



Violence is preventable – not inevitable

VRU LAUNCH VISION FOR THE FUTURE

PRESS RELEASE/MEDIA INVITE

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A vision for a less violent Scotland by 2017 is to be set out by the national Violence Reduction Unit.

The VRU's 10 year plan, which is to be launched by Justice Secretary Kenny MacAskill and Strathclyde Chief Constable Steve House tomorrow (**Monday, 17 December**), lays out a plan for a Scotland where violence is considered an aberration rather than a simple fact of life.

The plan outlines the unit's aims in six key areas:

1. Violence reduction as a national priority
2. Enforcement
3. Attitudinal change
4. Primary Prevention – seeking to prevent the onset of violence, or change behaviour so that violence is prevented from developing.
5. Secondary Prevention – to halt the progression of violence once it is established - this is achieved by early detection or early diagnosis followed by prompt, effective treatment
6. Tertiary Prevention – the rehabilitation of people with an established violent behaviour or affected as a victim.

Within this, some of the key goals are:

By 2010

- To have decreased the tolerance of violence in communities
- To have established national injury surveillance and sharing of injury data and intelligence with other agencies to prevent violence
- Work with the Scottish Prison Service and other agencies to broaden the range of violence prevention and parenting programmes in custodial settings

By 2017

- To have established a policing ethos which has adopted the public health approach to reducing violence and that is evident in all the police strategic plans
- To have narrowed the gap between reported crime and actual levels of violence as a measure of community confidence
- To have a national policy and local delivery of universal and specialist support programmes around parenting and early years
- To have joint funding for schools based officers built into spending plans for councils and police forces
- We will work with our partners to make violence interventions with victims and offenders an integral part of the treatment.

Central to the plan is a commitment from partners in health, education and communities to bring about a change in attitudes that will help achieve a permanent and sustainable reduction in levels of violence. Copies of the document will be circulated to health and education bosses as well as high-level police officers across the country in order to encourage this. The document will also be available online at the unit's website, **www.actiononviolence.com**.

Detective Chief Superintendent John Carnochan, Head of the Violence Reduction Unit, said:

“What we are offering is a vision of a less violent Scotland. Certainly we anticipate that the plan will change over time as our aspirations grow greater and as more people sign up. What we really want is for people to look back in 10 years time and reflect on just how far we have come.

“The challenge of reducing violence within 10 years may seem daunting, but the Scots have never shirked a challenge. As a country, we need to be bolder, more innovative and less tolerant of violence. We see this document as a starting point, something to strive for. Achieving it won't be easy, but that is no reason not to try.”

The launch will take place at the Glasgow University Dental Hospital and School. The Hospital is currently piloting the COVAID (Control of Violent, Angry, Impulsive Drinkers) initiative at two maxillofacial units (Southern General and Monklands) in partnership with the VRU. Mr MacAskill and Chief Constable House, who have both expressed their desire to develop multi agency responses to violence, will meet with staff working on the initiative as part of the launch.

Justice Secretary Kenny MacAskill said:

“We are under no illusion that tackling the high levels of violence in Scotland will be easy. The scale of the challenge we have inherited as a Government

is significant and I know there are no overnight solutions to tackle this macho culture.

“The Scottish Government is fully committed to tackling violence in our society and the root causes of that violence. That’s why I welcome the VRU’s 10 Year Strategic Plan. It is ambitious, it is different and it is designed to bring real change. There is no doubt there will be challenges along the way. However, it provides very real goals for us all to focus on.

“It is important that that we don’t see this as an issue for political points scoring. We need continuity of policy and approach to tackle a problem as deep-rooted as this. It’s right that we have a twin approach of tough enforcement with long-term prevention. That approach began under the previous administration and it is one we will build upon.

“The ideal and worship of the hard-man has to stop. That, fuelled with alcohol, is the root cause of much if not most of the violence in our land. We need to keep cracking down hard on those who carry knives while also working to educate young people about the dangers of carrying a weapon. We are also taking co-ordinated action to help tackle the causes – challenging Scotland’s ‘drink to get drunk’ attitudes, our new drugs strategy, and our work to use money from the proceeds of crime to give young people more opportunities in areas like sport and arts.

“All of this will complement the Plan set out today and I hope that together we can help deliver longer term reductions in levels of violence.”

Chief Constable Steve House said:

“From the outset I have made clear that my priority for Strathclyde is tackling violence. I am fully supportive of the long term view. My immediate concern is to ensure that the force is focussed on containing and managing the problem of violence as it is now. We will continue to do what Strathclyde does well – enforcement. Through this, we will support the Violence Reduction Unit in driving towards the goals laid out in this blueprint for the future.”

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Notes for editors

1. The launch of the Violence Reduction Unit’s 10 year plan will take place at the Glasgow University Dental Hospital & School, 378 Sauchiehall Street Glasgow, on **Monday, December 17**.
2. Copies of the plan will be available at the event

3. COVAID – Control of Violence for Angry, Impulsive Drinkers is an intervention programme developed by Professor Mary McMurrin of the University of Nottingham. First trialled in Cardiff, the programme aims to encourage people to control their anger, stop and think in response to problems and control their drinking. An evaluation of the Cardiff programme showed that all participants had so far shown improvement in aspects of anger control and problem solving, and that incidents of aggression and violence had been minimal for the duration of the course. The chances of re-offending were twice as high for people who did not complete COVAID compared to those who did.
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