


<p>Cabinet</p> <p>28 July 2015</p>	 <p>TOWER HAMLETS</p>
<p>Report of: Debbie Jones, Interim Corporate Director – Children’s Services</p>	<p>Classification: Unrestricted</p>
<p>Ending Groups, Gangs and Serious Youth Violence Strategy</p>	

Lead Member	Councillor Rachael Saunders, Cabinet Member for Children’s Services
Originating Officer(s)	Jebin Syeda, Strategy, Policy and Performance Officer
Wards affected	All Wards
Key Decision?	Yes
Community Plan Theme	A safe and cohesive community

Executive Summary

This report proposes the borough’s first Ending Groups, Gangs and Serious Youth Violence Strategy. The strategy will consolidate the work undertaken by the Council and its partners and will put in place a joined-up approach and commitment to addressing and tackling the issue of groups, gangs and serious youth violence(GGSYV). The strategy recognises GGSYV as a safeguarding issue and as such the commitment to addressing GGSYV includes all forms of exploitation and abuse which can be associated with GGSYV.

The strategy will place a strong strategic, co-ordination and leadership role on the local authority with a focus on safeguarding children, young people and families. The delivery is through the recruitment of a Ending Groups, Gangs and Serious Youth Violence Co-ordinator to provide operational lead and the setting up of a Strategic Action Group which will be the base for multi-agency response to GGSVY providing operational response to group offending and complex cases and strategic direction.

Recommendations:

The Mayor in Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Agree the Ending Groups, Gangs and Serious Youth Violence Strategy 2015/16 – 2017/18 and the supporting action plan.

1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 This is the borough's first Ending Groups, Gangs and Serious Youth Violence Strategy and needs to be signed off by the Mayor and Executive for implementation. The strategy is needed to enhance the partnership focus and approach to how we respond to local issues of GGSYV. This is needed to ensure we support and safeguard young people and families from harm in relation to involvement in GGSYV.

2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 There are two alternative options. One of these is the option to do nothing, and continue to operate services as is. The strategy presents an opportunity to improve our partnership focus and co-ordination of our response to GGSYV. The do nothing option does not enhance the service offer to those who are involved and does not enable the partnership to take a prevention approach to supporting those involved in GGSYV. The other alternative option would be to put in place an alternative strategy. The proposed strategy is the best fit strategy for our partnership and feedback from Home Office suggests that the way the strategy is framed in the context of identifying and supporting vulnerabilities is the best approach.

3. DETAILS OF REPORT

- 3.1 In 2012, the Home Office undertook a review which resulted in a report and some initial work was undertaken. That work has continued, however, the need for a comprehensive strategy was identified. This is the strategic document and brings together the work undertaken in the interim period and reflects the community needs and the political importance given to this piece of work.
- 3.2 Historically, GGSYV has not been a significant issue but over the years has grown as an issue of concern for the community and for politicians, particularly with the increased use of knives in violent assaults. Although the issue locally is not as significant as other boroughs, the nature of violence and its impact on the community and the family is, and calls for a co-ordinated response to prevent, support and provide enforcement with support to ensure the borough responds to, and manages the emerging issues.
- 3.3 The strategy has been widely consulted on with partner agencies and seeks to put in place, strong strategic leadership and an operational lead with the overall aim to improve co-ordination and partnership focus. The aim of the strategy is for Tower Hamlets Partnership to *reduce the harm caused by groups, gangs and serious youth violence and its associated forms of abuse*. This requires a strong partnership approach as the issues cannot be tackled by one agency alone. The work we do on GGSYV will be guided by the following key principles:

- 1) The partnership will not tolerate groups, gangs and serious youth violence and its associated abuse in Tower Hamlets;
- 2) Our work will be underpinned by a safeguarding approach;
- 3) Young people (and families) who are at risk of involvement in groups, gangs and serious youth violence and the associated forms of abuse will be offered targeted interventions at the earliest point to discourage involvement with support from the appropriate partners;
- 4) If young people (or families) continue to engage in GGSYV the partnership will use all enforcement options available and also continue to offer support with appropriate interventions;
- 5) The partnership will place a strong commitment to data and intelligence sharing to reduce the harm caused by groups, gangs, serious youth violence and the associated forms of abuse.

3.4 The strategy divides the delivery of the work into four key areas:

- 1) Intelligence and data sharing – Improving how we use data for early identification and intervention and to influence our commissioning intentions;
- 2) Early identification and prevention – Supporting professionals to respond to concerns, engaging the community, supporting parents and support in schools;
- 3) Intervention and support – interventions to address the key risks and impacts of being involved in GGSYV;
- 4) Enforcement with support – creative use of legal powers across the partnership, assessing gaps in current provision for those who reach the cut off point for local authority young people’s services and are young and vulnerable, gang exit strategy for those who want to exit an offending lifestyle.

3.5 The work on GGSYV will be developed and directed through the Strategic Action Group. Involvement in the work of the Strategic Action Group from partner agencies is key to influencing and delivering the work and will include Social Care, Police, Housing, Public Health, Voluntary Sector, Probation, Clinical Commissioning Group, Child and Adolescent Mental Health and other local agencies and services including schools.

3.6 The prevention focus of the strategy taking a whole family approach means it fits well with phase two of Troubled Families, the Strategic Action Group will therefore work as a sub-group of the Troubled Families Board reporting to it on operational matters. Additionally, operational leadership will be provided by the recruitment of an Ending Groups, Gangs and Serious Youth Violence Co-ordinator the funding for which has been agreed.

3.7 The EGGSYV Strategy is a three year strategy with an ambitious one year action plan which will be reviewed and reported to the Community Safety Partnership Board as part of the governance arrangements.

4. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

4.1 Resources of £50k per annum have been identified from the Council’s reserves to fund the post of EGGSYV Co-ordinator for the duration of the 3

year strategy. Any additional costs over £50k will be met from Troubled Families grant.

5. LEGAL COMMENTS

- 5.1. The Council's functions in relation to children include a duty under section 11 of the Children Act 2004 to make arrangements to ensure that its functions are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Section 10 of the Act also requires the Council to make arrangements to promote cooperation between its safeguarding partner agencies including schools, the police, probation services and the youth offending team.
- 5.2. The EGGSYV Strategy is consistent with this legislative framework and Government guidance; in particular *Safeguarding Children who may be affected by Gang activity*, a non-statutory practice guidance which is supplementary to, and should be used in conjunction with, the Government's statutory guidance *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (2010).
- 5.3. The practice guidance recommends that Local Safeguarding Children Boards should ensure that local procedures and multi-agency protocols are in place for children at risk of harm through gang activity in their area. Clear protocols should help to create a seamless, collective response to meet the needs of children and young people. The EGGSYV Strategy is consistent with this recommendation.
- 5.4. Additionally, pursuant to the statutory guidance *Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation* issued under section 7 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970, the Council's responsibilities include ensuring there is a multi-agency CSE Strategy and action plan with standard procedures and protocols and this is referred to within the EGGSYV Strategy.
- 5.5. The activities set out in the action plan appear capable of being carried out within the Council's statutory functions and officers will need to ensure that the action plan is implemented to ensure this is the case. In this regard, the following may be noted –
 - The action plan proposes information sharing between partner agencies. This may be permissible but appropriate protocols must be put in place, which ensure that personal data is only processed in accordance with the data protection principles under the Data Protection Act 1998.
 - Appropriate use may be made of enforcement tools to combat gang and group crime which were introduced in Part 1 to Part 9 of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 in the form of dispersal powers, injunctions, public spaces protection orders, criminal behaviour orders and offences relating to firearms and protection from sexual harm and violence.
- 5.6. When considering the EGGSYV strategy, it is relevant to take into account that the Council has a duty under section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act

1998 to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent the following in Tower Hamlets: (a) crime and disorder, including anti-social and other behaviour adversely affecting the local environment; and (b) the misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances; and (c) re-offending. The Council has adopted the Community Safety Partnership plan under the Crime and Disorder Act and care should be taken that the EGGSYV strategy is consistent with that plan.

- 5.7. In carrying out its functions, the Council must have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful conduct under the Equality Act 2010, such as discrimination, the need to advance equality of opportunity and the need to foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who don't (the public sector equality duty). Before adopting the EGGSYV strategy, some form of equality analysis will be required that is proportionate to the function in questions and its potential impacts.

6. ONE TOWER HAMLETS CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 The delivery of the strategy sits at the heart of developing one Tower Hamlets, a place where people feel safe and where young people have a choice and freedom in using the local environment in the way they need to without being harmed or harming others. The strategy seeking to actively identify vulnerable individuals and provide support taking a whole family approach addresses inequality for those experiencing trauma in their life which left unresolved could manifest itself in more complex adversity.
- 6.2 This strategy is the borough's first Ending Groups, Gangs and Serious Youth Violence Strategy and as such will put in place arrangements to ensure gang and youth violence related monitoring arrangements are embedded to enable evidence based one Tower Hamlets considerations to be made. We will pursue and reinforce this further through the work we take forward on the strategy.
- 6.3 The strategy identifies that British Asian males are highest represented as both victims and perpetrators of serious youth violence. To further understand this, we have initiated a thematic review which also looks at the backgrounds of the young people's cases being considered to help us frame a local response. The findings of this review will be fed into the work we take forward on the strategy.
- 6.4 An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken which identifies the need to embed the monitoring of GGSYV, including monitoring as per the requirements of the Equality Act 2010; this is built into the recommendations of the strategy. A copy of this assessment is appended to the report.

7. BEST VALUE (BV) IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 We are investing in the recruitment of an Ending Groups, Gangs and Serious Youth Violence Co-ordinator which will secure continuous improvement in our approach to supporting those who are involved or at risk of involvement in GGSYV. This will improve efficiency and effectiveness in the management of cases and emerging issues on GGSYV by improving the service offer and preventing the escalation of GGSYV in the borough.

8. SUSTAINABLE ACTION FOR A GREENER ENVIRONMENT

- 8.1 The proposals put forward in this report do not have any direct environmental implications

9. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 We do not currently have a significant gangs and serious youth violence issue in the borough as evident in other boroughs. Although the number of incidences are not alarming, the nature of violence is intense and too many of our young people are experiencing negative trauma which has wider implications for families, communities and service providers. If we do not enhance our strategic focus and delivery co-ordination, there is the risk of the borough not being at the forefront of emerging local issues with groups, gangs and serious youth violence. The implementation of the strategy will set up a strong partnership which can manage emerging issues before they manifest as a significant problem for the borough.

10. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 This strategy provides the strategic and operational framework for reducing crime and disorder by taking a prevention and intervention approach to supporting young people and families.

11. SAFEGUARDING IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 One of the principles of the strategy is that the work we do is framed around safeguarding. This means that in all cases, the safeguarding principle will be key to how we respond to cases of GGSYV as a partnership. The implementation of the strategy will strengthen the operational arrangements for identifying the risks and needs of vulnerable young people through our partnership conceptual model, the Family Wellbeing Model. It will also improve the co-ordination and service offer across the partnership. Additionally, the focus on improving how we use data and intelligence locally to identify and support individuals and families will enable a stronger safeguarding role for all agencies involved.

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- NONE

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Ending Groups, Gangs and Serious Youth Violence Strategy
- Appendix 2 – Equality Impact Assessment on the Ending Groups, Gangs and Serious Youth Violence Strategy

Background Documents – Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements)(Access to Information)(England) Regulations 2012

- NONE

Officer contact details for documents:

Jebin Syeda, Strategy Policy and Performance Officer,
jebin.syeda@towerhamlets.gov.uk 020 7364 2070