

Press release: Home Secretary to launch Serious Violence Strategy

Commissioned by the Home Secretary and backed with £40m of Home Office funding, it marks a major shift in the government's response to knife crime and gun crime.

It strikes a balance between prevention and robust law enforcement with a new £11m Early Intervention Youth Fund for community projects to help young people live lives free from violence.

The strategy identifies the changing drugs market – in particular the devastating impact of crack cocaine – as a key driver of the violence harming our communities and announces a range of powerful actions to tackle the issue of “county lines” and its implications for drugs, violence and exploitation of vulnerable people.

That includes £3.6m to establish a new National County Lines Coordination Centre.

The Home Secretary will launch the Serious Violence Strategy at an event in London today to an audience of community groups, public sector partners and industry representatives, including organisations and charities she has met in recent weeks.

She will also announce that she will lead a new Serious Violence Taskforce which will bring together the voluntary sector, local Government, police and other key sectors to ensure the strategy is delivered effectively.

In her speech she is expected to say:

This strategy represents a real step-change in the way we think about and respond to these personal tragedies, these gruesome violent crimes which dominate the front pages of our newspapers with seemingly depressing regularity.

A crucial part of our approach will be focusing on and investing more in prevention and early intervention.

We need to engage with our young people early and to provide the incentives and credible alternatives that will prevent them from being drawn into crime in the first place. This in my view is the best long-term solution.

Because what better way to stop knife crime than by stopping young people from picking up knives in the first place?

The strategy stresses the importance of early intervention to tackle the root causes of serious violence and steer young people away from crime in the first place, whilst ensuring the police continue to have the tools and support they need to tackle violent crime.

It states that about half the rise in robbery, knife and gun crime is due to improvements in police recording. For the remainder, drug-related cases seem to be an important driver. Between 2014-15 and 2016-17, homicides where either the victim or suspect were known to be involved in using or dealing illicit drugs increased from 50% to 57%. Crack cocaine markets have strong links to serious violence and evidence suggests crack use is rising in England and Wales due to a mix of supply and demand factors.

The strategy sets out how drug-market violence may also be facilitated and spread by social media, with a small minority of people using social media to glamorise gang or drug-selling life, taunt rivals and normalise weapons-carrying.

The Home Secretary will go on to say:

We will take the comprehensive approach necessary to make sure that our sons and daughters are protected and our streets are safe.

As a government we will never stand by while acid is thrown or knives wielded.

I am clear that we must do whatever it takes to tackle this so that no parent has to bury their child.

In addition to the £40m of Home Office funding to deliver the strategy in the next two years, it references:

- The Home Office's £13m Trusted Relationships Fund, through which the Home Office is providing £13 million over the next four years to pilot approaches which provide support to young people at risk of sexual exploitation, gang exploitation and peer abuse in England. The Fund will support work to help young people to build positive and trusted relationships with adults who are there to support them, which may help prevent not only their risk of abuse but also involvement in violent offences, for example through child criminal exploitation.
- The £40m Youth Investment Fund, launched in September 2017 by DCMS, DfE

and the Big Lottery Fund to boost local 'open access' youth provision in six targeted disadvantaged areas in England. Over 300,000 young people are expected to benefit from increased access to a range of activities that help them develop their skills and build positive relationships. This will include young people affected by violence.

- £90m of "dormant accounts" money, which will support disadvantaged and disengaged young people with their transition to work;
- The Troubled Families Programme, which has £920m for local authorities to work with 400,000 families between 2015 and 2020.