Violence is preventable – not inevitable
THE VIOLENCE REDUCTION ALLIANCE PLEDGE:

VIOLENCE IS NOT INEVITABLE AND IS THEREFORE PREVENTABLE. POSITIVE ALLIANCES, EFFECTIVE INFORMATION SHARING AND COMMITMENT TO INNOVATIVE PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION POLICIES WILL REDUCE VIOLENCE IN SCOTLAND
REDUCING VIOLENCE
AN ALLIANCE FOR A SAFER FUTURE
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FOREWORD
No country or community is untouched by violence. Images and accounts of violence pervade our media; it is on our streets, in our homes, schools, workplaces and institutions. Violence is a universal scourge that tears at the fabric of communities and threatens the life, health and happiness of us all.

Violence is often seen as an inevitable part of the human condition – a fact of life to respond to, rather than prevent. However, encouraged by the success of public health approaches to other environmental and behavioural-related health problems, these assumptions are changing.

The focus is broadening, with increasing emphasis on prevention and addressing the root causes of violence. However, a key requirement for addressing violence in a comprehensive manner, is for people to work together in partnerships of all kinds, and at all levels, to develop effective approaches.

STRATHCLYDE POLICE ESTABLISHED A VIOLENCE REDUCTION UNIT IN JANUARY 2005 TO TARGET VIOLENT BEHAVIOUR, PARTICULARLY KNIFE CRIME AND WEAPON CARRYING AMONG YOUNG MEN.

DESPITE AN OVERALL FALL IN CRIME IN THE WEST OF SCOTLAND, LEVELS OF VIOLENT CRIME – IN PARTICULAR, KNIFE CRIME – HAVE REMAINED RELATIVELY CONSTANT FOR THE LAST 40 YEARS.

The unit had simple aims: to reduce violent crime and behaviour by working with partner agencies to achieve long-term societal and attitudinal change, and, by focusing on enforcement, to contain and manage individuals who carry weapons or who are involved in violent behaviour. The aim of the unit was also to explore best practices and develop sustainable, innovative solutions to this deep-rooted problem.

This document highlights the work carried out by the unit during the past year and identifies good practice. It also identifies potential future opportunities for taking the agenda forward in partnership with the Scottish Executive and other local partners to build a Violence Reduction Alliance for a Safer Future in Scotland.
“VIOLENCE IS AS STUBBORN AS IT IS PERNICIOUS AND IMPACTS NEGATIVELY UPON ALL AREAS OF SOCIETY TODAY.

VIOLENCE – FROM BULLYING IN OUR SCHOOLS AND HOMES, TO MURDER ON OUR STREETS – IS PERVERSIVE, AFFECTING INNER CITIES TO RURAL COMMUNITIES AND TOWNS THROUGHOUT SCOTLAND.

Violence infects the well-being and health of communities where the daily stress and fear experienced by individuals and families inhibits their lives and aspirations.

Violence is preventable, but criminal justice solutions alone cannot achieve this.

For decades, the majority of the allocated resources, energy and funds has been committed to dealing with the consequences of this violence, with little cohesive efforts being made to solve the causes. Health boards, social work and education departments, and criminal justice agencies have all committed significant proportions of their budgets to dealing with violence and its consequences, a pattern of expenditure that continues today. Yet, in some areas, the levels of violence remain unacceptably high, health is still poor, educational attainment low and our prisons full.
All violence from bullying to murder is abhorrent. Interpersonal violence, involving young men carrying knives and other weapons in Scotland, increases the likelihood of death or serious injury – violence of such intensity that it is virtually unique in western Europe. The majority of young men who become involved in violence, both as victims and offenders, will be poorly educated and will, in all likelihood, live in areas described, in social terms, as being of high deprivation. These areas have, over many years, been the focus of the concentrated resources and energy of the public and private sector and, yet, despite these often heroic efforts, they are still classified as among the most deprived in the country.

In the worst of these areas, interpersonal violence is almost accepted as legitimate, a community norm, something that cannot be changed. The scars from this conflict are evident on the faces of young men who live in these areas and label them not as the victims they are, but as fighters – violent men. The women who suffer at the hands of violent partners and the children brought up in a daily atmosphere of conflict, aggression and abuse and who witness violence every day – have less visible scars.

A great deal of effort has been expended on dealing with the consequences of social deprivation: poor health, alcohol and drug abuse, and low educational attainment. Violence, too, has been tackled from this same perspective. Until we have clear evidence that attitudes are changing, there will be little chance of sustainable progress.

The problems are easy to identify, but the solutions are less clear. What is clear is that there will not be a single solution, but rather a thousand small victories that will incrementally deliver to our communities improved confidence, an enhanced quality of life, better health and a return of greater aspirations. No child in Scotland has the ambition to become a murderer – we need to fully understand why some grow up to be violent and others not.
In Scotland, we have an opportunity to make a difference. We have an economy of scale that facilitates closer alliances between the vital agencies. Violence reduction is a pressing and legitimate issue that permits focused collaborative action towards a single common purpose.

In successfully tackling violence, the benefits will be far-reaching – helping to improve the economy by producing a more skilled workforce. It will improve the image of Scotland. It will improve the well-being of our communities and will significantly reduce the burden on public resources, currently expended dealing with the consequences of violence.

This will require a long-term commitment. Short-term initiatives alone do not deliver this type of sustained change.

Fundamental to our success is the need to improve, beyond recognition, the effectiveness of every agency in working together. Success requires meaningful alliances that are founded, not on a particular discipline, role or funding stream, but rather on positive agreed outcomes. We must also fully involve those key partners who are often forgotten and the communities themselves, for, without their involvement in improving their everyday lives, we will just have a few more decades of the same.

The challenge is big and daunting and it will not be easy, but we must make a start on it and, in some respects, it does not matter where we start, but start we must.”

Detective Chief Superintendent John Carnochan,
head of the Violence Reduction Unit
FOR DECADES OUR RESPONSE TO VIOLENT INCIDENTS HAS BEEN BASED AROUND THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM ALONE. POLICE INVESTIGATE CRIMES, OFFICERS ARREST THE OFFENDERS, AND THEY ARE DEALT WITH BY THE COURTS. Whilst there have been welcome reductions in some areas of crime, such as theft and reset, crimes of behaviour – in particular, violence – have remained persistent.

Imagine if public health officials had taken the criminal justice approach to disease control. People with measles would be locked away in isolation hospitals until their infection cleared up; then they would be released back into society. We would, therefore, need more hospitals and more nurses. This would not eradicate measles, but isolating the sufferers would make the rest of us feel safer.

Thankfully, what public health did was apply some primary prevention measures. They identified the cause, developed a cure and targeted the most vulnerable group. They then introduced a primary prevention measure – they inoculated babies.
When applied to violent behaviour, this approach makes it easier to see long-term, sustainable solutions to a deep-rooted problem.

However, it is important that police also continue to contain and manage the problem in the short to medium-term. Experience tells us if a short-term operation proves to be successful, forces should develop it as part of the standard policing plan for the future.

EVERYONE WAS SCREAMING – YOU’VE BEEN SLASHED. I PUT MY HANDS UP AND THERE WAS BLOOD EVERYWHERE

Kirsty Nisbet, teenage knife attack victim
Examples of innovative policing over the past year:

**Operation Vine:** This was a partnership action in Glasgow with Strathclyde Police, British Transport Police and the transport company First. The primary aim of Operation Vine was to detect and disrupt individuals or groups that intelligence sources and crime pattern analysis indicated were regularly travelling into Glasgow city centre while in possession of weapons. Police used metal detectors during this operation, which proved very effective not only at highlighting concealed suspicious objects, but also in terms of public reassurance. Many members of the travelling public expressed support for the use of the detectors and the wider tactics employed during Operation Vine.

**The Warrants Initiative:** A great deal of police time is taken up chasing warrants and trying to locate individuals. Many of these warrants, if served in the mornings, would mean that prisoners could be processed at court the same day, thereby negating the need for an overnight detention. Raising awareness of this may encourage individuals to hand themselves in to avoid a longer detention than necessary. Warrants for the most violent offenders have been prioritised by Strathclyde Police over the past 12 months, ensuring they are dealt with as quickly as possible.

**Test Purchasing:** Alcohol is certainly a contributory factor in many violent incidents. Curtailing the sale of alcohol to under-18s will undoubtedly have an impact on violence and other antisocial behaviour. The Lord Advocate has agreed in principle to the use of under-18s in controlled test purchase operations. These operations will not only target local retailers, but also major retailers and chains. We hope to pilot operations later this year.
ALCOHOL IS CERTAINLY A CONTRIBUTORY FACTOR IN MANY VIOLENT INCIDENTS

Nite Zone: Glasgow city centre had identifiable problems in relation to the dispersal of revellers which contributed to incidents of violence occurring. This is an excellent example of collaborative working. Strathclyde Police joined forces with Glasgow City Council and transport company First to launch an initiative to make the city centre safer for revellers after a night out. The main aims were to ensure that people managed to travel home quickly and safely after a night out on the town, and to reduce violence and antisocial behaviour. The Nite Zone covers some of the busiest areas in the night-time economy. Late-night bus services were extended and community wardens were introduced to direct revellers towards bus and taxi ranks, while street lighting and CCTV systems were also enhanced. Initial figures show a significant reduction in street disorder.

The K marker: Every time a person is caught carrying a knife, the case is flagged with a ‘K’, which allows police to track the case as it goes through the criminal justice system. This enables police to identify any weaknesses in police processes and practices and also to monitor the type of sentence handed down by the courts.

Conclusion
Whilst our work over the past 12 months has shown that the police alone cannot solve this embedded problem, concerted efforts will continue to contain and manage violent behaviour. We must send out a strong message to violent individuals that this type of behaviour will not be tolerated. And we must reassure our local communities that we are doing everything in our power to enable them to live in a law-abiding Scotland.

ALCOHOL IS CERTAINLY A CONTRIBUTORY FACTOR IN MANY VIOLENT INCIDENTS
THERE ARE NO REWARDS FOR OBEYING SOCIETY’S RULES, BUT RATHER THERE IS A PROMISE OF PUNITIVE ACTION IF THOSE RULES ARE BROKEN. THEREFORE, IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT ACTION IS TAKEN AGAINST OFFENDERS AND, MORE IMPORTANTLY, THAT THEY ARE SEEN TO BE PUNISHED APPROPRIATELY.

In many of our hard-pressed communities, residents are reluctant to stand against those who are violent, and we know that violence there is significantly under-reported. Sadly, this is a powerful indication that, in these communities, violence is an acceptable fact of everyday life and becomes almost a community norm. Therefore, swift and visible justice must be delivered if we are to reinforce confidence in the system.
Research has shown that community courts, such as the Centre of Court Innovation in the United States, although a costly approach, can offer a greater degree of connectivity at the local level. Benefits include a speedier process, improved public trust and a perceived reduction in the fear of crime.

One model recently adopted in Greenock is to establish a specialised court dealing with weapon violence. One day every fortnight is set aside in the town’s Sheriff Court to fast-track offenders who have been charged with carrying a knife or offensive weapon. This weapons court is a joint initiative by Strathclyde Police, the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service and the Scottish Court Service. Concentrating on this one area of crime enables all of those involved – from sheriffs through to court appointed social workers – to understand the scope of the problem and the breadth of the solutions.

Early intervention is crucial to long-term reductions in violent behaviour; however, there will be some people we cannot save. Prison still has an important role to play in society today, and dangerous individuals should be segregated to protect our communities. However, with prison at an estimated 97 per cent daily capacity in Scotland, there has to be an assessment of whether the right people are being sent to prison and if there are alternative disposals that may offer a better long-term solution to the problem. We need to think about what options are available to the courts. Consideration should also be given to more proactive disposals being made available to the courts, such as anger management and practical parenting skills.
Other approaches to dealing with antisocial behaviour, such as Acceptable Behaviour Contracts and Antisocial Behaviour Orders, have recently been introduced, although their effectiveness in the long-term is still to be fully evaluated.

**Conclusion**

As a recent Home Office Victimisation Survey suggested, if less than 50 per cent of crime is reported it could be argued that justice is challenged in those communities where there is already a significant under-reporting of violence. We have a justice system to be proud of in Scotland – it’s the envy of the world. However, in a 21st century Scotland, communities must have confidence in a justice system that connects with their daily lives.
EDUCATION MUST BE A CORNERSTONE OF ANY LONG-TERM VIOLENCE REDUCTION STRATEGY.

HOWEVER, EDUCATION IS NOT SOMETHING FOR TEACHERS AND SCHOOLS ALONE – EVERYONE HAS HIS OR HER PART TO PLAY, INCLUDING PARENTS, SIBLINGS, PEERS, SIGNIFICANT ADULTS AND ROLE MODELS IN PUBLIC LIFE.

Recent research suggests that many of today’s youth lack key social skills, such as team working, oral communication and problem solving. Further studies show that these non-cognitive skills allow people to rationalise, negotiate and compromise to achieve effective resolution without the need to resort to violence. These skills also help individuals make good decisions about their lives and how they behave.

These skills are, in the main, passed on to children from parents, guardians and significant adults. It is now commonplace in some parts of Scotland that children are bringing up children, without possessing the necessary skills or receiving adequate support to pass these key skills on to their children. Love is not always enough.
Teachers can only teach what parents provide, and indications of the absence of these soft skills are often apparent in a child’s first months in primary school. This may potentially affect the child’s ability to learn.

Education, therefore, should not be the sole responsibility of teachers. Over the past year, we have developed some excellent links with education and some groundbreaking cross-agency work is taking place.

We already have 10 campus police officers in Scottish secondary schools. The police officers become a central figure in the school and provide additional moral authority. They get to know the young people and build up real trust. We’ve had many examples of pupils coming to the campus officer, looking for advice on everything from bullying to drugs. The officers are also able to enhance the intelligence available in the area around the school – for example, who’s been gang fighting or who’s selling drugs. The officers build up a close working relationship with the head teachers and school staff. The schools feel the officers bring real benefits to the behaviour of pupils and the general atmosphere in corridors and classrooms.

A MAJOR DETERMINANT OF SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS IS SUCCESSFUL FAMILIES. SCHOOLS WORK WITH WHAT PARENTS BRING THEM. THEY OPERATE MORE EFFECTIVELY IF PARENTS REINFORCE THEM BY ENCOURAGING AND MOTIVATING CHILDREN

Professor James Heckman, Economist and Nobel Prize Winner
We are just about to introduce the next generation of campus officers into three Scottish schools.

East Renfrewshire will pilot the SSPC (schools, social work, police and community) model. This is based on a tried and tested programme in Denmark, which sees the above agencies all coming together to help young people.

The police officer – who will be specially selected for the role – will work with teachers and social workers to identify children potentially at risk of offending. SSPC aims to tackle this at the earliest possible stage and in a sensitive way to ensure the child isn’t stigmatised.

The whole ethos of SSPC is to include young people and their parents or guardians in the process, so that from the outset they are not only seen as part of the problem, but also as part of the solution. Interventions are not viewed as punitive, but something positive.

Conclusion
The education process should not end with schools or colleges and should encompass additional training post school for those young people who do not have the necessary skills to survive in Scotland’s economy. Innovative models of training that can deliver skill-based programmes are necessary for those children who do not achieve academic success. Assisting children who leave the formal education system without the necessary life skills will only help reduce levels of antisocial behaviour and levels of violence. This will help to serve Scotland’s economy by providing an adaptive and eager workforce.
CHAPTER

FOUR

PUBLIC HEALTH APPROACH
THE CAUSES OF VIOLENCE ARE NUMEROUS AND THERE IS NO ONE SINGLE SOLUTION. RATHER, THERE WILL BE A THOUSAND APPROPRIATE SOLUTIONS FOR A THOUSAND PROBLEMS. HOWEVER, IN ORDER TO DELIVER THESE SOLUTIONS, THERE MUST BE AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE PROBLEM AND THE POTENTIAL IMPACT. THE PUBLIC HEALTH APPROACH – AS ADOPTED BY THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION – IS AN EVIDENCE-BASED APPROACH FOR IMPLEMENTATION, FROM A VARIETY OF DISCIPLINES IN PARTNERSHIP.

There are four stages to this approach which help to engender the development of an ecological model (otherwise known as the Public Health Model) of violence where a number of influencing factors can be accounted for.

1. **Defining the problem:** Violence is not consistent across every community in Scotland. There are some areas where violence is highly visible and apparently endemic; however, there is also the violence that is less visible, such as domestic and elder abuse, which can cross all communities. Examining the scale of violence at a local level is essential to developing programmes that fit with community needs.
2. **What are the causes:** The cause and risk of violence for each individual may be different. However, it is important to understand the triggers that impact across different types of violence in order to gain an insight into what makes people violent. The causes can be classified into four areas of risk: the individual, the relationship, the community and societal factors.

3. **What works and for whom:** By identifying the causes and risks, there is an opportunity to develop tailored, effective interventions. Each partner and organisation will deliver specific outcomes, whether this is in relation to policing, education, health or employment. The list of agencies able to implement and become involved is limited only by their capacity, skills and willingness.

4. **Implementation and dissemination:** It is essential that interventions and their outcomes are properly evaluated. Funding and resources should be gained and maintained on the basis of success; therefore, establishing and measuring performance indicators are necessary to assess the impact. This process is continuous and, if the strategies are not successful, there is no point in continuing the practice. This is key to widespread implementation of effective practices.

The Public Health model as detailed on the following page helps to identify the risk and the protective factors associated with violence. This model considers four key areas, starting with the individual and moving out to societal/cultural impact. Clearly, some of the areas identified in the model will only be relevant to particular forms of violence. However, by adopting this approach, the identification of influencing factors and where they impact should become clearer, therefore influencing the development and deployment of an effective intervention strategy.
The full picture of violence has yet to be established and analysis is ongoing; however, collectively, we know enough to begin to take co-ordinated action. It is unlikely that we will ever know all the causes of violence, but, by being brave and using what we know now, there is an opportunity to take positive steps to address the problem.

Collaborative working between organisations is the real strength of the public health approach. Tackling violence is not the sole domain of any one organisation: it is only through agencies working together that a sustainable difference can be made.
CHAPTER FIVE
THE HEALTH ISSUE
The health service bears a significant burden from violence. Conservative estimates from England and Wales suggest that 3 to 6 per cent of the annual health service budget is used in the treatment of violence. This equates to an annual cost of between £258 million to £517 million per annum in Scotland.

Violence significantly impacts on the safety and well-being of staff and fellow patients within Accident and Emergency departments, with an estimated 15 per cent of all NHS staff reporting a violent attack within the last year. (Commission for Health Improvement, 2004)

A snapshot study of people with injuries attending Accident and Emergency departments in Glasgow in 2004 highlighted that only approximately 30 per cent of the assaults were reported to the police. Studies into Accident and Emergency situations also suggest that unreported crimes may be occurring in areas where reporting hitherto was traditionally low and, as a result, new hot spots and areas of concern are being identified.
This disparity in reporting is significant. In practical terms, these victims are denied access to services, and police are basing their resource allocation on less than one third of the available information.

This under-reporting also tends to support the view that, in some communities, violence is seen as an acceptable form of behaviour, thus undermining community confidence and well-being.

**Injury surveillance:** An essential element of the Public Health model is injury surveillance, which helps ensure a fuller understanding of the true picture of violent incidents and, if available in real time, can assist with resource allocation and a prevention strategy.

In addition, a true measure of our combined efforts to reduce violence will be most apparent in levels of admissions of individuals through Accident and Emergency Departments.

Injury surveillance does require some additional work by Accident and Emergency staff; however, two pilot schemes are currently underway in Glasgow and Paisley, and initial reactions have been positive. As highlighted in the survey on the following page, all the details are anonymous. Police are not given the names of victims or any kind of personal details. They are simply given the date, time and location of where the violence occurred.

A similar system has already been running in Cardiff for a number of years. Since the introduction of the process, there has been a 25 per cent reduction in the number of assaults being treated at the Accident and Emergency department. This reduction has been sustained for over two years.

**INJURIES – SUCH AS STABBINGS – ARE THE SECOND MOST COMMON CAUSE OF DEATH FOR UNDER-40S IN SCOTLAND.**

Dr Rudy Crawford, A&E Consultant
This diagram demonstrates the discrepancies between police recorded violence and potential levels of actual violence.

**Conclusion**

A lasting reduction in violence could lead to major benefits for the health service in Scotland releasing valuable resources for other priorities. Imagine how many more hips could be replaced or what life-saving equipment could be paid for if we could achieve a genuine and sustained shift away from the booze and blades culture.

Assault survey – Above is a copy of the survey which forms part of the injury surveillance scheme running in two Scottish hospitals.
FOR TOO LONG, VIOLENCE HAS BEEN A FACT OF LIFE – CUTTING SHORT TOO MANY YOUNG LIVES AND UNDERMINING OUR COLLECTIVE HOPES TO CREATE A SAFER, STRONGER SCOTLAND.

Justice Minister Cathy Jamieson MSP

It is impossible to estimate with accuracy the potential annual cost of violence to the Scottish economy, but according to one US economist, Professor James Heckman, it could be as high as £3 billion. This is not only the cost to the health service, the police service, prisons, the judiciary, education and social work, but also to the economy as a whole, with victims unable to work through injury and stress, and offenders unable to work as a result of their violent behaviour.
Being a victim of violence can literally scar you for life. Some victims, through no fault of their own, find it impossible to get into employment. This may be due to their injuries. However, there have been examples of knife victims being rejected by employers, who perceive them as violent because they have scars on their faces – yet, again, they are victims. Victims may also have psychological problems preventing them from living normal lives, with symptoms akin to post-traumatic stress.

Scotland in the 21st century has become a service economy, yet many big employers are looking abroad for labour. Why is this when we still have high levels of unemployment?

A recent survey of 18,000 employers in Scotland by Scottish Enterprise Network identified a huge skills gap. One in five workplaces reported skills gaps. People were lacking whole skill sets, including basic communication skills, as well as soft skills, such as eye contact. Again, these are not hugely technical skills, but are acquired in early learning from parents and significant adults.

Research like this shows that it is vital we start to bridge that gap and ensure our young people secure training and decent employment.

Working has multiple benefits. It not only helps the economy, both locally and nationally, but it also helps to reduce crime as it reduces both opportunity and susceptibility, and it improves the general health and well-being of communities.

**Conclusion**

One in five households in some parts of Scotland are experiencing whole-house unemployment, and almost half of employers state school leavers are not prepared for work. There are also whole families living off state benefits and, sometimes, crime. Where are the role models here, advocating the importance of work?

Within these non-working families, creating positive influences is crucial. Back-to-work schemes should be targeted towards the whole family, providing both the skills and opportunities to enable a return to work.
EMPATHY IS THE SINGLE GREATEST INHIBITOR OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF PROPENSITY TO VIOLENCE.

George Hosking, World-wide alternative to violence – Wave Trust

The time is now right for everyone in Scotland to join together and make a real difference in tackling this decades-old problem. Clearly, major change will not happen overnight, but we have to make a start.

We must also be brave and innovative – not everyone will see our vision – but we have to start doing things differently. We cannot allow things to continue untreated for the next four decades.

We must also galvanise our communities. To make a difference, our hard-pressed communities have to say ‘enough is enough’. Local people must work together with the police, education, health and others to make Scotland a safer place for everyone.
The newly created Violence Reduction Alliance will encompass this nationwide approach, whereby all stakeholder organisations will work together doing what they do best, utilising the skills available.

This is an opportunity for Scotland to become a world leader – a centre for excellence – in tackling social issues that have been present for generations. Although violence in society is more visible in some communities than others, we should not turn our backs on it and leave it for others to solve.

It may be perceived that violence – in particular, knife crime – is an issue for the west of Scotland, but, in 2004/2005, 25 murders committed with a knife happened outwith the Strathclyde force area. In addition, domestic violence, elderly and child abuse, and self-directed violence impacts on all our communities, regardless of geographic or social boundaries.

The Violence Reduction Alliance will be a forum for sharing best practice and driving through change at a local level. This is a bottom-up approach, using analysis of local issues and problems to deliver targeted solutions. Key organisations will be tasked to implement changes at this local level, as well as inform the national picture.

At a national level within Scotland the Scottish Executive has established a Violence Working Group comprising of senior policy makers from across all areas. This group which will be supported by appropriate experts from across Scotland will work with the VRU and local partners to identify what is working, or has potential to give Scotland the respite from violence it so needs.

Whereas, at a local level within Scotland, there already exists a framework in which the Violence Reduction Alliance can be embedded. Via the Community Planning Partnerships, the main stakeholders and decision-makers are already in place to make the strategic decisions, task and approve appropriate action.
The composition and remit of these groups is dependent on the nature of the problem within the local authority area. It is recommended that, where street violence is particularly problematic and endemic, a separate violence working group should be created. Clearly, other areas won’t have the same volume of violence; therefore, violence reduction could be integrated into another group, such as the antisocial behaviour working groups that have recently been established in most local authorities. Violence is the most extreme form of antisocial behaviour.

To ensure successful alliances, the composition of the group should reflect the problem; however, it is suggested that several key stakeholder departments/organisations should be included (police, education, social work, health, procurator fiscal and the children’s reporter). Other bodies may be added to the group, depending on the nature of the problem – for example, Culture and Leisure Services, Careers Scotland etc. Members of the working group should be at a senior level within their specific departments/organisation.

An Action on Violence website will be launched on 1 April to share best practice and highlight positive initiatives and news stories across Scotland. Over time, this will become a knowledge bank and a communication network for everyone to use.

**THIS IS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR SCOTLAND TO BECOME A WORLD LEADER – A CENTRE FOR EXCELLENCE**
WHILE A MULTI-AGENCY APPROACH IS CRUCIAL TO VIOLENCE REDUCTION IN THE LONG-TERM, WE MUST CONTAIN AND MANAGE THE PROBLEM IN THE SHORT TO MEDIUM TERM.

Under the banner of Safer Scotland an anti-violence campaign will be launched on 1 April. Over the next 12 months there will be a focus on: building local alliances, addressing violent behaviour among young men, weapon carrying – particularly knives, alcohol consumption and access, and gang membership in our hardest hit communities. The message is clear – violence is no longer tolerated in 21st century Scotland.

The VRU will liaise with forces to develop a tailored plan of action for each local area to ensure that the right areas are being targeted. Lessons learned from these actions and operations will be embedded into existing policing practices to ensure continuation past the 12-month duration of the campaign.
Through the pioneering work by the Alliance and its members, the aim is to reduce violence in all areas of society. Although daunting, this is an achievable goal and has numerous other benefits in terms of Scotland’s health and economy.

A series of seminars will begin in May 2006. These will be designed to engage and challenge the community safety teams responsible for dealing with violence reduction in their local areas. The seminars will be held across Scotland, covering a different topic area each time, and, as a package, it will deliver a rounded view of violence and the skill set necessary to implement change. These will be aimed at tactical level practitioners and focus in on cross agency issues, such as health and enterprise.

The four seminars will cover in detail the areas outlined within this booklet:

Seminar 1: May 2006
Seminar 2: July 2006
Seminar 3: October 2006
Seminar 4: December 2006
THROUGH THE PIONEERING WORK BY THE ALLIANCE AND ITS MEMBERS, THE AIM IS TO REDUCE VIOLENCE IN ALL AREAS OF SOCIETY
REDDUCING VIOLENCE IS A LEGITIMATE GOAL WITH FAR REACHING UNIVERSAL BENEFITS. IT WILL BE DIFFICULT, IT WILL REQUIRE RESOLUTE ACTION, IT WILL TAKE TIME, BUT IT CAN BE DONE.

The outcomes and experience of the past four decades provide stark evidence of the need to consider alternative ways of breaking the relentless culture of violence that blights so many of our communities. Despite considerable effort and resources focused on the most challenged communities, we have collectively failed to bring about any sustainable reduction in violence. We have the people and there is a need to start. We must now find the will and commit to doing the right thing.
Change will take time. We know the outcome of short-term initiatives is short-term solutions. We need to be brave enough to stop doing what does not work, be brave enough to try new ways, and smart enough to recognise both. Partnerships must be based on outcomes and not mutually compatible processes. This will allow intelligent focus on real issues with positive results.

We have an economy of scale, an Executive that is connected, and the existing local structures that can deliver the change.

Following our Strategic Violence Conference in March, the Violence Reduction Unit will be working in partnership with the Scottish Executive and other partners to build a Violence Reduction Alliance appropriate for Scotland needs and to develop its role as a national centre of expertise in tackling violent crime.

The time is right.

The time is now.