

# Dorset CSP Serious Violence Strategy

## Foreword

This strategy paper arises from the serious violence strategic needs assessment undertaken in 2023 in response to the Serious Violence Duty. Implementation of the Duty's statutory responsibilities and actions is being delivered through the existing structures of the Dorset Community Safety Partnership (CSP), in line statutory guidance for the Duty published in January 2023. This includes ensuring our strategic response to the Serious Violence Duty is an integral part of the CSP's Community Safety Plan 2023 - 2026.

Serious violence detrimentally impacts the lives of children, adults and the elderly, can have a devastating impact on the lives of the vulnerable and can be destructive to the lives of individuals, families and whole communities. Serious violence has a human, financial and societal cost, and there are often ongoing physical, emotional and mental health problems experienced by the victims of violence.

*"Offending, particularly committing serious crime. It's a massive problem in as much as how wide reaching it is, so it's very rarely just the victim that's affected, is it? It's their relatives and friends and colleagues. It doesn't ever really go away." (Survivor)*

Tackling serious violence in any community requires a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach. The Dorset CSP is committed to understanding the nature, volume and impact of serious violence across the partnership area, and to establishing strong and clear responses. Using a locally developed innovative risk based approach, we are committed to identifying where resources are most effectively targeted, and to supporting collaborative approaches to reducing crime.

Dorset CSP has a long and credible history of working to improve community safety for all residents of and visitors to Dorset. Working in a place-based way, we will deliver on the Serious Violence Duty using a public health approach. This will better support our communities and help us to achieve sustainable change.

## What is Serious Violence

The national Serious Violence Strategy sets out specific types of crime of particular concern, including homicide, violence against the person which may include both knife crime and gun crime, and areas of criminality where serious violence or its threat is inherent, such as in county lines drug dealing. March 2023

Statutory guidance requires each area to define serious violence for its own location. Serious violence in the Dorset CSP area is defined as activity:-

- causing threat, danger, or harm to the person;
- demonstrating disregard for the safety and wellbeing of others;
- involving gangs, grooming, coercion or manipulation of those more vulnerable; and
- those involving coordinated and organised illegal activity by groups or gangs.

## **Serious Violence in Context**

### **National Context**

Since 2014, incidents of serious violence have increased across England and Wales. An example of this is an 84% increase in violent offences involving knives or other sharp implements between June 2014 and June 2020. Home Office analysis demonstrated a rapid increase in the identification of county lines throughout 2020, which in turn drove a significant increase in the referral of children and young people for criminal exploitation. Numbers of sexual offences across England and Wales have risen significantly in recent years. Robbery was recorded as increasing by 13% in 2022 compared to 2020.

### **Dorset Context**

Crime rates for Dorset show reductions in a number of crime areas, and Dorset is noted as the 6<sup>th</sup> safest county. However, there are criminal activities which impact the lives of residents and visitors which should be addressed under the serious violence duty. Serious violent crime has increased since 2020/2021, where local data mirrored trends seen across the country. Rates for 2021/2022 and 2022/23 have remained fairly static.

Reviewing serious crime data for the last 3 years and recognising that in each case these still remain lower than regional and national comparative rates, crimes relating to violence against the person, violence and sexual offences and violent domestic abuse are shown to be the priority areas. These crime areas will drive our focus for responsive action.

While weapons enabled crimes are low for the Dorset area compared with regional and national figures, data shows an increase in the tendency to carry knives and other sharp weapons, particularly amongst young people, making it a priority area for early intervention. Additional areas for early intervention and preventative work include a focus on rates of reoffending, cases of coercion and exploitation, and young people as victims.

Our strategic needs assessment also identifies the need for further research and analysis in the areas of rural domestic abuse where Dorset rates suggest underreporting of these crimes, and sexual offences where rates suggest this growing area of criminal activity needs to be better understood.

### **Our Approach**

Through using a public health approach, the strength and commitment to partnership working demonstrated across the Community Safety Partnership and wider partners will provide a framework to deliver on the Duty.

Using our local risk based approach enables us to understand not only the areas where we need to focus activity, but also the drivers and influencing factors that impact on serious violent crime.

*“Prevention is always better than the cure - there was lots of occasions in my journey where I could have been picked up by support organisations when in police custody it never happened.” (Perpetrator)*

The voice of victims, communities and specifically young people has been sought, as a part of our approach to develop responses that meet the needs and expectations of our residents in a human sense as well as reducing crime rates. We have also sought the views of a number of perpetrators of serious violence, to provide a counterbalance and enable us to consider how to develop not only impactful but also sustainable responses.

**This means we will:**

- Benefit from the strong partnership and governance of the Community Safety Partnership to deliver this multi-agency strategy
- Deploy integrated approaches, ensuring partners drive the agenda, are accountable for their individual contributions and new developments can integrate into overall strategic direction.
- Develop an ongoing understanding of the risk of crime, the causes and influencing factors that underpin crime within our communities.
- Use continuous learning to ensure our responses, solutions and impacts reflect the dynamic and evolving lives of our residents.
- Use an evidence based approach to developing and delivering interventions and target them where they are most needed.
- Work with our communities and partners to address the risk factors particularly impacting on those who are vulnerable to and from serious violence.
- Use prevention and early intervention to reduce the draw into serious violence for young people.
- Engage with young people and communities to establish routes to attitudinal and cultural change in matters relating to serious violence.
- Work with young people and communities to shape and deliver our responses to serious violence.
- Develop medium and long term responses, that can shape ongoing and lasting solutions.
- Integrate out work from this period of implementation for the Duty into related strategies and services to ensure development and achievement have a connected and long-term route for impact.
- Work collaboratively and smartly to reduce duplication and make the best use of resources.

**Our Priorities**

Developing strategic priorities will provide a framework for tackling the complex issue of serious violence effectively. To deliver our strategy we will work collective on six priority areas:

- SV01: Develop and deliver approaches to tackle high-harm offending
- SV02: Develop and champion activity that supports victims of serious violence
- SV03: Ensure children and young people better understand the risks and drivers for serious violence to prevent them from becoming drawn into crime
- SV04: Taking action that tackles serious violence in the community, to improve the safety of our streets
- SV05: Robustly tackle organised crime, including county lines and rural organised crime.

SV06: Undertake work to further develop our understanding of serious violence.

**SV01: Develop and deliver approaches that tackle high-harm offending**

Our aims are to:

- Improve intelligence sharing between agencies, leading to an increase in the identification and apprehension of high-risk individuals involved in violent activities over two years.
- Implement focused deterrence strategies in high-risk neighbourhoods, aiming for a reduction in violent crime rates within targeted areas over five years.

**SV02: Develop and champion activity that supports victims of serious violence**

Our aims are to:

- Deliver services and support to those identified specifically as high-risk and most vulnerable through cross-cutting themes of violence against women and girls (VAWG), mental health, substance misuse, and homelessness, with the goal of addressing underlying issues linked to violent behaviour.
- Develop services and support that respond to the drivers of vulnerability, with the goal of providing appropriate and timely interventions for those in most need.

**SV03: Ensure children and young people better understand the risks and drivers for serious violence to prevent them from becoming drawn into crime**

Our aims are to:

- Increase the awareness and understanding of violence triggers and prevention strategies through targeted work and engagement with young people and communities, to achieve a reduction in community-reported violence incidents over three years.
- Implement evidence-based violence prevention programmes through schools, targeted youth work, young people's provision and partners youth focused activities, focusing on conflict resolution, relationships and respect, and social skills development, aiming for a decrease in youth-related violence incidents.

**SV04: Taking action that tackles serious violence in the community, to improve the safety of our streets**

Our aims are to:

- Establish community engagement in high-risk neighbourhoods, fostering collaboration between local organisations and the police, leading to an increase in community-led violence prevention initiatives over three years.
- Empower front-line practitioners in communities to organise and deliver events and initiatives to tackle serious violence, aiming for an increase in youth-led programmes.

**SV05: Robustly tackle organised crime, including county lines and rural organised crime.**

Our aims are to:

- Develop and deliver programmes of work specifically aimed at vulnerable young people, with a view to reducing the impact of extra familial harm, coercion and exploitation particularly in relation to county lines.

- Understand and respond to established and emerging organised crime in rural areas, specifically related to exploitation of vulnerable adults.

#### **SV06: Undertake work to further develop our understanding of serious violence.**

Our aims are to:

- Implement DiiS data collection system to monitor violence patterns through presentation at emergency departments, aiming for an improvement in data accuracy and reporting efficiency.
- Conduct further research and analysis in key areas, as identified by our initial strategic needs assessment and by future needs analyses, with the goal to review and refresh our serious violence strategy over time and in response to current and emerging need.

#### **Measuring Impact**

There will be the need to realise some short-term outcomes, due to the nature of the funding and implementation of the Duty. However, much of this work needs to establish more medium and long-term goal in order to understand and tackle the root causes of serious violence.

With this in mind, we will measure impact through:

- regular evaluation and reflection on the effectiveness of all of our work related to serious violence, including data analysis and the voice of our young people and communities.
- Modifying our strategies and approaches based on evaluation results, emerging trends and community needs to ensure ongoing effectiveness.

*“I’m living a kind of half-life. ... I was a very independent (professional) person. ... life is very different now. I think it's just because every normal stuff becomes such a challenge, doesn't it? When you're traumatized. Normal things are a challenge.” (Survivor)*

#### **Ways of Working**

The effective mapping of existing and newly emerging strategies that have interdependencies with implementing and delivering on the Duty will ensure better collaboration and cohesion across all of the work we are doing. Combined with our strong history of partnership working and collective approach to finding and delivering on solutions also provides a good foundation for this work without duplicating activity, structures and governance arrangements.

*“From my experiences, synergy between partner organisations is vital to ensure that people do not slip through the net or get trapped in a vacuum of crime and violence.” (Perpetrator)*

This initial strategy paper has been developed in line with the requirements of the Duty. It is produced to supplement and add further detail to the Dorset CSP’s Community Safety Plan 2023-2026, which provides our overall approach to community safety including serious violence.

#### **Implementing this Strategy**

Implementation of the Serious Violence Strategy in Dorset is integral to our work on community safety and will be overseen by the Dorset CSP. The governance and delivery arrangements for the CSP will ensure our work on serious violence is coherent and comprehensive, and incorporated into existing structures in line with the statutory guidance.

*“Whether it is perceived or real fear. With social media and press media (you can’t tell) what’s hype and what’s real. It’s not being portrayed in the right way. It impacts on mental health and physical wellbeing. Living in fear takes a toll (creates) anxiety.” (Focus Group)*