

21 October 2021		ITEM: 5
Hidden and Extreme Harms Prevention Committee		
Thurrock Council's Response to Criminal Gang Activity		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-key	
Report of: Jason Read, Youth Offending Operations Manager Michelle Cunningham, Community Safety Partnership Manager		
Accountable Assistant Director: N/A		
Accountable Director: Dr Jo Broadbent, Director of Public Health		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

This report is to provide the Hidden and Extreme Harms Committee the opportunity to fulfil their purpose in relation to ensuring that all elements of the Council work together and in partnership to ensure that the Council is responding appropriately to the challenges presented by Criminal Gang Activity.

For the purposes of this committee and report, Criminal Gang Activity is defined as per the Home Office definition of 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

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 one or more areas within the Country through a dedicated mobile phone line.

County line enterprises almost always involve the exploitation of vulnerable people, be they children or adults, and is always a safeguarding issue.

Criminal gangs have a significant impact on communities as well as the lives of the young people and their families that become involved. Solving gangs and the associated use of offensive weapons and criminal exploitation requires a long term

strategy and a sustained approach, not a short term response. The annual report of the Director of Public Health on Youth Violence and Vulnerability in 2020 (*Appendix 1*) will support Thurrock in developing a Public Health approach to violence and it brings together all relevant agencies to support young people and intervene before they are groomed by gangs and go on to commit offences, and will provide a long lasting solution.

Thurrock are part of the Essex Violence and Vulnerability Board which recognises the significant impact that serious violence associated with gang activity is having on the communities of Essex. This has brought access to considerable additional funding for early prevention and intervention activity.

1. Recommendation(s):

1.1 That Members of the committee through scrutiny assure themselves of the response by Thurrock Council to address criminal gang activity in Thurrock.

1.2 That Members contribute to the delivery of this agenda ensuring that communities have a voice within this agenda.

1.3 That Members agree that an annual report on the work of the Violence and Vulnerability Board to address criminal gang activity in Thurrock be brought to the Committee.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 National Context:

In March 2019 the Home Office announced a Serious Violence Fund to help tackle serious violence in 18 areas worst affected of which Essex was identified as one of the Violence Reduction Unit areas. This funding was to support Surge operation activity by Essex Police and to set up a Violence and Vulnerability Unit (VVU) in Essex to build capacity to tackle the root causes of serious violence by bringing together Police, local government, health, education professionals, community leaders and other key partners to provide a multi-agency response to local drivers of serious violence.

2.2 Essex Violence and Vulnerability Unit

As a partnership the focus of the Essex VVU is to address issues which will lead to a reduction in serious violence – namely to:

- Reduce hospital admissions for assaults with a knife or sharp object and especially among those victims aged under 25
- Reduce knife-enabled serious violence and especially among those victims aged under 25
- Reduce all non-domestic homicides and especially among those victims aged under 25 involving knives

This will be achieved by:

- Identifying and tackling organised crime gangs, County Lines and drug supply.
- Delivering a proactive, robust local enforcement programme in partnership with communities.
- Reducing the risk of young or vulnerable people being exploited by gangs and help those involved in gangs to break away.

The Essex Violence and Vulnerability Round Table is chaired by the Police Fire and Crime Commissioner Roger Hirst and attended by members and Directors from Thurrock.

The Essex Violence and Vulnerability operations board is attended by officers from YOS, CSP and Public Health for Thurrock.

There are 5 work streams to deliver on the focus areas:

1. Voice of Communities
2. Targeting interventions
3. Developing the Workforce
4. Raising Awareness
5. Improving our understanding.

2.3 Thurrock Structure and related priorities

The response to Serious Youth violence in Thurrock (16-24 year olds) has been structured around the 2020 Annual Public Report by the then Director of Public Health on Youth Violence and Vulnerability. This takes a public health approach to serious youth violence and vulnerability and makes 32 recommendations within the following 4 categories:

1. Surveillance – led by Public Health and Childrens Social Care
2. Primary Prevention –through Brighter Futures
3. Secondary prevention –through the Local Safeguarding Childrens Partnership Multi Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) group
4. Tertiary Prevention –through the Community Safety Partnership Executive and Operational Gang Related Violence Group

The Thurrock Violence and Vulnerability Board has been convened to bring together representation from the 6 key strategic partnership boards, namely; the Community Safety Partnership, the Safeguarding Adults Board, the Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership, Youth Crime Governance Board, Brighter Future's Partnership Board and the Health and Well Being Board in order to provide governance for the coordination and implementation of these recommendations and ensure a cross cutting public health approach to **youth violence and vulnerability**.

The Violence and Vulnerability Board is chaired by the Director of Public Health and is required to provide oversight and assurance to:

1. Coordinate and provide oversight of the activity of the 4 work streams delivering the implementation of the findings and recommendations from

the Annual Public Health report on Youth Violence and Vulnerability report 2020

2. Ensure that the work of the Essex wide Violence and Vulnerability unit is delivered locally in Thurrock
3. Ensure that the voice of communities is part of tackling serious youth violence

2.4 Safeguarding and Criminal Gang Activity

Protecting children and vulnerable adults from the risks in relation to criminal gang activity should be seen as part of the Councils wider safeguarding duties, and is the same as protecting them from any other harms.

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

3.1 Summary of Action to Date: Surveillance

- Through Essex Police areas of priority have been identified for intervention (localities work) due to their societal factors
- The wards determined for Thurrock based localities work using analysis determined where offenders known to criminal justice services reside (this therefore includes those offenders open to our services but offending out of borough) and where victims / perpetrators known to Essex Police reside (not where offences happen) are:
 - West Thurrock and South Stifford
 - Tilbury St Chads
- 11 micro areas have been identified for high visibility policing (Op Grip) due to the recorded crimes in the area
- A bimonthly report on contextualised safeguarding is produced highlighting areas of concern requiring an environmental response
- Mapping has been undertaken on a predominantly street level gang operating in the Grays area
- The first data sets have been created in Xantura ready for review.
- Through the Youth Crime Governance Board a triangulation has been identified between Child In Need (CIN), Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and early onset of offending.
An annual data report is presented to the Thurrock Violence & Vulnerability Board in respect of the gang related violence operation group through put

3.2 Next Steps: Surveillance

- Through the Adult Safeguarding Board work streams we are working on a vulnerable adult contextualised safeguarding report
- Continued development of products available within Xantura to support early intervention

3.3 Summary of Action to Date: Primary Prevention

- Making informed choices – interactive sessions delivered by Essex Police available to all education establishments June 21

- Awareness raising being delivered by our gang and exploitation worker in secondary schools
- Leaflet for parents created and distributed through schools *Appendix 2*
- Early Years and Family/Parenting Support through Brighter Futures

3.4 Next Steps: Primary Prevention

- A series of workshops on gang activity in Thurrock have been scheduled for professionals
- To plan and deliver focused workshops with communities to raise awareness
- To offer primary schools in key locality areas opportunity for programmes to raise awareness of exploitation in all forms
- To deliver walk on line roadshows to years 5, 6 and 7
- Continued work with youth cabinet to develop their response
- Strengthen commissioning arrangements into a single integrated function that includes a review of parenting programmes and robust evaluation of the impact of individual interventions
- Develop a comprehensive curriculum skills based offer focusing on improving communication, improving classroom behaviour, problem solving, strengthening emotional intelligence, reducing aggression and strengthening impulse control based on evidence based programmes
- Expand the reach of the generic youth service offer, prioritising areas where there is currently no or inadequate levels of provision and higher prevalence of youth violence
- Expanding the reach and breadth of INSPIRE generic skills based offer allowing a greater number of young people to benefit.

3.5 Summary of Action to Date: Secondary Prevention

- Additional funding provided by the VVU for St Stephens to deliver youth outreach work in West Thurrock and South Stifford
- Red Balloon commissioned by the VVU to deliver detached youth work in Grays, Tilbury and W Thurrock and South Stifford. This includes the holiday hunger programme, sports activities and links to existing organisations in the community.
- Mentoring project in place through the Youth offer with a focus on SEND and Children in Need
- Protocol in place with schools to reduce exclusions, provide targeted intervention and manage risk & vulnerability.

3.6 Next Steps: Secondary Prevention

- Develop outreach work delivered by the Olive Academy to reduce exclusions and support transition back to mainstream
- Clearly defined processes for referrals from the multi- agency panels for Tier 2 interventions will be in place, to ensure that young people with multiple risk factors receive the right support at the right time.
- Increase the numbers of crack cocaine users in treatment and convert them into successful recovery. We acknowledge that this is not going to be a quick outcome.

3.7 Summary of Action to Date: Tertiary Prevention

- C17 was an established gang in Grays, however following successful application of injunctions there is now limited activity.
- The multi-agency Operational gang related violence group meets monthly to discuss all nominals. The purpose of the forum is to identify, monitor and share information regarding identified gang nominals residing in Thurrock
- SOS project (run by St Giles Trust) being delivered in the Olive Academy
- Reachable Teachable moments project delivered by gang and exploitation lead
- Reachable Teachable moments project within Basildon and Thurrock University Hospital
- Through well homes approach to vulnerable families moving into the borough
- 29 individuals across Thurrock have been trained to deliver individual, or group work to parents/carers to reduce violence within the home.

3.8 Next Steps:

- Fearless Futures to be delivered in Thurrock for offenders of serious violence within the probation service
- To recruit Youth Exploitation Worker to work within the YOS to support those young people in Thurrock at risk of involvement of gangs and county lines.
- Improve our trauma focused offer within YOS and wider
- To review within Youth Justice Plan (YJP) and include resettlement process in action plan
- Evaluate current and future offer in relation to mental health services and develop a more integrated a holistic model with a greater focus on addressing familial, school, and environment risk.

4. **Reasons for Recommendation**

- 4, 1 Scrutiny by members in relation to this priority will ensure that Thurrock Council is in a strong position to fulfil the new duty which will be placed upon it in relation to serious violence¹. This duty on public bodies will ensure relevant services work together to share data and knowledge and allow them to target their interventions to prevent serious violence altogether.
- 4.2 No agency will resolve this issues on its own and we need to work with communities and ensure that they are part of the solution.
- 4.3 To enable members to agree a process for monitoring of identified actions to ensure Thurrock Council responds appropriately to the challenges posed by criminal gang activity and delivers on the recommendations within the Annual Public Health Report.

[draft guidance - serious violence duty \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

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

5.1 The purpose of bringing this report to the HEHP Committee is for scrutiny by Members.

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 This work will form a key part of delivering on the draft priorities within the Health and Well Being Strategy 2022/26 and will be consulted on as part of the development of that strategy.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

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

The Home Office through the PFCC have provided Violence and Vulnerability funding for Localities work and work with those at risk of High Harm. Corporate Finance will ensure the money is spent in accordance with the conditions attached. This is in addition to one-off funding made available by members from the budget surplus to support work on anti-social behaviour.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Lindsey Marks**
Deputy Head of Law

This is a report into criminal gang activity. The Serious Violence Duty places a statutory duty on local authorities and a range of other authorities including, youth offending teams, schools, local health boards, and policing bodies, to collaborate to prevent and reduce serious violence in the area and to formulate an evidence-based analysis of the problems associated with serious

violence in a local area, and then produce and implement a strategy detailing how they will respond to those issues. Prisons, youth custody agencies and educational authorities may also need to work with these core partners. The aim of the Duty is to encourage organisations to share information, data and intelligence, and work collaboratively rather than in isolation to tackle serious violence. Those involved must work together to identify the causes of serious violence and make plans to address it. New powers are created for sharing information with each other and with the police.

In addition the Council have an obligation to ensure the safety and protection of Thurrock residents.

7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**
**Community Engagement and Project
Monitoring Officer**

There are no direct implications in relation to diversity and equality from this report. Monitoring of the ethnicity of young offenders, and any identified learning disabilities is in place through the Youth Crime Governance Board and actions to address any identified disproportionality put in place.

7.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder, Health Inequalities, and Impact on Looked After Children

This report will support members in ensuring that they are delivering on Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act.

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):

[draft guidance - serious violence duty \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

9. **Appendices to the report**

- Appendix 1: Annual Public Health report 2020
- Appendix 2: Parent leaflet

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