

Safer Bromley Partnership – 29 November 2018

Gangs and Serious Youth Violence Report

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Operational Update:

The purpose of this report is to provide information to strategic partners on work related to gangs and serious youth violence in the London Borough of Bromley. This paper provides a summary of the recent Locality Review undertaken in July 2018 of the London Borough of Bromley as part of the national serious violence strategy work of the Home Office and the Mayor's office for policing and crime (MOPAC).

The reviewers consisted of a small team of officials who spent the day in the borough interviewing and conducting focus groups with front line practitioners and partners to gather information and knowledge on their perceptions of their understanding of serious youth violence, gangs and county lines within the borough. The locality review is a rapid assessment of what is happening locally with a focus on violence and vulnerability. This process should enable local areas to have an understanding of the rapid issues around gang activity, to enable us to test out prevalence of issues identified through cross referencing what we know and to identify barriers to effectively tackle and understand the issues.

The review was not a review of any single organisation but a process of what we know operationally in this borough. The reviewing team held 8 focus groups comprising of practitioners and managers from:

- Youth Offending Service
- Community Safety
- Education / Housing
- Police Teams (schools, cadets and YOS police)
- Health (CAMHS and school nurse)
- Safeguarding / Children Looked After
- Community
- Targeted Youth Support

Some of the themes in Bromley:

- All professionals recognised that there are developing issues with gangs, violence and exploitation within the borough and the need to map gangs, location and associations.
- Young people involved in gangs and serious youth violence is a safeguarding issue, hence this is now under Children's social care directorate moving from community safety and was strengthened by combining this with young people missing and those exploited either sexually or criminally.
- The developing picture of gangs was seen to be mainly within the Anerley and Penge area of the borough and are predominately characterised as black males.
- There was some recognition of gangs in the Traveller community in the Crays and in the past there have been some clashes between the different locations/ groups.

- The reviewers found that county lines was understood and young people tended to promote their activities through the use of social media, monetary gain and supplying and distributing illegal drugs.
- Issues of schools using managed moves to remove non-academic children and some young people being excluded by school and a comment that a lot of children “don’t survive in academies” hence they were then placed at the alternate provisions in the borough. Often these children are labelled as being gang members or gang affiliated.
- There is an increase of incidents of malicious communication reported in schools and a general view that interventions related to prevention and diversion was lacking.
- Girl’s involvement in criminality and harm escalates very quickly and professionals talked about resources available to support these girls such as Barnardo’s and Women’s Aid work.
- There was a concern that there was a disparity between offence seriousness and outcome and a view from professionals that some young people commit serious offences and were not dealt with sufficiently to reduce risk or an appropriate harsher sanction which was a concern.
- A number of risk issues raised such as the impending closure of Camberwell Green Court and all their work being transferred into the Bromley borough and the potential implications of 6 boroughs’ residents involved in offending, being in the borough and the potential for this to create tensions and conflict particularly around gangs.

Recommendations:

1. A perceived lack of governance and overarching strategy for the partnership.
2. Visioning/summit event, involving partners and communities from across Bromley.
3. Establish a local multi agency analyst forum
3. Consider the production of informed needs assessment in the borough
4. Current legislation around Modern Slavery and Trafficking could be used against individual gang members
5. Set up a regular dialogue with the youth courts and the CPS
6. A programme of multi-agency training in the area of county lines and the associated vulnerability subjects would be useful and desirable,
7. Development of a stronger and more flexible system of multi-agency arrangements for managing vulnerabilities.

Summary

The issue of serious youth violence and gangs has become a higher priority in the borough and across the country with concerns heightened by a small but increasing number of tragic incidents that in some cases has led to fatalities. There is an overwhelming view that gangs and youth violence is an issue within the borough and as such a Gangs Protocol is now in place led by the Safeguarding Children’s Board via the Vulnerable Children’s sub group. This The Missing, Exploitation, and Gang Affiliated (MEGA (Panel) which is an operational panel that tracks and oversees the children and young people who are vulnerable and at risk because they go missing, are exploited or involved in gangs. There are a number of forums and ongoing developments to manage and reduce risk for this cohort of children. The review gives us the opportunity to consider how we wish to further develop our understanding of local issues and how we might consider our responses as a partnership.