working to achieve real, tangible results.

Thank you to you all.

Sue Arnold

Deputy Staffordshire Commissioner for Police, Fire and Rescue and Crime



Foreword from Staffordshire Police

I am sure this strategy will be welcomed by businesses large and small across the county, particularly in what has been a difficult time for us all, not least businesses who have fallen victim to crime during the pandemic.

Business crime can have a huge impact on the communities we serve, and we know that building strong relationships with business owners is hugely beneficial in terms of understanding their concerns and helping to prevent and reduce opportunities for this type of crime to reoccur.

This plan will give our Neighbourhood Policing Teams some clear direction in terms of how business crime is recorded and how we analyse that intelligence but, most importantly, how victims are engaged with, and how we can better respond to their needs.

It will also help build our understanding of the organised crime groups who seek to target businesses, through cyber crime or otherwise, and increase our ability to pursue and bring them to justice.

We are excited to take a 'power in numbers' approach and work in partnership with the Commissioner's Office and the Local Enterprise Partnership to improve how we tackle business crime together, and make Staffordshire a safer place to live, work and visit.

Assistant Chief Constable Scott Green
Staffordshire Police



Foreword from Alun Rogers, LEP

Creating the right environment for businesses to grow, innovate, diversify, and thrive is central to the LEP's ambition to enhance the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire economy. An underlying basic principle of this is ensuring businesses feel safe and secure, with robust support in place if they do find themselves the victim of crime.

That is why the LEP is supporting the Staffordshire Commissioner's Office and Staffordshire Police on this important strategy, to help create a place of greater safety for our business communities.

We want to ensure businesses feel equipped to prevent themselves being a target of business crime and support them to be prepared by having the right processes in place. We are all too aware that the business support landscape can sometimes feel complex and daunting, particularly for SMEs, but by working with our partners in our Growth Hub and the Chamber of Commerce, we want to simplify the landscape and be a guiding hand to businesses in need.

This is about ensuring Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire remains one of the safest places in the country to do business, and that we continue to make the region an attractive place to live, work, play and invest.

It is fantastic to see the public and private sectors working in partnership to help our region thrive, and I look forward to continuing to work with partners to see this come to fruition.

Alun Rogers
Chair, Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)



Introduction

We value our business communities and the role they play in contributing to the economic, social and cultural tapestry of Staffordshire. The consequences of businesses falling victim to crime have a negative effect on the economy and a direct impact on members of staff, supply chains and customers. Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are particularly vulnerable when they are victims of crime, as in some circumstances it can force their businesses to stop trading.

Business crime can have a wide-ranging and damaging impact beyond the direct financial cost of the loss or damage to property. It can increase insurance premiums, damage a business's ability to meet customer needs, cause it reputational damage with both customers and suppliers, impact on its employees, jeopardise future and commercial activity, waste valuable time, cause stress, anxiety, anger and frustration, and result in physical harm¹.

Approaches to business crime across the United Kingdom have to date narrowly focused on crimes against the retail sector and the night-time economy, and as a result it is from here that we find much of the data on which local responses are based.

However, we know that business crime is more diffuse than this and that our understanding of how crime impacts on businesses more broadly must be reflected in our strategic and operational responses going forward.

Building on our Business Crime Matters (2014-2018) Strategy, Sue Arnold, Deputy Staffordshire Commissioner for Police, Fire and Rescue and Crime, commissioned a range of activities to better understand the impact of crime on our business communities and to develop more effective ways to work collaboratively in generating solutions.

To this end, Staffordshire University carried out research on the scope, scale, and impact of business crime in Staffordshire, reviewed the current practices and policies and analysed its impact on businesses.

In addition, we have worked with a range of partners to support the development of this revised Business Crime Strategy. In late 2020, we held a series of roundtables and interviews with representatives from our diverse business communities, and local service providers including Staffordshire Police.

The roundtables were themed around (1) SMEs and the local business community experience, (2) rural crime, (3) tackling national and international crime, (4) the role of the public sector, and (5) combatting cyber crime. The findings from these engagements have fed directly into this revised strategic approach.

Business crime is a complex and evolving landscape. Businesses come in all shapes and sizes and crimes can impact upon them in very different ways. There are networks of organisations at the local, regional, and national levels which respond to various crimes against businesses. However, due to the very specialist nature of these crimes, the responses tend to be separated thematically with little coordination or communication between the various organisations responding to business crime, particularly at the regional and national level.

This strategy will translate this complexity into a clear, coherent offer for our local businesses, to increase communication, accessibility and ultimately to foster trust and confidence in our approach to combatting business crime in Staffordshire.

¹Business Crime in Staffordshire and Beyond: Current Practices and Future Directions, by Nick Howe et al. (2019) – Page 1.



Findings from our engagements with Staffordshire's business communities:

- ▶ There should be an emphasis on business communities rather than there being a homogenous "Business Community". The broad range of businesses engaged through this process highlights the array of sectors represented within these communities, which may require tailored responses to the crimes that may affect them. However, there were common themes that were consistent across all these communities.

To create clarity and consistency in our approach, this strategy establishes common themes on the services that are available across the breadth of our business communities which can be tailored to specific needs at the operational level by the relevant service providers. Consistent across all communities were the themes that (1) businesses want to be **prevented** from becoming the victims of crime, (2) businesses want to be **prepared** for the worst and should a crime take place, to minimise the impact and resume trading as soon as possible, and (3) businesses want to be confident that

those who commit crimes against them will be **pursued** using all criminal and civil legal tools available.

- ▶ Crimes against our businesses must be correctly identified and classified for our business communities to have confidence in the data and the action that will be taken should they report a crime. It is of concern that research by the Federation of Small Businesses indicates that just over a fifth (21%) did not report the crime to any authorities. We must do more to promote trust and confidence in the way our business communities interact with the criminal justice system.

We are working with Staffordshire Police to review the recording and management of crimes that are reported to enhance the level of service our local business receive. Through the delivery of this strategy, we will provide our business communities with increased visibility of this work, encourage more sharing of crime data, and provide platforms for more regular accountability at a local level.

- ▶ There was clear evidence at the local level that crime reporting pathways often depend upon personal relationships, rather than there being clarity and confidence in what is available to business users. Larger businesses were well positioned to recruit expertise in how to navigate crime reporting and investigation requirements. However, for smaller businesses there was a distinct gap in how these processes are understood and used. Reporting mechanisms must reflect the realities of demands on business users. To promote trust and confidence in crime reporting systems and to encourage their use, the user experience of those seeking to report crimes must be expeditious and business friendly.

We will work with Staffordshire Police and our wider partners to identify the most effective means of reporting crimes and systematise their use, drawing upon evidence of where there are effective relationships between businesses and the police, so this level of service is available across the breadth of our business communities. We must ensure these systems are fit for purpose through securing end-user testing and feedback.

- ▶ The mode and frequency of communication efforts must reflect the realities of the demands on business users. Service providers including the police and organisations established to support businesses must better understand these demands. Communications should be concise, action-orientated and utilise appropriate platforms.

We understand there are a broad range of businesses and services that have been developed to support them. Through this strategy, we will establish a clear local offer which will include the coordination of communications efforts to maximise opportunities to engage with our business communities, ranging from specific campaigns to the enhancement or establishment of fora where they can directly engage with service providers.

² "Calling time on Business Crime: Safeguarding small firms for the future", Federation of Small Businesses, 2019 - <https://www.fsb.org.uk/resource-report/calling-time-on-business-crime.html>

National, regional and local responses to business crime

- Policing across the United Kingdom has moved to a THRIVE (threat, harm, risk, investigation, vulnerability, and expectations) model of priority setting³. For business crimes that do not meet the threshold for police action, more needs to be done to challenge the perception that this is due to the police not prioritising investigations of this nature because they are “victimless”.

There was an emphasis throughout our engagements on the need to better understand expectations both of what businesses could do to prevent themselves from becoming victims of crime, and of what services (particularly the police) could do to support businesses more effectively. Through the delivery of this strategy, we will draw together business communities and service providers, and build a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities.

- There was clear evidence of a range of activities being undertaken to reduce business crime and its impact across Staffordshire. However, these activities are not drawn together into a coherent local offer and businesses found it difficult to understand the range of services available to them.

This strategy will drive activities to consolidate and coordinate the range of available services into a single platform which would provide an interface for business users to access those organisations best placed to service their requirements.



The national picture regarding business crime is fragmented and disconnected. The various levels of response and support at the local, regional, and national levels exist in siloes based upon themes such as cyber, rural and fraud, and are largely impenetrable for service users.

Responses to the various dimensions of business crime have grown organically as new crime types emerge, most recently in relation to developments in response to cyber crime.

Strategies have typically been formulated thematically and in isolation from other responses and the direct implication is that for our business communities, opportunities may be missed in delivering holistic services where they may be victim to a range of different crimes. There is a lack of strategic direction, coordination and ownership linking the broad range of entities, services, and specialised responses to different types of business crime.

For Staffordshire, we will ensure our strategic approach traverses the full range of our business communities and that it translates the complexity of business crime responses into a clear and accessible local offer. In 2019 the Deputy Staffordshire Commissioner commissioned research to explore crime and safety issues impacting on rural areas and communities across Staffordshire. In Staffordshire, 78% of land is classified as rural and is home to one in five of the local population and one in four local businesses. A central finding was that rural crime is not significantly different to urban crime⁴. The research underpinning this strategy echoes this point, and rather than promoting separate strategic responses for different sections of our business communities, the strategy must be holistic and focus on the issues that intersect all businesses.

³Staffordshire Police Public Confidence Strategy 2018-2021 - <https://www.staffordshire.police.uk/SysSiteAssets/media/downloads/staffordshire/about-us/staffordshire-police-public-confidence-strategy.pdf>

⁴Rural Crime: A profile of crime and its impact in rural Staffordshire (2019) - <https://staffordshire-pfcc.gov.uk/rural-crime-strategy/> - Page 10.

Our aim

“To create a place of greater safety in Staffordshire which is attractive to business communities and will give them the best opportunity to thrive”

What are our priorities?

- ▶ To reduce business crime and help businesses to feel safe in Staffordshire, which in turn will support the growth of the local economy
- ▶ To improve multi-agency working to address business crime
- ▶ To increase the depth and breadth of our engagement across the full range of our business communities

What is “business crime”?

Following consultation with the National Business Crime Centre (NBCC), the National Police Chiefs’ Council agreed the following definition for business crime which came into effect from June 2019⁵:

“Any criminal offence where a business, or person in the course of their employment, and because of that employment, is the victim”

Businesses as victims of crime:

Far from crimes against our business communities being “victimless”, we understand that there can be a very real human cost to crimes against businesses, particularly where members of staff have been assaulted or have been targeted because of their role in working for a business.

The Code of Practice for Victims of Crime in England and Wales⁶ states that businesses and other enterprises such as charities can receive the services set out in the Code and make an Impact Statement where a criminal offence has been committed against them, subject to the provision of a named point of contact to the relevant service provider.

The named point of contact for a business can make a Victim Personal Statement. In addition, businesses of all sizes can make an Impact Statement for Business. This is like a Victim Personal Statement and will be used in the same way in court but allows the business to explain how a crime has affected it, such as direct financial loss, operational disruption, or reputational damage.

The named point of contact has the right to be provided with information about the Impact Statement for Business process by the police when reporting the crime, to help them decide whether the business wishes to make one.

⁵<https://www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/investigations/policing-business-crime/>

⁶The Code of Practice for Victims of Crime in England and Wales (November 2020) - https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/936239/victims-code-2020.pdf - Page 25. Further information about the Victim Personal Statement and Business Impact Statement process is available from the police and at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/victim-personal-statement>

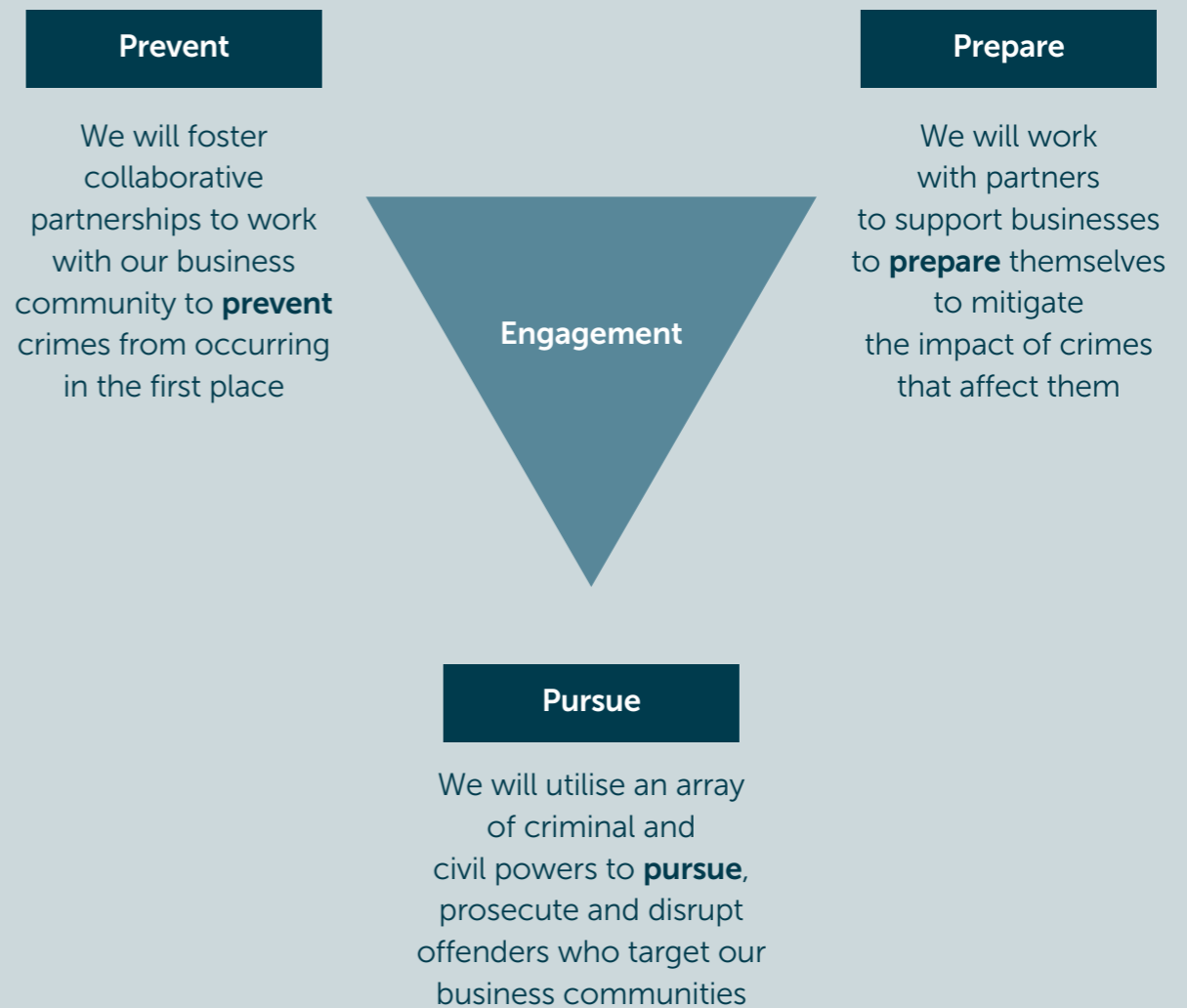
Structure

Following our engagements with Staffordshire’s business communities, we have developed this strategy based on the crime-related themes that intersect all our businesses:

- ▶ Businesses want to be **prevented** from becoming the victims of crime,
- ▶ Businesses want to be **prepared** for the worst and, should a crime take place, to minimise the impact and resume trading as soon as possible, and
- ▶ Businesses want to be confident that those who commit crimes against them will be **pursued** using all criminal and civil legal tools available.



Our strategy for combatting business crime in Staffordshire is therefore built upon the following three workstreams:



Prevent

Prevention is better than cure. We will work in collaboration to increase the understanding of local businesses regarding the evolving types of crimes that can impact upon them and how they can safeguard themselves to prevent these crimes taking place. To do so, we will work with the range of service providers to increase their engagement with businesses. We will coordinate efforts through a single platform which will act as an interface for business users to access those organisations best placed to service their requirements.

We will:

- ▶ Develop a cohesive “offer” for our business communities, drawing together the various forms of support which are available into a single online platform hosted by the Deputy Staffordshire Commissioner.
- ▶ Develop awareness-raising campaigns and utilise appropriate channels of communication to engage with businesses and distribute crime prevention advice, for instance Smart Alert.
- ▶ Develop our multi-agency frameworks to ensure they are holistic in their approach to business crime, building upon and enhancing the approach developed by the Partnerships Against Business Crime in Staffordshire (PABCIS) partnership.
- ▶ Raise the profile of business crime prevention within our Community Safety Partnerships.
- ▶ Maximise opportunities for Secure by Design guidance to be disseminated.
- ▶ Develop the confidence of local services to proactively share information. We must work within the Data Protection Act 2018, but this should not be a barrier to services contributing to community safety.

Over the last three years, the Co-Op has invested £70m in security, crime prevention and colleague safety measures. The Co-Op’s “Safer Colleagues, Safer Communities” campaign is focused on tackling crime and violence and protecting their staff.

They have invested in a range of measures to prevent the theft of goods from their stores which include SmartWater™ fog systems, the roll-out of intelligent CCTV (iCCTV), and increased connectivity in the use of tablet devices to streamline communications.

The Co-Op has a system of prioritisation to identify “focus stores” that require additional resources and have a dedicated Response and Resilience Team and counselling services to provide post-incident support to staff impacted by crime.

Prepare

Where we have not been able to prevent a crime from taking place, we must support our business communities to manage its impact not only in the immediate aftermath but longer term as well. The array of different forms of crime impact on businesses in many ways, from not being able to trade in the short term, to the longer-term effects of staff not feeling safe in the workplace. Not all these impacts are captured within crime reporting pathways, so we must work to build the awareness of service providers to better support our business communities.

We will:

- ▶ Draw lessons from the Business Crime Advisory Service and roll out awareness training across Staffordshire Police, prioritising Neighbourhood Policing teams as those who are building relationships with our business communities, so they can better understand the medium to long-term impact of crime on businesses beyond the initial act of criminality.
- ▶ Equip our businesses with an understanding of the requirements of the investigative process, ensuring every opportunity is exploited to capture the best evidence, for instance in relation to the seizure of CCTV footage and forensic opportunities.
- ▶ Utilise our multi-agency frameworks to disseminate feedback and best practices on how they can mitigate the impact of business crime.
- ▶ Enhance the connectivity of our business crime support services, including through local fora and the single online platform hosted by the Deputy Staffordshire Commissioner.
- ▶ Build upon the Cyber Champions initiative to engage with businesses and develop their capacity to mitigate the impact of a broader range of crimes.

The free Cyber Champions in the Workplace initiative was spearheaded by the Deputy Staffordshire Commissioner in October 2018, in response to a growing number of cyber crimes in the region and a lack of practical knowledge among businesses about how to be safe online.

The training has been developed and is delivered by Staffordshire Police's Cyber PROTECT team and West Midlands Regional Organised Crime Unit (WMROCU).

These workplace Champions will provide guidance until specialist services arrive.

For more information about becoming a Cyber Champion in your workplace or to sign up for training sessions, email:

CyberCrimeUnit@staffordshire.pnn.police.uk

Pursue

Our local businesses must have confidence that crimes against them will be investigated expeditiously and diligently. Where they do become a victim of crime, the process must be clearly understood, particularly in relation to the communication of crime reporting data and how Staffordshire Police utilise the THRIVE model of prioritisation in responding to calls for service. This goes to the heart of building trust and confidence with business communities. If justice is seen, justice is done, and making the case that victims reporting crimes leads to tangible action which could lead to crimes being detected could be instrumental in preventing others from becoming victims.

We will:

- ▶ Enhance crime identification and recording processes, building on the relationship between Staffordshire Police and the Business Crime Advisory Service.
- ▶ Build confidence in local business crime data through sharing information on a regular basis and disseminating through multi-agency partnership arrangements.
- ▶ Work with regional and national agencies to build a joined-up approach to the investigation of crimes affecting businesses so that victims are provided with an effective service.
- ▶ Utilise our multi-agency frameworks to disseminate feedback on investigations and lessons learned where appropriate.
- ▶ Ensure that victims of business crime are afforded the range of services set out in the Victims' Codes of Practice.

Over a period of six months, the theft of quad bikes was prevalent within the farming community, and some business owners were repeat victims. Farmers were frustrated and deeply concerned for the livelihood of their families due to the impact the thefts were having on their businesses.

Staffordshire Police, working with the farming community and neighbouring forces, undertook a proactive operation, placing a Rat Trap quad bike at a farm which was fitted with a tracking device. Within a week the quad bike was stolen from the farm. Officers traced the tracker and, cross-referencing local CCTV, identified the suspect as a member of an Organised Crime Group, who was subsequently arrested and convicted.

Engagement

Intersecting each of these workstreams is the theme of **engagement**. Based upon the research that underpins this revised strategy, there is a desire for ongoing dialogue between the police and business communities to facilitate better understanding of current concerns and new and emerging issues. However, there is often a feeling that such discussion was too narrowly framed around the priorities and concerns of a big, well-resourced, and extremely vocal majority, drawn from big businesses in retail and the night-time economy⁷. Through each of the three workstreams set out above, we will increase the depth and breadth of our engagement with our diverse business communities to ensure they each have a voice in shaping this area of work going forward.

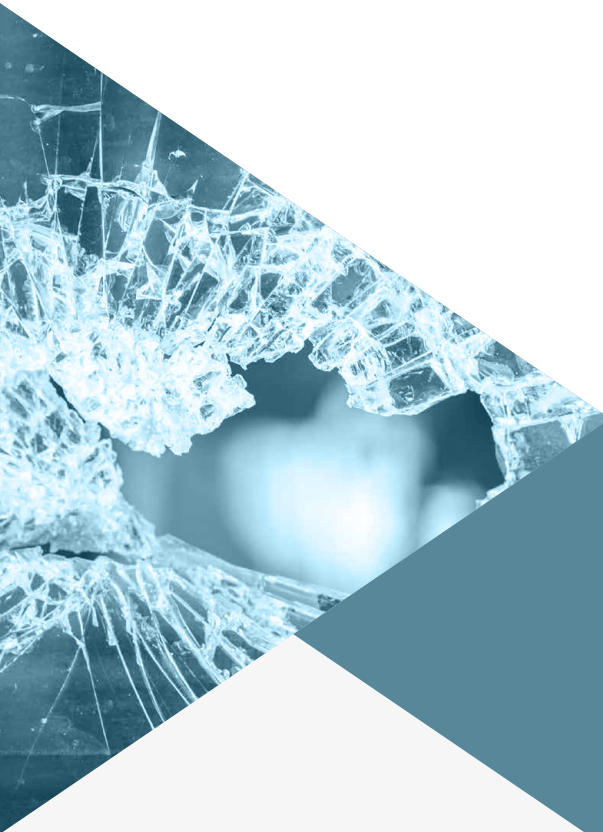
How will this strategy be delivered?

This strategy will drive a **Business Crime Action Plan** with which the Deputy Staffordshire Commissioner will galvanise, lead and coordinate efforts across the range of local partners delivering services to our business communities, including Staffordshire Police, the Chambers of Commerce, PABCIS and the Local Enterprise Partnership, and hold partners to account for how these services are delivered.

References

- ▶ **Business Crime Matters (2014-2018)**
<https://staffordshire-pfcc.gov.uk/cms/wp-content/uploads/BUSINESS-CRIME-MATTERS-STRATEGY.pdf>
- ▶ **Business Crime in Staffordshire and Beyond: Current Practices and Future Directions, by Nick Howe et al. (2019)**
- ▶ **“Calling time on Business Crime: Safeguarding small firms for the future”, Federation of Small Businesses, (2019)**
<https://www.fsb.org.uk/resource-report/calling-time-on-business-crime.html>
- ▶ **The Code of Practice for Victims of Crime in England and Wales (November 2020)**
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/936239/victims-code-2020.pdf
- ▶ **Crime against businesses: findings from the 2018 Commercial Victimization Survey**
- ▶ **Home Office Statistical Bulletin 17/19, 5th September 2019**
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/829399/crime-against-businesses-2018-hosb1719.pdf
- ▶ **Rural Crime: A profile of crime and its impact in rural Staffordshire (2019)**
<https://staffordshire-pfcc.gov.uk/rural-crime-strategy/>
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⁷Business Crime in Staffordshire and Beyond: Current Practices and Future Directions, by Nick Howe et al. (2019) – Page 3.



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