

SERIOUS VIOLENCE DUTY**REPORT OF CHIEF FIRE OFFICER****For Approval****1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To inform Members that following public consultation in July 2019, the Government announced that it would bring forward legislation introducing a new serious violence duty ("The Duty") on public bodies. The Duty will ensure relevant services work together to share data and knowledge and allow them to target their interventions to prevent serious violence.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Members:
- a) Note the Authority's responsibilities under the Serious Violence Duty and;
 - b) Endorse the work the Authority are undertaking through the Cleveland's Unit for the Reduction of Violence (CURV) Governance Group to support the duty.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Statutory guidance has been issued in relation to the Serious Violence Duty, which is set out as Appendix A. The guidance is issued by the Secretary of State as Chapter 1 of Part 2 of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 ("the PCSC Act"). The guidance has been produced to support organisations and authorities exercising functions in relation to the Serious Violence Duty.
- 3.2 The Duty is a key part of the Government's programme of work to prevent and reduce serious violence. This will be achieved by public bodies taking a multi-agency approach to understand the causes and consequences of serious violence. The main focus will be on prevention and early intervention and must be informed by evidence.
- 3.3 The guidance also outlines changes made to section 6 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, ensuring preventing and reducing serious violence is a priority for Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs).

- 3.4 This guidance is for specified authorities defined in section 11 of, and Schedule 1 to, the PCSC Act (Chief Officers of police, fire and rescue authorities, Integrated Care Boards, Local Health Boards, local authorities, youth offending teams and probation services).

4. INFORMATION

- 4.1 Violence Reduction Units (VRUs) are non-statutory partnerships established in areas of the UK that are most affected by serious violence and are supported with initial funding from the Home Office. By way of illustration, between April 2021 and March 2022, the Cleveland area saw an increase of 15.7% in violent offences. This is in comparison to a national increase of 17.7%. Per 1000 population, this means Cleveland has the third highest level of violent crime in England and Wales and suffers the highest level of knife crime in the country.
- 4.2 The core function of the VRU is to offer leadership, collaborate with all relevant agencies operating locally and provide strategic coordination of the local response to serious violence. The VRU has enabled a multi-agency 'public health' approach to preventing and tackling serious violence. There is an expectation that much of the VRU activity should focus on early intervention and leading and coordinating the local response to serious violence. This may include the funding of specific interventions.

5. CLEVELAND'S UNIT FOR VIOLENCE REDUCTION (CURV)

- 5.1 The main aims of Cleveland's Unit for Violence Reduction are:
- Develop a multi-year violence reduction strategy
 - Implement a system wide approach to preventing and reducing serious violence in Cleveland
 - Provide support for initiatives and risk reduction measures through grant allocation
 - Ensure its response is place based and bespoke to the challenges in each local authority area
- 5.2 In terms of oversight, a dedicated governance group has been established, which is chaired by the Head of CURV. The Authority is represented by the Assistant Chief Fire Officer – Director of Community Protection, or a nominated deputy.
- 5.3 The Authority will support the CURV through partnership working, the sharing of resources and developing local initiatives where appropriate.

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