

# People Scrutiny Commission

27<sup>th</sup> February 2020



**Report of:** Executive Director, People

**Title:** Safer Options – Response to Serious Violence

**Ward:** Citywide

**Officer Presenting Report:** Ann James, Director of Children and Families Services;  
Gary Davies Head of Service Early Intervention Targeted Support

## **Recommendation:**

To review the approach taken to tackling the issue of young people engaging in or at risk of being involved in serious violence.

## **The significant issues in the report are:**

Bristol like many core cities has seen an increase in serious violence involving young people. There have been serious incidents which have led to people being killed including a young person.

A significant response has been put in place which involves a range of agencies and is focused on supporting communities to respond to the problem. It is recognised that this is a long term response and there is a significant commitment to make a real difference.

The local response is known as Safer Options and has developed a clear understanding of the young people at greatest risk. A range of preventative, disruptive and diversionary actions have been implemented.

A number of priorities have been identified through consultation with young people, families, community and professionals, that are now being implemented

The board is asked to note the progress to date.



## 1. Introduction – Overview

- 1.1. Reducing serious Youth Violence and Criminal Child Exploitation is one of our One City Priorities for the year. As with other major cities, Bristol has an increase in youth violence and emerging issues of county lines, drug dealing and children and young people exploited for criminal activities.
- 1.2. Safer Options is Bristol's response that was initially developed in the East Central area of the City and now with Home Office Funding provided via the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, the approach has been expanded to cover the whole City (North and South as of September 17<sup>th</sup> 2019).
- 1.3. The Safer Options Team is grounded in a Public Health approach to serious violence which has been seen to be successful in Glasgow and is now used in London. This approach conceptualises violence as a collective, rather than individual issue and focuses on understanding causality in order to provide preventative strategies.
- 1.4. We are committed to this approach and to including the wider community as we know that it is through partnership and collective approaches that we will succeed in tackling the contextual safeguarding risks that our young people face. Our Youth Mayors and Youth Parliament members agree; they have made reducing serious youth violence and knife crime one of their city priorities too.
- 1.5. The Safer Options approach recognises that children and young people at risk of or involved in serious youth violence, crime and CCE are victims in their own right and their behaviour is a consequence of the abuse and trauma they have experienced. It also recognises the impact of peer groups and the built environment in amplifying risk and/or creating safety.
- 1.6. There is a strong correlation between Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and an increased vulnerability to becoming involved in contextual safeguarding risk, violence and offending. Bristol City Council and its partners are committed to reducing the impact of ACES, which is a One City priority and the preventative work of the Safer Options Team supports this commitment.
- 1.7. The Safer Options Team takes a multiagency/multidisciplinary approach that is intelligence led, evidence informed and focused on prevention. It analyses the support around young people, assesses risk, utilises trusted relationships and invests in an enhanced offer to young people, schools and others to build safety where this is required.

## 2. Operational Delivery:

- Multi-disciplinary team established April 2019 and expanded citywide September 2019

- Fortnightly meeting in each locality to identify children and young people at risk of serious youth violence, crime or CCE, to stratify the risks to each young person through a tiered system in order for discussion to focus on those most at risk.
- The children and young people are identified using intelligence from the community, police, statutory partners and predictive risk analysis looking at a range of known vulnerability and risk factors.
- The cohort is stratified into three tiers, with Tier 1 as very high risk of involvement in serious youth violence, crime or CCE, with risk deescalating to Tier 3.
- Those in tiers 1 and 2 are discussed in depth with actions set for each young person. Actions include contact with professionals involved, sharing information, ensuring support is available and signposting or bolstering current support where relevant.
- Link to Operation Topaz and intelligence shared in order to enable effective disruption of perpetrators
- Joining up intelligence across Council/Police systems has identified:
- There are currently 276 individuals on the cohort which covers the whole city. This varies depending on what risk factors are present in police systems in a given week.

2.1. Against the above individuals, a total of 401 actions have been completed. These can vary from ensuring an individuals' educational offer is appropriate, sharing information with lead professionals to assign community mentors to an individual.

2.2. The Multi-Agency approach has allowed us to build and maintain really positive relationships with a wide range of services both internally and externally. The trust that has been built where communities, police, VCS groups and schools are willing to and are sharing information and intelligence has led to us having a better understanding and ability to target those most at risk.

2.3. Within the council we have developed robust pathways to ensure joined up working across the service including Youth Offending Team, Families in Focus (Early Help), Social Care and Through Care Team.

#### **2.4. Targeted Group work**

2.5. In addition, we have developed local appropriate interventions, co-produced with communities. These have been based on assessing local needs and relevant data. Examples of groups which have already been established are a Girls/ Young women's group, Gypsy Roma Traveller (GRT) group, Change Your Mind Set, Engage, Grassroots.

2.6. Girls Group: The Safer Options Team have commissioned local organisation to develop targeted intervention and prevention work with girls and young women who may be at risk of exploitation or gang activity. This group has been successful thus far engaging 15 different girls who have been identified through Safer Options, Social Care, schools and the police. The impact of this group works with girls and young women to:

- Improved confidence and self-esteem will impact on all areas of their lives, at home, school, and in their relationships.
- Increased knowledge, confidence and resilience
- Raised aspirations

2.7. Change Your Mind Set: This group has been set up by local people in the community funded and supported by Safer Options, targeting young people who we know are involved in SYV and CCE. This group offers young people a safe space in their community, an opportunity to learn new skills, raise aspirations and the staff a chance to work with young people on issues of the choices and consequences of carrying weapons, CCE, and how to stay safe.

2.8. They are all promising interventions however they are all in their infancy and will require further evaluation.

### **2.9. Multi-Agency detached youth work**

2.10. Through police and community intelligence are able to identify key locations across the city where young people are at greatest risk. Into those areas we have deployed a Multi-Agency detached youth work team to engage young people and the police have been able to deliver targeted proactive police patrol and police operations

### **2.11. Schools work**

2.12. The recruitment of the Education Inclusion Managers has provided capacity to focus on working in and with schools to:

- Improving partnership working and strategic planning
- Sharing and promoting good practice in relation to exclusions, managed moves and negotiated transfers
- Coordinating early help and prevention
- Improving information-sharing
- Implementing safeguarding via PSHE and other areas the curriculum, to ensure children are supported to achieve

This has improved the education offer to those children most at risk, prevented unnecessary delays and enabled them to remain in settings they would have otherwise been excluded from due to the confidence gained by implementing a support package.

**2.13. ECHO (Emerging Cohort of young people most at risk)**

2.14. In the first instance, we met with school designated safeguarding leads to firstly, identify the needs the school cohort and setting require in relation to serious youth violence and CCE, secondly, determine the relevant training and intervention that could meet these needs. Subsequently, the Safer Options team went out to community organisations to determine what could be delivered by VCS groups and identify any gaps, this allowed us to support groups to develop workshops.

2.15. We have now produced a menu of services which can provide schools with a range of prevention and early intervention services that they can access to address issues of Child Criminal Exploitation and Serious Youth Violence in their settings. These services are provided by professionals from community and youth organisations who specialise in working with vulnerable young people. The menu of services has five categories of support:

- **Staff Training** covers training and workshops for all professionals working with young people
- **Parenting Workshops** involve a range of services for parents and carers
- **Young People’s Universal Services** cover a range of workshops and support applicable to whole school settings or year groups
- **Targeted Work** involves a range of interventions for smaller groups of vulnerable young people
- **One-to-One Support** cover interventions aimed at individual young people at risk

2.16. The aim of these services is to ensure that schools have access to relevant and effective prevention and early-intervention initiatives to keep their young people safe in the community. Additionally these services will ensure that staff and parents are equipped with professional guidance and training about how best to support young people vulnerable to exploitation and serious violence.

**2.17. Community Work**

2.18. We work with and for communities in Bristol. Having been involved in organising and hosting a series of community meetings with local residents, community groups, businesses, parents and young people to identify issues/ concerns and ways to address them, we now have a good level of understanding of the communities we are working in and have trusting relationships where the community are more open about what is going on, and who they are concerned about.

2.19. **Community Mentors** – Through our community consultant, community relationships and community groups we have been able to identify key individuals from the community and with lived experience that the young people we are working with can relate to. We currently have **25 community mentors** city wide and **36 young people have a community mentor** working with them.

- 2.20. The successful impact of community mentors has meant young people have engaged really positively, the feedback from partners has been positive and the benefits have been notable. On many occasions young people have developed relationships with mentors where statutory agencies have struggled to engage in the same way. To support and develop mentors we have worked with City of Bristol College who will deliver an accredited mentoring course.
- 2.21. **Parents Groups** – 2 parents groups have been set up and run providing an opportunity for parents to explore parenting issues in a supportive setting. A result of this will be offering the parents an opportunity to train as community parent practitioners.
- 2.22. **Training** - The Safer Options team have been working with the Safeguarding in Education team to develop and deliver awareness training for staff and bespoke safeguarding training for community mentors and youth workers working directly with young people.
- 2.23. An improved offer to schools: Weapons in School**
- 2.24. We have worked with schools, Safeguarding in Education Team and the police to develop guidance, to support educational professionals to make **robust, safe and proportionate** decisions when responding to concerns about offensive weapons on the setting's site. This guidance has been in the context of developing multi-agency partnership working to ensure that children and young people are protected from additional risk and exploitation not just in the short term but also in the long term.
- 2.25. In addition further support is provided to support the school after it has dealt with the initial incident:
- 2.26. An educational inclusion manager and youth justice worker will attend the school within 48 hours of an incident.
- 2.27. An assessment of the incident, a meeting with the young person and a family visit will take place. This will lead to a contextual assessment being carried out and a number of recommendations being presented to the school. This will include a varied menu of support offers being made available dependent on the nature of the events.
- 2.28. The focus of the work being to reduce any repeat incidents, provide the best support available and give the school confidence and a defensible response which tries to reduce the need for long term exclusions if appropriate.
- 2.29. In combination with **police surge funding** the force has invested in supporting Safer Options with police intelligence staff and strengthened their resources deployed to schools that hold the

most vulnerable young people. A commitment to work very closely has emerged that will join the police focus on vulnerable young people in school with the local authority team around the school approach.

### **3. Governance**

#### **3.1. Serious Violence Executive group**

3.2. A monthly multi agency Serious Violence Executive Group is meeting on a monthly basis to review the strategic direction of the approach and to ensure that all agencies are aware of the current levels of activity and to contribute towards a coordinated operational response. It is chaired by the Executive Director of People and attended by one of the police Assistant Chief Constables . This group report to the Keeping Bristol Safe Board.

#### **3.3. Serious Violence Operational Group**

3.4. This group meets on a monthly basis and consists of operational managers from across the agencies who have direct responsibility for resources that manage and respond to incidents and contribute to our preventative approaches. The group reviews past incidents for learning; checks and test appropriate coordinated responses were put in place when responding to incidents. They seek to understand the latest intelligence, trends, patterns and understand the national context to ensure that the approach across Bristol is well informed and coordinated.

#### **3.5. Learning from Recent Incidents**

3.6. There were three very serious incidents in Bristol involving young people in 2019, which resulted in three deaths , a young person and two older men. These incidents were subject to a rapid review under the Working Together 2018 Regulations and with a full child practice review now commissioned.

3.7. In the latter part of 2019 there was a surge of incidents involving weapons in the south of Bristol. This led to the mobilisation of a significant mutli-agency response which was able to identify those involved and implement a range of preventative, disruptive and diversionary tactics which brought the situation under control. This has led on to some targeted work with groups and individuals in the area.

3.8. Analysis of these incidents in Bristol has shown that whilst we have been very effective in identifying the most at risk groups of young people and minimising risk effectively it has become clear that there are a small group of young people who require a greater level of focus. These

are those young people who are known to have perpetrated serious violence including stabbing another. Often related to previous trauma and abuse these young people have demonstrated an ability to inflict this high level of violence and this separates them from others in their group. Intelligence is crucial in identifying this small group of young people as the incident may not be reported, or victims may not support a prosecution but good quality information will enable us to identify and effectively target those people. We are currently working on developing a longer term approach to supporting this such young people, learning from Cities and approaches that have an evidence base e.g. America, Glasgow and London.

## **4. Data analysis**

- 4.1. The use of information held by various agencies relating to vulnerability is a critical element in identifying the most at risk young people. The Insight Analytical Hub has been developing products which pull together information held by a range of agencies to produce analysis and information which support professional decision making by identifying the most at risk young people.
- 4.2. In November 2019 a new targeted analytical product went live which assists in bringing volumes of information together to identify those who are in peer groups but at risk of becoming more involved due to associated risk factors. This supports the targeted work with preventative/ distraction/ diversion activities. Recent testing has confirmed that we are identifying the right young people, including those at risk but not previously known to services.

## **5. Problem Profile development**

- 5.1. A partnership analyst has been employed to initially carry out the Home office requirement of creating a problem profile but also to provide dynamic analysis of trends, patterns, crime rates, hot spots and predictive profiles of those most at risk. This document will be completed by the end of February 2020

## **6. Response Strategy development**

- 6.1. A further condition of the Home office funding was to develop a local response plan. This work has now been completed. It has included speaking to families, young people, the community and key professional stakeholders. Included was 15 1-1 interviews with young people engaged/ on the cusp of serious violence, the response of over 200 young people to a survey. There was a clear message that was twice as strong as any other message from the consultation with young people and the community – Young people need more to do.

6.2. The consultation and feedback led to the below eight priorities:

**Priority 1: Positive, safe and accessible activities for children and young people**

**Priority 2: Investment in community assets**

**Priority 3: Raising awareness of Serious Youth Violence and Child Criminal Exploitation**

**Priority 4: Improving police presence and disrupting crime**

**Priority 5: Improving education and learning for a successful future**

**Priority 6: Targeted help**

**Priority 7: Earlier Help for families who are struggling**

**Priority 8: Young people’s activism and mentoring**

## 7. Next Steps

- 7.1 A further opportunity to apply for funding from the Home office via the Office of the Police Crime Commissioner has been made available for the financial year 2020/21. An application has to be submitted in March 2020 including detail plans as to the intended use of the grant to support this work. The grant has been ring-fenced and it is anticipated that it will be allocated to Avon and Somerset Police. There is a requirement to set out sustainability plans for when the grant ends, therefore it could be assumed that this will be the final year of funding.
- 7.2 The Safer Options approach will adopt the priorities that have been developed in consultation and a detailed action plan is being drawn up which will include activities to be implemented in the next 12 months but also into the longer term.