

STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SERVICES AND LICENSING COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, 18 JANUARY 2024

Report Title	Serious Violence Duty			
Purpose of Report	To inform members of the Community Services & Licensing Committee of the implementation of the Serious Violence Duty for Local Authorities			
Decision(s)	The Committee RESOLVES to adopt The Serious Violence Duty			
Consultation and Feedback	<p>All members of the Stroud District Community Safety Partnership (SDCSP) were consulted about the priorities including the Serious Violence Duty</p> <p>Stroud District Council Departments Gloucestershire Police Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner (Gloucestershire) Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Support Service (GDASS) Gloucestershire County Council Departments Gloucestershire Fire & Rescue Service Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board Barnardos Victim Support Trading Standards Solace Town Councils Safe Spaces Clewer Initiative (Modern Slavery) Bromford Housing Sovereign Housing Sanctuary Housing P3 Charity Change Grow live (Drug & Alcohol services) CGL. The Door Prospects (Youth Provision)</p>			
Report Author	Tony Dix, Interim Principal Community Services Officer Email: tony.dix@stroud.gov.uk			
Options	None			
Background Papers	S17 Crime & Disorder Act 1998 as amended. Serious Violence Duty			
Appendices	Appendix 1 – EXEMPT Appendix 2 – Stroud District Community Safety Partnership Plan 2023 – 2026 Appendix 3 – Serious Violence EIA Appendix 4 – EXEMPT Appendix 5 – EXEMPT			
Implications (further details at the end of the report)	Financial	Legal	Equality	Environmental
	No	Yes	Yes	No

1. Introduction / Background

- 1.1 The Serious Violence Statutory Duty commenced on 31st January 2023; the overarching legislation is detailed in Section 17 Crime & Disorder Act 1998 as an amendment detailed below.
- 1.2 **The responsibilities of the Local Authorities are set out in Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (“The Act”), which dictates that the responsible authorities (as defined by the Act) must consider the implication on crime, disorder, and anti-social behaviour in all their day-to-day activities regardless of department. In its broadest sense the Act also brought about a duty to cooperate and lead the creation of Community Safety Partnerships.**
- 1.3 In January 2023, an amendment was added to Section 17 Crime & Disorder Act 1998 to include a Statutory Duty on Local and Responsible Authorities for Serious Violence and the responsibility to include it in any relevant plan or priority to tackle serious violence in all its forms. The definition of serious violence is left to the individual responsible authority. The serious violence definition adopted in Gloucestershire is defined by the World Health Organisation (WHO).
‘The intentional use of physical force or power threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation.’
- 1.4 The Police and Justice Act 2006 19 (11) Local Authority scrutiny of crime and disorder matters have been amended to include serious violence. At Stroud District Council this function is carried out by the Community Services and Licensing Committee.
- 1.5 The Duty commences on 31st January 2023. Specified authorities have until 31st January 2024 to produce their SNA and Strategy.
- 1.6 Serious violence has a devastating impact on the lives of victims and families and instils fear within communities and is extremely costly to society. Incidents of serious violence involving knives and other weapons has increased significantly, with regular media broadcasts of young people sustaining life changing injuries or death as a result.
- 1.7 The Serious Violence Duty, which is encompassed in the Police Crime, Sentencing (and Courts Act 2022 (PCSC) is part of the Government’s broad approach to prevent and reduce serious violence. The key strands being a multi-agency public health approach to understanding the drivers and impacts of serious violence, and a focus on prevention and early intervention.
- 1.8 The Duty has been introduced in the context of an increase in violence over the last decade and the impacts this has on victims and their families. The guidance to the Serious Violence Duty provides the example of increase in offences involving knives or sharp instruments by 84 percent between the year to June 2014 and the year to June 2020 in England and Wales. The guidance also suggests that the government is aiming to strike a balance between ensuring “agencies are focussed on their activity to reduce serious violence whilst also providing sufficient flexibility so that the relevant organisations will engage and work together in the most effective local partnership for any given area”.
- 1.9 The Duty requires specified authorities to work together to share information, target their interventions, collaborate and plan to prevent and reduce serious violence within their local communities.
- 1.10 Responsible authorities (also known as “duty holders”) who are subject to the Duty include: local authorities, the Police, Youth offending teams, Integrated Care System, Probation, and the Fire Service.
- 1.11 In addition to tough law enforcement, there needs to be an understanding in order to address the factors that cause someone to commit violent crime in the first place, this includes where coercion is a factor regarding vulnerable children and adults, in particular where they are groomed, exploited, or cuckooed. The Duty aims to ensure that agencies are focussed on their own activity and multiagency work to prevent and reduce serious violence in their area.
- 1.12 The legislation allows two or more specified authorities to collaborate to prevent and reduce serious violence in a “local area”. This means that authorities are permitted to work across local government

boundaries and in doing so, collaborate on strategies which cover areas greater than that which they primarily provide services in.

- 1.13** The Act also introduces Serious Violence Homicide Reviews which requires specified authorities to carry out a Review into the circumstances of certain homicides where the victim was aged 18 or over, and the events surrounding their death involved, or were likely to have involved the use of an offensive weapon. These Reviews will be similar to Safeguarding Serious Case Reviews or Domestic Homicide Reviews.
- 1.14** The Duty does not specify a 'lead' authority to be responsible for coordinating activity. However, there is a general consensus across partner agencies in Gloucestershire including District Community Safety Partnerships (CSP), that the Office of the Gloucestershire Police & Crime Commissioner (OPCC) (Safer Gloucestershire) is best placed to take the lead on behalf of all the specified authorities for the strategic and analytical work and responses to the Home Office on how the Duty is being met, with local CSPs.
- 1.15** It has been proposed that funding related to the Serious Violence Duty is provided to Gloucestershire OPCC via the Home Office to act as lead authority to undertake the following on behalf of all of the specified authorities.
- A Strategic needs assessment and strategy has been undertaken . This took place in 2023 by a consultant and led by OPCC. Partner organisations were involved including Stroud District Council
 - Agreeing a joint Gloucestershire Serious Violence Strategy that provides all the specified authorities and Community Safety Partnerships throughout Gloucestershire with the evidence that they are meeting the requirements of the Serious Violence Duty.
- 1.16** Local responses, based on the findings of the Strategic Needs Assessments, will be led by local partners through their respective Community Safety Partnerships, with the support of the Gloucestershire OPCC & Safer Gloucestershire as required. Home Office Serious Violence Duty funding will be allocated to each Community Safety Partnership through the serious violence fund to deliver local responses.
- 1.17** Local areas are encouraged to take a 'public health approach'. This means using data and insights to understand serious violence and its causes locally with a commitment to identifying the populations most impacted and reducing inequalities. It also requires high levels of collaboration with communities and their partners to focus on generating short- and longer-term solutions which draw on the evidence of effectiveness. Importantly, this approach focuses on tackling the causes of violence including trauma informed solutions to focus prevention and early intervention activity as well as deploying criminal justice responses where necessary.
- 1.18** By adopting this approach, the burden on all specified and relevant authorities, including Stroud District Council, in meeting the Duty is reduced and Stroud District Community Safety Partnership may on application to the OPCC Serious Violence fund receive funding to deliver tailored local responses, embedded through local community involvement, case management and governance structures.
- 1.19** The first round of serious violence funding was opened in October 2023 SDCSP made an unsuccessful application and funds were allocated to projects outside of the Stroud District. The second round of applications will be decided on in January 2024. SDCSP has made two new applications for the January 2024 round.
- 1.20** To decide how applications are allocated, a panel of twelve senior stakeholders from across the County meet to evaluate the bids, a decision is made to approve a bid if eight of the twelve stakeholders agree that it meets the criteria set.

2. Main Points

- 2.1** The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 - Serious Violence Duty came into effect on 31st January 2023

2.2 The Duty **requires** the following specified authorities within a local government area to collaborate and plan to prevent and reduce serious violence:

- **Police**
 - o Chief Officers of police for police areas in England and Wales
- **Justice**
 - o Probation Services
 - o Youth Offending Teams
- **Fire and Rescue**
 - o All fire and rescue authorities operating in England and Wales
- **Health**
 - o Integrated Care Board in England
 - o Local Health Boards in Wales
- **Local authorities**
 - o A district council
 - o A county council in England
 - o A London borough council
 - o The Common Council of the City of London in its capacity as a local authority
 - o The Council of the Isles of Scilly
 - o A county council in Wales
 - o A county borough council in Wales

2.3 The Office of the Gloucestershire Police & Crime Commissioner (OPCC) has undertaken to produce an implementation plan 2023/2024 and a Strategic Needs Assessment for Gloucestershire has been carried out to provide evidence of need to support this duty. The OPCC has employed Crest an independent organisation to provide a quantitative profile of Gloucestershire to assist with the countywide strategy.

2.4 The Head of Community Services at Stroud District Council is a member of the County Strategic Group.

2.5 The below points are the four serious violence headings which the County Strategy Group will be use in their finalised plan.

- o **Reducing Harm caused by Serious & Organised Crime (SOC)**
- o **Reducing Harm caused by Violence and Intimidation Against Women and Girls (VIAWG)**
- o **ASB can present a multitude of abhorrent behaviours, many of these are linked to hate crimes.**

2.6 **Supporting our Communities to Build Resilience.** Stroud District Community Safety Partnership has to provide a monthly return to the Safer Gloucestershire Board on serious violence measures undertaken in this District which sit under the four priorities above Stroud District Community Safety Partnership (SDCSP) Plan 2023 -2026 was agreed at the Community Safety Partnership in June 2023, it was also adopted by Community Services & Licencing Committee in September 2023. **The Serious Crime framework aligns with SDCSP priorities**

The SDCSP plan has five priorities detailed below:-

Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3
Aim to reduce and proactively tackle Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) in all its forms and raise awareness of alcohol and substance misuse and reduce	Aim to reduce but increase awareness and reporting of Violence Intimidation Against Women and Girls (VIAWG), serious violence, domestic	Aim to Prevent people being drawn into extremism and take positive action in respect of hate crime.

related crime/incidents including street related ASB.	abuse / sexual violence, and exploitation whilst supporting victims: including criminal exploitation, modern slavery, and human trafficking.	
Priority 4	Priority 5	
Build stronger and cohesive communities with a focus on increasing community confidence.	Aim to reduce and prevent re-offending by working with partners to address persistent prolific offenders who cause most harm.	

2.7 The finalised County Strategic plan must be in place by 31st January 2024, at present this plan is in draft form.

2.8 Success Measures under the duty include: -

- A reduction in hospital admissions for assaults with knife or sharp object
- A reduction in knife and sharp object enabled serious violence reduction recorded by the Police.
- A reduction in homicides recorded by the Police.

3. Conclusion

3.1 The Serious Violence Duty is a duty that requires Stroud District Council and the Stroud District Community Safety Partnership in particular to develop a plan to tackle serious violence in their district.

4. Implications

4.1 Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report as the recommendation is to adopt The Serious Violence Duty.

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4.2 Legal Implications

The report above sets out details of significant implications in **paragraph 1 above**.

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4.3 Equality Implications

An EIA has been carried out by Officers in relation to the decision made in this report and due regard will be given to any implications identified in it.

4.4 Environmental Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.