

ITEM [5]

Report Name:	Preventing Serious Youth Violence	
Meeting:	Barnet Safer Communities Partnership Board (SCPB)	
Meeting Date:	26 th July 2019	
Enclosures:	Government response on a new legal duty to the Consultation to preventing and tackling serious youth violence.	
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Outcome Required:	Information Only	<input type="checkbox"/>
Restricted	No	

Preventing Serious Youth Violence – new legislative duty

Context

The Government's Serious Violence Strategy published in 2018 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/serious-violence-strategy>) is clear that tackling serious violence is not only a law enforcement issue, it needs a multi-agency approach involving a range of partners and agencies such as education, public health, health and social services, housing, youth and victim services with a focus on prevention and early intervention. Action should be guided by evidence of the problems and what works in tackling the root causes of violence. To do this, it is an imperative to bring organisations together to share information, data and intelligence and encourage all to work together rather than in isolation. This approach is a building block of the Government's public health approach to preventing and tackling serious violence.

The Government is also investing £100m extra funding in 2019/20 to support increased police activity to tackle knife crime. This includes the provisional allocation of £35m funding for the introduction of Violence Reduction Units (VRU) in the 18 force areas most affected by serious violence. London's VRU is hosted by Greater London Authority. <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/mayors-office-policing-and-crime-mopac/violence-reduction-unit-vru>

The proposed prevention duty will complement and assist the Violence Reduction Units in their aim of preventing and tackling serious violence, by providing a strategic platform with the right regulatory conditions to support successful delivery of this multi-agency approach, including through the extended set of partners on whom the duty will fall.

The proposed new duty that Government invited responses on suggested three options:

- Option 1: New duty on specific organisation to have due regard to the prevention and tackling of serious violence
- Option 2: New duty to legislate through Community Safety Partnership
- Option 3: A voluntary, non-legislative approach

Government has now closed consultation and published their response on 15th July (Appendix I). In summary, it is suggested to introduce primary legislation for statutory organisation and authorities to have 'duty to collaborate and plan to prevent serious youth violence' rather than to have 'due regard'.

This change will ensure that the duty is the responsibility of agencies and bodies rather than individual professionals and to provide the necessary clarity around what is expected, while still enabling those organisations the freedom to decide how to best discharge this duty in their local area. It is also suggested to leave to local areas to define a scope of serious youth violence providing that, as a minimum, definition described in the Strategy is used.

Option 2 was not seen as favourable because Community Safety Partnership Boards (CSPB) function differently across the country and quality of partnership engagement that drives joint working is variable.

It is therefore intended, instead of introducing primary duty for prevention for the CSPB, to introduce legislation to amend section 6(1) of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 which sets out the strategies Community Safety Partnerships must formulate and implement, to explicitly include serious violence. By ensuring Community Safety Partnerships formulate and implement a serious violence strategy it would ensure that it remains a priority at a local level.

Combining this amendment to the Crime and Disorder Act, with a new duty on specific organisations or authorities, would also enable Community Safety Partnerships to raise the issues to a higher strategic level as necessary given that in some local areas there are a significant number of Community Safety Partnerships and this may make it difficult for other partners to engage with them effectively.

Next steps

The Government will publish guidance supporting the new legislation to assist statutory agencies to effectively deliver a multi-agency public health approach. The guidance will highlight best practice and explain how different partnership models can work in practice, including with Violence Reduction Units. In doing so, the importance of involving the voluntary, community and faith sectors will be emphasised, recognising the key contribution that they are able to make in this area, but also allowing for flexibility to ensure that appropriate organisations are working together to tackle the specific challenges faced across England and Wales.

In Barnet, the focus on preventing Serious Youth Violence has been overseen by Barnet Safeguarding Partnership <https://thebarnetscp.org.uk/bscp/professionals/adolescent-risk> through a Vulnerable Adolescent Strategy and a range of initiative including REACH.

Our local work should build on these successes. Insight and Intelligence network has been tasked by the Council Management Team to summarise the evidence locally, scope and map current activities across the borough

and highlight potential gaps where prevention interventions and partnership working could be strengthened.

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