

Non-Executive Report of the: Overview and Scrutiny Committee 22 nd March 2018	
Report of: Will Tuckley, Chief Executive.	Classification: Unrestricted
Gangs and serious Youth Violence: A Scrutiny Review Report	

Originating Officer(s)	William Tompsett, Senior Strategy, Policy & Performance Officer
Wards affected	All

Summary

1.1 This report provides the report and recommendations of the Scrutiny Review on the issue of Gangs and Serious Youth Violence in Tower Hamlets.

Recommendations:

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

1. Agree the report and the recommendations; and
2. Authorise the Divisional Director Strategy, Policy and Partnership to amend the draft report before submission to Cabinet, after consultation with the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

1.1 This report outlines the findings and recommendations from the gangs and Youth Violence Scrutiny Review, which was part of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee's work programme for the 2017/18 municipal year.

2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

2.1 The committee may decide to not to agree the recommendations. This is not recommended as the report outlines work undertaken by Councillors and officers to identify areas of improvement.

3. DETAILS OF REPORT

Background and context

- 3.1 The Gangs and Serious Youth Violence Scrutiny Review was chaired by Councillor Danny Hassell in his role as Scrutiny Lead for Children's Services in order to obtain an overview of the scale and impact of Gangs and Serious Youth Violence in the Borough and the work currently being planned and delivered by the Council and its partners.
- 3.2 In 2017 the London Borough of Tower Hamlets underwent an Ofsted review of its Children's Services and one of the recommendations that arose was that the Council should ***“Urgently improve the quality and timeliness of services for children who are at risk of becoming involved in gangs and serious youth violence. Ensure the alignment of those services with those for children who go missing and those who are vulnerable to sexual exploitation and radicalisation. Ensure that comprehensive and accurate intelligence and data inform service developments.”***
- 3.3 Two sessions were held in January and February 2018. The first session was held at the Town Hall and looked at current approach and practices, existing research and findings and examples of good practice being delivered in other areas. The second at a local youth facility called 'Spotlight' looked at real-life case studies, feedback and findings from reviews and the work of key partners in the borough.
- 3.4 This review was underpinned by three core questions:
- a) What is the true scale and impact of Gangs and Youth Violence issues in Tower Hamlets?
 - b) What are common factors that lead to involvement in gangs?
 - c) How can the Council and its partners work together more effectively to reduce the impact of gangs in the borough and help young people avoid or exit gang involvement?
- 3.5 The following Members and officers attended the Review Sessions held in January and February 2018:

Name	Title	Organisation
Councillor Danny Hassell	Chair of Gangs and Youth Violence Review and Scrutiny Lead for Children's Services	LBTH
Councillor Dave Chesterton	Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC)	LBTH
Councillor Rabina Khan	OSC Member People's Alliance of Tower Hamlets (Leader of PATH Group)	LBTH
Councillor Shafi Ahmed	OSC Member (substitute)	LBTH
Councillor Amy Whitelock-Gibbs	Lead Member for Education and Children's Services	LBTH
David Burbidge	Co-opted Member for Health Scrutiny Sub-Committee	Health Scrutiny
Fahimal Islam	Young Mayor	LBTH

Shaiam Islam	Deputy Young Mayor	LBTH
Claire Belgard	Interim Head of Integrated Youth and Community Services	LBTH
Nikki Bradley	Service Manager Youth Justice, Children's Social care and Family Interventions	LBTH
Debbie Jones	Corporate Director, Children's Services	LBTH
Nancy Meehan	Interim Divisional Director, Children's Social Care	LBTH
Adam Salmon	Ending Gang, Group and Serious Youth Violence Coordinator	LBTH
Paula Wilkinson	Crime Reduction & Rapid Response Team Manager	LBTH

3.6 There was also representation from partner organisations by the following:

Name	Title	Organisation
Mike Hamer	Deputy Chief Inspector	Metropolitan Police
Sean Drislane	Detective Inspector	Metropolitan Police
Maurice Mason	Community Safety and Partnership Manager	London Borough of Hackney
John O'Shea	Deputy Head Teacher	Bow School
Daniel Rose	Director	Spotlight
Khalid Sugulle	Community Worker	St Giles Trust
Joe Williams	Head of ASB and Safeguarding	Poplar HARCA

Evidence gathering and methodology

3.7 The Review received presentations on the following areas:

- Local Context – definition of gangs and profile in Tower Hamlets
- Wider Context – summary of findings from research and studies from other authorities and organisations
- Current Workstreams – the authority's current work in tackling gangs and related issues
- Presentation from London Borough of Hackney – approach and work done by the Integrated Gangs Unit in Hackney
- Troubled Lives, Tragic Consequences – thematic review of cases and interventions
- Case studies and Opportunities for Early Intervention – real cases, issues and lessons learned
- Spotlight – overview of the work delivered by Spotlight for young people
- St Giles Trust – overview of the work delivered by St Giles trust

3.8 The report with recommendations is attached as Appendix 1. There are twenty recommendations arising from the review. It is useful to note that the report reflects the discussions from two review sessions and background research.

3.9 The report highlights very clearly that there is no single solution or approach to tackling the issue of gangs and youth violence and this is not a problem that the

Council or any agency can tackle alone. A joined up partnership approach that considers the wider implications and effects on young people, their families and the local community is essential.

- 3.10 There is also an identified shortage in detailed information and intelligence that is needed to provide a full picture of the impact of gangs and youth violence as well as dedicated resources to provide robust analysis and inform effective strategic planning.
- 3.11 Findings from the meetings, which included submissions from Senior Officers and partners, have been supplemented by additional secondary sources. These include Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime statistics and analysis taken from existing reports and research conducted by other authorities and national agencies. The recommendations arising from this range of evidence sources are outlined under four themes below:

Approach and Focus

- 3.12 **Recommendation 1:**
Our approach to dealing with those involved in or victims of gangs and youth violence should consider the needs of the whole family and adopt a safeguarding approach.
- 3.13 **Recommendation 2:**
The Council should develop a new Gangs Strategy which reflects the concerns of the community and young people and has a strong focus on the voices of victims and of empowering the community.
- 3.14 **Recommendation 3:**
Consider how we structure our activity in response to gangs and exploitation to ensure that it is a more holistic approach such as a wider 'exploitation' team.
- 3.15 **Recommendation 4:**
Our assessments of children entering the care system should more thoroughly consider the mental health needs, including an understanding of the specific impact of violence on their lives.
- 3.16 **Recommendation 5:**
Ensure that there is funding and coordination that covers interventions for young people over the age of 18.

Analysis, Knowledge and Understanding

- 3.17 **Recommendation 6:**
Undertake further analysis of the gangs profile in the borough including the age and ethnic profile of those involved.
- 3.18 **Recommendation 7:**

Improve and develop our understanding of the impact of County Lines and Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) on our looked after children who are placed outside of borough.

3.19 Recommendation 8:

Further work needs to be undertaken to develop a more comprehensive understanding of impact on women as a result of gangs and gang activity in the borough, in particular Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). This should include the voices and experiences of those who have been victims of gangs and serious violence.

Communications, Joint-Working and Engagement

3.20 Recommendation 9:

Current engagement with Job Centre Plus should be expanded to include the Council's WorkPath as employment is considered an effective opportunity for gangs exit.

3.21 Recommendation 10:

Consider ways in which the risk and vulnerability of young people attending the London East AP can be better understood and develop an effective support package for young people re-entering secondary school when moving from the London East AP.

3.22 Recommendation 11:

Engage with schools and the police to better understand their policies around exclusions in relation to carrying knives.

3.23 Recommendation 12:

Wider engagement should be undertaken with the local community and other stakeholders, including schools, faith groups and TRAs to increase an understanding of community concerns and how they might help contribute to our response.

3.24 Recommendation 13:

Consideration should be given to whether there should be a social care/youth worker presence in A&E, including the paediatric A&E at Royal London in order to support early identification and intervention of those involved in gangs or subject to exploitation by gangs.

3.25 Recommendation 14:

The Council should work in partnership with the police in order to develop effective disruption activity in relation to gangs, drugs and CSE, ensuring that it utilises all of the tools and powers at its disposal.

Training and Capacity Building

3.26 Recommendation 15:

Current training being delivered to staff on gangs and serious youth violence should be offered to all staff, including agency staff in relevant roles.

3.27 Recommendation 16:

Instigate a programme of training for local residents, where appropriate, to act as community advocates.

3.28 Recommendation 17:

Develop a peer led programme to raise awareness of risks and vulnerabilities and support peers through mentoring.

3.29 Recommendation 18:

Ensure that there are effective, reflective supervisions for staff to ensure that they can raise sensitive issues in a supportive setting.

3.30 Recommendation 19:

Provide training to youth workers in developing an understanding of youth courts and the youth justice system.

3.31 Recommendation 20:

The Council and partners should offer a quality assured preventative programme to schools, in order to spot early warning signs and develop the resilience of young people.

4. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

This report recommends the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to note the recommendations of the Gangs and Serious Youth Violence Scrutiny Review Report. There are no direct financial implications to the Council from this report, however if the cost of actions carried out to implement recommendations cannot be contained within the existing Council revenue budget, then growth funding will need to be requested for consideration as part of the medium term financial planning process.

5. LEGAL COMMENTS

5.1 The Council is required by section 9F of the Local Government Act 2000 to have an Overview and Scrutiny Committee and to have executive arrangements that ensure the committee has specified powers. Consistent with this obligation, Article 6 of the Council's Constitution provides that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee may consider any matter affecting the area or its inhabitants. The Committee may also make reports and recommendations to Council or the Executive in connection with the discharge of any functions.

5.2 The Scrutiny Review's purpose was to obtain an overview of the scale and impact of Gangs and Serious Youth Violence in the Borough and the work currently being planned and delivered by the Council and its partners. In that regard, Section 10 of the Children Act 2004 places a requirement for agencies to cooperate with local authorities, to ensure a co-ordinated approach to safeguarding to promote the well-being of children in each local authority area. This cooperation should exist and be effective at all levels of the organisation, from strategic level through to operational delivery. Further, under section 11 of the Act, local agencies, including the Council, police and health services, have a duty to ensure that they consider the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children when carrying out their functions.

- 5.3 20 recommendations have been proposed in the Scrutiny Review Report and all are capable of being undertaken within the Council's powers.

6. ONE TOWER HAMLETS CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 Although it has been identified that a majority of young people currently involved in gangs are from BAME communities, this is broadly representative of the diversity of the local population. Similarly, although gang involvement is predominantly male dominated, the impact on women and girls through direct involvement or families is an area of specific focus. Community cohesion and empowerment is at the heart of the review and a focus for recommendations.

7. BEST VALUE (BV) IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The recommendations in this report are made as part of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee's role in helping to secure continuous improvement for the Council, as required under its Best Value duty. The recommendations arising from the review are designed to improve the efficiency of the authority and partners in working together to deliver improvements and secure additional funding for tackling the issue and impact of gangs and youth violence.

8. SUSTAINABLE ACTION FOR A GREENER ENVIRONMENT

- 8.1 There are no direct implications from this report with regards to action for a greener environment.

9. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 One of the reasons for this review was the recommendation resulting from the Ofsted review. Not addressing this effectively would have significant impact on the Council's reputation and service. Once the report has been agreed by Governance DMT and Overview and Scrutiny Committee, officers will produce a detailed action plan, to implement the recommendations. Therefore, during the action planning stage the key risks, implications and mitigating actions will be identified and agreed.

10. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The recommendations in this report focus on improving the understanding and ability to effectively tackle the impact of gangs and serious youth violence within the borough. This includes working with key partners including the police to offer alternative and diversionary activity for young people at risk and support for individuals and families. It is envisioned that adoption of these recommendations will lower the number of incidences of crime and anti-social behaviour linked to gangs and help make Tower Hamlets a safer place to live.

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- NONE

Appendices

- Appendix 1: Gangs and Serious Youth Violence Scrutiny Review Report

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

List of “Background Papers” used in the preparation of this report

- NONE