Preventing Gang Involvement and Youth Violence Strategy

2017 – 2020
Many children growing up in the inner city areas of Bristol are at daily risk of experiencing street conflict and issues relating to gangs. For too long these young people have felt helpless and not listened to.

The diversionary, positive activities they have needed to steer a safe course in life, away from street conflict may not have been accessible to them.

Through the activity outlined within this strategy, we are pledging to end young people’s involvement in gangs and street conflict. We will empower them to fulfil their true potential, in safe and vibrant communities that are free from crime.

Foreword

Street conflict and involvement in gang activity can affect any young person, from any family, in any neighbourhood. However, we must not be blind to the fact that some young people are disproportionately affected by these issues.

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Introduction

Gang violence has afflicted some neighbourhoods and communities in Bristol over many years. In 2001, armed police officers were placed on the streets of central Bristol in response to a sharp rise in gang related violence in St Pauls. The dynamics of who is involved has changed and continues to change. A constant, however, is that gang-related violence in Bristol is inextricably linked to illicit drug supply. Gangs are increasingly exploiting vulnerable young people in Bristol to sustain their criminal activity. There are many factors that draw young people into gangs: poverty, inequality, parental separation and/or other negative childhood experiences such as domestic violence and abuse, mental illness, alcohol and substance misuse. Also, perceptions of safety and exposure to crime. We all have a part to play in tackling these risks and building on the strengths and resilience of young people and their families to divert them away from gangs and street conflict.

Nationally, the government’s ‘Ending Gang and Youth Violence: Community Engagement’ 2014 report, highlighted key principles for successful community engagement as part of the solution to combating gang and youth violence. It also reinforced the principle that ending youth violence requires an end-to-end approach, from prevention to rehabilitation, from a range of statutory and non-statutory partners including the local community, public agencies and businesses.


Building on the recommendations and aspirations of these documents, it is the intention of this ‘Preventing Gang Involvement and Youth Violence’ strategy to structure our local response to gangs and street conflict, around the following themes:

• **Engagement and Support**  
  Prevention, early intervention and diversion

• **Empowerment**  
  Delivering solutions, options and tools for young people and the communities affected by street conflict

• **Enforcement and Disruption**  
  Diverting young people away from harm and safeguarding individuals and communities
Our vision for young people is to prevent and divert them away from gang involvement and street conflict so that they are safe, feel safe and can realise their life potential.

In line with Bristol’s Strategy for Children, Young People and Families, the Safer Bristol Partnership and the Police and Crime Commissioner’s pledges to protect the most vulnerable citizens in Bristol, this strategy is written from a safeguarding perspective. We will actively identify those most ‘at risk’ of being drawn into gang violence and crime, as well as offering safe routes out of gang behaviour.

Linked strategies and areas of work:
- Substance Misuse Strategy
- Youth Offending Team
- Learning City Project
- Children & Families Partnership
- Targeted Youth Support
- Bristol Resilience Strategy
- Policing Operations
- Domestic Violence & Abuse Strategy
- Health & Wellbeing Strategy
- Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy
Bristol Stats:

1 in 3 offences from Young People in Bristol were crimes of Violence against the person (2016/17)

5,400 - 16 year olds have emotional health likely to require support

There are around 700 children in care in Bristol and 420 care leavers (2016)
1 in 5 people in Bristol are under 16

There are 45 religions, 187 countries of birth represented and 91 languages spoken in Bristol

8,800 children and young people have special educational needs 15% of all pupils (2016)

42 Knife related offences committed by 34 young people in 2016/17

In 2015, 22% of Bristol’s children live in 10% most deprived areas of England
In 2010, this was 19% of children

19% of children have English as an additional language (2015) 64% of children in Lawrence Hill
4% of children in Hartcliffe & Withywood

Facing the challenges - our approach

- Build on our strong history of partnership working
- Deliver a shared strategic vision for commissioning
- Harness good practice for early intervention, whole family approaches and offender management
- Ensure current gang members get the help they need to exit gang activity
- Better use of current services to strengthen help offered to individuals and their families
- Target our resources at the right people, at the right time & in the right place
- Ensure services are evidence based & focused on positive outcomes
- Give communities the skills to help their young people
- Help young people, families & their communities become more resilient to the effects of gang membership

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Age range of young people on which this strategy is focussed:
This is primarily intended as a young people’s strategy, focussing on 10-18 year-olds. However the principles and practice outlined within this approach may also benefit older people (18-25 year-olds) at risk of involvement in gangs and street conflict. The strategy takes into account the need to work with families and wider communities to safeguard vulnerable young people.

Gangs, the risks they pose and our approach to managing those risks

Managing Risk

Prevention
- Youth Movements & Organised Groups
  - Characteristics: A distinctive mode of dress or shared leisure time preference
  - Needs met through universal and targeted youth support services

Early Intervention & Support
- Anti-Social or Criminal Groups
  - Characteristics: Small clusters of friends who band together usually for shorter periods of time to commit crime, primarily for financial gain
  - Managed through Youth Justice, anti-social behaviour and ‘emerging cohort’ processes

- Influenced & ‘wannabee’ groups
  - Characteristics: Loosely structured group, engage in spontaneous social activity & exciting, impulsive criminal activity. Engage in collective violence against other similar groups
  - Managed through multi-agency disruption, coordination and targeted support

Targeted Disruption & Intervention
- Street Gangs
  - Characteristics: Semi-structured organisation, engaged in planned and profitable criminal behaviour. Engage in violence against rival street gangs
  - Managed through multi-agency disruption, coordination and targeted interventions

- Organised Crime Groups
  - Characteristics: Groups that exhibit a formal structure & a high degree of sophistication. They are composed mainly of young adults & engage in criminal activity primarily for economic reasons & almost always maintain a low profile
  - Disruption and Enforcement managed through Specialist Police teams

Needs met through universal and targeted youth support services
Managed through multi-agency disruption, coordination and targeted support
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### Action Plan:

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<td>Action</td>
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<td>Engagement &amp; Support</td>
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<td>Reinforce established partnership links to ensure pan-Bristol activity is joined up and expertise is utilised for all young people in need.</td>
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<td>Produce a six-monthly report utilising shared partnership information, to identify emerging gangs and young people who are potentially at risk of becoming gang members. Use predictive risk management techniques to effectively target ‘at risk’ individuals with targeted interventions.</td>
<td>Identify, target and prioritise the most vulnerable and ‘at risk’ individuals by effective agency data-sharing and the use of new predictive methods of analysis.</td>
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<td>Continue to build on the partnership action plan with clear, timely and accountable activities. Establish operational partnership groups that have: Common risk assessment tools and methodologies Shared Case Management function in which criminal justice, youth work and/or social welfare professionals work with the young person and their families. To support them via an agreed plan which will encourage, and facilitate, alternative life choices and sustainable desistance from gangs and street conflict. A joined up referral pathway process to develop clear prevention/exit strategies ensuring that vulnerability and risk are prioritised.</td>
<td>Targeted and seamless support plans will be offered to young people across Bristol. The service will evolve to make sure relevant and effective service are offered. Services will become increasingly effective, relevant and targeted.</td>
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<td>Ensure that services are made accessible to young people at appropriate venues and times.</td>
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<td>Identify and map the different agencies that can offer interventions. Support intensive one-to-one or group work programmes that will encourage alternative life choices, sustainable desistance and build resilience in young people; young people transitioning into adult interventions; young people who are at risk but haven’t yet become involved in gang activity.</td>
<td>Consult young people to establish their preferred times, places and methods of accessing services.</td>
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<td>Improve access to mental health and wellbeing services.</td>
<td>Will improve the uptake rate of services.</td>
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<td>Ensure all agencies are aware of the services which can help young people with unresolved mental health and wellbeing issues, that affect their behaviour and negative life choices.</td>
<td>Will offer fundamental help to identify the root causes of anti-social behaviour.</td>
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We will measure the success of this strategy in the following ways:

- A reduction in the number of street conflict offences being committed in Bristol
- A reduction of knife crime offences involving young people being committed in Bristol
- Improvement in the following categories of the annual Bristol City Council, ‘Quality of Life’ survey, for the areas known to be affected by gangs and street conflict:
  - % respondents who agree locally, anti-social behaviour is a problem
  - % respondents who agree police and local public services are successfully dealing with issues of crime and anti-social behaviour
  - % respondents whose day-to-day life is affected by fear of crime.

We acknowledge that prevention and diversion intervention are long-term solutions to gang and street conflict. Enforcement has a key role to play but this is limited, as effective enforcement methods provide only short-term solutions.

These include reducing the risk to and from a particular individual, acting as a deterrent or mitigating the immediate effects of serious youth violence within local communities.

### Measures of success

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### What can we do about it?

“Encourage them to take part in school/out of school activities. Get them into a sport or join a gym. Feed them positive, mental attitude. Help them build their self esteem and confidence. Encourage them to attend courses anything that will keep them busy and their mind off the bad stuff”

### Why do you think young people get involved in street conflict or gangs?

**Money, protection & improved life style came out top for the reason**

### What is the public attitude towards street gangs?

There is a perception that gangs and street conflict affects certain communities in the city and is not a general issue

If you or someone you know felt pressured to join a gang, who would you talk to about it?

Young People generally trust their family and friends for their main source of help. Some feel a mistrust of salaried officials but some may speak to their school or the police. But some may not talk to anyone at all about it.

Reference: excerpts taken from Consultation with young people
The Safer Bristol Partnership will oversee the delivery of this strategy. This partnership represents the Mayor of Bristol, the Police and Crime Commissioner and other stakeholders and strategic governance groups within the city. Performance will be shared with these wider groups on an on-going basis.