Government response to the Riots, Communities and Victims Panel Final Report

Author: Andrea Davies LGiU associate
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Summary

12 July 2013 saw the release of the Government Response to the Riots, Communities and Victims Panel's Final Report. This report outlines a broad range of ongoing and new interventions, including how the Government:

- aims to address the causes of the riots by supporting families, improving education and beginning to tackle youth unemployment, principally through existing policies;
- strengthen Community Service, reform rehabilitation, set up a prison gate resettlement service and improve support for ex-offenders through employment;
- and improve public trust in the police through initiatives such as reduced stop-and-search programme and increasing the powers of the Independent Police Complaints Commission.

This cross-cutting report will be of interest to elected members, Council officers and organisations with an interest in early learning, education, health, youth services, probation and regeneration.

Briefing in full

To tackle the physical damage wrought by the riots, the new High Street Innovation Fund allocated £100,000 to the 100 most blighted local authority areas in England at the end of March 2012. Some 99% of valid uninsured claims under the Act have been resolved. All insured domestic claimants and 95% of small-to medium-sized businesses have received settlement or interim payments. 99% of those claims repudiated by insurers and subsequently received by the Metropolitan Police Service...
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(MPS) have also been resolved. Decisions on 92% of claims by insurers reclaiming their costs from police authorities have been made. The Government is engaging with the Association of British Insurers and the police to resolve outstanding claims. It is carrying out a review of the Riot (Damages) Act, in line with a Riots, Communities and Victims Panel Final Report recommendation.

Tackling criminality

Within a week of the first court sitting after the riots, the courts dealt with 1,000 defendants. As of August 2012, a total of 2,138 people had been found guilty and were sentenced. Just over 1,400 were sentenced to an average custodial 17.1 month sentence - over four times the average sentence of 3.7 months meted out the year before for similar crimes.

In December 2011, Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of the Constabulary (HMIC) published a review of its policing response. Publication of the Strategic Policing Requirement followed this. Recommendations such as substantially increasing the number of police officers trained in an improved public order policing programme have been implemented. The All Source Hub in the National Domestic Extremism and Disorder Intelligence Unit has been set up, along with the National Police Coordination Centre.

The Home Office has allocated £1.2 million over three years to a network of Young People’s Advocates to support girls threatened by gang-related sexual violence. Following the November 2011 cross-Government Ending Gang and Youth Violence report, the Ending Gang and Youth Violence programme was set up with an experienced team of practitioners working in thirty-three priority areas. The Youth Justice Board is complementing this initiative by establishing ‘gang forums’ across the country.

Trident’s Gang Command set up by the MPS in February 2012 is presented as a case study. It aims to engage communities and involves three strands: enforcement, prevention and targeting. From April 2012, according to the November 2012 Year One report, Ending Gang and Youth Violence Report, 2,000 known gang members were arrested, many of whom have been charged with serious offences. Gang injunctions for under-18 year olds were introduced in January 2012, along with tougher sentences for adult offenders convicted of a second very serious violent or sexual crime.

The Strategy for Social Justice

The Government accepts the Riots Panel’s conclusion that “the problems surrounding the riots are wide-ranging”, “problems such as entrenched educational and social failures which may have helped contribute to the unacceptable mindset of the minority that caused the riots”.

Having reviewed social policy, the Government published its Strategy for Social Justice in March 2012 which “builds on existing programmes”. Previous approaches to tackling poverty focused on increasing incomes above the poverty line. The Strategy aims “to give individuals and families facing multiple disadvantages the support and tools they need to turn their lives around”. It is based on the principles of prevention, early intervention and employment; its starting point is that solutions which are devised and implemented locally often work best.
Families and early learning

The Riots’ Panel recommended early intervention and support for children and parents, especially the 500,000 “forgotten families” “bumping along the bottom of society” and more likely to be home to the rioters than the 120,000 families targeted by the Troubled Families Programme although they just miss meeting the thresholds which would trigger concerted public services After the Riots.

The Response to the Riots’ Panel states that Councils co-ordinating multiple services such as social services and probation have “gone some way in targeting support and advice to families including the ‘forgotten families’”. The £448m Troubled Families Fund targeting the 120,000 most challenged families has been allocated; 152 Councils are involved. One third of Councils is committed to starting the programme this year. A network of coordinators oversees each area programme and brings together local partners - police, Job Centre Plus, health organisations and schools. The aim is to help adults move towards employment and children get back to school, as well as reduce crime and anti-social behaviour.

In 2012, the Government launched a CANparent trial to stimulate a national market in universal parenting classes; this was part of its commitment in ‘Supporting Families in the Foundation Years’. 85% of parents have said that they are satisfied with classes and would recommend them to a friend.

The Panel’s report had recommended extending the Family Nurse Partnerships to all first-time mothers initially under 18 years of age, and then under 20, by the end of the next Spending Review Period. The Government now commits to increasing the number of places on the programme to 16,000 by 2016.

The final June 2012 National Evaluation of Sure Start report makes clear the positive impacts of the Sure Start programmes “in engaging and helping the poorest families without stigma”, helping “establish an infrastructure which is well-placed to engage the most vulnerable and support them effectively”. Despite acknowledging the effectiveness of Sure Start, there is no stated commitment to the programmes.

The Government will fund Early Learning Places for 130,000 two year-olds from September 2013 for 15 hours a week for families eligible for school meals. In September 2014, the number of children eligible will double; this number is likely to include children from low-income working families, with Special Educational Needs and adopted children from care. Places will be offered by the maintained, private and voluntary sector. Local authorities will have responsibility for ensuring that all children eligible secure a place. They will receive a total of £760m a year by 2014-5.

The Pupil Premium introduced in April 2011 is allocated to schools or in some cases, to local authorities, for children between 5 and 16 from low-income families on school meals, or who have been in care continuously for over six months. The premium per child was £448 in 2011-12, £623 in 2012-13 and £900 in 2013-14.

Education

The Riots’ Panel recommended support to young people with the greatest educational needs to enable them to reach age-appropriate literacy levels, and an end to unsatisfactory Pupil Referral Units. It also recommended training for young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs), and a ‘Youth Job Promise’ for those unemployed for over a year.
The Response endorses the need for young people to have the right education and skills if they are to have a stake in society. In addition to addressing poor performance and discipline, the Government wants to ensure basic literacy levels and all schools to teach reading through *systematic synthetic phonics*. Failure to improve standards will result in schools becoming “Academies with a strong sponsor”, this being “the best way to improve schools that are consistently underperforming”.

**Education and training for employment**

*Building Engagement, Building Futures* sets out the Government’s strategy for improving education and training of young people through radical reforms to schools, vocational education, skills and welfare provision. These aim to tackle the rising levels of young people not in education, training or employment.

Education is to become compulsory until 17 years of age in 2013 and 18 in 2015. [Raising the participation age: statutory guidance for local authorities](#). Spending in 2012-13 will total £7,335 billion and £7,440 billion in 2013-14 to pay for education and training for 16-18 year-olds, including apprenticeships. Vocational education is being reformed following the Wolf Review.

The *Youth Contract* provides Jobcentre Plus support for unemployed 18-24 year-olds; this will be resourced by the Flexible Support Fund introduced in April 2011. London Jobcentre Plus Centres in Battersea, Haringey and Tottenham have used the Flexible Support Fund to work with community projects using dance, rugby and boxing to teach a range of social skills.

Over the next three years, 100,000 places for work experience or sector-based work placements will be provided each year. Over the same period, there will be contracted education or training provision for 55,000 16-17 year-old NEETs.

In addition, 20,000 more grants under the *Apprenticeship Grants for Employers* will be funded. From August 2013, a new traineeship programme will prepare 16-24 yr-olds, and youngsters with learning difficulties for apprenticeships. Jobcentre Plus, colleges, and trainers and employers are expected to ensure that their support reflects the needs of the local labour market.

The DWP launched *Day One Support for Young People* pilots in August 2012 in North and South London Jobcentre Plus Districts. It targets 18-24 year olds who are claiming Jobseekers’ Allowance while having done less than six months work since leaving full-time education. They are given 13-week placements of benefit to their local community.

There is statutory duty on schools to provide independent career guidance in years 9 to 11 for all forms of post-16 education, including apprenticeships. From September 2013, this duty is extended to 18 year-old students. Unemployed young people are entitled to up to three free, in-depth face to face sessions from the National Careers Service (NCS). NCS will provide a guidance session to 18-24 year-olds within three months of registering for Jobseekers’ Allowance.

**Helping develop social skills**

The three-year *Innovation Fund* announced in March 2011 totals £30m over three years for social investment projects to help up to 17,000 of the most disadvantaged
young people aged 14 or more. These projects include support for example, in anger management, confidence building, peer group mentoring and mediation. Two of the ten Innovation Fund projects focus on gangs. Available feedback on some projects has been very positive.

The Positive Youth programme is part of the Government’s intent to for a “youth inclusive approach” in its policies, to help young people have supportive relationships and strong ambitions. The launch of the National Citizen Service in brings together 16 year-olds from different backgrounds to become community volunteers.

City regeneration

Seeking to address the Riot Panel’s concern about the link between deprivation, high unemployment and rioting, the Response also outlines the Government’s current approach to regeneration, starting with City Deals. The first Round was launched in 2012 in eight ‘core cities’: Manchester, Leeds, Liverpool, Newcastle, Sheffield, Nottingham, Birmingham and Bristol.

In Greater Manchester, Earn Back is a pilot for payment by results allowing the city to keep part of additional tax generated from its up-front £1.2 billion infrastructure investment. Greater Birmingham and Solihull Finance will create a revolving investment fund by applying private sector fund management methods to public sector funding. Leeds will set up Guarantee for the Young providing every young person with some form of work, apprenticeship or training through 24,000 new apprenticeships and related opportunities. Nottingham will develop the Creative Quarter to boost high tech start-ups and through the Generation Y project, encourage graduates into entrepreneurship.

The second round of City Deals in 2013 is inviting 20 cities to make proposals based on a single local economic growth challenge. The DWP and Business, Innovation and Skills Department are developing a ‘Labour Market core offer’ to help local people prepare for work in all cities participating in these Rounds.

The Response mentions the 39 Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) for stimulating growth and jobs. The Growing Places Fund (GPF) initiated in November 2011 is helping deliver key infrastructure to unlock stalled development. £730m allocated to LEPs (£673m capital GPF) is being invested to generate jobs and housing. Half of this capital fund had been allocated to 206 projects by December 2012.

Reform of the criminal justice system

In July 2012, the Government published the White Paper Swift and Sure Justice: the Government’s Plans for Reform of the Criminal Justice System. Reforms include more flexible and longer hours in magistrate and youth courts, longer operational hours for the Virtual Court used for preliminary hearings in the magistrate courts for video link transmissions from a defendant at the police station, and more use of prison to court video links. Lessons from these pilots will determine which are retained.
As well as recourse to punishments such as strict curfews, fines and unpaid work, courts will have the power to use new offender-tracking technology and to access benefit and tax information to inform how high to set a fine. Courts will also be empowered to set financial penalties taking into account the offender’s possessions as well as income. The *Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing bill* has been amended to allow landlords to evict tenants who have been convicted of riot-related offences in any part of the country, not just their own area.

Community payback will be strengthened and made more demanding. Unemployed offenders will have to work within days of their sentencing at least 28 hours over four days a week, leaving one day to look for work. Members of the public will have more say in the type of projects undertaken to ensure that projects are of positive local benefit. At the same time, offenders will have a chance to make reparation for their offences.

Courts will also be able to defer sentencing so that restorative justice can be put in place and make “criminals face up to the consequences of their actions”. The £5,000 cap on compensation orders in the magistrates’ courts will be removed.

**Rehabilitation**

The Riots’ Panel recommended a ‘wraparound’ support programme for young adults following release from custody, and intensive rehabilitation programmes as an alternative to custody, to help deal with drug and alcohol addiction and find employment. The Government is committed to transforming rehabilitation. One important reform is extended statutory rehabilitation for offenders sentenced to less than 12 months in custody, and a ‘through the prison gate’ resettlement service.

The reform includes opening up to market for rehabilitation services to a range of public, private and voluntary provider sectors, at national and local level. This will be accompanied by new payment incentives such that market providers will only be paid in pull for genuine reduced re-offending. *Day One* access to the Work Programme for offenders on release and payments to Programme providers to provide jobs and avoid re-offending are two measures being tested by the DWP and the Ministry of Justice.

The Alcohol Strategy to tackle excessive alcohol consumption was announced in March 2012. One key proposal was to set a minimum price per unit of alcohol which has not been progressed by the government.

**Police and the public**

The Riot Panel’s report recommended a better complaints management and police engagement with communities, and institutional reform. The Response recognises the need for measures to improve public trust in the police. Action includes a programme to reduce stop-and-search and increased powers of the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPPC).
Measures are also being taken to strengthen police integrity including opening up the top ranks of policing so that it is “less of a closed shop”, and committing to investigation and punishing in case of wrongdoing. As a result of legislative changes, the IPPC is to be given further powers to investigate private contractors working for the police. Resources from the police are being transferred to the IPPC to “put an end to the police investigating the police”.

Comment

The Government’s Response cuts across all Departments and marshals existing policies while introducing or extending useful interventions such as the Family Nurse Partnerships, and the Ending Gang and Youth Violence programme. Delivery of Early Learning Places, the through the prison gate resettlement service and extended statutory rehabilitation services through market provision will be some of the yardsticks by which success of the Government’s approach will be judged.

The Riots’ panel singled out the 500,000 forgotten families which were more likely to have been home to the rioters - these being ones that just miss the thresholds triggering concerted public services. Such families are likely to be among the hardest hit by the current welfare cuts and caps, the increased cost of living and reduced Council services resulting from budget cuts.

The Government acknowledges the critical role of early intervention to improve the prospects of deprived and low-income families. Yet its Early Learning pledge for two-year olds overshadows the erosion of the Sure Start Centres. One-third of Sure Start Centre budgets were cut in 2011 and 2012; by now, 558 Centres have closed, according to the Guardian. Of the current 3,000 Centres in England, only 500 offer childcare, as the Minister for Children removed the obligation to provide it. To implement its adoption strategy, the Government will divert funds previously earmarked for local authorities to spend on early intervention projects such as Sure Start and family support.

A 16 July 2013 report from an all-party parliamentary group chaired by MP Andrea Leadsom calls for revitalisation of Sure Start Children Centres, by re-allocating funding towards early intervention for the under-twos “before it’s too late”:

“Families need children's centres that join up local services under one roof, pooling the budgets of health visitors, midwives, speech and language therapists, mental health, childcare, nursery education, job-training and drop-in playgroups where isolated parents can meet. Here is a heart-warming reprise of the original Sure Start vision with children's centres as the social hub of every community.”

The government’s response has been heavily criticised by David Lammy, the Labour MP for Tottenham, where the unrest initially developed, who said it was “appalling and totally inadequate” and had been published without a ministerial statement and received almost no press coverage.
He says that the government ignores 39 of the 63 recommendations of the panel and had made no response to many specific recommendations made by the panel, including data sharing between local councils, pupil referral units, restorative justice and character building in schools.

Responding to this criticism, the communities minister, Don Foster, said what was important was the government's action in this area, rather than whether it was seeking publicity for it and that the government provided £190 million through schemes to get high streets going, and had introduced tougher knife crime punishments and street dance programmes to get females out of gangs.

For more information about this, or any other LGiU member briefing, please contact Janet Sillett, Briefings Manager, on janet.sillett@lgiu.org.uk