

**Social
Democrats**

**#FortheFuture
#ItStartsHere**

Tackling Violence in Dublin City

**Creating Safer Streets
and Communities**



“As violence increases on our streets, this government seems to see crime and violence as something to be responded to *after the fact*.

We need a coordinated multi-agency strategy to reduce violence, that follows international best practice.”

Gary Gannon TD -
Social Democrats’
Justice spokesperson



Contents

Introduction.....	1
Immediate Community Safety & Protection Measures	2
Safe Public Spaces and Night-Time Safety	2
Protection for Vulnerable Groups.....	2
Street Violence Prevention & Early Intervention.....	3
Public Awareness and Education	3
Youth Diversion and Alternative Pathways.....	3
Community-Led Interventions	3
Violence Interruption Teams: Stopping Violence Before It Escalates.....	3
Safe Community Spaces	4
Addressing High-Risk Areas.....	4
Smarter Policing & Targeted Enforcement.....	5
Proportionate and Intelligence-Led	5
Knife Amnesty and Weapon Removal.....	5
A Data-Driven Approach	5
Tracking Trends & Improving Accountability	5
Desistance, Sentencing & Restorative Justice	6
Current Sentencing Framework.....	6
Diversion and Alternative Sentencing.....	6

Introduction

We need a renewed approach, if we are to create a safer Dublin.

Our proposed strategy ensures a comprehensive and balanced response to knife crime and violence in Dublin City Centre, combining immediate interventions, long-term prevention, community-led solutions, and fair enforcement.

By adopting a public health approach, similar to the successful Glasgow Violence Reduction Unit, Dublin can:

- Reduce street violence.
- Create safer public spaces.
- Protect vulnerable groups.

The Social Democrats are calling for:

- An immediate investment of €8 million in measures to combat rising levels of violence around Dublin city.
- An increase in the Garda presence at high-risk locations, including public transport hubs, nightlife districts, and areas with high rates of assault.
- The creation of a new National Transport Policing Unit to police DART, Luas and Bus services and stations, as well as mainline rail services.
- Greater alignment with the UN *Safer Cities for Girls* Programme to enhance safety for all residents and visitors.
- The creation of a Dublin City Council community engagement team to ensure that vulnerable groups are directly involved in decision-making processes.
- The launch a city-wide knife crime awareness and amnesty campaign.
- Investment in youth work, sports programmes, arts initiatives, and employment pathways for at-risk youth.
- An expansion of youth diversion programmes to provide rehabilitation rather than custodial sentences for first-time offenders.
- The introduction of structured community service orders focused on desistance from crime, conflict resolution, and victim-awareness training.
- Development of restorative justice programmes where victims or community representatives can meet offenders to address and repair the harm done.
- Investment in bespoke, universal and integrated victim support services that can ensure the criminal justice system becomes more victim-centred.

Immediate Community Safety & Protection Measures

Safe Public Spaces and Night-Time Safety

The Government and/or City Council must:

- Increase the Garda presence at high-risk locations, including public transport hubs, nightlife districts, and areas with high rates of assault.
- Create a new National Transport Policing Unit to police DART, Luas and Bus services and stations, as well as mainline rail services.
- Improve urban design, with better street lighting, clearer sightlines, emergency call stations, and more pedestrian-friendly layouts of public spaces.
- Conduct community-led safety audits to identify and improve vulnerable public spaces.
- Expand 'Safe Zones' within nightlife districts to create monitored, well-lit areas for people who feel unsafe.
- Align with the UN *Safer Cities for Girls* Programme to enhance safety for all residents and visitors, including through conducting a comprehensive assessment of current safety issues facing women and girls, in partnership with NGOs, Dublin City Council, and An Garda Síochána.

Protection for Vulnerable Groups

The Government and/or City Council must:

- Create a Dublin City Council community engagement team to ensure that vulnerable groups are directly involved in decision-making processes regarding their safety.
- Establish LGBTQI+/Garda Liaison Teams to address hate crimes and provide direct support to the LGBTQI+ community.
- Collaborate with community groups to establish rapid response teams for racially motivated assaults.
- Invest in bespoke victim services – co-designed with those who may use the service – to understand and meet the needs of people who have experienced hate-motivated crime, to help them recover.
- Provide multilingual crime reporting services to support migrant communities.

Street Violence Prevention & Early Intervention

Public Awareness and Education

The Government and/or City Council must:

- Launch a city-wide knife crime awareness and amnesty campaign, drawing on programmes that have worked well elsewhere, including the *No Knives, Better Lives* initiative in Scotland.
- Incorporate social skills training for young people into schools and youth work programmes, to help them improve their decision-making around violence and offending into their teen and young adult years.
- Integrate restorative justice and conflict resolution training into school curricula.

Youth Diversion and Alternative Pathways

The Government and/or City Council must:

- Invest in sports programmes, arts initiatives, and employment pathways for at-risk youth, including for evenings and nights.
- Expand funding for early intervention caseworkers who have credibility with young people and young adults to engage directly with them before they enter the criminal justice system.

Community-Led Interventions

Violence Interruption Teams: Stopping Violence Before It Escalates

The Government and/or City Council should:

- Invest in detached/outreach youth workers and deploy trained mediators, including people with experience of violence reduction, and community leaders, in knife crime hotspots to intervene before violence occurs, or to prevent further escalation.
- Use the evidence from ongoing projects in an Irish context which have aimed to strengthen partnerships between An Garda Síochána and minority communities to tackle violence effectively.
- Establish multi-agency teams to work together at a practice level to effect real change in disadvantaged communities.

Safe Community Spaces

The Government and/or City Council must:

- Retain monitored safe hubs in the city where young people can gather safely at night.
- Expand after-hours youth services in high-risk areas to offer safe alternatives to risky and anti-social behaviour in city centres and neighbourhoods.

Addressing High-Risk Areas

The City Council must:

- Audit high-risk areas, in collaboration with people who live and work in these areas and use these services within them.
- Conduct a comprehensive audit of housing and accommodation services to identify security gaps, insufficient staffing and service/support provision, and lack of funding.
- Use the results of this audit to establish minimum safety and support standards for accommodation providers.
- In conjunction with the government and HSE, provide adequate levels of the necessary support services for people with complex needs, including around mental health and addiction.
- Avoid the over-concentration of high-risk services, to reduce pressure on individual local communities.

Smarter Policing & Targeted Enforcement

Proportionate and Intelligence-Led

Government must:

- Ensure Gardaí use stop-and-search powers fairly, with independent oversight, and data collection and monitoring to prevent and respond to racial profiling.
- Increase police patrols in areas known to experience higher levels of violence, focusing on deterrence and working with communities rather than punitive crackdowns.

Knife Amnesty and Weapon Removal

We need to:

- Establish permanent knife surrender bins in community centres, Garda stations, and high-risk areas.
- Launch targeted outreach campaigns encouraging young people to dispose of weapons safely.

A Data-Driven Approach

Tracking Trends and Improving Accountability

Government must:

- Improve crime data collection and public reporting to better track trends in knife crime and street assaults.
- Conduct annual independent reviews of violence reduction initiatives to measure their effectiveness and impact.
- Strengthen oversight of practices by An Garda Síochána, particularly regarding stop-and-search operations, to ensure fair and unbiased policing.

Desistance, Sentencing & Restorative Justice

The Current Sentencing Framework

The current sentence for carrying a knife with intent to injure has already been increased. We would examine an evidence-led sentencing framework focused on sentences that prevent and reduce crime in our communities. We need:

- An evidence-led sentencing framework, ensuring the judiciary have the training, information and access to probation and other services to deliver sentences that prevent and reduce crime, while meeting victims' needs.

Diversion and Alternative Sentencing

Research has outlined that young adults – not unlike adolescents – can be particularly vulnerable to peer pressure, difficult personal or socioeconomic factors including substance misuse, and the impact of childhood trauma.

We need:

- An expansion of youth diversion programmes to provide rehabilitation rather than custodial sentences for first-time offenders.
- The introduction of structured community service orders focused on desistance from crime, conflict resolution, and victim-awareness training.
- Development of restorative justice programmes where victims or community representatives can meet offenders to address and repair the harm done to victims, and ensure offenders can understand, and make good for, the impact of their actions.
- Investment in bespoke, universal and integrated victim support services that can meet victims' needs irrespective of whether the perpetrator is caught or punished, ensuring the criminal justice system becomes more victim-centred.

www.socialdemocrats.ie

#ForThe Future
#ItStartsHere