

Serious Violence Strategy Update

Purpose of report

For discussion.

Summary

Dan Greaves, Crime Director at the Home Office, will attend the meeting to provide an update on the launch of the Serious Violence Strategy and the new Serious Violence Taskforce. This paper provides a brief overview of the Strategy and seeks the Board's views on the document and appropriate LGA next steps.

Recommendation

That Members of the Safer and Stronger Communities Board note the update on the Serious Violence Strategy and provide their views to help develop the LGA's next steps on this issue.

Action

Members' views on the content of the strategy will help to develop the LGA's supporting activities to councils on this issue.

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| Contact officer: | Rachel Phelps |
| Position: | Adviser, Community Safety |
| Phone no: | 0207 664 3119 |
| Email: | Rachel.Phelps@local.gov.uk |

Serious Violence Strategy Update

Background

1. The [Serious Violence Strategy](#) was launched by the former Home Secretary Amber Rudd on 9 April 2018. Cllr Simon Blackburn attended a breakfast roundtable meeting with the Home Secretary to discuss the Strategy and later attended the launch with LGA Chief Executive Mark Lloyd.
2. We issued a [response](#) to the Strategy which welcomed the significant emphasis placed on the value of early intervention support, which we said is vital to prevent young people becoming involved in crime in the first place. The LGA also highlighted the importance of adequate funding to enable councils to take forward this preventative work. At that time, councils had still not received their youth justice grant allocations, which made it impossible for youth offending teams to plan effectively to ensure positive outcomes for young people. The grants have now come through youth offending teams.
3. Following the launch of the Strategy, the LGA was invited to be a representative on the new [Serious Violence Taskforce](#). Other representatives include a coalition of Government ministers, cross-party MPs, police leaders, public health bodies and the voluntary sector. The first meeting of the Taskforce took place on 26 April 2018. Cllr Simon Blackburn represented the LGA at this meeting, which predominantly focused on the terms of reference for the Taskforce and presentations on county lines issues.
4. The next Serious Violence Taskforce meeting is planned for 11 June 2018. Ahead of this meeting, we have asked councils to send through some case studies on tackling serious violence crime to highlight examples of best practice, which we will subsequently share with our member councils.

Serious Violence Strategy – An overview

5. The Strategy is concerned with specific types of violent crime, including homicide, knife crime and gun crime. It also highlights the emerging crime threats such as the use of corrosive substances as a weapon and the violence around moped enabled crime. The Strategy will focus on areas of criminality with gangs, county lines drug dealing and robbery.
6. The Strategy recognises that serious violent crime is a national problem, with all forces seeing an increase in serious violence. It calls upon key partners at a local, regional and national level to help prevent this type of crime.
7. It's important to note the LGA has been a member of the Home Office's action group on two-wheeled powered vehicle crime. LGA representatives have also attended Home Office-led meetings on other forms of violent crime, such as knife crime, county lines drug dealing and acid attacks. We are mentioned as part of the County Lines action plan in the Serious Violence Strategy as helping disseminate best practice locally and nationally.

8. Due to the relatively small number of individuals committing the majority of crime and serious violence, the Strategy indicates there is a large potential benefit to preventative intervention. The Strategy suggests that cost benefit analysis shows preventative interventions offer value for money, help to reduce incidents of crime and lead to better health, education and employment outcomes.
9. The Strategy does not include issues such as domestic abuse or child sexual exploitation and abuse, as there are separate work programmes looking at these issues. There will be links with the forthcoming refresh of the Serious and Organised Crime Strategy expected to be published in the coming months.
10. There are four key themes in the Strategy:
 - 10.1 Tackling county lines and misuse of drugs;
 - 10.2 Early intervention and prevention;
 - 10.3 Supporting communities and partnerships; and
 - 10.4 Effective law enforcement and criminal justice response.
11. The Strategy proposes a number of new commitments and initiatives of direct relevance to councils, including:

Tackling county lines and misuse of drugs

12. There is a commitment to deliver the second phase of activity under the County Lines Action Plan to consolidate and build on the work undertaken to date and address new and specific threats and challenges. £3.6 million will be provided to support the development of the new National County Lines Co-ordination Centre. The Home Office will continue to work with the CPS and NPCC lead on the prosecution of county lines encouraging the use of Modern Slavery Act offences where appropriate.
13. There will be county lines practitioners' guidance and a nationwide media campaign to raise awareness of the threat of county lines to young and vulnerable people. The Home Office will update the Working Together to Safeguard Children and Keeping Children Safe in Education guidance to reflect the risks to children of serious violence including serious risk of harm associated with county lines. The LGA is mentioned in the County Lines Action Plan as supporting the dissemination of best practice on this issue. We have worked with the Home Office to agree the wording in the Strategy.
14. Action will be taken on county lines mobile phones lines and restricting drugs supply, through partnership action to tackle heroin and crack use in targeted areas. The Home Office will support the role of the Recovery Champion in providing leadership and advice on standards of provision for drug treatment. We have said it will be important for the police to work with local government and public health services to ensure the relevant support services are in place, should targeted action be taken in the local area.

15. Following the launch of the Serious Violence Strategy, the LGA has planned a [county lines conference](#) on 12 July 2018 to share examples of best practice in local government of tackling county lines issues and criminal child exploitation. The Home Office will be speaking at this event.

Early intervention and prevention

16. Both Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) and Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) will have access to the new Early Intervention Youth Fund (£11 million over two years), to help support youth and community groups providing intervention programmes in England and Wales. The bidding process is still to be agreed, but there is likely to be an element of match-funding.
17. We welcome the additional funding provided to Community Safety Partnerships as part of the Early Intervention Youth Fund. We have previously emphasised the importance of providing CSPs with the opportunity to make larger funding bids, on a sub-regional and regional basis and in partnership with PCCs or other key partners, rather than 'penny packets' which often can only be used to fund short term, one off interventions.
18. Young people involved in or at risk of being involved in gangs and serious violence will have access to more intensive, tailored support through early access to the DWP Work and Health Programme.
19. The Home Office will work closely with the Department for Education to consider what further specific actions may be needed to support Looked After Children at risk of criminal exploitation and being drawn into crime. The Home Office will work with the NPCC and the Department for Education to improve police-school relationships, so children do not feel the need to carry weapons for protection.
20. The Home Office will roll out Liaison and Diversion services in police stations and courts to help improve outcomes for people in mental health crisis, and provide face-to-face support for parents of children with mental health problems and improve early interventions on young people with mental health issues.
21. In our response to this announcement, we have said the action to tackle the crisis in children and young people's mental health is long overdue. Children who are in need of support have to wait 18 months before they receive vital services and guidance, which is unacceptable. As part of our Bright Futures campaign, we are calling on the Government to deliver long-term root and branch reform on children's mental health and ensure the system speeds up, rather than delays, children asking for help. We want to ensure children can access the support as early as they need without having to go on a waiting list, as well as reduce overall demand on specialist services. The Government's green paper on children's mental health is an opportunity to address this important issue, and we will continue to work with the Government on this.
22. The Home Office will continue to support and fund the Young People's Advocates scheme working with gang-affected young women and girls, and explore whether the model should be expanded to other areas.

23. The Government will refresh the Missing Strategy and publish an implementation plan to reflect those who go missing in the context of county lines criminality.

Partnerships and local communities

24. The Knife Crime Community fund will provide further rounds of funding to community groups to prevent knife crime in 2018/19 and 2019/20.
25. Support will be provided to Community Safety Partnerships to take a leading role in strengthening local links and sharing information. The Home Office will support CSPs by hosting conferences to bring partnerships together to share best practice and innovation.
26. PCCs will be expected to prioritise and identify what action they are taking against serious violence in their annual Police and Crime Plan. The Home Office will also look at opportunities to expand the role of PCCs in relation to public health. This is somewhat concerning as PCCs have been expressing interest in councils' public health funding. The commissioning of drug and alcohol treatment should not be solely viewed through the prism of offending. There are lots of people who receive treatment who are not involved in offending, and taking the money from public health will compromise councils' ability to address wider public health issues.
27. PCCs and CSPs will be encouraged to take a leading role in strengthening local links to best make use of the information gathered through the Information Sharing to Tackle Violence Initiative.
28. Strategic reviews will be available to local areas through the Ending Gang Violence and Exploitation (EGVE) programme, and funding will be provided to support community projects tackle gang related violence and knife crime through the EGVE fund. There will be action plans for promoting police guidance and training on acid attacks, moped enabled crime, social media abuse and firearms.
29. The Home Office will encourage smaller independent retailers to join the voluntary commitment on the responsible sales of corrosive substances, including not selling products containing the most harmful substances to under 18s. Sulphuric acid will be added to the list of substances subject to the Poisons Act 1972 to restrict access to it. The Home Office have also commissioned the University of Leicester to research the range of motivations for those who carry and use acid and corrosives for criminal activity.

Law enforcement and the criminal justice system

30. Trading Standards teams will be supported to undertake prosecutions of retailers who sell knives to under-18s through developing a specific prosecution fund to support this activity. In our response to this announcement, we have highlighted that trading standards has experienced significant cuts since 2009 – in common with many other council services. Trading standards teams face the particular challenge of trying to balance a range of local and national objectives, and are subject to a growing list of additional responsibilities given to them by Government without adequate additional funding.

31. Tackling knife crime is a key priority in a number of areas and it is useful the Government is providing funding to support prosecution against online and in-store retailers relating to knife crime. However, with staffing capacity significantly reduced across the service, there will be challenges in some places with resourcing the test purchasing operations that will lead to prosecutions, as well as with balancing this with competing priorities. This important service needs to be properly funded to enable it to take action on the wide range of public safety issues for which it is responsible.
32. There will be a greater focus on serious violence within the existing Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and the Fire and Rescue Service police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy (PEEL) inspection reports from 2018. The Home Office will also work with HMIC to support a thematic inspection of county lines in 2018-19.
33. The Home Office will work with the NPCC lead to implement preventative measures in respect of online video platforms encouraging gang related violence and take action against illegal material posted online.
34. The Home Office will continue tightening up legislation on knives, corrosive substances and firearms, including action in relation to online sale of knives.
35. The Home Office will develop the Victims Strategy to recognise the importance of, and need for, a joined-up approach across Government in supporting victims.

Delivering impact and next steps

36. The Home Office will outline the next steps for the Inter-Ministerial Group on Serious Violence (formerly the Inter-Ministerial Group on Gangs), the new cross-sector Serious Violence Taskforce and plans for the International Violent Crime Symposium to be held in autumn 2018.
37. As part of the Strategy, the Home Office will look to test and evaluate interventions to identify effectiveness in preventing victimisation and perpetration of serious violence.
38. There is also a commitment from the Home Office to deliver a series of national and regional events with key sectors to assess changes in the nature and threat of serious violence and challenge impact.

Questions to consider

39. Members may wish to raise the following questions regarding the Serious Violence Strategy:
40. The Strategy outlines details of a Prosecutions Fund which will be made available to trading standards teams. Is there any further detail on how much funding will be available through this fund and how the bidding process will work?
41. When will Community Safety Partnerships and Police and Crime Commissioners have access to the new Early Intervention Youth Fund?

42. The Home Office have committed to providing support to Community Safety Partnerships to take a leading role in strengthening local links and sharing information, by hosting conferences to bring partnerships together to share best practice and innovation. The LGA is ideally placed to share best practice in local government. Will the Home Office agree to work with the LGA on these future conferences?
43. As part of our Bright Futures campaign, the LGA has called on the Government to deliver long-term root and branch reform on children's mental health and ensure the system speeds up, rather than delays, children asking for help. In light of this, will the Home Office provide a future update on how successful the roll out of Liaison and Diversion services in police stations and courts has been?
44. The LGA is holding a conference on county lines issues in July. Would the Home Office be supportive of future events to share best practice on this issue in local government? And will the Home Office give a commitment to work with the LGA on future regional events?

Implications for Wales

45. There are Welsh representatives on the Serious Violence Taskforce to highlight their views on the Serious Violence Strategy. The LGA will continue to feedback any next steps from the Taskforce that may have an impact on the devolved regions.

Financial Implications

46. All work can be carried out using existing LGA resources.

Next steps

47. Members are asked to provide their views on the content of the strategy to help develop the LGA's supporting activities to councils on this issue.