

LONDON BOROUGH OF HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM

Report to: Cabinet

Date: 15/01/2024

Subject: Serious Violence Duty Strategy

Report of: Councillor Rebecca Harvey, Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion and Community Safety

Report author: Laura Seamons, Service Transformation Lead, Community Safety

Responsible Director: Bram Kainth, Strategic Director of Environment

SUMMARY

In December 2019, the government announced that it would bring forward legislation to create a new Serious Violence Duty, under the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act (PCSC) 2022.

The Duty requires specified authorities to work together to prevent and reduce serious violence, including identifying the kinds of serious violence that occur in the area, the causes of that violence, and to prepare and implement a strategy for preventing and reducing serious violence.

The Hammersmith & Fulham Serious Violence Duty Strategy has been co-produced with partners, including young people, the voluntary and community sector, businesses, the Metropolitan Police, Health colleagues and the Youth Justice Service. The Strategy has been produced alongside a strategic needs assessment that has identified current and long-term trends of serious violence across the borough, including victim and suspect profiles, locations and timings of offences. Together with the consultation, the strategic needs assessment has allowed us to develop a strategy that is both collaborative and data informed.

Under the new Duty, the Serious Violence Duty Strategy must be published on the council's website by 31st January 2024.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That approval be given to the contents and publication of Hammersmith & Fulham's Serious Violence Duty Strategy.
 2. To note that once the Strategy has been approved an accessible version of the strategy will be developed to be published at the same time.
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Wards Affected: All

Our Values	Summary of how this report aligns to the H&F Values
Creating a compassionate council	The strategy seeks to deliver an approach to tackling serious violence that is both data informed and collaborative with young people and the voluntary and community sector to ensure the strategy identifies and supports those most in need.
Doing things with residents, not to them	The Serious Violence Duty Strategy has been co-produced with young people, representatives from the voluntary and community sector and local businesses. In addition to statutory partners that work closely with a wide range of residents from across the borough.

Financial Impact

The strategy was compiled and developed by the Community Safety Unit with support from the Business Intelligence Team, within the existing approved budget for the service. Any costs relating to the implementation of the strategy are expected to be managed within existing approved Council budgets and new grant funding provided by the Home Office for this purpose (£80,000 secured for the period 2022/23 to 2024/25).

Finance impact completed by Tom Berry, Finance Trainee (Environment), 16 November 2023.

Financial implications verified by Andre Mark, Head of Finance (Strategic planning and investment), 16 November 2023.

Legal Implications

- In April 2022 the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 came into force. Under the section 8(3) duties to collaborate and plan the local authority and other specified authorities must:
 - a. identify the kinds of serious violence that occur in the area
 - b. identify the causes of serious violence in the area, so far as it is possible to do so, and
 - c. prepare and implement a strategy for exercising their functions to prevent and reduce serious violence in the area.

- Once a strategy has been prepared, under section 7 the local authority must:
 - d. publish the strategy
 - e. keep the strategy under review, and
 - f. from time to time prepare and implement a revised strategy.

- Publication of the Serious Violence Duty Strategy contributes to the fulfilment by the Council of these obligations.
- There are no other direct legal implications associated with the publication.

Legal implications completed by Jade Monroe, Chief Solicitor Social Care, 15 November 2023.

Background Papers Used in Preparing This Report

None

DETAILED ANALYSIS

Proposals and Analysis of Options

Serious Violence in H&F

1. The Serious Violence Duty Strategy has been produced under the requirement set out in Chapter 1 of Part 2 of the PSCS Act. It requires specified authorities to work together to plan and reduce serious violence, including identifying the kinds of serious violence that occur in the area, the cause of that violence, and prepare and implement a strategy for preventing, and reducing serious violence in the borough.
2. The responsible authorities in the Serious Violence Duty are:
 - The Police
 - Fire and Rescue authorities
 - Justice Organisations (youth offending and probation services)
 - Health bodies (Integrated Care Boards)
 - Local authorities

The Serious Violence Duty Working group, which is represented by all the responsible authorities, have worked collaboratively to produce the strategy. The group will continue to work together to deliver the requirements of the duty, and ultimately reduce serious violence across the Borough. Alongside this, the Community Safety Partnership and the Policy and Accountability Committee will continue to hold responsible authorities, including the police, to account and will monitor the key performance indicators and action plan established for the serious violence duty.

3. Serious Violence for the purposes of the Serious Violence Duty, is defined as:

- a. *Any violence and exploitation affecting young people under the age of 25, domestic abuse, and sexual violence. Within the context of these types of violence, it encompasses homicide, grievous bodily harm, actual bodily harm, rape, assault by penetration, sexual assault, personal robbery, threats to kill and violence against property caused during the commission of one of these offences.*
- b. Domestic abuse is as defined in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. Domestic abuse is defined in the act as :-

Behaviour of a person (“A”) towards another person (“B”) is “domestic abuse” if—

- (a) A and B are each aged 16 or over and are “personally connected” to each other, and*
- (b) the behaviour is abusive.*

Behaviour is “abusive” if it consists of any of the following—

- (a) physical or sexual abuse;*
 - (b) violent or threatening behaviour;*
 - (c) controlling or coercive behaviour;*
 - (d) economic abuse*
 - (e) psychological, emotional or other abuse;*
- and it does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct.*

- c. For the purpose of the serious violence duty the same definition of serious violence including the definition of domestic abuse will be used across all London authorities. A template provided by London’s Violence Reduction Unit has been used to produce the strategy to ensure consistency across London.
4. H&F has produced a strategic needs assessment using a range of data sources to allow us to identify current and long-term issues relating to serious violence and those most vulnerable to involvement in the local area. The strategic needs assessment has informed the strategy and provides a greater understanding of established and emerging serious violence trends, priority locations or other high-risk issues.
 5. In 2022, there were 1,634 violent offences that resulted in injury and there was a higher rate of crime per resident compared to the London average. 34% of these offences involved someone under the age of 25. Violent offences were most concentrated in town centre locations and most concentrated in Shepherd’s Bush for offences involving young people under the age of 25.
 6. There were 2,835 offences flagged as domestic abuse in 2022, similar to the London average.
 7. In 2022 there were 395 sexual offences, a slightly higher rate of crimes per residents when compared to the London average. 41% of sexual offences occurred in a public place. In 75% of offences the suspect was male, and the victim was female. A high number of offences were reported in Shepherds Bush Green, Hammersmith Broadway, and Brook Green.

8. The strategy and strategic needs assessment in addition to meeting the requirement of the serious violence duty, will also support the council to build on and continue to enhance our wider programme of work in tackling crime in the borough. The wide-ranging data analysed within the strategic needs assessment and recommendations within the strategy will ensure initiatives delivered by the Gangs Violence and Exploitation Unit, and the Law Enforcement Team can be targeted to locations and individuals most in need. It will also support the council's ambitious VAWG strategy to deliver its objectives.

Co-production

9. Hammersmith & Fulham Council recognises that to tackle violence there needs to be a holistic and integrated approach with the community. This strategy has been co-produced with the voluntary and community sector local businesses and young people. Through consultations we have identified what partners think are the biggest gaps in service provision and what they felt was needed to reduce serious violence in the borough. We have engaged with the H&F Youth Council to understand what locations are a particular concern for young people in the borough are and what they felt the priorities should be for tackling youth violence. Consultation surveys were also completed with young people engaged with the Youth Justice Service.

Strategy Recommendations

10. The strategy outlines the recommendations that, based on the strategic needs assessment and consultation, can be used by all partners to tackle serious violence in the borough

Recommendation 1: *Tackling domestic abuse should remain a continued focus given the high proportion of violence with injury offences which are flagged as domestic abuse (24%) and the greater number of domestic abuse offences compared to violence with injury offences (70% more domestic abuse offences compared to violence with injury offences). Consideration should be given to investing in gaps in current support provision for those affected by domestic abuse, as well as initiatives to support with early intervention, enable desistance in perpetrators, and prevention projects for young people.*

Recommendation 2: *Build stronger and more effective responses to serious violence and sexual abuse, taking account of any links between these offences (and domestic abuse) to ensure the most effective services are commissioned. These responses should pay particular attention to (i) the high proportion of violent offences that involve young people under the age of 25, (ii) the high proportion of violent offences that involve females under the age of 18, and (iii) the geographical trend for violence and sexual offences to take place around Shepherds Bush Green, Hammersmith Broadway, and Brook Green.*

Recommendation 3: *A higher than expected proportion of sexual offences occurred in public spaces (both indoor and outdoor) and were concentrated in specific locations (Shepherds Bush, Hammersmith Broadway and Brook Green). Interventions that aim to reduce sexual violence in the public realm should be targeted at these locations including supporting nighttime economy venues and should be designed in consultation with women and girls across H&F.*

Recommendation 4: *Shepherd's Bush Green and Hammersmith Broadway have the most concentrated number of offences for violence with injury and sexual offences. Specific consideration should be given to where violent crimes are taking place.*

Recommendation 5: *Interventions should also consider level of trust and confidence in partnership services and look at ways to engage best with victims of violent crime to build relationships to report and access support. Services should be developed collaboratively with residents when possible.*

Reason for the decision

11. The Council has a statutory duty to publish a Serious Violence Duty Strategy by 31st January 2024. This strategy fulfils this requirement.
12. Cracking down on crime is a key manifesto commitment, and this strategy supports the objectives of tackling Violence Against Women and Girls and tackling gang crime.

Next Steps

13. Once approval is given the strategy will be published on the website, not later than the 31st January 2024. The strategy will then be refreshed annually.
14. Additional projects will be identified and delivered in line with the recommendations of the strategy, which are based on consultation results and the strategic needs assessment.
15. The findings of the strategic needs assessment and the recommendations of the strategy will enhance the council's wider approach to tackling violent crime.

Equality Implications

16. H&F Equality Impact Analysis Tool completed (Appendix 2).

Risk Management Implications

17. There is a risk that communication between identified partners (including young people, the voluntary and community sector, businesses, the Metropolitan Police, Health colleagues and the Youth Justice Service) is not

joined up and that the collaborative approach that has been used when developing the strategy does not continue once the strategy is published. Steps should be taken to ensure that all partners are involved in tackling serious violence as the recommendations are implemented. This includes the request for information and data to be shared in a timely manner. The partnership will use well established information sharing agreements to ensure that the correct process is followed when sharing information and that it does not contravene the basic rights of any individuals identified.

Implications completed by Jules Binney, Risk and Assurance Manager on 14/12/2023

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Serious Violence Duty Strategy
Appendix 2 – Equality Impact Assessment