

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills)	Date of Meeting:	Tuesday 16 January 2024
	Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Adult Social Care)		Tuesday 23 January 2024
	Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Childrens Services & Safeguarding)		Tuesday 30 January 2024
Subject:	Serious Violence Duty		
Report of:	Assistant Director of People (Communities)	Wards Affected:	(All Wards);
Portfolio:	Communities & Housing		
Is this a Key Decision:	No	Included in Forward Plan:	No
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

The serious violence duty came into force in January 2023 and requires specified authorities to publish a strategy by January 2024 to prevent and reduce serious violence. The work in preparing the strategy on Merseyside has been coordinated by the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner. The purpose of this report is to update members on the work undertaken so far this year and seek views on the draft strategy.

Recommendation(s):

- (1) Members note the contents of the report
- (2) Make any suggestions for change to the strategy and/or local delivery plan

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

The Serious Violence Duty is a statutory duty placed on relevant authorities of which Sefton is one. It is essential that members understand the work being undertaken to reduce and prevent serious violence.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: (including any Risk Implications)

There are no alternative options

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

£101,161.68 – labour costs 2023/24
£122,302.81 – non-labour costs 2023/24

This funding has been retained and managed by the Office for the Police & Crime Commissioner to coordinate and deliver the duty across Merseyside.

(B) Capital Costs

Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets):	
Within existing resources	
Legal Implications:	
Sefton is a relevant authority and is therefore statutorily required to deliver the duty.	
Equality Implications:	
The Equality implications have been considered as part of the strategic needs assessment carried out by the Office for the Police & Crime Commissioner and have been mitigated within the strategy.	
Impact on Children and Young People: Yes	
Much of the preventive work is focused on Children and Young people as we know they are, particular vulnerable children and young people, most likely to become involved in serious violence.	
Climate Emergency Implications:	
The recommendations within this report will	
Have a positive impact	No
Have a neutral impact	Yes
Have a negative impact	No
The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors	Yes
The Duty will have a neutral impact on the climate.	

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable: Some of the most vulnerable members of our community are victims of serious violence and this strategy and delivery plan will serve to protect them.
Facilitate confident and resilient communities: The strategy and delivery plan places a huge emphasis at coproduction with our communities to make them more aware of and more resilient to serious violence
Commission, broker and provide core services:
Place – leadership and influencer:
Drivers of change and reform:
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity:
Greater income for social investment:
Cleaner Greener

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD.7492/24) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD.5592/24) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

Meetings, strategy groups, consultation focus groups, emails

Implementation Date for the Decision

Immediately following the Committee meeting.

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Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Serious Violence Timeline

Appendix 2 – Merseyside Serious Violence Draft Strategy v1

Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

1. Introduction/Background

- 1.1 Following public consultation in July 2019, the Government announced that it would introduce legislation relating to a serious violence duty. This aimed to ensure that relevant services work together to share information to target interventions, where possible through existing partnership structures, to prevent and reduce serious violence within their local communities. The Government also announced that it would amend the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to ensure that serious violence is an explicit priority for Community Safety Partnerships and by making sure they have a strategy in place to explicitly tackle serious violence.
- 1.2 Whilst the guidance does not specify a particular partnership to lead, given the categories classed as “Serious Violence” are contained within the Community Safety Strategy, it makes sense that the Safer Sefton Together (SST) is the partnership lead body for Sefton.
- 1.3 The Duty requires partners to understand the causes and consequences of serious violence, focusing on prevention and early intervention. There is a requirement to focus on root causes relevant to the local area and produce a Strategic Needs Assessment with contributions from Partners. This assessment will support local areas to prepare and implement a Serious Violence Strategy, with the ambition to prevent and reduce violent crime through tangible actions. The guidance offers case studies from partnerships that have already developed this area of work. Partners expected to form part of the strategic network include Police, Local Authorities, Fire Service, Health agencies, Youth Justice Services, Voluntary and Community Sector, Schools, and local Prisons.
- 1.4 Serious violence relates to homicide, domestic abuse, as well as all violence against the person including gun and knife crime. Partners have the flexibility to include alcohol related crime, modern slavery and violence towards women and girls if this is relevant to their area. In addition, partnerships need to focus on areas of criminality where threats are inherent, such as county lines and drug dealing territories.
- 1.5 At a Merseyside level it was agreed at strategic level that domestic abuse will not form part of the serious violence definition for the purpose of the Duty. The scale of domestic abuse cannot be underestimated, and the partnership recognise the impact of these incidents on victims, survivors, and their families, and will continue to support the pre-existing mechanisms in place across the region to oversee and govern activity to prevent domestic abuse and protect victims. The partnership will also continue to ensure preventative activity is directed at addressing underlying risk factors which are shared between domestic abuse and serious violence, to ensure a whole-systems approach to reducing risk and harm.
- 1.6 There is an expectation for partners to share data from a number of sources to develop a local picture. The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 enables permissive information sharing.

- 1.7 Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) are not a specified authority under the Duty but have an important convening role and will be expected to carry out several functions relating to the Duty. In particular PCCs will have a role in convening partners, utilising their unique position as being responsible for the totality of crime and police in a force area. The 5 Local Authorities (LA's) agreed for the Merseyside PCCs office to coordinate the production of the Serious Violence Strategic Needs Assessment and the production of a pan-Merseyside Serious Violence Strategy. The small amount of new burdens funding that accompanied the duty was partly used to fund a Coordinator post within the PCCs office.

2 Work to date

- 2.1 Appendix 1 is a timeline of the work undertaken within the last year.

2.2 Readiness Assessment

The Home Office commissioned Crest Advisory to work with each Police & Crime area to assess their readiness for the duty. Crest carried out a number of local workshops and assessed the Merseyside area as Ready & Engaged and working towards mature. It also assessed the risk of serious violence in Merseyside as

- Violence Severity – High
- Violence Vulnerability – Extremely High

- 2.3 As part of their readiness assessment work, Crest identified a need to support the relevant authorities across Merseyside to facilitate stronger co-production across existing governance structures. These workshops took place in July 2023.

2.4 Consultation

In September 2023 a consultation exercise to understand the perception of the problem, causes and consequences was undertaken. The consultation also sought to understand respondents awareness of prevention work and views on ways to improve this, as well as developing an understanding of what prevention means to different people. A universal consultation questionnaire was available to residents across Merseyside. Hosted by Liverpool City Council there was questionnaire for adults (18+) and children 11+. The links were promoted through social media and through the school network. In addition we carried out targeted engagement with cohorts identified as particularly vulnerable in the Strategic Needs Assessment (SNA).

- Youth Justice Cohort
- Turnaround Cohort
- Youth Connectors Cohort
- Making A Difference Group
- Younger Care Experienced Group
- New Beginnings Group
- Uniformed Groups
- Commissioned Youth Providers

There were only 139 respondents to the universal questionnaires (adult and school) this poor response was replicated across the other Merseyside LA's. Unfortunately this means that the consultation response is not statistically reliable. The focus groups provided much richer feedback and this has been incorporated into the strategy.

2.5 Draft Strategy

The draft strategy (Appendix 2) was received on 8 December 2023 with initial feedback requested by 22 December 2023 so the version could be sent to the designers for a more polished version to be produced by 8 January 2024.

Members will note the strategy is very high level, very text heavy and requires a significant design work to make it more reader friendly. The version we are expecting from the designers in January 2024 will contain more photographs, infographics etc.

2.6 Local Delivery Plan

Members will be most interested in what this means locally for Sefton communities. The first draft of the Delivery Plan is currently being developed and will be mapped against the high level strategic aims of the strategy but also cross referenced to the priorities contained within the Safer Sefton Together Strategy 2023-26 and will be reviewed through 2024.

There is no additional funding for LA's to deliver the duty and therefore the delivery plan will reflect the work already underway in preventing and reducing serious violence in our Communities.

2.7 Strategy Launch

The strategy will be launched by the Police & Crime Commissioner on 9 February 2024.

3. **Review & Governance**

3.1 The duty requires relevant authorities to annually review their strategy and delivery plan. Given the tight timescales encountered in implementing the strategy a full review will take place in 2024 and provide an opportunity for Overview & Scrutiny members to take an active part in that review.

3.2 The governance for the strategy and delivery plan will rest with the SST partnership.