

Serious Violent Crime - Update

Purpose of report

For discussion.

Summary

This paper provides a brief overview of the latest policy developments on serious violent crime. It accompanies the presentation from Patrick Green, Chief Executive of the Ben Kinsella Trust, who will be speaking about the work of the Trust and the impact that knife crime has on our local communities.

Appendix A provides the LGA's response to the Government's consultation on taking a multi-agency approach to tackling and preventing serious violent crime.

Recommendation

Members of the Safer and Stronger Communities Board are asked to note this paper and provide any further feedback.

Action

Officers to take forward as directed.

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Serious Violent Crime – Update

Background

Serious Violence Strategy

1. In April 2018, the Government published its [Serious Violence Strategy](#), which sets out the Government's response to serious violence and recent increases in knife crime, gun crime and homicide. The Strategy identifies the changing drugs market as one of the main drivers of the recent increase in violent crime.
2. 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.
3. There are four key themes in the Strategy:
 - 3.1 Tackling county lines and misuse of drugs;
 - 3.2 Early intervention and prevention;
 - 3.3 Supporting communities and partnerships; and
 - 3.4 Effective law enforcement and criminal justice response
4. The Home Office held a series of serious violence engagement events across the country, which focused on the local perspective to tackling serious violent crime. The LGA helped to promote these events to local government colleagues.

Serious Violence Taskforce

5. Following the publication of the Strategy, the Local Government Association was invited to become a member of the Serious Violence Taskforce. The Taskforce is a coalition of government ministers, cross-party MPs, police leaders, local government and the voluntary sector who help design and deliver the key commitments of the Serious Violence Strategy.
6. Cllr Simon Blackburn represents the Local Government Association at the Taskforce's monthly meetings. He puts forward the voice of local government and highlights the important work that councils are doing to tackle serious violence.
7. Last year, Cllr Blackburn gave a presentation to the Taskforce to provide members with a 'deep dive' account of how Blackpool has taken steps to tackle county lines issues. Cllr Blackburn touched upon a number of successful police operations, which had uncovered and disrupted county lines activity, with the help of local partners and council officers.

New legal duty consultation

8. At the Conservative Party Conference 2018, the Home Secretary Sajid Javid MP announced the Government would be taking steps to introduce a statutory duty for all agencies to tackle serious violent crime together. He said this duty would include health, education, social services, local government and housing.
9. In April 2019, the Government published its [consultation](#) on a new legal duty to support a multi-agency approach to preventing and tackling serious violence. The LGA submitted its response to the consultation on 28 May 2019. Our full response is [available here](#). We continue to liaise with the Home Office on this important issue.

Funding

10. There have been a number of Government funds allocated to tackling serious violent crime:
 - 10.1 The Trusted Relationships Fund;
 - 10.2 The Early Intervention Youth Fund; and
 - 10.3 The Prosecutions Fund.
11. The Home Secretary also announced a new £200 million youth endowment fund, which will be delivered over 10 years and will target young people at risk of starting a life of crime and violence. The fund, which is aimed at 10 to 14 year olds, will focus on those most at risk of youth violence.
12. Whilst announcements of these new Government funds are welcome, we have said this should not replace the core funding required to support integral local government services. We have called on the Government to address the local government funding gap in the upcoming Spending Review.
13. We have also called for funding to be extended beyond 2020 for the Troubled Families programme.

Independent Review of Drug Misuse

14. Alongside the announcement of a new legal duty consultation, the Home Office launched a review of the market for illegal drugs. The review will look at recreational drug use, as well as considering use by the users who cause the most harm to themselves and their communities. LGA officers are liaising with the Independent Review team to ensure there is local government engagement as part of the review.

Prime Minister's Serious Violence Summit

15. In April 2019, LGA representatives attended the Prime Minister's Serious Violence Summit and subsequent ministerial roundtable sessions on health and education. Following the Summit, the Prime Minister convened an inter-ministerial taskforce to tackle serious violence. As a member of the Home Office's Serious Violence Taskforce,

we have agreed to share best practice and learning across local government on this important issue.

16. Following the Summit, the Home Secretary [allocated](#) 18 police forces, worst affected by violent crime, the final part of a dedicated £100 million fund to bolster their operations. Around a third of the funding - £35 million – has been allocated to support the setting up of local violence reduction units (VRUs) and other preventative activity across the country. LGA officers are liaising with the Home Office on the setting up of the new local VRUs.

Serious violence inquiry

17. In May 2019, the Home Affairs Committee held an evidence session on serious violent crime, with the Minister Victoria Atkins MP. During the session, MPs highlighted the cuts to youth services and wider local government services, which they said urgently needed to be addressed in the Spending Review. Cllr Simon Blackburn also gave evidence to the committee, further details of our evidence can be found [here](#).

LGA key messages

18. Tackling serious violent crime is a key priority for councils. This has become even more vital due to the rising levels of this type of crime and the harm it causes to victims and communities, as well as the young people and vulnerable adults drawn and exploited into committing it.
19. Law enforcement and criminal justice measures are only part of the response needed to tackle serious violent crime. A multi-agency partnership approach is required, working across Government departments and all agencies, including local government, health, education, social services, charities, youth services and practitioners.
20. We support the World Health Organization's (WHO) definition of taking a public health approach to reducing violent crime. This approach aims to consider the underlying causes of the issue, and identify risk factors which can then be addressed.
21. By identifying the early indicators and risk factors of serious violence, this can help key agencies to implement the right interventions and divert individuals away from violent crime. This requires a greater investment in early intervention and prevention initiatives.
22. Councils need sustainable, long-term funding commitments to ensure that they can develop programmes that will consistently protect and care for our communities, particularly those that are vulnerable.
23. Whilst new Government funds to address serious violence are welcome, this should not replace the core funding required to support integral local government services.
24. Councils are currently face a funding gap of £8 billion by 2025, of which £3.1 billion is attributed to children's services. We have called for this funding gap to urgently be addressed in the Government's upcoming Spending Review.

LGA's work on this issue (2018/2019)

County Lines Working Group

25. In addition to our membership of the Serious Violence Taskforce, the LGA is a member of the Home Office's County Lines Working Group. At the last meeting, we received an update on the new Department for Education Unit which has been set up to support councils on issues concerning modern slavery, child criminal exploitation, child sexual exploitation and county lines. The LGA is mentioned in the Home Office's County Lines Work Plan, published in the Serious Violence Strategy.

Home Affairs Committee inquiry

26. In January 2019, following our [written evidence submission](#), Cllr Simon Blackburn gave oral evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee, as part of their [inquiry on serious violent crime](#). Cllr Blackburn highlighted the importance of tackling the root causes of serious violent crime, through early intervention and prevention initiatives, which require sustainable and long-term Government funding. The LGA have submitted [supplementary written evidence](#) to the committee, outlining some of the LGA's key recommendations.

Violence and Vulnerability Partnership Board

27. In January 2019, LGA officers visited Southend's Violence and Vulnerability Partnership Board, which brings together partners from community safety, safeguarding, university and schools, health, housing and local community groups. The aim of the board is to identify children, young people and vulnerable adults who are at higher risk of exploitation and grooming, particularly vulnerable to criminal exploitation, and who require additional support and safeguarding. This work is supported by the Violence and Vulnerability Unit, which has conducted a number of local government peer reviews.

International Violent Crime Symposium

28. Cllr Anita Lower, Vice-Chair of the LGA's Safer and Stronger Communities Board, attended the International Violent Crime Symposium in November 2018. The symposium was organised by the Home Office to bring together best practice and guidance from other countries who have taken steps to tackle serious violent crime. There was a presentation from the World Health Organization on taking a public health approach to tackling serious violence, which the LGA has been supportive of in recent briefings.

Trusted Relationships Fund

29. The LGA hosted a best practice event with the successful local government bid leads of the Trusted Relationships Fund. The fund has been set up by the Home Office to help youth workers, police, nurses and other professionals form close, protective relationships with children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation, county lines gang crime or relationship abuse. The LGA will continue to work with the Home Office and the bid leads to share best practice and learning.

Meeting with Redthread

30. Cllr Blackburn met with the Chief Executive of Redthread, a youth work charity based in London that supports young people aged 11–25 in their personal and social development. Their projects look at health-based interventions and support for younger people at the ‘teachable moment’ to help steer them away from a life of crime. We will continue working together as members of the Serious Violence Taskforce.

Serious Organised Crime Strategy

31. The Government released its new [Serious Organised Crime Strategy](#), which sets out how it will target and undermine crime networks and protect victims from its impacts. As we said in [our response](#), long-term investment in local services is crucial to enabling us to identify signs of exploitation and intervene at an early stage. Only with the right funding and powers can councils continue to make a difference to people’s lives, by supporting families and young people, and helping to tackle serious violent crime in our local communities.

LGA’s report on family violence and youth offending

32. In our report on [family violence and links with youth offending](#), the LGA has identified certain risk factors that could affect a child or young person being exploited or involved in violent crime. These could include frequent truancy, level of poverty/deprivation, delinquent peers, and experiences of family violence.

Knife sales

33. With the latest official figures showing a 40 per cent rise in knife crime in England and Wales in the past two years, we [called](#) for plans in the Government’s Serious Violence Strategy to fund councils to prosecute retailers for breaches of knife sale laws to be brought forward as soon as possible. This is alongside our wider campaigning for councils’ vital work in early intervention and public health to be recognised and properly funded.

Gang’s Summit

34. In February 2019, LGA officers attended a Gang’s Summit, chaired by the Children’s Commissioner for England Anne Longfield. Ahead of the Summit, the Children’s Commissioner published the following report on [“improving safeguarding response to gang violence and criminal exploitation”](#), which the LGA responded to [here](#). The aim of the Summit was to bring together those working on the Government response to violence and those tasked with protecting children at a local level.

Crimestoppers County Lines Campaign

35. In July 2018, Crimestoppers launched a campaign in towns across England to provide the public with information about county lines and how they can help. We helped publicise the campaign to local authorities through our various LGA communications channels.

County Lines Conference

36. In July 2018, Cllr Simon Blackburn co-chaired the [LGA's conference on county lines - tackling criminal child exploitation](#). Attendees had the opportunity to hear from speakers from the Home Office, the National County Lines Coordination Centre, the Violence and Vulnerability Unit, the Children's Society and from councils who have been leading the way on this important issue. Cllr Blackburn continues to outline local government views at the County Lines Working Group.

The Offensive Weapons Bill

37. The LGA briefed peers ahead of the House of Lords debates on the Offensive Weapons Bill, which focused on the introduction of Knife Crime Prevention Orders (KCPOs). In [our briefing](#), we highlighted the rising demand and reductions to central government funding mean that children's services departments face a £3.1 billion funding gap by 2025.

Breaking the cycle of youth violence – LGA report

38. In March 2019, we published our LGA report on '[Breaking the Cycle of Youth Violence](#)'. The report contains a number of case studies which demonstrate how councils and their partners are taking the lead on tackling youth violence and intervening early to divert young people away from a life of serious violent crime.

Violent Crime workshop

39. LGA officers attended a violent crime workshop, held jointly by the Home Office and the OSCT Joint Security and Resilience Centre. The workshop focused on possible solutions to tackle the use of offensive weapons and how to improve detection of bladed articles and corrosive substances. The Home Office will publish a summary of the workshop sessions shortly.

National County Lines Coordination Centre Conference

40. In April 2019, Cllr Anita Lower, Vice-Chair of the LGA's Safer and Stronger Communities Board, spoke at the National County Lines Coordination Centre Conference, hosted by the National Crime Agency. Cllr Lower emphasised the importance of working in partnership to help tackle serious violence and county lines activity. She called for greater investment in prevention and early intervention services to help break the cycle of youth violence.

The Ben Kinsella Trust – background information

41. The Ben Kinsella Trust is a charity which aims to tackle knife crime through education and campaigning. The charity was formed in the name of Ben Kinsella, who was 16 years old when he was stabbed to death, in a horrific act of violence, which took place in Islington in 2008. Since the Trust was founded, it has been responsible for many changes and achievements in the battle against knife crime.

42. The Trust aims to:

42.1 Raise public awareness of knife-crime;

42.2 Educate children of all ages of the consequences of knife crime and the devastating effect that it has on families; and

42.3 Build youth centres in Ben's name.

43. The Trust runs a number of workshops for primary and secondary school children. The workshops educate children about the consequences of carrying a knife and how to make positive choices to stay safe. They also run workshops for ex-offending young people, all female workshops and for 13-19 year-olds who are need additional support to build up their self-confidence to enable them to make more positive lifestyle choices.

44. In January 2019, Cllr Simon Blackburn visited the Ben Kinsella Trust site in Islington to learn more about their early intervention programmes with children and young people, which help to raise awareness of the consequences of knife crime and serious violence. We have invited the CEO of the Ben Kinsella Trust, Patrick Green OBE, to present to the Safer and Stronger Communities Board meeting in June 2019.

Possible questions (in response to Patrick Green's presentation)

45. Has there been enough research and investment into early intervention initiatives which might help to divert a young person away from crime?

46. What more could be done, beyond the commitments outlined in the Serious Violence Strategy, to help tackle serious violent crime?

47. When is the best time to intervene with a child or young person, in order to have a positive impact on how at risk they are to criminal exploitation?

48. How important is educating children and young people about the risk factors/warning signs of criminal exploitation?

Financial Implications

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

Next steps

50. Officers to note any feedback from Board Members and take forward any future work, as directed.