

**Report of: Executive Member for Children, Young People and Families**

<b>Meeting of:</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>Ward(s):</b>
Executive	26 November 2020	All

<b>Delete as appropriate:</b>	Exempt	Non-exempt
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**SUBJECT: Youth Safety Strategy (2020 -2025)****1. Synopsis**

1.1 Islington's current Youth Safety Strategy 'Working Together for a Safer Islington' reaches its conclusion this year. The aforementioned covered a three year period commencing from 2017. Not all local authorities have a current Youth Safety strategy, but the safety of Islington's children, young people and community is one of the most significant priorities for the Council and the partnership. Subsequently, a new strategy has been produced via a process of co-production with key partners, including parents, children and young people. The new Youth Safety strategy, which covers the period 2020 – 2025, builds on the successes that have been achieved in relation to the area in recent years, but focusses on a number of new initiatives, developments and models to ensure that Islington becomes one of the leading areas in the country in relation to youth safety.

The Youth Safety Strategy sets out the council's plan and that of the partnership, to increase the safety of young people in Islington over the next five years. It is based on a comprehensive needs analysis implemented in Islington with Public Health, our partners and stakeholders and an analysis of 'what works'. The evidence indicates that many of the young people who become involved in crime or violence have had a troubled adolescence, but evidence also shows that these causes can start much earlier in life due to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's) such as domestic abuse, neglect, abuse and discrimination. The aim of the strategy is to ensure that the partnership is able to respond at all stages of a child's journey through eight key strands - Prevention, Identification, Engagement, Diversion, Support, Protection, Disruption and Enforcement and Prosecution.

The strategy takes into account the indisputable negative and significant after-effects of the COVID 19 pandemic, on our children, young people and families. It also acknowledges structural racism and seeks to address the important challenges in relation to discrimination, inequality and disproportionality. We have also made reference to the terrible murders that have seen some of our young people become victims of this and the devastating impact that this has on the community. Reducing such violence and homicide is a key priority for the partnership.

## **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 To approve the proposed strategy for Youth Safety as outlined in this report. It is recommended that this strategy is approved for publication and release this year in order to replace the previous strategy.

## **3. Background**

- 3.1 Serious Youth Violence (SYV) and group related offending are serious and concerning issues for society. In 2019, the number of offences involving knives and sharp instruments in the UK rose by 7 per cent to 45,600 in the year, a record national high. In London, 23 teenagers were killed because of knife crime and SYV – the highest level for 11 years. In Islington, two young people who were open to our youth services were killed via knife crime in 2019.
- 3.2 In Islington, the partnership is aware that drugs markets are a significant aggravating factor in youth violence in the borough. Vulnerable young people, particularly young men and boys, can be groomed into gangs and the drugs trade from a young age. These children and young people are being exploited, for profit, by adults involved in the drugs trade and risk being lured or bullied into involvement in 'County Lines' drug distribution. This risk is heightened if they are from the African or African-Caribbean community, have learning difficulties and/or have experienced difficulty within the education system.
- 3.3 Deprivation and poverty are also significant risk factors that impact on the safety of children and young people. In October 2019, Islington had the highest levels of income deprivation affecting children (IDACI) in London. With the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, families will need help to adapt positively to these changes at a time when there is intense national pressure on public finances and where the United Kingdom has entered the most severe recession of the G8 countries. Whilst research tells us that resilient children, families and communities can 'bounce back' and thrive despite the challenges they face, there are some that will not be able to do so.
- 3.4 Despite these challenges, Islington has achieved some significant successes in recent years. Some of these include a reduction in the number of Knife Crime with injury (non Domestic Violence related under age 25) offences which has reduced by 46.1% in Islington between 2017/18 and 2019/20 and the reduction in the number of children receiving custodial sentences which has reduced from 30 children in 2016/17 to 7 in 2019/20. The latter means that Islington performed better than most of its statistical neighbours for this indicator including Hackney, Haringey, Hammersmith and Fulham, Greenwich, Lambeth and Southwark in the most recent year. There is more work for the partnership to do to improve further and the new strategy sets out these objectives and methods.

- 3.5 Some of the challenges covered in the strategy include the partnership's response to identifying and implementing the most effective way/s of preventing the exploitation of children and young people in the first place. The strategy is explicit about the ways that too many vulnerable children are either encouraged, coerced or attracted to a way of life that can be devastating for them and communities. It aims to eliminate these methods, but recognises that this is a difficult task that can only be achieved by the partnership and communities working together.

## **4. Implications**

### **4.1 Financial implications:**

There are no direct financial implications for the council as a result of this strategy. The main financial implication to note is that the strategy seeks to keep children, young people and the wider community safe. The more successful the strategy is at doing this, the less pressure on the council's finances (e.g. through fewer children being remanded to custody or to the care of the local authority, fewer children being placed into secure accommodation or by not needing to apply to the family court to make children looked after). As well as having benefits for the children and young people concerned, this is a key part of our strategy for controlling costs within the division, against high-cost demand led budgets.

### **4.2 Legal Implications:**

Islington has duties and responsibilities under several pieces of legislation to protect and safeguard children from crime and to protect the public. The Crime and Disorder Act (1998), Criminal Justice and Immigration Act and the Legal, Aid Sentencing Punishment and Offenders Act (2012). The latter ensures that children and young people can only be remanded in certain circumstances. This strategy covers these responsibilities as a council.

1. The report is consistent with the Local Authority's obligation to promote well-being under section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 which provides as follows:

#### **"2 Promotion of well-being.**

(1) Every local authority [**F1** in Wales] are to have power to do anything which they consider is likely to achieve any one or more of the following objects—

- (a) the promotion or improvement of the economic well-being of their area,
- (b) the promotion or improvement of the social well-being of their area, and
- (c) the promotion or improvement of the environmental well-being of their area.

(2) The power under subsection (1) may be exercised in relation to or for the benefit of—

- (a) the whole or any part of a local authority's area, or
- (b) all or any persons resident or present in a local authority's area."

2. Part of this strategy is aimed to assist looked after children in respect of whom the local authority owes a range of duties under the Children Act 1989, the Children and Families Act 2014 , successor legislation ,regulations and relevant guidance.
3. The provisions of this report are consistent with the local authority's statutory duties and applicable guidance.

### **4.3 Environmental Implications and contribution to achieving a net zero carbon Islington by 2030**

The main environmental impact of the youth safety strategy is via its universal youth offer. The universal offer will involve use of energy, water, and waste generation on the sites. Organisations running youth centres have a vested interest in ecologically sound practice, with council commissioners ensuring this is adhered to through robust contract monitoring and quality assurance processes in place which will continue throughout delivery of the universal youth offer.

### **4.4 Resident Impact Assessment:**

The council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010). The council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life. The council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

A full resident impact assessment has been completed and aligns with principles which are covered within the strategy. Underpinning the strategy is Islington's Fairer Together initiative which has set the ambition to make Islington fairer and create a place where everyone, whatever their background, has the opportunity to reach their potential and enjoy a good quality of life. The impact assessment and the strategy also reference the need to tackle racial inequality by flagging the under-representation of minority ethnic groups in positions of power and their over-representation in terms of poverty, ill health, crime and incarceration. It is widely acknowledged that racism and prejudice are significant contributory factors to these societal issues. The youth safety strategy aims to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and to advance equality of opportunity for all of the borough's children, but especially those who are at risk of exploitation.

## **5. Conclusion and reason for recommendations**

5.1 It is recommended that this strategy is agreed in order to:

- Ensure that the Council and the partnership are clear of the course of action in relation to Youth Safety for the next five years
- Provide children, young people, families and the wider community with clarity on the approach that the Council and its partners are taking in relation to Youth Safety and its interconnected matters
- Set out a framework for quantitative and qualitative monitoring of outcomes in relation to Youth Safety

## Appendices

- The Youth Safety Strategy 2020 – 25  
(note: a final version is currently being produced by the council's graphic designers)
- Youth Safety Action Plan
- Resident Impact Assessment

**Background Papers:** None.

Final report clearance:

**Signed by:**



13 November 2020

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Executive Member for Children, Young People  
and Families

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