

MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL

REPORT FOR INFORMATION

COMMITTEE: Children & Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

DATE: 15 July 2008

SUBJECT: Guns and Gangs

REPORT OF: Director of Children's Services

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

The issues of guns and gangs are becoming increasingly high profile with the number of deaths of young people rising. The shift in age range from late teens and early twenties now the average age of a young person involved lowered to mid teens. This requires a more young person focussed response whereby targeted intervention and prevention remain the priority.

Partnership across all of the agencies involved is crucial. The violent Gangs Board is now well established and functioning well, holding agencies to account for agreed planned actions as well as sharing information and intelligence which allows for planning and preparation in advance.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That members note:

- A) Progress made to date
- B) The direction of travel to ensure we provide targeted intervention as well as earlier intervention and prevention
- C) The use of knives is not a significant one for the City yet.

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FINANCIAL CONSEQUENCES FOR THE REVENUE BUDGET

Plans fall within the current financial envelope including grant funding as and when arises

FINANCIAL CONSEQUENCES FOR THE CAPITAL BUDGET

None

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

No background papers

WARDS AFFECTED:

All

1. Introduction

The gun/gang issue has a high profile in the City and has been the subject of increased and specific focus from government over the last 12 months. During this time the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) and Children's Services have worked closely together to further develop our multi-agency gang strategy and to embed understanding of the problem facing the city. We recognised the need to ensure we had a co-ordinated response to gun/gang issues across a much wider range of agencies who have a role to play in supporting the outcomes of the violent gang strategy.

Whilst gun crime remains a small proportion of overall crime in Manchester, its impact is felt deeply and it has a negative effect on public confidence and perceptions of safety.

The issue of gun/gang violence is not new to the City – it has existed in some form over the past 10 years. During this time we have worked very closely with communities, particularly those in the Metropolitan Police Division area, to support and establish specific services and responses, to help us understand and respond to the problem.

Over the last three years there have been a number of high profile cases of younger people becoming involved in gang violence which has increased the focus on the problem both locally and nationally. For the last year the escalation of gun crime, particularly with young people created a specialist development team, Tackling Guns Action Programme (T-GAP) across the core cities affected.

Prior to the initiation of T-GAP from central government, Manchester had established a joint Violent Gangs Board with colleagues in Trafford, in recognition of the cross boundary issue. The remit of the Board is to oversee the development and delivery of an integrated, strategic approach with the ultimate aim to eradicate gang violence. Plans are emerging to build upon best practice and engaging local communities. The requirements to deliver Integrated Youth Support and targeted Youth Support IYS and TYS will be a key component of this, as will the management and rehabilitation of offenders. Key however is the commitment to a continuing programme of high visibility surveillance and enforcement.

2. What Are We Doing to Address the Problem

- 2.1 The issue is complex and therefore needs a strong multi-agency response with clear leadership and purpose. The government's TGAP programme commended Manchester for the excellent work we have undertaken to date and our refreshed partnership and strategy will build on this work. The partnership through the Manchester Violent Gangs Board is an illustration of the strong priority given to the issue and has senior representatives from GMP and MCC. In recognition of the role that schools play in both recognising "symptoms" and being in a role that protects all children. A recent seminar has

been held with a selection of Head Teachers to scope the breadth of the problem for schools and agree a way forward. It has been agreed that more regular dialogue will continue with those schools directly affected.

2.2 Prevention

We recognise that early intervention with those most at risk is essential in stemming the culture of gang violence. Joint work in the City has focused on identifying those families and young people at the highest risk of involvement in gang violence and providing targeted prevention support. This is done through a range of systems and initiatives.

- the safeguarding protocol, approved by the Manchester Safeguarding Children's Board provides a mechanism for referral, using the Common Assessment Framework when concerns are first realised.
- mentoring programmes in schools for the siblings of gang members – via the current Eight til Late Project
- MMAGS school-days which educate young people about the dangers of becoming involved in gang culture and support teachers in identifying and dealing with gang issues in their schools,
- mentoring and support projects for young people from those communities who are most affected – the RECLAIM project last year worked with 49 young men from the wider Moss Side area providing leadership skills, support, mentoring and opportunities for personal development.
- Our parenting programme within Children's services and across Partner agencies has developed a range of parenting support that equips parents with the tools to support their children through problematic teen issues. A particular programme on parenting your teens is available and has evidence of impact.

Our prevention programmes will be further developed through the wider strategy and through targeted youth support over the coming year, with additional funding supporting activity through the PAYP resources.

2.3 Interventions

For those young people and adults who are already known to be involved in gangs, our specialist service, MMAGS (Manchester Multi Agency Gang Strategy Team) is engaged with around 80 gang members at any one time. The service predominantly focuses on

- challenging behaviour associated with gang culture,
- engaging with a range of agencies to support gang members out of gang involvement,
- working with the individual and with family members to develop strategies to exit gang culture
- longer term interventions to help young people to change their lifestyle.

MMAGS also works with young people who have been convicted and sentenced. The team is managed by the Manchester Youth Offending

Service, ensuring that there is a strong link to the statutory services and also recognising the shift in the age range of those involved.

We are developing our work with parents, both of those who are already gang involved and those who are at risk.

The YOS parenting and prevention staff also provide interventions to young people and their parents. Referrals are made on a locality basis, often through Area Casework Panels. The workers in the Central area have worked with the parents of young people identified as being at risk of gang involvement and this has included children participating in the 8 'til Late Project. Parental engagement may be on a voluntary or statutory basis i.e. if subject to a Parenting Order. Interventions are provided assertively and incorporate both individual work and structured group-work, Parenting Your Teen in Manchester.

2.4 Enforcement

There is significant understanding and expertise in the local Police divisions around the background to and manifestation of gun crime, particularly in the Metropolitan Division, which has the largest concentration of firearms discharges in the GMP force area.

The XTF X-Calibre Task Force is a GMP dedicated team of specialist police officers whose role is to monitor gang tensions, overtly and covertly gather intelligence in relation to gang activity, implement specific police operations to tackle gang problems both before, during and after incidents and, importantly, to reassure the public that a strong police presence is in force.

XTF works closely with the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership to ensure a coordinated response to the problem and is a key partner in the Manchester Violent Gangs Board (which has a specific focus on the City in addition to the joint Board with Trafford).

This dedicated resource has recently been involved in Operation Cougar which, from February 2008 to the present, has had an enormous impact on restricting gang activity and violence with young people. Although GMP initiated it is an initiative that has been negotiated with children's services and crime and disorder for a joint approach with agreed principles. The operation is a combination of high visibility police presence, disruption tactics and intervention, which has resulted in there not being a single gang related firearms discharge on the Metropolitan Division since the commencement of the operation. One major innovation has been to use Emergency Police Protection Powers to intervene with those young people at the highest risk of shooting or being shot and contacting parents to share concerns and engage them in services. Many parents were simply unaware of the activities of their children late at night.

Since it began in February 2008 Operation Cougar has delivered the following results:

- 67 Active Deployments (i.e. specific police operational activity)
- 139 Persons arrested
- 103 Criminal arrests
- 19 Public Order arrests
- 5 Breach of licence arrests
- 833 Stop searches (non of which have resulted in public complaint)
- 832 Intelligence submissions
- 56 Disruptions of gang activity
- 7 Firearms recovered
- 4 Ammunition recoveries
- 33 'At risk' juveniles notified to MMAGS with 12 being referred via safeguarding protocol
- 2 Emergency Police Protection Orders (both times on the same individual)
- 16 warning letters served

During this time there has not been one complaint made to GMP regarding any of the increased action outlined above. This very successful initiative will continue to operate for the foreseeable future and, with the increasingly focused joined -up approach from the CDRP and Children's Services, with continual review of the impact it is having.

3. Knife Crime

- 3.1 The use of knives is not a feature of gang activity in Manchester and the majority of crimes involving bladed weapons are either related to domestic violence (adults) or street violence that may be alcohol related and occasionally in hate crime incidents.

The Safer Schools Partnership and national campaigns form an important part of the universal preventative approach in relation to the use of knives and bladed weapons and we are strengthening our approach to preventative work in a number of ways:

The YOS is currently undertaking an audit into the number of young people currently with the service who have offences involving knife-crime. This information has not previously been available due to the way crimes are categorised and recorded. Initial findings should be available later this month.

The YJB is developing a specific knife-crime programme and Manchester is one of the YOS's involved in developing this and in piloting it later this year. The current range of groupwork programmes incorporates knife crime but there is not a specific full programme.

The Safer Schools Partnership is developing work around the national knife crime campaign with local schools and the Community Safety Coordinators also support information and prevention campaigns at neighbourhood level.

The Crime and Disorder Performance Board and Children's Board will monitor trends in knife crime incidents and activity to ensure that any emerging trends are picked up and responded to quickly.

4. Future Direction of Travel

- 4.1 The recent refocusing of the Violent Gangs Board has sharpened the focus and review of a number of areas within the MMAGs approach. There is evidence from GMP that the average age of those involved is younger and we are definitely, though not exclusively dealing with increasing numbers of young people. A number of areas are now being addressed:-
- a review of the safeguarding protocol to ensure we do not only consider the needs of those at low level involvement but we address the needs of those most at risk (of essentially criminal behaviour) of being actively involved or a target for discharges of weapons.
 - A refocus on the work of the MMAGs team and the priorities they need to address.
 - The focus on certain types of targeted activities e.g. the new Fallowfield pilot in response to a recent shooting.
 - The completion of the risk assessment for staff working in this area.
 - A continuation of Operation Cougar for the foreseeable future.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 This area of work is highly visible and a significant challenge. It does largely depend of robust partnership working across a range of professionals with differing responsibilities and accountabilities within communities.

Through the period of the T-GAP existence Manchester was deemed to be ahead of most other cities in terms of our understanding of the problem and finding innovative solutions to address the most complex issues. We have made progress in shifting expertise to equip other mainstream staff to have the skills and confidence to address the problem with families. Parenting and family support work will be a key element to ensure we embed the skills needed to manage, protect and support the needs of those young people involved.

We ask that you note the report and the progress made to date.