

13 August 2019

Dear Stakeholder

SERIOUS VIOLENCE UPDATE

We are writing to you following previous correspondence on the matter of serious violence to update you regarding a number of local developments. As you will be aware concerns regarding this issue have been increasing and we are all conscious of the devastating consequences of this violence for the victims but also their families and wider communities. The impact of such violence is also felt by many organisations and tackling this issue is a key priority for the Government as part of their Serious Violence Strategy. To deliver this locally requires the collective commitment of all relevant agencies working in partnership.

Building on the Serious Violence Summit that we held in May 2019 we are now writing to update you on a number of pieces of work/funding streams relating to efforts to tackle Serious Violence in Avon and Somerset:

1. Home Office - Violence Reduction Units (£1.16m in Avon and Somerset)

You may be aware that the Home Office has set aside a £100m Serious Violence Fund for 2019/20. One element of this has been put towards the establishment of Violence Reduction Units (VRUs) and Avon and Somerset were one of the 18 forces selected to submit proposals for this investment.

We are pleased to share with you that the Home Office has awarded £1.16m funding for 19/20 to the Avon and Somerset PCC following the submission of an approved proposal for this grant. This project will see the establishment of **five Violence Reduction Units** and a **Strategic Governance Group** chaired by the PCC with membership from the OPCC, Constabulary, Public Health England, Education, CCG and representatives from local VRUs. This group will have oversight of VRU activity, seek to unblock strategic force-wide issues and support the Home Office reporting process. The point of contact for this group is [Alice Jones](#), Senior Commissioning and Policy Officer, OPCC.

Local VRUs (one in each of the five Local Authority areas in Avon and Somerset) have been locally designed to meet local need and issues.

The VRUs generally consists of a **coordination** post/process, resources to deliver the year one VRU priorities of a **problem profile** and **response strategy**, along with a range of **interventions**. Single points of contact for local VRU hubs are as follows:

Area	SPOC	Role/Organisation
BANES	Sally Churchyard	Head of Young People’s Prevention Service People and Communities Department Bath and North East Somerset Council
South Gloucestershire	Rob Walsh	Head of Safe Strong Communities South Gloucestershire Council
North Somerset	Howard Potheary	Community Safety Manager Community Safety Team North Somerset Council
Bristol	Gary Davies	Head Of Early Intervention & Targeted Services (Children and Families Services) Bristol City Council
Somerset	Trudi Grant	Director of Public Health Somerset County Council

While funding beyond March 2020 has not yet been secured, long term change is very much the Home Office’s ambition. They will therefore be evaluating year one activity as part of their work to secure longer term funding as part of the Spending Review.

2. Home Office/OPCC - Behavioural Insights Team (BIT) Report (Home Office funded)

You will recall that the OPCC commissioned BIT to undertake a piece of research on *Serious Violence in Avon and Somerset* – this research has now been completed and the final report is attached. This will be the foundation for the delivery of Violence Reduction Units (VRUs) and the OPCC intends to publish the report online in September once the VRU Strategic Governance Group has met. We will be working with local VRUs to determine how this will shape delivery but in the meantime urge you to review its findings and recommendations.

3. Home Office - Policing Surge Activity (£1.72m in Avon and Somerset)

Funding for surge policing activity was also allocated from the Home Office Serious Violence Fund to the same 18 police force areas. The Home Office’s primary objective for the police surge funding is to reduce serious violence in public spaces with a focus on reducing knife crimes committed against young people. Following a short application process, this funding has been split into four key areas of focus in Avon and Somerset:

1. Prevention and Enforcement in hotspot areas;
2. Intelligence gathering and targeting of individuals and groups;
3. Improving our Investigative Response; and
4. Improving our Equipment and Technology.

The majority of the funding has been allocated to prevention and enforcement, an area which the Constabulary feel offers the most impact for our communities. As part of this, working closely with partners the Constabulary will employ an extra 14 PSCOs to educate, identify risk and assist with diversionary tactics to children and young people. It should be noted that the role of these PCSOs is still being developed but we will ensure that they are distributed across the force area.

We will also be allocating a significant proportion of funding towards putting extra officers into hotspot areas to detect and prevent knife crime. The deployments will be intelligence-led based on the BIT report.

We will also be investing in a hyperlocal media campaign that will target the areas most severely affected by knife crime, in line with the Government's #knifefree campaign.

The rest of the funding will be invested into better technology to assess and develop Police intelligence. This will allow the Constabulary to efficiently and effectively identify the highest risk people/ areas and share data with partners to make informed decisions.

[Superintendent Peter Warren](#) is the lead for this funding and can answer [any further queries](#).

4. Home Office - Youth Endowment Fund (£200m total national fund)

As part of the Government's Serious Violence Strategy, the Home Office made £200m available in a Youth Endowment Fund over the next 10 years to fund and test interventions aiming to prevent young people from being drawn in to crime and violence, to build up our knowledge of what works in this area.

The Avon and Somerset PCC and Constabulary have supported a multi-agency submission via C/Insp Ben Moseley in South Gloucestershire. We have also supported an application by the national umbrella organisation for Voluntary Police Cadets (VPC) which would aim to build skills and offer life opportunities to a cohort of young people (11-13 year-olds) with the ultimate goal of reducing ASB and diverting them from criminal behaviour. We will know in mid-August whether bids have been successful.

There are no doubt other bids within the area that agencies have submitted and we are keen that local VRU activity capitalises on any other projects supported by this fund.

5. OPCC - Serious Violence Coordination Fund (£100k across Avon and Somerset)

The offer still remains for Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) to apply for up to £20k (one-off) match funding to support the coordination of local work to tackle Serious Violence. The OPCC has so far received and approved proposals from Bristol and Somerset.

6. Other investment

We have been pleased to see local investment in work to tackle Serious Violence such as the Bristol *Safer Options Team* and welcome any other updates on such investment from partners.

7. Serious Violence Duty

Underpinning this work, it is worth noting that following a consultation, the Home Office have announced a new [Serious Violence Duty](#). The new 'public health duty' will cover the police, local councils, local health bodies such as NHS Trusts, education representatives and youth offending services. It will ensure that relevant services work together to share data, intelligence and knowledge to understand and address the root causes of serious violence including knife crime. It will also allow us to target interventions to prevent and stop violence altogether. In addition, the government will amend the Crime and Disorder Act to ensure that serious violence is an explicit priority for CSPs by making sure they have a strategy in place to tackle violent crime.

Overall you will see that there is a great deal of activity underway to tackle serious violence and we are keen to ensure that this remains as joined up as possible. In order to effectively tackle this issue we are supportive of a public health approach, building upon our existing relationships to focus on the joint objective of reducing serious violence in our communities. We are confident that we are moving in the right direction with these exciting ventures and look forward to working with you on this, welcoming any further suggestions or opportunities to work together that you may have.

Kind regards



Sue Mountstevens
Police and Crime Commissioner
for Avon and Somerset



Stephen Cullen
Assistant Chief Constable

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(2019) Behavioural Insights, Developing a Serious Violence Strategy for Avon and Somerset