



HM Government

# Ending Gang and Youth Violence Programme: Annual Report 2014/15





# **Ending Gang and Youth Violence Programme: Annual Report 2014/15**

Presented to Parliament  
by the Secretary of State for the Home Department  
by Command of Her Majesty

March 2015



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# Home Secretary



In 2011 when we launched the Ending Gang and Youth Violence programme following the August riots, I was clear more had to be done to deal with damaging and destructive gang culture.

In some parts of the country, far too many young people are growing up surrounded by casual violence, getting drawn into gangs, knowing people who have been stabbed or shot, and living in communities where they are threatened with violence. This not only causes untold harm to their lives, but misery for their families and local communities.

Over the last three years we have supported local areas in targeting this threat. We have worked with a range of partners in 43 areas including local authorities, children's social care, employment advisers, voluntary and community organisations, the police and criminal justice agencies. In 2012/13 we provided direct funding of £10 million to 29 areas. Throughout the programme we have also given local areas practical support tailored to their specific needs. This has included the services of our independent expert advisers' network which is made up of over 80 people with expertise in tackling gangs and youth crime.

We have worked to understand gang dynamics better, particularly the need to address mental health issues, and the risks faced by young women and girls who come into contact with gangs. We know many are subjected to appalling rape, abuse, exploitation and domestic violence.

We have strengthened legislation by introducing a new offence of "threatening with a knife in a public place or school", updated the definition of gang-related violence so that it reflects better the way gangs operate, and expanded the terms under which gang injunctions can be imposed to include drug dealing. We have introduced new powers to tackle gang-related violence in prisons. We have also improved the information sharing links between the police and the National Offender Management Service to tackle gang affiliation and violence in the secure estate.

Where criminal activity takes place, we have been clear that the law must be robustly enforced. But we must also work to prevent young people from becoming drawn into gangs in the first place. This year, through a new collaboration with the Early Intervention Foundation, we have helped local areas access evidence of "what works" in preventing gang and youth violence, and identify the risk and vulnerability factors that make young people susceptible.

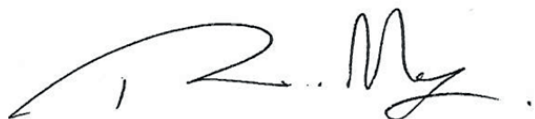
We are also doing more to understand the complex relationships between street gangs, the illegal drugs market, troubled families and serious and organised crime.

This year, through improved communications with partners such as the police, the National Crime Agency and others, we uncovered serious criminality that may otherwise have taken a lot longer to identify. In a number of cases, this involved the exploitation of vulnerable young people and adults by a hard core of violent gang members in order to move and sell drugs across the country, known as 'county lines'.

We know some urban gangs engage in drug dealing on behalf of organised criminals, and some aspire to become organised gangs in their own right. So we must continue to work together to effectively tackle the threats posed by gangs and crack down on gang crime.

Crime is down by more than a fifth since 2010, according to the independent Crime Survey for England and Wales. Knife crime and firearms offences are down, with offences involving knives or sharp instruments falling by 20% since this Government came to power. And hospital admissions following an assault with a knife or sharp object dropped by 22% between 2009/10 and 2013/14.

Finally, I want to thank all those in local communities and non government organisations who have supported our work and helped us to understand the challenges better. It is thanks to your commitment and willingness to work hard to make a difference that we will ensure that vulnerable young people are given a brighter future.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Theresa May', with a large, sweeping flourish at the beginning.

Right Honourable Theresa May MP  
Home Secretary



# Secretary of State for Work and Pensions



Social justice lies at the heart of the Government's ground-breaking work to tackle gangs and youth violence – transforming the lives of people devastated by being affiliated to a gang or the victim of violence.

Social justice is about changing fates and helping people to move beyond the circumstances they find themselves in, even when there is no easy way out.

Established in the aftermath of the 2011 riots, this exactly was the aim of the Government's strategy to end gang and youth violence: to give vulnerable and troubled young people a second chance, where it is seemingly impossible to see anything but a life of violence, crime and institutions. This is about breaking the cycle of violence with an alternative lifestyle – one built on responsibility, trust, hope and compassion.

Three years on from the start of this strategy, our ambition has expanded further still. Beyond the original 33 worst-afflicted areas, this report now outlines the Government's on-going work in 43 local areas across England and Wales, setting out the progress we have made.

This work starts with intervening early, preventing problems from becoming entrenched. Now, DWP's Innovation Fund is doing just that, getting to the young people who are most at risk and helping to raise their expectations. To date, Innovation Fund projects have helped 15,400 young people, and 16,600 positive education and employment outcomes have been achieved – each one making a lasting difference to people's lives.


For those who are able, we know that work offers the best route out of disadvantage. That is why through a team of specialist Jobcentre Plus gangs advisers, we are developing new ways to reach out to young people, breaking the destructive spiral of gang life through work. The consistent effort of our advisers has had a substantial positive effect on former gang members. Of nearly 3,000 young people who have been helped, almost two thirds have moved into employment, education or training. What's more, through local partnerships, engagement with local employers has also led to youngsters embarking on apprenticeships, moving towards sustainable employment.

It is imperative that our ambition remains to continue offering those trapped in a destructive cycle of gang and youth violence a chance to break free and forge a more peaceful and positive life.

For in visit after visit to Britain's most deprived estates, both gang members and community workers tell me the same thing. It is one matter to put an immediate stop to gang violence, but true success is about keeping that young person out of a gang, away from violence on a permanent basis. This is what will deliver meaningful life change, helping young people to realise their potential and the opportunity of a better future.

In doing so, this strategy is not simply about changing the fates of individuals caught up in gang violence. Even more than that, it is about changing the fates of entire families and communities who otherwise suffer the damage.

We must make this a lasting ambition – into the next Parliament and beyond. By doing so, we can hope to build sustainable foundations on which children, neighbourhoods and our whole society can flourish, free of gang violence.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Iain Duncan Smith', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Right Honourable Iain Duncan Smith MP  
Secretary of State for Work and Pensions

# Introduction

## The difference the programme has made

Publication of the cross-government *Ending Gang and Youth Violence* report in November 2011 has led to a significant change in the way this problem is understood and tackled. It is now widely recognised that gang and youth violence is as much an issue of safeguarding vulnerable people and identifying undiagnosed mental health issues amongst gang members, as it is about ensuring the right sanctions are in place to punish criminal behaviour. It is now better understood that some young people who commit violence have been victims themselves, or witnessed violence in the home at an early age. There is a new emphasis on early intervention and prevention. Many local areas can now identify who their most violent and vulnerable young people are, and are targeting resources more effectively. For the first time, the dangers to girls and young women from gangs – including the significant risk of sexual exploitation – are being recognised and action is being taken.

## Catalyst for change

In the words of one local partner, the programme has been a “catalyst for change”<sup>1</sup>. It has encouraged local areas to take a fresh look at their challenges, and make more effective and efficient use of local resources. It has encouraged local innovation, and the sharing of learning amongst partners.

## Genuine collaboration

These changes have only been possible because of the genuine collaborative approach taken, involving the engagement of a wide range of local, regional and national partners. Those involved include the Early Intervention Foundation, the NSPCC, the British Association of Sexual Health and HIV, Public Health England and Crimestoppers, as well as a broad range of voluntary organisations, local authorities, criminal justice agencies, Police and Crime Commissioners and government departments.

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1 Focus group with practitioners to assess the Ending Gangs and Youth Violence programme – May 2014

## Practical support for local areas

The distinctive way in which the programme has been designed and run has been crucial to the progress made. The focus has been on facilitating practical change in local areas by establishing a frontline team and drawing on the expertise of an 80-strong network of independent advisors with experience of dealing with gangs and youth violence, including the links between gangs, drug dealing and serious and organised crime. Knowledge of the issues is now more sophisticated and the programme has evolved in response to this and feedback from partners. An early identification process has been developed to enable local areas to identify those young people who are most violent or most vulnerable to harm from gang violence. This wide-ranging approach has ensured that support has been tailored to the specific needs and circumstances of local areas.

## Low cost, high impact

The programme has also offered real value for money. Home Office funding of £10 million to local areas in year one (2012/13) helped our priority areas set up sustainable approaches to tackle this problem. This came from the re-prioritisation of existing funding following the riots of summer 2011. Since then, our approach has been to provide expert advice through the Ending Gang and Youth Violence frontline team and the 80-strong peer network. This has been both low cost and high impact, and has helped local areas – including the new ten areas that joined the programme in summer 2014 – identify and improve their response to tackling gang and youth violence.

## Identification of gang-related serious and organised crime

Through our work to improve information gathering and sharing, and collaboration between partners, the programme has uncovered some serious criminality that may have otherwise have taken a lot longer to identify. This involves serious and organised criminality by a hard core of violent gang members who exploit vulnerable young people and adults in order to move and sell drugs across the country. This is known as 'county lines' because it extends across county boundaries. We are working with local partners, the police and the National Crime Agency to ensure this issue is gripped effectively.

## Challenges ahead

Much progress has been made under the Ending Gang and Youth Violence programme. We must ensure we continue to address new challenges and priority issues, such as the exploitation of vulnerable young people and adults by gangs.

# Practical support for local areas

*“The work of the Ending Gang and Youth Violence programme has helped us get to a point with this young man that we would not have been able to achieve without their support and national guidance.”* Barking and Dagenham

The *Ending Gang and Youth Violence* report published in 2011 recognised that: “there is no simple panacea to youth or gang violence. Solving the problem requires systematic effort across a range of services... ensuring processes are clear, that staff are trained properly and all avenues pursued.”<sup>2</sup> We also made clear that the programme would focus on giving local areas support tailored according to their specific local challenges.

The programme approach, from the outset, has therefore been both practical and peer-led, and engaged the wide range of local agencies that come into contact with young people and communities affected by gangs. This has been provided through our Ending Gang and Youth Violence frontline team and a peer network of over 80 experts with experience of dealing with gangs, including the links with drug dealing and serious and organised crime. The network come from a wide range of professional backgrounds including youth and community work, safeguarding, education, health, probation and youth justice, and the police. This was a much broader approach than had been taken before, which tended to be top-down and much more police-led. The breadth of experience and perspectives in the extended peer review network has been a real strength of the programme and a key factor in its success. Using this approach, we are now supporting 43 local areas across the country.

The review<sup>3</sup> of the first year of the programme (2012-13) showed that this approach works. Local areas felt that they had been able to drive the programme to a greater extent than previous Home Office initiatives, and saw the peer support and focus on cross-agency working as particular strengths. Positive changes were made as a result.

Recent feedback confirm that the programme continues to make a positive difference – 79% (22) of the areas responding to a survey<sup>4</sup> found the work of the programme to be ‘extremely’ or ‘very important’, with 71% (20) having a ‘better understanding of which young people are involved in or affected by gangs’ as a result.

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2 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ending-gang-and-youth-violence-annual-report-2013>

3 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ending-gang-and-youth-violence-review-2012-to-2013>

4 Local area feedback from Ending Gangs and Youth Violence programme participating areas – October 2014 (28 out of 33 areas responded)

In addition, the ten new areas that joined the programme in 2014 also say that they have benefited, with 89% of areas (8) stating it was either extremely or very important to be part of the programme.<sup>5</sup> Participation was also felt to be significant in changing the work carried out in local areas to address gang and youth violence, with 89% of areas (8) intending to engage more gang-affected young people (whether for enforcement or supportive interventions).

## Practical support for partners in Brent

The Ending Gang and Youth Violence frontline team has helped the London Borough of Brent make significant improvements in tackling gang and youth violence. A programme of support was developed that was intensive and covered an 18 months period. As a result Brent has now introduced:

- An effective multi-agency case management process which brings organisations together to manage high-risk gang members in the area, and divert them away from crime and into positive lifestyles.
- Preventative work in local schools on gangs and youth violence. The work involves awareness building with pupils, with a focus on the risks and consequences of gang membership and pathways out.
- A youth worker in St Mary's hospital who identifies patients referred in with gunshot or stab wounds and provides targeted intervention and support as necessary.
- A gang 'call-in' where gang members were called in to a meeting with local agencies and community representatives. During the call-in the gang members were presented with a stark choice – to stop violent and criminal activity or face the full force of enforcement action. At the same time they were offered mentoring and other support such as advice on work place skills, employment, housing and other life and personal skills. Since the call-in, those gang members who engaged have not been involved in any serious violence incidents. Further gang call-ins are planned.
- Enforcement activity targeted at hot spots where there is violence on the street in licensed premises to reduce violent crime and reassure the community. Stop and search, search warrants and CCTV have also been used.

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<sup>5</sup> Local area feedback from the most recently joined (2014) Ending Gangs and Youth Violence programme participating areas – February 2015 (9 out of 10 areas responded)

- A stronger and more effective local partnership with responsibility for taking action including the police, schools, local authority, voluntary sector, troubled families team, probation, housing, youth offending, substance misuse, safeguarding and health professionals.
- In addition, mental health services are planned for young people with complex needs whose problems are not currently addressed by existing services in the area.

Brent has come a long way in a relatively short period of time since joining the programme. As a result, opportunities have been created for the first time which positively impact on the lives of vulnerable young people in the area.

## Action taken over the last year includes:

- Enabling local areas to better understand their local gang and youth violence issues through effective data collection and information sharing. This has been achieved through the development of a new process – called the local assessment process. A series of interviews and focus groups with frontline practitioners are used to enable local areas to identify information about gang-related problems that may otherwise be missed. Ten areas have benefitted from delivery of a local assessment process, tailored for their local challenges (such as sexual exploitation by gangs). To ensure all areas can benefit, and to meet demand from local areas, a self-assessment toolkit has been produced and shared across the 43 Ending Gang and Youth Violence areas.
- Providing tailored support to selected Ending Gang and Youth Violence priority areas to help them identify and resolve local information sharing barriers. The Centre of Excellence for Information Sharing works with local areas to explore underlying organisational and cultural barriers to effective sharing of information. It supports the area to develop and deliver its own solutions, using good practice and lessons learned in other places. In return, the Centre of Excellence for Information Sharing disseminates the insight gained in the local area to inform and develop a deeper understanding of information sharing challenges amongst a wider audience.
- Delivering training to help around 300 frontline practitioners to better understand how young people become involved in gangs and the risks that gang involvement or association presents in young people's day to day lives, which can affect their attitudes, behaviour, attendance and motivation. Evaluation from the training indicates that practitioners who come into contact with young people are now better able to adapt their approach as they have a greater understanding of the circumstances of the young person they are trying to support.



- Holding a national conference in December 2014 on the *Evolution of Gangs – Violence and Vulnerability*, which brought together 135 gang and youth violence practitioners from across the country. The conference provided attendees with new and practical ways to use data and to share information effectively in order to identify violent and vulnerable individuals.
- Delivering intensive peer reviews with the ten new areas joining the Ending Gang and Youth Violence programme. These have resulted in an improved understanding of the local violence and vulnerability linked to gangs, and many areas have now developed new multi-agency partnership approaches focusing specifically on addressing the recommendations made.
- Providing tailored support to a number of areas on issues such as community engagement, missing people, engagement of youth services, and links between trauma and gang activity. Support was also provided on the development of more effective processes, services and interventions for those at risk of gang related domestic violence. This work has helped areas to better understand the issues and to identify the most appropriate interventions.

*“The work done in developing a local problem profile gave a clear focus for our work, and has subsequently fed into a range of other work relating to public service reform, tackling organised crime and addressing child sexual exploitation.”*

**Oldham – Feedback from an area participating in the Ending Gangs and Youth Violence programme, October 2014**

- Rolling out a revised version of the Workshop to Raise Awareness of Prevent (WRAP) training. The facilitated training package was designed to help practitioners identify when a person may be vulnerable to radicalisation, how to raise concerns and what proportionate action should be taken. Gang practitioners are being encouraged to take up this training.
- Ongoing support to all priority areas in sharing of good practice and understanding emerging threats, risks and harms.
- Delivering regional master classes to help voluntary sector organisations working on gang, youth violence and drugs issues to better understand new commissioning practices. The Home Office and Cabinet Office commercial master classes provide advice to voluntary sector organisations on how to adapt their business practices, and help them to build relationships with other organisations and with commissioners, including Police and Crime



Commissioners. As a result of these master classes, voluntary sector organisations will be able to provide a more coherent and 'sellable' offer to commissioners, while still retaining the values and strengths of the youth voluntary sector.

The Ending Gang and Youth Violence frontline team and extended peer network are at the heart of the approach of the programme. Our local approach has helped us develop a much better understanding of the causes of vulnerability and violence linked to gangs or groups. Our engagement with a diverse range of independent experts who can challenge the way things are done and facilitate direct engagement has also made a crucial difference. It has ensured we could stay on top of new challenges, and act as a catalyst for change where problems were identified. Support given by these experts has also enabled local areas to identify and implement sustainable locally driven solutions, share good practice and mainstream gang and youth violence priorities.

*“Without a doubt, the Ending Gang and Youth Violence programme, has been a help to our work locally... Without it we wouldn’t have been able to achieve half the things we have.”*

**Interview participant, Ending Gang and Youth Violence Review, 2012-2013**

*“I believe the programme has removed the stigma of areas recognising their problem and seeking to work with the Home Office on gangs.”*

**Deputy Chief Constable Dave Thompson, West Midlands Police and National Policing Lead on gang violence – Written evidence to Home Affairs Select Committee Inquiry on Gangs and Youth Crime, 2014**

*“The creation of a national programme led by a central government department is incredibly helpful in convincing local councillors and leaders to acknowledge and tackle an issue.”*

**Safer London Foundation – Written evidence to Home Affairs Select Committee Inquiry on Gangs and Youth Crime, 2014**

*“The Ending Gang and Youth Violence Peer Review has been a positive and extremely useful experience and will most definitely support us in taking the work forward.”*

**Barnet – Feedback from an area participating in the Ending Gang and Youth Violence programme, February 2015**

# Early intervention, prevention and routes out of gangs

*“The programme has helped us develop effective early identification, developing and delivering a Pathways Out programme, revitalising partnership work and collaboration, and improving leadership at a community and political level.” Derby*

In 2011, the government set out the importance of all partners working together to stop gang and youth violence, and that this included teachers, doctors, youth workers and social workers, as well as the police. It was clear that practitioners from all agencies who come into contact with young people, from birth and the early years onwards, need to be alert to the risk factors that may point to a child becoming involved in violence and crime, and they need to have the knowledge and tools to intervene at the earliest opportunity to help that child and their family.

Since 2011, we have driven work across government to embed and strengthen local multi-agency work on prevention and early intervention. This has been with the aim of helping agencies in our priority areas to safeguard young people from the harm caused by gangs and violence.

We know that the work of the Ending Gang and Youth Violence programme has made a tangible difference in local areas: last year, 28 of the original priority areas told us that 71% (20) of them had a better understanding of how to intervene early to prevent young people becoming involved in gang violence, and 57% (16)<sup>6</sup> used this information to commission more effective preventative programmes or support.

The risk factors usually do not exist in isolation. That is why we have joined up across government to link with initiatives to help the most disadvantaged in our society including the Troubled Families programme, Social Justice Strategy, and Care Leavers Strategy. Our aim is to break the damaging intergenerational cycle of crime and violence that still occurs in too many families. A good example of this is the collaboration with the Department for Work and Pensions to support local areas to roll out innovative schemes to break the cycle of disadvantage through work, education and training.

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6 Feedback from Ending Gangs and Youth Violence programme participating areas – October 2014 (28 out of 33 areas responded)

## Nottingham Peer Support Programme

Nottingham Jobcentre Plus and Nottingham City Council have worked together to develop an innovative work readiness programme aimed at helping steer disaffected young people away from violence and criminality. The programme provides young people with training to develop their skills, and brings local employers on board to give participants work experience and interview practice. From the first round of young people to take part, 18 have begun now begun apprenticeships with the employers.

One young person completed programme and took up a role at a recording studio. He said, *"This is the first time I've finished anything. I feel so proud that I can tell my mum that I've finished this course and got a job"*.

The second and third rounds of the peer support programme began in February, focusing on the youth, sports and constructions sectors.

## Action taken over the last year includes:

- Supporting local areas to develop effective early intervention approaches and commission more effective preventative programmes. This has been achieved by the Home Office funding the Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) to:
  - Ensure local areas are fully informed about which programmes are shown to be effective in preventing gang and youth violence. Programmes identified through this review will be added to the EIF's online guidebook for commissioners which will be available shortly.<sup>7</sup>
  - Help local practitioners better identify those children in need of support by publishing a report<sup>8</sup> which pulls together the academic evidence on risk factors for gang involvement and youth violence, and gives practical advice on how to identify these risk factors.
  - Support local areas to commission better mentoring programmes by publishing simple, evidence based guidance.<sup>9</sup>
  - Provide practical support and advice to local areas, which has included advice on engaging schools and working with health partners.

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7 <http://www.eif.org.uk/preventing-gang-and-youth-violence/>

8 <http://www.eif.org.uk/preventing-gang-and-youth-violence/>

9 <http://www.eif.org.uk/publications/preventing-gang-involvement-and-youth-violence-advice-for-commissioning-mentoring-programmes/>

*“Having recently gone through an EGYV peer review and currently planning the multi-agency response, the range of programmes offering safeguarding and diversion intervention could easily lead to commissioning off the shelf packages more suited to the supplier than the subject requirements. The mentoring guidance is an excellent tool to develop a mature needs assessment and gives confidence in demanding and selecting services suitable for local issues and local needs.”*

**Margate – following its peer review by the Ending Gang and Youth Violence Peer Review Network, February 2015**

- Helping parents, carers and other adults worried about a young person at risk of gang involvement or youth violence by:
  - Supporting the NSPCC to extend its telephone helpline to provide advice on gangs.
  - Making advice available through the Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Centre website. The webpage is due to go live in April 2015.
- Strengthening schools’ powers to respond to pupil absence, where this is a sign that a young person may be being drawn into a negative lifestyle, including gang activity, by:
  - Ensuring schools can use their legal powers to encourage parents and carers to support a child’s school attendance and educational success or use sanctions where there is a risk of disengagement. We have increased the amount attached to penalty notices issued for pupil absence and reduced the overall time given to pay the penalty notices.
  - Prompting schools to act early to address patterns of poor attendance by reducing the threshold for classifying a pupil as being persistently absent, from missing for 20% of school time to missing for 15%. The persistent absence threshold will reduce further to 10% from September 2015.
- Working to end the cycle of disadvantage by:
  - Supporting dedicated Jobcentre Plus advisors to develop innovative ways of working with young people affected by gang and youth violence to help them into employment, training or education. For example, co-locating with other agencies such as, the police, probation services and local authorities, making home visits or meeting young people in a ‘safe’ place away from the Jobcentre office. Advisors in London and the Home

Counties have worked with nearly 3,000 young people since February 2012,<sup>10</sup> 63% of whom have moved into work, education or training.

- Ensuring that Jobcentre Plus advisors in the ten new priority areas know how to identify and work with young people affected by gangs by providing training on the nature of gang culture, and sharing learning about how success has been achieved with young people on the periphery of gangs.

*“Working with my Jobcentre Plus advisor has been a turning point in my life, and has helped me “fix up”. She has supported me to get this apprenticeship, and I can now walk the straight and narrow, positive path in life. I am now focused and motivated to stay in employment. It has also motivated some of my friends, who have been doing nothing with themselves, and who are unemployed and signing on, to try much harder to get themselves sorted out.”*

**Former gang member helped by Jobcentre Plus advisor, January 2013**

- Raising the expectations of young people through the Department for Work and Pensions’ Innovation Fund. The Fund, which supports disadvantaged young people aged 14 years old and over, has helped 15,400 young people since its inception in April 2012,<sup>11</sup> including those involved in or affected by gangs, youth violence or youth crime. 16,600 positive outcomes have been achieved, including re-entering education, gaining educational qualifications, and securing employment.

## Tower Hamlets ‘Think Forward Project’

Think Forward is a DWP Innovation Fund project that provides one-to-one support to vulnerable young people aged 14-17 years old to help them achieve positive behavioural change and educational qualifications.

One young boy, who comes from a background of family criminality and gang involvement, has been inspired to reject gangs by role models from the project’s partner business, E&Y. He told his Think Forward project worker that he had said “no” to older gang members who offered him money to pick up and drop off a firearm for them, saying: *“I don’t want my life to go that way...I want to do it in the legit’ way, like E&Y do.”*

<sup>10</sup> Jobcentre Plus figures as at December 2014

<sup>11</sup> DWP Innovation Fund figures as at September 2014

- Through Cabinet Office initiatives young people have been supported to ensure they have the opportunities and tools they need to fulfil their potential by:
  - Funding social action programmes under the Centre for Social Action’s £2.9 million Vulnerable and Disengaged Young People Fund. Local areas have been able to access funds to work with groups of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, including young offenders and young people at risk of joining or in gangs. Over the last year, more than 1,000 volunteers have already been mobilised to give their time and support to almost 2,000 young people through 26 grant programmes across England.

## Centre for Social Action’s Vulnerable and Disengaged Young People Fund

The Social Action programmes work with three groups of young people: young people in and leaving care, young offenders and other young people from a disadvantaged background. Across the young offenders stream, there are eight programmes supporting more than 400 young offenders or young people at risk of offending. One of the initiatives under the Fund is SOVA, a charity that works with communities in England and Wales to help people steer clear of crime. They are using their grant of £205,000 to scale up its volunteer mentoring programme, involving at least 250 young offenders in the West Midlands. Volunteers will mentor and support young offenders in a range of key areas, such as advice around accommodation and independent living skills, accessing substance misuse services and developing interests away from negative peer groups. As with all the Vulnerable and Disengaged Young People programmes an independent evaluator will assess the impact of the programme on the young people’s outcomes.

- Supporting young people affected by gangs and youth violence to develop entrepreneurial skills in partnership with the Evening Standard newspaper, as part of its Frontline London campaign. In April 2014, the Cabinet Office put a call out for young Londoners with a social enterprise idea to apply for funding of up to £8,000 per project. The ten successful participants came from across London and ranged in age from 19-30 years. The entrepreneurs received sessions on basics in business and leadership development and were matched with a mentor from Lloyds Banking Group. Since starting the programme in June 2014, five of the entrepreneurs’ social enterprises have started trading.
- Continuing to see impressive growth in the National Citizen’s Service (NCS) with over 130,000 young people having taken part to date. Considerable care has been taken to ensure that young people from disadvantaged backgrounds have access to the programme through outreach work and bursaries. NCS not only recruits young people from a wide range of backgrounds but consecutive independent evaluations have also

demonstrated that it engages them in their communities whilst equipping them with the skills to make a difference.

- Enabling families affected by gang and youth violence to benefit from an integrated, whole family approach by targeting families affected by these problems and other associated risk factors in the local eligibility criteria for the Troubled Families programmes.
- The expanded Troubled Families Programme will reach families with a broader range of multiple problems – including parents and children involved in crime and anti-social behaviour, those affected by domestic violence and families where mental and physical health problems are prevalent. Over two thirds of the best performing local areas on the current programme have started delivery of the expanded programme early. The current Troubled Families programme is firmly on track, with over 105,000 families turned around as at the end of February 2015.

## Troubled Families Programme

An unemployed single mother was struggling with her two children (a son and a young daughter) who were out of control, not attending school and committing anti-social behaviour. The mum was suffering from depression and the police were regularly called out to the house by neighbours who could hear the son, who was often violent to his mum, smashing up the house. The mum struggled with parenting and the family was often abusive to the many different services who tried to help them. Mum was also in debt. The son had three Youth Referral Orders for criminal damage, assault and public order offences, was excluded from mainstream school and was associating with a well-known gang.

The family intervention worker explained the consequences of the family not working with her to change their ways, for example it could mean court action for non attendance at school, or anti-social behaviour orders. She worked directly with the mum on better parenting and made sure that mum got help with her depression, her financial situation and began talking to her about getting a job.

The worker realised the son was also suffering from mental health problems and got him the help he needed from children's mental health services. The relationship strengthened between the family worker and the son and he is now fully enrolled on an education course and since then there have been no more incidents of anti-social behaviour. His relationship with his mum has improved greatly and the domestic violence incidents have stopped.



As a result of the Ending Gang and Youth Violence programme, local areas now better understand the benefits of preventative work and early intervention initiatives to community safety, including the longer term cost savings they yield. Our work with the Early Intervention Foundation means that local areas are also better equipped to understand what the evidence tells us about risk factors, so that they can identify these early on and target their resources accordingly. But this knowledge in itself is not enough. The Ending Gang and Youth Violence frontline team and network of experts have provided the crucial advice which has enabled local leaders and practitioners to act on what they have learned. This has led to positive changes to working arrangements and service delivery which has been vital in supporting practitioners to make preventative interventions and pathways out of violence and crime available at the different stages of a young person's life.

*“As a result of the Ending Gang and Youth Violence programme, and the recent peer review in our area, we now have a better understanding of which young people in the local area are involved in, or affected by, gangs. Most of the agencies are now talking and sharing information via the Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub and we are able to focus on the most vulnerable individuals affected by this criminality.”*

**Ipswich – Feedback from an area participating in the Ending Gangs and Youth Violence programme, February 2015**

# A public health response to youth violence

In 2011, our ambition from the Ending Gang and Youth Violence programme was clear – for the response to violence and its prevention and reduction to be seen as much as a health priority as it is a policing one. We have gone a long way to achieving that ambition. Over the last three years we have seen a major change in the way that health services view their role in reducing violence, with the importance of their role promoted in key policy documents, such as the public health outcomes framework, the Mandate from the Government to NHS England and *Protecting People Promoting Health*.<sup>12</sup> The Department of Health's Policy Research Programme has commissioned and funded independent research by the Centre for Public Health at Liverpool John Moores University. This ongoing research includes a suite of reports and case studies to support local partners in using health data in violence prevention.<sup>13, 14, 15</sup> As a result issues like Accident and Emergency data sharing on violent incidents with the police, the mental health needs of young people involved in gang and youth violence, and girls associated with gangs have been recognised as areas that need greater focus.

## Providing mental health support

A young man aged 16 with mental health problems was subject to physical abuse from his parents who in turn were abusing alcohol and drugs. He got involved in a local gang and was carrying drugs for them.

He was kidnapped by a rival gang and was physically harmed by them. They took the drugs and money which meant that he was under pressure because his local gang were looking for him.

As a result of the problems he faced the young man became suicidal. Due to the severity of these problems, the young man and his family were moved to a different borough under the Safe and Secure scheme managed by the Safer London Foundation.

12 [www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH\\_132358](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_132358)

13 [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/216977/Violence-prevention.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/216977/Violence-prevention.pdf)

14 [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/383495/2902896\\_DoH\\_Mandate\\_Accessible\\_v0.2.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/383495/2902896_DoH_Mandate_Accessible_v0.2.pdf)

15 [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/386221/NHS\\_England\\_Mandate.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/386221/NHS_England_Mandate.pdf) – nhs mandate 2015/16

Following the move, he was supported by a mentor from SOS St Giles Trust. The mentor identified and secured relevant pathways to help the young man address the problems he faced. That work carried on for six months to the point where the mentor has now built up the young man's self-esteem and confidence. Part of the support is about finding what young people are passionate about and supporting them to help achieve it.

As a result of the specific action taken to support the young man, he is now seeking to enter the entertainments industry and has been supported in pursuit of his ambitions. He also participates in sporting activities twice a week which he enjoys and which helps him.

We have worked closely with the Department of Health, Public Health England, NHS England and others to raise awareness and improve health agencies local response to gang and youth violence. Practical support has been provided by the Ending Gang and Youth Violence frontline team through in-depth reviews with community safety partners (including health partners) in two priority areas, and the learning has been shared with other areas.

## Action taken over the last year includes:

- Piloting an innovative approach to training local partners on how to recognise mental health problems in young people and help them access the right services in Barking and Dagenham. The approach involves young people in the training and in shaping the response that the agencies provide. MAC-UK, the leading charity on gangs and mental health, were commissioned to undertake this work.
- Exposing the issue of the high levels of mental illness faced by gang members through publication of *The mental health needs of gang-affiliated young people*, produced by Public Health England and the Centre for Public Health.<sup>16</sup> The document sets out, for the first time, the programmes and evidence-based interventions that promote health and emotional wellbeing, support recovery from mental illness and help young people move away from harmful gang-related activities.
- Awarding up to £460,050 in 2014/15 and up to £379,050 in 2015/16 to the Metropolitan Police for specialist mental health training from the Home Office Police Innovation Fund. The training aims to train eight thousand professionals across London to help them respond to the signs of mental and emotional trauma among gang members.
- Producing a series of podcasts about gang and youth violence for health professionals. The podcasts include Professor Mark Bellis, from the Centre for Public Health, who sets out the public health approach to violence; and Dr Charlie Howard, founding director of

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16 [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/398674/The\\_mental\\_health\\_needs\\_of\\_gang-affiliated\\_young\\_people\\_v3\\_23\\_01\\_1.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/398674/The_mental_health_needs_of_gang-affiliated_young_people_v3_23_01_1.pdf)

MAC-UK, on the mental health needs of gang members. The podcasts, produced by Public Health England and the Home Office, are available on GOV.UK.<sup>17</sup>

- Supporting Redthread to expand the provision of youth workers in Accident and Emergency departments across major trauma centres in London. This will provide more support to young people who are admitted to Accident and Emergency Departments during the crucial ‘teachable moment’ after they have been admitted with a wound.
- Publishing guidance<sup>18</sup> for schools to help teachers better identify underlying mental health problems, including those which may make young people more vulnerable to negative influences, so that they can be confident in finding appropriate help for at-risk pupils.
- Bringing together health and criminal justice partners to share good and promising practice on gang and youth violence, mental health, early intervention and sexual violence. Workshops were held in Manchester and London, organised by the Department of Health, Home Office, Public Health England and the Early Intervention Foundation.
- Ensuring that Accident and Emergency Departments are clear about how to share information on violent incidents with the police, to enable violent hotspots in local communities to be identified more accurately. The Department of Health oversaw and published the development of an information standard setting out the minimum level of data that hospitals are expected to capture and share with community safety partners. The standard was developed with the College of Policing, National Policing Leads, Public Health England, College of Emergency Medicine and NHS England and was published by the Health and Social Care Information Centre in September 2014.

We know that young people, including gang members exposed to violence, have poorer health outcomes. We have learnt from international partners about the strength of utilising health services to support young people early on. Through the programme we have been able to support local areas to overcome barriers and implement a multi-agency approach to gang and youth violence that considers the health and wellbeing needs of young people involved in, or at risk of, being involved in gang and youth violence. Whilst we have made significant progress in bringing health partners on board our programme, these links need to be maintained and developed further as we learn more about the changing nature of gang involvement.

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17 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mental-health-needs-of-gang-affiliated-young-people>

18 <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/mental-health-behaviour-guidance-to-be-issued-to-schools>

## Supporting a young person with mental health needs

A vulnerable young person had been transferred into the area due to involvement with gangs in the previous area of residence. He had been picked up a number of times with gang nominals and caught in possession of an offensive weapon. Following the transfer however, the young person continued gang activity with a gang in the new area.

In response, the young person was referred to Pathways Multi-Agency Support (PMAP) by local Social Services. Both the young person and his mother were identified as having mental health issues necessitating a referral to Child and Adult Mental Health Services (CAMHS). The young person's problems were centred around his behaviour as a result of experiencing domestic abuse in the family home and the mother's were due to experiencing domestic abuse directly as well as coping with her son's behaviour.

In addition, further support was provided. A mentor was allocated to the young person; the gangs schools officer liaised with the young person's school and social services continued to support the whole family. The young person was the subject of a care order and was a looked after child to move him away from the area; this was not however a permanent arrangement. He was also referred to a specialised team to help address his mental health needs and also introduced to a local centre for young people who provided extra support. The young person's mother was supported by mental health services to the point where she was able to take up employment.

The Metropolitan Police schools officer and the Education Welfare Officer jointly identified educational issues and another more appropriate school was identified that provided for young people whose needs are beyond mainstream educational provision.

The young person's mother was working so was unable to give as much support as the young person required so mentors stepped in to provide support. Mentors attended several meetings to help plan the young person's progress through the education system.

A serious risk to the young person was identified in the event of continued residence in the borough. A move within the Safe and Secure programme was proposed due to the risk of either death or committing a violent offence but was not pursued as the family did not want to leave the area due to existing support networks.

In terms of outcomes, the support provided to address all the identified issues was successful and attempts are currently being made to move the family out of the area with continued support. The planned move has to take into account the limited housing supply available in other boroughs. There is also some enforcement action being taken as the young person has attended court due to robbery. The identified risk is more focused however on his vulnerability to gang association.

# Supporting women and girls affected by gang violence

*“At last, a gang strategy that acknowledges the presence of girls.”* Carlene Firmin MBE<sup>19</sup>

The *Ending Gang and Youth Violence* report published in 2011 recognised that: “In focusing on the male perpetrators and victims of gang violence it can be easy to lose sight of the role that young women and girls may have in gang-related activity, and the hidden impact of serious youth violence on them.” Women and girls associated with gang members can experience significant harm, including sexual violence. Safeguarding this vulnerable group of young women has been a priority for the Ending Gang and Youth Violence programme, whereas previous gangs work had focused on enforcement and viewed gang violence as only concerning boys and young men. This is the first time any Government has tackled these issues.

In 2011, we committed to developing ways to identify young women at risk of gang-related violence and sexual violence and to providing interventions to protect them. At that time the problem was described as ‘hidden’ and local interventions were poor or non-existent. From this starting point, considerable progress has been made. In the review of the first year of the programme, local areas reported implementing new and improved approaches to supporting girls and women associated with gangs.

The introduction of Young People’s Advocates – supported by Home Office funding of £1.6 million over four years – means that there is now a specialist service in around half of our priority areas which supports girls and young women affected by sexual violence by gangs. Common issues faced by the young people with whom the Advocates work include domestic violence, drug and alcohol misuse, school exclusion and going missing from home.

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<sup>19</sup> Head of the MsUnderstood Partnership and Senior Research Fellow, University of Bedfordshire. The Guardian, 8/11/2011

## Manchester Integrated Gangs Management Unit

In Manchester, each girl or young woman deemed at risk from gang activity will be met in a place where she feels most comfortable. An assessment of need will be devised to ensure that her needs and any ongoing vulnerabilities are identified and addressed holistically. Many of the young women that the Unit work with have been groomed into sexualised or criminal activity and believe that such behaviour is normal. Therefore, the agencies responsible for safeguarding will work in partnership with the Young People's Advocates (there are two in Manchester – one on the Integrated Gangs Management Unit and one in St Mary's Sexual Assault Referral Centre).

In one example, a 'looked after' girl came to the attention of the Unit as there were concerns about her safety. She was going missing from home and was growing distant from her foster carers, with whom she had previously had a good relationship. It transpired through police intelligence that she was associating with a known gang member. The Integrated Gangs Management Unit and a Young People's Advocates worked closely with the girl on a 12 week programme. The programme aims to build self esteem, address any substance misuse or other issues, such as domestic violence, and replace negative factors, which could attract vulnerable girls to gangs, with positive alternatives. With this help, she no longer has anything to do with gangs.

As well as working with young people on a one-to-one basis, the Advocates work closely with local partners such as schools to raise awareness about young people at risk of sexual violence or exploitation. In feedback from local partners, including the police, youth offending teams and social workers, 87% (26) stated that the Advocates they worked with had had a very positive effect on providing direct and intensive support for young people who are victims, or at risk, of sexual violence or exploitation.<sup>20</sup> The strength of the Young People's Advocate model has been a catalyst for additional investment in similar posts which have been introduced by voluntary organisations and local authorities.



## The strength of the Young People's Advocate role

Drawing on the good practice and successful outcomes of the four Home Office funded Advocate posts, Safer London Foundation has attracted funding for another 15 posts from local authorities, the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime in London, and a range of charitable trusts and foundations. They now have 19 Young People's Advocates working across London providing support for seven more boroughs and expanding the support in response to the high demand in the six areas where services were already being provided. Despite this, Safer London Foundation still has waiting lists of young people who need help and frequently receives referrals for young people living in areas that do not have Advocate provision.

## Action taken over the last year includes:

- Ensuring that sexual health services can identify young people at risk of, or suffering from, sexual exploitation and understand their responsibilities to share information appropriately with relevant agencies, by supporting the development of a new screening tool by the British Association for Sexual Health and HIV for healthcare professionals. This has been widely publicised, including by the Royal College of GPs, and the Local Government Association to local authorities and Health and Wellbeing Boards, and by Brook, a sexual health charity. It has since been adopted by many sexual health clinics.
- Training frontline practitioners including nurses, teachers, housing staff and police officers on the vulnerabilities experienced by gang associated women and girls, by delivering training events for practitioners. These were run jointly by the Home Office and the MsUnderstood Partnership.<sup>21</sup>
- Ensuring that that the police, local authorities, schools and other local agencies can identify which girls and young women are most vulnerable to gang-related sexual exploitation or crime, and can be given the right support. A 'problem profile' has been developed by the Metropolitan Police, and Greater Manchester Police has produced a report on the profile of vulnerable girls and women, including practical steps for identifying and responding to them.
- Ensuring that cross-government work to protect vulnerable women and girls from violence is coordinated by including a number of actions to support gang-associated girls in the Violence Against Women and Girls Action Plan, published in March 2014. These cover the provision of 'safe spaces' in youth offending teams, where girls can be seen by youth

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<sup>21</sup> The MsUnderstood Partnership between the University of Bedfordshire, Imkaan, and the Girls Against Gangs Project.



justice staff without intimidation from male gang members, and training for local partners on how to support these girls and young women.

## ‘Safe spaces’ and Youth Offending Teams

In 2012, we committed to ensuring that gang-associated girls and young women can access youth and criminal justice services without risk to their safety, through disseminating best practice on ‘safe spaces’ to Youth Offending Teams and Probation Trusts.

In Leeds, for example, the Youth Offending Team encourages meetings with young women to be conducted in venues outside of their offices, such as at the Leeds Together Women Project, One Stop Centres and coffee shops. This approach has led to better engagement with girls and strong worker/young person relationships. There has been positive feedback that meeting young women in safe, female-friendly venues allows them to feel safe as they do not risk facing unwanted attention from young men also attending the Youth Offending Team, and the young women also feel more valued by their workers.

Young women who offend are often vulnerable and many have experienced or witnessed sexual abuse and domestic violence. In order to ensure that they feel safe and comfortable, every young woman supervised by Leeds Youth Offending Team is offered a female case worker. Co-working with male colleagues is also encouraged in order to promote positive male role models to young women.

- Continuing funding for the 13 dedicated Young People’s Advocates posts until March 2016. This is part of a wider package of support for violence against women and girls issues.
- Informing young people about issues around sexual violence and gangs by including a section on gang-affected girls in the Home Office ‘This is Abuse’ teenage relationship campaign website and the ‘This is Abuse’ PSHE Association discussion guide. The latter links to four powerful short films made by the University of Bedfordshire featuring young people who share their insights about gangs and what needs to be done to address gang-related sexual violence and exploitation.

## Activities and achievements of the four Home Office-funded Young People's Advocates at the Safer London Foundation\*

- Intensive one-to-one support offered to 103 young women experiencing or at significant risk of sexual violence and exploitation.
- Advice and consultation services provided to practitioners on a further 353 cases of vulnerable young people.
- One-off awareness raising group sessions with 610 young people.
- Attendance and contribution at over 498 local borough multi-agency operational and strategic meetings to help the identification of, and delivery of services for, victims of gang related sexual exploitation.
- 106 specialist half day or one day training sessions delivered to over 677 professionals.
- Awareness raising with a further 258 professionals through workshops and awareness raising presentations.

The Advocates work as part of the Foundation's Empower team, which supports vulnerable young women who experience gang-related sexual violence and exploitation. In total, the team has identified and mapped over 788 vulnerable and at risk young women across London.

*\*Figures apply to the period March 2012 to January 2015.*

Building the confidence of local partners to identify and support vulnerable gang-associated girls and young women has been essential, as has bringing together gangs, sexual violence and safeguarding professionals who would have previously worked separately. As a result of support for local areas from the Ending Gang and Youth Violence frontline team and network, through national training events and the invaluable work of the Young People's Advocates, local areas now have a better grip of the problem. Feedback<sup>22</sup> from priority areas found that 64% (18) of those who responded reported a better understanding of issues relating to women, girls and gangs, and 50% (14) had improved identification and protection of vulnerable women and girls. However, this is a relatively new area of work and maintaining momentum is crucial. Whilst progress has been made – and most importantly, vulnerable girls

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22 Feedback from Ending Gangs and Youth Violence programme participating areas – October 2014 (28 out of 33 areas responded)

and young women who were previously deemed as 'hidden' are now receiving help – we recognise that more needs to be done.

*"I have been able to feel as if I am not alone in the world and also know my worth. The YPA has helped me gain my self confidence back and I feel as if I can talk to her about anything that comes across my mind. I have stopped meeting up with people whom are no good for me and have learnt that not everyone is your friend."*

**Young woman working with Advocate,  
January 2015**

*"The YPA role has led to an increased focus on the area of sexual exploitation and an improved understanding by multi-agency partnerships on risk issues, and the support, provision and education required."*

**Feedback from a local partner working in an  
area with a YPA, June 2013**

# Improving the criminal justice response

The programme has placed a strong emphasis on tackling the violence perpetrated by those entrenched in gang and youth violence and who refuse the help offered to them to change their criminal behaviour. This approach is based on a collaboration between the police and criminal justice partners.

Since the last annual report, more information is being shared routinely between the police and the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) on gang affiliation and tensions, stronger measures have been put in place to manage gang-related violence both in the community and the secure estate, and knife crime legislation has been strengthened.

## Action taken over the last year includes:

- Improving information sharing between the police and NOMS to ensure that offenders who are gang members are managed appropriately after they have been sentenced by the courts. A number of police forces are sharing information about gang members with the secure estate and we will be encouraging other police forces to take this partnership approach.
- Supporting work between the Metropolitan Police Trident Gang Crime Command and HMP/Young Offender Institution Isis to manage high risk gang members. This collaboration has helped to achieve robust enforcement for violent offences committed in custody, contributed to a significant reduction in violence at Isis and seen police officers working with offender managers to enable appropriate measures to be put in place when an offender leaves custody and returns to the community.
- Ensuring that violent crimes committed in prison are appropriately dealt with in the criminal justice system by supporting a new protocol, which supports joint action by NOMS, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and national policing leads.
- NOMS piloted the 'Identity Matters' programme, an intervention aimed at addressing gang affiliated offending which can be used in both the community and custody.
- Supporting the Youth Justice Board and NOMS to put in place an Intelligence Directed Placement system across the under-18 youth offender institution estate to provide information on issues, such as gang-affiliation, which could put the young person at risk. This will ensure that transfers of children between Young Offender Institutions are in the

best interests of the young person and take into account all known information which could impact on their safety or security.

- CPS London delivering an improved approach for prosecuting gang members who are on the Metropolitan Police Service gangs matrix, which lists the most violent offenders. Targeted cases are allocated to dedicated gang prosecutors and processed swiftly through the criminal justice system. A protocol has also been agreed between CPS London and London prisons to promote closer working.
- Introducing specialist community impact statements, which give a voice to the victims of crime, for gang and knife crimes in London, as well as a new prison community impact statement tailored for use in the secure estate. Community impact statements ensure that the courts have the information they need to assess the impact that offending has on the local community or within custody, and can take that into consideration when sentencing. This has been led by CPS London and the Metropolitan Police Service.
- Introducing new powers to tackle serious violence and drug trafficking in prisons. The Serious Crime Act 2015,<sup>23</sup> which received Royal Assent on 3 March 2015, includes two new criminal offences. The first will make it an offence for prisoners to possess knives and other offensive weapons in prison without authorisation, punishable by up to four years in prison. The second criminalises throwing an article into a prison without authorisation; this is particularly aimed at criminal gangs trafficking into prison new psychoactive substances. This offence attracts a maximum penalty of two years' imprisonment.
- Continuing to target “high harm” foreign national offenders, including gang members for removal as part of Operation Nexus, a collaboration between the police and Immigration Enforcement. Since its inception in October 2012 and up to February 2015, Nexus has removed more than 277 high harm offenders through proactive targeting, and over 3,009 foreign nationals following arrest and identification in custody suites.
- Extending Operation Nexus to West Midlands, Greater Manchester, Scotland, Merseyside, Kent, Cleveland, Cheshire, South Wales and Yorkshire. We will work with police forces to roll out Nexus over the course of 2015.
- Increasing the maximum sentencing penalties for possession of prohibited firearms and ammunition without authority, and creating a new offence of possession for sale or transfer of a prohibited firearm or ammunition without authority. These provisions are contained in the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.
- Strengthening gang injunctions which will make them a more effective tool for local agencies targeting gang activity and the violence it generates. The Serious Crime Act 2015, updates the definition of a gang for the purpose of a gang injunction to reflect changes in the way gangs operate (e.g. removing references to names and colours, and making the

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23 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/9/contents/enacted>

links to serious and organised crime), and will expand the range of activities for which a gang injunction can be issued to include illegal drug dealing.

A more effective response to gang-related and youth violence involves greater coordination and information sharing. As a result of a greater focus on these issues, many gang members who were on the streets are now in custody. However, what happens in the community often has an impact in the secure estate and vice-versa, and so effective information sharing between the police and other criminal justice partners has been vital to ensure that the risk presented by offenders who are known gang members is managed appropriately once they have been sentenced. This has allowed better targeting of interventions, better management of those potentially in conflict and improved planning for release and resettlement.

## Information sharing between the Metropolitan Police and NOMS

Lack of intelligence and understanding in prisons regarding gang-affiliation and conflict in the community increases the potential for inter-gang rivalries and violence to continue and potentially escalate within the prison environment. Because of a prevalence of gang-affiliated young prisoners in the London area, this problem has been particularly acute at HMYOI Feltham and HMP/YOI Isis.

Discussions between NOMS and the MPS Trident Gang Crime Command led to the MPS sharing data from their gangs matrix with NOMS. The matrix contains details of young people who have a street gang affiliation in London and present a risk of violence. Information on tensions between different gangs is also shared. This enables the establishment to have better knowledge of prisoners involved in gangs and manage risk more effectively.

Outcomes from this work include:

- An enhanced level of intelligence sharing between the MPS and prisons across a large part of the prison estate.
- The gangs matrix and tensions document being shared with around 80 establishments across the country holding prisoners affiliated to London gangs.
- Prison and offender managers making more informed decisions about how to manage gang affiliated offenders.
- Aiding the management of good order and discipline across the prison estate.
- Enabling prison managers to provide more informed and timely intelligence to the police on gang members using information obtained in custody.

- Better management of gang-affiliated offenders when they are released.

*“The collaborative work with the police and the Trident Gang Crime Command has not only contributed to a safer prison, but has been very important in how together we support offenders back into the community with the best chance of never returning. The Trident team have made a major contribution to how we manage gang affected young men.”* Grahame Hawkings, Governor HMP/YOI Isis

# Links to serious and organised crime

*“As a result of the work of the Ending Gang and Youth Violence frontline team for the first time I have felt that there is now a joined up national approach to the issue of county lines”*  
Intelligence Officer, South East Regional Organised Crime Unit.

Tackling the links between serious and organised crime and street gangs is crucial in preventing gang violence and crime, and in stopping street gang members from being drawn into more serious and organised criminal activity. Last year we stated that our work with the priority areas provided evidence of the complex relationships between street gangs, drugs markets, troubled families and serious and organised crime. The issue of organised crime groups using street gang members as part of a supply chain to deal or transport drugs around the country was also recognised in the *Serious and Organised Crime Strategy* published in 2013.

Since then, we have taken forward a range of work to ensure an effective, strategic response to tackling serious and organised crime committed by a hard core of violent gang members who exploit vulnerable young people and adults in order to move and sell drugs across the country. This is known as ‘county lines’ because it extends across county boundaries. Our work with local areas, the police and the National Crime Agency has helped us to uncover issues which may otherwise have taken a lot longer to identify.

This is already having an impact. Local partners are drawing on a new assessment process to identify individuals who commit this crime or are vulnerable to exploitation, drawing on information which may otherwise have been missed. By using information that is already available to them in a different way, local areas can put measures in place to safeguard against these threats and enforcement action is also being taken.



## Lewisham: Action on County Lines

The Ending Gang and Youth Violence frontline team has worked intensively with Trident Gang Crime Command, Lewisham's Central Gangs Unit, and Lewisham Council following the reporting of increased violence and arrests of young people from Lewisham outside of Lewisham. As a result of this work, intelligence was uncovered that showed that gangs were not only involved in local drugs markets but were also using young people to sell and transport drugs outside the local area (to safe houses in Portsmouth and Deal).

Young people were being intimidated into transporting the drugs, and often led further into gang activity through alleged drugs debts when drugs were "stolen" in transit from them. The Ending Gang and Youth Violence frontline team were able to directly support and influence an improved cross-border partnership response to the issue. Effective information sharing between local partners enabled the provision of immediate support when vulnerable young people were identified. As a result, care packages were created and ongoing support was provided to fourteen vulnerable young people.

After about five months the drug dealing operation was successfully disrupted. Eight members of a Lewisham based organised criminal network were arrested across London, Kent and Hampshire. This is the first time that an operation against gangs and drug dealing had placed as much emphasis on identifying and safeguarding vulnerable individuals, as it did on effective enforcement against the criminal perpetrators.

## Action taken over the last year includes:

- Increasing access to expert advice on tackling serious and organised crime by street gangs by extending our Ending Gang and Youth Violence peer network to include people with experience in these issues.
- Helping local practitioners to better understand and grip the problem of gangs using violence and exploiting vulnerable people in order to sell drugs, through targeted support and the development of a county lines toolkit. This not only enables local practitioners to understand how the drugs market is driving violence in their area, but also to put a targeted response in place.
- Working with the National Crime Agency and National Policing leads to review current intelligence, and develop a national intelligence assessment and response to the issue of county lines.
- Conducting a peer review looking specifically at the pathways from gangs into serious and organised crime in Kent and Essex. This will help the local police forces build their

understanding of the overlap between urban street gangs and organised crime groups, and strengthen the partnership activity in place to respond.

- Promoting the establishment of organised crime partnership boards and serious and organised crime local profiles as part of the *Serious and Organised Crime Strategy* published in October 2013. These processes have been designed to outline the main threats, vulnerabilities and risks within a specific area, so that resources can be targeted as effectively as possible. Under this strategy we have established a short term Serious and Organised Crime Frontline Team to support local partners to develop these, and to support the delivery of local projects.
- Issuing guidance<sup>24</sup> to help local partners – particularly those in local authorities and the voluntary and community sector – to identify those at risk of being drawn into serious and organised crime. The document focuses partners on the pathways into serious and organised crime to help local partners target intervention activities as effectively as possible.

The Ending Gang and Youth Violence programme and the Serious and Organised Crime Strategy have been the main catalyst for pushing forward work in this area and have helped to ensure there is a continued focus on developing an effective, strategic response to these links between street gangs and serious and organised crime. As a result of this work, a number of priority areas now have a better understanding and for the first time are able to identify individuals who cause the most serious harm and those who are highly vulnerable from exploitation.

## Pathways Out

A young person was heavily involved in gangs and had criminal convictions for supplying drugs at a young age. They were referred onto the 'Pathways Out' initiative, a new intervention programme for gang members, that was developed by one of the priority areas with the support of the Ending Gang and Youth Violence frontline team. A mentor worked with the young person to overcome their challenges and provided them with a coach to build their confidence in applying for jobs and preparing for a work environment. The intervention enabled the young person to obtain qualifications and full time employment. The young person is no longer involved in a gang lifestyle that could have led to more serious and organised criminality.

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24 Individuals at Risk of being drawn into Serious and Organised Crime – A Prevent Guide – <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/individuals-at-risk-of-being-drawn-into-serious-and-organised-crime-a-prevent-guide>

*"The programme has helped with the national recognition of gangs, county drugs lines and Missing Children and the benefits of cross county information sharing and working."*

**Greenwich – Feedback from an Ending Gangs and Youth Violence programme participating area, October 2014**

*"The programme has helped in improving understanding of local patterns of gang related criminal activity; the needs of overwhelmingly vulnerable individuals; and how to identify and intervene early to disrupt the wider gang networks."*

**Ealing – Feedback from an Ending Gangs and Youth Violence programme participating area, October 2014**

*"What has been impressive about the Ending Gang and Youth Violence programme, is their ability to draw in partner agencies to assist in addressing this problem. This has enabled law enforcement to have a greater focus on the 'prevent' organised crime strand whereas up to this point I acknowledge that the majority of our work has been towards the 'pursue' elements."*

**South East Regional Organised Crime Unit, January 2015**

# The challenges

Three years after publication of the *Ending Gang and Youth Violence* report, there is now a far broader and in-depth understanding of the issues and how to tackle them. This includes a much better knowledge of the challenges, and how best to target action to ensure the considerable progress made is sustained.

We know that the Ending Gangs and Youth Violence programme has helped local areas to tackle gang violence and it is having a positive impact. However, through our better understanding, we know that many gangs are changing. Local partners tell us that street gangs are becoming less visible in public, and more fluid in the way they organise themselves. The programme has also uncovered a hard core of gang members who are becoming more organised and sophisticated in their criminality, and are exploiting vulnerable young people and adults in order to sell drugs (known as county lines). We also know that young people who are drawn into gang violence – whether as a victim, perpetrator or both – are subject to a wide range of risk factors that need a tailored response. We know that gangs look and operate differently in different areas and there is no single approach that will work in all cases.

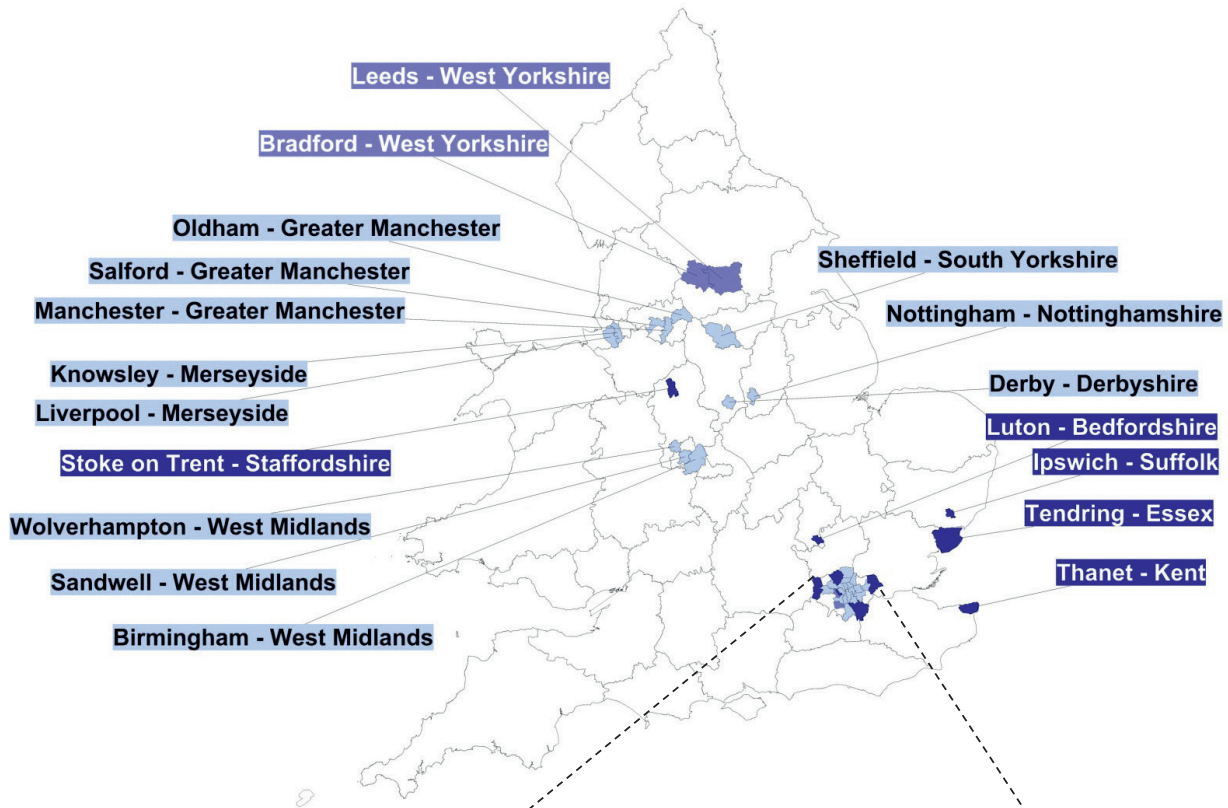
Other important challenges include continuing our work to: safeguard vulnerable gang-associated girls and young women; challenge attitudes amongst young men which can fuel violence; ensure legislation is used effectively to disrupt and challenge gang members, including use of gangs injunctions and knife crime legislation; and ensure that our improved understanding of the underlying causes of gang violence means that safeguarding, health and education agencies continue to intervene early with children and young people at risk. Approaches are evolving – such as the work in London to focus on group violence – and this is to be welcomed.

## Shield Pilot

The London Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime, with the Metropolitan Police and three local boroughs, is running the first project in the capital to target gangs as a whole (rather than individual members). This will see every known member of a gang penalised through a range of civil and criminal penalties when any one gang member commits a violent crime, such as a stabbing. Any members of the gang who genuinely want to leave their violent lifestyle behind will also be helped to do so under the pilot scheme. It is based on the Group Violence Intervention method, which has already proven successful in the United States, where it was pioneered, and a similar model introduced in Glasgow in 2008 has seen youth violence drop by almost 50 per cent. The approach is part of a wider set of Strategic Ambitions for London which include prevention work with schools and family support; interventions for mental health/emotional trauma; support for victims; and gang exit.

We have the tools, such as the local assessment process which enables areas to pick up information they may otherwise have missed, and the right people are engaged, ranging from the National Crime Agency to community activists. Many local areas now see gang and youth violence as core business and have mainstreamed their response to it. Ending gang and youth violence remains a priority of the coalition government.

# Annex – Map of Ending Gang and Youth Violence priority areas



Joined the programme in...

- 2014
- December 2012
- April 2012





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