

County lines – a national summary & emerging best practice

May 2018

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Acknowledgements

The initial work to develop the Locality Reviews and Strategic Framework Reviews was undertaken by Paul Cullen and Mick McNally at the Home Office as part of the Ending Gang and Youth Violence programme (EGYV). Since leaving the Home Office and forming the Violence and Vulnerability Unit (VVU) in association with the Association of Town Centre Management (ATCM), this work has been further developed and refined into the now recognised methodology that has produced these findings.

1. Introduction

This report is designed to provide policy makers and practitioners with an overview of the findings of the 70 or so Locality Reviews and the 3 Strategic Framework Reviews that have taken place over the past few years into drug markets, gang activity and the exploitation of vulnerable people known as 'county lines'. The report outlines the themes that are emerging from local areas and groups them under the recommended headings that form the structure of the developing Local Action Plans.

These are not intended to be definitive findings but like the reviews themselves are based on what the team has observed and what they have been told by local practitioners and managers. There is clearly more work to be done and over the next two years with the continued Home Office and MOPAC sponsorship, the Violence and Vulnerability Unit will continue to collate and disseminate these findings widely.

However, like the reviews, this report is not intended to be an analysis of the gangs themselves but more of a testimony of the impact they are having in local areas and on vulnerable populations.

Gangs/ Race/Culture

This report is not an analysis of the gangs themselves or their make-up but is based on what we are told by local people and agencies about the gangs they are seeing in their areas. As with the NCA report (<http://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/publications/832-county-lines-violence-exploitation-and-drug-supply-2017/file>), the gang constituency may appear to over represent members from BME communities in terms of race and ethnicity, however, this representation seems to be a direct reflection of the populations of the host boroughs or cities from where they originate, rather than any intrinsic statement about these communities. We concur with this position.

Gender

In all of the reviews, young men's involvement in the gang activity is dominant, with girls and young women often appearing as 'victim associates', involved because of their relationships to gang nominals or through proximity to the physical arenas that gangs move into. However, there have been a few examples where local areas have identified that girl gangs are becoming active protagonists in the drug markets, mirroring the operations of their male counterparts. It is our view that more work needs to be done to look at how girls and young women are being recruited into this activity and, once involved, how they are identified and supported by services. From the limited reports we have come across, it would appear that the current indicators of gang activity used by services are missing the involvement of girls and young women and this needs to be addressed.

Context- Partnership working

It is clear that the issue of County Lines and gang activity does not fit neatly into any of the current partnership work programmes or structures that have been set up in local areas. It crosses disciplines, agency accountabilities and thresholds and allows gangs to exploit these differences and service gaps, to target vulnerable populations with relative ease and impunity. This calls for a

more systemic view of local activity to ensure there is a more holistic approach to tackling the issue.

The most worrying aspect of the findings in the report is the growing violent nature of the interactions between gangs and local people and how this is being played out in public arenas. In addition, the growing use of class A drugs in towns and cities across the country is a worrying trend which requires coordinated efforts from central Government, local partnerships and local communities, all working together.

SIMON FORD

Director
Violence and Vulnerability Unit

2. Background

The Home Office has been working on issues related to 'county lines' since 2013. Experts seconded into the Ending Gang and Youth Violence Unit identified an emerging pattern of youth violence and drug trafficking. Using a new methodology of interviewing front line practitioners and cross referencing diverse sets of data, a pattern of sophisticated drug trafficking emerged, one which operated as a business model dependent on the exploitation of vulnerable children and adults. This concentrated pattern of gang activity and drug trafficking became known as 'county lines'.

The work was developed inside the Home Office and was then commissioned out to the voluntary sector in 2015. Since April 2017 the work is being delivered by the newly formed Violence and Vulnerability Unit housed within the ATCM supported by the HO and MOPAC.

To date, over 70 Locality Reviews and 3 Strategic Framework Assessments have been completed and these Reviews have created the findings contained in this guidance on the nature and practice of 'county lines'. In addition, the organization of local action to tackle 'county lines' has also been identified and where good practice under each of these headings exists, they have been recorded in section 6.

3. Summary

Since the Ending 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 and this type of crime often involves the criminal exploitation of children and adults by physical intimidation, sexual and/or financial extortion. This marks the emergence of a new type of criminality that links

street gangs, drug dealers, and organised crime groups; together they are operating as unregulated, extremely violent and exploitative businesses.

The key characteristic of this criminality involves the exploitation of a vulnerability – usually drug dependency, attachment/emotional issues, poverty or mental health. This is a very lucrative business model and increasingly we are hearing how the groups are utilising violence as a control mechanism in order to maintain discipline with their workforce and distribution network (with debt servitude used initially to maintain a degree of leverage against the customer base and/or workforce), or as a way to maintain market share against business rivals.

4. The Work So Far: Locality Reviews

The Locality Review is a one-day process for local areas as part of the national strategy to tackle gangs and serious youth violence. It comprises 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; to understand how the partner agencies are working together operationally to deliver the area's gang/group and youth violence priorities; and to examine what blockages are perceived to effect delivery at a front-line level. The review reflects the information gathered from the practitioner interviews and highlights communication issues as well as the potential gaps and barriers to identification and effective intervention.

5. Emerging Findings

(i) Recruitment and grooming through debt enslavement

Older dealers and gangs, such as those in their early 20s, for example, are setting up markets and drug lines, and controlling young people from 14 onwards through placing them in debt for drugs. This debt can involve financial and sexual exploitation often although not exclusively divided along gender lines. Gangs wishing to exploit young people target them in arenas where they are

likely to have reduced monitoring and supervision such as, PRUs and Children's Homes. However, we have also heard of gangs targeting children with no links to services, as was highlighted in Brighton where middle class children are targeted alongside more obviously vulnerable ones, an indication that gangs are becoming more creative in their recruitment methods.

Trends in serious youth violence are therefore changing with far more exploitation of boys and young men groomed to sell drugs. Young women caught up in this form of grooming are often being used for sexual exploitation but we have found that this gender division is not exclusive and more work is required to understand the involvement of girls and young women. Related work on Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) has recorded that there is a significant gang dimension in the exploitation of young women and girls which needs to be monitored. These recruited young people (mainly boys) are also becoming both victim and perpetrators of stabbings, and although this has always been a feature of gangs and 'county lines', we hear of it in virtually every area we now work with.

Young people who become indebted to gangs are becoming more ruthless and desperate in attempts to pay off debts, and/or using violence as a way of sending messages to rivals, or as a way of earning status within the gang. This may be one of the reasons for a rise in youth violence: young people committing robberies in order to try and pay off debts to gangs. We have also heard that a number of young people who are being placed in these desperate situations around the country, feel trapped and with no-one who can help them. One side effect of this is YOT staff reporting that young people who would normally talk to them about acts of offending, are reticent to disclose their gang involvement for fear of reprisals.

Violence is being normalised amongst this cohort of young people to the extent that in some areas carrying knives and dealing drugs is viewed as normal activity. The use of guns is seen as a serious intent to hurt someone (whereas the use of knives is perceived as a warning). There has also been a general increase in knife carrying which is not related to gang membership but more a result of fear of gangs. This has been a striking feature across Wales for example, where the violent activity of Merseyside gangs appears to be leading to adults and children carrying weapons for protection – individuals who would not usually do this according to YOT and CRC workers we talk to.

There is abundant evidence that social media is fueling violence. Rivalry and status is maintained through music videos and YouTube is used by gangs to raise their profile and to threaten and intimidate. Furthermore, exposure to violence online appears to have led to a desensitisation of violence amongst young people, although the adults we talk to seem to have little understanding of how young people use and interact with social media. Senior gang members are also using apps such as "find my iPhone" to monitor the movements and whereabouts of the children working for them, and also film children and less senior gang members carrying out incriminating acts, which are often sexual in nature. This is obviously a coercion tactic, although we have heard that such monitoring by gang elders may be perceived as care by the exploited young person.

(ii) Criminal Justice System – commonly repeated issues and concerns

Young people arrested on suspicion of possession or PWITS are often released pending further investigation and sent back to their home area, which is usually *not* where they were arrested. Police tell us they are struggling to get emergency duty teams to engage with the young person, so they return home with a drug debt and often no proper engagement with services.

"When young people go through the justice system they only receive a slap on the wrist."

We have heard from YOT staff of cases where young people around 15 years old caught with large quantities of class A drugs (e.g. 30 rocks) are only being sentenced for possession even though the drugs are clearly not for personal use but held with the intent to supply. In addition, regular offenders are not being given custodial sentences, a practice exacerbated by a lack of consistency in knife crime sentencing. This sends a message to young people that the consequences of drug dealing and violence are minimal and acts as an incentive for older dealers to continue to use teenagers of around 14 and 15 years old. In effect, YOT workers have no sanction they can invoke as a warning for young people, the lack of which they feel undermines their work.

There is a persistent call from practitioners that there should be a change in the law to make the grooming of young people illegal and for it to incur stiff penalties. More needs to be done to target older dealers who are seen openly operating in urban areas, driving expensive cars and recruiting young people in the street. A regular challenge cited is that the thresholds for service intervention are too high, with young people coming to the attention of the YOT at a crisis point, when their behaviour is already entrenched.

A constant observation is that the young people's services are not evolving to meet the reality of what is happening and more effective collaboration is needed.

This is underpinned by a common theme that there is a rising tide of ASB which is not being challenged, leading to (very) young people thinking they can do whatever they like with impunity. The reduction in housing and local authority ASB teams is identified as being a causal factor. Conversely, this lack of intervention also sends a message to young people that if they are in trouble no one is coming to help them and therefore, joining a gang becomes a strategy to keep themselves safe.

The Reviews reported an increase over the last two years in more serious cases being referred, due to this lack of early ASB interventions and the removal of protective/early intervention agencies such as Youth Services and outreach work. An example was given of a young person being referred who had a history of relatively minor offences which had escalated within weeks to running drug lines and being found in a traphouse with significant quantities of drugs. This means there is less information available to YOT and other support staff, due to the reduced number of youth workers and the ending of Connexions as a service.

(iii) The Secure Estate

Another disturbing finding coming from the Reviews, is that in those areas that have close connections to prisons and the secure estate, gangs are reportedly operating their lines from

within the prison service. Reports from a variety of partnerships suggest that the freely available supply of mobile phones inside prison, means that gang members are able to control their operation as well as meter out intimidation and exploitation, from within the prison.

In addition, as many prisons and secure units have strong connections to the local geographical area, rival gangs are often housed in the same location which allows for rivalries and feuds to continue and escalate. Probation Officers reported that they were getting calls from inside the prison from their clients asking for transfers and expressing real concerns for their safety. This is a worrying phenomenon and would account for much of the rise in violence reported by the prison service and needs to be tackled.

(iv) Schools and colleges – commonly repeated issues and concerns

The targeting of young people excluded from secondary schools is a major feature in the profile of 'county lines'. Increasingly, schools are excluding pupils for a wider range of behaviours and even if the exclusion is intended as temporary, there is little evidence of reintegration back into main stream education. The exclusion of these vulnerable young people from full time school, whether placing them on reduced timetables, putting in place home schooling arrangements, or removing them to Pupil Referral Units (PRU) exacerbates their vulnerability and increases the risk for being targeted by gangs for exploitation. In some areas, PRUs become the arena for gang rivalries which become dangerous for pupils and hard for staff to manage.

PRUs are also viewed as the place where already vulnerable young people get first hand exposure to and experience of crime (drug dealing /violence/intimidation/ recruitment for 'county lines'). There are growing numbers of excluded children in alternative provision and this clustering together is creating a recruiting arena for crime and anti-social behaviour.

More encouragingly, we are seeing better engagement with schools in the Locality Reviews in recent months compared to 18 months ago. This is thought to be because some schools are now facing up to the issue of 'county lines' and the connection to gang culture, an awareness of a problem which needs to be developed and supported across the country.

(v) Early help and intervention – commonly repeated issues and concerns

Early intervention would require recognition of indicators showing involvement in gang or 'county lines' activity, necessitating training for youth services, schools and families on the dynamics of exploitation, drugs and grooming. There is a common call for more outreach and positive activities for young people, arising from the realisation that a reduction in these services has left a vacuum into which gangs are moving.

Throughout the Reviews, information from young people themselves is often the most revealing about what is actually happening on the ground. When a young person does disclose to youth workers or YOT staff an experience which indicates grooming or involvement in drug dealing (for example, being bought a pair of trainers or supplied with cannabis and then needing to pay back the debt through a variety of means), they need to be listened to and any information recorded.

YOT/Youth workers engage with thousands of young people every week and a better system is needed to record and report anything which causes them concern.

When young people get involved in 'county lines', offering diversion away from these activities will inevitably involve the whole family. This is particularly complex when money from 'county lines' activities might be paying household bills in some cases, and so there can be a complicated relationship with gang related involvement in families who have few material resources. Some parents are clearly confused by exam driven secondary schools when the message is that their children are failing but without clear reasons or support being provided. Some parents also struggle with maintaining boundaries in the home, especially if substance users themselves, and similarly, some young people are brought up in households where crime is normalised.

Therefore, one of the most important gaps revealed by the Reviews is the need to provide parents with good information and practical advice as well as offering comprehensive early intervention and family support programmes such as Triple P.

Some innovative areas are developing intensive work with parents: offering guidance on what to do and what signs to recognise, how to look for weapons and drugs, even advising how to carry out daily searches, all of which is intended to send out a message that certain behaviours are unacceptable. This needs to be encouraged and disseminated widely.

(vi) Adult and child safeguarding – commonly repeated issues and concerns

The Safeguarding of Adults and Children is the key intervention in the protection of vulnerable people who get involved with 'county lines' and gang/drug dealing activity. But often the threshold required for an intervention from Social Care, especially with adults, is too high for them to be offered a service and this is a gap that needs to be addressed. 'Cuckooing' is a common feature and where adult service users become entrenched in gang activity and their homes are taken over for the purposes of drug dealing, a change of housing may be the only option. However, if the person is said to have capacity to make their own decisions (and not suffering from a recognisable/diagnosed mental health condition/learning disability) and want to stay in the property, services cannot / will not take further steps unless they move to eviction proceedings.

There is a growing view that this issue of capacity needs to be re-examined in cases of 'cuckooing' as *"You can't say someone has capacity who has always been abused and vulnerable."* There is also a suggestion that this type of abusive relationship is akin to domestic abuse and the legislation covering 'coercive control' could be considered when deciding what tools and powers can be employed to safeguard vulnerable adults.

Housing related support services are very thin on the ground and in the past dealers/gangs would be well aware that professionals would visit properties regularly and that would help protect the property. However, with the demise of these support services, dealers are able to move in and out of properties with impunity.

The safeguarding of children and young people involved in 'county lines' is challenging the child protection systems and thresholds. The child care system is mainly designed to protect children from abuse and neglect, most usually from within the domestic setting. Social care practitioners reported that the interpretation of current child protection policy as it stands, does not allow workers to accept cases on the sole basis of debt enslavement and entrapment.

In consequence, referrals to agencies where young people are showing signs of involvement in criminal exploitation are often not accepted due to diminished resources and higher thresholds. Therefore, there is a need to re-examine what constitutes 'neglect' for this cohort of young people when parental care is not the primary issue. In many areas, it is often left to the Criminal Justice System/ Youth Offending Services to offer help and support, by-passing early intervention agencies.

Indeed, one YOT worker reported that they had to fight for a case of a child who had possession of a gun to be accepted as neglect.

This leads to a tendency to view these young people's behaviour, especially in the case of boys, as a sign of criminality, almost a life style choice, rather than evidence of a vulnerable child in need of protection. This is similar to how girls and young women and their sexual activities were viewed prior to events exposed in Rotherham and CSE, so there is growing sense that past lessons need to be learned and applied.

"Any child holding crack cocaine should be a child protection case. We are not talking about cannabis, these are drugs that people kill for and that kill."

Girls and young women caught up in 'county lines' are also more likely to be viewed as victims and referred to the MASE and sometimes their violent behaviour is ignored or minimised. It is also reported that agencies, and especially health agencies, whilst being alive to signs of gang activity with boys, such as knife wounds to the buttocks and abdomen, are not picking up corresponding indicators in girls and young women. Some of the reviews suggest that girls and young women caught up in gang related activity are more likely to present (particularly to A & E and GPs) with self-harm, depression, overdose and a range of other disorders, but their assessments are not including gang activity as a factor, unless there is CSE involved. Clearly, this needs attention.

There has been a call for a new type of power to manage/protect young people caught up in 'county lines': an urgent need to explore a type of Child Criminal Exploitation Protection Order.

(vii) Financial Exploitation

In addition, there is evidence that there is a new dimension of financial exploitation where young people's bank accounts are being used for money laundering purposes. This is becoming common for general criminality and credit card fraud, but there is evidence that young people are being targeted for the specific purposes of laundering drug money. There were reports from the Reviews that it was the appearance of large sums of money in their children's bank accounts that alerted them to the presence and association of gangs in their child's life. Again, this needs more

work to develop prevention strategies and work with financial institutions and police fraud services.

(viii) Drug markets

We believe that the customer base for class A drugs has grown across the UK, a view based on hundreds of interviews with practitioners who tell us they are seeing clients who “are not the usual suspects”. This includes an increase in women and young people using crack cocaine and heroin.

There are price wars between gangs across the country as they seek to open new markets. As well as making drugs cheaper, we hear they are cutting them with more dangerous drugs such as Fentanyl in order to make them more attractive to customers. Some gangs are even marketing their drugs through texts using enticements such as 'two for one' offers and inclusion in prize raffles.

Xanax is frequently said to be a growing concern, particularly since September last year, with widespread use amongst a range of young people, including middle class children and gang members. It is used to calm nerves before exams or prior to acts of violence. We have heard of young people being hospitalised through use of Xanax, the withdrawal from which can be extremely dangerous.

Work we have carried out in Bedfordshire and Essex has successfully drawn in Public Health professionals, although in most of the areas where we work, they are not properly engaged and therefore no one can really explain/understand the local drug markets and how this is driving violence. The use of violence as a control mechanism used by gangs to maintain order amongst the young people who work for them or against victims of 'cuckooing' appears to be rising, according to those we talk to.

6. Strategic Framework Assessments

The Strategic Framework Review is usually carried out across police force areas and commissioned by the OPCC and breaks down into 3 key stages:

(i) **A peer review** of strategic managers across the region / force area. This is directed at senior strategic managers within the various agencies and units (i.e. police, health, children’s services, housing, schools etc.) with the key outcome being the production of a county wide strategic framework to address violence, vulnerability and exploitation across the county.

(ii) **A series of workshops with practitioners**, facilitated by ourselves and a mix of peer reviewers experienced in dealing with practitioners. The workshops are based around the 5 key themes outlined below. The process is based on the Home Office’s proven and highly regarded peer review process and should produce an understanding of what is possible, what is realistic and what is achievable across the region through the eyes of practitioners.

We especially look at existing fora and groups that could be used to incorporate case management of vulnerable people, and anything that can be usefully co-opted, *rather than invent new structure and partnerships.*

(iii) **This framework is then based around 5 themes of:**

- data and intelligence.
- governance
- enforcement/cross-border working
- prevention
- protection/ safeguarding

The final Framework Review will consist of key objectives and work based around these themes, directed by the initial interviews with senior managers and the practitioner workshops.

Emerging findings from strategic framework assessments –

The most regular observations we come across during this work from a vast range of agencies, community leaders, VCS workers and senior managers are –

- 'County lines' is one of a suite of exploitative crimes currently taking place across the country.
- The problem is probably increasing across the country, manifesting itself in raised levels of violence, exploitation of adults and children, class A drug use and potentially increases in burglary and other types of acquisitive crimes.
- These crimes ('county lines', child sexual exploitation, modern slavery, Prevent/Channel panel) appear to be linked in terms of offenders and victims. It is stated on many occasions that "*I go to another meeting, see the same people and talk about the same groups of people*".
- Trends in serious youth violence are changing with far more exploitation of boys and young men groomed to sell drugs. Young people indebted to gangs are said to be more ruthless and desperate in order to attempt to pay debts and/or using violence as a way of sending messages to rivals.
- The risk and threat of 'county lines', and how it links to other types of exploitation is not properly understood. A common understanding of the threat posed by this type of exploitative crime is required, as is a needs assessment that considers issues driving this problem and the connections between drugs, public health, housing changes, welfare reform and social media usage by young people.
- The groups behind these crimes do not have a silo mentality, and neither should partnerships and agencies across the UK. This point is made repeatedly by those we talked to and most emphasise the need to bring together the CSE, modern slavery and 'county lines' agendas.

- There are partnerships for CSE, organised crime groups, modern slavery, radicalisation and other types of vulnerabilities. We are told that there needs to be a process of rationalisation that pulls together these work streams, partnerships and resources. (Local CSP's tend to drive enforcement work, the LSCB will tackle safeguarding. However, it is often the case that victims and offenders straddle both these key partner groups, yet there is little or no collaboration or intelligence shared between the two). People tell us that these groups and partnerships have usually developed organically and on the basis of need (and the emergence of an issue).
- There is usually no consistent or agreed understanding of *vulnerability*. There are numerous definitions of vulnerability across the country and amongst agencies, and these sit alongside statutory definitions. The need to understand what the various agencies and partnerships across the country mean by the term (and consequently what this means in terms of support) is said to be crucial, given that the key characteristic of 'county lines' is the exploitation of vulnerable adults and children.
- Following on from this, there is no consistent or agreed understanding of *safeguarding* (outside the statutory requirement) across the country in relation to this type of criminality.
- There needs to be a consistent countrywide enforcement approach, based on the use of modern slavery and trafficking legislation that targets those gangs and groups who choose to exploit children and adults in order to sell class A drugs.

7. Best practice examples from the locality reviews and strategic assessments

Most of these examples are still in the early stages of development and have not been evaluated. However, from our national perspective we consider these examples to be promising and worth exploring further.

(i) Governance

This covers all aspects of the work, and is about leadership, vision, partnerships, performance management and target monitoring. Leadership matters as much at a tactical level as it does at a strategic level, but the key is how leaders persuade other partners as to why they should be involved, and how. The problem of gangs, violence and vulnerability cuts across many areas and boundaries, and as a consequence leadership and governance in a county and regional context (that also involves partners from outside the county) is absolutely crucial.

Essex and Bedfordshire OPCC

Have commissioned a strategic framework in place across the force area to tackle this issue, one that links to existing CSE and modern slavery/trafficking work. This will provide a consistent and intelligence led approach to the problem, placing health and other agencies at the forefront of the situation. The work has found a home within an existing partnership structure or meeting, rather than a new or standalone group.

Southend-on-Sea

Southend Council have commissioned a piece of work on 'county lines' which brings together the Health and Well-Being Board, both Safeguarding Boards and the CSP, to develop a common work stream that will culminate in a weeks focused activity to tackle the impact of gangs in the local area. This builds on a successful operation called Op Cent which identified and tackled CSE and Gang related activity.

South Birmingham

A police daily threat, risk and harm management meeting is seen as effective and highlights overnight risk. It refers to the operational partnership meeting for longer term action planning and deployment.

Westminster

Integrated Gang Unit – structure and practice, a multi-agency team including mental health support for females

Gloucester

Community Harm Reduction team – very early days for a multi-agency group, but a promising approach to joint working.

Operation Flux – a joint task and finish group set up to tackle a group of very young children who appear to be operating as an OCG in Cheltenham.

(ii) Enforcement/Cross border working

An inconsistent use of tools and powers by partnerships to tackle gangs has been a feature of most gang affected areas over the past 5 years. With a national increase in 'county lines' activity, regions and partnerships previously unaffected by gangs have found themselves having to review procedures and activities, and the rise of 'county lines' has led to the need for tools and powers that reflect the rise in exploitation and close links to trafficking and modern slavery. In addition, the need for regions to link both strategically and operationally with large urban areas who are exporting the gang issue is crucial.

Specific problems around gang activity and intimidation have emerged in the **Secure Estate** with rivalries and 'county lines' operations and activities continuing despite incarceration.

South Birmingham

The IOM Youth manager is in regular contact with case management workers at Youth Offending Institutions, and he will check his client's visitor's details using the PNC. This has thrown up numerous examples of visitors from London wanting to see local kids from Birmingham, when there is no reason for them to know each other

Westminster

Thematic workshops are held for partners: for example, the use of closure orders, civil tools and powers, led by housing staff.

Kensington and Chelsea

Housing enforcement and use of civil tools and powers: Housing staff here are carrying out vital work around tenancy enforcement using a wide range of available tools and powers.

Rhyl

The use of modern slavery legislation by the local policing team (Deaconing) to tackle this issue. Stage one practice is arrest and prosecution. Stage 2 will be positive convictions.

Southend-on-Sea have produced a **Tools and Powers guide** for practitioners to consider what they can use in a variety of circumstances.

Exeter / Plymouth

There was **evidence of very good practice in Exeter** where the police pro-active unit had established links between the police and the prison service **and in Plymouth** where there was adult safeguarding work in the Stonehouse area, and joint working between police and housing staff around 'cuckooing'.

Bedford Prison

Bedford prison are working closely with the PCC and local police to build capability and resilience in intelligence sharing, joint training, identification of shared inmates with complex needs and the violent, vulnerable and exploited. The collaboration has enhanced the operational response and resource available to support these men in the prison and into the community. It has also helped identify and manage risk of conflict escalation through better information sharing.

MOPAC are working with HMP Isis to enhance the response to through the gate services and focus on violence reduction.

(iii) **Data and Intelligence: Understanding the problem**

Understanding the nature of the threat posed by gangs around violence and vulnerability is the key to partnerships being in a position to effectively tackle the problem and crucial to drawing in partners who may not initially see the issue as something they should be involved with.

Essex and Bedfordshire have commissioned via their strategic frameworks:

The production of a high-level **Joint Needs Assessment** - a strategic briefing note, along with a local tool to inform operational activity.

A steering group consisting mainly of analysts from a range of key stakeholders (Public Health, Police, YOT, local authority) to direct and produce these new products.

Terms of reference for this work and a framework narrative to supplement the work. Police, Public Health and various county and unitary authorities are producing an assessment based on drug use and drug markets.

South Birmingham

Children's services south assessment team – they have developed a mapping tool that has allowed them to map out young people who are linked to gang violence and activity across the

south of the city – the process has not been codified however or written down yet but is promising practice.

Thames Valley Police

The force has commissioned a proof of concept around social network analysis 'Predictive Harm Analytics', which takes information and data held by the force and Children's Services in Oxfordshire and Milton Keynes to produce association maps around two particular schools. These charts show links and map out influencers and key movers amongst the cohorts of young people suspected to have links to gangs and 'county lines'.

Westminster

I2 analysis – the IGU are developing an i2 data chart using partner data from health to highlight vulnerable people/locations, facilitating contextual safeguarding and supporting a demand reduction plan targeting this agenda. This data will help inform a new 'county lines'/gang strategy.

Gloucester

The City safe scheme funded by the PCC and local City Council and now self-funded by members appears to be a good way to inform partners, share information and identify violent, vulnerable and exploited people and locations in the city of Gloucester.

Swansea

Wales wide information sharing protocol supported and funded by the OPCC's office allows sanitised information on LA and RSL housing tenants to be shared with police. It helps identify repeat callers and vulnerable people.

The local emergency department has seen an increase in people from London secreting drugs internally and the local hospital safeguarding lead has developed and delivered training for front line staff to help identify risk and share information with local police. This has resulted in health data and information contributing to demand reduction and prevention/problem solving.

The new DORIS data system being introduced to help identify re-offenders who may internally secret drugs on their way back into prison appears to be an effective way to link the Regional Intelligence Unit work with local police and the NPS with high risk/vulnerable men. This is a new system and is worth reviewing.

Wrexham

A victim informed 'cuckooing' profile which should help to put a safeguarding process in place.

Bedford

Operation Mitchum: This police-led group has collated a 'cuckooed' person profile.

(iv) Prevention

Preventing young people from becoming involved with gangs, violence and vulnerability is crucial if the cycle of gang violence is to be broken.

Brent

Use of flagging on Police National Computer for those identified as belonging to an at-risk Offender Management cohort. Apart from those on the gang's matrix the Offender Management Team also flag an early intervention cohort. As a result, useful intelligence is obtained regarding movements and associates.

Outcome based review – exploring ways to engage grass roots organisations to support activity in relation to gangs and children on the edge of care. The borough is exploring ways in which to engage these groups who are also involved in tackling gangs and identifying those at risk of exploitation. Support will also be provided to assist in developing and submitting funding applications.

Kensington and Chelsea

Engagement with families appears to be centred around putting a message across that involvement with crime and gangs is not acceptable, and helping parents be more assertive with their children.

Gloucester

Great Expectations – A VCS initiative using prison offenders to educate and deter young people at PRUs and those generally at risk.

'County lines' educational book of resources to help educate young people in secondary schools and PRUs.

Flintshire

Proposals for awareness raising amongst staff working at or near venues targeted by drug groups seeking to exploit the vulnerable could deliver both protective and intelligence benefits.

The Online watch list seems promising and could provide a real link to local groups and individuals within communities affected by this issue.

Wrexham

A local CSE drama class which is being adapted to include 'county lines' appeared to be recognising the issues it linked and was recommended as good practice.

Associated actions to reduce issues linked to Spice – the Crisis Café. This is a drop-in resource staffed by various health and medical staff to provide support for users – up to go chronic users have attended.

Croydon

The processes and structures in place to support MISPERs are well thought of by those we interviewed and appears to work well in terms of identifying vulnerable young people. There would appear to be good practice here that other boroughs could learn from.

Grimsby

Posters with words direct from young people caught up in county lines

Consequences

"If I slip up or don't do as I'm told they use intimidation, fear and violence."



In their Pocket

"Once you have started you are in their pocket and lose control over your own life. You become a slave."



(v) Protection/Safeguarding

Primarily, this issue is about safeguarding and protecting vulnerable people who are being exploited by gangs. We know that harm is often hidden. With many vulnerable people, it is not until the full picture of that person is known that the potential harm is identified.

Westminster

The **systemic social worker practice** incorporated into the Integrated Gang Unit is innovative.

Kensington and Chelsea

Adult safeguarding work – it is not laid out as a process yet, but immediate work takes place via social care and housing staff to contact victims of 'cuckooing' and their neighbours.

Brent

Public Health Training includes issues of exploitation

'Making every contact count' training which includes issues of exploitation and modern slavery provided by Public Health staff to front line practitioners including social care and housing officers.

Gloucester

Gloucestershire Criminal Justice Liaison Service and the Nelson Trust – these organisations have a lot of information and knowledge about vulnerable adults, practice good information exchange, offer support to vulnerable adults and maintain good links with other support agencies. Funded via NHS England and the OPCC.

Bognor

The proposed review of Adult Safeguarding procedures. This work accepts that there may be areas of adult safeguarding that need reviewing. This includes training and awareness, process reviews and workshops.

A police car staffed by police and a mental health nurse appears an effective use of staff time and addresses local mental health issues at source.

A successful tactic used by the prevention team to establish 'county lines' links and identify vulnerable young people is to examine the phones of young people who are reported/found missing and run these through a 'county lines' data base.

Rhyl

Joint work to tackle 'cuckooing' in Colwyn Bay and Rhyl by SNT staff, NACRO and others. Visits, posters, enforcement and support are all coordinated through the local neighbourhood police team.

Tunbridge Wells

There appears to be some excellent work taking place by the Community Police Team around the **identification of 'cuckooed' properties and forming safeguarding links with other agencies,** both locally and in London. The joint visits to 'cuckooed' properties and those at risk of 'cuckooing' is an excellent tactic and is to be applauded.

Worcester

Here there was a very good example of a **detached youth work service** where workers were actively out on the street looking for vulnerable young people. The service had also created two courses for young people called *Impact* and *Empower* which were designed to get young people (especially young women) to critically evaluate their behaviours and attitudes and reassess their relationships. This was a very positive development and is soon to be launched in a TV programme in early May.

8. About the Violence and Vulnerability Unit (VVU)

The Violence and Vulnerability Unit (VVU) is a small national team of gang / county line / community safety experts who have been commissioned to work in association with ATCM, to deliver targeted support to local areas who are being adversely affected by gangs, county lines and the associated violence and exploitation of vulnerable populations:

Director: Simon Ford

Delivery Managers: Paul Cullen and Mick McNally

Training Manager: John Dunworth

The Unit works with local partnerships to help them;

- *Disrupt the movement of gangs and their associates into shire counties and seaside towns, to commit crime ('county lines')*
- *Prevent the exploitation of children by gangs and organised crime groups (sexual exploitation or exploitation in order to commit crimes such as drug dealing)*
- *Understand the relationship between serious group offending and local drug markets (including illegal, legal highs and prescription drugs), and links between street gangs and organised crime groups*
- *Better understand the links between vulnerable populations, locations and gangs e.g. care homes, missing young people, school's absence and exclusions*
- *Create better links between violence and vulnerability and the Prevent programme .*
- *Understand the vulnerabilities experienced by gang-associated women and girls*
- *Ensure that resources are effectively targeted and partnership structures are able to respond quickly to the new threat without duplication*

There are several key areas of intervention and support that being offered by the Unit:

- Locality Reviews
- Strategic Framework Reviews
- An on-line training programme

The Unit's work is also supported by a wide network of associates/experts with a wide range of complementary skills who work on the Locality Reviews and the Strategic Framework Reviews.

The Home Office has now extended the Unit's funding for a further 2 years to cover 2018-19 and 2019-2020.

Learning from the gang and youth violence programme is shared via the Gang and Youth Violence Special Interest Group and can be access by the Home Office tackling crime unit and Basecamp online site. <https://basecamp.com/2308334/projects/12421689>

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or visit <http://vvu-online.com>

ANNEX A

Training brochure link <https://vvu-online.com/training/index.ph>