

Serious Youth Violence Thematic Review Briefing

Welcome to this Bedford Borough Safeguarding Children Board (BBSCB) briefing to help practitioners and their managers understand the key messages from the Serious Youth Violence (SYV) Thematic Review.

Who should read this Review?

Any practitioner and manager whose work brings them into contact with children, young people and their families. The messages are just as important for those working in adult services (where service users are parents or carers).

Why a Thematic Review?

This review was commissioned by the BBSCB following two incidents of SYV which resulted in the death of one young person and the serious injury of another. For both young people there were concerns about drug misuse/selling and potential involvement in gangs. The BBSCB was keen to ascertain if issues for vulnerable young people including county lines and other forms of exploitation, drug misuse, SYV and involvement in gangs are being identified and responded to early enough. The cases of these young people have provided a lens through which to consider current service responses, informing a wider case audit of young people identified as vulnerable or at risk of SYV.

Methodology

Review of chronologies for two serious cases and participation in the **National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel's review of young people at risk from criminal exploitation**, which the author of the SYV Thematic Review also participated in. Audit of 10 young people currently in the system and then further in depth analysis of 4 of these young people who were also interviewed. A Panel event day to explore emerging themes and then a Practitioners' session to explore themes, successes and challenges.

As part of the Review young people's views were sought about the services they received;

- ✚ Frequent changes of social worker was not helpful
- ✚ They were reluctant to accept support – lack of trust
- ✚ Services do not understand their lived experiences
- ✚ Help came too late
- ✚ Relationship with one key worker did make a difference
- ✚ They wanted help with getting to college, jobs, CVs, accommodation
- ✚ They identified the use of community hubs to provide safe spaces where they could drop in. Plus accessible venues that provide options - acceptable to different groups
- ✚ They wanted consistent relationships

The SYV Thematic Review looked at the context of risk and vulnerability through a contextual safeguarding lens for these young people (Firmin, 2015).

Young person – ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences), missing episodes, cannabis use, ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder), SEN (Special Educational Needs), low mood/anxiety, involvement with Youth Offending Services, or placed in a Youth Offending Institution, TAF (Team Around Family), child in need, child protection

Home - Domestic violence at early age, absent fathers/in prison, parental drug use, physical/emotional abuse, poor relationships and challenges re: parental capacity

Peer Group - Gang involved or associated criminal exploitation, county lines, cuckooed houses, victims of debt bondage and assault, witness to incidents of SYV and known to carry or store weapons

School - Difficult school histories, multiple permanent exclusions and school moves, internal isolation, bullying and attendance at alternative education provision

Neighbourhood - Local hotspots identified and out of county locations – Northampton, Coventry linked to county lines.

Conclusions

A number of recommendations support the local and regional development around SYV and child criminal exploitation that is already underway, focussed on:

- ✓ Ensuring that the local policy framework recognises and responds to the risks of extra familial harm
- ✓ Widening partnerships in safeguarding
- ✓ Promoting the routine use of practice tools and guidance to assess risks and share information through training
- ✓ Ensuring all relevant partners have appropriate training
- ✓ Mapping local contexts and groups in which harm occurs
- ✓ Intervening in schools and alternative education where appropriate
- ✓ Minimising the use of permanent school exclusions and providing wrap around support where unavoidable and when young people are transferring to alternative education
- ✓ Providing evidence-based relational support that persistently seeks to engage vulnerable young people.

TACKLING YOUTH VIOLENCE AND CRIMINAL EXPLOITATION

The **National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel's review of young people at risk from criminal exploitation** above looked at common patterns, similarities and differences between the approaches taken in local areas (including Bedford Borough) to answer the following questions;

- **Do adolescents in need of state protection from criminal exploitation get the help they need, when they need it?**
- **How can the services designed to keep adolescents safe from criminal exploitation, and the way those services work together, be improved to prevent further harm?**

The following key findings combine evidence from the children's experiences with professional opinion from those who worked with them about the effectiveness of services and approaches available to children who are seriously harmed through criminal exploitation.

- Ethnicity and gender appear to be factors
- Known risk factors around vulnerability don't always act as predictors
- Exclusion from mainstream school is seen as a trigger point for risk of serious harm
- Effective practice is not widely known about or used
- Trusted relationships with children are important
- Responding to the 'critical moment'
- Parental engagement is nearly always a protective factor
- Moving children and families works for a short period but is not effective as a long-term strategy
- More priority should be given to disrupting perpetrator activity
- The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is not well understood and is inconsistently used
- Comprehensive risk management arrangements can make a difference.



What support is there when working with SYV?

The published SYV Thematic Review is available on the [BBSCB website](#). For Pan Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Board e-learning and face to face training click [here](#).

To access the Pan Bedfordshire Inter-agency Child protection procedures click [here](#)



To access the (BAVEX) website click [here](#).

For the Multi-Agency Information Submission Form click [here](#).



For information on the Bedfordshire Violence and Exploitation Reduction Unit (VERU) click [here](#).



For more information click [here](#).

