

07 November 2016

## **Violent Crime**

### **Purpose**

For discussion and decision.

### **Summary**

Recent police statistics on violent crime have raised fears that incidents of violence in England and Wales are increasing, marking an end to a long-term downward trend. Members of the Safer and Stronger Communities Board have previously expressed concerns that violent crime may be a growing issue, mirroring anxieties raised recently by other member authorities. This paper provides an overview of the statistics and nature of violent crime for further discussion and considers some options for responses.

### **Recommendations**

That the board:

1. Note the statistics on violent crime;
2. Note the concerns raised by some member authorities and requests for support; and
3. Consider and comment on the proposals for a LGA programme of support set out in paragraphs 12, 13, and 14.

### **Action**

Officers to action as directed by members.

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## **Violent Crime**

### **Background**

1. Serious incidents of violence continue to attract significant media attention, and are an ongoing concern for local communities. Following long-term downward trends in both overall levels of recorded crime and in violent offences, recent statistics suggest that this pattern may be changing. However the latest statistical release from the Office for National Statistics for the year ending June 2016 suggests the picture is complex, and both the nature and extent of violent crime cover a broad range of circumstances.

### **Understanding prevalence**

2. Police statistics on violence against the person offences incorporate homicide, violence with injury and violence without injury. Both actual and attempted assaults are included in the figures, which include some offences such as harassment and stalking, where no physical assault is involved.
3. Police recorded crime for the year ending June 2016 suggests that following many years of decreases in violent incidents, the volume may now be increasing:
  - 3.1 Recorded incidents of violence against the person offences have risen by 24% in the last year, which is the highest number of offences recorded in a 12-month period since 2002.
  - 3.2 Police recorded incidents of violence with injury increased 12% on the previous year, including a 26% rise in attempted murder (an additional 147 incidents). Incidents of violence without injury increased by 35%.
  - 3.3 All but one police force (Nottingham) recorded an increase in violent crimes, with the largest increases in Northumbria, West Yorkshire, Durham, and Avon & Somerset.
  - 3.4 Recorded offences involving a knife or sharp instrument (covering violence against the person, robbery and sexual offences) increased by 9% overall on the previous year. This includes an 18% increase in attempted murder and a 12% rise in assault with injury/assault with intent. This suggests an increase over the last two years, ending a downward trend since 2011. Possession offences rose by 15% in the last year.
  - 3.5 37 of 44 police forces recorded a rise in offences involving knives and sharp instruments, with the largest contributor being West Midlands Police.

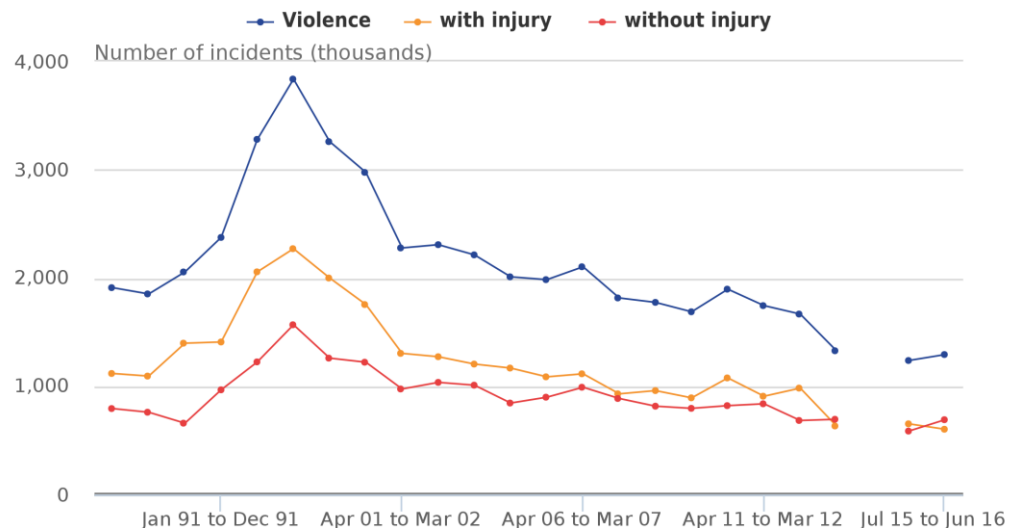
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- 3.6 The number of homicides recorded in the latest year increased by 3%<sup>1</sup>. Over the long-term, the rate of homicides has fallen from 14 per million in 2006 to 10 per million in the year ending March 2016.
4. A number of factors should be considered when analysing police-recorded incidents, which may contribute towards apparent increases. These include:
- 4.1 improvements in crime recording in recent years (following criticism of police recorded crime by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC), which is thought to have affected violence against the person offences in particular). Evidence suggests that offences such as attempted murder may have previously been recorded as other types of violent crime, such as wounding with intent, that might be easier to prove in court.
  - 4.2 increased police focus on encouraging reports of domestic abuse following HMIC's 2014 report criticising police responses.
  - 4.3 the introduction of two new harassment offences in April 2015, which has contributed 36% to the rise in overall recorded violence against the person offences and 47% to violence without injury offences.
  - 4.4 targeted action by police around knife crime possession following legislative changes introduced in July 2015.
  - 4.5 an increase in the number of violent crimes reported to the police, as suggested by evidence from the Crime Survey of England and Wales (CSEW).
5. Findings from the Crime Survey of England and Wales are regarded as a more reliable indicator of long-term trends. CSEW findings for the latest survey suggest:
- 5.1 There is no statistically significant change in levels of violence from the previous year (a 4% fall in incidents of violence overall; an 8% decrease in violence with injury; and an 18% increase in violence without injury).
  - 5.2 Around two in every 100 over 16s in England and Wales were a victim of violent crime in the last year – compared to three in every 100 in 2006 and 5 in 100 in 1995.
  - 5.3 From 2002 to 2014 violent incidents reduced but have plateaued over the last two years, as illustrated by the following chart:

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<sup>1</sup> This excludes the 96 Hillsborough victims which were recorded in last year's figures as manslaughter victims

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Source: Crime Survey for England and Wales, Office for National Statistics

6. Other indicators of trends in violent crime include incidents recorded in hospital emergency departments, which suggest there has been no change on the previous year. (The latest available London ambulance data for assaults with a knife (for year ending October 2015) suggested a 9% rise in incidents). Conversely, Metropolitan Police data suggests that emergency and non-emergency "calls for service" relating to violent crime decreased by 2% in the last year.

### The nature of violent crime

7. Earlier this year the ONS published a detailed analysis of the nature of violent crime, based on findings from the CSEW for the year ending March 2015. Although this partially pre-dates apparent recent trends, it provides a context in which to set the statistics:
  - 7.1 43% of violent offences reported were perpetrated by a stranger, 36% by an acquaintance and 20% as domestic violence (the latter is thought to be underreported in the CSEW). Incidents of stranger violence are most likely to take place in pubs or clubs (27%) or other<sup>2</sup> (32%). Incidents of acquaintance violence are most likely to take place at work (30%).
  - 7.2 Men are more likely to be a victim of violent crime than women (2.4% of males compared to 1.3% of females). For victims aged over 16, perpetrators are also most likely to be male (81%) and aged between 25 and 39 (46%).
  - 7.3 Adults aged 16-24 are more likely to be a victim of violent crime than any other age group (4.2%).

<sup>2</sup> This include car parks, shops, places of education, friends' homes, entertainment places or other

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- 7.4 Overall, victims sustain a physical injury in 52% of incidents of violence. This varies by the type of violence, with 76% of incidents of domestic violence resulting in physical injury compared with 50% of acquaintance violence and 41% of stranger violence incidents.
- 7.5 For victims aged between 10 and 15, incidents are most likely to be committed by someone they know well (58%) and in 78% of violent incidents against children the offender was a pupil at the victim's school. The perpetrator was mostly likely to be male (89%) and aged between 10-15 (86%).
- 8. A report published in September 2016 by the London Assembly's Police and Crime Committee looked at the nature of serious youth violence in London. The report concluded that:
  - 8.1 The number of victims of serious youth violence (SYV) in London has been rising over the past four years.
  - 8.2 Knives are a significant part of SYV, flagged as a factor in around half of SYV incidents. A dominant factor for young people carrying knives appears to be a belief that it is needed for self-defence. Other factors cited include peer group influence and exposure to violence within the family. However it is acknowledged that issues are complex.
  - 8.3 Gang activity is flagged as present in only a small proportion of cases; related to about 5% of victims – it is thought that much of the SYV in the capital may relate to peer groups rather than "gangs".
  - 8.4 Changes in recording practices may contribute to apparent increases in SYV, but it is suggested that increases may be down to an increase in young people's involvement in serious crimes (such as drugs), and increased community tensions.

## **Commentary**

- 9. Taken as a whole, this represents a complicated landscape for understanding any emerging trends in violent crime and the nature of violent incidents.
- 10. However, several authorities in large cities have reported that they are concerned that violent incidents are growing. There are some suggestions that voluntary sector groups are also concerned that young people are increasingly carrying knives. It is possible that this is exacerbated by the perception that levels of knife crime and violence are increasing.
- 11. Some local authorities have indicated that they would welcome LGA support to assist local efforts in reducing violence.

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## **Ways forward**

12. The Home Office already has a programme of work designed to reduce violent crime, and is funding peer support for councils with gangs and serious youth violence through the Institute of Community Safety. The LGA can best complement this existing support and assist our member authorities by disseminating examples of good and effective practice, which we know some local authorities are keen to access. There are a number of areas of good practice the LGA could highlight, including:
  - 12.1 Work by the Early Intervention Foundation suggests that the most effective responses to serious youth violence include family focussed and/or therapy-based group programmes, mentoring schemes and community engagement. Data sharing is recognised as important in identifying risk and developing protective factors.
  - 12.2 Research by the Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice (SSCJ) suggests that the two main reasons for young people carrying knives are status and fear of crime/for protection. Therefore, education-based interventions have the most impact on tackling knife crime; raising awareness about the dangers and consequences of carrying knives and engaging in knife crime.
  - 12.3 Recent national-level responses around knife crime include agreements with major retailers to prevent underage sales; and work with organisations to help deliver prevention messages to children and young people.
  - 12.4 London Councils and the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) are also undertaking work to identify examples of good practice in tackling serious youth violence. Existing projects aimed at addressing violent knife crime in the capital, include 'Redthread'; a programme which places youth workers in A&E departments to talk to young victims and consider how they can be supported.
13. The LGA could host a conference to showcase some of this work, and/or develop some case studies or guidance for councils. Initial discussions with the LGA Events team suggest that a conference could be scheduled for late Spring/early Summer 2017.
14. A further issue on which the LGA could disseminate good practice is regarding data-sharing. Some local authorities have reported difficulties in obtaining data on violent incidents from A&E departments, which could help in understanding the extent of the issue, identifying risks and targeting responses. The Home Office has acknowledged this is a wider issue and is working with the Institute of Community Safety to identify how better use could be made of the regional violence-reduction nurses to exchange data, or whether the London model of sharing A&E data through a central hub could be replicated elsewhere. Initial conversations with the Institute suggest they would welcome LGA assistance in promoting which ever model for sharing A&E data the Home Office looks to adopt.

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### **Next steps**

15. Members are asked to:

- 15.1 Note the statistics on violent crime;
- 15.2 Note the concerns raised by some member authorities and requests for support;  
and
- 15.3 Consider and comment on the proposals for a LGA programme of support set  
out in paragraphs 12, 13, and 14.

### **Financial implications**

- 16. Subject to agreement from the LGA's Events team, it is possible that a conference could be organised on a commercial basis, covering the costs of hosting. Other lines of work identified could be met from existing resources.