



Executive
20 May 2013

**Report from the Director of
Strategy, Partnerships and
Improvement**

Wards Affected:
ALL

**Task Group Report - a review of gangs in Brent and the
development of services for prevention, intervention and
exiting**

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report brings to the Executive the work, findings and recommendations of the Partnership and Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee's task group investigation into gangs and services for prevention, intervention and exiting.
- 1.2 This task group was set up following the publication of a report commissioned by the Community Safety Team entitled, *Establishing the reality of gangs in Brent (2010)*. The key findings from this report highlighted a number of issues. Firstly, the definition of the term gang used in Brent varied significantly. Secondly, there was little evidence of US style gangs in Brent, though some street based groups of young people, mostly boys, do exist in the south of the borough. Lastly, for young people involved in these groups there is insufficient provision to divert them away from involvement.
- 1.3 As these finding were potentially significant for Brent, the task group focussed on the gaps identified, particularly a lack of a definition used by all key partners and agencies in Brent, key risk factors for joining a gang, the extent of the problem (and make up of Brent's gangs), and what types of services could be developed to prevent, divert and exit gang involved young people.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Executive notes the task group's recommendations and asks officers to consider their appropriateness when revising Brent's community safety

strategy and in the context of the Council's service planning and budget setting process.

2.2 That members of the task group be thanked for their work.

3.0 Detail

3.1 The issues highlighted in *Establishing the reality of gangs in Brent* report were raised at the Crime Prevention Strategy Group by the lead member for Crime Prevention and Public Safety. Partners involved in the group agreed to support the task group's work.

3.2 The task group reviewed a range of literature in the course of their research, and drew in particular from the following publications:

1. HM Government (2011) *Ending Gang and Youth violence: A Cross-Government Report including further evidence and good practice case studies*. London: Crown.
2. The Centre for Social Justice (2009) *Dying to Belong: An In-depth Review of Street Gangs in Britain*. London: The Centre for Social Justice.
3. Hallsworth, S. and D. Brotherton. (2011) *Urban Disorder and Gangs: A Critique and a Warning*. London: Runnymede
4. Pitts, J. (2008) *Reluctant Gangsters: The Changing Shape of Youth Crime*. Cullumpton: Willan Publishing.
5. Hallsworth, S. and K. Duffy (2010) *Confronting London's Violent Street World: The Gang and Beyond*. London: Routledge.

3.3 In order to complete the work identified in the scope, the task group gathered evidence from a number of sources. These included:

- Genny Rennard, the then Head of the Integrated Community Safety Team (Brent Council)
- Anita Dickenson, Head of Brent Youth Offending Service (Brent Council)
- Matthew Watkis, Youth Offending Service Gang Co-ordinator (Brent Council)
- Chief Inspector Stuart Smith (MPS, Brent)
- Christine Topping, Violence Against the Person Focus Desk (MPS, Brent)
- Andy Brown, Head of Substance Misuse (NHS Brent)
- Helena O'Connell, Service Manager (Young Addaction)
- Kiran Vagarwal, Neighbourhood Crime and ASB Manager & Project Co-ordinator (Brent Council)
- Inspector Heidi Tubby, Partnerships (MPS, Westminster)
- Pat Green, Divisional Manager for Westminster City Council (Victims Support)
- James Salter, Principal Officer (Brent Youth Offending Team)

- Helena O'Connell, Service Manager (Young Addaction)
- Jennifer Shaw, Youth Worker (Brent Youth Service and Connections Service)
- Matthew Watson, Service Manager NW Locality Young People's Service (Westminster City Council)
- Jennifer Ogogle, DJ (Bang FM) and Junior Reid, Recording Artist from Brent
- Dr Charlie Alcock, CEO (MAC UK)
- Bethan West, Gangs Prevention Programme Coordinator (London Borough of Waltham Forest)
- Professor John Pitts, Academic and author of 'Reluctant Gangsters'
- Rob Owen, CEO and Dave Evans, Partnerships Manager (St. Giles Trust)
- Rena Sodhi, CEO and Claire Hubberstey, Director of Projects and Partnerships (Safer London Foundation)
- Chief Inspector Timothy Champion, Trident Gang Command Unit (MPS)

Members of the task group heard from a number of other local authorities, including Westminster City Council and Waltham Forest to identify areas of best practice that could be brought back to Brent.

Members of the task group visited the Monday Club at Young Addaction which works with young people, referred by the Youth Offending Service and Community Safety Team, who are on the periphery of gang related activity.

The task group spent an evening on Brent's Youth Bus when it was operating in South Kilburn as part of a CAGGK project delivering youth outreach.

Members of the task group visited St. Giles Trust, who specialise in offering ex-offender led exit programmes who have recently begun taking referrals from Brent.

In addition to using Professor John Pitts' academic work as key reference material, members of the task group met with Mr Pitts to hear about some of the work he is currently researching and ask about recent trends.

The task group heard from organisations such as Safer London Foundation and MAC UK who are providing services identified by partners as best practice, the former in relation to young women in gangs or gang affected and the latter, who engage gang involved young people to think about their mental health through their Music and Change programme.

Lastly, the task group visited New Scotland Yard to hear from Chief Inspector Timothy Champion, who led the Trident team carrying out operations in Brent. Mr Champion gave the task group an up-to-date account of the changing nature of gang activity in Brent and across London.

3.4 The task group's work focussed on the following areas:

- Defining what a 'gang' is and the development of a strategy
- Key risk factors for joining a gang
- Girls in gangs and sexual exploitation
- Gangs in Brent
- Prevention, intervention and exiting services

4.0 Recommendations from the Task Group

The task group recommends that the Council:

1. Prioritise tackling gangs and youth violence and make it a key corporate priority. The Council should also commit to working closer with partners and the community to reduce gang membership and violence in the community. This issue must be seen as both a Safeguarding and Public Health issue.
2. Hold a partnership and stakeholder event to bring together all interested agencies and organisations together to develop a gangs strategy.
3. Develop a robust, gender-proof, multi-layered gangs strategy that provides a more coordinated approach on three core areas: prevention, intervention and exit pathways for each of the identifiable cohorts listed above recognise the need to use enforcement methods when all other options have failed. The strategy should also adopt a single, working definition of gangs.
4. The Partnership and Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee receive regular feedback on the development of the strategy and play a lead role in the partnership event
5. Develop a robust, multi-agency identification and assessment methodology that uses a traffic-light system for targeted support and interventions. Any such approach must also include reporting of incidents and intervention referrals from hospital A&Es within the West London area.
6. Development of an integrated gangs unit to analyse and manage the changing profile and risk of gangs in Brent and to effectively manage the PMAP and all associated partnership working and support the delivery of Prevention, Intervention and Exit services.

7. Develop a greater partnership with local schools, particularly primary schools, with a view of developing and training a lead from each school to act as Single Point of Contact (SPOC) and liaise with colleagues within the Partnership.
8. Consult with community partners and organisations to develop an Independent Advisory Group (IAG) to work with the Partnership. A similar consultation and IAG should also be created for young people in Brent.
9. Align processes with the Working with Families initiative to identify and manage cohorts to reduce duplication.
10. Develop a scoping and mapping project to understand the extent of the problem for women and girls who may be involved or affected by gangs and vulnerable to sexual abuse. A gendered approach must also be undertaken regarding any victim support, intervention and exit strategies. This must also be consistent with recommendation 3.

5.0 Financial Implications

- 5.1 Many of the recommendations from the task group have financial implications and these will need to be considered as part of budget planning process for 2014/15 and beyond. They will also be considered in shaping up a revised community safety strategy (the statutory crime reduction strategy) for 2013-2016. Community safety is funded from both the Council's base budget and from external funding. The latter comes primarily through MOPAC and the London Crime Prevention Fund. The allocation for Brent for 2013/14 fell short of the total bids submitted and at £627,000 is less than last year's allocation of £674,000. Nevertheless, it is still a substantial sum. The revised community safety strategy will have to balance needs, priorities and resources.

6.0 Legal Implications

- 6.1 There is no one statutory provision which sets out the Council's role in relation to managing the impact of gangs on the young people involved, the community and the area. However, there are a range of local authority powers and duties set out in legislation and guidance including those concerning children and young people, education and community planning which requires and enables Councils to participate, along with partner agencies, in dealing with this issue. Examples include the Council's responsibilities to establish a Crime and Safety Partnership and formulate and implement a strategy for the reduction of crime (Crime and Disorder Act 1998). In addition to any specific provisions, the Council also has general powers which can be exercised under Section 1 Localism Act 2011. The emphasis of the government reports such as *Ending Gang and Youth Violence* has been on cross agency and cross departmental working. Additionally, in London, the Mayor's Office for Police and Crime (MOPAC)

has a key strategic role in relation to policy and crime reduction and London Councils are represented on the London Crime Reduction Board.

7.0 Equality Implications

- 7.1 Recommendations from task groups are considered within service delivery or development plans and as such will be subject to the equalities impact assessments carried out by services as part of their work programme.

Background Papers

A review of gangs in Brent and services for prevention, intervention and exiting Task Group Report

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