



## Ending Gang and Youth Violence

In November 2011, the Government published 'Ending Gang and Youth Violence', a report precipitated by the riots of August 2011. The report examined what measures would have the biggest impact in diminishing gangs and set out a series of national actions to tackle this problem. The central message was 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.

As a consequence of that report, the Home Office set up a dedicated team of people with experience in dealing with gangs to work in the 33 local authority areas with the highest levels of gang and youth violence (twenty of these are in London). In addition to the frontline team we developed a peer network made up of over 80 people with frontline experience of dealing with gang violence – youth workers, education and health professionals, probation and youth offending officers, community activists, former gang members and police officers.

The Ending Gang and Youth Violence (EGYV) programme focused on 5 key themes:

- Providing support
- Punishment and enforcement
- Partnership working
- Prevention
- Pathways out

The objectives for the team with support from the peer network were to:

- Map the different agencies which may be in contact with gang nominals and their families
- Map the local gang or serious youth violence problem, using partnership data
- Review their procedures for identifying gang members and potential victims
- Gather independent feedback from local communities on what could be done better
- Scrutinise prevention and enforcement strategies and suggest areas for improvement
- Agree a practical action plan to improve the way gangs are tackled locally

The 33 areas were each offered a peer review, a constructive and supportive process with the aim of helping partnerships improve on how they deliver outcomes in tackling gangs and youth violence. The reviews involved an assessment against the national and international experience and learning from working with gangs, which provide the essential elements for a successful gang prevention strategy:

- Strong local leadership
- Mapping the problem
- Responding in partnership
- Assessment and referral
- Targeted and effective interventions: enforcement, pathways out and prevention
- Criminal justice and breaking the cycle
- Mobilising communities

## Key findings

During the peer review process, local partners highlighted some key challenges:

- ensure that there is a shared working definition of a gang or a gang nominal between local partners
- have a full understanding of the complexity of the local gang problem
- understand the drivers of gang and youth violence, for example mental health, drugs or violence against women and girls
- have joint local objectives to tackle gang and youth violence
- guard against silo working by agencies
- work in partnership to avoid duplication of work, particularly in relation to commissioning interventions
- agree information to be sharing and monitor, for example, Accident and Emergency (A&E) data

The breadth of partnership working required to effectively tackle gang and youth violence is challenging for areas; as is the ability to maintain a clear understanding of the dynamic nature of their street gang problem.

There are also a number of more challenging issues that have emerged from the peer reviews and where our understanding and that of local partners is growing. These include:

- The need to understand the relationship between street gangs and changing local drugs markets;
- The movement of gang members and associates from the 33 areas into other areas, such as the Home Counties, to commit crime
- Links between street gangs and organised crime groups (and implications for the National Crime Agency)
- The use of social media to facilitate violence and intimidation
- The links between health, particularly mental health, and gang violence
- Youth offending services managing a more violent cohort than previously
- The ability to identify both dangerous gang nominals and young people at risk of involvement in gang crime when there is a lack of police intelligence

## Review of 2012-13

Overall, the first year of the Ending Gang and Youth Violence programme was considered to be a success by the local priority areas. In particular:

- Areas felt that they had been able to drive the programme to a greater extent than previous Home Office initiatives, in terms of influencing both how the programme supported them locally and the national impetus of the programme.

**“Without a doubt, [the Ending Gang and Youth Violence programme] has been a help to our work locally... Without it we wouldn’t have been able to achieve half the things we have”**

- Particular strengths of the programme were seen to be the peer reviews, the general manner of support (which was felt to be flexible and responsive to local issues), and the encouragement of local cross-agency working. Areas felt they benefitted from being a part of the programme, and that positive changes to addressing gangs and youth violence had occurred locally as a result of the programme.

**“... It’s really good to have an open discussion about a problem rather than talk about who to blame”**

- Positive changes that were felt to have occurred due to the programme included: improvements to the local strategic direction / leadership around tackling gangs and youth violence (for example the clarity and communication of plans for the future); increased involvement of other local agencies (e.g. health, Jobcentre Plus) and the voluntary and community sector; and, new improved approaches to specific issues (such as understanding the local problem with gang and youth violence, and supporting girls and women associated with gangs).

**“[The Ending Gang and Youth Violence programme] has made [gangs and youth violence] everybody’s business”**

## 2013-14 Frontline Support to Local Areas

Over the last 12 months, the frontline EGYV team have been working closely with the 33 EGYV areas to develop and embed their approaches and processes around tackling gang and youth violence. This work has included:

- Developing and sense checking local strategies and processes to embed multi-agency partnership engagement and accountability;
- Deep dives into how health services are engaged in the EGYV agenda;
- Peer reviews in a number of prisons, YOIs, a secure training centre and a secure children’s home;
- Working with NOMS and EGYV police forces to improve information sharing between police and the secure estate;
- Exploring local drugs markets and how these drive violence and exploit young people;
- Helping areas to develop their community engagement and, in particular, working with third sector organisations to develop a consortia approach;
- Delivering ‘Understanding Gangs’ training to frontline practitioners in local agencies, including Jobcentre Plus gangs advisers.

## 2014-15

We will be focusing our efforts on:

- in-depth work on the issue of drugs markets reaching out of gang-affected areas to other towns and cities, so that local areas understand this issue and can tackle it effectively;
- further work early intervention, supporting local areas by identifying and sharing good and promising practice;
- continuing to drive progress on girls and gangs, ensuring that young women and girls affected by gang-related violence or sexual exploitation are identified and offered the right support.

## Further information

Ending Gang and Youth Violence report, November 2011:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ending-gang-and-youth-violence-cross-government-report>

Ending Gang and Youth Violence - One Year On report:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/228873/8493.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/228873/8493.pdf)

Ending Gang and Youth Violence Annual Report 2013:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ending-gang-and-youth-violence-annual-report-2013>

Ending Gang and Youth Violence – Review 2012-13

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ending-gang-and-youth-violence-review-2012-to-2013>

## Ending Gang and Youth Violence priority areas

