


Non-Executive Report of the: Health and Wellbeing Board 13 May 2019	
Report of: Denise Radley, Corporate Director - Health, Adults and Community, LBTH	Classification: Unrestricted
Prevention of knife crime	

Originating Officer(s)	Katie Cole – Associate Director of Public Health, LBTH Charles Griggs – Head of Community Safety, LBTH Sarah Williams – Public Health Registrar, LBTH
Wards affected	All wards

Executive Summary

The recent rise in knife crime seen in London and across the UK has sparked widespread concern and calls for action to more effectively tackle the issue. Amongst this discourse, there have been calls for a 'public health approach' to knife crime, to focus on prevention and re-conceptualise it as a safeguarding issue.

This item, in the form of a presentation, aims to update the Board on what we are already doing as a borough to tackle knife crime. The Board will be invited to discuss how we could evolve our current approach to tackling this important health and wellbeing issue.

Violence can cause serious harm to those directly involved and has serious negative effects on the wider community and people's perception of safety. Violence is preventable and many of the risk factors for violence overlap with risk factors for poor physical and mental health. Hence, if the root causes of violence are targeted, then the benefits will go beyond purely a reduction in violence.

A public health approach takes a life course approach targeting the whole population with different preventative interventions for different ages and groups. It systematically uses data and evidence to understand the root causes of violence and addresses the underlying risk factors for violence. It requires good multiagency working and close working with communities to be successful.

A public health approach for violence reduction follows the same model as for all public health interventions:

- Intelligence – a good understanding of the problem
- Strategy – how can we mitigate the problem
- Delivery of interventions – implementation of strategy
- Partnership – good multiagency working
- Evaluation – to ensure that interventions can be improved upon

- Communication – to ensure that the community owns this work

Following this model, the public health approach in Tower Hamlets to prevent knife crime has targeted interventions across the entire life course and interventions aimed at primary, secondary and tertiary prevention.

Primary prevention promotes wellbeing, optimising development and increasing resilience to prevent or minimise the development of risk factors for any adverse outcome. Primary prevention in relation to knife crime is very broad, encompassing work to reduce and mitigate the effects of childhood poverty, build a health-promoting environment, provide the best educational/employment opportunities and ensure that the Healthy Child Programme is delivered to all children. Examples include the delivery of knife crime and personal safety programmes in schools.

Secondary prevention supports individuals who have risk factors for involvement in knife crime, but who haven't been affected at that point. Risk factors include exposure to family violence, having a number of adverse childhood experiences, living in a low-income household. Clearly, not all people who have risk factors for involvement in knife crime will go on to be affected by it. Interventions at this level aim to provide early help and targeted support, either within universal programmes (such as health visiting) or targeted support (such as Family Nurse Partnership, Early Help, drug and alcohol services, and children's social care). Children's Centres are an important source of support, with multi-disciplinary teams helping to provide a strong and stable start to life. The work they undertake links into the broader "neglect" agenda, and includes support to reduce domestic violence and improve parental mental health, both adverse factors which impact on young people and increase vulnerability to being drawn into knife crime.

Tertiary prevention supports individuals, their families and communities following a knife crime incident. It focuses on prevention of future incidents and on 'healing' to improve health, wellbeing and social outcomes for all those who have been affected. Serious Youth Violence is a Safeguarding issue and Tower Hamlets have ensured that the operational elements of serious youth violence are embedded within Safeguarding arrangements and are reported to the Exploitation sub-group of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board. Where children and young people have been identified as being involved in serious youth violence, strategy meetings with relevant partners have been held and cases have been opened to Children's Social Care and support has been provided from the Exploitation hub, the Police, St Giles and Community Safety. Children are offered additional one to one support through St Giles and where exploitation or gang involvement is identified there are police teams who are embedded within the Exploitation hub to offer support for disruption activities.

In 2017 the Community Safety Partnership developed a Partnership Knife Crime Action Plan in response to rising levels of knife violence in the borough, shifting from a criminal justice to a public health approach, looking at the long term solutions. The plan was developed following extensive consultation with experts, our local community and young people whose lives have been affected by knife crime, including victims, offenders and family members. The plan contains actions that are being delivered by a broad range of council services and partner organisations.

Activities include:

- Community weapon sweeps (with police, council and members of the community) retrieving knives hidden in our streets and other public places,
- Policing operations each month known as Operation Sceptre are targeting known weapon carriers and removing knives, other weapons and those using them off our streets – (the most recent operation resulted in 18 arrests including 5 for possessing offensive weapons, and 8 knives were recovered),
- Frequent deployment of the MPS Knife Crime Task Force to support Tower Hamlets Police,
- Test purchase operations by Trading Standards in retail outlets and training their staff to ensure knives are not being sold over the counter to those underage,
- Operation Continuum is our multi-agency response to addressing the links between serious organised crime, drug supply and knife crime. The most recent operation was conducted in the Weavers Ward. Over the past 12 months there have been seven operations leading to the following results (amongst many others):
 - zombie style knives have been seized
 - 140 warrants executed/properties raided
 - 46 weapon Sweeps conducted and 39 weapons recovered including knives and other weapons.
- A Youth Independent Advisory Group (IAG) has been set up to ensure that young people's voices are heard and taken into account as we develop further targeted work to address knife crime and other issues impacting on their fear of crime,
- A Community Impact Statement has been prepared by the Police Borough Commander. It includes a quote from the Mayor and it informs the Courts of the seriousness of knife crime and how we treat it locally, in order to support substantive court outcomes and appropriate sentencing.

Since commencement of the knife crime action plan, police crime data shows a downward trend of offences compared on a rolling year (1 April18- 1 April19):

- Total Knife crime offences (including knife intimidated robbery) have decreased by 7%.
- Knife crime injury offences for those aged under 25 have seen a decrease of 9%

As evidenced above, these programmes require a coordinated multiagency approach and knife crime prevention will benefit the entire population. As part of the public health approach to violence reduction the Public Health directorate are leading on a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) on Violence affecting Young People. This will help provide a deeper insight into the problem and inform the response.

Recommendations:

The Health and Wellbeing Board is recommended to:

1. Note the update on Prevention of Knife Crime (presentation to be given at

- the Health and Wellbeing Board).
2. Discuss the contribution and commitment of all partners within the Board to delivering the action plan and a reduction in knife crime.

1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 To provide an update on the Prevention of Knife Crime as part of a public health approach to violence

2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 Not applicable

3. DETAILS OF THE REPORT

- 3.1 Not applicable – presentation to be given at Health and Wellbeing Board

4. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Not applicable

5. OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 This section of the report is used to highlight further specific statutory implications that are either not covered in the main body of the report or are required to be highlighted to ensure decision makers give them proper consideration. Examples of other implications may be:
 - Best Value Implications,
 - Consultations,
 - Environmental (including air quality),
 - Risk Management,
 - Crime Reduction,
 - Safeguarding.

6. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

- 6.1 There are currently no direct financial implications which result from updating the Board on what the council is doing to prevent knife crime. As the approach to preventing knife crime develops, financial implications of potential actions to address any issues identified will be assessed and considered.

7. COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES

- 7.1 This report provides an update on the steps being taken by the Council to address the problem of knife crime in the borough and has no direct legal implications.
- 7.2 The Children Act 2004 requires cooperation between safeguarding partner agencies including the Council, schools, the police, probation services and the youth offending team. The multi-agency approach set out in this report is consistent with the legislative framework and Government guidance; in particular the statutory guidance *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (2018), and the Government's *Serious Violence Strategy* published in 2018. The Health and Wellbeing Board has the task of communicating and engaging with local people on how to achieve the best possible quality of life and to be supported to exercise choice and control over their health and is therefore the appropriate body to receive and consider the contents of this report.

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- None

Appendices

- None

Local Government Act, 1972 Section 100D (As amended)

List of "Background Papers" used in the preparation of this report

List any background documents not already in the public domain including officer contact information.

- None

Officer contact details for documents:

N/A