

Committee(s):	Date(s):
Safer City Partnership	20 May 2019
Subject: Serious violence: new legal duty to support multi-agency action - Government consultation	Public
Report of: Community Safety Team	For Information
Summary	
<p>The Government has published a consultation document on options for supporting a multi-agency or public health approach to tackling serious violence. This consultation includes options for the introduction of a new legal duty and a non-legislative option for partners to work together voluntarily to prevent and tackle serious violence https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/serious-violence-new-legal-duty-to-support-multi-agency-action</p> <p>Option one: New duty on specific organisations to have due regard to the prevention and tackling of serious violence</p> <p>Option two: New duty through legislating to revise Community Safety Partnerships</p> <p>Option three: A voluntary non-legislative approach</p> <p>Recommendation(s)</p> <p>Members are asked to support option two.</p> <p>The Community Safety Team will submit a response by the end of the closing date on 28 May 2019.</p>	

Background

1. The Home Office is proposing a new legal duty to support a multi-agency or public health approach to tackling serious violence. This would involve a range of partners and agencies such as education, health, social services, housing, youth and victim services, and offender management, as well as the voluntary and charitable sector.

Why is the Government proposing this new legal duty?

2. This proposal comes in the wake of major new measures to tackle violent crime outlined by the Home Secretary which builds on the Government's Serious Violence Strategy published in April 2018. These measures include:
 - Early Intervention Youth Fund which encourages partnership working between the police and community safety teams by providing funding to support early intervention and prevention with young people - a rise in knife crime, gun crime and homicide driven by male on male offending alongside a shift to youth offending. The Strategy also outlines other risk factors that can impact on an individual's vulnerability and susceptibility to becoming a victim of serious violence including domestic abuse and substance misuse.
 - Independent review of drug misuse - a rise in serious violence driven by an increase in crack cocaine use since 2014 and the growth of county lines in which drug selling gangs from major urban areas have sought to exploit markets elsewhere.
3. The Government's multi-agency or public health approach should include targeted interventions in local communities that are guided by evidence of the problems and what works in tackling their root causes. This approach requires organisations to share information, data and intelligence, and work in concert rather than in isolation.
4. The consultation paper illustrates this point by referring to the Wales and Scottish Governments and how they recognise that policing and public health are inextricably linked i.e. police responding to complex social issues, health and wellbeing more so than crime. Wales has adopted five ways of working to tackle serious violence: prevention, collaboration, involvement, integration and long-term focus. Wales also promotes the value of 'robust research and evidence to inform and test solutions drawing on the multi-agency perspectives and assets of wider partners to most usefully contribute towards shared priorities.' The Government highlights this distinction as part of the consultation process.

Community Safety Partnerships

5. As part of this consultation process, the Government is interested in views about how this new duty could be imbedded into existing partnerships, leading on safeguarding or Community Safety Partnerships (CSP). CSPs already have a very important role to play in preventing and tackling serious violence. CSP are under a statutory duty (established under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998) to work together and include other local partners including business representatives and the voluntary and community sector. In addition, Serious and Organised Crime Partnership Boards were introduced through the Serious and Organised Crime Strategy in 2013. Membership of partnership is on a voluntary basis and are led by the police force or local authority. The City

of London's SOC Board meets with partners on a quarterly basis and the City of London Police also meets with SOC partnership representatives.

6. In addition to CSP, the Government's consultation refers to the multi-agency working arrangements of Health and Wellbeing Boards (HWB). They too have a statutory duty to encourage the integrated delivery of health and social care to advance the health and wellbeing of people in their area. Therefore, HWB can play a significant role in preventing and tackling violence in collaboration with CSP and local partners.
7. The Home Office is asking which of the three proposed options do we consider would best achieve the consultation vision?
 - Option One: New duty on specific organisations to have due regard to the prevention and tackling of serious violence.
 - Option Two: New duty through legislating to revise CSPs.
 - Option Three: A Voluntary Non-legislative approach.
8. Option one - this is the preferred option of central government. It requires legislation to place a new duty on specific organisations or specific functions and to have due regard to the prevention and tackling of serious and organised crime. Specific organisations would include local authorities, criminal justice institutions, education, child care institutions, health and social care bodies and the police. There are some disadvantages to this option including too much variation between areas and the requirement for primary legislation might be slower to implement than options two and three. It is not entirely clear how these new structures would operate in relation to CSPs.
9. Option two - a new duty through legislation to amend CSPs to ensure they have a strategy for preventing and tackling serious violence. Such partnerships would need to reflect the range of organisations that need to be involved in preventing and tackling serious violence. This option differs from option one as it directly commits organisations to become members of a partnership i.e. a CSP rather than requiring organisations to have 'due regard' to preventing and tackling serious violence. For this option to succeed, CSPs must also have strong and effective links with other multi-agency partnerships.
10. Option three - this option is to encourage areas to voluntarily engage in a multi-agency approach instead of, or to complement, introducing a new statutory duty. This would involve bringing together a range of organisations and partners that are integral to an effective multi-agency approach to preventing and tackling serious violence. A voluntary approach would rely on someone taking a leadership role to drive forward the work and bring together different local partnerships. This would allow local areas to manage themselves but in the absence of a specific duty serious violence may not be treated with the appropriate level of priority.

Points for consideration

11. Taking a multi-agency or public health approach in tackling and preventing violence will demand increased funding. The work of the Violence Reduction Unit in Scotland which brings together partners on preventative collaborate projects works because it receives proper investment from the Scottish Government. Since 2010 local authorities in the UK have had to absorb substantial cuts to service provision and despite the efforts made the scale and pace of these cuts over the last few years has made a significant impact on services.

12. It could be argued that this consultation is really proposing a new set of duties without providing any additional investment. For a public health approach to work it requires investment to properly fund evidence-based interventions. It could also be argued that this consultation is a refocus from cuts to outcomes rather than savings and may provide sustained support to facilitate a more strategic longer-term approach to tackling serious violence.

13. Prevention is key to tackling serious violence and therefore we do welcome this consultation's focus on prevention; vulnerable people with health and social issues who are at risk from involvement in serious violence and how best to meet the health needs of people in an integrated and holistic way.

Recommendation

14. We recommend to Members Option two:

A new duty through legislation to amend CSP to ensure they have a strategy for preventing and tackling serious violence but with the following proviso:

- Any duty imposed on local authorities from Central Government would need to be flexible to allow adaption to local issues and circumstances.

- Revising CSPs might be complicated by changes in responsibilities, requirements, geography and political structures of the area (e.g. PCCs, changes to the Probation service) but it could be said with some confidence should not be a significant hurdle for the SCP.

The CST will respond to the consultation following discussion with Members. The consultation deadline is 28 May 2019.

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