

6 December 2018		ITEM: 5
Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview & Scrutiny Committee		
Gang Related Violence Update Report		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: N/A	
Report of: Julie Rogers, Chair of Thurrock Community Safety Partnership Rory Patterson, Corporate Director of Children’s Services		
Accountable Assistant Director: Daren Spring, Assistant Director – Street Scene and Leisure		
Accountable Director: Julie Rogers, Director of Environment and Highways		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

This report outlines how Thurrock’s Community Safety Partnership (TCSP) through its partners, in particular, Thurrock Council, Essex Police and Youth Offending Service, are addressing the issues of gang related violence in Thurrock. Gang violence has a significant impact on communities as well as the lives of the young people who become involved. Solving gangs and serious youth violence and exploitation is not a short term issue; the strategy in place is aimed at ensuring Thurrock is positioned well to respond to changing local challenges with a clear focus on early intervention and prevention, disruption and enforcement.

The TCSP remains committed to working in strong partnership through Essex Police, Youth Offending Service, Probation Services, Education, Housing and Children’s Social Care to work together to prevent and disrupt gang activity. Operation Raptor is the Essex Police response to tackling gang related violence through an approach to disrupt and prevent organised drug distribution and this report highlights some of its successes.

We would like to take the opportunity to thank Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview Scrutiny Committee members for agreeing to defer this report, which was due to activity in relation to obtaining gang injunctions. This is a dynamic and ongoing piece of work and a full update will be provided by the Essex Police representative at the meeting.

Whilst the Police are accountable for addressing the criminal element associated with gangs through effective law enforcement other agencies, the Council in

particular, have a contribution to make in providing early intervention and prevention. Communities also have a responsibility to report in order to facilitate robust enforcement action being taken by Police and Council. The changing drugs market is a key driver in an increase in violent crime and therefore all agencies also have a responsibility to tackle the misuse of drugs. The strong association between gang activity and links to the emerging drugs market and the risk of exploitation and vulnerability and partnership response is recommended within the Thurrock Young Persons Substance Misuse Needs Assessment 2018 (appendix 1).

Ongoing monitoring continues to take place, more recently it has shown an increase in those people identified as having an affiliation to gangs and the number of statutory agencies managing them. The dynamics of gang affiliation in Thurrock has significantly changed and is anticipated to continue to do so. Convictions in relation to the possession of knives has increased by 100% amongst young people, therefore activity needs to focus on advising young people of the risks associated with carrying a weapon.

Members and the community have a significant role to play in reducing gang related violence through ongoing reporting, in particular in relation to drug dealing and the possession of weapons and risk to vulnerable adults of exploitation, even if anonymously via Crimestoppers. This report provides an update on proactive activity as well as setting out the overall approach to implement the action plan.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 Cleaner Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee are requested to:

- a) Note the continually changing landscape and challenge in Thurrock and partnership working to combat an increase in violent crime.**
- b) Note the approach and resources identified to implement the action plan.**
- c) Encourage reporting by communities through the “Report It” campaign.**

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an oversight of gang activity in Thurrock and the work undertaken and planned by the Thurrock Community Safety Partnership to address gang related violence.

2.2 Definition:

The Home Office define a gang as being:

- A relatively durable, predominantly street-based group of young people who
- See themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernible group;
 - Engage in criminal activity and violence; *And may also:*
 - Lay claim over territory (not necessarily geographical, but can include an illegal economy territory);

- Have some form of identifying structural feature; and/or
- Be in conflict with other, similar groups

2.3 Changing dynamics:

In the past year there has been a significant change in the dynamics of gang affiliation in Thurrock. The majority of those identified in Thurrock are now affiliated to a Thurrock based gang as opposed to a London gang. Direct links are now been seen between Thurrock based gangs and individuals moving into Thurrock, or those that have been relocated by London authorities.

2.4 Oversight of gang nominals:

Operational multi agency meetings take place monthly to review gang nominals (those individuals identified as having or being at risk of affiliation with gangs) in Thurrock and to agree actions to prevent and disrupt activity. In the year 2017/18, 60 individuals were reviewed, predominantly aged 17–18. The youngest being 13 and the oldest 37. Geographically they reside predominantly in the south of the borough. Of those identified there are affiliations to 15 different gangs, of which 3 are local to Thurrock.

2.5 National Picture:

Following recent increases seen nationally in homicides, gun crime and knife crime the Government has published the National Strategy on Serious Violence 2018 (see Appendix 2). The strategy stresses the importance of early intervention and the need for a multi-agency approach involving a range of partners, including Police, Local Authorities, Social Services, Youth Services, Health and Education and highlights the key roles that the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC) and Community Safety Partnerships have to play. They have identified 4 key themes:

- Tackling County Lines and Misuse of Drugs (County lines as described by the Home Office is the term used to describe gang and organised crime networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into 1 or more areas within the Country through a dedicated mobile phone line).
- Early Intervention and Prevention.
- Supporting Communities and Local partnerships.
- Effective Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice Response.

2.6 Essex Response:

Safer Essex, of which Thurrock is a partner, have published the Violence and Vulnerability Framework (Appendix 3) designed to create a set of principles to which all partners can work, assisting in aligning and streamlining activities to raise awareness, act as interventions and support the vulnerable. It is aimed at creating an environment which will facilitate a coordinated approach and recognise opportunities for joint commissioning. Safer Essex are now in the process of developing an action plan to address the issues identified within the framework and will widen the scope to address Serious Violence, Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), Missing Persons, Modern Slavery, Human Trafficking and Drugs.

Operation Raptor is the Essex Police response to tackling gang related violence through an approach to disrupt and prevent organised drug distribution.

2.7 Situation in Thurrock:

Historically, Thurrock had a number of young people living in the borough who had affiliations with London gangs; recent intelligence is showing an increase in young people from Thurrock offending countrywide, not just in London. This has increased the risk of trafficking of young and vulnerable people. 8 young people were referred to the National Referral Mechanism in 2017.

Significant change in the dynamics of gang culture in Thurrock is now being observed, three identified core groups meet part of the definition of a gang and are currently being monitored by agencies.

In response to this the CSP Delivery Plan 2018/19, Priority 2 identifies safeguarding vulnerable victims from hidden crimes including Gang Related Violence.

In Thurrock the team consists of 1 Sergeant and 4 officers.

In 2017 in Thurrock this led to the following outcomes:

- £205,884 of drugs being seized
- £34,640 of cash being seized
- Prison sentences of 18 years were obtained for dealers
- 44 weapons seized (plus 100 tear gas lighters)
- 33 vehicles were seized
- And 40 premises were searched

In 2018 to end of June this has led to the following outcomes:

- Seizure of drugs: 17.23g cannabis, 185.25g cocaine/crack, 27.45g heroin, 4g ketamine
- £44,439 of cash being seized
- 41 arrests made
- 6 weapons seized
- 11 vehicles seized
- 18 warrants executed
- And 24 premises searched

Despite there being a number of identified nominals and intelligence linking young people resident in Thurrock to numerous London gangs, their offending is primarily outside the borough. The Council, through Children's Social Care, Youth Offending and education has a responsibility to deliver services and risk management in relation to our young people. Management of risk in relation to adults is through the Community Rehabilitation Company and National Probation Services.

Although youth crime in Thurrock has reduced there has been an increase in serious crime committed by young people residing in Thurrock. Evidence has shown gangs moving into Thurrock and “cuckooing” vulnerable residents (i.e. taking over their property to deal/store drugs from).

Alongside gangs comes a particular risk for girls and young women to be exposed to the risk of sexual abuse and exploitation, as well as potential for involvement in serious organised crime groups. Any focus on youth violence must therefore include a commitment to educate and reduce the risk to young women.

2.8 Aims and Objectives:

The refreshed action plan for 2018, in line with the Essex framework has 5 strategic objectives

- I. Structure and Approach
- II. Data Sharing
- III. Training
- IV. Early Intervention and Prevention
- V. Enforcement

3. **Issues, Options and Analysis of Options**

3.1 Issues and Threats:

- Whilst there is an excellent data flow in place between council teams and the Police, this is a recurring issue that could always be improved including links with the Metropolitan Police.
- Whilst communities regularly express concern over drug dealing in their area, there is a lack of reporting through official channels, for a variety of reasons, in particular difficulty in reporting, perceived lack of action taken and fear of repercussions. The CSP are working with CVS to promote Crimestoppers as a confidential way of reporting.
- In respect of resources Children’s Services are currently considering further funding to implement specific prevention services for those at risk of child criminal exploitation. In addition to working with the Essex Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner on a pan Essex bid for funding from the Early Intervention Youth Fund. This will support local initiatives.
- There is a changing drugs market in Thurrock with early signs of an increase in Class A usage. The illegal drug market is a clear driver of violence and Home Office figures indicate that in 2016/17 57% of homicides were linked to either the victim and/or suspect being a drug user or dealer.¹
- Increased levels of severity and complexity of violence; in particular sexual violence and abuse are being recorded and managed by YOS and social care.

¹ Source: Home Office Serious Violence Strategy 2018

- Concerns of exploitation and increased reports of child sexual and criminal exploitation.
- Displacement and migration from London bring a change in local demographics; this is an Essex wide issue and requires a collaborative approach with London Boroughs to improve the management of risk this poses.
- There have been low levels of engagement with the mentoring programme funded by the PFCC and delivered by Gangsline.
- Looked after children are more vulnerable to becoming victims and there are links with missing children and gangs.
- Nationally there has been an increase in the use of fluids as a weapon.

3.2 Actions in place to address

3.2.1 Structure and Approach

Strong leadership is key to ensuring that there is clear accountability and work is collaborative. Strong links are required to Children's, Youth and Educational Services. The Corporate Director of Children's Services has taken on the role of chairing the Strategic Gang Related Violence Group in Thurrock. The Red Gang Related Violence Group meet monthly to review known gang nominals and agree actions across a range of agencies with close links to the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) Risk Assessment Group (RAG) who look at child exploitation, missing young people and all risk factors in relation to young people.

Thurrock's Youth Justice Plan for 2018/21 has a priority in relation to gangs, knives and child criminal exploitation

3.2.2 Data Sharing

- Police analysts developing association charts in relation to known gangs.
- Increased submission of intel reports from Council teams.

3.2.3 Training

- Children's Social Care receiving training on gangs as mandatory which is being delivered by the YOS team.
- Gangsline, commissioned provider by the Police and Fire Crime Commissioner, by the end of 2018 will have delivered training to over 200 professionals.
- Training programme on cuckooing rolled out to front line staff to safeguard vulnerable adults from mate crime.

3.2.4 Early Intervention and Prevention

- Crimestopper awareness campaigns in place to improve reporting on gangs, drug dealing and cuckooing as well as the Report It campaign being rolled out through CVS and community forums.
- Gangsline have delivered awareness to 3 schools to date with 3 more planned for Autumn term.
- Youth Offending Services delivered 2 intervention lessons to year 10 pupils in Harris Academy, trained up all staff at Palmers College and SEEVIC, as well as Magistrates and Court staff.
- Thurrock Council's Prevention and Support Services delivering Youth at Risk programme with a session on knife crime, gangs and consequences.
- Crucial crew, organised by Thurrock Council, included knife crime awareness session to 1100 year 6 pupils.
- Resources have been provided to schools in relation to County lines and parental handbook. A manual has been produced for professionals and parents (appendix 4).
- Awareness of mate crime raised through a play on cuckooing to residents with a learning disability as part of a Stay Safe day.

3.2.5 Enforcement

- Op Raptor (Essex Police) received £35,660 funding from the Council this year to deliver covert and overt operations to address gangs in Thurrock and in August these additional proactive operations led to the arrest of 12 people in relation to a number of offences, including for possession of weapons and drugs, in relation to drug dealing and under the Mis-use of Drugs Act.
- Following these funded operations Op Raptor have been able to gather sufficient intelligence to enable them to obtain successful gang injunctions against 10 nominals to date. Please see full details of the injunction at Appendix 5.

Gang injunctions allow courts to place a range of prohibitions and requirements on the behaviour and activities of a person involved in gang-related violence. These conditions could include prohibiting someone from being in a particular place or requiring them to participate in rehabilitative activities.

The aim of a gang injunction is to prevent a person from engaging in, encouraging or assisting gang-related violence and may also serve to protect them from gang-related violence. Gang injunctions aim to prevent serious violence from occurring, break down violent gang culture and engage gang members in positive activities to help them leave the gang.

The injunctions are individual and have some stringent conditions, in particular with regards to restricting movement within Grays but also wider restrictions within the injunction which include:

- Non-association with other members of the C17 gang, this means they cannot be anywhere as a collective group.
- The banning of making drill music which is then publically available to all through YouTube.
- Wearing hoodies or face coverings. and
- Being in the company of girls aged under 16.

If they are found in breach of any of these conditions, wherever they are in the borough they will be subject to arrest. This order is being robustly enforced and arrests for breach have already been made and taken before the courts. The injunction is already having a positive impact with comments from local business managers in Grays Town Centre including:

- Since the injunction the drug dealers have all disappeared and staff are no longer afraid to leave work at night.” Essex Police Op Raptor team will continue to enforce these injunctions through high visibility patrols and are responding to an increase in intelligence being provided by the public. All those involved have also been given an opportunity to engage with support to move on from gang life.
- The Youth Offending Service are working with the Courts, Young Offenders Institutes and other criminal justice services to ensure that the relevant restrictions are placed on identified nominals or those at risk of exploitation. These include electronically monitored curfews, non-contact requirements, exclusions and restrictions regarding mobile phones and social media. These are attached to community and custodial sentences as well as bail conditions and out of court disposals.
- Youth Offending Services offer programmes to youths within the Criminal Justice System on knife crime, peer pressure, drill music and streetwise.
- Activity in Grays High Street has been disrupted through utilisation of Thurrock Council’s CCTV to identify perpetrators and there is improved CCTV on the Garrison Estate, Purfleet, and Seabrooke Rise, Grays.
- Trading Standards have engaged with a number of retailers stocking knives in relation to under age sales.

There is currently no reported impact on the broader community, however the Police will be continuously monitoring and referring to the Community Safety Partnership any future concerns.

3.3 Next Steps

3.3.1 Structure and Approach

- Resource an Intervention and Prevention role within children’s services to deliver training and interventions within schools.
- Review of action plan and strategy to incorporate risks of criminal exploitation.

- Continue to work proactively with Essex Police to support and implement their recently launched Crime Prevention Policy, in relation to Gang Criminality and knife crime page 8 of the Policy, attached as Appendix 6.

3.3.2 Data Sharing

- Utilisation of Xantura data to provide predictive intelligence and drive prevention activity.
- Housing are trialling new technology to allow residents to record incidents anonymously and improve reporting.

3.3.3 Training

- Work with Office of PFCC to identify training provider from 2019.
- Increase awareness of indicators of CSE through utilisation of LSCB online training kit.
- Host conference to raise awareness of current situation in Thurrock and actions to prevent it.

3.3.4 Early Intervention and Prevention

- Launch a directory of resources for schools including:
 - CSE/gang lesson plan that has been developed for us by South Essex College;
 - Promotion of the Essex County Fire Service knife programme for year 9 pupils
- Look at utilising active citizens to deliver programmes in primary schools.
- Review offer in relation to mentoring programmes for those at risk of exploitation.

3.3.5 Enforcement

- Essex Police continue to obtain intelligence for further injunctions with robust sanctions on those involved in gang related violence and enforcement by the Op Raptor team supported by Council funding.
- On the back of the Police injunctions Housing, where appropriate will pursue tenancy enforcement action.
- Increased usage of Community Protection Notices.
- Trading Standards to launch Challenge 25 to retailers selling knives.
- Housing Services to ensure relevant safeguards and intelligence sharing in place with regards to houses of multiple occupancy. Ongoing review of CCTV to disrupt activity in hot spot areas.

3.4 The Equality Impact Assessment has highlighted:

- Young people are at greater risk of sexual and criminal exploitation, cyber bullying and gang related violence.
- Learning disabled are at risk of being “cuckooed” (i.e. taking over their property to deal/store drugs from) in relation to gang violence.
- Females are more likely to be a victim of sexual exploitation in relation to gangs.
- Wards most impacted by gang related violence are in the south of the borough.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 This report provides Overview and Scrutiny Committee the opportunity to be assured that whilst we are facing a constantly evolving challenge we are taking a robust approach to address gang related activity in Thurrock and to improve confidence that:

- I. There is an understanding of residents’ concerns in relation to this issue
- II. That there is strong partnership approach and leadership in place to ensure a cohesive coordinated response across all areas of the council, specifically Children and Adult Services, Housing, Environment and the TCSP.

4.2 This issue cannot be tackled by agencies acting alone and requires the support of community leaders to engage with residents and encourage reporting.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

5.1 N/A

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

6.1 The Thurrock Community Safety Partnership is central to delivering Thurrock Council's priority of:

People – a borough where people of all ages are proud to work and play, live and stay.

This means:

- High quality, consistent and accessible public services which are right first time.
- Build on our partnerships with statutory, community, voluntary and faith groups to work together to improve health and wellbeing.
- Communities are empowered to make choices and be safer and stronger together.

- 6.2 The CSP action plan links closely to and supports delivery of Essex's violence and vulnerability framework – Appendix 1.
- 6.3 Addressing the issue of drug related violence is of high importance to our communities and the need to reassure them that positive action is being taken to reverse the current trend in relation to violent crime.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Laura Last**
Management Accountant

The Home Office have currently made available a sum of money through the Tackling Serious Violence and Knife Crime Fund, the TCSP will support the PFCC bid.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **David Lawson**
**Assistant Director of Law & Governance
& Monitoring Officer**

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Price**
Community Development Manager

Implications as outlined in 3.4 which our action plan seeks to address.

7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

This report will help the Council and its Partners ensure that they are delivering on its commitments to Section 17.

8. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- Thurrock Gang Related Violence strategy 2017/20
- Thurrock Gang Related Violence action Plan revised 2018
- Gang related violence throughput data 2017/18 (Restricted report)
- Performance indicators for the Gang related Violence Group 2017/18 (Restricted report)
- Thurrock Draft Youth Crime Justice Plan

9. Appendices to the report

1. Thurrock's Young Persons Substance Misuse Needs Analysis 2018
2. Home Office Serious Violence Strategy:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/serious-violence-strategy>
3. Safer Essex Violence and Vulnerability Framework June 2018
4. Gang related violence booklet
5. Gang injunction
6. Essex Police Crime Prevention Strategy:
<https://www.essex.police.uk/getmedia/ba9adca8-0cd2-4992-aa2a-5f111f8cfc0a/Essex-Police-Crime-Prevention-Strategy-2018-2021.pdf>

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