

London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham

Report to: Community Safety & Environment Policy & Accountability Committee

Date: 11/11/2020

Subject: The formation of the Gangs Violence and Exploitation Unit (GVEU)

Report of: Gideon Springer -Strategic Lead for Safer Streets

Summary

This report provides an overview of the of LBHF's new Gangs Violence and Exploitation Unit. It outlines our progress with resourcing the team, the developing operating model and the work we intend to undertake within the wider council and strategic partnerships to reduce the harm caused to our young people who are at risk from gangs, violence and other forms of exploitation.

In order to do this effectively there is a need to look holistically at the way we deal with vulnerable young people. This approach will also include the involvement of those within Children's Services, Housing, the Voluntary Sector and employment to provide a better future for our young people.

Recommendations

1. For the Committee to note and comment on the report.

Wards Affected: All

H&F Priorities

Please state how the subject of the report relates to our priorities – delete those priorities which are not appropriate

Our Priorities	Summary of how this report aligns to the H&F Priorities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building shared prosperity 	<i>Supporting vulnerable young people away from gangs, violence and exploitation, back into education and employment.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creating a compassionate council 	Providing a service that intervenes, to improve the lives of the most vulnerable young people in the borough.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Doing things with local residents, not to them 	Working with communities to enable them to support vulnerable young people

Hammersmith & Fulham Council

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Background Papers Used in Preparing This Report

None.

1. Proposed Outcomes

As part of earlier corporate discussions relating to gangs, youth violence and exploitation the following outcomes framework was proposed as an approach to help organise our workstreams. The work of the new Gangs Violence and Exploitation Unit will fall mostly into the 'Protection' outcome: But will aim to work in partnership to address the other five outcomes outlined below:

1.1 Participation

Our communities particularly our young people, are engaged and active in designing young people's services

1.2 Community Support

Communities and families are well supported to tackle issues of exploitation and know where to look for help

1.3 Prevention

Our young people are provided with the best youth services in London which encourage positive activities and appeal to all

1.4 Early Intervention

All LBHF service provision is trauma informed and targeted at dealing with vulnerabilities early to reduce the impact of adverse experiences on our young people

1.5 Protection

We will use all available legislation to ensure our communities are protected from criminal behaviour

1.6 Community Resilience

Working with communities and the third sector to build an anti-violence culture

2. Performance Measures

The headline performance measures are proposed as follows:

2.1 Key Performance Indicators

- To reduce the number of violent crimes committed by young people;
- To reduce the number and seriousness of injuries caused by youth violence;
- To reduce the number of robberies and drug related offences committed by young people;

Once the team is fully in place, we will look at the previous levels of these offences with a view to setting clear targets, however the effect of the pandemic on all levels of crime and its continuing impact, will make it difficult to calculate smart targets in these areas at the current time with the pandemic second wave restrictions and possible further lock downs.

2.2 Qualitative Measures

- To identify, disrupt and enforce against specific gangs that operate in H&F;
- To identify and respond to young people 'associated' with gangs;
- To provide safe routes out of gang association;
- To identify and respond to the needs of females associated with youth violence;
- To establish and maintain a longer-term sustainable framework based on early intervention, disruption and prevention to ensure that young people involved in low level criminality are successfully diverted from more serious crime
- To provide support for victims.
- To provide support for the families of those exploited into gang activities.

3. The Experience of Vulnerable Young People Within Hammersmith and Fulham

Some young people in the borough (and nationally) have been conscripted into gangs and gang culture by organised crime leaders. It is our duty to safeguard young people from this and prevent others from being drawn into this form of criminal activity. We also need to ensure that those who are the perpetrators of this form of exploitation are brought to justice.

Our number one priority is to keep people safe and our residents need to know that we are doing everything in our power to prevent their children and young people being victimised and exploited by those involved in organised crime. In order to address these issues we have created the borough's first ever dedicated unit to tackle gangs, violence and exploitation.

In addition to the very real harms caused by gang activity, fear of crime and gangs is pervasive and something which must be tackled. We will be tough on gangs, but as a compassionate council, we will also be tough on the causes of gangs, which means addressing the underlying issues.

This will involve a significant amount of joint working at a senior level to ensure that Hammersmith & Fulham develops leading practice in relation to establishing new early intervention approaches, improving case management and bringing about reductions in the number of young people involved in violent incidents.

4. The Gangs Violence and Exploitation Unit (GVEU)

The Leader of the council was instrumental in developing this ground-breaking agreement between the Council and the Metropolitan Police. Hammersmith and Fulham will fund Police Officers to work together with specialist council staff to bring the full weight of criminal legislation to bear on gangs and gang leaders operating in the borough. Whilst at the same time delivering greater initiatives to engage with and divert vulnerable young people away from gangs, violence and exploitation.

This new dedicated Unit will consist of 11 LBHF employed officers and 6 Metropolitan Police Officers (17 FTEs). The total annual cost of the unit is £983,000.

The GVEU will lead a strategic portfolio of work to deliver Hammersmith & Fulham's approach to supporting young people out of gangs, violence and exploitation. This will involve a significant amount of joint working at a senior level to ensure that Hammersmith & Fulham develops leading practice in relation to establishing new early intervention approaches, improving case management and bringing about reductions in the number of young people involved in violent incidents.

5. Progress in establishing the Gangs Violence and Exploitation Unit.

Approval for the recruitment to the GVEU was received in June 2020, interviews were held on 25th & 26th August. We have now recruited the Team Leader and 3 of the 4 Gangs Workers. They took up their posts in mid September 2020 when the GVEU became operational. The final Gangs Worker post has been offered to a candidate and they are in the process of being recruited.

The next phase of recruitment for the 4 ASB Coordinators is currently underway, interviews are taking place late October and early November. This will be followed by the final stage to recruit the Researcher and Analyst Posts in November.

Police have identified 4 officers to work in the GVEU and 2 officers who will work alongside them but focus on operational delivery with the Youth Offending Team. The contract for these posts has now been agreed with the Metropolitan Police.

Office space for the GVEU has been identified within 145 Kings Street and this will form the physical base for the team. The team will start to carry out business critical work in the Borough in the first week of November.

The terms of reference and operating procedures for the team are being developed through stakeholder consultation and a series of workshops. It is envisaged that the team will operate alongside the Youth Offending Team and Family Assist to identify vulnerable young people who do not yet reach the threshold for statutory intervention but are nevertheless at risk from gangs, violence or exploitation.

By intervening with these children at an early stage, the GVEU will be able to work with them, their and third sector providers to divert them away from risky behaviour. GVEU Officers will utilise some of the services already available within the Borough but will also work in a different way with the community to support vulnerable young people and develop different approaches.

6. Operating Model

Framework

- The GVEU We will work in conjunction with all departments within the Council and does not replace any of the existing services. The police are part of the GVEU and will be co-located in 145 King Street
- Every vulnerable young person referred to or identified by the Unit will be evaluated in relation to the level of risk and given a RAG status. Progress with that young person will be monitored via monthly multi-agency casework conferences.
- If GVEU in conjunction with other agencies feel that risk / criminal activity is increasing (change in RAG status) a multi-agency decision will be made about who is best placed to work with the young person.
- GVEU workers will work with a broad range of cases – this could be the most high-risk or young people that are coming to the attention of the CJS but who are not currently engaged by any statutory agency. The ultimate aim will be to support the young person into education, employment, training, and any other pathways likely to work for that individual.
- We will work with social landlords when young people are coming to their attention due to GVE issues and work with them around enforcement and support.
- When our efforts to support and divert a young person have not been successful and all options have been exhausted, we will consider all enforcement options such as tenancy action, injunctions, Closure Orders etc. This work will be carried out in conjunction with the police and relevant agencies will be consulted. Enforcement action does not mean that support will be withdrawn.
- We will have an analyst and business support role to assist the unit. The analytical work will be crucial to developing the work of the unit and informing us where we need to focus our work.

Other deliverables:

- The GVEU will look to operate a duty service similar to other operational areas of the council where the mailbox and phone line are staffed
- We will develop online reporting tools similar to ASB and hate crime whereby a family / person can refer to us about concerns they may have about GVE issues so they can seek assistance. We will work with Children's / Family Services re: any safeguarding concerns and we can signpost the family / person / offer support. Additionally, there will be a reporting tool for people to report issues of concern around gangs, violence and exploitation. We will make it clear this should be reported to the police if an emergency and give

details of services available. This will help to develop the local intelligence picture around this area of work.

- We will publicise the GVEU via LBHF's social media.
- Where there is an intelligence picture being built of areas requiring outreach work due to congregation / ASB, the GVEU will deliver outreach work in these areas with the assistance of our partners - police, CCTV, NWS and Parks police
- The GVEU will work with the community via community groups, faith groups and TRA's to build on existing relationships and develop new ones. This will be for the purposes of encouraging families / young people to seek advice support and developing intelligence
- Developing the Council's response with our internal / external partners to our young people who are involved in County Lines activity – developing intelligence, response and assistance.
- We will be a part of the consultation meetings that have been developed for practitioners to seek assistance around GVE concerns and this will be done on a rotational basis by the GVEU workers.

7. Statistical Information

Appendix 1 below sets out some of the critical statistical information that sets the borough context for the GVEU in relation to the following three core factors: (1) first time entrants to the criminal justice system, (2) re-offending data, (3) the recommendations of the Lammy Review and data on disproportionality within the youth offending cohort in H&F.

Appendix 1

1. First Time Entrants into the Criminal Justice System

Historically, Hammersmith and Fulham Borough has seen higher rates of first time entrants into the Criminal Justice System than the National Average and the London Average.

However, this rate now lies below both the London average of 264 per 100,00 and the National average of 215 per 100,00 of local 10-17-year olds. The actual number of FTE's dropped by 2 from 31 to 29 (rounded).

Hammersmith and Fulham remain favourably at 4th place in our YOT 'family' for 2018/19 FTEs.

However as can be seen from the below charts Hammersmith and Fulham still have considerable challenges when it comes to Children and Young People sentenced to custody and Children and Young Peoples reoffending rates which remain higher than all those in our YOT family.

2. Children and young people sentenced to custody

	Use of Custody - Baseline			Use of Custody - Latest Data		
	Apr 18 - Mar 19			Apr 19 - Mar 20		
	Number	2018 Population	Rate per 1,000	Number	2018 Population	Rate per 1,000
Hammersmith and Fulham	7	14,086	0.50	11	14,086	0.78

New YOT Family

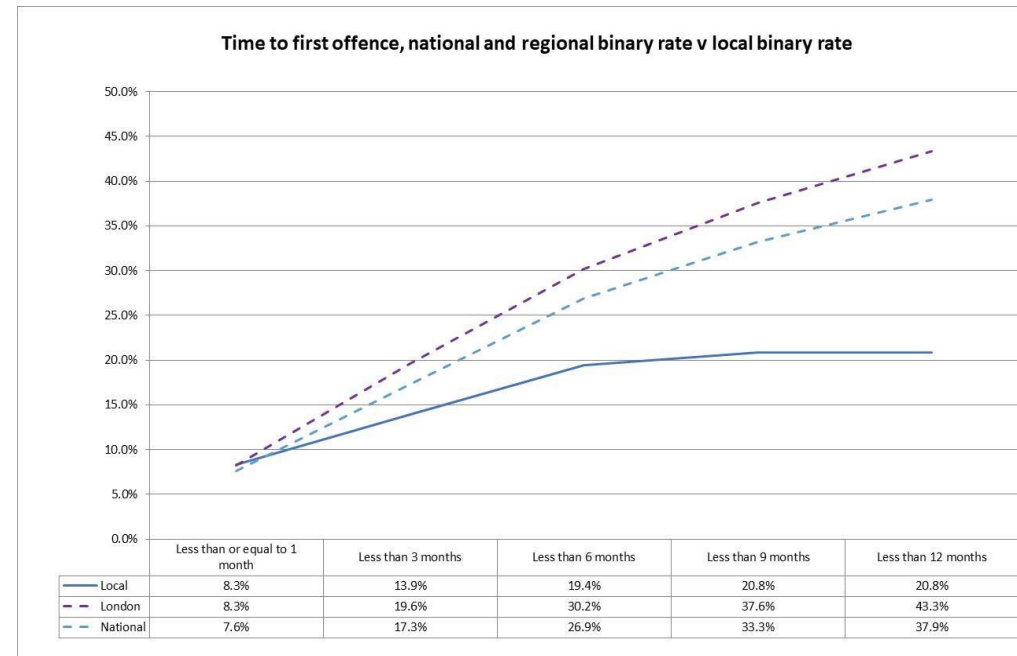
Camden	7	21,377	0.33	1	21,377	0.05
Wandsworth	3	22,363	0.13	1	22,363	0.04
Westminster	5	19,014	0.26	3	19,014	0.16
Islington	23	16,616	1.38	6	16,616	0.36
Kensington and Chelsea	5	11,706	0.43	2	11,706	0.17
Haringey	10	24,826	0.40	N/A	24,826	-
Greenwich	17	26,380	0.64	13	26,380	0.49
Southwark	8	24,912	0.32	9	24,912	0.36
Manchester	54	47,861	1.13	31	47,861	0.65
Merton	1	17,948	0.06	4	17,948	0.22
Family Average	13	23,300	0.57	8	23,300	0.33

3. Hammersmith and Fulham's Reoffending Data:

Apr 17 - Mar 18

Live Reoffending Data April 19-Mar 20

	Reoffences per reoffender	Reoffences per offender	% Reoffending
Hammersmith and Fulham	4.45	2.28	51.4%
Camden	3.89	1.66	42.7
Wandsworth	3.67	1.64	44.7
Westminster	3.49	1.42	40.7
Islington	4.23	1.99	47.1
Kensington and Chelsea	2.61	0.85	32.7
Haringey	3.31	1.35	40.9
Greenwich	2.93	1.10	37.6
Southwark	4.36	2.02	46.3
Manchester	4.78	1.75	36.7
Merton	3.41	1.55	45.5
Family Average	3.87	1.60	41.4



Hammersmith and Fulham data for the 12-month cohort Apr17-Mar18 shows the proportion of reoffenders increasing on the previous year, up from 46.7% to 51.4%. Hammersmith has the highest reoffending rate within its YOT family, and the rate lies above the London average 41.9% and the National average 38.4%.

Live reoffending data for the Apr19-Mar20 cohort has moved from 12.9% to 20.8% reoffenders since last quarter. From the current cohort total of 72 young people, 15 have reoffended (offences proven), while 6 more have offences pending which if all proven would increase the binary rate to 29.2%. Live reoffending data for 2019-20 is showing this rate as tracking below London and national rates, however this rate will not be finalised until January 2022

4. The Lammy Review

David Lammy MP published his final review into the treatment of, and outcomes for, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) individuals in the CJS in September 2017. H&F Youth Offending Service (YOS) contributed to this review.

The review aimed to 'make recommendations for improvement with the ultimate aim of reducing the proportion of BAME offenders in the criminal justice system' and covered the role of the CPS, courts system, prisons and young offenders institutions, the Parole Board, the Probation Service and Youth Offending Teams (YOTs).

The review highlighted that BAME people represent:

- 14% of the population;
- 25% of the prison population; and
- 40% of young people in custody.

Black people represent:

- 3% of the population;
- 12% of the prison population; and
- more than 20% of young people in custody.

The review also found that:

- Arrest rates are higher for BAME people;
- BAME people are more likely to plead not guilty;
- There is evidence of differential treatment - for example, BAME people are more likely to receive prison sentences for drug offences;
- BAME people report poor experiences of prison (including discrimination); and
- Young BAME people in prison through the youth system are less likely to have recorded mental health needs, learning difficulties or troubled family relationships, suggesting they have unmet needs.

The review identified that if BAME people were not disproportionately represented in our CJS there would be 9,000 fewer prisoners (equivalent of 12 average prisons). It also estimates the economic cost of this overrepresentation in the courts, prisons and probation service as £309 million a year.

YOTs were established in the Crime and Disorder Act (1998) with a view to reducing youth offending and reoffending. The Lammy review acknowledged the success of the youth justice system in reducing the numbers of children and young people overall but cited:

- The BAME proportion of young people offending for the first time rose from 11% year ending March 2006 to 19% year ending March 2016;
- The BAME proportion of young people reoffending rose from 11% year ending March 2006 to 19% year ending March 2016; and
- The BAME proportion of youth prisoners had risen from 25% to 41% in the decade 2006-2016.

5. The Hammersmith & Fulham Picture

Data

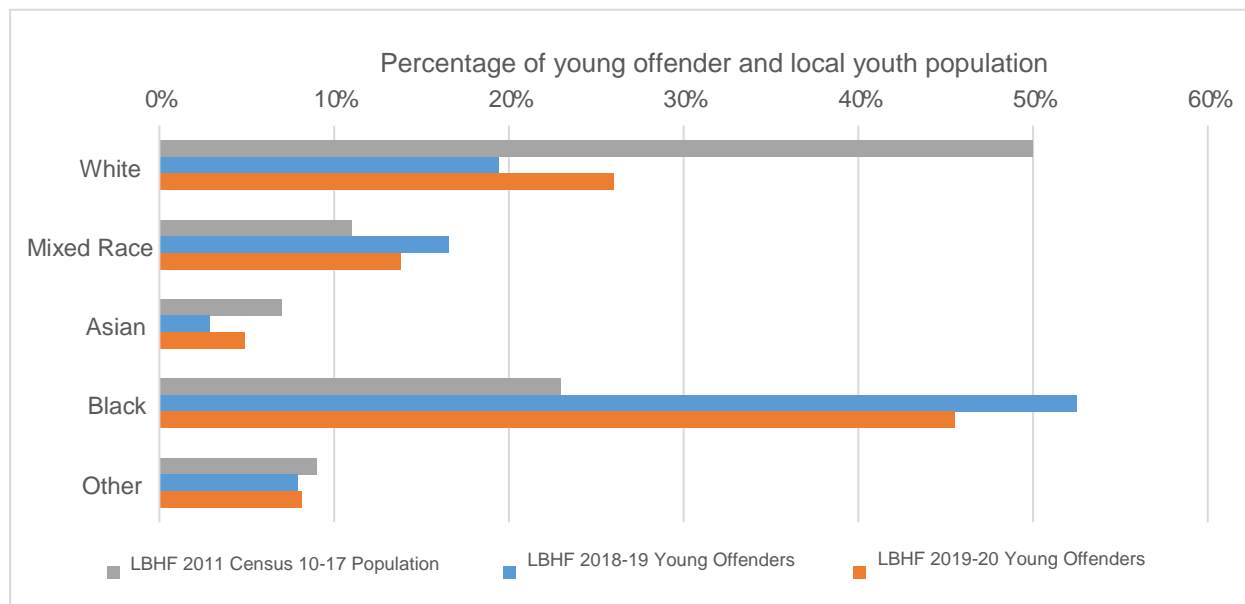


Figure 1 - H&F local youth population and young offender population by ethnicity

Figure 1 shows a significant overrepresentation of the Black group of young offenders compared to local youth population in H&F, while the White group is significantly under-represented. The Q4 period for 2019/20 shows that the overrepresentation of the Black group has decreased on the previous year. In H&F the rate of overrepresentation of BAME young people has been above the London and National rates. However, Q4 of 2019/20 saw the rate of overrepresentation reducing to below the London and National rates.

A recent stocktake of offences falling under the Youth Justice Board's (YJB) definition of serious youth violence robbery, violence against the person and drug offences showed Black and mixed heritage (Black and White) young people as overrepresented in this cohort. All recorded robbery offences in the year to March 2019 were committed by Black and mixed heritage children and young people.

- The live reoffending tracker 2019/20 shows of the current cohort of **73** young people **49** are BAME.
- Of the **8** young people currently in either a secure training centre (STC) or Young Offenders Institution (YOI) all bar **1** are Black or of mixed heritage.
- There are **54** young people open to the YOS currently of which **14** are LAC and **12** of whom are Black or mixed heritage.

Data from Children's Services also highlights that BAME children are overrepresented in terms of permanent school exclusions.

It is the aim of the GVEU to address this disproportionality by way of early intervention and diversion of young people who are involved or on the periphery of involvement with gangs Violence and exploitation. Within the Borough, this cohort is predominantly young BAME males who often see that they have no other option but to be drawn into this lifestyle.

The GVEU will work with young people to provide that alternative future and by working in partnership with all other statutory and non-statutory agencies operating within the Borough the team will start to affect the lives of these young people in a positive manner.