

Violence and Vulnerability

December 2018

Briefing for the HWBB

It is clear that the issue of County Lines and gang activity does not fit neatly into any of the current partnership work programmes or structures that have been set up in local areas. It crosses disciplines, agency accountabilities and thresholds and allows gangs to exploit these differences and service gaps, to target vulnerable populations with relative ease and impunity. This calls for a more systemic view of local activity to ensure there is a more holistic approach to tackling the issue.

The most worrying aspect is the growing violent nature of the interactions between gangs and local people and how this is being played out in public arenas. In addition, the growing use of class A drugs in towns and cities across the country is a worrying trend which requires coordinated efforts from central Government, local partnerships and local communities, all working together.

National Summary on County Lines

Therefore, we know violence and Vulnerability is a cross cutting issue that has a major impact on the life of a community and therefore needs responses from a wide range of services. Southend's response has been to set up the new **violence and vulnerability strategic group** consisting of senior representatives from all 4 of Southend's strategic Boards; **The Local Safeguarding Children's Board, The Adults Safeguarding Board, The Health and Well-Being Board**, and the **Community Safety Partnership**, which has been tasked with a support and challenge function for the strategic and frontline services. The first meeting of the Board was convened on 3rd July and since then significant progress has been made to get a much clearer and accurate picture of this fast moving and dynamic phenomenon.

Our Local Action Plan brings together multi-agency data and local intelligence with the single purpose of creating a set of measures that sends a clear message to all members of the community (including victims and potential perpetrators) about the Council's resolve to fully understand and vigorously tackle the problem of violence and exploitation as a priority. This requires a clear understanding of the problem locally which means co-ordinating data and intelligence to keep tabs on criminal activity

The Plan marshals resources and activities to focus on collaboratively disrupting and inhibiting the operations of the drug gangs and to develop a resilient community response that is in line with Southend's vision for 2050.

The Plan's activities are organised under the 4 Ps which will impact on all services:

- **Prepare** (ensuring that all the partnership agencies are fully briefed and staff are appropriately trained and operational policies reflect the growing concern)
- **Prevention** (education and public awareness are all agencies up to speed) campaigns such as *see the signs*
- **Protection** (safeguarding vulnerable children and adults) impacting on the wider health agenda (drugs/alcohol/sexual health/violence/ serious wounding/killing) key role of school nurses
- **Pursue** (disrupting criminal behaviour including the use of civil and criminal justice interventions/ community safety)

However, this criminality does not respect borders, so we work and collaborate closely with our neighbours in Thurrock and wider Essex County.

Key Issues for HWBB

- The local drug market is driving the violence and exploitation in Southend and is key to developing effective and co-ordinated actions and responses. We need a better understanding of the complex drugs market in the borough and the supply and the demand (of class A drugs in particular) in order to limit the drug dealing activity that takes place in public spaces. This falls within the remit (although not exclusively) of Public health
- The violence in the community has major impact on Health services (A and E admissions) and related issues of exploitation such as sexual assaults/ overdoses/mental health/ homelessness/drug and alcohol dependency/
- Interventions in other parts of the Country (Glasgow) have been led by the public health agenda.
- Include issues of V and V in all routine enquiry/ assessments to identify issues early.
- We need to understand the problem and look at it through a variety of lenses so we can collaborate better.
- Awareness and competency training for all frontline staff in Health and Well-Being frontline services
- Create/nominate Violence and Vulnerability Champions in all agencies and departments

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