

**AYM (Association of Youth Offending Team Managers) response:
Home Office Consultation on a new legal duty to support a multi-agency
approach to preventing and tackling serious violence
28th May 2019**

About the AYM

The AYM is a professional association representing the majority of youth offending teams (YOT) and their managers in England. Section 39 (1) of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 requires the co-operation of the named statutory partners to form a YOT. Section 38 (1, 2) identifies the statutory partners and places upon them a duty to co-operate in order to secure youth justice services appropriate to their area. These statutory partners are the local authority, police, the probation service, and health. To support the YOT, additional partners may also be recruited to the joint strategic effort to prevent offending by children and young people. The Association is able to draw on the wealth of knowledge and the breadth of members' experience to promote public understanding of youth crime issues and to play its part in shaping the youth crime agenda. Our members run services providing community-based supervision for children and young people who offend. We also work closely with staff in secure units and young offender institutions to ensure that young people in custody have as smooth a transition as possible back in to the community.

The AYM welcomes the opportunity to provide a response to the Consultation on a new legal duty to support a multi-agency approach to preventing and tackling serious violence.

8. 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.

YES

We want to take this opportunity remind the Home Office that in 1998 their legislation, the Crime and Disorder Act created a statutory multi-agency local partnership with the primary function to prevent youth crime. This partnership has successfully overseen significant reductions in the numbers of young people involved in formal youth justice by a combination of efforts and approaches currently being described as a "public health approach to problem solving serious violence. This local partnership is currently active alongside another such partnership, the statutory Community Safety Partnerships.

We therefore welcome the vision's assertion that action should be 'guided by evidence of the problems and what works in tackling their root causes', Agencies in local statutory partnerships are already working in concert, rather than isolation, to identify children at risk as early as possible. This is despite many local partnerships having seen central government investment in preventative and early help services being significantly reduced over the last decade.

However, we would encourage a development of the vision for tackling serious violence that fully represents a holistic approach to protecting children and their families from harm. Encouraging local partnerships to combine and gather a broad range of partners and their interventions. These should not see serious violence as different or not related to the many other threats that some children face. As the recent report by the College of Policing acknowledges, adults are responsible for most serious violent crime.

The Government's response to tackling serious violence should be part of a broader strategy to improve the capacity of the safeguarding system and statutory services to protect children at risk of harm outside the home, including but not limited to serious violence – but also child sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation and other forms of harm.

We wonder if the suggestion of a statutory duty is misplaced. There are current partnerships that already have a duty to prevent serious violence. We would encourage the Government to ensure agencies have the training and resources they need to identify and respond to harms as early as possible, and should work to identify best practice in partnership working where it already exists, and promote and support this.

9. Do you consider that Option One would best achieve the consultation vision?

NO

Please explain why.

The Association of YOT Managers represent a significant number services working directly with children and young people involved in serious violence. We believe the approach to children at risk of involvement in crime has been shown to be one of early identification and prevention. The response to serious violence where children are involved must be one that is child-focussed and welfare-based, addressing the underlying causes of the child's behaviour, and actively promoting their rehabilitation and reintegration.

We support a public health approach to tackling serious violence which seeks to address its root causes, and welcome the government's acknowledgement of the need to shift focus from a punitive response towards a multi-agency, more preventative approach.

However, we would encourage a development of the vision for tackling serious violence that fully represents a holistic approach to protecting children and their families from harm. Encouraging local partnerships to combine and gather a broad range of partners and their interventions. These should not see serious violence as different or not related to the many other threats that some children face. As the recent report by the College of Policing acknowledges, adults are responsible for most serious violent crime.

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10. 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.

We would suggest that the list is explicit in including Directors of Children Services (or their delegate) under local government, and add the new multi-agency safeguarding arrangements (replacing local safeguarding children boards) in this section too. Under criminal justice agencies; we would add Heads of Youth Offending Services.

11. Do you consider that Option two would best achieve the consultation vision?

NO

Please explain why.

For the same reasons outlined in our response regarding Option One. Option Two is less favourable to Option One as it leaves less flexibility for local authorities to decide on a partnership setup that suits local needs. Option Two is our least preferred proposal.

12. 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?

Yes and the new multi-agency safeguarding arrangements should be considered as key partners in a strategy to keep children safe from harm, including serious violence. We would also request that Heads of Youth Offending Services be added.

13. Do you consider that Option Three would best achieve the consultation vision?

YES

Please explain why.

AYM believes that option three most accurately reflects a true public health approach, which the evidence supports as being effective at tackling serious violence. The consultation itself acknowledges the success of similar voluntary approaches to multi-agency working, for example the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) in Scotland. The voluntary approach leaves room for flexibility and adaptability, to ensure resources are directed most efficiently, reflective of and responsive to local needs. AYM believes that of the available options, this approach will be most effective at fulfilling the government's stated aim of facilitating information sharing, multi-agency working, and reducing violence.

However, we have concerns that this option will not fulfil the stated aims of the consultation without additional investment to allow a comprehensive strategy which enables partnerships to address serious violence as part of wider safeguarding duties, with adequate guidance and resources. We would encourage a greater proportion of investment to be in what the College of Policing review suggests as effective and promising approaches.