

## **Committee:** Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

**Date:** 4<sup>th</sup> July 2013

Agenda item: 6

Wards: All

### **Subject:** Home Office Peer Review and Gang Call-in

Lead officers: Paul Angeli, Assistant Director Children's Social Care and Youth Inclusion, Annalise Elliott, Head of Safer Merton

Lead members: Councillor Edith Macauley, Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Engagement and Equalities and Councillor Maxi Martin, Cabinet Member for Children's Services

Forward Plan reference number:

Contact officer: Annalise Elliott, Head of Safer Merton, Curtis Ashton, Service Manager Family & Adolescent Services

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#### **Recommendations:**

- A. That the panel takes note of the work undertaken for the peer review and the recommendations made by the frontline team.
  - B. That the Commission determines whether it wishes to receive a further update on the peer review and, if so, when. The panel comments on the recommendations and receives the action plan when it has been completed in consultation with partners
  - C. That the panel takes note of the activity undertaken around the Gang call-in event.
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## **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1. This report includes the report received following the recent Home Office Peer Review on gangs and youth violence in Merton. It also provides a summary of a cross-border Gang call-in initiative, held in March 2013.

## **2 DETAILS**

### **Home Office Peer Review**

- 2.1. The Rt Hon Theresa May MP announced on 27 December 2012 that an additional £500,000 was available to help communities confront the problem of serious youth violence. The support was to be targeted at young people at risk of becoming violent offenders and those already involved in gang and knife crime, to encourage them onto a different path.
- 2.2. The Home Office also announced the expansion of its Ending Gangs and Youth Violence (EGVY) frontline team to cover four more priority areas, including Merton.

2.3. As part of this expansion, the frontline team visited Merton between 18 – 22 March 2013 to conduct a peer review. The programme for their visit included:

- A tour of the borough with the Police and Council;
- Meetings with the Police Consultative Group chair, the the Assistant Chief Probation Officer, and the Chair of the Merton Safeguarding Children Board.
- Interviews with senior leaders in the Police and Council
- Interviews with
- Focus groups with the Police, CSF (including a wide range of staff from Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH); children’s social care; Transforming Families; YOS; Youth Service and Education Officers; Safer Merton; Headteachers; Safer Schools police officers; Health; Mental Health and the Voluntary Sector.
- To support the visit, a comprehensive position statement was compiled, as means of a self-assessment outlining the partnership approach to gangs, youth violence and related criminality for those aged up to 25 years. The statement covered the following 7 key principles as set out in the Ending Gang and Youth Violence report:
- **Leadership** – the extent of open and collective leadership on gang and youth violence issues from key partners and at all levels.
- **Mapping of the problem** – the arrangements in place for gathering and using information and intelligence from a range of agencies to take an evidence-based approach to work.
- **Responding in partnership** – demonstrating how local agencies are coming together to agree shared priorities and commit resources, based on local information.
- **Assessment and referral** – the processes in place for the assessment of threat, risk and harm posed; safeguarding process to identify those vulnerable to gang and youth violence; responding and referring in a timely manner; and arrangements for the on-going monitoring of risky and at risk individuals.
- **Enforcement, pathways out and prevention** - targeted interventions in the right areas, times and people.
- **Criminal justice and breaking the cycle of reoffending** – the consideration of the links between gangs and custodial estate
- **Mobilising communities** – how local people are engaged in designing and delivering services that best meet the needs of all members of the community, including ‘hard to reach’ groups.
- A number of supplementary documents covering children’s services and Youth Offending inspection reports, business cases, actions plans, and case studies were also given to the frontline team in advance of their visit

- 2.4. At the end of their 4 day visit, the team presented the initial feedback on Merton's strengths and areas for improvement under the 7 key principles, and the good and emerging practice they identified. They also made a number of initial recommendations ranging from looking at evaluation to considering a Merton specific vision or narrative in relation to ending gangs and youth violence. The final report is attached as an appendix and an action plan is being developed through Children and Young People's and Safer Merton partnership structures.
- 2.5. The final report is attached as an appendix and an action plan is being developed through Children and Young People's and Safer Merton partnership structures.

### **Gang call-in**

- 2.6. As part of the gangs diversion programme and following similar initiatives in Glasgow and Enfield, Merton and Wandsworth Borough organised a "gang call-in". On the afternoon of 6th March 2013, 15 gang members were collected from various pick up points on both Boroughs in minibuses staffed by police officers and CSF youth offending and youth service workers.
- 2.7. The young people were taken to Kingston Crown Court, where they entered via the cell area, were searched by court security and entered the dock. Chief Superintendent Williams, the Borough Commander for Merton Police challenged the young people and set the context for the evening.
- 2.8. Following this a number of invited speakers spoke to the youths including:
- A London Ambulance Service Paramedic who related the story of a stabbing victim he dealt with who died on route to A&E;
  - A Surgeon related his first hand experience of battling to save the lives of those suffering life threatening injuries and the hands of gangs, and the pathetic waste of a life of those who die as a result;
  - The mother of murder victim told of her anguish and the hole left by the pointless murder of her son who was involved in gang activity.
  - A former gang member drove home the message "when you are arrested and imprisoned, your mates don't visit. When you need them most if you are shot or stabbed, they have all run off and police who you despise are the first to work to keep you alive."
  - A well known person from the local community explained how they turned away from violence and the gang lifestyle. Luck may have brought them to where they are today but this started with the decision to think for themselves and stay clear of the danger gangs bring you into.
  - A CSF Transforming Families manager ended, with a calming approach reconfirming why the assembled mass in the court had turned up to assist the young people to commit to their decision to turn away from their recent behaviour. The majority of the people present then attested to their commitment through a show of hands as to their

faith in the young people so that the young people could see they are important and that together we would work for their future.

- 2.9 The Judge summed up what choice the young people had - make the right one and they will gain assistance from all the police and professionals assembled, making the wrong one will in the end lead to a loss of liberty.
- 2.10 The Court was filled with Police officers, Transforming Families & YOS workers, Job Centre Plus, , mentors and other professionals, who engaged with the young people to get them to sign up to a diversion contract.
- 2.11 The young people were then taken back to their boroughs, with any of those undecided visited the following day with a view to signing them up to diversion.
- 2.12 In total, all 15 of the young people who attended were signed up to a diversion contract. 3 others leaving prison custody have also been signed up. CSF key worker mentors have been assigned to them and a programme of targeted intervention is underway.
- 2.13 Constructive feedback has been gathered from the call-in event which will be applied to future initiatives.

### **3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 3.1 None

### **4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED**

- 4.1 The Peer Review programme undertaken during the visit, as outlined above

### **5 TIMETABLE**

- 5.1. The final review report awaits receipt, therefore any action outlined in the report will need to have timeframes. The action plan will need to be developed through the existing partnership structures over the next three months.

### **6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1. None for the purposes of this report - financial, resource and property implications of implementing any recommendations made in the final report will be met by the various council departments and the partnership and this will inform the actions taken, which will need to be delivered within an environment of financial and physical constraint.

### **7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1. None

**8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS**

8.1. This strategy covers all sections of the community and does not discriminate against any group.

**9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

9.1. The implications are all positive and crime and disorder specific.

**10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

10.1. None for the purposes of this report – risk management and health and safety implications of implementing any recommendations contained in the final report will need to be accounted for.

**11 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT**

11.1. Draft report “Ending Gang and Youth Violence Peer Review”.

**12 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

12.1. None

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Home Office

## Merton

# Ending Gang and Youth Violence Peer Review

March 2013

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# 1. Introduction

- 1.1 As part of the Home Office Ending Gang and Youth Violence initiative, 33 areas have been invited to participate in a programme of guided reviews designed to assist them with ensuring their partnerships have effective structures and responses in place to contribute to the shared aim of ending gang and youth violence. These areas have been selected based on identified levels of gang activity and serious youth violence in accordance with the Dying to Belong<sup>1</sup> and ACPO definition of a gang, namely:

A relatively durable, predominantly street-based group of young people who;

- (1) See themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernible group, and
- (2) Engage in a range of criminal activity and violence

They may also have any or all of the following features:

- (3) Identify with or lay claim over territory
- (4) Have some form of identifying structural feature
- (5) Are in conflict with other, similar, gangs.

- 1.2 The Ending Gang and Youth Violence Team have worked with the Local Government Association to develop an ending gang and youth violence peer review model with an innovative community dimension. The model has been designed to help areas assess the robustness of their structures and processes in tackling this issue.

# 2. Key overall strengths

- 2.1 This is a strong partnership, well led at both political and senior officer level. There was generally a good understanding of Merton's gang and serious youth violence problem amongst those interviewed, although more than one interviewee questioned if Merton has a problem with gangs. Safeguarding policies and procedures are well embedded in the partnership; a multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) is in place and at the time of writing was due to go live with the addition of police staff.
- 2.2 Operationally, the review team found a number of examples where Merton had moved quickly as a partnership to nullify threats. Engagement with most partners is generally strong, especially with local schools and the voluntary and community sector (VCS).
- 2.3 There are some passionate, knowledgeable and highly committed individuals working on this agenda and this came through very clearly during interviews and discussions. Overall, the key strengths are:
- **Strong partnership working**
  - **A good understanding of the ending gang and youth violence agenda at senior and operational leadership level**
  - **Good understanding of current threat to Merton (although this requires a vision)**
  - **Good data sharing between most partners**
  - **A MASH is in place**

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<sup>1</sup> 'Dying To Belong', Centre for Social Justice, 2009

## 3. Background to the peer review

3.1 The ending gang and youth violence peer review was developed by the Home Office EGYV team working with the Local Government Association as a 'critical friend' challenged by peers against the peer review benchmark, which is based upon the seven principles of ending gang and youth violence.

The peer review benchmark focuses on:

- Strong local leadership
- Mapping the problem
- Responding in partnership
- Assessment and referral
- Targeted and effective interventions
- Criminal justice and breaking the cycle
- Mobilising communities

3.2 The peer review team consisted of:

Paul Cullen, EGYV Peer Review Manager, Home Office  
Viv Ahmun, Independent Adviser to the Home Office  
Steve Edwards, Independent Adviser to the Home Office  
Gaynor Egerton, Independent Adviser to the Home Office  
Rachel England, Independent Adviser to the Home Office  
Dave Walker, Independent Adviser to the Home Office  
Karen Williams, EGYV Peer Review Manager, Home Office

3.3 The programme for the on-site phase of the review was organised in advance and included a variety of activities designed to enable members of the team to meet and talk to a cross-section of partners. The team undertook a range of activities, including (but not limited to):

- Discussions with members of Merton's ending gang and youth violence partnership and various stakeholders from the statutory and voluntary sectors
- Interviews with a range of community groups and partner organisation representatives
- Review of a range of supporting documentation

3.4 The team also undertook a number of visits, designed to get a rounded sense of the specific issues facing local people in relation to gang and youth violence. Examples of activities the team undertook were:

- Talking to youth workers and young people in and around the Phipps Bridge Estate
- Tour around the area

3.5 The team was appreciative of the support provided by the partners and would like to thank everybody they met during the process for their time, contribution and transparency, especially Annalise Elliot, the EGYV single point of contact (SPOC). The team was particularly appreciative of the way in which officers organised logistical support in the build up to and during the team's visit. We would particularly like to thank Amanda Woodhall for her support and assistance, both in advance of the review and onsite.

## 4. National context

- 4.1 The disturbances of August 2011 were the catalyst for the Government to accelerate work around serious youth violence and gangs. Whilst gang members did not play a central role in orchestrating the disorder, they were involved, and the disturbances brought issues of serious youth violence to the forefront of public consciousness.
- 4.2 Since the disturbances, a group of senior Ministers, led by the Home Secretary, have met regularly to discuss the problem of youth violence and gangs, and the cross-government Ending Gang and Youth Violence report, published in November 2011, sets out a series of national actions to tackle this problem. The central message of the cross-government report is that gang and youth violence is not a problem that can be solved by enforcement alone. Every agency needs to be encouraged and facilitated to join up and share information, resources and accountability.

## 5. Performance against the benchmark

### 5.1 Strong local leadership

#### Strengths

#### 5.1.1 **There is clear political support for the EGYV agenda and a commitment from senior officers; for example**

- **Youth violence including knife crime is a priority**
- **Strategic focus on young people not in education, employment or training (NEET)**

There is a shared strategic ownership at a senior level across the partnership with regards to tackling gang violence. This is evident from the political leadership and senior management across the EGYV partnership. Senior managers recognise the significance of gangs and youth violence as an issue for the Merton and clearly understand the extent to which gangs are a problem in the borough and the threat posed by cross-border gang activity.

The partnership has made youth violence, including knife crime, a strategic priority; evidence of the seriousness with which the partnership views the issue. Another strategic priority is young people not in employment, education or training, with the partnership recognising the linkages/interdependencies between the two agendas.

There was an appreciation of the causal drivers of gang and youth violence and the need to deal with issues in a timely and effective manner and also a willingness to try new initiatives to suppress gang related issues as they arise.

#### 5.1.2 **Strong culture of partnership working promoted and maintained by effective leadership.**

Throughout the peer review it was evident that partnership working is a real strength in Merton, both at the strategic and operational levels.

Merton's senior leadership provides the environment within which partners can collaborate to ensure effective partnership working to find innovative solutions to issues.

A good example of this is the borough commander's leadership in terms of attracting funding to establish a new boxing facility on the Phipps Bridge estate, demonstrating a real willingness to personally engage with young people either involved or at risk of getting involved in youth violence and gangs.

### 5.1.3 Internal communications, for example the use of blogs by senior leaders, is positive.

The use of blogs by senior staff within the borough to communicate on a whole range of issues was seen as positive and enabled clarity of purpose to be communicated.

## Areas for improvement

### 5.1.4 Need for a vision/narrative around gangs and serious youth violence (past – present – future).

The peer review team felt that Merton would benefit from a narrative (or perhaps internal vision) in respect of youth violence and gangs. The team found that on a number of occasions people would articulate how gangs did not exist in the borough but within a short while would then describe how they had worked in partnership to tackle gang issues; it was at times contradictory. There was sense that when Merton has had issues relating to gangs, partners have dealt with them in a timely and effective manner which may explain the above.

An opportunity exists to frame Merton's gang narrative in the terms of 'past, present and future', enabling the partnership to describe what has happened in the past and how this was dealt with; what the present challenges are and current activity is, and finally future risks, particularly around cross-border gang activity.

### 5.1.5 Health partners are not yet fully engaged yet in the EGYV agenda.

There are opportunities to engage colleagues from health in respect of the EGYV agenda. Organisationally, health is very complex this should be led in the first instance by the senior leadership to establish relationships at the strategic level. The opportunity afforded by the forthcoming refreshment of the Joint Strategic Needs Analysis (JSNA), due to the separation of Sutton and Merton as public health entities should be grasped, to ensure that serious youth violence is considered within Merton's revised JSNA.

## 5.2 Mapping the problem

### Strengths

#### 5.2.1 Good understanding of the problem – i.e. Offender Management Panel for young people and adults; an individual focus with emphasis on risk and vulnerability.

Merton established the Offender Management Panel (OMP) to focus on the top 15-20 adult and young offenders who are vulnerable or at high risk of re-offending and/or causing serious harm or concern. The model gives key partners a targeted, integrated system for offender management, particularly around the age range of 18-25.

The OMP meets on a very regular basis and is in two parts: half the meeting focuses on young people and half on adults identified by the above agencies as representing current concern, principally around high risk to others/themselves in the community. Many referred to the OMP are likely to be actively involved or at the fringes of gang activity/serious group offending. This picture of local offending behaviours gives all partners a clear road map of how to prioritise resources and an agreed plan of action for a way forward on preventative work as well as addressing the identified violent crime.

It has a broad range of agencies involved including: police, probation, youth justice service, prolific and persistent offender (PPO)/integrated offender management (IOM), anti-social behaviour (ASB) team, housing, youth service, social care, child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS), substance misuse, mental health and the drugs intervention programme (DIP) team. Schools are also engaged with the OMP and a good source of intelligence and are able to identify those who are at risk/involved in serious youth violence.

### 5.2.2 Good understanding of gang activity coming into Merton from out of borough.

Merton has good mapping/tracking agreements in place for all historical gang-related activity within borough and from gang activity coming into the Merton from surrounding boroughs. This is underpinned by a genuine commitment to working cross-borough to manage the risk of harm to local young people. They are aware of how cross-border incidents could lead to existing gangs expanding in membership and further groups emerging in the aftermath. The OMP analysis of local intelligence on risk and vulnerability is perfectly placed to enable incoming gang issues to be even better understood and to identify incoming young people from other neighbouring boroughs involved in gang violence.

## Areas for improvement

### 5.2.3 Continue the emphasis on the collective strategic and operational approach to violence against women and girls in order to better understand the issues and responses.

It was evident from the interviews throughout the peer review that Merton prioritise all forms of violence against women and girls including, for example, domestic violence and sexual exploitation. A targeted approach, including early prevention and education through to enforcement, is in place across the borough. This could be further enhanced by developing and agreeing a specific violence against women and girls strategy and action plan which would bring together the various services targeted at women and girls and violence. This could include a thorough gender-specific commissioning framework for current and future service provision and greater coordination of resources.

### 5.2.4 Mapping of gangs/youth violence from a public health perspective is needed to inform the health and wellbeing strategy.

During the peer review, interviewees discussed the identifiable link locally between health inequalities of violent offenders, offending behaviours, improving health outcomes and how this can reduce re-offending rates which in turn can bring health benefits to individuals and to the wider population as a result of improved community safety.

In this context, the Health and Wellbeing strategy is an ideal vehicle within which the new Director of Public Health can refresh the mapping of the health needs of violent offenders, ex-offenders and those at risk of offending, who may be experiencing significant health inequalities. A clearer health and youth violence map would strengthen the partnership approach to tackling serious youth violence.

### 5.2.5 Continued development of mapping gang nominals across boroughs.

The current robust local intelligence sharing protocol could be further enhanced through dialogue with neighbouring borough partners to encourage them to share more intelligence with Merton to enable the creation of a cross-borough gang and offender intelligence profile. This framework for sharing cross border information and practical advice with neighbouring boroughs could help in understanding the background and local context to the key drivers around incoming gangs and gang violence and the links between sexual violence and gangs.

## 5.3 Targeted and effective interventions

### Strengths

#### 5.3.1 Good range of interventions to address gang and youth violence for young people under 18, with a strong emphasis on prevention.

The partnership's approach to date, as set out in its position statement, has been to put in place preventative interventions for young people who are under 18, and to operate an enforcement-led approach for those who are over 18. There is strategic acknowledgement that more interventions are needed for the over-18 age group, and the review team found evidence that these are beginning to be put in place to create a more balanced response.

Particular examples of promising interventions raised during the peer review:

- **Work in schools:** This includes Growing Against Gang Violence (GAGV) in Year 6 in primary schools and in secondary schools and the on-going work of the safer schools officers.
- **Intervening to stop gangs developing:** the 'Deadbridge' gang case study testifies to the impact of the partnership's intelligence-led and timely response to an emerging estate-based gang with potential affiliations to a more established grouping. The deployment of youth workers seems to have been particularly effective in sustaining this intervention to ensure a positive outcome.
- **Call-in:** Although it is too early to fully evaluate its effectiveness, the recent call-in for gang members appears to have worked well with a number of the individual young people involved now engaged in alternative pathways.

#### 5.3.2 Strong alignment of EGYV work with Transforming Families and co-ordinated management of interventions.

Although the borough's Transforming Families programme is at an early stage, there is good evidence that both its design and initial operation are configured to address involvement in gang and youth violence. Gang association is an element of the fourth eligibility criterion, which is helpful in targeting interventions as part of a holistic family-centred approach. The review team also heard details of a case study in which a young person involved in gang activity was supported to engage successfully in targeted interventions within the overall management of family intervention. This integrated methodology of intervention provides a robust platform for future work.

#### 5.3.3 Evidence of interventions being developed for 18–25 cohort

The partnership has been clear about its intention to establish a range of interventions for 18-25 year olds involved in gang and youth violence. The peer review team found evidence that this objective is beginning to be implemented in a number of key areas. These include:

- **Jobcentre Plus:** a lead officer has been appointed to co-ordinate employment-related support for those 18-25 year olds identified as being involved with gang activity.
- **Integrated offender management:** the interventions co-ordinated by IOM in the borough are well-directed and effective.
- **Young people's substance misuse lead:** the remit of this post includes 18-25 year olds which allows for interventions to be put in place for the cohort.

## Areas for improvement

### 5.3.4 To develop further the 18-25 interventions with emphasis on transition and the co-ordination and management of interventions.

There is a need for the partnership to extend further the range of interventions it has in place for 18-25 year olds. This will establish a more sustainable approach for this cohort, with an appropriate balance between enforcement and prevention/diversion.

There is a need to focus on the transition phase as young people become 18 to ensure that this is as seamless as possible and that there is continuity of provision to support the progress of individuals. The co-ordination and management of interventions is also crucial to ensure the most effective use of resources in each case.

### 5.3.5 Limited evidence of what is working and why

The interventions that the partnership has put in place – particularly for the young people under 18 - appear to be having a positive effect on levels of gang and youth violence, as evidenced by the high level indicators for the borough. It is important, therefore, that the learning is captured regarding what works: key success factors should be identified, particularly where multiple interventions have been used.

There are two significant reasons for undertaking some ongoing and formalised evaluation in this area: the funding climate is set to become even more constrained in the coming years; and gang and serious violence activity in Merton is fluid and is influenced by the dynamics of adjacent boroughs. Should indicators start to show an increase, it is important that the partnership is able to deploy its resources in the most effective ways possible.

### 5.3.6 Improved targeting and awareness of the gangs and youth violence cohort through reciprocal information sharing and improved communication between all relevant agencies including the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS)

Although information sharing and communication is generally effective across the partnership, there was evidence that some key agencies working with individuals within the gangs cohort were not fully informed of other interventions that were in place. This included some voluntary and community sector organisations.

There is therefore a risk that certain interventions may not be fully aligned which could undermine the progress of some young people. This could be addressed through bringing together the relevant agencies on a regular basis to share information around individual cases.

## 5.4 Assessment and referral

### Strengths

#### 5.4.1 Strong evidence of universal and targeted safeguarding.

- **Adoption of Munro recommendations**
- **OMP has the right agencies at an appropriate level**
- **Strong child centred approach**

Interviewees evidenced that they understood what is meant by safeguarding and the different ways in which children and young people can be harmed, including through gang association and serious violence.

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The partnership demonstrated an understanding of the child /young person within the context of their life and recognised and understood the impact of any transitions they may be going through as evidenced in the operation of effective cross-agency referral processes; for example a Probation officer embedded within Youth Offending Service (YOS), a Probation manager allocated to the OMP and the plans to place a Probation Officer within the MASH one day a week.

A strong child-centred approach was evident throughout interviews; interviewees were able to link their Signs of Safety approach (a strength based approach to keep children safe) to the EGYV agenda.

### **5.4.3 The development and implementation of the MASH has been informed by best practice from other boroughs.**

The review team heard that Merton had looked at and learned from pilots around London before they implemented their MASH. In addition, MASH practitioners in Merton will work with counterparts in neighbouring boroughs, ensuring mechanisms are in place to share information about individuals including gang members and those at risk of becoming gang members, and are linked in to the pan-London MASH which will inform about emerging themes

Over 400 practitioners have been briefed on MASH and there is also a Merton MASH webpage along with links to the London Safeguarding Children Board website.

### **5.4.4 Development of single assessment tool.**

Staff from the MASH are in the process of developing a shared single assessment tool. This will provide a more holistic and efficient approach to assessment and offer a systemic approach to the allocation of resources, especially if the practice guidance contained within the pan-London safeguarding protocol around risk/protective factors is reflected within the single assessment tool.

## **Areas for improvement**

### **5.4.5 Continuation of MASH awareness briefings.**

Although there had been comprehensive briefing sessions for practitioners with regards to the MASH, the review team heard from some practitioners who said that they did not know about MASH and/or how their role fit into it.

### **5.4.6 Greater clarity may be required around the links between victims of adult sexual exploitation and the work around child sexual exploitation.**

Some interviewees were unclear about the links between victims of adult sexual exploitation and ongoing work to address child sexual exploitation issues. It may therefore be timely to review what systems and processes they have in place to safeguard vulnerable adults, raise awareness of this issue across all staff and check whether current systems and processes effectively safeguard vulnerable adults.

### **5.4.7 CAMHS need to be able to understand their role within the EGYV agenda.**

CAMHS (and multi-systemic therapy) professionals are represented both at strategic and operational levels within the overall EGYV partnership. However, during the review process they were unable to articulate how mental health issues link to gang violence, especially with regards to helping children and young people improve their emotional well-being and in building resilience to gangs and gang involvement.



As part of workforce development, Merton may wish to consider developing a common understanding of this issue through a specific training programme delivered through Merton Safeguarding Children Board to enable greater access to bespoke mental health services for children and young people at risk of involvement in gang activity.

### 5.5 Responding in partnership

#### Strengths

##### 5.5.1 Well established and mature partnerships across a range of statutory and non-statutory agencies.

- **Offender Management Panel – strong working relationships, positive approach and a solid hub for partnership working**
- **Good engagement with schools at strategic and operational levels**

Members of the review team were pleased to hear of, and witness, some strong partnership working across the borough, including a range of statutory and non-statutory agencies such as social landlords. Housing associations, such as Priory Homes, articulated their position within the partnership and gave examples of how safeguarding training for staff has been introduced in order for them to identify and report safeguarding issues pertaining to young people and children, whilst visiting homes and estates.

All those interviewed who attend the OMP were overwhelmingly positive about it, whilst open to change and improvement where possible. This appeared to reflect Merton's general "can do" attitude to partnership working, which was apparent across a range of agencies at both strategic and operational levels.

A focus group of head teachers demonstrated how this culture of positive working has had an impact at both strategic and operational levels. For example the head of the Pupil Referral Unit outlined how her staff had been involved in the recent gang call in, and reported that the four pupils involved were still talking positively about the event and its impact.

#### Areas for improvement

##### 5.5.2 Cross-border EGYV works at operational and strategic level needs an enhanced focus and development of agreed processes.

Partnership working is an extremely strong point for Merton, and the only obvious area for improvement is around cross border working, both strategically (for example there is an opportunity to make links between schools across boroughs in order to help head teachers around exclusions and moves) and operationally between agencies involved in tackling gang and serious youth violence.

A cross-border meeting between Lambeth, Wandsworth and Croydon took place during the Merton peer review to discuss shared practice, issues and nominals; this meeting has the potential to introduce common processes across boroughs that can only benefit all concerned and introduce consistency. This is explored in more detail as a recommendation.

## **5.6 Criminal justice and breaking the cycle**

### **Strengths**

#### **5.6.1 An energised and targeted Offender Management Panel (OMP) with suitable representation**

Merton's Offender Management Panel (OMP) arrangements are a real strength for the Borough, with the multi agency sub group identifying and coordinating intervention with young people and adults identified as at risk. With appropriate representation and engagement by relevant partners, the panel is a well co-ordinated and targeted response to breaking the cycle of gang and youth violence offending.

The wider Merton Integrated Management Model, which includes the OMP, is a strong, well embedded and integrated multi-agency approach. With development plans for the forthcoming year around the delivery of interventions, it is apparent that the approach is regularly reviewed and adjusted according to changing need.

#### **5.6.2 Effective transition arrangements between the YOS and probation service**

There are clear transition arrangements between the YOS and probation service with a seconded probation officer to the YOS and agreed roles and responsibilities in transition cases.

#### **5.6.3 Numerous examples of promising practice in breaking the cycle of offending.**

The peer review found numerous examples of promising practice in Merton's approach to breaking the cycle of offending – a peer mentoring programme, a gang exit programme, a knife crime prevention programme in addition to prevention and early intervention approaches being just some examples of emerging good practice.

Merton's recent gang 'call-in' has demonstrated some early impacts. With targeted subsequent intervention provided for offenders, there are planned intervention approaches for each individual who attended the 'call-in'. In addition, Merton sought feedback from professionals and young people in attendance and the constructive feedback received will be used to inform future 'call-in' planning.

### **Areas for improvement**

#### **5.6.4 Training and employment for the EGYV cohort, with improved pathways and resources.**

A common wish amongst Merton's partnership agencies was for improved pathways for training and employment for the EGYV cohort. Taking into account the specific needs of this cohort, it was felt that pathways could be improved with better access for young people seeking to exit gang and youth violence. It was also identified that there may well be resources available to the cohort that were not universally known across the partnership and as a result, a mapping exercise with wide communication of findings and developed pathways is recommended. The review acknowledges that this work is underway with a Jobcentre Plus gangs lead in place, but this work should be prioritised as the main intervention/pathway for 18-25 year olds involved in gang and serious youth related violence.

#### **5.6.5 Accommodation provision – is there the potential to expand Grenfell provision to the EGYV cohort to provide suitable accommodation for exiting gang members?**

Again, similar to training and employment pathways, a theme emerged around accommodation provision.

Some examples of dedicated and targeted provision were available – Grenfell and multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) provision for example, but the partnership may wish to explore whether or not such provision could be expanded to the EGYV cohort to provide suitable accommodation for exiting gang members? Effective use of safe and secure to move and manage high risk offenders should also be considered.

## 5.7 Mobilising communities

### Strengths

#### 5.7.1 Strong VCS involvement in the development and delivery of universal and targeted provision.

There is strong third sector partnership working in relation to the development and delivery of both universal and targeted provision. This was evidenced during a focus group with a number of VCS groups involved in EGYV work with Uptown Youth Service and Merton's targeted mentoring support for vulnerable young people, being two examples of the excellent work taking place.

The council's community engagement strategy, which informs much of the work-taking place in relation to communities, has made some progress in improving engagement.

*'We have undertaken engagement mapping and identified some gaps. We aim to give everyone an opportunity to get their voice heard. We will develop new engagement models and work with our residents and encourage and support those groups who have not always been represented, to get involved in decision-making.'*

#### 5.7.2 Good examples of police supporting grassroots youth provision and interventions.

A number of community based organisations told the review about the extent to which the police support grassroots organisations and work in partnership.

There are some positive examples of police engagement in terms of supporting grassroots youth service provision (a proposed boxing club, as outlined in the Leadership section) and targeted interventions. The 'call-in' is the most recent example, alongside the OMP, not least in relation to the sharing of intelligence and coordinated work with offenders, vulnerable young people, and their families.

### Areas for improvement

#### 5.7.3 Draw on existing fora and groups to improve community ownership of this agenda.

Whilst there are many examples of good work taking place at a grass roots level, they often go unrecognised and therefore risk being duplicated when resources could be better invested in developing existing work; for example evaluation, or partnership working, or investing in development of services in those areas where genuine gaps exist such as within the local Tamil community.

There is a clear commitment to develop new engagement models with communities who have not always been represented, but this needs to be set out clearly within the EGYV agenda. .

### 5.7.4 Training around EGYV agenda needs to be available to build the capacity of community groups.

Actively including community groups and the third sector in a rolling training programme would greatly contribute to community mobilisation and partnership working. Training is also central to any capacity building process, so the training could be modified to include a specific community oriented component, that addresses effective partnership working, effective evaluation, social action and social investment approaches to service design and delivery.

### 5.7.5 Develop an EGYV engagement strategy that involves the community in decision making processes and structures

Capacity building in relation to the Transforming Families Programme needs to begin with community involvement in order to increase community understanding, reduce the potential for stigmatisation, and ensure greater support for vulnerable families. Given the clear links between the EGYV agenda and Merton's Transforming Families programme, it is an opportune time to conduct a consultation process with key organisations and groups in order to ensure the initiative secures maximum buy-in from local residents.

## 6. Good practice

### **Priory Homes have a safeguarding process for staff**

A range of staff from Priory Homes have been trained in recognising safeguarding issues and know how to refer to the appropriate agency.

### **MASH**

Practitioners in Merton will work with counterparts in neighbouring boroughs, ensuring mechanisms are in place to share information about individuals including gang members and those at risk of becoming gang members, and are linked in to the pan-London MASH which will inform about emerging themes

Over 400 practitioners have been briefed on MASH and there is also a Merton MASH webpage along with links to the London Safeguarding Children Board website.

### **YJS assessment and intervention planning process**

There is a structured approach to assessment, planning interventions and case management with integrated action plans, participation by young people in the planning process and structured reviews of progress. Quality assurance processes support this systematised approach.

### **'Deadbridge' youth intervention**

An operation that showed how quickly Merton can move as a partnership when faced with a collective threat.

### **Ricards Lodge Girls School work on building young women's self esteem**

Part of Merton's many initiatives to address violence against women and girls, and a good example of how schools are a solid part of the partnership.

### **Range of YJS EGYV specific interventions**

There is a range of universal and targeted intervention programmes available to the YJS, including the knife crime prevention programme and the serious youth violence exit programme.

### **Youth service EGYV peer mentoring programme**

There is emerging evidence of programme impact with reduced rates of recidivism. The programme is innovative and is delivering targeted intervention that is beginning to demonstrate a positive effect on desistance and improved outcomes for young people.

## 7. Key recommendations

- 7.1 Consider a Merton specific vision or narrative that sets out your collective approach to tackling gangs and serious youth violence – this can be internal, for partners only rather than the general public, and will help to bring even greater consistency to your approach to tackling gangs and serious youth violence.
- 7.2 Take advantage of the opportunities offered by public health and clinical commissioning group to refine their needs analysis (Joint Strategic Needs Assessment) in relation to EGYV and use this to inform the health and wellbeing strategy. This needs to include CAMHS.
- 7.3 Establish a structured and rigorous, formalised system of evaluation in order to establish which interventions and initiatives are working and why.
- 7.4 Establish an overall picture and collective strategic and operational approach to violence against women and girls.
- 7.5 Consider establishing new cross-border alliances in addition to the new Wandsworth/Croydon/Lambeth group. For example in relation to schools headteachers felt it would be useful to establish links with schools across borders to share information around pupils, exclusions . This approach would be helpfully facilitated by a strong strategic steer.
- 7.6 Work with Jobcentre Plus to develop a local partnership to target employment and training opportunities for 18-25 EGYV cohort. This should include commissioners such as probation, work programme and VCS agencies. This could link with local apprentice schemes.
- 7.7 Consider mop up sessions to ensure full awareness of MASH to ensure that all are sighted on how Merton's children's services go from 'good to great' with the development of a first response MASH.
- 7.8 Consider facilitating meetings for VCS working around the EGYV agenda – similar to existing sexual exploitation meetings – to ensure best use and understanding of resources.
- 7.9 Draw on existing forums and groups to improve community ownership of this agenda, ensure training around EGYV agenda is available to build the capacity of community groups and develop an EGYV specific engagement strategy that involves the community in decision making processes and structures.

## 8. Conclusion and next steps

- 8.1 The team found examples of good practice in Merton and welcomes your support in detailing these so that they can be captured and publicised on the Local Government Association Knowledge Hub (<https://knowledgehub.local.gov.uk>) for the benefit of other areas. The EGYV team are developing the Gang and Youth Violence Special Interest Group on the Knowledge Hub to store and share effective practice. This site can also be used to view current good practice from other areas and key stakeholders in gang and youth violence.
- 8.2 The Home Office EGYV team will support the ongoing work and have identified Mick McNally from the Home Office Core Team as the designated single point of contact for Merton. The response of the partnership to the findings of the review will be the subject of further follow-up during the next six months.
- 8.3 Further support from the Home Office EGYV peer review team is available with regards to possible workshops and individual support to implement the recommendations from peer review members.

## Glossary of terms

A&E	Accident and Emergency
ACPO	Association of Chief Police Officers
ASB	Anti-Social Behaviour
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
CCG	Clinical Commissioning Group
EGYV	Ending Gang and Youth Violence
IOM	Integrated Offender Management
JSNA	Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
MAPPA	Multi-Agency Public Protection Panel
MASH	Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub
NOMS	National Offender Management Service
OMP	Offender Management Panel
SPOC	Single Point of Contact
VCS	Voluntary and Community Sector
YJS	Youth Justice Service
YOI	Youth Offending Institution
YOT	Youth Offending Team