



Gangs and Violence

Recommendations Progress



west midlands
police and crime
commissioner

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Recommendation 1

The Gangs and Violence Commission is to provide ongoing leadership, direction and co-ordination to work that will reduce the impact of gangs and violence, working to fill the current leadership vacuum. The Gangs and Violence Commission should continue meeting quarterly to monitor, review and scrutinise the implementation process and progress related to the recommendations in this report. Importantly, the commission should agree priorities and timeframes for implementation of the recommendations. Furthermore, the commission should establish a community/city-led implementation group who will ensure delivery of the recommendations approved in the report.

The Gangs and Violence Commission met quarterly up until the end of 2019, when the transition in to the VRU began. The implementation group met separately. Work across all 24 Recommendations was implemented. The Commission continued to hold the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner accountable on delivering a programme of work that took a 'Public Health Approach' to youth and gang violence. In the 2019 Serious Violence Report the Home Office recognised the Gangs and Violence Commission as best practice in building community consensus. The Commission's work was cited as a key pillar of the original bid for Violence Reduction Unit funding and many of the Commission's recommendations were carried forward as work streams as the Violence Reduction Unit was established.

Recommendation 2

The Gangs and Violence Commission will work with a range of partners to collate and analyse data about gangs and violence. The commission should develop ways to regularly gather and compare local data on gangs and violence with national trends. For example, national data shows that Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) youngsters are disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system and have fewer life chances than other ethnic groups. This should be compared with the trends in Birmingham. This will enable more rigorous analysis and future planning relating to offending, gangs and violence association and evaluation of outcomes and interventions.

The 2017 'Uniting to Improve Safety' by Dr. Rev. Carver Anderson offered a detailed analysis into violence and gang-related activity in Birmingham. This work was picked up and progressed by the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU). Specific delivery strands include a Mapping and Gapping exercise for current assets in the region relating to violence prevention. In addition, the VRU has undertaken a Strategic Needs Assessment which gives a comprehensive breakdown of deprivation, violence hotspots and school exclusions, to name just a few, in the region. They have various data analysts in the unit who continue to investigate the data behind these issues.

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Recommendation 3

The Gangs and Violence Commission will agree a broad, preventative public health based action plan for addressing gangs and violence, recognising that enforcement does not offer enduring solutions. The commission partnership should agree on a public health approach to gangs and violence and use this to commission services. The public health approach does not negate the inclusion of criminal justice or law enforcement actions, but considers it within a framework for considering how gangs and violence problems are defined; also the challenges, aspirations, causal factors and support needs for those associated. This should enable more inclusive and effective partnership working and better outcomes.

The Commission advocated a public health approach when tackling violence and continued to hold the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner accountable on delivering a programme of work that was a 'Public Health Approach' to youth and gang violence. The Violence Reduction Unit has since adopted a public health approach that underpins all of their work. We now have a multi-agency partnership, led by the VRU, which is looking to fully incorporate the Public Health approach to tackling violence.

Recommendation 4

The action plan will include targeted, place-based activity. The commission partners, with the West Midlands Police should decide which neighbourhoods need more strategic interventions and partnerships to address their specific concerns. The partners should also offer 'doable' strategic action plans with 'measurable' outcomes. These plans should also include the joint training needs that would allow for more effective work with families and communities associated with gangs and violence.

Twenty Six organisations received funding from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner to deliver various interventions, with the aim of preventing individuals being involved in serious violence. They ranged from weekly sports sessions, media projects in schools, community outreach, targeted programmes in schools with young people at risk of gangs and violence, group and 1 to 1 work with gang affiliated young women, youth leadership courses, and parent training.

Over 5,000 young people attended diversionary activities.

Additionally, 392 young people received mentoring and 35 school staff and 161 parents attended Gangs & Violence awareness sessions to support them in identifying and referring young people at risk of exploitation and criminality to appropriate provision.

The Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) has carried forward this work stream by delivering targeted placed-based, whole-system approaches into a number of key sites: The Three Estates (Birmingham), Walsall College, Hillfields (Coventry) and Lozells (Birmingham).

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The VRU also now has 7 Community Navigators in post, one in each local authority area. They are the VRU's 'people on the ground'. It is their job to work with communities, partners and stakeholders to reduce violence. They help co-ordinate the violence reduction effort in local neighbourhoods. They also help introduce new interventions, designed to prevent and reduce violence.

Recommendation 5

The commission should consult with local community-led organisations to support their full involvement in the development of 'local community well-being partnerships' (community, voluntary, faith, statutory and business) in neighbourhoods identified as areas needing interventions relating to gangs and violence.

The Commission received national acclaim for having community members at its heart. The Home Office recognised it as best practice in building community consensus in the 2019 'Serious Violence report'. Two Community Developers and a Community Facilitator were appointed in March 2019. Their main work included:

- Helping organisations to engage with local policy makers and statutory partners.
- Supporting third sector organisations with the development of funding proposals and applications, either to the OPCC or other sources of relevant funding.
- Help organisations to develop practical organisational skills e.g. project management, financial management, and contracts and grant compliance.
- Promoted collaboration between different communities.
- Built networks with community organisations.
- Made sure community concerns were heard in the OPCC forum

Recommendation 6

The commission partners should enable community organisations and groups involved in gangs and violence associated interventions to strategise, share and train together. The best practices produced locally can be shared with statutory providers to influence city policy and practice.

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- Supporting third sector organisations with the development of funding proposals and applications either to the OPCC or other sources of relevant funding.
- Help organisations to develop practical organisational skills e.g. project management, financial management, and contracts and grant compliance etc.
- Promoted collaboration between different communities.
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Recommendation 7

Our understanding of gangs and violence locally must be underpinned by a sustained academic research programme.

The work of the Violence Reduction Unit is underpinned by research and evaluation and this work is being progressed on an ongoing basis.

Recommendation 8

The development of a community-led partnership; to use social media and information technology mechanisms to strategically reach key communities and stakeholder audiences regarding gangs and violence awareness /initiatives.

A partnership of community organisations were commissioned to carry out a community-based communications project. They created 'OnPoint', which can now be found across multiple social media platforms. This spread awareness of programmes funded by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner to a younger audience. It gained feedback from those young people that take part in the violence reduction programmes and has facilitated conversations with young people to hear their views about how to reduce violent crime.

Recommendation 9

The commission partners should ensure a remapping of all community groups/organisations, faith groups and key individuals providing or supporting gangs and violence services and interventions. These groups and individuals should be invited onto an Independent Advisory Group (IAG) to work with the commission to deliver workshops around: gangs and violence reduction; and ways to increase community participation and explore more effective ways to support communities directly affected by gangs and violence.

Two Community Development Workers helped to build a network of community organisations. A roundtable event was held between members of various faiths to discuss this agenda. It continued to meet and has set the foundation for the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) to continue this work by establishing a Faith Alliance. The VRU has also carried out a mapping and gapping exercise, setting out a record of community organisations.

Recommendation 10

The commission partnership should learn from Birmingham Youth Offending Service and consider a roll out of its family-empowerment approach as a template for working with families, with needs linked to the criminal justice system, youth violence and criminality.

Work continues with the Youth Offending Teams across the West Midlands through the work of the Violence Reduction Unit.

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Recommendation 11

A flexible and culturally responsive community based preventative and reactive mediation and conflict intervention capability is required. The commission should promote a shift away from the 'law enforcement' response towards community-led mediation and conflict interventions and approaches. Community organisations (faith and non-faith) should be supported to appoint and train community mediators and facilitators to mediate in situations associated with gangs, conflicts and violence reduction in neighbourhoods.

A mediation service was commissioned, to be used by West Midlands Police (WMP). This option has been welcomed by WMP and has been used on over 30 separate occasions. A community consortium was consulted by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, with the offer of funding a community-led service, however these plans failed to materialise.

Recommendation 12

The commission partners should work to include an 'authentic youth and family voice' in their discussions and planning. This voice can represent the views of victims and perpetrators in service provision and provide relevant information about 'life on the ground'.

A Community Facilitator was appointed and helped provide insight to the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner about 'life on the ground'. Members of the commission were also present in this agenda, often engaging with families and young people themselves. This provided a real insight into the views of these groups.

Recommendation 13

The commission partners should prioritise supporting community-led organisations that support children, young people and young adults identified as 'at risk' of gang or violence related behaviours and activities. Such early interventions have a greater chance of success and should be available to anyone in need.

Twenty six organisations received funding from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner to deliver various interventions that prevented individuals being involved in serious violence.

They ranged from weekly sports sessions, media projects in schools, community outreach, targeted programmes in schools with young people at risk of gangs and violence, group and 1 to 1 work with gang affiliated young women, youth leadership courses, and parent training.

Over 5,000 young people attended diversionary activities.

Additionally, 392 young people received mentoring and 35 school staff and 161 parents have attended Gangs & Violence awareness sessions to support them in identifying and referring young people at risk of exploitation/criminality to appropriate provision.

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Recommendation 14

The Commission will review approaches to school exclusions, aiming to develop services and support for excluded pupils and their families. The commission partners should examine patterns of school exclusions and how schools manage them in the priority areas. Processes that lead to exclusion overlap with processes that encourage people to become involved with organised crime and violence. The aim is to understand what leads to exclusion, how exclusions are managed and what support is offered to the child and family once they have been excluded. This includes issues around race, gender, faith, culture and the need for schools or colleges to signpost families affected to local groups (faith, business, parents and community) for support.

The Police and Crime Commissioner and Commission continually raised this as an issue, requesting data and explanations around why school exclusions have been increasing. This has been carried forward into an education work strand in the Violence Reduction Unit, which is taking a whole-system approach to reducing violence. They have an Education Lead and have recruited 4 Partnership Engagement Officers who work with schools to help deliver interventions which include training, diversionary activities etc.

A mentoring service was commissioned that provided enhanced mentoring support to around 36 young people placed on a so called 'Managed Move'.

Recommendation 15

The new Police Cadet scheme must engage young people in areas most affected by gangs and violence. The commission should promote the implementation of the Cadets Scheme in specific areas of Birmingham. This will involve a more targeted approach to the recruitment of volunteers from diverse backgrounds to be cadets and a community-city partnership to engage groups and institutions to champion and support the scheme.

As of November 2020:

- There are currently 343 cadets and 22 cadet applications pending. Projections show that WMP are on target to achieve the PCCs ambition of 500 cadets by May 2021
- 50/50 split in female/male attendance
- By using local crime data and specifically looking at impact areas, WMP are ensuring that they are offering cadets to young people most in need of support.

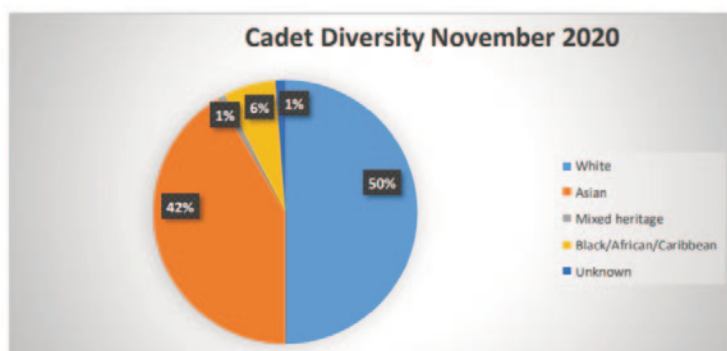


Figure 1 Cadet Diversity November 2020

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Recommendation 16

The Commission will develop, support and review schemes that support young adults at risk and ex-offenders to find work and start businesses.

In September of 2020 the Police and Crime Commissioner's Enterprise for Employment scheme was launched to help ex-offenders, with violent convictions, get back into employment.

The intensive support service borrows heavily from the health based Individual Placement and Support model and consists of a 30 day rapid job search. A place, then train approach. The philosophy being that an individual's support should not end once they have found employment, but the majority of support should be focused on helping that individual maintain employment. The project has so far supported just under 20 people, aged 18-35, into employment and self-employment.

Recommendation 17

Mentoring schemes should be targeted at young people at most risk. The commission partners should support the appointment of the Partnership Engagement Manager to develop school-based mentoring schemes to support young people 'at risk' of exclusion/offending and in need of greater support. The engagement and consultation with local community groups will be necessary for this role.

A mentoring service was commissioned that provided support to around 36 young people placed on a so called 'Managed Move'. The Violence Reduction Unit has rolled out the Partnership Engagement Role across the West Midlands. There are now 4 posts. They deliver specific interventions into schools, including mentoring.

A number of projects funded, as part of the Commission's work, contained a mentoring offer. 392 young people received mentoring.

Mentoring for young people at risk of exclusion and in the criminal justice system were also commissioned and delivered by the Children's Trust.

Recommendation 18

The Commission will support development of specialist family and trauma therapy services for those affected by gang associated violence. The commission partnership should ensure that specialist counselling services, including family therapy and trauma therapy services are available to both victims and perpetrators of gang associated violence. This will involve commission partners compiling a comprehensive list of organisations and agencies that offer these specialist services.

A local third-sector organisation was commissioned to deliver a 12 week specialist support programme for the families of victims. This helped to fill an area that was identified as a gap in service provision.

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Recommendation 19

Birmingham City Council should engage partners in a review of services for young people. The commission should encourage the City Council to review its position on youth facilities in priority areas and wards to consider the establishment of partnerships or to re-establish spaces and facilities where meaningful activities (learning, fun, sports, discussions, counselling, coaching, mentoring) can take place.

Work has taken place in partnership with Birmingham Local Authority to fund youth activities across priority areas.

Recommendation 20

Prisoners associated with gangs and violence should have a comprehensive 'intervention and support package' in place for when they leave prison.

Resettlement services were commissioned by the Violence Reduction Unit as a direct result of this Commission recommendation. Four providers were commissioned for Wolverhampton, Coventry, Birmingham Young People and Birmingham Young Adults. They will support those individuals who leave prison and help them reintegrate back into society. The aim is to prevent them from any further offending.

Recommendation 21

The Commission's action plan should include exploration and review of faith-based approaches to gangs and violence. The commission should develop a co-ordinated approach to engage all inter-faith and multi-faith forums/groups in Birmingham. The aims are to discuss the role of faith, values and morals in issues around organised crime, gangs and violence and to promote working together, especially in 'priority neighbourhoods', to increase the peace.

A roundtable event was set up by the Commission for members of various faiths to discuss this agenda and how they can help tackle gangs and violence.

It continued to meet and then set the foundation for the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) to continue this work by establishing a Faith Alliance. The Alliance is continuing the work of the Commission, by bringing together representatives from all faiths to discuss the role of faiths in preventing violence in the community. It delivers a resource that can help the VRU tap into and work with the faith communities.

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Recommendation 22

There should be investment in capability to seek greater external funding from charitable and non-statutory funders. The commission should support the appointment of a Fundraising/Community Development Manager to encourage capacity building in community groups and to build a network of voluntary and community groups. Such a network can investigate joint funding and investment strategies to secure substantial funding, e.g. Big Lottery Reaching Communities joint bid, from non-statutory funders supporting gangs and violence reduction initiatives.

A Community Fundraising Manager was appointed in 2018. Employed by Birmingham Voluntary Services Council that person works on building capacity within the voluntary sector and assisting organisations with funding applications. They have also assisted the OPCC with funding applications, including a successful bid that was put in for the Early Intervention Youth Fund. This allowed the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner to invest £2 million in diversionary activities for young people in the West Midlands.

Recommendation 23

The commission should establish a community-led 'interdisciplinary business hub' for supporting individuals and families associated with gangs and violence. This hub will show people routes into employment, training, self-employment and business start-up possibilities.

In September of 2020 the Police and Crime Commissioner's Enterprise for Employment scheme was launched to support ex-offenders with violent convictions and to help them back into employment.

The intensive support service borrows heavily from the health based Independent Placement and Support model and consists of a 30 day rapid job search.

The premise is that an individual's support should not end once they have found employment, but the majority of support should be focused on helping that individual stay in work. The project has so far supported 18 people, aged 18-35.

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Recommendation 24

The Commission should work with businesses to provide spaces for activity, training, mentoring and advice for individuals and families associated with or impacted by gangs and violence.

Whilst it was not financially viable to buy or rent premises to conduct this intervention work, the Police and Crime Commissioner's Enterprise for Employment scheme worked to support ex-offenders with violent convictions and helped them back into employment.

One of the key arms of the project is business outreach. The provider is expected to engage with businesses, both to find work for the individuals on the project, but also to perform a broader piece of work concerning attitudinal change amongst the business community.

At present the project is exploring how to use medium to large businesses' Corporate Social Responsibility agendas to encourage employment opportunities for this cohort of young people. A specific campaign launch regarding this will be happening later this year.