

# Taking a public health approach to tackling serious violent crime

Case studies

# Foreward

Tackling serious violent crime is a key priority for councils. This has become even more vital due to the rising levels of this type of crime and the harm it causes to victims and communities, as well as the young people and vulnerable adults drawn and exploited into committing it.

For the year ending December 2019 in England and Wales, the Office for National Statistics found a 7 per cent increase in the number of offences involving knives or sharp instruments (to 45,627 offences). This was 49 per cent higher than when comparable recording began (year ending March 2011) and the highest on record.

There were 1.2 million incidents of violence estimated by the Crime Survey for England and Wales for the survey year ending December 2019. Of all recorded homicides in the latest year, 40 per cent involved a knife or sharp instrument.

When we talk about serious violent crime, this will mean different things to different people. In the context of the Government's Serious Violence Strategy, this refers to violent crime that occurs in a public space, for example knife crime, homicides, robbery or gun crime.

However, for many areas, serious violent crime will mean domestic abuse or activity by serious organised crime gangs. So, whilst there is a focus on public space violent crime, different areas will experience varying levels and types of serious violent crime. In turn, this will require different responses at a local level.

Law enforcement and criminal justice measures are only part of the response needed to tackle serious violent crime.

A multi-agency partnership approach is required, working across Government departments and all agencies, including the police, health, charities and a range of local government services such as, education, social services and youth services.

We support the World Health Organization's (WHO) definition of taking a public health approach to reducing violent crime. A public health approach that "seeks to improve the health and safety of all individuals by addressing underlying risk factors that increase the likelihood that an individual will become a victim or a perpetrator of violence. By definition, public health aims to provide the maximum benefit for the largest number of people. Programmes for primary prevention of violence based on the public health approach are designed to expose a broad segment of a population to prevention measures and to reduce and prevent violence at a population-level."

This approach aims to consider the underlying causes of the issue within a community, identify risk factors, and then take action to reduce incidents. By identifying the early indicators and risk factors of serious violence, this can help key agencies to implement the right interventions and divert individuals away from violent crime.

Taking a public health approach to reducing violence recognises the necessity both of gaining an understanding of violence through evidence and of responding to the problem through carefully designed interventions. Robust evaluation of those interventions feeds back into our understanding of what works to reduce violence most effectively for the most amount of people.

In this guide, we have pulled together a series of case studies to highlight some examples of best practice across local government. The case studies highlight how councils have been working in partnership to deliver early interventions which help to prevent children and young people from becoming involved in serious violent crime. Many of the case studies are in the early stages of their work, showing signs of promise, which we hope will be of interest to other councils. We will look to re-visit these projects at a later stage to share further learning.

This is part of our sector-led improvement work to provide support for councils, and I hope that you find it useful in your own area's work to tackle serious violent crime.



**Councillor Katrina Wood**

Vice-Chair of the LGA Safer and Stronger Communities Board

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# 10 tips to help councils address the issue of youth violence

## 10 tips to help councils address the issue of youth violence

During the process of compiling these case studies, the LGA has heard from a number of councils who have reflected on lessons learned and provided some helpful tips for tackling serious violent crime.

### **1. Multi-agency partnerships**

Serious violence is a complex issue with complex causes. Reducing serious violence takes a coordinated, genuinely multi-agency approach which includes all the relevant statutory and voluntary providers, working together with local communities to share intelligence and develop solutions. Involving a broad range of stakeholders will bring fresh ideas and perspectives and allow new partnerships and solutions to emerge. It can be beneficial to integrate this work into wider safeguarding and multi-agency working arrangements, and to streamline referral systems.

### **2. Sharing a common goal**

Different agencies may historically have had very different approaches to tackling youth violence. Recognising that all partners share a common goal and are working towards the same end point is a critical first step in effective partnership working. A willingness to find a new way of working is essential, along with an acceptance that everyone has responsibility. Tackling the core issue together can lead to better integrated working arrangements and practice across the partnership workforce. If a service is being implemented across a wide area, perhaps across different local authority boundaries, it can be done so in a way that aims for overall consistency while recognising that each locality is different.

### **3. Buy-in to a public health approach**

Broad buy-in to a public health approach to serious violence is essential. For some, this concept may be very new. Having a clear articulation of what it means to take a public health approach which everyone can understand – including service users and local communities – can help foster buy-in from across the system.

### **4. Data analysis and information-sharing**

Sharing information between partner agencies and analysing it through a public health lens will help to identify and prioritise locations, groups and individuals of concern. This helps to secure resources and target support at the right people and places. Analysing data from the police, health and councils, and combining it with local intelligence and information from other partners such as the voluntary sector, will help councils and partnerships to articulate need – the first step to addressing it. Data can be used to identify problems and build an area-wide overview of the networks and links between groups and individuals, but effective intelligence-building requires skilled analytical support.

### **5. Evidence-led interventions**

Taking an evidence-led approach to violence reduction means deploying interventions and approaches where there is good evidence that they may work in reducing violence. This doesn't mean that partnerships should not innovate, but their service design should incorporate and reflect the evidence that already exists, and that it addresses the evidenced root causes of violence such as childhood trauma, social inequality, poverty,

mental health problems etc. Partnerships can also strengthen the evidence base through evaluating and publishing the results.

### **6. Involving young people**

Involving younger members of the community can help councils to unpick the challenges and agree on actions to be delivered. This can include having young people represented on working groups, holding special events to gather information and ideas, and working closely with schools. Understanding the lived experience of children and young people – their concerns, fears and priorities – can help partnerships to design services that successfully meet local need. In designing and delivering targeted interventions, outcomes may be improved if the participants have an opportunity to express what they are interested in and what they will engage with.

### **7. A strengths-based approach**

Partnerships can develop a strengths-based approach which draws on and celebrates the strengths of young people and empowers them to make positive decisions. A strengths-based approach focuses on identifying the strengths or assets, as well as the needs and difficulties, of children, young people and families. Staff can be encouraged to work with each young person's strengths, skills and interests rather than focusing on what is absent from their lives. Young people at risk of serious youth violence need positive role models to show them the choices they have, and activities to give them an alternative to life on the streets.

### **8. Engaging the wider community**

Violence, and fear of violence, are very real issues for local communities, so it makes sense to fully involve communities in the response to it. This can include involving local people in information-gathering and service design; commissioning services from the local voluntary and community sector; working with youth clubs, sports clubs, schools and colleges; engaging community members as mentors and trusted adults; and involving young people as peer trainers or school ambassadors.

### **9. Training and support for staff**

Offering effective training and ongoing support for frontline staff is critical. The emotional impact of working with children and young people at risk can be very challenging, particularly when some of them may be facing extreme risk such as threats of violence, suicide, criminal exploitation or missing episodes. It takes time to build the trusting relationships needed for targeted approaches to work and having a high turnover of staff will lessen the chances of success. Having resilient workers is crucial to achieving positive outcomes. Measures such as initial training, case supervision, personal supervision and regular check-ins can help to support staff wellbeing and safety.

### **10. Ensuring longer-term sustainability**

New processes and partnership working need to be embedded wherever possible to ensure long-term sustainability, particularly when they are tied to limited-term funding pots. In order to achieve sustained success, councils and partnerships will need to mainstream some of these processes and activities as part of their core business.

# Case studies

# BARKING AND DAGENHAM: COMMISSIONING POSITIVE DIVERSIONARY ACTIVITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

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The London Borough of Barking and Dagenham (LBBD) is delivering a multi-agency intervention approach, working with a range of community organisations to deliver positive activities and mentoring for young people at risk of becoming involved in or coerced into crime.

## The challenge

LBBD's approach is in response to the rise in serious violence, including violent crime, knife offences and gang activity, across the Metropolitan Police's East Basic Command Unit area. Between January and August 2019 there were just under 20 incidents of violent and sexual offences per 1,000 population. 115 possession of weapons incidents were reported over the same period (0.54 incidents per 1,000 population).

## The solution

Working with the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime, Barking and Dagenham Council has commissioned five local community organisations to deliver positive diversionary activities to children and young people who are at risk of becoming involved in crime or are vulnerable to criminal exploitation. In 2019, Barking and Dagenham and Redbridge councils were jointly awarded £500,000 from the Home Office's Early Intervention Youth Fund (EIYF) to help tackle serious youth violence.

The five organisations delivering intervention services are Arc Theatre, Box Up Crime, Future MOLDS, LifeLine Projects and Studio3Arts. The activities include arts, boxing, drama, music, music production and mentoring to provide positive interactions that can help steer young people away from making the wrong decisions.

Each service can also refer young people to the other services, to help provide tailored support to meet the needs and interests of the individual.

Each programme has been working to identify a cohort of young people already engaged in their services to train to become mentors and positive role models. This will increase their skills, management and leadership abilities, improving their future opportunities for education, employment and training. One service has now employed a young person into their workforce.

Barking and Dagenham has also commissioned Spark2Life to deliver intensive mentoring through the integrated gangs unit and youth offending service, alongside a music and mentoring programme within local schools. The mentoring service provides one-to-one support for medium to high risk young people involved in criminal behaviours linked to issues such as gangs, county lines and knife offences, to help challenge their mindset and steer them away from offending behaviours.

Through the EIYF the council also commissioned the social enterprise Abianda to provide targeted training in supporting young women affected by gang and group violence. This training was delivered to the integrated gangs unit, youth offending service, missing and exploitation team and Metropolitan Police representatives.

## Impact

Councillor Margaret Mullane, Cabinet Member for Enforcement and Community Safety, said: "These projects are helping young people to get the support they need and will help to steer them away from crime and violence."



We're also working closely with our partners and sharing knowledge and skills to help get to the root causes of issues, rather than dealing with problems in later life."

Spark2Life have been working with around 30 young people linked to the integrated gangs unit, with 26 of them positively engaging with the service where previously they may have not been engaged with support and mentoring services. In the last quarter of 2019, of those 26 young people, 21 (80 per cent) had not reoffended whilst working with Spark2Life. The Spark2Life youth offending service worker is currently working with around 20 young people, with 90 per cent engagement with the service. These young people are receiving support with job applications, construction skills certification and resettlement into the community, along with support to reduce reoffending.

Trauma training has been delivered to 195 frontline professionals to help them understand the impact of trauma on people's life choices and how this manifests in their behaviour, such as increased risks in offending behaviours, substance misuse and mental health. The training is being offered to relevant frontline staff in schools, the police, health services, the fire and rescue service and the council, to help improve the support available for young people who are experiencing, or have experienced, trauma and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). Additionally, 20 staff across the Community Safety Partnership and community interventions have been trained in how to deliver trauma-informed training, and have gone onto to deliver this training to 223 staff to date.

Frontline staff including commissioned community interventions, council staff, police and health staff have been offered a short county lines awareness training session. This explores grooming, cuckooing and county lines production, highlighting young people as both victims and perpetrators. This training helps frontline staff to spot the signs and to approach and work with young people affected by these issues.

## Lessons learned

Nathan Singleton, Chief Executive Officer of Lifeline Projects, one of the organisations delivering the community interventions, said: "To stem the surge of serious youth violence we need a joined-up approach, with all relevant statutory and voluntary providers working in partnership to share intelligence and develop solutions. Young people at risk of serious youth violence need positive role models to show them the choices they have, and activities to give them an alternative to life on the road."

LBBB has recognised that there is a need to intervene at an earlier stage, providing support, information and advice to primary school pupils. The council is now working to provide support before the point of need.

## How is the approach being sustained?

This work forms part of LBBB's wider approach to dealing with serious youth violence. The borough's Community Safety Partnership is working to establish long-term intervention programmes aimed at early identification, early intervention, community-based prevention, targeted intervention, intensive interventions and enforcement.

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# GREATER MANCHESTER: EMBEDDING PSYCHOLOGISTS INTO THE COMPLEX SAFEGUARDING WORKFORCE

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Councils across Greater Manchester are integrating psychologists into their complex safeguarding teams, enabling frontline workers to deliver more effective interventions to help vulnerable young people exit from exploitation and recover from trauma.

## The challenge

With a population of almost three million, Greater Manchester covers a large area and includes ten local councils. There is a mix of inner-city areas, where gang violence and organised crime can be a problem, and more suburban areas with challenges such as county lines and trafficking.

Since 2013, Greater Manchester's public sector partners have been working with victims and potential victims of child sexual exploitation (CSE) using a strengths-based and person-centred approach. Recognising that this could be adapted to other forms of exploitation, Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), made up of the ten local councils, working in partnership with Greater Manchester Police and stakeholders across the criminal justice, health and voluntary sectors, created a new complex safeguarding model which is being rolled out across Greater Manchester.

Damian Dallimore, GMCA's Partnership Lead for Serious and Organised Crime, said: "Challenges such as county lines require a different approach to CSE but the risk factors are often the same. Serious organised crime, county lines and modern slavery are intrinsically linked to safeguarding issues when children, young people or vulnerable adults are involved. If we don't deal with the trauma and psychological impact of abuse or exploitation, the victims are vulnerable to further abuse and exploitation by offenders and organised crime groups."

## The solution

At the heart of Greater Manchester's approach is the ambition to build better quality trusted relationships between professionals and vulnerable young people. The original CSE teams have evolved into complex safeguarding teams – one in each of the ten districts, with a small hub team managing the programme, policy, performance and standards. In addition to CSE, each team deals with child criminal exploitation, county lines, modern slavery, trafficking and threats to life.

The work is formed around six principles:

- young people must be at the centre
- exploitation is complex, therefore the response cannot be simple or linear
- no agency can address exploitation in isolation
- knowledge is crucial
- communities and families are valuable assets and may also need support
- effective services require resilient practitioners.

In 2018, GMCA won investment from the Home Office Trusted Relationships Fund to integrate psychologists into the complex safeguarding teams. Rather than working directly with young people, the psychologists would use their expertise to upskill those frontline professionals that have the trusted relationships.

The decision was made to put the project out to tender to see what private and voluntary providers could offer. The successful bidder was the Resilience Hub, set up by Greater Manchester's four mental health trusts to pool resources and expertise in providing a trauma response following the 2017 Manchester Arena attack, with Pennine Trust as lead provider.

Damian said: “The Manchester Arena terrorist attack was a horrendous incident which deeply affected our city-region, and the Resilience Hub did a wonderful job of providing assistance to a huge number of people who were traumatised by the events of that evening. We wanted to apply that expertise to working with children and young people who have been traumatised by abusive and exploitative criminals. Out of an unspeakable tragedy has developed a service which now provides care and support to some of the most vulnerable children in Greater Manchester.”

Each of the ten teams is different, based on local demand and partnership arrangements, but all include children’s social care, family support, early help, police, health and the voluntary sector. Each trusted professional works with children and families, under the guidance of a psychologist, to understand behaviour in the context of life events. Interventions are informed by models of trauma recovery.

## Impact

Evaluation of the original CSE work demonstrated improved outcomes for children, young people and families. For every £1 spent, £5.48 was saved on accommodation services costs alone. The cost benefit analysis estimated a £48,000 saving per person over five years (based on agency costs, not including accommodation).

By December 2019, psychologists had been brought into seven of the ten complex safeguarding teams. The number of children and young people benefiting from this new service had at that point exceeded 500 – already beyond the initial expectation of 300 each year. The psychologists will eventually influence the practice of 120 frontline professionals. Feedback from staff who have received training is universally positive.

Developing trusted relationships with this cohort of children and young people is not easy, but frontline staff say the psychologists have already added a huge amount of value to their teams.

“Bringing psychological formulation into the teams moves us away from the diagnostic model, which can stigmatise and label young people,” said Damian. “Instead, we can see that their behaviour is perfectly in line with what would be expected, given their experiences. We can work with them and address these issues to help them move towards their aspirations in life.”

## Lessons learned

Recruiting the right psychologists, who would be comfortable upskilling other professionals, was critical. They had to be confident and able to demonstrate leadership when embedded into very busy multi-professional teams.

One of the challenges was implementing the service across ten councils, aiming for consistency while recognising that each place is different. Going out to tender allowed the partners to test the market and encourage innovation. Consideration was given to sharing some teams between more than one council, but there was a risk that this would lead to unmet need.

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# NORTH YORKSHIRE AND CITY OF YORK: TESTING DIFFERENT ‘TRUSTED RELATIONSHIP’ MODELS

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North Yorkshire County Council and City of York Council are testing the effectiveness of different models of support for young people at risk of exploitation, in a project supported by the Home Office’s Trusted Relationships Fund.

## The challenge

Criminal exploitation of children and young people through county lines is a growing problem across the UK. North Yorkshire and York are no different, with active networks identified across the county and city, often associated with violence, threats and the carrying of weapons such as knives.

Many young people who have been victims of exploitation or abuse say they did not have a consistent, trusted adult with whom they could share concerns, either in their family or their community network – and that this led to harm escalating in their lives.

## The solution

North Yorkshire County Council and City of York Council are working in partnership, along with agencies including the police and health, to foster trusted relationships for those at risk of or subject to child criminal exploitation (CCE). In 2018 this work was awarded more than £1.1 million from the Home Office Trusted Relationships Fund, with the funding released over four years.

This £13.2 million fund is supporting eleven council-led projects taking new approaches to tackling vulnerability among children and young people identified locally as at risk of exploitation or abuse. By using a variety of methods to foster trusted relationships, this work will improve understanding of emerging local threats, reduce victimisation and drive down demand on statutory services.

Through this and other early intervention funds, the Home Office is working to build a stronger evidence base on what works to protect young people from harm.

At the core of North Yorkshire and York’s work is a relationship-based practice model which acknowledges that trusted relationships are a key enabler for change. The focus is on vulnerable young people aged 10-17. Through flexible packages of support and using a strengths-based and solution-focused approach, the project fosters positive long-term relationships and promotes protective factors.

A range of accredited and evidence-informed interventions are used to help build resilience, including restorative practice and motivational interviewing. Each young person is matched with a trusted adult from one of three groups:

- trained young adults with their own experience of children’s and family services
- trained volunteer adult mentors
- a trusted adult.

Support is delivered through two strands. Strand one supports children and young people identified as being at risk of CCE and other forms of exploitation, and strand two supports those already experiencing exploitation.

In the City of York, strand one is delivered through specialist adult volunteer mentors. In North Yorkshire it is delivered through restorative practice relief workers, care-experienced young adults aged between 16 and 24. The primary role for both groups is to develop a trusted relationship with the child or young person to help build their resilience, self-esteem and self-efficacy. All are fully trained and supervised; the restorative practice relief workers are paid as contracted workers.

Strand two provides support for children and young people identified as already subject to exploitation. Delivery across North Yorkshire and York is through family network coordinators (2.5 full-time equivalents), trained to offer support through a continuum of approaches including restorative practice and family finding. Their responsibilities include building a positive relationship with the young person, identifying connections with trusted adults, and developing resiliency within the individual and their family/wider network.

Michael Lord, Trusted Relationships Project Coordinator, said: “Central to the project is the ambition to harnesses the power of relationships. This recognises that people and services with a positive relationship with the young person are best placed to support them, and their family, to jointly develop a plan to move them away from exploitation risks and make a real difference in their lives.”

## Impact

The target outcomes include achieving improved relationships, improved safety, increased engagement in education, training and employment, improved emotional and physical wellbeing and reduced criminal activity. The ambition is to work with over 200 individuals between 2019 and 2022.

The project is at an early stage and a full outcome and performance framework is being developed. However, it is showing early promise in terms of positive outcomes for some vulnerable young people within the initial cohort – for example reduced exploitation risk, fewer missing episodes and reduced criminal activity.

## Lessons learned

Michael Lord said that from a project implementation perspective, it has been highly beneficial to integrate this work into wider safeguarding and multi-agency working arrangements.

The referral process is fully integrated within the designated child exploitation process for each local authority area. Agencies cannot submit a direct referral, as that would bypass the existing child exploitation pathway. Taking this approach is expected to deliver benefits including:

- consistency in how cases are considered, nominated and allocated
- ensuring there is multi-agency agreement on the appropriateness of Trusted Relationship Project support in the context of the existing range of options and interventions
- ensuring that child exploitation forums retain oversight of children and young people within their local authority area
- ensuring that case-holding responsibility remains with the children and families service, with this project supplementing the work of other agencies/services.

## How is the approach being sustained?

This project will be used to strengthen the evidence base on what works to protect young people from exploitation and abuse, helping to improve services over the course of the programme and beyond. It will also lead to better integrated working arrangements and practice in terms of awareness, identifying and addressing exploitation across the partnership workforce.

Data will be used to build a business case that assesses the future value of this model and looks at whether the project is effective in delivering cost savings across the partnership.

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# NOTTINGHAMSHIRE AND NOTTINGHAM CITY: HARNESSING COMMUNITY ASSETS TO HELP REDUCE VIOLENCE

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Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) is working with local communities to prevent violence and reduce its impact, building a detailed understanding of the causes of violence and investing in evidence-based interventions that make a lasting difference.

## The challenge

Reducing incidents of serious violence is a high priority for Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County. Nottingham was ranked the fifth worst city in the UK for knife crime in 2018, with 500 incidents. In Nottinghamshire, the rate of violent offences is lower than for its statistical neighbour average (18.7 per 1,000 population in 2016/17), but some parts of the county have much higher rates.

Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire VRU, set up in September 2019, brings together key partners and builds on the work already underway – including the Nottinghamshire knife crime strategy. While the county and city differ in terms of their demographic profiles and prevalence of violent crime, they share a commitment to working together to:

- understand the needs of local communities
- identify what works
- commission and implement evidence-based interventions
- share learning and evaluate impact.

## The solution

The VRU has a strong focus on prevention and early intervention. Interventions are aimed at building community resilience to violent crime and changing social norms, using local intelligence to interrupt the transmission of

violence by analysing where it may occur and working with people at higher risk.

The VRU began its work with a period of intensive information-gathering to create a comprehensive strategic needs assessment, which in turn informs a strategic response strategy. Helene Denness, the VRU's Consultant in Public Health, said: "This involves bringing together data that hasn't been looked at through a public health lens before and articulating data in a different way."

Whilst the VRU's work will encompass people of all ages, children and young adults will be at its heart. The initiatives include 'My Voice', a county-wide writing programme launched in primary schools and delivered by the Nottingham UNESCO City of Literature. It aims to develop tools for positive self-expression through writing, talks and mentoring opportunities, giving children a platform to explore their fears around violence and express their creativity. The outcome is to avoid the low self-esteem, poor mental health and isolation that can nurture youth violence.

Juno Women's Aid will deliver a six-month pilot of one-to-one and group work for young people who have been exposed to domestic violence knife crime. This will aim to provide the participants with an understanding of healthy relationships, manage their experience of exposure to abuse and give them clear messages that violence and are wrong.

Work will also take place in schools, alternative provision and prisons with young men identified as vulnerable to gang involvement and knife crime, supporting them to make better choices, develop healthy relationships, develop coping strategies and increase their aspirations for the future.

The VRU also aims to build on the success of the 'Mentors in Violence Prevention' programme, which uses a creative bystander approach to prevent bullying and gender-based violence. Supported by teachers and community partners, peer trainers will be equipped with the skills to work with younger pupils on these issues.

## Impact

The strong focus on reducing violence is beginning to have an impact. Knife crime across Nottinghamshire fell by 8.7 per cent in the 12 months to September 2019 (from 882 to 805 incidents). The city of Nottingham saw particular success, with a decrease in knife crime of 18.9 per cent. The number of offences per 1,000 population across Nottinghamshire has dropped below the national and regional average for the first time in over a decade.

Police and Crime Commissioner, Paddy Tipping, said: "These figures are certainly a positive indication that the preventative work we are doing, including school-based education and family intervention, as well as robust enforcement, is making a difference to the safety of our communities.

"However, we must not become complacent. This must be sustained in the long-term through continued national funding so many more young people are supported to make positive lifestyle choices that will help steer them away from high-risk friendships and behaviour."

## Lessons learned

Violence is a complex issue with complex causes, and reducing violence takes a coordinated whole-system approach which includes public bodies but also harnesses the assets and energy within the voluntary sector and communities themselves.

Helene Denness said: "Our work to reduce violence starts with different agencies recognising we have a common goal; we care about the same end point.

Traditionally we have had different ways of getting there, but we are willing to find a new way together. Partnership working is about accepting that we all have a responsibility. That systems thinking will underpin our future work.

"We are fortunate that we have buy-in to the public health approach across the system. The directors of public health were part of this conversation from the start; our lead members want to be involved. We are very focused on citizens and communities, recognising that issues such as poverty, inequality and racism affect people differently.

"Securing skilled analytical support has been key to our success. Without experienced analysts that can access data from health, local authority and police sources, we wouldn't be able to understand or articulate need. Our violence reduction strategy will be informed by this analysis, alongside a comprehensive review of the literature and the lived experience of local people."

## How is the approach being sustained?

The next steps for the VRU include creating:

- a violence reduction response strategy (defining the problem and approach) and response plan (identifying and managing what specific interventions will be undertaken, when, where and by whom)
- an assets-based community and stakeholder engagement plan
- an evaluation and review framework, with evaluation training for community groups.

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# REDBRIDGE: FAMILY THERAPY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AT RISK OF GANG INVOLVEMENT AND EXPLOITATION

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Redbridge Council is piloting a licenced, evidence-based family therapy service to work with children and young people at risk of gang exploitation. This will provide an edge-of-care service delivering an intensive, home-based, holistic, therapeutic intervention to those who may be at risk of gang involvement and exploitation.

## The challenge

As in other London boroughs, the number of young people involved in gangs or county lines has risen in Redbridge over recent years. Children as young as primary school age have been groomed by criminals to join gangs, carry knives and transport drugs. Knife crime levels have increased and there have been fatalities in the borough. Addressing these issues is a priority for Redbridge Council.

With the introduction of the pilot project, 'Functional Family Therapy – Gangs/Families Are Forever' (FFT-FAF), it is envisaged that the right help at the right time can be provided to children and families to help them to think and respond differently to adverse events and situations. This work will have the overarching aim of improving family functioning and young people's responses towards negative pull factors that could diminish their long-term life chances.

## The solution

Redbridge Council secured over £700,000 from the Youth Endowment Fund to pilot FFT-FAF, which is a collaboration between Redbridge children's services and Family Psychology Mutual. The Youth Endowment Fund was founded with £200 million investment from the Home Office, as part of the Government's plan to tackle serious violence.

This is the first time that this clinical adaptation of FFT has been trialled outside of the United States. The pilot project will deliver an intensive, home-based, holistic, therapeutic intervention to children and young people aged 10-14 who may be at risk of gang involvement and exploitation.

A team of three functional family therapy workers (specialist clinical psychologists, social workers or mental health nurses) will work with young people and their families over a three- to five-month period, aiming to overcome negative patterns of behaviour and build on relationship strengths. This will aim to reduce conflict, build positive relationships and provide a safer home environment.

The FFT workers are embedded within Redbridge's family intervention team (FIT). Anna Watson, Manager of Specialist Services for Exploited Children, said: "We recognised that we needed to work in a different way with young people who are being exploited and are on the verge of being taken into care, so we created the FIT team to provide support for them alongside commissioned services."

Sabina Samad, Service Manager for FIT, said: "The aim of the team is to work creatively with our hard-to-reach and difficult-to-engage young people by being flexible, tenacious and dynamic in our efforts to build a rapport. Forming these trusted relationships will potentially pave the way for engagement. Our FIT team is relentless in ensuring that young people are seen, they are safe, and that any intelligence is shared and mapped to build on the borough's demographic intelligence, hotspot areas and person-of-interest profiles."



## Impact

Families are Forever in Redbridge is operating as a feasibility study and pilot, with evaluation led by Greenwich University. Following a feasibility study phase, work with families will begin in July 2020. There will also be a control group.

Each of the three workers will begin with a caseload of three to eight families, eventually rising to about 15, with up to 20 home-based sessions for each family. In cases where a young person is due to return home from care, family support will begin three weeks before the due-home date.

The goals include reducing the number of looked-after children (both by preventing young people from entering care and enabling others to return home to a family better able to cope), and reducing the number of young people involved in county lines and gangs.

## Lessons learned

Sabina Samad said: “The key lesson we have learned is that the intensity of the work that the FIT team undertake is relentless. The emotional impact on social workers and family support workers can be overwhelming, particularly when there is a continuous level of risk to any particular young person. This may entail threats of stabbing, risk of suicide or missing episodes.

“These risk factors can heighten workers’ anxiety levels and it has been a learning curve to recognise that despite having the right services in place, having resilient workers is key to ensuring positive outcomes for children and young people. As a result, there is regular clinical supervision as well as case/personal supervision, with check-ins and check-outs on a daily basis. The FIT team is committed to ensuring high team morale and safety.”

FIT is co-located with a range of commissioned services for young people at risk of or subject to exploitation including Barnardo’s, Safer London and the St Giles Trust. This enables expertise and intelligence to be easily shared.

There is one referral pathway for all services wanting to access a FIT-specific service – which is through the FIT allocation panel. This ensures that the FIT team and commissioned services have an overview of the cases, and that any significant information is shared to inform further referral outcome decision-making.

It was recognised that some families with entrenched problems and chaotic functioning may not be ready for family therapy, so preliminary work will take place with them to ensure the best chance of successful intervention.

## How is the approach being sustained?

Partners in Redbridge are developing a mapping tool to understand the problem profile and identify hotspots. The pilot is in its early stages, so it is too early to assess its impact. However, given the successful identification of cases during the feasibility phase and the volume of potential cases, there is a strong possibility that this approach could be sustained, subject to ongoing funding.

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# REDCAR & CLEVELAND: TARGETED INTERVENTION IN ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR HOTSPOTS

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Intensive support for young people involved in crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB) has been piloted in Loftus, a small town in the borough of Redcar & Cleveland, using funding from the Home Office Early Intervention Youth Fund – and has had a positive impact on those taking part.

## The challenge

Redcar & Cleveland is a unitary authority area in the North East of England. The larger towns include Redcar, Saltburn-by-the-Sea and Guisborough, while smaller towns and villages include Brotton, Eston, Skelton and Loftus. Loftus is among the 10 per cent most deprived places in England and struggles with rural isolation. Teenagers have to travel out of town by bus to attend school – but beyond that they don't often leave the area. Unemployment is high and many families are on low incomes.

Redcar & Cleveland Council's early help youth and community service manages a successful 'Streetz' outreach project, delivering interventions on Friday evenings in identified ASB hotspots. Intelligence is regularly shared through the Community Safety Partnership and other forums. Through this process, it was identified that five older youths were responsible for a lot of ASB in the Loftus area including drug use, assaults, vandalism and threatening behaviour. This seemed to be encouraging other young people to get involved in gang culture and violence, resulting in rising community tensions and a real risk to those involved from community retaliation.

## The solution

In 2018, Cleveland's Police and Crime Commissioner, Barry Copping, was successful in a bid for over £546,000

from the Home Office's Early Intervention Youth Fund (EIYF) for work in four key areas: prevention, early intervention, targeted intervention and diversion.

Redcar and Cleveland's youth service had designed a 'Youth Work Plus' targeted intervention model for steering young people away from ASB and criminal behaviour. This approach was initially used with the five older youths, and following a programme of intensive support they were moved on to other specialist services. The EIYF funding then enabled the council to expand this work, and 20 young people in Loftus were identified and invited to take part.

Youth Work Plus has three phases and works to engage young people through methods including outreach, home visits, one-to-ones, school meetings, youth centres and other support services. Phase one included drop-ins and sessions with the aim of building positive relationships and carrying out assessments to capture each individual's needs. This also highlighted important information around adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and family history contributing to their behaviour.

Phase two was a three-month programme, including group work and one-to-one sessions, delivering information, coaching and counselling. A six-week structured programme, held at the youth centre, delivered presentations and group discussions on issues such as risk taking behaviour, drug and alcohol awareness, mental, physical and sexual health, and the consequences of ASB.

Consultation with the participants led to the topic of MCing (a music genre popular in the area) being chosen to engage them in positive activities in phase three. Youth Work Plus brought in two professional MCs from Newcastle who the young people

looked up to. This proved to be an excellent engagement tool, helping them to gain skills and providing constructive activities for their leisure time. Using music helped them to creatively and honestly explore their feelings about community, identity, behaviour and gang culture.

## Impact

The aim of Youth Work Plus is to restore relationships and empower people to take control of their lives. It provides them with consistency, trusted adults and ambition for the future, and staff noted that each participant grew in self-confidence and self-esteem.

Measurable outcomes include:

- ASB in Loftus reduced by 41 per cent in the 12 months to December 2019, compared to the previous 12 months.
- Seventeen of the 20 young people have had no further ASB involvement.
- PCSOs and police reported a huge change in ASB locally and a noticeable improvement in the behaviour of young people.
- One participant has returned to education, having previously been permanently excluded.
- Those involved have opened up about other issues including substance abuse, mental health and physical health, which has allowed staff to refer them (with consent) to other services.
- Twelve young people are working towards ASDAN-accredited awards and four have achieved John Muir awards in outdoor activities.
- Fifteen are attending a weekly youth club with their peers and had no exclusions in the five months to February 2020.
- Six took part in a Forest School project, helping to create a new woodland pathway for community use.

## Lessons learned

Given the high needs and challenges that this target group presents, staff training and support was critical. It takes time to build the trusting relationships needed for this approach to work. Initial training sessions covered ACEs, signs of wellbeing and managing challenging behaviour, and formed critical worry statements as a framework to support progress.

Partnership working and information sharing was crucial, particularly in identifying the right people to work with. This involved close working with the early help and social work teams, Cleveland Police, the ASB team, schools and other agencies. Consulting with the young participants about what they would like to engage with was also important.

## How is the approach being sustained?

Youth Work Plus delivers preventative roadshows with an ASB theme in primary and secondary schools; runs an ambassador's programme in schools; works with young people involved in knife incidents in one-to-one sessions; delivers holiday programmes in identified areas of ASB; and runs restorative projects. EIFYF funding enabled the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Cleveland to double investment in youth outreach across the area, which has funded some of this work. However, the EIFYF funding ended in March 2020.

The team would like to use Youth Work Plus in other target areas, and if funding becomes available the large village of Skelton is next in line.

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# SOMERSET: INFORMATION-SHARING TO IDENTIFY AND ENGAGE WITH YOUNG PEOPLE AT RISK

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Somerset is one of five Violence Reduction Units (VRUs) in the Avon and Somerset area, and is testing analytical technology which combines data from the police, health and councils to help inform partners and target responses to where there is most risk of harm from violence.

## The challenge

Somerset is one of England's most rural counties but has easy transport links to cities including Bristol and London. Identifying and working with at-risk young people can be more difficult in rural areas, where services are dispersed and individuals tend to travel greater distances across district boundaries.

In terms of criminal exploitation of young people, local issues include county lines and youth groups. Youth groups are less organised and without the geographical boundaries that are seen in youth gangs in cities. Young people are more likely to move between multiple networks and the cohorts are fluid. Experience indicates that individuals in these groups sit on a positive spectrum of activity between the most entrenched and least entrenched members at any one time.

## The solution

Avon and Somerset was awarded £1.16 million from the Home Office Serious Violence Fund in 2019/20 to introduce VRUs. The Police and Crime Commissioner, Sue Mountstevens, allocated funding to each of the five local authority areas within Avon and Somerset. The key deliverables for the first year are a problem profile and response strategy.

Each of the five VRUs (Somerset, South Gloucestershire, Bristol, North Somerset, and Bath and North East Somerset) are working with education, police and health partners to identify the local drivers of serious violence and develop coordinated responses based on prevention and early intervention.

Somerset VRU, based within Somerset County Council, brings together expertise from community safety, public health, housing, the police and children's social care, and is part of the Safer Somerset Partnership. A key focus is early intervention, and one part of its work is to test specialised analytical technology developed by Avon and Somerset Constabulary to help inform partners and target responses to where there is most risk of harm from violence.

The technology combines data from the police and council (soon to include health) to help identify and prioritise interventions for individuals and communities. The multi-agency VRU team can then match local knowledge to the data, in order to advise services on potential interventions or partnership opportunities that could help to safeguard individuals and communities.

## Impact

Where a young person has been identified as at risk, the VRU team have an adolescent intervention worker available to make enquiries with lead professionals and the individual concerned and, where appropriate, support a public health approach to reduction of harm. This may include work around positive relationships, harm reduction and personal safety. The aim is to re-engage them with services including therapeutic programmes, activity programmes or enhanced interventions from partners such as Barnardo's.

Clare Stuart, VRU Manager for the Safer Somerset Partnership, said: “Many of these young people are known to services and have received offers of support but are not engaging with them. The adolescent worker has extra resource available through the VRU to try to offer them something that they can hook onto to reduce the risks they are facing. It’s about being really flexible and being positive and creative about responding to challenging and evasive behaviours, in order to engage people with longer-term support.”

This is demonstrated through one of the test cases, Mandy (not her real name). A likelihood of high risk of harm was identified. Case-based knowledge confirmed this and there were accumulative risk indicators present which gave a high level of concern. These included hidden harm factors from family networks, a recent displacement into accommodation away from familiar networks and associates of concern.

The VRU adolescence worker made enquiries with children’s social care, who confirmed that Mandy was not engaging well with services and there were safeguarding concerns regarding her missing episodes. Countywide intelligence from within the VRU meant they could identify possible locations and networks linked to her missing episodes. Mandy has now agreed to a short-term intervention from the adolescence worker, who has been able to feed further intelligence into local policing strategy to help reduce the risk of harm to her.

## Lessons learned

The VRUs were initially a six-month project, which limited the possibilities (in order to avoid a situation where people would be left without support). Funding for 2020/21 has since been confirmed, so work is continuing. However, where appropriate, new processes and partnership working will need to be embedded to ensure long-term sustainability.

Somerset County Council has launched a family intervention service which incorporates work with adolescents and their families. The VRU team is working closely with managers to ensure that good practice findings from the VRU can inform and support this new service.

There is strong value in having a countywide overview and understanding of the networks/group links between different individuals. Moving forward, the VRU is expanding use of the analytical technology, using this information to support the contextual safeguarding of young people and to prioritise locations and groups of concern. Where local partnership solutions to those groups of concern have not been met, a multi-agency ‘MAVE’ (missing and vulnerable to exploitation) partnership has been set up to provide a case escalation process that can steer resources to priority concerns.

## How is the approach being sustained?

The VRU is carrying out a county-wide needs assessment to identify gaps in provision and practice. This will inform a response strategy setting out the most effective ways to reduce violent crime. The VRU is raising awareness of key issues across Somerset, advising partners on good practice and providing extra resources to fund projects that will help to prevent violent crime.

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# SUFFOLK: A DATA-LED APPROACH TO GANG AND COUNTY LINES EXPLOITATION

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Suffolk has been working to embed a public health response to violence reduction, using a data-led approach and creating a specialist multi-agency team to provide a united approach to tackling criminal exploitation.

## The challenge

Suffolk is a large and mainly rural county – a picturesque place with a strong tourism sector, but with above-average levels of low educational achievement, low skills and low wages. The two largest towns, Ipswich and Lowestoft, have neighbourhoods with high levels of deprivation, and there is some rural deprivation.

Suffolk has historically been a very safe place. Hospital admissions for violence-related injuries are about half of the England average, and there are lower-than-average recorded crimes in most categories. However, in recent years this began to change. For example, in the year to September 2018 there was a 37 per cent increase in robbery (436 incidents), while weapons possession increased by 18 per cent (421 incidents). Violence related to gangs and county lines is part of this changing picture.

## The solution

Public sector leaders in Suffolk agreed there was a need for a public health approach to violence reduction. Collating and sharing data was seen as critical from the start, in order to help the partners understand the problems, map their impact, create interventions and ensure that everyone was working towards the same goals. This work was led by Suffolk County Council's public health team and involved the creation of innovative (but lawful and appropriate) approaches to data sharing.

The public health team went back to basics – looking at the definition of a public health approach to violence and using the 'Serious violence in Lambeth needs assessment 2015' to consider the generic risks and the additional risks present in Suffolk. The University of Suffolk was commissioned to gather evidence on the scale of the problems. Analysis of data from education, social care, early help and troubled families provided new insights into levels of involvement and risk in gangs and county lines.

Suffolk has a well-established public leaders group which enables county-wide issues to be discussed centrally, and which includes the county council and five district and borough councils. The group created a strategic action plan and provided £500,000 to establish a team to work with two known gangs in Ipswich and develop a practice model for the whole county. The multi-agency 'SAGE' team (Suffolk Against Gang Exploitation) is now working to provide a united, whole-system approach to tackling gang exploitation.

SAGE includes an education, training and employment worker, a community engagement officer, restorative justice officer, consultant social worker, mental health worker, social worker and psychologist. Its work includes expertise and advice, panels, case work, disseminating good practice, events and interventions.

A series of community-based signal events were held to explain the signs of county lines activity and how to report it. A training module was developed for frontline practitioners in settings such as schools and hospitals. Other engagement activities have included working with the community to develop responses, upskilling organisations and councillors, delivering events in key locations and engagement with the voluntary sector.

## Impact

A full evaluation of this work programme is now underway, with initial findings published early in 2020. The interventions that have been trialled include:

A trauma-informed pilot approach for a small number of cases (a psychologist facilitates a case formulation meeting, bringing together relevant professionals to explore what interventions are required).

A thinking skills programme for young people involved in violence or gangs and their parents/carers, using cognitive behavioural therapy (funded by the Home Office Early Intervention Fund).

‘Contextual safeguarding’ – ensuring that young people are safe in their places, such as parks and school gates.

‘StreetDoctors’ sessions, delivered to young people in their communities, providing the first aid skills needed to deal effectively with a trauma injury.

Some key statistics that reflect progress to date include:

- the number and threat levels of county lines in Suffolk has reduced
- 23,000 frontline professionals, parents and young people have benefited from training, awareness-raising or briefings
- £1.3 million in funding has been levered in to tackle the issue, on top of the £500,000 from Suffolk Public Sector Leaders
- the SAGE cohort has shown an overall reduction in offending behaviour.

## Lessons learned

Suffolk recognised that this emerging problem needed a genuinely multi-agency approach. Anna Crispe, Assistant Director, Knowledge & Intelligence, Public Health Suffolk, said: “There are so many levels of vulnerability that are created by being caught up in these activities. Nearly all the

risk factors are complex and multi-factorial – there is no simplistic answer – but not tackling these issues leads to huge personal and societal costs.

“Whilst we have achieved a lot in a relatively short space of time, there are other learning points which we are reflecting on and need to address going forward. These include the need for improved system-wide communication, streamlining governance where possible, and the need to mainstream some of these activities as part of our core business.”

## How is the approach being sustained?

Chrissie Geeson, Head of Localities and Partnerships, said: “In the coming months, chief officers and elected leaders will review their commitment to tackling the issues. Any future work programme will embed the learning from our work to date, and we will continue to adapt and flex our approach as the nature, scale and pace of the issue changes.”

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# SUSSEX: A YOUTH COACHING PROGRAMME TO DIVERT YOUNG PEOPLE AWAY FROM CRIME

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REBOOT is a Sussex-wide programme using dedicated youth coaches to engage positively with young people at risk of involvement in serious violence. The five-stage referral pathway is led by Sussex Police but involves a range of partners, including 15 councils.

## The challenge

The historic county of Sussex includes the local authority areas of East Sussex, West Sussex and Brighton & Hove. Between them they face the full range of youth crime challenges, including knife offences and widespread county lines activity. County lines from London and other cities are thought to affect every town in Sussex, with dozens of cases identified in the last few years.

## The solution

In November 2018 the Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner, Katy Bourne, secured over £890,000 from the Home Office Early Intervention Fund to establish a pan-Sussex youth programme. 'REBOOT' provides a five-stage, police-led referral pathway for children and young people who show early indicators of serious violence. It works with them to tackle the problems they face, move them away from negative behaviours and channel their focus on investing in the future.

Young people are referred into the REBOOT pathway if:

- they are aged between 10 and 17 (with priority for 11- to 14-year-olds)
- they have come to police attention in the last four weeks
- a multi-agency risk assessment form has been completed
- they are at risk of one of the five key drivers of crime (opportunity, drugs, alcohol, character and profit).

At stage one, a police community support officer visits the young person's home to speak to them and their parents/guardians. More than half of the referrals don't need to go further than this stage. If there are ongoing risk factors, the options at stage two include voluntary referral to an NHS mental health nurse and/or the REBOOT youth coaching intervention service. There are three other stages, culminating in civil injunction at stage five, but less than two per cent of young people move past stage two.

REBOOT brings together partners including Sussex Police, East Sussex County Council, West Sussex County Council, Brighton & Hove City Council, 12 district and borough councils, youth offending services, the voluntary and community sector (VCS), leisure service providers and Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust. All 15 councils were collaboratively involved in developing the bid and in the implementation of the funds and service delivery.

The coaching intervention service is delivered by a collaboration of four local VCS organisations, led by YMCA DownsLink Group in conjunction with AudioActive, the Hangleton and Knoll Project and the Trust for Developing Communities. Nine specialist youth coaches (three each covering East Sussex, West Sussex and Brighton and Hove) work to engage young people in activities of interest to them and move them away from negative behaviour. Each coach will work with approximately 30-35 young people over the course of a year.

The coaches gather intelligence across agencies to carry out strengths-based assessment of the young person's needs, then develop personalised plans that work with their strengths and abilities. They focus on what is positive in the young person's life (existing skills, interests and assets).



These interventions, along with support from partner agencies, help to build the young person's resilience and improve their critical thinking ability.

An 'enabling fund' is available to spot-purchase or commission activities and opportunities to help each young person develop constructive interests, learn new skills and overcome the issues they face. The youth coaches receive regular group reflective practice supervision.

## Impact

REBOOT does not replace existing practices but offers another layer of support for vulnerable young people. The pan-Sussex programme launched in April 2019. In the nine months to December, 617 young people were accepted onto the police pathway. Of those, 56 per cent (346) closed at stage one, 25 per cent (155) moved on to stage two, 1 per cent (eight) moved to stage three, four moved to stage four, and one moved to stage five. A small number of young people did not continue to stage one of the police pathway.

During that nine-month period, 165 young people were accepted for coaching. They reported that it had already had a positive impact on their:

- personal goals (59 per cent)
- family support and healthy relationships (56 per cent)
- resilience and self-esteem (53 per cent)
- hope for their future and empowerment to make good choices (51 per cent).

Councillor John Allcock, chair of Brighton and Hove City Council's children, young people & skills committee, said: "The council is committed to delivering high-quality youth services. We've been involved in developing REBOOT from the beginning, which has allowed us to influence how the programme works to safeguard young people and supports them to live their best lives.

"While needs are different across the county, young people can easily be drawn into anti-social behaviour and crime if there is no suitable early intervention or diversionary programme wherever they are. Youth services have been struggling to cope with demand following significant cuts in government funding over the last 10 years, so this programme is much-needed."

## Lessons learned

Detective Sergeant Christopher Varrall, REBOOT programme manager, said partners sharing a common goal and working to the same key deliverables has been central to its success so far. A clear governance structure, strong communications plan and clear branding have been important for the programme's identity. The performance partnership monthly report, developed by a performance analyst, has been crucial to communicating the programme.

Developing a strengths-based approach, which draws on and celebrates the strengths of the young people involved, empowers them to make positive decisions. "Finally, through having a consistent approach across Sussex we can identify increases in public confidence, efficiency and the effectiveness of our joint approach to targeting routes leading to serious violence."

## How is the approach being sustained?

REBOOT was initially funded for one year. Funding has been extended initially until June 2020, with a full sustainability announcement expected in the spring.

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# WALTHAM FOREST: INVOLVING YOUNG PEOPLE IN DESIGNING ACTIONS AND SOLUTIONS

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Following an increase in serious violence across London, crime had become the number one concern for residents in the borough of Waltham Forest. In response, a Violence Reduction Partnership was set up to tackle violence and its root causes – with the wellbeing of young people at the heart of its ambitions and solutions.

## The challenge

Waltham Forest is located in the north east of London. Rates of violent crime have risen significantly in recent years, in line with the rest of London and the UK. The borough has suffered a number of tragic incidents, including the murder of 14-year-old Jaden Moodie early in 2019. Waltham Forest residents are 50 per cent more likely to be concerned about knife crime than the London average.

## The solution

Waltham Forest Council launched a Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP) in November 2018. The VRP was created to bring together all partners – police, health, education, the council, voluntary sector, local business and the wider community – to unite efforts behind a shared vision and strategic approach, with an ambition to reduce violence and ensure the safety of local residents.

There is a clear framework for delivery based on a public health approach, but which purposefully looks to simplify the language to ensure it can be understood by the wider community, structured around four 'domains':

- **Curtail** – strong enforcement which seeks to predict, disrupt and tackle specific acts of violence, and prosecute and rehabilitate perpetrators.
- **Treat** – quick, effective, trauma-informed treatment for anyone who has experienced violence.

- **Support** – early, targeted support for those most vulnerable to violence and exploitation, to reduce the risks they face.
- **Strengthen** – widespread empowerment of communities to build resilience and prevent violence.

Four working groups were set up to unpick the challenges and agree on actions to be delivered by the partnership. These groups are action-focused, with young people at the heart of designing the solutions. Young people are represented on all four groups and there is an additional young people's group to challenge recommendations. An annual 'Big Youth Conversation' provides direct data to inform the programme.

Some early interventions have been designed to deliver on the ambitions in each domain. For example:

- **Curtail:** there are now more joint operations between the police and council than any other London borough.
- **Treat:** the 'Safe and Together' model has been introduced to support domestic abuse survivors by focusing on the perpetrator's pattern of behaviour, in order to keep the child safe with the survivor.
- **Support:** 48 community mentors have been trained to support young people at risk of exclusion from school.
- **Strengthen:** almost 10,000 primary school pupils will receive 'LifeSkills' lessons to build their resilience to stressful situations.

## Impact

The VRP's strategic work plan is at an early stage. Learning will be evaluated, instilled and shared as the different initiatives progress. However, there are positive early headline results, including a reduction in knife crime offences of 29 per cent between August 2018 and November 2019 – the

biggest reduction of any London borough over that period.

Progress is being made across each domain. A local pilot with police under Curtail led to a 38 per cent decrease in crime; an information-sharing arrangement under Treat meant schools received notifications of over 300 instances where their pupils had witnessed domestic abuse; work in Support reduced persistent school absence by almost 20 per cent in 2018/19 (573 fewer pupils out of school); and in Strengthen, the first cohort of 2,000 pupils to receive Lifeskills lessons have seen the best progression results in UK.

The current priorities include:

- active work to address knife-carrying
- work to improve relations between the police and young people
- how to better utilise 'reachable moments' to get early, effective support to those most at risk of exploitation
- ensuring effective support is available in the right places across the system.

Councillor Ahsan Khan, Cabinet Member for Community Safety, said: "The VRP has made a really positive start and demonstrated how, by connecting organisations across the community, we can take effective steps to reduce violence. However, we are very far from celebrating: violence is still far too high and one incident of knife crime is an incident too many. This is the start of our journey."

## Lessons learned

Daniel Phelps, Waltham Forest's Head of Independence and Wellbeing, said a number of lessons had been learnt over the VRP's first year. Firstly, the value of having a clear articulation of a public health approach that everyone can understand. The inherent simplicity has helped foster buy-in from across the system whilst retaining the credibility of the approach in being effective at tackling violence.

Secondly, the importance of having the widest partnership, with full representation from the voluntary and community sector, to share information and work with. This has brought fresh ideas and perspectives and allowed new partnerships and solutions to emerge, with the council acting as a conduit for relationships, solidifying the partnership.

Finally, work to reduce violence must go hand-in-hand with work to reduce fear of violence. Despite recent reductions in knife offences, fear of knife and gun crime has increased. Waltham Forest has the highest level of fear of gun crime and the second highest of fear of knife crime in London, and work is underway to understand and address these fears.

## How is the approach being sustained?

Waltham Forest Council has identified the reduction of violence as one of two overarching priorities. Through the VRP, it has the infrastructure and framework to deliver on this over the years to come. Much of the activity is being taken forward by working group members, with an external co-chair on each of the four domains, meaning energy and momentum is brought from across the system.

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With thanks to Rachel Potter, who the LGA commissioned to write this report.



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