



Cabinet

Title	Violence, Vulnerability and Exploitation Strategy Update
Date of meeting	18 July 2023
Report of	Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder) for Family Friendly Barnet - Councillor Pauline Coakley-Webb
Wards	All
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Urgent	No
Appendices	None
Lead Officer	Tina McElligott, Director of Children's Social Care tina.mcelligott@barnet.gov.uk Telephone: 5169
Officer Contact Details	Soriyah Carnegie, Strategy and Insight Advisor soriyah.carnegie@barnet.gov.uk Telephone: 2662
Summary	
This document sets out the provision for an updated Violence, Vulnerability and Exploitation Strategy. This will be our third multi-agency strategy. The work has begun on ensuring that children and young people's voices are central, and that the strategy	

addresses their needs. The development of the strategy is dependent upon the completion of two inter-related strategic needs assessments the Safer Communities Partnership Strategic Needs Assessment and the Combatting Drugs Partnership's Needs Assessment. These will inform priorities and areas of focus both of which will both be completed by October 2023. This report requests a public consultation is launched which will further direct, inform and shape the strategy development.

Recommendations

- 1. For Cabinet to note the timeline for the development and publication of Barnet's Violence, Vulnerability and Exploitation strategy 2023 - 2027.**
- 2. For Cabinet to approve a public consultation period 30 July – 30 September 2023**

1. Reasons for the Recommendations

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Safeguarding children and young people from the psychological and physical harm caused by sexual and criminal exploitation and involvement in gangs and serious violence is a core priority for the Barnet Safeguarding Children Partnership.
- 1.2 In the report of the Children's Commissioner 'Keeping Kids Safe' (February 2019) it is noted that there were 33,000 children who are the sibling of a gang member and 34,000 children who have been victim of a violent crime, and either are a gang member, or know a gang member (2018/19 National Office of Statistics).
- 1.3 The report recognises that those on the periphery of a gang and who have experienced violence in the past 12 months are more likely to be vulnerable to exploitation by criminal networks involved in 'county lines' drug supply and thus, more likely to go missing from home and care.
- 1.4 The Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) Addendum Report 'Protecting Children from Criminal Exploitation, Human Trafficking & Modern-Day Slavery' (November 2018), emphasizes the need for a wider perspective and understanding of the context, situations and relationships in which child exploitation manifest. It finds that all children are vulnerable to exploitation, not just specific groups.
- 1.5 Research and local data, also point to the increased vulnerability of children and young people with adverse childhood experiences including exposure to parental substance misuse, housing instability, offending, violence and neglect at home.

These children and young people are more likely to experience exclusions from school and are more likely to have social, emotional and mental health needs, factors which can increase the risk of these groups being targeted for the purposes of exploitation.

1.6 In developing local arrangements for safeguarding children and young people at risk of exploitation and violence over the past four years, there has been greater emphasis on listening to the voices of children, young people and parents affected by violence and exploitation and by working in partnership with those working with them at grassroots, community and statutory levels of intervention. Our joint approach has enabled the development of preventative, diversionary and educative approaches across the borough supported by improved information sharing and stronger agency collaboration.

1.7 Barnet's local profile of vulnerable adolescents identifies a higher representation of boys from Black and other racially minoritized backgrounds as being at risk of criminal exploitation and involvement in gangs and serious youth violence and that the age of identification is decreasing.

1.8 Young Black boys and girls are too often adultified and their experience of educational exclusion, contact with law enforcers and the criminal justice system is disproportionate.

1.9 Barnet's first Vulnerable Adolescents Strategy 2018 – 2020 strategy was developed by the Children's Safeguarding Partnership to keep children and young people at risk of sexual and criminal exploitation safe. Four priority areas were agreed, including:

- i. Multi-Agency Leadership
- ii. Predict & Prevent
- iii. Identify & Intervene
- iv. Disrupting and stopping perpetrators

1.10 In delivering the 2018 – 2020 Strategy Barnet was one of four local authority areas in England to successfully secure Home Office funding to deliver a 4-year Trusted Relationships Programme in partnership with voluntary sector providers Art Against Knives, MAC-UK and Growing Against Violence. The partnership successfully delivered a number of local practice changes against the ambitions of the strategy including the establishment of a range of well-attended multi-agency fora in which children at risk were routinely discussed, jointly developed risk and vulnerability assessment tools, policies and local practice protocols, including agreed responses to serious incidents of violence in the borough, improved data collection and information sharing and a shift in practice approaches that put relationships with

children and young people at the center by building trusted relationships and involving them in decisions and services being created for them.

1.11 In 2020, the strategy was refreshed and developed further, to include three additional areas of focus for the partnership which were; tackling the disproportionality of racially minoritized children and young people, particularly Black boys, in criminal exploitation activities and incidents of serious violence, engaging children and young people in finding solutions and recognizing that adolescence continues beyond the age of eighteen years requiring a transitional safeguarding approach to support older adolescents aged under 25 years into adulthood.

1.12 Most of the aims against the 2020 – 2022 strategy have been met, despite it having been largely delivered in a Covid context by extending its aims into 2022/23. Notable successes for the partnership have included; the establishment of a working group to tackle exclusions of Black boys from school, development of residential programmes for Black boys in contact with the criminal justice system, the opening of the first London Accommodation Pathfinder aimed at keeping Black 16/17-year-olds out of custody whilst on remand, the development and launch of the 'My Say Matters' Child Participation and Involvement Strategy, the development of a successful and far-reaching Parent Champion Network with parents of children at risk of exploitation and representative of marginalized communities, the evolution of the Serious Incident Response Protocol to include community impact meetings supported by funding from the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) to pilot a capacity-building project in the community in response to incidents of violence. Funding was also obtained from the London Crime Prevention Fund to develop a Victim Care Hub and develop Restorative Justice approaches in the borough. Further, detached youth work and skills to employment has been developed with MOPAC funding to expand the intervention offer to young people aged 18-25 years.

From Harm to Hope

1.13 As local practice has developed, so has government policy and statute. In December 2021, the government launched its 10-year plan to reduce the supply and demand for drugs 'From harm to hope'. Guidance issued in June 2022 set out the requirement for each local authority area to develop a Combatting Drugs Partnership and conduct a joint needs assessment based on a review of local drug data and evidence, by November 2022 followed by a local drugs strategy delivery plan by December 2022. There are a number of areas covered within the Plan that cross into safeguarding adolescents from exploitation, including:

- Breaking drug supply chains: breaking up and disrupting gang operations to deal wholesale, rolling up county lines, bringing perpetrators to justice, supporting and safeguarding victims and reducing violence and homicide.
- Delivering school-based prevention and early intervention programmes to reduce chances of using drugs and; supporting young people and families at the most risk of substance misuse and criminal exploitation

- ensuring there are local pathways to identify and change the behaviour of people involved in activities that cause drug-related harm

Serious Violence Duty

1.14 In December 2022, the Secretary of State issued statutory guidance on preventing and reducing serious violence under Chapter 1 of Part 2 of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 (“the PCSC Act”). The guidance also outlined the changes made to section 6 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 in ensuring preventing and reducing serious violence is a priority for Community Safety Partnerships. The guidance is for specified authorities defined in section 11 of, and Schedule 1 to, the PCSC Act (Chief Officers of police, fire and rescue authorities, Integrated Care Boards, Local Health Boards, local authorities, youth offending teams and probation services. It is also for relevant authorities, including prison authorities, youth custody authorities and educational authorities (defined in section 12 of and Schedule 2 to the PCSC Act).

1.15 Serious violence has been defined by London’s Police Crime Commissioners, MOPAC, as ‘Any violence and exploitation affecting young people under the age of 25, domestic abuse, and sexual violence. Within the context of these types of violence, it encompasses homicide, grievous bodily harm, actual bodily harm, rape, assault by penetration, sexual assault, personal robbery, threats to kill and violence against property caused during the commission of one of these offences. Domestic abuse is as defined in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.’ This was developed with the aim of London authorities having a single definition in tackling serious violence in the region.

1.16 The Serious Violence Duty requires the Safer Communities Partnership to undertake a Strategic Needs Assessment (SNA) of serious violence in the local area, to formulate an evidence-based analysis of information relating to the violent crime types, the drivers of crime within the partnership area and the cohorts most vulnerable. The SNA will inform the development of a Serious Violence Plan that must be published by 31 January 2024 and will build on the Violence, Vulnerability and Exploitation Plans developed across London authorities in 2021/22

Pan-London & national developments

1.17 The London Adolescent Safeguarding Board (LASOB) has developed a ‘Handbook’ for practitioners, it has also commissioned a peer review of Strategic Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) arrangements across London in 2022 from which a number of recommendations and workflows have arisen. These and research published by Research in Practice ‘*It was hard to escape: Safeguarding children at risk from Criminal Exploitation*’ (2020), ‘*The terrifying abyss of insignificance: Marginalisation, mattering and violence between young people*’ (2021), ‘*No one noticed, no one heard*’ (2022) and learning from the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel: ‘*Safeguarding children at risk from criminal*

exploitation' (2020) will inform the development of Barnet's refreshed Violence, Vulnerability & Exploitation Strategy.

Timeline for Violence, Vulnerability & Exploitation Strategy 2023-2027

- 1.18 The cross-over of drug supply, criminal gangs and exploitation, sexual exploitation and violence into the lives of children and young people is significant. As such, the next iteration of the Vulnerable Adolescent's Strategy (Violence, Vulnerability & Exploitation Strategy) will need to consider the evidence, gaps and opportunities identified within the SNA's of the Combatting Drugs Partnership and Safer Communities Partnership if it is to tackle the complexity of contextual issues affecting the safeguarding of young people effectively.
- 1.19 Whilst awaiting the completion of the SNA's noted above, there is a range activity proposed to work alongside the delivery of services to meet the needs of this vulnerable group of children. This is detailed below, it is anticipated that the draft of a new strategy will be ready for in November 2023.

Consultation

- 1.20 This strategy will be co-produced with children and young people at its heart.
- 1.21 In accordance with Family Services 'My Say Matters' Strategy and the Corporate Plan for community participation, the Violence, Vulnerability and Exploitation Strategy will be co-produced with children, young people and their parents. A two-month consultation period will allow for authentic co-production in which young people are given a 'blank sheet of paper' to shape the strategy informed by their lived experience. This will take place over the summer break, reaching out to youth groups, children engaged in Barnet Achieving, Creative, Engaged (BACE) activities throughout the summer and those currently using adolescent Early Help, adolescents at risk services, youth justice, special educational needs and disability (SEND) services and corporate parenting services. In recognition of the vital role that parents play in keeping children safe, the Parent Champion network will also be further engaged for consultation in the summer period.
- 1.22 The draft strategy that will be developed by children and young people and their families will provide the basis for a wider multi-agency, voluntary sector, public and member consultation in September through a series of workshops and events. The draft from this phase of consultation will be fed back to children and young people in workshops alongside the findings of the Strategic Needs Assessments for consideration of the development of a final draft. This will be completed by October 2023 with the final version of the Strategy being presented to Cabinet for sign-off in November 2023.

1, 23 In March 2023, an initial consultation session was undertaken with a range of key stakeholders involved in delivering the current strategy and included representation from

local youth and community groups. This initial discussion was aimed at galvanising stakeholder engagement and coproduction early into the process.

2. Alternative Options Considered and Not Recommended

1.1 It is not recommended that the Violence, Vulnerability and Exploitation strategy is produced without it having been informed by local needs assessments. The period of child and family consultation allows for authentic co-production of ideas based on lived experience in the interim of the reports becoming available

1.2 This further does not affect delivery of services or the effectiveness of partnership arrangements as the 2020-22 strategy will be retained until the refreshed version is operational.

2 Post Decision Implementation

2.1 Post-decision, a period of engagement and consultation will commence on 24 July and end on 8 September 2023.

2.2 The consultation will include meetings with key stakeholders including police, community safety, health agencies, education provision, parent champions, children and young people, residential homes, housing, cross-council services and voluntary, early help, youth justice, community, faith and social enterprise sectors. The consultation will include a combination of face to face and on-line workshops and an on-line survey for children and young people and members of the public.

2.3 Youth groups and organisations including; UNITAS, Art Against Knives, 4Front, Youth Realities and the Centre of Excellence will be supporting the period of consultation, engagement and coproduction with children and young people. An initial scoping and planning meeting is planned for week commencing 10 July to deliver a series of supported sessions focused on:

2.4 These supported sessions will focus on:

- **What is it like for you?**

In this session, we will gather feedback and insight into children and young people's lived experience and explore things that are helping, what they are worried about and where they see the opportunities for change

- **What should a good strategy for tackling violence and exploitation look like?**

What should the partnership be doing, how can young people get involved, how will we know if it is working, what will be different?

- **Does this look right?**

How should the strategy look and how will children and young people co-deliver a launch event with the multi-agency partnership in December.

2.5 The focus group with Parent Champions will follow a similar format to that outlined for children and young people.

2.6 During September 2023 the results from the workshops and survey's will be analysed alongside the findings of the strategic needs assessments of the Combatting Drugs Partnership and Safer Communities Partnership to form the first draft of the strategy. This draft will be shared with Members, key stakeholders, children, young people and parents for feedback during October 2023 with the final version being ready for publication by the end of November 2023.

3 Corporate Priorities, Performance and Other Considerations

Corporate Plan

3.1 The Violence, Vulnerability and Exploitation strategy will be informed by strategic needs assessments that will identify gaps, build on local strengths and provide a clear rationale for partnership activity in tackling violence and the harm caused by criminal gangs that exploit children in the drug supply chain. This is in line with the Corporate Plan for making Barnet a safe place for citizens and tackling inequalities in our marginalised communities.

3.2 The Public Consultation on the development of the strategy will ensure that communities can participate, are engaged and services delivered are accessible and delivered in local neighbourhoods.

3.3 The development of a strategy that keeps children safe from harm and enables them to thrive into adulthood is part of the council's Family Friendly vision 'where children and young people have the best start in life with the best education, the right support and safeguarding when they need it, and the right tools to live their lives successfully into adulthood'.

Corporate Performance / Outcome Measures

3.4 Not currently applicable

Sustainability

3.5 Not currently applicable

Corporate Parenting

- 3.6 Children in care and care experienced young people have a higher prevalence of adverse childhood experiences that may make them susceptible to grooming and coercion as such may be at an increased risk of becoming involved with the criminal justice system.
- 3.7 The strategic aims of working with children, young people and adults at risk of violence and exploitation will ensure cohesive overlap with Corporate Parenting Services, Combatting Drugs Partnership, Youth Justice Board, Strategic MACE and, in Transitional Safeguarding arrangements.

Risk Management

- 3.8 There is little risk that the aims of the consultation will not be achieved in the timescales set out. The summer break provides a space in which children and young people can be engaged in settings where they are spending their time. There is an established Parent Champion Network developed, in part, from MOPAC funding aimed at engaging parents of 'at risk' adolescents from marginalised communities.
- 3.9 The public, community services and member consultation period in September has sufficient time to produce an on-line questionnaire and schedule on-line meetings as necessary.

Insight

- 3.10 The noting of new timescales for the development of the Violence, Vulnerability and Exploitation strategy is an exercise in ensuring high data quality.

Social Value

- 3.11 The harm caused by illegal drugs know the stark reality of the damage they drive. Illicit drugs cause violent and acquisitive crime, tear apart families and degrade neighbourhoods, with a cost to society of close to £20 billion (Combatting Drugs Minister, 2022)
- 3.12 Violence preventative interventions, improve educational and health outcomes. Violence is a major cause of ill health negatively affects wellbeing; it is strongly related to inequalities. The poorest fifth of people in England have hospital admission rates for violence five times higher than those of the 64 35 most affluent fifth. It affects individuals and communities and is a drain on health services, the

criminal justice system and the wider economy. (Serious Violence Duty: Draft Guidance for responsible authorities, 2023).

- 3.13 Children who are criminally exploited are routinely exposed to violence and suffer psychological and physical trauma from their experiences. Trauma is defined as an event, series of events, or set of circumstances experienced by an individual as life-threatening or physically / emotionally harmful, that has lasting adverse effects on an individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional or spiritual wellbeing (Huang et al., 2014).
- 3.14 The cost of offending and reoffending is set out in the 2018 Home Office report on the Economic and Social Cost of Crime (2nd edition). The report followed a cohort of offenders identified in 2016 who subsequently went on to reoffend during the 12-month follow up. The total estimated economic and social cost of reoffending was £18.1 billion. In addition, there is a further personal, familial and community cost which impacts on the lives of individuals, children and families and the communities that they live in.
- 3.15 48% of adults that spend time in prison go on to reoffend within 12-months of release. Prison does not treat offending and does not prevent reoffending (Ministry of Justice, 2019 'Proven reoffending statistics': April – June 2017)

4 Resource Implications (Finance and Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT and Property)

- 4.1 No current resource implications

5 Legal Implications and Constitution References

- 5.1 The government's 10-year plan to cut drug crime and save lives: From Harm to Hope provides o hope'. Guidance issued in June 2022 set out the requirement for each local authority area to develop a Combatting Drugs Partnership and conduct a joint needs assessment based on a review of local drug data and evidence by November 2022 followed by a local drugs strategy delivery plan by December 2022.
- 5.2 Under s.6 Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 Safer Communities Partnerships must develop a Serious Violence Strategy by January 2024.
- 5.3 Under s.17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, it is a duty of the Council (and other partner agencies, including Police, Fire & Rescue, Greater London Authority, Transport for London) when exercising its functions to have due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder (including anti-social behaviour), misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances and reoffending.

- 5.4 The Barnet Safeguarding Community Partnership is a Community Safety Partnership set up in accordance with the requirement of the section 5 Crime and Disorder Act 1998 as amended by section 108 of the Policing and Crime Act 2009.
- 5.5 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 places a duty on local authorities in England to assess the need for accommodation-based support to victims of domestic abuse, prepare and publish a strategy for the provision of such support and monitor and evaluate its effectiveness. Prior to publishing a strategy, the local authority must consult the domestic abuse local partnership board and such other persons as the local authority considers appropriate.
- 5.6 Section 10 of the Offender Rehabilitation Act 2014 amended the Offender Management Act 2007, placing a duty on the Secretary of State for Justice to ensure that arrangements for supervision or rehabilitation identify specific need and so make appropriate provision for women and vulnerable groups.
- 5.7 Section 40 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 places a duty on local authorities, after consultation with the relevant persons and bodies, to formulate and implement for each year a plan (a "youth justice plan") setting out: (a) how youth justice services in their area are to be provided and funded; and (b) how the youth offending team or teams established by them are to be composed and funded, how they are to operate, and what functions they are to carry out.
- 5.8 The Chair of the Youth Justice Board has responsibility for submitting the Youth Justice Plan to the Youth Justice Board established under section 41 and shall publish it as required by the Secretary of State.
- 5.9 Under the Council Constitution, Part 2D the terms of reference of Cabinet includes the following responsibilities:
- Development of proposals for the budget (including the capital and revenue budgets, the fixing of the Council Tax Base, and the level of Council Tax) and the financial strategy for the Council;
 - Monitoring the implementation of the budget and financial strategy;
 - Recommending major new policies (and amendments to existing policies) to the Council for approval as part of the Council's Policy Framework and implementing those approved by Council;
 - Approving policies that are not part of the policy framework;
 - Management of the Council's Capital Programme;

6 Consultation

- 6.1 As a matter of public law, the duty to consult with regards to proposals to vary, reduce or withdraw services will arise in four circumstances:

- where there is a statutory requirement in the relevant legislative framework
- where the practice has been to consult, or, where a policy document states the council will consult, then the council must comply with its own practice or policy
- exceptionally, where the matter is so important that there is a legitimate expectation of consultation
- Where consultation is required to complete an equalities impact assessment.

6.2 Regardless of whether the council has a duty to consult, if it chooses to consult, such consultation must be carried out fairly. In general, a consultation can only be considered as proper consultation if:

- comments are genuinely invited at the formative stage
- the consultation documents include sufficient reasons for the proposal to allow those being consulted to be properly informed and to give an informed response
- there is adequate time given to the consultees to consider the proposals
- there is a mechanism for feeding back the comments and those comments are considered by the decision-maker / decision-making body when making a final decision
- the degree of specificity with which, in fairness, the public authority should conduct its consultation exercise may be influenced by the identity of those whom it is consulting
- where relevant and appropriate, the consultation is clear on the reasons why and extent to which alternatives and discarded options have been discarded. The more intrusive the decision, the more likely it is to attract a higher level of procedural fairness.

6.3 The refresh of the Violence, Vulnerability & Exploitation (Vulnerable Adolescents) Strategy will be informed by public consultations - including with partnership organisations, members and service users.

Equalities and Diversity

7.1 Decision makers should have due regard to the public sector equality duty in making their decisions. Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 sets out the public-sector equality duty to which the authority must have due regard.

7.2 Elected Members are to satisfy themselves that equality considerations are integrated into day-to-day business and that all proposals emerging from the business planning process have taken into consideration the impact, if any, on any protected group and what mitigating factors can be put in place. The equalities duties are continuing duties they are not duties to secure a particular outcome.

7.3 Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:

- remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- Encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

Having due regard to the need to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:

- Tackle prejudice, and
- Promote understanding.

7.4 Compliance with the duties in this section may involve treating some persons more favourably than others; but that is not to be taken as permitting conduct that would otherwise be prohibited by or under this Act. The relevant protected characteristics are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage and Civil partnership

7.5 The commitment to the Public Sector Equality Duty is set out in the council's Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Policy 2021-2025 which aims to actively tackle inequalities, foster good relationships across our communities and recognise the contributions that people from different backgrounds make to life in our borough. Violence and offending affect all communities and there well documented racial disproportionality in the criminal justice system for children and adults that must be addressed.

7.6 The Violence, Vulnerability and Exploitation Strategy will aim to reduce the exploitation to children, recognise the particular vulnerabilities and intersectionality of protected characteristics, disadvantage and discrimination. It is our aim for the borough to be a fair, inclusive and a safe place for all our communities. Where discrimination is tackled, hate crime is reported and dealt with promptly, and everyone feels safe to live their life.

Background Papers

- 8.1 [From harm to hope: A 10-year drugs plan to cut crime and save lives - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/from-harm-to-hope-a-10-year-drugs-plan-to-cut-crime-and-save-lives)
(www.gov.uk)
- 8.2 [Guidance for local delivery partners \(accessible version\) - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/guidance-for-local-delivery-partners-accessible-version) (www.gov.uk)
- 8.3 [Serious Violence Duty - Statutory Guidance](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/consultations/serious-violence-duty-statutory-guidance) (publishing.service.gov.uk)
- 8.4 [Adolescent safeguarding in London](https://adobe.com/uk/pressroom/articles/adolescent-safeguarding-in-london) (adobe.com)
- 8.5 [\(Public Pack\) Agenda Document for Safer Communities Partnership Board, 28/04/2023 10:00](https://www.moderngov.co.uk/2023/04/28/public-pack-agenda-document-for-safer-communities-partnership-board-28-04-2023-10-00) (moderngov.co.uk)