



Milton Keynes Local Assessment Report

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1 Introduction

Since the Gang and Youth Violence programme started in 2011, a number of challenges have emerged from the peer reviews, and our understanding of the way in which gangs or groups use violence and exploit vulnerable individuals to commit crime has evolved significantly.

Increasingly, crime is being committed in private spaces rather than the public sphere and this type of crime often involves the criminal exploitation of children and adults on a physical, sexual or financial basis. Groups of offenders, variously labelled as street gangs, organised crime groups, dangerous drug networks and subversive groups carry out this abuse, often via illegal drug markets and the lucrative profits to be made from them, or for ideological ends. Most of this violence and exploitation is not reported and won't always show up in recorded crime statistics.

Increasingly it also appears that vulnerable people, especially children, are subject and exposed to a range of risk factors, making them vulnerable to a range of perpetrators. How they are then subsequently exploited often appears to depend on who gets to them first. It also seems to be the case that current partnership structures across the country aren't able to respond to this new threat, and often continue to work in silos or duplicate work and resources. There is plenty of evidence nationally to show local partnerships and various agencies are often trying to support the same people or families, duplicating effort and resources, or missing vulnerable cohorts altogether.

New communities, who will often hold the key to understanding the issues and tracking perpetrators are also not engaged with properly or often at all; partnerships will want to engage with them to help effect cultural change and communicate messages.

As a result of extensive work across the country to support partnerships affected by gang based violence and vulnerability issues, the EGYV programme finished in 2016 and was replaced by the Ending Gang Violence and Exploitation (EGVE) programme. Based around the new 6 priorities of the EGVE programme, the challenges for partnerships therefore are:

- The need to understand the relationship between serious group offending and local drug markets (including illegal, legal highs and prescription drugs)
- The links between vulnerable cohorts, locations and gangs e.g. care homes, missing young people, schools absence and exclusions
- Making links between violence and vulnerability and the Prevent programme
- Vulnerabilities experienced by gang-associated women and girls
- The exploitation of children by gangs and organised crime groups (sexual exploitation or exploitation in order to commit crimes such as drug dealing)

- Gang members and associates moving into other areas, such as shire counties or seaside towns, to commit crime
- Links between street gangs and organised crime groups
- The use of social media to facilitate violence and intimidation
- The links between health, particularly mental health, and gang violence
- Youth offending services managing a more violent cohort than previously
- The ability to identify both dangerous gang nominals and young people at risk of involvement in gang crime when there is a lack of police intelligence
- Making sure that resources are effectively targeted and that partnership structures are set up to respond quickly to the new threat without duplication

Often practitioners have many insights into how gangs and groups are operating and exploiting young people and vulnerable adults. This qualitative information, when triangulated across a number of interviews and linked with relevant quantitative data sets can show a richer picture of how gangs and groups work, and help us to tackle them more effectively. It can also help us to identify and protect vulnerable people. This is the local assessment process (LAP).

2 Purpose of the Local Assessment Process

The LAP is a one day process for local areas as part of the national strategy to tackle gangs and serious youth violence. It works as a broad-brush set of interviews and focus groups with front-line practitioners to gather information, building a qualitative picture of the key issues and drivers around county lines, gangs, youth violence and vulnerability. It is a rapid evidence assessment process that focuses on violence and vulnerability. It should –

- Enable rapid assessment of issues around gang activity, serious youth violence and victimisation through drawing upon the experiences of practitioners, communities, victims and offenders
- Test the prevalence of issues identified through cross-referencing opinions from interviewees/groups and relevant quantitative data
- Identify barriers to effectively understanding and tackling local priorities (in relation to threat, risk and harm)

It is crucial to understand that this is not a review of any single organisation's role, but a process that seeks to identify what local practitioners know about vulnerability at an operational level, understand how the partner agencies are working together operationally to deliver the area's gang/group and youth violence priorities and examine what blockages are perceived at a frontline level to effective delivery.

3 The interviews

Thames Valley Neighbourhood Police Team (stream 1, interviews 1 & 5)

The group did not feel gangs were a major problem for Milton Keynes but felt violence was increasing and information was not shared effectively, so potentially there could be a hidden issue. The group named the following groups/gangs –

- Dead man network from London
- Green bandana
- Purple bandana
- Red bandana
- Milton Keynes 12, believed to be a very young group

Those interviewed provided evidence of an increase in youth violence and spoke about initiation violence including buttock stabbing. Use of social media is believed to be a key driver of violence, exploitation and drug activity (particularly legal highs).

The group had knowledge of London and Birmingham gangs coming to Milton Keynes but had not been briefed or informed by any recent intelligence product. The group felt these gangs targeted the area due to local demand for drugs (seemingly both illegal and legal highs) and felt the recent decrease in stop and search checks had led to a (perceived) safer environment for them to operate in.

A clear concern of the group was the imminent amalgamation of the personal education centres (PECs), as all felt this was a cause for concern with a vulnerable and sometimes violent cohort moving into one area which could increase risk to the extended group and surrounding areas. Current experience of the police was that Bridge Academy staff had to escort some young people home for fear of group/gang violence.

Gang injunctions are not used at present and the group felt the current definition of gangs was a barrier to the effective identification of group violence and how the local partnership tackle it.

There was a general feeling that the current understanding of gang activity is not shared effectively amongst local police officers and teams, which in turn was hindering the identification and effective tackling of local problem crime groups from other areas who feel able to operate without fear of being recognised by the local police team. Although Thames Valley Police have just taken on a new intelligence system (Niche), the group felt this system is too complicated to support their local briefing needs and the search stream requirements too complicated to support effective patrols.

The multi-agency risk meeting (MARMM) was felt to be an effective process for tackling child sexual exploitation (CSE) but missed the opportunity to discuss violent and vulnerable people outside of CSE who may be at risk of exploitation.

The current missing person (MISPER) debrief process by police officers does not appear to inform the intelligence picture at present and may benefit from an independent review process. The group also felt

that there was a real potential to use soft intelligence from the voluntary sector which was felt to be significant, but no tasking or referral was made to utilise this resource.

All felt the biggest drug issue in their respective areas and throughout Milton Keynes were related to legal highs, followed by cannabis and then class A drugs such as cocaine. All present however felt that drugs were not a priority for them or the tasking team, so a full understanding of the legal and illegal drug market is not available to them at present.

The group also felt that mental health issues amongst young people is a significant issue for them and the limited resources available was oversubscribed with one officer quoting “the waiting list for mental health support service is 18 months”.

Children and Family Partnership / Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) (stream 2, interview 1)

Those interviewed had no awareness of the term county lines or the possible presence of gangs in the Milton Keynes area. They were however aware of clusters of vulnerable young people, and some common and repeat locations where they gathered. It was felt that there was some commonality in terms of the background of these children, namely attendance at one of the three PECs, a risk of CSE, being a MISPER and drug use (mainly cannabis and new psychoactive substances (NPS)).

The vulnerable locations outlined were –

- M1 service stations
- St Mungos
- Wolverton Shopping centre
- The Point (it was outlined that this used to be a youth provision (now closed), but that it was also adjacent to a bus hub, and very close to a McDonalds (with free Wi-Fi)

The group told us that most of the young people frequenting these clusters would be known to partnership meetings and potentially screened through the local CSE tool, although it was felt that the tool at present would probably not pick up other aspects of exploitation outside of CSE. It was remarked that Colin Wilderspin was understood to be aware of this and was looking at reframing the tool and questions.

Criminal Justice / Health Agencies (stream 3, interview 1)

There was a belief amongst those interviewed that the area did not have a problem with serious group violence, though references were made to some organised fights. There was some speculation as to whether recent changes made to the operation of PECs whereby young people from different areas are now being mixed together could be a contributory factor to group tensions. Interviewees spoke at length about a signal incident from some years previously when two young people were shot dead. This was an incident that was referred to by many of the groups interviewed throughout the day, reflecting the impact that these murders had on the community and agencies/practitioners.

The group spoke about illegal drug dealing activity and referred to London based groups bringing drugs into the area using young people from the capital. Cocaine, cannabis and MDMA was said to be

available on a number of housing estates, with older local dealers recruiting impressionable young people from the estates to deal on their behalf. New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) were seen as a particular problem in the area and the group feared that NPS use by young people could put them at risk of CSE. Interviewees decried the fact that there were few resources available to offer pathways out of offending behaviour.

Adult Safeguarding / Adult Social Care / Local Authority Licensing and Public Realm (stream 2, interview 2)

This group outlined a number of concerns around vulnerable adults who appeared to be exploited and cuckooed, a rising number of rough sleepers in the town centre (some of whom were thought to be using NPS and class A drugs) and a cohort of eastern European adults (usually males) who were being exploited for their labour.

Once the model of county lines and cuckooing was explained to the group they were able to identify potential examples of this occurring within Milton Keynes, where a number of vulnerable adults had been targeted, often with learning difficulties or a disability such as autism, including a very recent example.

There was no knowledge or awareness of the county lines model or gangs from the Licensing or Public Realm attendees, although they felt the problem could be present within the town.

No one present was aware of any type of drug market, either open (in a public space) or closed (at a private property), although the YCMA building (across from the main Civic offices) was felt to be a potentially vulnerable location.

Adult Safeguarding staff asked how they could start to refer and report cases of cuckooing, and who would be responsible for managing and monitoring this.

Neighbourhood Policing Team (TVP personnel) (stream 3, interview 2)

Serious youth/group violence was not seen by this group as a problem in the area, though there was reference to some young people wearing red or blue gang colours and occasional outbreaks of fighting. Some members of such groups were also suspected to be involved in illegal drug supply. There was evidence of London based groups bringing illegal drugs into the area using cars hired in London, with some evidence of the properties of older drug users being used for drug supply activities ('cuckooing'). Overall, those interviewed felt that there were large intelligence gaps and that information was not being effectively shared within the police and with partner agencies. Frustrations were expressed with delays in intelligence submissions being entered onto the police intelligence system.

Schools / Colleges / Children Services (stream 1, interview 3)

At the start of the interview the group stated that they had no knowledge of gangs in Milton Keynes but went on to describe what they called squads and clear evidence of activity often attributed to serious group offending. This underlined an earlier group's assertion (Neighbourhood Police Team) that the definition of gangs has become a barrier to effective identification and intervention.

The safeguarding board was mentioned as an example of good practice, and the facilitation and delivery of training on CSE was also mentioned a number of times by the group as helping them identify and refer CSE issues appropriately. All felt the current MASH with the adapted adult referral going through it made the MASH a true front door referral process.

A clear concern of the group was the imminent amalgamation of the PECs as all felt this was a clear cause for concern with the concentration of a violent and vulnerable cohort.

Locality meetings chaired by Children and Social Services, held in the North / Central and South informed the MARMM and were agreed to provide a good structure to help manage individuals with a lower level of risk who are not referred to the MARMM. It was agreed an invite to the schools would enhance this stakeholder group.

The group identified a number of vulnerable locations across the area including a McDonalds near the Point (thought to be due to free Wi Fi) and Campbell Park due to numerous exits and no CCTV. They stated regular drug and sex paraphernalia had been found there. Underground car parks and the hidden parts of roundabouts were also identified as vulnerable locations for violence, exploitation and drugs.

The group felt more information could be shared with schools to help manage safeguarding and prevent violence and vulnerability, as effective engagement with schools is an opportunity to support early intervention. Interviewees felt all the issues experienced by Milton Keynes' young people were currently discussed in the school environment and therefore a significant opportunity exists to better identify and tackle these issues.

Adult Social Care (Inc. mental health) (stream 2, interview 3)

The group had evidence of cuckooing amongst a number of adult clients who had drug dependency and mental health issues. A recent case was discussed regarding a client in Bletchley - the case in question had all the classic signs of a class A drug user being cuckooed as outlined by the Home Office EGYV team and National Crime Agency (starting with low level anti - social behaviour, lots of comings and goings from the flat, more problems and serious behaviour leading to complaints from neighbours).

This type of exploitation wasn't thought to be common across the Milton Keynes area, and those in the group thought that these cases came to their attention at a rate of perhaps less than one per month. However, further discussion amongst the group revealed that each individual targeted may have a network of up to twenty individuals around them, most of whom would be class A users, and that it was the network rather than the individual who would be targeted for drug sales, thus making it worthwhile for gangs and groups to take over (cuckoo) tenancies.

Granby Court was identified as a vulnerable location with adults being exploited and cuckooed there, along with the Campbell Centre – a health centre whose services are frequented by vulnerable adults including users, and those interviewed felt that the immediate environment of the health centre was targeted by drug dealers who wanted access to customers en mass.

One of those interviewed had recently been working at the Oakhill Secure Training Centre where gang nominals from London and Birmingham have been held, some for firearm offences. It was said that one

nominal from West London in particular was vulnerable, as he had learning difficulties and believed that he was carrying a BB gun, rather than an actual firearm.

The Fishermead Estate was talked about as an area where there were clear territorial disputes between white, west African and Somali youth groups, although these were not thought to be gangs or the disputes racially based.

Finally a market in legally prescribed prescription drugs was discussed, in particular two anti-psychotic drugs, Olanzapine and Risperidon. These drugs were prescribed to individuals with mental health issues who were then selling them on in order to buy illegal or NPS drugs. The buyers of the drugs were felt to be cocaine users (perhaps aged 25-40?) who couldn't obtain them by other means. It was not known why these drugs had a market (although if the buyers were heavy cocaine users then the anti-psychotic element may be useful), but the original individual who was prescribed the drugs fell into a vicious circle – they wouldn't be taking their anti-psychotic drug, would sell them to buy illegal or NPS drugs, requiring more prescription drugs to combat the psychosis.

There was also felt to be an aftermarket in opiate based prescription drugs too, perhaps aimed at an older market.

Community / Housing & Voluntary Groups (stream 3, interview 3)

Representatives did not feel that the area had a serious problem with gangs, but did speak of drug dealers operating on some of the local housing estates and of cocaine being supplied within the night-time economy (NTE). Echoing the views of earlier interviewees, the use of NPS was seen as a problem locally. The training of local taxi drivers to identify signs of CSE was seen as a positive step.

There was a call from members of the group for better information-sharing amongst agencies, with the first step seen as being a networking event where the local picture could be presented to attendees as a foundation for future coordinated activity. The general feeling was that the area was at risk of exploitation by crime groups from outside the area and that now is the time to build local resilience to resist such infiltration and the attendant problems.

Local Authority Services /Adult Safeguarding (stream 1, interview 4)

(ASC did not attend)

The group agreed legal highs was a significant issue for young people in Milton Keynes and stated that although trading standards had used legislation to tackle the growing issue and support the police effort, this was not a sustainable option for future operations. New legislation due in later this year may help to address this issue.

The Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) team have a good collaboration between police and their unit which makes information sharing easy and they have seen the development of gangs from outside Milton Keynes coming onto the housing estates. They quoted the "Dead man network" as a London group seen on the estates.

The communal areas of Fishermead were highlighted as an area where needles, drugs and sex paraphernalia have been found and ASB linked to this activity. It was also thought that Somali gangs/groups had also targeted and taken over properties on the estates to facilitate drug selling.

All agreed that although information sharing between themselves and police was good it could be improved and it was felt that a central data base or process would help clarify what information was required and how information could be shared. It was also agreed that training and awareness for staff around gangs/groups and exploitation beyond CSE would be useful to highlight trigger signs, graffiti, personal safety and identification/referral.

Schools / MASH / Youth Services / Children and Family Partnership (stream 2, interview 4)

The group had no awareness or knowledge of county lines or external gangs, but examples were given of children as young as 11 years old dealing and holding drugs on certain estates. Youth workers stated that they had seen very young children holding three mobile phones and wearing two pairs of trousers. The MASH representative commented that they weren't getting any referrals for this type of concern / behaviour.

The group collectively had concerns around the three PECs, in as much as they provided opportunities for children outside of mainstream education and possible offending to meet up and make connections with each other, even if they lived in totally separate parts of the town. Students were said to move between the PECs and had exposure to a more experienced offending cohort. The merging of the three PECs next year into one was felt to be an ill judged move, with the group feeling that there may be a host of unintended consequences as a result (mainly the concentration of a cohort with experienced offenders who would influence others).

The group told us that the situation in Milton Keynes from their perspective was nuanced – there weren't any street gangs, but some were aware of white, Asian, west African and Somali youth groups in conflict, and one claimed that a known gang nominal from Luton had been identified visiting the Lakes Estate.

Not much was known about the private residential care homes in the area, as some believed there were two but that no young people from Milton Keynes were placed in them, that they were used by London Boroughs to place young people. It was also felt that families from London were being placed into Milton Keynes without any form of referral.

Oakhill Secure Training Centre was mentioned again, with one interviewee talking about problems inside the centre caused by gang rivalries, and their concern that local young people placed in the centre would be exposed and influenced by this. The Foyer at Wolverton was also named as a vulnerable location due to its client base.

The group talked about the changing demographics of the area and rising population and agreed this had potential to cause more problems around offending in the future if not managed.

Community Voluntary Groups – Neighbourhood Watch, Citizen’s Advice Bureau (CAB), YMCA, Community Action (stream 2, interview 5)

There was a limited awareness of gangs involved in exploitation, mainly via the YMCA, who gave an example of police warning them recently that five gang nominals from out of town were looking to exploit vulnerable adults via the cuckooing process. The YMCA felt they are vulnerable to a range of exploitative behaviours due to their clients and the building where they reside (apparently there are multiple entrances, making access easier than usual). Legal highs and class A drugs are an issue with YMCA clients.

CAB stated that a third of their clients using the drop-in service suffer from substance abuse or have a disability / learning issue. The service has changed to reflect this and CAB now carry out home visits due to the complexity of the cases. They have made five safeguarding referrals and have come across examples of financial abuse where pensioners and vulnerable people have been financially exploited by family and acquaintances.

A number of other things were mentioned, and one of the group claimed to have seen homeless people in a soup kitchen queue targeted by drug dealers in cars. The CAB talked about a couple of examples of visits to Somalian families where transitory males displaying signs of wealth and material possessions far beyond the capacity of the family have been noted several times. When questioned about the source of the wealth the individuals concerned were unable or unwilling to explain where and how they had acquired the cash or goods.

Vulnerable locations mentioned included Granby Court, YMCA, the Campbell Centre and the Beanhill Estate.

Neighbourhood Policing Team (TVP personnel) (stream 3, interview 5)

This group spoke of a rise in stabbings in the area over the previous year and of an underlying feeling that the problem of group violence could escalate. Apart from the double shooting murder referred to by all groups, this group referred to a shooting incident six months ago and an unconfirmed firearm discharge within the previous week. Interviewees spoke of between three and five drug supply telephone numbers being used in the area as part of a ‘county lines’ operation, though it was conceded that these numbers could all be owned by one ‘county lines’ network. Evidence was provided of ‘cuckooing’ activity, with groups using the homes of vulnerable drug addicts. No evidence had been found of ‘county lines’ operators recruiting local young people to deal on their behalf, but it was said that such groups were bringing young people from London with them, including young women.

Schools/Colleges/Children services (stream 1, interview 6)

The Milton Keynes College team highlighted significant information linked to their 10,000 student cohort and are clearly an essential information source for the local partnership. Mental health amongst this cohort was felt to be a concern with services often over stretched and young people left with no referral options. An 18 month waiting list for support service from child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) was also mentioned as problematic by this group.

Of the 200+ high risk safeguarding referrals made by the college it was estimated over 40 % had mental health issues; it was also noted that of this group perhaps 80% were from a white ethnic background

and over represented as the group felt that young people from a black minority ethnic background may not be coming to attention or seeking help for fear of cultural stigma.

All agreed that training and awareness for staff regarding gangs/groups and exploitation beyond CSE would be useful to highlight trigger signs and aid identification/referral. They also agreed the CSE safeguarding training offered and delivered by the safeguarding board was excellent.

The college pay for half of a PCSO post and this was felt to provide a good support service and facilitate good information exchange.

The MASH was seen as a useful front door for referral and advice, but the interviewees appeared unsure of where to go for advice regarding gang/group violence and exploitation if it did not involve CSE or Prevent issues. The group were also concerned about the PECs and future plans for merging them into one unit.

Commissioned Services / Community Groups (stream 3, interview 6)

Members of this group were concerned that austerity measures meant that there was little on offer by way of support to those at risk of victimisation or recruitment to violent criminal groups. In recent times, two central facilities used by the community and by young people in particular have been closed. Interviewees felt that young males from the Somali community were being targeted by older drug dealers of varying ethnic backgrounds to deal drugs on their behalf and that in many ways, the same factors and lack of life chances that leave the young open to recruitment by drug dealers, could leave them open to radicalisation.

4 Summary

The interview team spoke to over 70 practitioners from a range of organisations. The majority of them had a low awareness of gangs and the existence of county lines, but a significant minority of them could describe the activities of groups and drug lines, with the resultant exploitation of vulnerable people, especially adults.

There is serious group offending present in Milton Keynes, but it takes several different forms and isn't necessarily apparent or obvious. There are a number of drug lines (county lines) coming into the town, with all the apparent similarities of method known elsewhere in the country, but the official existence of these lines seems to be restricted to a few individuals at the moment. The use of very young children to deal and carry drugs was described during a couple of interviews, along with examples of vulnerable adults being cuckooed and exploited. Aligned to this is the existence of a number of youth groups who appear to have territorial loyalties and are in dispute with each, albeit (as described on the day) towards the lower end of the violence spectrum.

The expansion of the town and demographics needs considering – the building blocks required for county lines to take hold are all in place – vulnerable families moving in, concentration of deprivation, clusters of vulnerable young people, a concentration of them in PECs, a thriving drug market and a local secure training centre where local young people could potentially meet London and Birmingham gang nominals.

However, the problem doesn't seem as embedded yet as other areas and those interviewed weren't aware of local links between MISPERs, looked after children and group offending. There also appears to be relatively low numbers of identified drug lines.

In addition,

- Sound partnership structures appear to be in place – a number of those interviewed felt the community safety team were effective and provided the glue to pull a number of things together from a partnership perspective
- Those interviewed are aware of how to make CSE referrals and the structures to tackle it
- A number of repeat vulnerable locations were consistently mentioned
- The merging of the PECs should perhaps be risk assessed considering the number of interviewees concerned by the potential problems this may cause
- At the moment the issue appears contained, but further work is needed to fully understand what is going on across the town
- Elements of gang infiltration were not fully understood or disseminated across the partnership
- Examples were given of vulnerable adults being exploited
- Not much understanding amongst those interviewed of how the local drug market works and what drives it
- Nothing in place to support vulnerable adults exploited by groups

Vulnerable locations mentioned -

- Granby Court
- YMCA
- Campbell Centre
- Beanhill Estate
- Fishermead Estate
- Lakes Estate
- M1 service stations
- St Mungos
- Wolverton Shopping centre
- The Point

5 Recommendations

1 Consider a Milton Keynes definition for group offending that is understood and agreed across the partnership by statutory, voluntary and community groups. There is group offending taking place in Milton Keynes and many of those interviewed described gang activity. Arguments and debates regarding the existence and presence of gangs tie up partnerships and can lead to delay and a failure to tackle the problem.

2 A detailed problem profile should be prepared, drawing upon intelligence from all relevant agencies and communities, and the processes around intelligence gathering and the inputting of intelligence submissions should be reviewed and streamlined.

3 The local and external illegal drug markets need to be better understood, and especially the role young children and vulnerable adults play within it. Part of the problem profile outlined above should aim to uncover and explain -

- The overall picture, both locally and outside of borough
- Who's doing it, what's their motivation and how are they doing it?
- Who's being exploited as part of this market? What does this look like?
- What drugs are being sold and how? How many lines are there? What's the value of the market?
- What's the local user base look like?
- Are gangs sexually exploiting local children?
- How can soft intelligence from practitioners be incorporated into this work, and on a day to day basis?
- What intelligence can be gleaned about the cohorts likely to be exploited by gangs via social media?

We know that gangs are changing their tactics on a weekly basis, in order to get around potential sanctions so this should be seen as a dynamic and fluid document / piece of work.

- 4 There is a need to commission gang awareness training. This was requested by practitioners during the LAP and should be considered for those groups and practitioners who work with vulnerable cohorts or in areas they are known to be active in. This should also include training around local use of social media, and could also link in with a network event to support the development of a problem profile around group offending.
- 5 The multi-agency risk meeting (MARMM) was felt to be an effective process for CSE but misses the opportunity to discuss violent and vulnerable people outside of CSE who may be at risk of exploitation. Consideration should be given to including those involved in or subject to serious group offending.
- 6 Adopt a police national computer (PNC) marker for identified violent offenders and vulnerable / exploited people. There is no PNC marker in place to recognise gang associated and vulnerable people, this would help build a clearer intelligence picture of an individual's movements and help targeted enforcement or preventative resources in the Thames Valley and other force areas.
- 7 Consider establishing a teacher forum with appropriate representation to help identify and support individuals linked with vulnerability and violence issues.
- 8 The current MISPER debrief process by police officers does not appear to inform the intelligence picture at present and may benefit from an independent review process. There is a real potential to incorporate the voluntary sector.
- 9 Some work is required around information sharing and ensuring that a feedback loop around this is established so that agencies sharing information with the police (and vice versa) obtain regular feedback. This should also be the case where agencies make a safeguarding referral, where as a matter they should be told what is happening to their referral.
- 10 Consideration should be given to crafting messages to convince young people that involvement in the illegal drugs trade is not a route to wealth for the vast majority of those involved. Rather, it carries the constant risk of arrest, imprisonment, violence from other dealers and all for financial returns that often do not reflect the minimum wage.
- 11 A compendium of services available within the area to support the vulnerable, provide pathways out of offending behaviour and to engage/divert 'at risk' young people should be compiled so that all agencies are aware of what is available, even in austere times.
- 12 The proposed merging of the current PECs should be re-considered. A large number of those interviewed expressed concern regarding this, and the subsequent concentration of violent and vulnerable young people.

6 County Lines

County lines is a national issue involving the use of mobile phone lines by groups to extend their drug dealing business to new locations outside their home areas. This issue affects the majority of forces.

A county lines enterprise almost always involves exploitation of vulnerable persons; this can involve both children and adults who require safeguarding. The gangs will put the vulnerable individuals between themselves and the risk of detection, asking them to courier drugs, often plugged internally, and/or to sell drugs at the other end of the line in a “traphouse”, something known as “cuckooing”.

Cuckooing involves placing gang members into a property of a vulnerable person (often a drug user) either forcibly or by promise of free drugs. The property is then used as a base from which to sell drugs, and mobile phones are used to order more drugs via couriers, who travel by train or car.

7 Ongoing support

Learning from the gang and youth violence programme is shared via the Gang and Youth Violence Special Interest Group: <https://knowledgehub.local.gov.uk/>.

Contacts to discuss the recommendations and support any future work are -

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