

STRATEGIC POLICING AND CRIME BOARD

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Report: New Government Drug Strategy – Progress Update

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Purpose of paper

1. This paper will set out information around the new Government drug strategy and the potential implications this could have for the OPCC. It will set out the work the office has done, following its publication, to ensure it is involved in the implementation. This paper is for information only.

Background

2. A new government drug strategy was published on 6 December 2021, setting out a 10-year vision for addressing the impact drugs markets have on individuals and communities. The three key priorities of the strategy are enforcement, treatment and reducing demand for drugs.
3. Whilst it shares similar priorities with previous drug strategies in wanting to see reductions in overall drug use, drug-related crime and drug related harms, there are two unique differences that give hope that this one will be able to meet its aims. Firstly, the strategy is underpinned by Dame Carol Black's Independent Review of Drugs, and secondly, for the first time in over a decade, the Drug Strategy is accompanied by significant levels of funding.
4. Dame Carol's review was published in two parts between 2020 and 2021. Part One was a comprehensive examination of the UK's drugs markets, the harms caused by them and the costs to society. Part Two then set out a series of recommendations aimed at developing an effective response to the issues identified in Part One. A key finding of Dame Carol's work was that government interventions to restrict supply have limited impact on their own and that it is only by also reducing the demand for drugs, through the provision of high-quality treatment, that we will be able to make an impact on drug related harms. Significantly, however, the review concluded that the current provision of treatment in England was unfit for purpose and in need of urgent repair.
5. The vast majority of Dame Carol's recommendations were accepted and included in the final strategy, including a large injection of funding to rebuild the treatment system. Over the next three years, £780 million of additional funding will be

invested in drug and alcohol services to ensure capacity can be increased, along with the quality of treatment being delivered.

6. In order to ensure the funding is successfully utilised and to coordinate the priorities at a local level, the strategy calls for partnerships to be established in each area. These are intended to bring together a range of organisations and key individuals and have proactive oversight of the implementation of the strategy. The partnerships will make sure that local organisations work together to jointly agree provision and identify where improvements can be made.
7. PCCs are named as a key partner that should be involved in the local implementation of the strategy.

Key points

8. As an office, the OPCC did a lot of work to consider the implications of the strategy. We held an event in February with partners, publishing a [recommendation report](#) off the back of this. The event was attended by over 60 partners across the force area and asked partners for views on what they felt the priorities should be and how the work should be implemented, along with their views around the wider diversion agenda. The key conclusions of the report were that work on the new strategy should be multi-layered in its geographical footprint and should involve collaboration from all of the relevant agencies.
9. The PCC and members of his team also met with Dame Carol Black and members of the new governmental Joint Combatting Drugs Unit (JCDU). In these meetings, the case was put forward for PCCs to have a key role in the delivery of the strategy.
10. On the 15th June, guidance around local partnerships was published by Government. The guidance calls for new 'Combatting Drugs Partnerships' to be set up across England. Combating Drugs Partnerships should be multi-agency forums that are accountable for local delivery of the National Outcomes Framework (see Appendix 1).
11. There are two key decisions each area needs to make by 1st August. These are;
 - **The geographical footprint of each partnership.**
 - **Who the partnership's Senior Responsible Officer will be.**
12. A letter was sent to partners proposing that the PCC would be the senior responsible officer for a partnership that sat at force level. This would sit above local sub-groups in each local authority area that would drive local delivery.
13. On Wednesday 13th July, partners were invited to attend West Midlands Community Safety Partnership to discuss the proposal.
14. It was principally agreed at the meeting that the PCC would perform the SRO function, subject to Terms of Reference being approved by partners.

Financial Implications

This is an update report around plans that are yet to be fully confirmed therefore there are currently no financial implications. It should be considered though, that new Government funding may accompany future work within the partnership.

Legal Implications

This is an update report around plans that are yet to be fully confirmed therefore there are currently no legal implications.

Equality Implications

This is an update report around plans that are yet to be fully confirmed therefore there are currently no equality implications. If the partnership arrangements are confirmed, equalities will be a key consideration throughout all work.

Next Steps

15. The board will be kept updated on developments as they are confirmed.

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