

Locality Review

The local offer

2018/19

1 Introduction

Since the Gang and Youth Violence programme started in 2011, several challenges have emerged from the peer/locality reviews, and our understanding of the way in which gangs or groups use violence and exploit vulnerable individuals to commit crime has evolved significantly.

Increasingly, crime is being committed in private spaces as well as the public sphere, this type of crime often involves the criminal exploitation of children and adults on a physical, sexual and/or financial basis. Groups of offenders variously labelled as street gangs, organised crime groups, dangerous drug networks and disengaged young people carry out this abuse, often via illegal drug markets and for the lucrative profits that can be made from them. Most of this violence and exploitation is not reported and won't always show up in recorded crime statistics.

Increasingly it also appears that vulnerable people, especially children, are subject and exposed to a range of risk factors, making them vulnerable to a range of perpetrators. How they are then subsequently exploited often appears to depend on who gets to them first. It seems to be the case that current partnership structures across the country aren't able to respond to this new threat, often working in silos or duplicating work and resources. There is evidence nationally to show local partnerships and various agencies are trying to support the same people or families, or missing vulnerable cohorts altogether.

Communities, who can hold the key to understanding the issues and tracking perpetrators, are not always properly engaged. Partnerships will want to engage with them to help effect cultural change and communicate myth busting messages regarding the glamour of gang life. We have found some of the key challenges for partnerships are:

- The need to understand the relationship between serious group offending and local drug markets (including illegal, prescription drugs and new psychoactive substances)

- The links between vulnerable cohorts, locations and gangs e.g. care homes, missing young people, school absence and exclusions
- Making links between violence and vulnerability, the Prevent Programme and local secure estate.
- Vulnerabilities and exploitation experienced by gang-associated women and girls
- The exploitation of children by gangs and organised crime groups (sexual / physical exploitation or exploitation in order to commit crimes such as drug dealing) - this increasingly involves grooming via debt entrapment
- Gang members and associates moving into other areas, such as shire counties or seaside towns, to commit crime
- Links between street gangs and organised crime groups
- The use of social media to facilitate violence and intimidation
- The links between health, particularly mental health, and gang violence
- Youth offending services managing a more violent cohort than previously
- The ability to identify both dangerous gang nominals and young people at risk of involvement in gang crime when there is a lack of police intelligence
- Making sure that resources are effectively targeted, informed and that partnership structures are set up to respond quickly to the new threat without duplication

Often practitioners have many insights into how gangs and groups are operating and exploiting young people and vulnerable adults. This qualitative information, when triangulated across a number of interviews and linked with relevant quantitative data sets can show a richer picture of how gangs and groups work, and help us to tackle them more effectively. It can also help us to identify and protect vulnerable people. This is the locality review (LR).

2 Purpose of the Locality Review

County lines is an evolving national issue involving the use of mobile phone lines by groups to extend their drug dealing business to new locations outside their home areas. This issue affects overtly and covertly most areas around the country.

A county lines enterprise almost always involves exploitation of vulnerable people, this can involve both children and adults who require safeguarding. The gangs will put the vulnerable individuals between themselves and the risk of detection, asking them to courier drugs, often “plugged” internally, and/or to sell drugs at the other end of the line in a “traphouse”, something known as “cuckooing”.

Cuckooing involves placing gang members into a property of a vulnerable person (often a drug user) either forcibly or by promise of free drugs. The property is then used as a base from which to sell drugs, and mobile phones are used to order more drugs via couriers, who travel by train or car. This tactic is used across the country, with some organised groups using addresses for a matter of hours before leaving only to return sometime later thereby reducing the risk of detection even further.

The LR is a one-day process for local areas as part of the Home Office national Serious Violence Strategy to tackle gangs and serious youth violence. It works as a broad-brush set of interviews and focus groups with front-line practitioners to gather information, knowledge and perception whilst building a qualitative picture of the key issues and drivers around county lines, gangs, youth violence and vulnerability. It is a rapid evidential assessment process that focuses on violence and vulnerability. It should –

- Enable rapid assessment of issues around gang activity, serious youth violence and victimisation through drawing upon the experiences of practitioners, communities, victims and offenders
- Test the prevalence of issues identified through cross-referencing opinions/perception from interviewees/groups and relevant quantitative data
- Identify barriers to effectively understanding and tackling local priorities (in relation to threat, risk and harm)

It is crucial to understand that this is not a review of any single organisation's role, but a process that seeks to identify what local practitioners know or believe about vulnerability at an operational level, understand how the partner agencies are working together operationally to deliver the area's gang/group and youth violence priorities and examine what blockages are perceived to effect delivery at a frontline level. The review reflects the information gathered from the practitioner interview time table and may highlight communication issues where process exist as well as potential gaps and barriers to identification and effective intervention.

The cost of this work is match-funded by the Home Office. Please contact us for further details and availability.