

SC/24/03

Corporate, Infrastructure and Regulatory Services Scrutiny Committee
27 June 2024

Devon Preventing Serious Violence Strategy 2024-2029

Report of the Director of Public Health, Communities and Prosperity

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Committee before taking effect.

1) Recommendation

That the Committee be asked to support and commend the Devon wide Preventing Serious Violence Strategy and note the progress made towards delivery.

2) Background

On 5 October 2023 the Scrutiny Committee received a 'Masterclass' presentation on progress towards developing a Devon wide multi-agency response to the [Serious Violence Duty](#). This report presents an update on activities, focusing on delivery of the Devon Preventing Serious Violence Strategy which outlines a 5 year approach for multiagency work to prevent serious violence in Devon.

The Serious Violence Duty was introduced through the [Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022](#) and came into effect on 31st January 2023. It places a new requirement on specified authorities (the Police, Probation, Youth Justice, Fire and Rescue, Integrated Care Boards and Local Authorities) to work together to 'prevent and reduce serious violence'. Education and Prison authorities have a separate duty 'to collaborate' with the specified authorities. Police and Crime Commissioners have been given a convening and monitoring role to ensure specified authorities' compliance with the requirements of the Duty.

Safer Devon Partnership's Executive, chaired by the Director of Public Health, Communities and Prosperity, is providing strategic oversight for the development of a local response to the Serious Violence Duty. A tactical Preventing Serious Violence Partnership has provided ownership and steer to activities to prepare for and respond to the Duty requirements and is now charged with facilitating delivery of the Devon Preventing Serious Violence Strategy. Representation on this tactical Partnership includes all specified authorities, relevant authorities and a wide range of partner organisations and services. A diagram is provided in **Appendix A** which illustrates the governance arrangements.

The Duty required specified authorities to produce and publish, by the end of January 2024, a Needs Assessment outlining the picture of serious violence happening in their local area and a Strategy informed by this evidence base.

A comprehensive Needs Assessment was conducted in 2023 to inform Devon's Preventing Serious Violence Strategy and subsequent delivery. The Needs Assessment was informed

by quantitative and qualitative data and lived experiences shared by young people in Devon.

Alongside specified and relevant authorities, a varied range of local partners were involved in developing the Needs Assessment and subsequently the Strategy.

Following formal sign off by all specified authorities, including [Devon County Council](#), both documents have been published on the [Safer Devon website](#).

In recognition of the multifaceted nature of serious violence and the importance of a whole systems approach, the Strategy has been developed with reference to activities taking place across Devon's Strategic Partnerships; including the Devon Drug and Alcohol Strategic Partnership, the Devon Safeguarding Children's Partnership; the Devon Youth Justice Partnership and the Devon Interpersonal and Gender-based Violence and Abuse Partnership.

The importance of alignment with the latter is underlined by the prominence of domestic violence and abuse within Devon's profile of serious violence. The decision of Cabinet on 10 April 2024 to approve the recommissioning of an integrated Domestic Abuse Service in Devon from 1 April 2025 will further strengthen Devon's response to serious violence.

3) Progress towards delivery

2.1 Overview of the Strategy

The multiagency Preventing Serious Violence Strategy outlines Safer Devon's 5 year framework for preventing and reducing serious violence in Devon. It is grounded in a public health approach to violence prevention, recognising that addressing the root causes of violence is crucial for prevention. It acknowledges that violence prevention is a long term ambition requiring sustained preventative focus, system leadership, commitment and investment.

The Strategy recognises that Devon has some foundations in place to support a preventative response to serious violence and that we are well placed to build on work initiated in recent years.

The Strategy presents 5 core and 2 cross-cutting priorities for delivery from 2024-29. The focus of these priorities is guided by a people and place-based approach, supporting the allocation of delivery and resource where need is greatest. This includes identification of groups and places where specific focus would be beneficial, based on the Needs Assessment findings.

In line with the Serious Violence Duty's concentration on public space youth violence and its causes, throughout the Strategy and its delivery attention is predominantly given to children, young people and families, although adults with multiple disadvantages have also been identified as a group of focus given their prominence within the Needs Assessment.

A summary of the Strategy, including vision, priorities and an overview of its people and place-based focus, can be found in **Appendix B**.

2.2 Delivery

Strategy delivery builds on foundational work initiated in recent years by the Safer Devon Partnership, Devon's District Community Safety Partnerships and wider partners to support a preventative response to serious violence. This includes the development of interventions funded through the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner's Serious Violence Prevention Partnership Grant (ended in March 2024) and the Home Office Serious Violence Grant (the last confirmed grant will end in March 2025).

Led by Devon's Preventing Serious Violence Partnership, the focus of delivery to date has centred on identifying and progressing actions under Strategy priorities for the 2024-25 financial year alongside consideration of longer-term activities.

Delivery for 2024-25 comprises interventions funded through the Home Office Serious Violence Grant and further actions resourced through alternative funding streams or in-kind arrangements.

Identification and progression of actions is an iterative process and, given the complexity of certain actions and considerations spanning local and regional geographies, in some cases work to define scope, ownership and scale is ongoing.

Decisions over delivery are being driven by the following:

- Alignment to core priorities and principles of the Strategy
- Developing actions with clear and realistic timeframes, measures and outcomes
- Prioritising gaps in current provisions and system responses
- A multiagency approach to leadership and delivery
- Sustainability

Examples of actions being progressed against the Strategy priorities:

- Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) – development of a strategy/improvement plan to inform practice and provision that sets out vision and identifies potential short, medium and long term priorities to improve processes, protocols and approaches/practices between and across partners. Alongside this, delivery of training and supervision to key organisations to develop specific knowledge and skills to improve support for children and young people with identified SLCN.
- Young Person's Behaviour Change Service - 1:1 behaviour change intervention programme for young people who have experienced domestic abuse in their home and are beginning to demonstrate harmful behaviours towards a family member or intimate partner. The programme provides skills to break cycles of harm and restore healthy relationships. Additionally, upskilling is being provided for key partner agencies in the Young Person's Behaviour Change model, embedding it in Devon's approach for families affected by domestic abuse.
- Children affected by parental imprisonment / offending - commissioning of specialist training to equip youth service and Early Help practitioners with skills to support young people experiencing parental imprisonment, with the aim of embedding learning in

these roles. Space Youth Service will also be delivering a support programme for young people affected by parental imprisonment / offending, using schools as a route for engagement.

- Intervention Clinics - Devon and Cornwall Police initiative creating opportunities to support young people under the age of 18 who have carried out an offence for the first time or who are on the periphery of doing so. The clinics adopt a child-first, trauma-informed and whole family approach. With consent, young people are referred to services offering support and intervention opportunities.
- [Let's Talk](#) – continued development of information and support sessions for parents and carers, focusing on the challenges young people are facing today and tools to help support them. Bespoke sessions are being developed for parents and carers of children and young people with Special Educational Needs, using a co-development approach.
- [Devon Schools Wellbeing Partnership](#) – development of a universal digital resource for all schools in Devon, led by Public Health and supported by a multiagency steering group. Supplementary components include one year's free PSHE Association subscription for schools and development of a training and resource offer, covering topics like trauma.
- Community Protection Warnings (CPWs) pilot – extension / introduction of pilots in South Hams, Teignbridge, West, East and Mid Devon, respectively. CPWs are being introduced as a prevention and early intervention approach to anti-social behaviour and serious violence, utilising District Council Anti-Social Behaviour Officers and delivered in partnership with local agencies. Positive results from the initial pilot in South Hams, West Devon and Teignbridge indicate strong compliance and a positive impact on prevention.

A mapping exercise is currently underway to capture activities taking place across local systems with contributions to serious violence prevention, in addition to those being progressed through the Strategy. This will support our understanding of the local preventative 'offer', gaps, and opportunities for joint working.

The mapping has identified a number of activities being led by Devon County Council, other specified authorities and wider partners, including those outlined below.

- Step One (Devon County Council, Early Help) - programme working with young people and families to strengthen the transition from primary to secondary school. Personalised support will be provided to families, including liaison with schools to support young people's transition to year 7, support where a young person may have additional needs, family strengthening and opportunities through community projects, sports clubs and youth groups.
- [High Flow \(One Northern Devon Partnership\)](#) – located in Northern Devon, High Flow is a 'whole system whole person' approach to working with people with complex needs and multiple disadvantages who frequently access public services. The approach provides personalised and holistic support to better meet people's needs, using learning to improve the future system response.

- Safer Places, Safer Spaces (South Devon and Dartmoor CSP) – Teignbridge-based project developed in partnership with Young Devon and Space Youth Service to tackle violence by building resilience in communities with a focus on young people, women and girls. Work has focused on making town centres feel safer for all and changing the culture of misogyny through a whole community approach, including healthy relationships work with young people in schools. The project was resourced through the Government Levelling Up Fund.

4) Strategic Plan

Delivery against the Preventing Serious Violence Strategy aligns with the vision and priorities in the Council's Strategic Plan 2021 – 2025 (<https://www.devon.gov.uk/strategic-plan>). This includes:

- Be ambitious for children and young people

The Strategy identifies children, young people and their families as a primary focus group and prioritises activities taking a preventative, strengths based approach to building resilience and increasing safety from serious violence throughout the life course.

Additionally, the Strategy gives specific focus to children in care and care leavers and children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. This includes identifying activities with a positive direct impact on these groups. Examples include working with Justice and Corporate Parenting leads to explore opportunities to strengthen support for care experienced young people and young adults in the justice system, and funding specialist Speech, Language and Communication Needs training and supervision for practitioners to increase the identification and support of these needs in young people.

- Tackle poverty and inequality (address poverty, health and other inequalities)

The Needs Assessment and Strategy identify poverty and inequality as important drivers of serious violence. This includes the gendered nature of violence and its impacts.

The Strategy outlines a place-based approach to delivery, enabling focus on communities and locations whose experiences of violence and factors known to influence occurrence may be disproportionate. Specific actions focus on groups with protected characteristics, namely age, gender, disability and care leavers. Opportunities to strengthen consideration of equality, diversity and intersectionality during delivery are currently being explored. This includes work to strengthen our evidence base around the experiences of groups with protected characteristics.

- Improve health and wellbeing, including any public health impacts

Through adopting a public health approach to preventing serious violence, the strategy will focus on addressing the root causes of violence in our communities and

building protective factors against victimisation and involvement in violence throughout the life course. This holistic approach will also contribute to the broader social wellbeing of communities and support the personal wellbeing and life chances of our young people, families and adults. Actions delivering strong public health impacts include work supporting children affected by parental imprisonment and offending, and the Devon Schools Wellbeing Partnership.

- Help communities be safe, connected and resilient

The Preventing Serious Violence Strategy will support our communities to be safe from serious violence and build resilience against factors known to influence its occurrence. This contributes to Safer Devon's wider ambition to address community safety issues negatively affecting local people and communities.

The Community Protection Warning pilot is particularly demonstrative of the positive community impacts of a preventative approach to Serious Violence, with case studies highlighting the likely benefits of CPW compliance on increased safety, reduced vulnerability to harm and reduced incidences of anti-social behaviour and violence.

5) Financial Considerations

The Home Office has provided funding to support specified authorities to prepare for and deliver the Duty. As the 'local Policing Body', the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner receives the funding and is responsible for meeting Home Office reporting and oversight responsibilities to ensure the funding is spent appropriately.

At the time of writing, we await the grant documentation but a total of £204,595 Home Office grant funding to support the specified authorities in delivering the Serious Violence Duty in Devon has been confirmed for the 2024-25 financial year. Funding is being devolved to Safer Devon and the other upper-tier Community Safety Partnerships across the peninsula, with Devon County Council acting as the financial accountable authority on behalf of the Safer Devon Partnership. Decisions regarding spend have been taken by Safer Devon Partnership's Executive as membership includes senior representatives from all specified authorities.¹

No further financial support (beyond March 25) has currently been confirmed, however, delivery of the Strategy is not solely dependent on this funding. As previously noted, delivery of the Strategy is being resourced in a range of ways.

6) Legal Considerations

Alongside other specified authorities, Devon County Council has statutory duties around serious violence prevention as described in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022. The Preventing Serious Violence Strategy provides a means for achieving these duties.

¹ The Home Office requires decisions regarding Serious Violence grant funding to be jointly taken by all specified authorities.

7) Environmental Impact Considerations (Including Climate Change, Sustainability and Socio-economic)

An initial [impact assessment](#), available on the Council's website has been completed in reference to the Strategy. It was deemed too early to assess environmental impacts at that time. Further updates to the impact assessment will follow detailing any environmental risks and benefits.

8) Equality Considerations

The initial [impact assessment](#), completed in reference to the Strategy highlighted that the experience of violence and factors that can influence its occurrence have important effects, including disproportionate effects, on groups with certain protected characteristics. It also recognised that more needs to be done to understand the lived experiences of violence for people in Devon with protected characteristics and the importance of intersectionality to these experiences.

The Strategy's priorities and people / place-based lens supports consideration of protected characteristics within delivery. Specific focus is given throughout to children and young people up to the age of 25 and their families, alongside adults experiencing multiple disadvantages (age), Special Educational Needs, Speech, Language and Communication Needs and neurodivergence (disability), the gendered occurrence of violence and its disproportionate impacts on women and girls (gender), and care leavers and care experienced young people and young adults. Delivery for 2024-25 has also prioritised strengthening the understanding of experiences of violence in ethnically diverse people and LGBTQ+ people, and intersections between hate crime and violence.

The Strategy is also sensitive to the intersectionality between protected characteristics and with wider individual, relational and socioeconomic factors, and recognises that some groups experience multiple disadvantages due to the intersection of these factors.

Further updates to the impact assessment will be made iteratively as the work progresses to provide additional detail about the considerations for, and impacts on, groups with protected characteristics.

9) Risk Management Considerations

No significant risks identified. In developing and agreeing [Devon's 5 Year Preventing Serious Violence Strategy](#) and relating action, the Council, alongside the other specified authorities, is meeting its duties in this area.

10) Summary

This report provides an update on progress towards Devon County Council's fulfilment of its statutory obligations under the [Serious Violence Duty](#), as outlined in the [Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022](#). The report focuses on delivery of the [Devon Preventing](#)

[Serious Violence Strategy 2024-29](#), this being the multiagency mechanism for delivering activities in relation to the Duty on behalf of all specified authorities.

Steve Brown

Director of Public Health, Communities and Prosperity

Electoral Divisions: All

Cabinet Member for Public Health, Communities and Equality: Councillor Roger Croad

Local Government Act 1972: List of background papers

Nil

Contact for enquiries:

Name: Julie Richards

Telephone: 01392 382534