



Home Office

# **Serious Violence Duty: Consultation on Draft Statutory Guidance for Responsible Authorities**

## **Government response**



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# Introduction and background

On 28 April 2022, the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts (PCSC) Act received Royal Assent. The PCSC Act legislates the Serious Violence Duty (the Duty), a multi-agency approach to prevent and reduce serious violence in England and Wales. It sets out that 'specified authorities' across England and Wales must collaborate when implementing the Duty. 'Specified authorities' comprise of police, fire and rescue, health, local authorities, youth offending teams and probation services. They must work collaboratively and share data and information in order to put in place a strategy to prevent and reduce serious violence.

The statutory guidance will support the implementation of the Duty and is issued under Chapter 1 of Part 2 of the PCSC Act by the Secretary of State. The purpose of the guidance is to:

- Support specified authorities, responsible authorities and organisations in exercising their functions in relation to the Duty.
- Share case studies demonstrating effective partnership working advice on data sharing, information on monitoring and inspection and advice on working with the voluntary and community sector and young people.
- Provide Specific guidance included for authorities operating in Wales, which reflects the distinct Welsh legislative, policy and operational context.

The Duty remains a key part of the Government's programme of work to reduce serious violence. The importance of working together, across government, statutory, private, and voluntary sectors to deliver this change is crucial.

The public consultation on a revised draft statutory guidance on the Duty began on 23 June and closed on 21 July 2022. It invited feedback from relevant stakeholders and interested parties on the guidance, the legislation, local area support offers and a request for case studies. During the consultation period, we also engaged directly with a number of key stakeholders representing responsible authorities under the Duty, Violence Reduction Units and the Voluntary and Community Sector.

This document provides an overview of the responses received, summarising the key themes which arose from the consultation responses and how the feedback informed the final statutory guidance.

# Overview of responses

The consultation received 99 formal responses from a range of sectors and organisations. Not all respondents answered every question. All responses have been analysed and given full consideration in the preparation of the final statutory guidance. We would like to thank everyone who took the time to respond.

Those providing responses through the online survey were not obliged to provide details of who they were responding on behalf of. However, from those that provided this information, responses were from:

- National representative groups, such as the Association of Police Crime Commissioners, National Police Chiefs Council, professional bodies, Commissioners (Domestic Abuse Commissioner and National Data Guardian), justice (HM Prison and Probation Service and Association of Youth offending team Managers) voluntary sector.
- Local partners, including Community Safety Partnerships, Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs or equivalents), Violence Reduction Units (VRUs), police forces, local authorities and health.

Consultation responses were received from across England and Wales.

# Responses to specific questions

## **Q1. Does the draft statutory guidance improve your understanding of the legislation relating to the Serious Violence Duty? Yes, No, Any comments**

96% of respondents said that the guidance improves their understanding of the legislation.

## **Q2. Are there any specific aspects of the Serious Violence Duty that remain unclear (or are missing) after reading the draft Statutory Guidance? If yes, can you provide details?**

66% of respondents said that there were still aspects of the guidance that were unclear or missing. There were four themes which 20 – 30% of respondents raised:

### **Funding**

Additional clarity on the Duty funding model, how PCCs will distribute allocations, implications for local partnerships and domestic abuse and sexual offences interventions.

### **Local accountability and facilitating partnership working**

Whilst there was an acceptance that specifying no lead partner for the Duty could facilitate a public health approach, there needed to be a clearer steer on local accountability. Partnerships varied in effectiveness and one specified authority could operate across several partnership areas. There were similar requirements to engage with Combating Drugs Partnership and links to VRUs which overlapped with the Duty. 28% of the responses stated the guidance needed to be clearer surrounding accountability and monitoring.

### **Clarity on the inclusion of domestic abuse and sexual offences under the Duty –**

Whilst there was an acceptance that overall having a flexible definition of serious violence was beneficial so that areas could address their local needs, 22% of the respondents felt that the position on domestic abuse and sexual violence should be clearer. 11% (of the 22%) felt that if the inclusion of domestic abuse and sexual violence is left as discretionary then it risks inconsistency and creates difficulties in monitoring and evaluating successes.

### **The roles and responsibilities of Police and Crime Commissioners**

As PCCs are not Duty holders and their role is discretionary, respondents felt that it was particularly important to outline how they can hold others to account for their statutory responsibilities.

Other issues raised by respondents included the importance of safeguarding, the need for practical support with the complexities of data and information sharing, measuring the impact of the Duty and the role of education representatives.

**Q3. We are keen to include updated case studies to support the statutory guidance and to support continuous learning on serious violence. If you are able to provide a case study, please provide brief details below, including your contact details.**

We will be following up the information provided through the local support offer agreement.

**Q4. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following suggestions for support for local areas on the Duty?**

**The categories suggested: national seminars, peer support by operational experts. National Facilitators and local consultancy support.**

36 – 40% of respondents 'strongly agreed' and 23 – 30% 'agreed' with all of these options. In addition, respondents suggested other areas of support including utilising people with lived experience, better community engagement and easier access to best practice examples.

**Q5. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following suggestions for areas of support for local areas on the Duty? The areas of support suggested: data and information sharing, strategic needs assessments, multi-agency working and defining serious violence.**

The majority of respondents 'strongly agreed/agreed' with all of these areas. In addition, respondents suggested a strategy development, assurance and evaluation and community involvement.

# Impact Assessment, Equalities and Welsh Language

## Impact Assessment

The Impact Assessment for the Serious Violence Duty was published **here**.

## Equalities

The Equalities Impact Assessment for the Police Crime Sentencing and Courts Bill **here**.

## Welsh Language Impact Test

No responses raised considerations for Wales or Welsh speakers.

Welsh Government officials drafted the Wales specific guidance and consulted with stakeholders.



# Conclusion and next steps

A final version of the statutory guidance has been published on GOV.UK

We have incorporated amendments based on the themes highlighted through the consultation in order to articulate the position more clearly without removing the emphasis on local flexibility. We have also been developing further the arrangements for grant funding for the Duty. Details of this will have been communicated to representatives for Police and Crime Commissioners and responsible authorities. We have been supported by stakeholders, including, the Local Government Association, the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, the Domestic Abuse Commissioner and their local representatives.

We have also liaised with partners across Government and representatives from sector bodies, to tighten the draft guidance in a number of other areas, including, how the Duty aligns with other national policies and strategies, clearer sector specific guidance for Fire and Rescue Services; refinement of the health sector specific guidance to tighten up new legislative position due to recent Health and Care Act 2022; showing more clearly the links between safeguarding and the Duty.

We have committed to review the statutory guidance a year after its publication (by the end of December 2023) to make sure we can promptly consider feedback on how the Duty is working in practice and whether the guidance need to reflect these.

In order to ensure that local areas receive practical support in commencing and implementing the Duty, the Home Office are funding a support offer before and after commencement, through Crest Advisory.

Their work includes:

- Initial assessment meeting with each of the 43 local areas to assess each area's existing partnership-working arrangements, recommend steps and make practical and achievable recommendations on improvements. Crest will be making contact with local areas shortly.
- Deliver thematic workshops, to reach all 43 local areas on:
  - Obligations, governance and collaboration
  - Strategic Needs Assessments and response strategies
  - Data Sharing
  - Best practice approaches
- Development and establishment of a peer support network and knowledge hub including consideration of legacy arrangements for both

- Tailored support across the 43 local areas – this element will be by request or where considered a requirement following the initial assessments

# Consultation principles

The principles that Government departments and other public bodies should adopt for engaging stakeholders when developing policy and legislation are set out in the Cabinet Office Consultation Principles 2018:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/691383/Consultation\\_Principles\\_\\_1\\_.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/691383/Consultation_Principles__1_.pdf)





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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at [SeriousViolenceDuty@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:SeriousViolenceDuty@homeoffice.gov.uk)