

**Report of:** Executive Member for Community Safety

<b>Meeting of:</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>Ward(s):</b>
Executive	10 February 2021	All

<b>Delete as appropriate:</b>	<b>Exempt</b>	<b>Non-exempt</b>
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## **SUBJECT: Violence Reduction Strategy 2022-2027**

### **1. Synopsis**

- 1.1 This report outlines the background, implications and plans for publication surrounding the new Safer Islington Partnership Violence Reduction Strategy.
- 1.2 The Strategy itself is attached as appendix 1 to the report alongside a draft action plan in appendix 2 for comment and approval from the board as part of the oversight and governance process.
- 1.3 The documents are presented for discussion and we are open to changes ahead of final approval by the Safer Islington Partnership (SIP) planned for April 2022. Further development of the draft action plan in particular is planned over the coming months as detailed in section 3.7 of this report. This draft action plan provides an indication of the key actions that we will take across the partnership, starting in year one, to deliver the priorities that are identified in the Violence Reduction Strategy. Exact timelines and performance measures have been excluded from this summary version pending a process of consultation and agreement with all partners over the next three to six months. This work is underway and will continue through year one of the plan.

Following this process, we will have timelines and measurable outcomes presented to the Executive Member for Community Safety and agreed by SIP. The action plan will be reviewed and updated at regular intervals by SIP in order to robustly monitor progress in relation to our overarching ambition to reduce the long-term scale and impact of violence,

making Islington a fairer, safer borough for all. Ultimately, it will be a lens through which we can view changes in violent crime over time.

## **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 To approve the proposed strategy for Violence Reduction (2022-2027) as outlined in this report and attached as appendix 1 to this report. It is recommended that this strategy is approved for publication and release this year in order to meet indications from the guidance around the new Serious Violence Duty obligating Community Safety Partnerships to reduce serious violence through implementation of a violence reduction strategy, to replace the previous strategy and achieve our aspiration in Islington to promote a fairer, safer borough for all.

## **3. Background**

- 3.1 Violence is a universal challenge. It wreaks devastating consequences for victims, perpetrators, and their families, instils fear within and sows division into our communities, and has major financial and public health consequences for society at large. Violent crimes include exploitative and criminal activities where there is an inherent threat or reality of serious violence in the public realm and connecting to violence in the home. This includes: homicide, violence against the person (with injury) including knife and gun crime, Organised Crime (including County Lines drug trafficking), Serious Youth Violence, Violence Against Women and Girls (including domestic abuse) Hate Crime, Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking, cuckooing, and sexual offences (including rape and sexual assault). Within this, our remit is focussed specifically around reducing harm in the context of victims, offenders, and the location of where the actual or threat of serious violence took place.

Tackling this phenomenon is no easy task. Although the Crime Survey for England and Wales ([CSEW](#)) has shown long-term reductions in estimates of violent crime over the last two decades overall, incidents of serious violence have increased in England and Wales since 2014, with certain types of violence increasing sharply in recent years – knife crime, for example, increased by 84% between June 2014 and June 2020 according to the [Home Office](#). This includes levels of knife crime across London rising over the past five years. Through summary data compiled by the [Office for National Statistics](#), we also know that that ethnicity, gender, and age shape the lived reality of violence in England and Wales. These differing experiences in-part influence communities' trust in public services and the police; according to the [Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime \(MOPAC\) public voice dashboard](#) for example, Black and Mixed groups have significantly less confidence in the police compared to White ethnic groups.

The national and local picture of violence is complex and mixed. More recently in Islington, there have been positive reductions in the level of violent incidents across the borough with a 24% decline in crime and violent incidents overall between April 2020 and March 2021 (compared to the same period in 2019/2020). For example, we have seen a sustained reduction over the past three years (December 2018 – November 2021) in terms of knife injury victims under 25. In 2019/20 Islington recorded 554 knife crime offences, which was a 19% reduction compared to 2018/19 but still higher than five years previous. Between 2019/20 and 2020/21 we saw a 23% decline in offences, however Islington remained the tenth highest London borough for knife crime offences. This data is taken from MetStats2,

the Metropolitan Police Service business intelligence tool, shared internally with the council's Community Safety team.

While reductions in 2021/2021 in particular can partly be attributed to the lockdowns announced by the government in response to Covid-19, sustained reductions in types of violence such as knife crime follow on from the commitments included in strategies such as the Youth Safety Strategy 2020. We have worked closely with our partners, including the police and the voluntary sector to tackle knife crime across the borough. Youth Safety initiatives such as the Integrated Gangs Team, the partnership approach to youth offending, out of court disposal scrutiny panel and joined up police and continued partnership tasking are beginning to show results. Alongside this strategy, various Community Safety initiatives have been introduced, from the "No Knife Shop" scheme to promote shops who opt not to sell knives and the installation of knife bins at a number of locations, to the Safer Hillrise Project.

Through the Violence Reduction Strategy, we now want to build on the success we have seen so far and therefore continue the public health approach to violence taken in the Youth Safety Strategy, as well as maintaining or upscaling community safety initiatives showing a positive impact. There is still much more work to be done: even one violent incident is an incident too many and as COVID-19 restrictions ease and activities return, violence and crime is likely to rise again.

- 3.2 In May 2021, the UK Government published draft guidance on the new Serious Violence Duty, which indicates an obligation for Community Safety Partnerships to reduce serious violence through implementation of a violence reduction strategy. At current time, the Duty indicates that specified authorities will be required 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 obligating Community Safety Partnerships to prepare and implement a strategy for preventing and reducing serious violence in the area. The Government also announced that it would amend the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to ensure that serious violence is an explicit priority for Community Safety Partnerships by making sure they have a strategy in place to tackle violent crime.

Although the Safer Islington Partnerships' Violence Reduction Strategy is informed by and in line with this initial guidance indicating this statutory duty, it is predominately inspired by our aspiration in Islington to promote a fairer, safer borough. While we are seeking to agree the current draft version of the Strategy for publication in April 2022 at this stage, the aim is for this to remain a 'live' document. As additional and final statutory guidance and best practice emerges, it will be taken for consideration through the Safer Islington Partnership to allow for variations. Relevant documents, such as the Equality Impact Assessment and action plan, will be reviewed and revised accordingly.

This strategy sets out the framework for how we will take ownership of our ambition as a partnership to effect long-lasting change and reduce the long-term scale and impact of violence. Our aim is to place the reduction of Violent Crime at the heart of community safety; to promote a coherent vision and priorities for collaborative partnership working; with prioritised collective effort; and shared and sustainable measures of success.

- 3.3 Overall, our vision is to reduce the long-term scale and impact of violence – making Islington a safer, fairer borough for all. We will adopt a whole-community approach: supporting all victims and families affected, providing positive opportunities to those at-risk of becoming involved in violence, and rehabilitating offenders. Integral to this vision is our commitment to addressing the disproportionate impact of violence on certain groups –

namely, Black young men, women, and vulnerable adults. Through realising these aims, we aspire to:

- Save lives and significantly reduce serious injury
- Improve community resilience and cohesion
- Empower local people to take ownership over their neighbourhoods and communities
- Improve trust and confidence in public services and the police, particularly among Black and Ethnic Minority people

As the strategy seeks to reduce the long-term scale and impact of violence across the whole community, there may be the benefit of reduced pressure on the council's budget in the longer term. For example, through early intervention and prevention practices across the various strands of work brought together in this strategy. In terms of further funding, we did want to note that we will be keeping in touch regarding any funding opportunities that come up from governmental or other bodies, for example the Violence Reduction Unit, however the success of the recommendations is not dependent on additional funding; any additional funding would be to enhance activities only which is a further potential benefit.

- 3.4 We know that tackling violence is a multi-faceted challenge that cannot be resolved by any single organisation; only a partnership approach can be effective in delivering tangible reductions in violence on a local level. The strategy brings together and builds on the work across our Safer Islington Partnership to reduce serious violence, from teams in relation to Youth Safety, Violence Against Women and Girls and Hate Crime, to work actioned in the 2021 Summer Violence Reduction Plan. It comes out of the largest community safety consultation from any borough in the year so far at time of writing, embodying our commitment to put local people, communities and partners at the heart of our approach as the experts on their own neighbourhoods. Engaging, building trust with and collaborating with communities in Islington is vital to the success of this strategy, community involvement and engagement will remain at the forefront as we seek to tackle this complex challenge.
- 3.5 Alongside extensive engagement with communities and partners across the borough, including residents, service-users, voluntary and community sector organisations, staff across Islington Council and our statutory partners, we have been guided by the World Health Organisation 'public health' model of violence reduction, which will allow us to tackle both the root causes of and manifestation of violence in our approach. Our approach is a four-step, integrated approach that centres community empowerment as the most sustainable outcome for long-term, positive change: preventing violence, minimising impact supporting victims and offenders, and empowering communities.
- 3.6 This approach will be applied through each of our priority areas for the next 5 years. We have developed 5 key priority focus areas. Each priority area will form a separate strand of work. There are 6 strands in total, with a strand added to ensure we maintain a focus locally on the impact of drugs as a driver for serious violence and crime cutting across each area:
- Places and Spaces
  - Women's Safety
  - Youth Safety
  - Adults
  - Organised Crime
  - Drugs as a driver for crime

- 3.7 Creating this framework has allowed us the opportunity to articulate the extensive engagement that has taken place with communities and partners across Islington over 2021, ensuring diverse voices from across the borough and key learning from previous actions are reflected. It has provided us with a strong steer and support for the work we must do in the coming years, including identifying underdeveloped areas of understanding or provision, and an opportunity to assess effective use of resources towards common objectives. However, this is only the start of our journey.

Looking forward, there is much work to do and we will continue to put the community at the heart of this partnership effort. This will include the development of an action plan through a process of community consultation and engagement with partners, community groups and residents. The plan will allow us to robustly, continuously and regularly monitor the progress, outputs and impact of our work as a partnership. Our intention is for this to remain a 'live' document; the strategy and plan will evolve and develop in response to the changing nature of serious violence and crime in Islington as well as through our improved intelligence and understanding of issues.

With this in mind, we have collated violence reduction actions from various plans across the Partnership into a draft action plan. This is our starting point, setting out an initial picture of the tangible activities, resources and effort from across the Safer Islington Partnership within the scope of this strategic framework. We recognise that this document, attached as an appendix to the strategy, requires much work to ensure that the resources and collective effort align with – and can be measured over time against – our strategic objectives. This work is underway and will continue through year one of the plan.

The strategy and plan will be owned and monitored by the Safer Islington Partnership (SIP), which includes Islington Council, the police, London Fire Brigade, health sector, schools, probation services alongside representatives from the voluntary, community, faith, and business sectors.

Actions will be delivered by SIP's working sub-groups, with short-term progress and updates monitored at SIP's quarterly meeting. Long-term progress will be reviewed annually with an accompanying community safety report shared publicly to promote transparency and accountability in this work. In addition, we will continue to involve and engage our community to address the work outlined in this strategy through a range of other existing forums and activities, such as the Safer Neighbourhood Board, Safer Neighbourhood Panels, Ward Partnerships, SIP's Annual Assessment and emergency community meetings. Oversight over the release of the strategy will include the Housing Management Team, Corporate Management Board, Executive and the Safer Islington Partnership Board.

## **4. Implications**

### **4.1 Financial implications:**

There are no direct financial implications for the council as a result of this strategy. The focus of this strategy is about pulling together existing strategies and actions within the Council and partners, including ensuring there is effective use of existing resources/funding around common strategic priorities.

## **4.2 Legal Implications:**

Section 6 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 currently sets out the requirement for Community Safety Partnerships to have a strategy for the reduction of crime and disorder within their local area.

The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill 2021 ("the Bill") proposes an amendment to section 6 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 that will introduce the Serious Violence Duty ("the Duty") . The Duty will require Community Safety Partnerships to formulate and implement a strategy to prevent and reduce serious violence in their local area.

The Home Office has published draft statutory guidance for responsible authorities regarding the Duty which has been applied in the formulation of Islington's Safer Partnerships' Violence Reduction Strategy.

Once launched, the Violence Reduction Strategy must be kept under review. This will ensure that any updates to the Strategy necessitated by changes to the Bill before it is enacted or changes to the draft statutory guidance can be implemented in due course.

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

No negative environmental impacts are expected from the release and implementation of this strategy.

The strategy will provide support with the Council's ambition to work together towards finding local solutions to tackle the climate emergency as well as how we will deliver our ambition to achieving net zero carbon by 2030.

## **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.

The new Violence Reduction Strategy sets out the council's approach to reducing the long-term scale and impact of violence, making Islington a safer, fairer borough for all, in part, by putting Challenging Inequality at the forefront of our work.

Equality impact issues have been covered throughout the consultation period and during the production of this strategy, including the completion of an Equality Impact Assessment screening tool for the short-term emergency Summer Violence Reduction Plan and a full Equality Impact Assessment for this long-term Violence Reduction Strategy. This strategy seeks to make Islington a safer, fairer borough for all in line with Islington's Fairer Together, For a Fairer Future strategy launched in 2021 which sets out the commitment to create a more equal Islington. Integral to our vision is our commitment to addressing the disproportionate impact of violence on certain groups – namely, Black young men, women, and vulnerable adults.

The assessment outlines the positive impacts on people with protected characteristics and/or from disadvantaged groups who may be more likely to be victims and/or perpetrators of violence. Priority cohorts such as young people, Black young men, women and vulnerable adults will benefit from the work in our focus areas to specifically engage these groups to understand their experiences of violence and provide targeted support with a focus on early intervention and prevention. Additionally, we know that how safe local people feel can be influenced by many factors – including age, gender expression, race, ethnicity, visible religious affiliation, and expression of sexuality. Our work to create safer public spaces, and around issues such as Hate crime incorporated within this strategy, recognises and listens to the unique experiences of these groups and works to ensure everyone is and feels safe in our borough.

The assessment also acknowledges the possible low negative impact on certain groups. We have adapted a public health approach which focuses on tackling both the root causes and manifestations of violence and can be summarised by the following points:

- Focussing on a defined population
- With and for communities
- Not constrained by organisational or professional boundaries
- Focussed on generating long term as well as short term solutions
- Based on data and intelligence to identify the burden on the population, including any inequalities
- Rooted in evidence of effectiveness to tackle the problem

In adopting this approach, we seek to avoid over criminalising those groups most at risk of or already offending, particularly as this can undermine trust and confidence in the police. However, we recognise that punitive methods and criminalisation are critical aspects of a cohesive approach to tackling violence – our public health approach is complementary to, not in conflict with, enforcement and criminal-justice activities. In the short-term, more people, such as young Black men who are disproportionately impacted as victims/suspects of serious youth violence, may come into contact with the criminal justice system because of increased police interventions while prevention and support services operate in tandem. This has an associated risk that it could inflame community tensions, including racial tensions and mistrust in the police as there is already low confidence in the police among Black communities. However, we believe this potential negative impact is low and will be mitigated through the suite of other offers we have developed that positively target communities, including Black young men and young people, as part of our goal to improve trust and confidence in public services and the police. For example, we are developing a strategy specifically to improve Black communities' trust and confidence in the police as directed by the Mayor's Office for Police and Crime. This will encompass a range of engagement, training and comms offers under the interconnected themes of transparency, engagement, trust and respect, empowerment, and accountability. We will clearly communicate our approach as one ultimately seeking to prevent serious injury and violence across all communities, including those more likely to be impacted such as young people, young Black men, women and vulnerable adults. We have set out a clear governance structure for the monitoring and review of this strategy and an action plan will follow, outlining key activities and performance indicators to review the effectiveness of this framework. We have also set out how we will continue to engage our communities on the whole and through targeted activities as we move to implementation.

The partnership is determined to challenge inequality throughout the delivery of our services and various strategies incorporated under the Violence Reduction Strategy, to prevent discrimination and to address the impacts of intersectionality, working through a trauma-informed and inclusive approach. A full Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and is attached as appendix 2.

## **5. Reason for recommendations**

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

- Ensure the Safer Islington Partnership meets the draft guidance regarding the introduction of the new Serious Violence Duty which will obligate Community Safety Partnerships to reduce serious violence through implementation of a violence reduction strategy
- Ensure that the Council and the partnership are clear on the strategic vision, approach and priorities in relation to reducing the long-term scale and impact of violence for the next 5 years and beyond to meet our aspiration to make Islington a safer, fairer borough
- Ensure transparency and accountability through setting out clear responsibilities for ownership, monitoring and engagement plans in relation to the strategy and the commitments of the partnership

## **Appendices**

- Appendix 1: Violence Reduction Strategy draft (note: a final version will be prepared by the Council's graphic design team ahead of publication)
- Appendix 2: Initial draft action plan
- Appendix 3: Equality Impact Assessment

**Background papers:** None.

Final report clearance:

**Signed by:**



Executive Member for Community Safety

Date: 31.01.2022

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