

Response to the Gun Crime and Violence Committee Report.

Introduction

1. As Governor, I welcome the report from the Gun Crime and Violence Committee of the House of Assembly (“the Committee”) and the analysis and recommendations it provides. As constitutional responsibility for internal security sits with me, I agreed with Executive Council to lead on drafting the response to the Committee’s report. As that report indicates, serious violence cannot be tackled in isolation; it must be addressed in partnership with the Government through a multi-agency response which carries the support of the community and includes prevention strategies which address the multiple risk factors which cause and perpetuate violence.
2. Rather than responding to each of the specific recommendations in turn, I have set out below the overarching Criminal Justice response to the report and specifically highlighted the relevant recommendations in bold in brackets within the text.
3. As the report highlights, there has been a dramatic increase over the last 12 months in gang and drug related violence in Anguilla. Royal Anguilla Police Force (RAPF) advises that, in the year from 1 April 2023 to 31st March 2024, there have been 42 incidents involving guns, 5 of which resulted in murder, compared to 30 incidents and two murders in 2022 - 2023. The age range of offenders according to RAPF data is 17-25 year olds and the majority of offenders are boys, although there is increasing evidence of girls being coerced into criminality. According to the [Global Study on Homicide \(unodc.org\)](#) report, current levels of murder and gun gang crime put Anguilla in the top percentile of crime levels when considering crime against the size of the population.
4. There is increased anecdotal evidence of children being groomed at a young age to participate in gang related crime and associated violence. The nature of those crimes has also changed with recent shootings happening in broad daylight at public events and demonstrating a total disregard of the risks to bystanders. The cause of violence is no doubt complex and multifaceted but is in many cases linked to drugs and gang membership. There is increasing evidence that drugs are transiting through Anguilla as part of an international drugs trade. Anguilla has also seen an increase in acquisitive crime involving guns which may or may not be linked to gangs and drugs.

Areas of responsibility.

5. Constitutionally, as Governor, I hold the responsibility for internal security, including law and order, a role that encompasses appointing key positions within the Criminal Justice System (including the Chief of Police, Attorney General, members of the Magistracy, Head of the Financial Investigation Unit and Superintendent of the Prison Service). These individuals and their departments, however, receive their core funding from the Government of Anguilla (GoA) and ultimately the Anguillian taxpayer.
6. The execution of many of the essential functions related to the prevention, diversion, and rehabilitation of young people from criminal activities rests with

Ministers and their respective line Ministries. This includes vital areas such as public health, education, customs, immigration, social services, and probation.

7. His Majesty's Government (HMG) considers requests for financial and technical assistance from both the Government of Anguilla and the Governor's Office. This external support is crucial, in providing the specialised expertise and technical assistance necessary to effectively address the rising gun crime and gang violence. Recent assistance provided by the UK is detailed in Annex A and supports the collective effort aimed at bolstering Anguilla's capacity for ensuring a safe and just society.
8. To address the risk of departmental silos, I have re-established a Criminal Justice Board (CJB) to bring together various stakeholders within the Criminal Justice System for policy advice and input and to ensure a holistic understanding and approach to criminal justice priorities. I am grateful to Ministers and all those across the Government of Anguilla who have contributed to this response for their expertise and contributions.
9. Violence is preventable, not inevitable. It is perpetrated by a small minority of people albeit with dramatic impacts both on those directly affected and on the emotional and economic security of the wider community. To work effectively, we must adopt a partnership approach to ensure the criminal justice system is not only well-led but also well-supported in maintaining public safety and justice.

Criminal Justice priorities

10. A successful strategy for addressing gun crime means working across government, voluntary and religious groups and the wider community to deliver the following priorities: -

- A. A cross- institutional response to organised crime groups, gun and gang violence
- B. Safeguarding vulnerable children and adults
- C. Building trust and confidence in the criminal justice system

11. Those objectives need to happen at all three stages of the criminal justice system:-

- Prevention and diversion;
- Investigation and prosecution;
- Sentencing and rehabilitation

A. A Cross institutional response to serious organised crime groups, gun and gang violence

12. I have set out below some of the key priorities currently being addressed at a cross-institutional level.

Prevention – border security and illicit entry of goods and people.

13. The Committee's report rightly highlighted the challenges posed by the porous nature of Anguilla's borders and the importance of tackling illegal activities across those borders. There is increasing evidence of drugs being trafficked through Anguillian waters. The UK Joint Maritime Security Centre visited Anguilla in 2023 and recommended investing in a coastal radar system to provide a picture around Anguilla's territorial waters with the potential to trigger an alert if a vessel enters a marine protected area (**recommendation 2**). **I would strongly support the case for investing in a coastal radar system.** However, this is dependent on significant investment by the UK government to purchase and install the equipment and financial commitment by the GoA to maintain the equipment and provide the necessary funding to staff an "emergency control centre" to enable the RAPF to respond to radar alerts, among other things (see para 31 below).
14. Scanners located at ports and airports, to detect illegal weapons and drugs entering the territory, are an important tool to help reduce illegal activity at the border. The UK has paid for large scanners for the new Cargo building at the airport and funded a scanner at Blowing Point Ferry terminal for outgoing goods. Unfortunately, the scanner at Blowing Point is still not in use, which is being addressed. **I strongly recommend AASPA invest in a scanner for incoming bags at the Blowing Point Ferry Terminal (recommendation 4).**
15. I, as Governor, the RAPF, customs and immigration all continue to build on our close working relationships with law enforcement counterparts in Sint Marteen and Saint Martin (**recommendation 1**). This includes regular meetings and close cooperation on joint operations across our borders. There are agreements in place to allow Dutch and French authorities to enter Anguilla's waters in "hot pursuit" of illegal activity. In addition, there are a number of regional agreements, to which Anguilla is a party, that support law enforcement. Those are listed in **Annex B**.
16. The Committee's report raised a concern for the safety of customs staff – those staff are being rotated as resourcing allows (**recommendation 3**).

Prevention - education and community.

17. Reducing the likelihood of young people getting involved in gangs and entering the Criminal Justice System in the first place is a high priority. Once a young person is involved in a gang, it is extremely difficult for them to leave and, similarly, once they have a reputation or criminal conviction, their life chances are reduced.
18. I entirely support the conclusion of the Committee that educational institutions and the community have a vital role in addressing gun crime and violence and identifying opportunities to support young people and families to address the root causes of offending at a preventative stage.
19. The UK's safeguarding adviser visited Anguilla at the end of 2023. Her report noted that the Department of Education has shown some strong initiatives and

good practice, especially in relation to primary education. She also noted the significant concerns highlighted in the Committee's report around culture and behavior within the secondary school and the risk that organized gangs were grooming vulnerable "at risk" students in schools.

20. The DoE is currently working on an emergency protocol for shooting incidents with support from the London Borough of Bromley. This will include differentiated school alert systems depending on the emergency. The emergency protocols being developed are also looking into how to support students and staff after traumatic incidents, which is recognised as an area that needs to improve, following increased threats at the Albena Lake Hodge Comprehensive School.
21. Given recent traumatic incidents of violence, there is an understandable desire to show a strong, visible response to risks to physical safety such as CCTV and security guards at the school and strong adherence to penalties (**recommendation 7 and 8**). However, emotional security is also important and less visible. Children constantly on high alert are more likely to find difficulty focusing and exhibit disruptive behaviours, resulting in high levels of suspensions. **I would strongly support initiatives designed to support staff and students to develop policies and techniques to de-escalate confrontational situations.**
22. High levels of suspensions from school exposes at-risk young people to gangs especially where parental supervision is low and is likely to be counter-productive in the long run. The RAPF are planning to review the current "DARE" programme delivered by police officers in schools to make it more relevant to the current context and build tools to enable young people to resist gang and peer pressure and resolve disputes without resorting to violence. The Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office has also offered to support the introduction of a youth cadet Scheme for the Police/ Emergency Services that supports youngsters and diverts them away from the influence of crime and gangs.
23. I support the DoE work to look at in-school suspensions and ways to reintegrate such students back into the mainstream school and welcome GoA and DoE's considerations on how to better support children and staff through trauma both during and post incidents. Reducing the impact of trauma and supporting individuals through trying times with healthy coping mechanisms can be the difference between a child continuing on their positive path to their future or becoming at risk.
24. The UK government has this month agreed to fund a "Violence Reduction Coordinator" based in Anguilla whose role would be to work across Government Departments and Community groups to support the development of programmes and strategies to tackle the growth of gang and gun violence, including in schools.
25. Another important part of reducing disruptive behaviours in school is ensuring all students' needs are being appropriately met, that includes, those with moderate (not just severe) special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language. I welcome the planned training for teachers to identify children with dyslexia, for example.

26. I strongly support the Committee's argument (**recommendation 17**) on the need for more support for the Communities Services Planner. The recommendations in paragraph 41 of the Committee's report are vital but the **Community Services Planner also needs budgetary support to recruit staff if she is to deliver real change.**
27. Community Centres and Sporting facilities (**recommendation 6 and 9**) can also play an important role in tackling youth violence. However, they both rely heavily on volunteers and donations. Community centres hold significant potential to provide a wide range of community support and initiatives. The Anguilla Sailing Club is a good example of a sporting activity that not only teaches young people their National Sport, but also, promotes life skills like teamwork and is able to reach a diverse range of children, thanks to donations that mean 70% of children do not pay for their lessons.

Diversion

28. The Child Justice Act provides for diversion from the court system and while some components of the Act have been working well, others have not. **The Criminal Justice Board has recommended a review of the protocol applicable to all Criminal Justice Agencies involved to clarify respective responsibilities in relation to the Act and target timelines.**

Investigation and prosecution of crime

29. The RAPF has been understaffed for many years with currently 95 officers against a nominal headcount of 130. Recent improvements in Government finances mean this year's budget enables the recruitment of 15 + trained officers. In the meantime, the UK has provided trained armed officers to mitigate the gap in capacity. The UK is also funding an Inspector Senior Investigating Officer (SIO); a Sergeant Deputy SIO; a Constable case officer, an Analyst, two Financial Crime Investigators and 11 firearms officers (see Annex A).
30. Law enforcement partners are committed to building closer cooperation to securely share intelligence on a strictly need to know basis. This will include the creation of a Joint Intelligence Unit based at RAPF HQ and involving vetted officers from RAPF, Immigration and Customs.
31. The committee highlighted the call for wider use of CCTV (**recommendation 20**) and the Government of Anguilla has committed EC\$1 million in this year's budget for a CCTV system. The Commissioner of Police has advised that the most effective system would be a combined CCTV and automatic vehicle number plate recognition system together with an emergency response control centre. This would go beyond static recording of a location but also enable the police to be alerted whenever a vehicle wanted by the police passed a camera to trigger an immediate response as well as providing evidence to be used in court. The ambition would be to purchase cameras that could be moved around the island depending on operational need. The UK has funded 2 experts from UK police forces who will visit Anguilla in March 2024 to

advise on the design of a system that would have greatest impact and deliver best value for money.

32. In line with the recommendations in the Committee's report, work is underway to scope an Emergency Response Incident Control Centre at the NEOC **(recommendation 5)**. This would require between approximately 10 staff (to cover a 24-hour shift system) but would achieve the following vital tasks to make a significant difference in improving security and safety in Anguilla by providing a response to:

- Calls for fire, police and ambulance services;
- Enhancing the response in the event of a natural disaster including Tsunami alerts;
- Rapid risk assessment and multi-agency flagging for significant incidents;
- Alerts from the automatic vehicle number plate recognition system;
- Electronic monitoring breaches for those on bail and on parole if they breach curfew requirements or requirements not to enter a particular area imposed by the court;
- Maritime security/radar alerts enabling swift deployment of boats.

Sentencing and rehabilitation.

33. I welcome the Committee's focus on rehabilitation **[recommendation 14 -16]**. Boys between 11- 18 who are subject to care orders and those subject to criminal conviction or under investigation under a Child Protection Order, can be placed in Zenaida Haven. While there is a home for girls subject to care orders, there is no dedicated place for young female offenders other than prison. There is some anecdotal evidence that girls are consequently targeted by gangs to commit crimes on the assumption they will not be prosecuted.

34. Zenaida Haven itself is not fit for purpose. It was established 15 years ago as a short-term measure. It is now in a very poor state of repair (albeit immediate repairs funded by the Governor's Office have improved it in recent weeks). It has no safe outside recreational space or facilities to provide meaningful or restorative activity. **I strongly recommend the development by MICHUHT of a long-term plan to provide suitable facilities for children in care and those detained by the Criminal Justice System.**

35. The Probation Department are working with AG's chambers to look at the **piloting of electronic monitoring for those on bail, probation orders and parole**. Consideration of use of electronic monitoring to support community orders as an **alternative to custody** in suitable cases could support rehabilitation and enable young offenders to maintain positive relationships. Successful electronic monitoring requires strong multi-agency co-operation. A central control centre will be essential for successful monitoring.

36. Children taken into care or custody globally are consistently considered to have much higher rates of mental health difficulties than the general population. In the

UK, for example, the rate of mental health disorders in the general population aged 5- 15 is 10%. For those who are looked after, it is 45%, and for those in residential care it is 72%. [Context | Looked-after children and young people | Guidance | NICE](#). Well managed electronic monitoring of community sentences may be a better option in the right cases for long term outcomes than custody.

37. The Chief Probation Officer and the Prison Service are also looking to develop rehabilitation programmes, education, and meaningful activity for those who have come into contact with the Criminal Justice system. The Prison Service recognises the need for more appropriately tailored classes for those on remand and for greater join up between the prison and probation for those nearing the end of a custodial sentence to ensure rehabilitation work done in custody with offenders released on licence is picked up by probation once they are in the community.
38. The Chief Probation Officer is considering the most effective sentencing structure to ensure that offenders are required to cooperate with programmes on release. In order for offenders to be compelled to cooperate with such programmes they must be imposed within a sentencing framework handed down by the court.
39. Prisoners assessed to be low risk do carry out work in the community – most recently carrying out decoration and repairs at Zenaida Haven. Prison authorities have been in discussion with the Head of the Anguilla Community College to look at training courses to provide prisoners with opportunities to attain practical skills, so they have an opportunity to reintegrate on release. The Department of Youth & Culture runs a work programme, including one that can include ex-offenders. Expansion of this to include low risk prisoners would be very beneficial to help mitigate the reluctance of employers to take on those with a criminal record. The Department of Probation is in the process of exploring options to provide scholarships for suitable probationers and parolees.

Criminal Justice data

40. There is a need to improve the systematic collection of anonymised data across the Criminal Justice System to understand the whole “offender journey”. That starts with understanding which types of people are most vulnerable to being coerced into gangs and violence, the magnitude, scope, characteristics and consequences of the violence and the interventions that are likely to reduce violence and reduce reoffending. Such data needs to include data from beyond the traditional criminal justice space, such as, absentee rates from school, social services involvement for families at risk, hospital data, etc.
41. **I have asked the UK for expert support in looking at how the Criminal Justice System in Anguilla can obtain and analyse better data** to start to build an evidence base of what works in Anguilla to successfully rehabilitate offenders based on risk assessment metrics and reoffending statistics.

Safeguarding vulnerable children and adults.

42. A key challenge in bringing offenders to justice is the difficulty in bringing prosecutions because witnesses and victims are unwilling or unable to give evidence.
43. It is of vital importance in tackling the current wave of violence to improve **the experience of victims and witnesses in the criminal justice system and enable them to give their evidence without fear**. Victims and witnesses are often scared to give evidence in court, concerned that they will not be treated seriously or sensitively by the police or advocates or fearing reprisals or retaliation from offenders. The Governor's Office organised three days of specialist training for lawyers, police, probation, Parole Board and Child Justice Board Members in March 2024 to improve the ability of vulnerable victims and witnesses to give their best evidence through ensuring appropriate questioning that avoids aggressive or leading questions.
44. **I strongly support the Attorney General's plan to introduce legislation in the first half of 2024 to enable the use of "special measures" to enable vulnerable victims, witnesses and defendants – including those likely to be subject to intimidation to safely give evidence** including in appropriate cases through use of a screen, via video link etc.
45. The existence of oral committal hearings (long since abolished in many other common law jurisdictions) delays criminal trials and means victims and witnesses often have to give difficult and painful evidence twice. **I would strongly recommend legislation be introduced by the Attorney General to dispense with oral committals, thereby, reducing the need for victims and witnesses to give evidence twice and speeding up the administration of justice.**
46. The Criminal Justice Board is taking forward work to address the vital importance of a consistent approach to safeguarding across the different public bodies within the Government of Anguilla through **reviewing existing Memoranda of Understanding on safeguarding**. It is crucial that sensitive data is held securely and confidentially but, that where information needs to be shared to prevent crime and/or protect children or vulnerable adults, there is an appropriate, strictly controlled mechanism for doing so.

Mental Health

47. The Committee's report recognises the importance of mental health provision in addressing both the causes and impact of gun crime and violence (**recommendation 13**). It is right to pay tribute to the superb team of school counsellors and the Community Services Planner who supported young people and families in the immediate aftermath of the recent school shooting and who continue to work with young people and families at risk.
48. Anguilla has a SAFE hotline, run by a dedicated team of 10 trained volunteers and professionals who work around the clock to assist adults in need. The SAFE number is 7233 and offers confidential assistance, guidance, and information to anyone

facing emotional, social, or interpersonal difficulties. Support is provided in both English and Spanish. **I would strongly support the creation of a hotline or expansion of a version of the current hotline to offer support to children** also experiencing trauma or at risk while recognising that currently the hotline is entirely funded by donations.

49. There is also a **need for public servants working with victims or offenders involved in serious or sexual crimes to have access to trauma informed support.** This has recently been put in place for staff at the prison and the Governor's office is exploring how support might be offered to other public servants particularly at risk through their work.
50. Psychiatric support and assessment in Anguilla are provided by a psychiatrist working remotely. Considerable effort has been invested by the Premier and the Health Authority to recruit a suitable candidate on island. The difficulties in doing so are a familiar challenge across the Caribbean Overseas Territories but the consequences are a significant impact on the functioning of the Criminal Justice System with delays to psychiatric assessments needed for Court and for the Parole Board. **I strongly support the work by the Department of Health to consider added incentives to attract a suitable, fulltime psychiatrist on island given the current role has been vacant for two years.**

Building trust and confidence in the criminal justice system.

51. I agree with the Committee on the vital importance of building confidence in the law enforcement agencies. The public have the right to expect that information provided will be treated appropriately, that victims and witnesses will be treated sensitively and that no stone will be left unturned in identifying and prosecuting corruption. The RAPF is developing a mechanism for vetting all future recruits to the police and to apply it to existing officers moving to particularly sensitive roles in the force.
52. Community policing is a vital element of building trust in the community. The historical underfunding of the RAPF in recent years has meant that there has been less visible presence in the community than would have been ideal. The recruitment of an additional 15 officers in 2024 means that there will be more capacity to build on police presence and community initiatives (**recommendation 10 and 11**). The Police Commissioner has also committed to develop a "Policing Plan" in consultation with staff and the public and an annual published report on delivery of that plan.

Conclusion

53. As the Committee's Report makes clear, there is no one solution to tackling gun crime and violence in Anguilla. To really address the causes as well as the symptoms requires a collective and serious response across the community, the Governor's Office, from leaders in the Assembly and in Government and from the UK. It is not too late to turn the situation around and this reply, together with the Committee's

report, offers a framework within which action can be prioritised to take the right steps to protect Anguilla in the short and long term.

Annex A.

Funding and specialist expertise provided by the UK Government to support the Criminal Justice System in Anguilla.

PROJECT	2023/24 Funding (GBP)	2024/25 Funding (GBP)
Crime Superintendent	£100,000	£100,000
Analysts	£40,000	£60,000
Investigators	£200,000	£340,000
Intelligence development, INTERPOL workshop, London and Lyon. One week.	£14,000	£60,000
Witness protection workshop	£6,500	
Firearms officers includes 20 sets of ballistic protection equipment and firearms equipment	£1,000,000	£488,000
Strategic development and leadership support for RAPF officers	£22,000	£15,000
Taser equipment and training	£110,000	
Police regulations		£10,000
Command and control		£60,000
Gang violence reduction		£85,000
Total	£1,492,500	£1,218,000
Grand Total	£2,710,500	

Pan

- Leadership and support in strategic planning. Includes BOTCCoP, engagement with Association of Caribbean Commissioners of Police,
- Gender women in policing workshops and capability building activities.
- Data management and improved performance management through data analysis. Includes OTRCIS.
- Regional digital forensic capabilities.
- Regional ballistic forensic hub.

Additional specialist expertise and funding provided by the UK Government over last 12 months.

- Advice and support from safeguarding lead for the Overseas Territories B
- Advice and support for HMP Anguilla by the OT Prison Adviser D
- Restorative Practice training at HMP Anguilla.
- Secondment of UK Superintendent at HMP Anguilla.
- Interviewing Vulnerable Witnesses training for all Barristers Advocates and Judiciary
- Interviewing Vulnerable Witnesses training for RAPF Officers and AG Chambers officials.
- Training for the Anguilla Parole Board
- Zenaida Haven – General repair and uplifting of building.
- Police HQ - General repair and uplifting of building including roof repairs
- International Police Assistance Service (IPAS) visits and reports.
- IPAS regional training in Miami for RAPF Officers: Risk Mangement Course, Intelligence Analysis in Policing Course and the Open-source Intelligence Course.
- Joint Maritime Security Centre visit and report

Annex B Regional Law Enforcement Bodies of which Anguilla is a member.

The main law enforcement related regional organisations and agreements that Anguilla is a member of are set out below. The last four are FCDO facilitated and funded.

ACCP – Association of Caribbean Commissioners of Police. RAPF Commissioner is a full member of ACCP.

[ACCP website link](#)

CARICOM IMPACS - The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS). Anguilla is an associate member of CARICOM IMPACS.

<https://www.caricomimpacs.org/>

CARICOM - Caribbean Community rests on four main pillars: economic integration; foreign policy coordination; human and social development; and security. Anguilla is an associate member of CARICOM.

<https://caricom.org/our-community/who-we-are/>

CDEMA - Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency is a regional inter-governmental agency for disaster management in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). Anguilla is one of the nineteen participating states.

<https://www.cdema.org/index.php/about>

CRIS - Caribbean Risk Information System (CRIS) is a multi-faceted virtual platform that hosts risk management data and information accessible to stakeholders to facilitate analysis, research, greater awareness of risk management and climate change adaptation in the region. Anguilla has full access to CRIS.

[CRIS website](#)

Regional Ballistics hub – FCDO coordinated, and CSSF funded OT ballistics hub based in Cayman Islands providing access to nearly 2m INTERPOL ballistic records and ballistic forensic capabilities. Anguilla is a full member.

Regional Digital Forensics hub – FCDO coordinated and CSSF funded OT regional digital forensic hub based in Cayman Islands. Anguilla is a full member.

INTERPOL – Anguilla is an INTERPOL sub bureau linked to the UK National Crime Bureau and has access to all INTERPOL records and functions. Supported and funded by FCDO and UK National Crime Agency.

<https://www.interpol.int/Who-we-are/What-is-INTERPOL>

BOTCCoP - British Overseas Territories Council of Commissioners of Police. FCDO coordinated and funded. Anguilla is a full member.