

18 March 2019

Update Paper

Purpose of report

For information.

Summary

The report outlines issues of interest to the Board not covered under the other items on the agenda.

Recommendation

Members of the Safer and Stronger Communities Board note the update.

Action

Officers to progress as appropriate.

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Update Paper

Serious Violent Crime

Knife Crime

1. In January, 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.

Home Affairs Committee Inquiry

2. In January, 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 recommendations.

Serious Violence Taskforce

3. In February, Cllr Simon Blackburn attended the Serious Violence Taskforce meeting, which is chaired by the Home Secretary. The meeting focused on the introduction of Knife Crime Prevention Orders and the Home Office updated on the impact of their #knifefree campaign.

Public Health Approach to Tackling Serious Violent Crime

4. LGA officers have been liaising with the Home Office ahead of their formal consultation on a new legal duty to tackle serious violent crime. We have put forward the views of the Safer and Stronger Communities lead members, and will provide a full update to the Board in due course. The consultation is expected to be published shortly.

Gang's Summit

5. In February, 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.

The Offensive Weapons Bill

6. 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. We also called for the Government to conduct a full assessment to assess the potential impact to youth offending teams and other bodies who will be expected to supervise

18 March 2019

compliance with KCPOs. The Government amendments passed. The LGA will continue to highlight our key messages on this important issue.

Breaking the Cycle of Youth Violence – LGA report

7. In March, 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.

County Lines Working Group

8. In February, LGA officers attended the Home Office's County Lines Working Group. We received an update on the new Department for Education Unit which is being set up to support councils on issues concerning modern slavery, child criminal exploitation, child sexual exploitation and county lines. A formal announcement is expected in the coming weeks.

Violent Crime Workshop

9. 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.

Domestic Abuse/ Violence Against Women and Girls

Violence Against Women and Girls Event

10. In January, Cllr Simon chaired a joint LGA and Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) event on tackling violence against women and girls (VAWG). There were presentations from local authorities and PCCs sharing best practice on this important issue, with a keynote speech from Northumbria PCC Dame Vera Baird and representatives from the Home office.

National Oversight Group on Domestic Abuse

11. In February, Cllr Anita Lower attended the National Oversight Group on Domestic Abuse. The meeting focused on the proposals for the draft Domestic Abuse Bill and HMIC's inspection of the police's response to domestic abuse.

Draft Domestic Abuse Bill

12. The Government has published its [Draft Domestic Abuse Bill](#) and [consultation response](#), as well as a briefing which outlines the economic and social [costs of domestic abuse](#). The Government has confirmed a joint committee of both Houses of Parliament will be set up to examine the Bill before it is debated. In our [response](#) we highlighted the importance of funding vital earlier support services and prevention schemes to help stop domestic abuse occurring in the first place.

18 March 2019

Forced Marriage Consultation

13. The LGA has submitted a joint [response](#) with the Association of Directors of Children's Services and the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services to the Home Office's [consultation](#) on preventing and tackling forced marriage. In it, we outlined councils' concerns about introducing mandatory reporting on forced marriage and called on Government to refresh the current guidance.

Anti-social Behaviour

Home Office's ASB Advisory Board

14. In February, LGA officers attended the Home Office's Anti-Social Behaviour Advisory Board. The meeting focused on the current use of the ASB 2014 powers and whether refreshed guidance was needed for the use of civil injunctions and the community trigger process. If you would like officers to raise anything at the Board, please contact Rachel Phelps (Rachel.Phelps@local.gov.uk).

Licensing

Government response to working group taxi and PHV task and finish group

15. In February the Department for Transport (DfT) published their [response](#) to the recommendations made by the taxi/ private hire vehicle (PHV) task and finish group. The response was very positive from an LGA perspective and accepted many of the group's recommendations including those that the LGA has been calling for. Most notably Government announced that they intend to legislate when time allows to introduce; national minimum standards for taxi and PHV licensing; national enforcement powers; and a national licensing database. There is also a commitment to looking at how to resolve cross-border issues in more detail with the view to legislating on this.
16. In the short term there is no commitment to a complete overhaul of the licensing regime, but the proposals should address most of the key issues for councils, and the overall regime will be considered as part of DfT's wider work on Future Mobility. The LGA will continue to push for legislation to be brought forward as soon as possible.
17. Government's response also includes a number of areas that will be picked up in new Statutory Guidance which is currently out for [consultation](#). This is the first time Statutory (as distinct to best practice) will be issued. The consultation closes on 22nd April and LGA officers are in the process of formulating a response.

Friends Against Scams – Scam Marshal update

18. Scam Marshalls, part of the National Trading Standards (NTS) Scams Team's Friends Against Scams (FAS) initiative, are volunteers who provide support to members of their community to report and recognise scams. Scam Marshalls work supports the Scams Team to disrupt and prevent scams.
19. Currently over 600 people have signed up to be a Scam Marshall with the majority of sign ups coming from local authorities and FAS partners posting about Scam Marshalls on Twitter and

18 March 2019

Facebook. Further information about the initiative, including how to sign up can be found on the FAS [website](#).

Modern Slavery

20. Sarah Thornton, current chair of the National police Chiefs Council and former chief constable of Thames Valley police, has been appointed as the new Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, and will take up the role in June. Officers are working with the Office of the IASC to identify dates when the new Commissioner will be able to meet Cllr Rhodes, the Board's modern slavery lead, and attend a future Board meeting.
21. Officers are continuing to engage with the Home Office on its reform programme for the National Referral Mechanism, with a current focus on looking at training and the role of first responder organisations, who are able to refer suspected victims into the NRM.

FGM

National FGM Centre Advisory Group meeting

22. In early March the Advisory Group for the National FGM Centre met. The meeting considered the development of the sustainability strategy of the Centre, and the ongoing membership to forward plan for the Advisory Group.

Parliamentary Screening

23. On 7 February Cllr Anita Lower attended a parliamentary screening of a new BBC film 'Defying the cutting season' depicting the use of safe houses in Tanzania to protect young girls from FGM. Following the screening Cllr Lower and Leethen Bartholomew, the Head of the National FGM Centre, were part of panel which examined prevention in the UK.

National FGM Centre events

24. The Centre recently held two conferences; one on the medico-legal perspectives on FGM; and another on safeguarding in the context of faith and culture, at which Cllr Jo Beavis spoke on behalf of the LGA. Both were well attended and well received.

Brexit

25. Officers have been working with a cross-government group of officials from MHCLG, Defra, BEIS, FSA and HMRC's Border Deliver Group to support communications to officers working in local regulatory services, particularly with regard to planning for a possible no deal.

Civil Resilience

26. Officers have worked with colleagues within the LGA and with MHCLG's Resilience and Emergencies Division to develop a light touch process for sourcing mutual aid for authorities in the event of a council leading a response and recovery to an exceptional emergency. This builds on the LGA's experience of being involved in similar work in recent years, and is intended to simplify the way in which this has worked previously.

18 March 2019

However, the LGA has emphasised to Government that the process in itself cannot overcome one of the fundamental obstacles to sourcing mutual aid, which is that councils do not generally have the capacity to free up resources for mutual aid over a sustained period of time.

Counter-Extremism

27. In January we submitted our [response](#) to the Commission for Countering Extremism's recent public call for evidence. The Commission is a non-statutory independent expert committee of the Home Office, headed up by Sara Khan as Lead Commissioner. The initial objectives for the Commission are to engage widely on extremism and Britain's values across the public sector, communities, civil society, and with legal and academic experts; produce a strategic assessment of the threat faced from extremism, and the current response; and advise Ministers on the Commission's future structures and work programme.
28. Our submission set out councils' core role in countering extremism and building cohesive and resilient communities, and how, working with communities and partner agencies, councils are best placed to understand the complexities of local issues and what works in response. The submission explores the impact of extremism on local areas, the evolving threats from extremism and how understanding, responding and building resilience to it requires a dynamic, joined-up and long-term approach at both local and national levels. It also highlights the impact of funding challenges on work to counter extremism and foster cohesion.
29. Cllr Simon Blackburn was recently invited to join the Commission's Expert Group, which will provide the Lead Commissioner with advice and challenge in her first 12 months of the Commission. Cllr Blackburn attended the Group's meeting in February to explore some of the emerging themes from the call for evidence and next steps.
30. Cllr Anita Lower chaired another successful Leadership Essentials course for elected members on counter-extremism in January and we are now preparing for the next free course on Prevent and counter-extremism in Darlington on 26-27 March. There are still places available at the March event; if you or council colleagues are interested in attending please contact grace.collins@local.gov.uk for further details.
31. In February we supported the [Special Interest Group on Countering Extremism's](#) (SIGCE) seminar on Becoming Proactive Towards the Far Right. Cllr Lower attended the event, which included sessions on the evolving nature of far-right and anti-minority extremism and engagement with communities. Outcomes from the seminar, and details of future SIGCE events, will be published on the SIGCE's online [Knowledge Hub](#).