

CX/25/06

Corporate, Infrastructure and Regulatory Services Scrutiny Committee  
27 March 2025

## **Devon Preventing Serious Violence Strategy: March 2025 update**

### **Report of the Director of Public Health and Communities**

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

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#### **1) Recommendation**

That the Committee notes the progress made towards delivery of the Devon-wide Preventing Serious Violence Strategy.

#### **2) Background**

On 27 June 2024 the Scrutiny Committee received a report updating on development of a Devon-wide multi-agency response to the [Serious Violence Duty](#), which requires 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'. The report outlined Devon's Preventing Serious Violence Strategy, a five-year approach for multiagency work to prevent serious violence in Devon.

At the request of Scrutiny members, this present report provides an interim delivery update, focusing on achievements during the first fiscal delivery year (2024-25), whilst acknowledging that full delivery data is awaiting quarter four completion.

The Government has indicated its ambition to evolve policy around preventing and responding to serious violence. Whilst details are awaiting, the government has expressed commitment to preventing serious violence in the context of young people, including plans to address crime, anti-social behaviour, exploitation and knife crime.

#### **3) Delivery update**

April 2024 – March 2025 comprises the first year of delivering Devon's 5-year Preventing Serious Violence Strategy.

The Strategy outlines seven priorities. Projects that have been progressed over the last 12 months align to one or more priorities.

##### **Core priorities**

**Priority 1:** Shape preventative responses for young people and adults who, based on their individual needs and experiences, are at greatest risk of involvement in violence, taking account of intersecting needs and the individual ways that needs may present.

**Priority 2:** Strengthen our understanding and response to contextual harms to reduce exploitation and peer group related risks.

**Priority 3:** Strengthen our early years and early help targeted offer for families where risk and vulnerability factors in relation to violence are present.

**Priority 4:** Challenge the normalisation of violence, particularly in relation to young people - supporting them to develop healthy and respectful relationships, both intimate partner and peer to peer.

**Priority 5:** Work towards creating inclusive and supportive education environments where all young people can thrive, with a focus on strengthening their wellbeing, resilience and opportunities.

### **Cross-cutting priorities**

**Priority 6:** Work towards trauma, shame and neurodivergence-informed systems.

**Priority 7:** Strengthen our learning about serious violence, needs and drivers, and what works well as prevention.

Updates on a selection of projects are summarised below.

## **Young Person's Behaviour Change Service**

### **Overview**

The Young Person's Behaviour Change Service is a one-to-one behaviour change 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.

### **Impact**

As of December 2024, 39 young people have been supported, and 37 professionals have been upskilled in child-to-parent harm and the behaviour change approach.

The service has demonstrated success in working with young people, evidenced in two independent evaluations and qualitative case studies.

- *"I learnt new types of abuse. First, I thought it was just physical or verbal but there's emotional ... He also taught me that abuse within siblings is also bad, which I never really knew because I just thought it was alright..."* (reflection from one young person supported through the service)

## **Community Protection Warnings**

### **Overview**

A Partnership approach to the issuing of Community Protection Warnings (CPWs) is being piloted in East, Mid and South Devon as a prevention and early intervention approach to serious violence and anti-social behaviour.

## **Impact**

The pilots are experiencing high compliance rates and have been used effectively to address a broad range of concerns. Case studies highlight the benefits of CPW compliance on increased safety, reduced vulnerability to harm and reduced incidences of anti-social behaviour and violence. Partners are in the process of examining the learning from the pilots to inform future practice.

## **Children affected by parental imprisonment**

### **Overview**

Originating from a consultation with young people funded by the Safer Devon Partnership in 2022/2023, Not My Sentence is a support programme for young people who have experienced a close family member being sent to prison, delivered by Space Education Support Service.

The programme includes one-to-one support provided by trained youth workers, with topics including 'understanding the justice system' and 'emotional literacy'. Delivery is guided by a 'Not My Sentence' Workbook and Handbook, developed through the 2022/23 consultation.

Training has also been commissioned to equip practitioners with skills in supporting young people impacted by parental imprisonment.

### **Impact**

As of February 2024, 91% of the young people who completed the Not My Sentence programme believe it is useful for young people who have experienced a family member going to prison.

- *"I think there is room to improve services for young people who experience a parent or close family member going to prison. It is terrifying and I didn't feel like I was given any information that I could actually understand"* (reflection from one young person supported by the programme)

Specialist training was delivered by Children Heard and Seen to 17 practitioners in July, with priority given to those working within Early Help. Evaluation forms indicate positive increases in knowledge and confidence around supporting children impacted by parental imprisonment.

### **'Is This Okay?'**

#### **Overview**

The 'Is This Okay' Harmful Sexual Behaviour Programme is a preventative, targeted and educational series of sessions that works with young people who have been highlighted by schools as being at risk of displaying Harmful Sexual Behaviours or experiencing Harmful Sexual Behaviours, both in school and within their community.

The programme is delivered by Space Education Support Service to groups of young people, over 6 weeks. The programme includes consultation, evaluations and opportunities to gather young people's lived experiences around the types of sexualised behaviour that they are being exposed to at school, online and within the community.

## **Impact**

The 6-week programme has been running since 2022 in Teignbridge, and 2024 across wider Devon and has been delivered to 134 young people in 9 secondary schools.

Reflections from young people include:

- *"What I enjoyed most was feeling like I won't be judged for what I say and being able to be myself in here."*
- *"The most useful thing about this programme was being able to speak openly about my experiences because with most adults I can't."*
- *"The most useful thing for me was knowing that I can say no instead of doing something to please other people and that it's not something to be ashamed of."*

## **Let's Talk**

### **Overview**

Let's Talk is an initiative providing sessions and resources for parents and carers, focusing on challenges teenagers and pre-teens face in today's society and ways to best support them. Focus through the Serious Violence Strategy has included delivery of sessions specific to SEND and for Dads and male carers.

### **Impact**

Let's Talk SEND/Neurodiverse sessions have been successfully delivered, aimed at parents and carers of young people with SEND or who may be neurodiverse.

The sessions saw 477 live engagements and 499 views of the recordings and received a 4.8 average rating out of 5. 97% would recommend the sessions to other parents / carers.

A series of Let's Talk Dads sessions have also been developed following engagement with Dads and male carers to gain their views on what it might be helpful to focus on. A series of four webinars is planned for March focusing on a range of topics including challenging behaviour, healthy relationships and exploitation.

## **Peer Action Collective (PAC)**

## Overview

PAC is a national programme working with young people engaged in or at risk of becoming involved in violence. This includes:

- Developing an understanding of violence and its causes through lived experience peer research
- Delivering local and national social action that leads to change
- Increasing skills and employment opportunities for young people part of the PAC

Delivery in Exeter, through City Community Trust, has focused on the role of trusted adults (outside of the family) for young people at risk of crime or violence. Peer-led research is being carried out with young people at risk of crime and violence, followed by social action work.

## Impact

Exeter PAC has identified the following findings through its peer-led research, which is being used to inform social action work

- Importance for young people having access to a range of trusted adults
- Importance of having youth provision in appropriate spaces
- Importance of supporting adults to understand and be confident in their role as trusted adults for young people
- Importance of taking a youth voice approach

## 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.

- 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.

- Improve health and wellbeing, including any public health impacts

Through adopting a public health approach to preventing serious violence, the strategy is focusing 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.

- Help communities be safe, connected, and resilient

The Preventing Serious Violence Strategy supports 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.

## **5) Financial Considerations**

The Home Office provided funding during 2024-25 to support specified authorities to prepare for and deliver the Duty. As the 'local Policing Body,' the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner received funding and is responsible for meeting Home Office reporting and oversight responsibilities to ensure the funding is spent appropriately.

Home Office grant funding was devolved to upper-tier Community Safety Partnerships across the Peninsula. The Safer Devon Partnership received £204,595, with Devon County Council acting as the financially accountable authority. Decisions regarding spend were taken by Safer Devon Partnership's Executive, whose membership includes senior representatives from specified authorities.<sup>1</sup>

Financial support for 2025-26 has very recently been confirmed. The Safer Devon Partnership is due to receive the same level of financial support as last year - £204,595. Discussions are, at the time of writing this report, in the process of being held with specified and relevant authorities to inform spending decisions.

## **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.

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<sup>1</sup> 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 [impact assessment](#), available on the Council's website was completed in reference to the Strategy. Further updates to the impact assessment will be made iteratively and will detail 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.

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 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 delivering [Devon's 5 Year Preventing Serious Violence Strategy](#), the Council, alongside the other specified authorities, continues to meet its duties in this area.

## **10) Summary**

This report provides an interim 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 progress made during the first fiscal year of 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 and Communities

**Electoral Divisions:** All

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

**Local Government Act 1972: List of background papers**

Nil

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