

District Police Data – contextual summary

Recorded crime figures for the period show several areas of increase which are important to view in the correct context.

Domestic Abuse / Violence Against the Person – Up

The rise in DA-related violence aligns with improved victim confidence, enhanced reporting routes, and a continued positive-arrest policy. Increased police visibility in the NTE and strengthened safeguarding pathways have led to more offences being captured rather than reflecting increased underlying harm.

Serious Violence – Up

Serious violence remains a **low-volume but high-harm** category. The increase of 37 offences (42%) reflects broader national definitions now adopted locally via the Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP). The VRP uses a specific, expanded definition of *serious violence*, which includes a wider range of offences than traditional “most serious violence” categories. This includes categories such as:

- violence with injury,
- certain public order offences,
- knife-related offences,
- and some robbery classifications.

These broader definitions have now been fully adopted locally as part of the Serious Violence Duty under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, meaning more incidents meet the recording threshold for “serious violence” than would previously have been the case. (See business robbery)

This expansion alone means that incidents which might previously have sat in other categories are now counted within “serious violence,” increasing the recorded volume without an underlying increase in harm.

It does not represent a shift in Winchester’s overall safety profile.

Drug-Related Crime – Up

The 33.1% increase in drug offences is a positive indicator of proactive policing. Winchester’s Priority Crime Team has intensified enforcement through warrants, stop/search activity, and County Lines disruption. Planned policing around Boomtown accounts for a seasonal spike in detections, demonstrating successful operational delivery rather than a worsening drugs problem. Alongside this, we have maintained focused Night-Time Economy (NTE) patrols working closely with licensed premises to address illegal drug use at the earliest opportunity. Police teams, supported by licensing officers, PubWatch, and proactive plain-clothes deployments, regularly conduct targeted visits, searches, and engagement with door staff to identify and remove individuals involved in drug use or drug-related disorder. This early-intervention model has a positive downstream impact on reducing VAWG-related offences, as the prompt removal of individuals associated with drug

use prevents escalation later in the evening and reduces the number of high-risk interactions within the NTE. This approach aligns with the broader VAWG safeguarding work highlighted in the Q3 operational activity and the licensing-linked NTE operations delivered with VPO-trained officers.

Anti-Social Behaviour – Down

ASB reports fell by 6.8%, consistent with long-term local trends. This reflects strong partnership work (CSP, BID Rangers, police hotspot patrols) and targeted interventions delivered through OVAL, plus seasonal patterns that recur annually.

Boomtown Festival – Understanding the Impact on Recorded Crime

The annual Boomtown festival generates a predictable and planned uplift in recorded crime, primarily in drug-related detections. It is important for the Scrutiny Panel to note that:

The increase is expected and reflects proactive policing

During Boomtown, policing teams implement an intensive, pre-planned operation including enhanced searching at gates, targeted patrols, and intelligence-led interventions. This results in a deliberate rise in recorded drug possession offences, particularly at ingress points. These detections demonstrate successful enforcement, not increased local drug activity.

1. The rise reflects improved reporting routes and event-specific recording

Festival policing now includes strengthened systems for on-site reporting, safeguarding and evidence capture. The improved capability means more incidents are formally recorded rather than resolved informally by event staff. This drives numbers up in a positive way, ensuring transparency and accurate crime data.

2. Boomtown does not increase year-round local harm

Recorded offences linked to the event are largely self-contained and time-limited, with no sustained increase in community-level drug activity, violence, or ASB during the wider reporting period.

3. Event policing supports local reassurance

Police work closely with event organisers, public health, and partner agencies to safeguard vulnerable attendees, manage missing persons, and coordinate immediate interventions. The uplift in recorded crime therefore represents strong partnership governance and early-intervention safeguarding, aligning with CSP objectives.

In summary:

Boomtown-related crime data should be viewed as an indicator of effective and visible policing rather than increased criminality. The festival's presence leads to a temporary, positive spike in detections due to the scale of enforcement activity rather than any decline in local safety.