



The Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB) response to the consultation is as follows:

Q: Do you agree that the vision and focus for a multi-agency approach to preventing and tackling serious violence is correct? If not, please explain why.

There was a consensus that a multi-agency approach to preventing and tackling serious violence is the correct approach. There was also a consensus that making participation/co-operation a compulsory duty would be appropriate and desirable though this should be a duty on organisations and not individuals. There were some caveats/questions:

- What are the sanctions for those that didn't participate? If there are no sanctions then agencies and organisations might still choose not to engage. An example was given of MAPPA which imposes a statutory duty of organisations to participate but because there is no sanction, some organisations are less willing to participate than others.
- Who should participate? While larger organisations have greater capacity to engage in a number of multi-agency forums, smaller – often voluntary sector – organisations have limited capacity. Given that there are, locally, so many multi-agency forums there is a risk that membership and the agenda is dominated by the larger organisations. How do we ensure that membership of the forum is representative? How do we know that those organisations who claim to represent “the community” really do so? How do we ensure that health and education are represented at the right level? Health in particular is so multi layered and multi-faceted that we need to ensure that we engage with the most appropriate function.
- Leadership should come from an organisation outside of the CJS e.g. health or education. This would help shift the focus from the “end point” i.e. criminal justice intervention to early intervention and education.
- There needs to be robust arrangements for sharing information between statutory and private and voluntary and third sector organisations. All acknowledged the complexities of information sharing even between statutory agencies and the extra layer of difficulty when non-statutory organisations become involved.
- Information sharing needs to be appropriate and timely and for an identified/specified purpose. “Promiscuous” information sharing is unhelpful. It also needs to be acknowledged that in some instances, sharing information can be counter-productive e.g. sharing information about the identity of gun/knife crime victims by A and E might deter people from going to hospital. The nature of the information to be shared is also important. Is it data or actionable intelligence?

More generally, the focus of the Strategy has a somewhat “London-centric” feel to it. Knife crime among young people is not on the same scale in our communities as it is in other communities particularly in some London boroughs. While acknowledging that there are other, perhaps more pressing issues in the North East of England we also acknowledge that we do not want to “sleepwalk” into a position where knife crime becomes a significant issue and therefore the focus should be on education and promoting a counter-narrative for young people about carrying knives and involvement in gang related activity.

Option One: New duty on specific organisations to have due regard to the prevention and tackling of serious violence.

Do you consider that Option One would best achieve the consultation vision? Please explain why.

Do you consider the specific agencies listed in Schedule 6 to the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 the right partners to achieve the consultation vision? If not, please explain why.

Option 1 is not the preferred option. Although it was generally agreed that legislating to compel organisation to work together was a good idea in principle, issues around the “how” remain. There appears to be a broad discretion for partners to determine how they translate and operationalise the duty and there was a concern that agencies could superficially comply while still working in their organisational silos. There is a risk that the focus would be on meeting the requirements of the legislation rather than engaging with the spirit of it. Organisations already work together in a variety of forums locally and the need for another layer of meetings was questioned. When considering the models on which this approach is predicated (Glasgow, Cardiff etc) and the context in which the current concerns exist (e.g. London) it was considered that we are in a different position at this moment in time in that the issue of knife crime among young people particularly is not at that “epidemic” stage as it is elsewhere. Acknowledging however that we do not want to “sleepwalk” into a similar position to other areas where knife crime is a significant problem, it was considered that a more “bottom up” approach would be desirable with an emphasis on community involvement and education rather than, for example, criminal justice solutions. The “one size fits all” approach that seems to be supported by Option 1 was not considered to be sufficiently responsive to our current needs and issues.

Whether the agencies listed in the CTSA 2015 are the right partners will depend on the circumstances and what is trying to be achieved with whom. It is difficult to say exactly who should be involved in a prescriptive way, as different areas will have different issues that require different solutions. While there are probably core agencies that need to be involved whatever the issue – Health, Education, Police etc – there needs to be flexibility so that other groups e.g. Youth Justice, community groups etc – can be included to address particular or emerging concerns. The membership of any partnership should not be so fixed as to include others with an interest.

The disadvantages set out in the Consultation document were acknowledged as accurate and relevant.

Option Two: New duty through legislation to revise Community Safety Partnerships.

Do you consider that Option 2 would best achieve the consultation vision? Please explain why.

Should the list of Statutory Partners in Community Safety Partnerships be added to so that they can adequately prevent and tackle serious violence in local areas? If so, what organisations?

This was the preferred option. It is acknowledged in the Consultation document that CSP's already exist in all areas and that they are already a useful vehicle for delivering local solutions. There are existing relationships with a broad range of relevant organisations within the Partnerships and there is already established community buy in and representation. In an area like ours where there are a number of CSP's, it might be desirable to have an overarching governance group to oversee the activities of the individual CSP's. CSP's have demonstrated that they can be responsive to emerging local issues and that they can, where required, draw on a broad range of experience and expertise. Adopting this option with the caveat that CSP's were made more robust would appear to be preferable to setting up new arrangements as is inferred by Option 1.

It is recognised that CSP's are more robust in some areas than others. The response then is not to "reinvent the wheel" but invest in making them uniformly more robust.

In terms of membership, as outlined above in relation to Option 1, membership needs to be sufficiently flexible to allow areas to respond to emerging needs and issues. It is difficult to be prescriptive about who should be involved. The current core agencies are a useful starting point but prescribing and by definition limiting which agencies can contribute is unhelpful as it prevents flexibility to respond to emerging issues or concerns.

Option Three: A voluntary non-legislative approach.

Do you consider that Option Three would best achieve the consultation vision? Please explain why.

What other measures could support such a voluntary multi-agency approach to tackling serious violence, including how we ensure join up between different agencies?

There was no support for a voluntary, non-legislative approach. In the current financial climate where resources are stretched so thinly, it was felt that there needed to be an element of compulsion and if there was not, then organisations would simply opt out. The usual statutory organisation would inevitably be required to take the lead and whatever any voluntary body would look like, it would end up replicating existing partnership forums with the same few organisations sitting around the table. There was no further discussion about this proposed model.