

REPORT REFERENCE NO.	CSC/24/7
MEETING	COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE
DATE OF MEETING	26 APRIL 2024
SUBJECT OF REPORT	SERVICE RESPONSE OT THE SERIOUS VIOLENCE DUTY
LEAD OFFICER	ACFO GERALD TAYLOR, DIRECTOR OF SERVICE DELIVERY
RECOMMENDATIONS	<i>That this paper is noted</i>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>The Police Act (2022) introduced a legal duty on “specified authorities” to collaborate in reducing serious violence crime. Fire and Rescue Services are “specified authorities” for this duty which became law on 31st January 2023.</p> <p>This paper explains this legal duty in further detail, and the Service’s response thus far both in the Avon and Somerset, and Devon and Cornwall local authority areas.</p> <p>The Home Office set out three initial priorities to be considered; reduce knife crime; reduce serious violent crime involving young men; and reduce murder. Both Avon and Somerset and Devon and Cornwall have added reducing violence against women and girls (VAWG) to these priorities.</p>
RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	As indicated in the paper.
EQUALITY RISKS AND BENEFITS ANALYSIS	An initial assessment has not identified any equality issues emanating from this report.
APPENDICES	None.
BACKGROUND PAPERS	None.

1. **INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1. The Serious Violence Duty (SV Duty) is a legal requirement (as of 31st January 2023) for partners to collaborate on the Public Health agenda to tackling serious violence (with a focus on Youth Violence).
- 1.2. The SV Duty places a duty on police, justice, fire and rescue, health, and local authorities (known as the “specified authorities”) to work together to prevent and reduce serious violence. They must work together in a local government area (section 8 of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Police Act 2022 (“the 2022 Act”) and may collaborate more widely (i.e. across local government areas, section 9 of the 2022 Act).
- 1.3. Relevant authorities (educational, prison and youth custody authorities), who are not legally bound to this agenda, should be consulted by specified authorities in their preparation of a serious violence strategy, and may be required to carry out actions.
- 1.4. The Service was consulted separately via the respective Police and Crime Commissioner areas on behalf of all authorities as to the governance structures to enable this duty to be met. The Service’s view, based on its experience of working across differing governance structures in Devon and Somerset, was a commitment to ensure whatever governance model was chosen, to ensure that they were effective.
- 1.5. There was a requirement to produce a serious violence duty strategic needs assessment and produce a serious violence strategy.
- 1.6. The Avon and Somerset, and Devon and Cornwall areas are structured differently. This is not unusual, and as indicated previously, the Service is able to manage collaboratively and successfully with these variations.
- 1.7. The Home Office supported the governance consultation process using consultants.

2. **NATIONAL FIRE CHIEF COUNCIL (NFCC) GUIDANCE**

- 2.1 The NFCC has issued guidance to Fire and Rescue Services on the SV Duty. Their guidance explains:-
 - *The Duty aligns with existing FRS legislative duties, including the current Fire and Rescue Services Act (2004) and the Duty to Collaborate as contained within The Policing and Crime Act (2017). Enhancing policies, training, data sharing and collaboration will empower FRSs to tackle serious violence while delivering core prevention, protection, and emergency response functions.*
 - *FRSs occupy positions of trust in many local communities and are well established to play a vital role within local partnerships to reduce serious violence. The fire sector already does much to support the aims of the Duty.*

- *However, much more can be done, particularly locally, to further this work, whilst fulfilling statutory obligations relating to fire response, prevention and protection responsibilities. Although the Duty places strong essential emphasis on early interventions with young people, FRS will also need to work with at risk adults to deliver the Duty.*

3. THE AVON AND SOMERSET MODEL

- 3.1 The specified authorities within the Avon and Somerset area chose a structure that built upon Violence Reduction Partnerships (VRPs) that had already been established. However, to give greater oversight, and collaborative strategic governance, a Serious Violence Executive Board was created. This is chaired by the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner for Avon and Somerset.
- 3.2 Funding to support the SV Duty has been made available by the Home Office, and part of this has been used to employ a full-time director, through the PCC office, to lead the initiative. The director is Natalie Lavis, who was previously the strategy lead for the Avon and Somerset Local Resilience Forum (LRF).
- 3.3 It is interesting to note that in addition to the planned Executive Board meetings, an exceptional meeting was held to specifically respond to the recent spate of knife incidents in Bristol.

4. THE DEVON AND CORNWALL MODEL

- 4.1 The Devon and Cornwall model is, in our case, a Devon model. The chosen mode was to use the established Community Safety Partnership (CSPs) structures with overall governance provided through reporting through the OPCC as the local policing body.
- 4.2 Local CSPs within the Plymouth, Torbay and Devon local authority areas now have the SV Duty as a key objective. The Home Office funding to support the Duty is shared amongst the CSPs.

5. THE SERVICE'S RESPONSE TO THE SERIOUS VIOLENCE DUTY

- 5.1 The Service, through previous collaborative initiatives, has already established support to reduce serious violence. A good example of this, with support funding from our Safe Southwest charity, is the provision of anti-arson letter boxes for those at risk of domestic violence.
- 5.2 The Service has a long-established community youth programme (CYP) which has included school engagement, fire setter support and cadet groups. The Community Safety team are reviewing our CYP work to see how we can embrace the SV Duty further.
- 5.3 Our Data Analysts have already met with their counterparts to consider how the data we hold can be better used to enhance collaborative intelligence and support SV Duty reduction.

5.4 It is early days in developing our response to SV Duty, but this paper is designed to give reassurance to the Fire Authority that our obligation is being positively met.

ACFO GERALD TAYLOR
Director of Service Delivery