

Committee: **Place Scrutiny Committee**  
 Date of meeting: **19 April 2024**  
 Report Subject: **Serious Violence Duty**  
 Portfolio Holder: **Helen Cunningham, Deputy Leader**  
 Report Submitted by: **Sarah King, Head of Democratic Services, Governance and Partnerships**  
**Helena Hunt, Professional Lead Community Safety**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
Education DMT 11.03.24		04.04.24			16.04.24			CSP 08.04.24 Member Development 27.03.24

**1. Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 To present the first Serious Violence Strategy and the key findings of its underpinning Strategic Needs Assessment in respect of Gwent and in particular, Blaenau Gwent.

**2. Scope and Background**

- 2.1 The Police Crime Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 introduced a new statutory requirement referred to as the Serious Violence Duty, on ‘specified authorities’, which are:

- Local authorities
- Police
- Justice - Probation Services and Youth Offending Teams
- Fire and Rescue Authority
- Local Health Board

- 2.2 The Serious Violence Duty supported by statutory guidance ([here](#)) requires the above specified authorities to work together to plan to:

- prevent and reduce serious violence; including
- identify the kinds of serious violence that occur in the area;
- identify the causes of that violence (so far as it is possible to do so); and
- prepare and implement a strategy for preventing and reducing serious violence in the area.

- 2.3 The Serious Violence Duty requires ‘Relevant Authorities’, which include Education Authority, Prison Authority and Youth Custody Authority, to collaborate with the afore-mentioned ‘specified authorities’, albeit not legally bound by it.

- 2.4 To complement the overarching Serious Violence Duty, amendments to [section 6](#) of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 ensures that the local Community Safety Partnership has an explicit role in evidence-based strategic action on serious violence.
- 2.5 Local areas are encouraged to adopt the World Health Organisation's definition of a Public Health approach, which is a science-based four-step process:
- a) **Identify or define the problem:** Normally this step includes data gathering to find out who, what, why, where and when.
  - b) **Identify any possible causes:** Look for evidence of factors that put people at risk of being a victim or perpetrator of violence and any factors that may prevent this from happening.
  - c) **Develop and evaluate interventions:** Use the data to design, implement and evaluate interventions to prevent crime.
  - d) **Scale it up:** If evaluation shows that the intervention works, then it should be scaled up across organisations, communities, police forces and across the whole of Wales, while continuing to evaluate for how well it continues to deliver and its cost-effectiveness.
- 2.6 Early in 2023, the representatives of the local specified authorities agreed to collaborate across the Gwent region to plan and prepare the Serious Violence Strategic Needs Assessment and produce the Serious Violence Strategy, supported by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner as 'lead convener'.
- 2.7 The Serious Violence Strategic Needs Assessment and Serious Violence Strategy were submitted to the Home Office by the given deadline of 31 January 2024. A short two-week consultation period commenced to meet other Home Office deadlines. The documents were circulated for consultation to the local Community Safety Partnership and Education Authority.
- 2.8 Grant funding for specified authorities is administered, on behalf of the Home Office, by the Gwent Office of the Police Crime Commissioner, who is responsible for allocating grant funding to support the local implementation of the Strategy.
- 2.9 Governance Arrangements
- 2.9.1 Regionally progress against the serious violence duty will be overseen by the Gwent Serious Violence Prevention Partnership. Locally, progress will be overseen by the Blaenau Gwent Community Safety Partnership.
- 2.9.2 [Section 19](#) of the Police and Justice Act 2006 has been amended to ensure that local democratic scrutiny of crime and disorder matters, has been extended to include serious violence. This report and its appended Strategy and Strategic Needs Assessment supports the first steps for democratic scrutiny.

## 2.10 Inspection Regime

The statutory guidance notes the establishment of 'routine inspection programmes', and notes where the Secretary of State considers that a specified authority, or educational, prison or youth custody authority has failed to discharge certain serious violence duties they may issue directions to the responsible authorities for the purpose of securing compliance with the duty. However, the Secretary of State must obtain consent of the Welsh Ministers before giving a direction to a devolved Welsh authority.

### 3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 Option 1a: That Scrutiny consider the content of the Serious Violence Strategy and provide any observations.

Option 1b: That Scrutiny consider whether it would like to receive further progress reports covering serious violence by the Blaenau Gwent Community Safety Partnership.

### 4. **Evidence of how this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

#### Corporate Plan

Effectively tackling serious violence demands strong partnership working. The strategic needs assessment helped build a picture of the complex interplays between people, place and space. Like the Corporate Plan the Serious Violence Strategy will inform an ambitious programme of activity for the Local Authority and its partners that will ensure the people of Blaenau Gwent are at the heart of all we do and we support our communities to thrive, which in turn improves the quality of life and well-being and increases the resilience of those who live, work and visit Blaenau Gwent where everyone is welcome and safe.

#### Statutory Responsibilities

Paragraphs 2.1 – 2.4 above identify the relevant legislative duties placed on the Local Authority and the other responsible authorities of the Community Safety Partnership as well as the relevant authorities.

#### Gwent Well-being Plan

The responsible authorities and relevant authorities who have statutory duties relating to Serious Violence have all been involved in preparing the Gwent Well-being Plan. The positive and negative impacts of Community Safety has been acknowledged throughout the document. One of the five 'steps' that will help the PSB achieve the two well-being objectives is '*Enable and support people, neighbourhoods, and communities to be resilient, connected, thriving and safe*' accepting that community safety will make significant contributions to both well-being objectives and the other four 'steps'.

## 5. Implications Against Each Option

### 5.1 *Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)*

### 5.2 *Risk including Mitigating Actions*

### 5.3 *Legal*

The statutory guidance notes the establishment of 'routine inspection programmes', and notes where the Secretary of State considers that a specified authority, or educational, prison or youth custody authority has failed to discharge certain serious violence duties they may issue directions to the responsible authorities for the purpose of securing compliance with the duty. However, the Secretary of State must obtain consent of the Welsh Ministers before giving a direction to a devolved Welsh authority.

### 5.4 *Human Resources*

The Serious Violence Duty will be mainstreamed across the Council departments, and therefore subsumed within core business of its staff. Therefore, there are no significant human resource issues to consider.

### 5.5 *Health and Safety*

The Strategic Needs Assessment noted that over the 5-year period (2018-23), reported incidents decreased from 26 to 24 annually, totalling 98 incidents. Predominantly occurring in an elderly residential home (79%), the victims, mainly care workers (74%), reported injuries such as scrapes and bumps. Social Services reported 93% of incidents indicating RIDDOR compliance.

However, it is understood that there is a significant underreporting of violence in the workplace. This will be considered as part of the regional and local work programmes.

## 6. Supporting Evidence

In response to the Serious Violence Duty, Gwent has focussed on eleven categories of serious violence:

- Homicide
- Weapon Crime (with focus on bladed implements)
- Youth violence in public spaces
- Grievous bodily harm with intent
- Actual bodily harm
- Robbery
- Sexual violence
- Stalking harassment
- Arson with threat to life
- Assault on emergency workers

## 6.1 Performance Information and Data

The following key issues and findings are taken from the Serious Violence Strategic Needs Assessment

- The top 5 categories of violence crime in Blaenau Gwent are Stalking & Harassment, ABH with Intent, Weapon related crime, Rape & Sexual offences, and Bladed weapon crime.
- Blaenau Gwent has not recorded any homicide in the last 5-year period.
- Tredegar Central & west is the most common place for violent crime to take place.
- Stalking and Harassment has increased by over 50% in both rate and volume in the last 5-year period.
- The rate and volume of ABH with intent has remained consistent since 2018-19 except for 2020-21.
- Weapon related crime in Blaenau Gwent has shown a steady increase over the last 5-year period and crime involving a bladed weapon has increased in rate by 173% (n=0.85) and volume by 165% (n= 56).
- 44% (n= 312) of all known weapons used to commit crime in Blaenau Gwent were bladed implements in the last 5 years.
- Six Bells was 108% above the 5-year average volume of weapon crime in Blaenau Gwent in 2022/23 which is unusually high for that ward.
- The area of most concern in regard to weapon crime is Blaina where there was a total of 10 crimes in 2022/23 which was 2 ½ times more than the average in that area in the last 5 years. As are Sirhowy & Georgetown which have also seen a 2.5 x increase.  
in 2022/23 compared with the 5-year average.
- Rape and Sexual offences have seen a significant increase since 2018-19 with a crime rate increase of 95% (n= 1.65) and a volume increase of 88% (n= 106).
- Victims of serious violence in Blaenau Gwent are White, Female and between 26 – 35 years old except for Weapon crime where a victim is most commonly Male and ABH with intent where the victim is most commonly under the age of 18.
- Offenders of violent crime in Blaenau Gwent are mostly White, Male and between 26 – 35 years of age.

## 6.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***

Reduction in serious violence offences and offending. Increased confidence in the Local Authority to tackle serious violence. Increased confidence in local Policing and the local Community Safety Partnership.

## 6.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***

In line with the Home Office requirements a consultation on the Serious Violence Strategy was undertaken. All specified authorities and relevant authorities were engaged and participated in the production of the Strategic Needs Assessment and subsequent Strategy.

#### 6.4 **Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)**

This first Serious Violence Strategy notes that in Gwent we are committed to securing the foundations required to establish a strategy which achieves our vision of 'A Gwent Without Violence'. This interim strategy establishes what we need to put in place prior to setting out a longer-term strategy to prevent serious violence.

#### 6.5 **Preventative focus**

The Serious Violence Duty supported by statutory guidance requires the above specified authorities to work together to plan to:

- prevent and reduce serious violence; including
- identify the kinds of serious violence that occur in the area;
- identify the causes of that violence (so far as it is possible to do so); and
- prepare and implement a strategy for preventing and reducing serious violence in the area.

#### 6.6 **Collaboration / partnership working**

The production of the Strategic Needs Assessment and the subsequent formulation of the Serious Violence Strategy has been undertaken by the 'specified authorities' linking with the 'relevant authorities' collaborating closely with the Gwent Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

#### 6.7 **Integration (across service areas)**

The Serious Violence Duty will be mainstreamed across the Council and therefore subsumed within core business of its staff.

#### 6.8 **Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions**

#### 6.9 **Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)**

See Appendix B: Integrated Impact Assessment

### 7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

- 7.1 Regionally progress against the serious violence duty will be overseen by the Gwent Serious Violence Prevention Partnership. Locally, progress will be overseen by the Blaenau Gwent Community Safety Partnership. The Community Safety Partnership will provide timely reports for democratic scrutiny.

#### **Background Documents /Electronic Links**

Appendix A: Gwent Serious Violence Strategy

Appendix B: Integrated Impact Assessment