

Locality Review

York

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1 Introduction

Since the Gang and Youth Violence programme started in 2011, several challenges have emerged from the peer/locality 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 as well as the public sphere, this type of crime often involves the criminal exploitation of children and adults on a physical, sexual and/or financial basis. Groups of offenders variously labelled as street gangs, organised crime groups, dangerous drug networks and disengaged young people carry out this abuse, often via illegal drug markets and for the lucrative profits that can be made from them. 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 seems to be the case that current partnership structures across the country aren't able to respond to this new threat, often working in silos or duplicating work and resources. There is evidence nationally to show local partnerships and various agencies are trying to support the same people or families or missing vulnerable cohorts altogether.

The UK Government definition of county lines is set out below together with a definition of child criminal exploitation, which is increasingly used to describe this type of exploitation where children are involved:

County lines is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas [within the UK], using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of "deal line". They are likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move [and store] the drugs and money and they will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons.

Child Criminal Exploitation occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into any criminal activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator and/or (c) through violence or the threat of violence. The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Child Criminal Exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

Communities, who can hold the key to understanding the issues and tracking perpetrators, are not always properly engaged. Partnerships will want to engage with them to help effect cultural change and communicate myth busting messages regarding the glamour of gang life. We have found some of the key challenges for partnerships are:

- The need to understand the relationship between serious group offending and local drug markets (including illegal, prescription drugs and new psychoactive substances)
- The links between vulnerable cohorts, locations and gangs e.g. care homes, missing young people, school absence and exclusions
- Making links between violence and vulnerability, the Prevent Programme and local secure estate.
- Vulnerabilities and exploitation experienced by gang-associated women and girls
- The exploitation of children by gangs and organised crime groups (sexual / physical 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, informed 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 locality review (LR).

2 Purpose of the Locality Review

The LR is a one-day process for local areas as part of the national serious violence strategy. It works as a broad-brush set of interviews and focus groups with front-line practitioners to gather information, knowledge and perception whilst building a qualitative picture of the key issues and drivers around county lines, gangs, youth violence and vulnerability. It is a rapid evidential 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/perception 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 or believe 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 to effect delivery at a frontline level. The review reflects the information gathered from the practitioner interview time table and may highlight communication issues where process exist as well as potential gaps and barriers to identification and effective intervention.

It does not test any local or countywide strategic frameworks or review local strategies - these can be reviewed via other separate products -

- Local/county strategic framework review
- Training programmes covering, county lines, modern slavery, gangs
- Town centre management plans and case studies
- 5-day local strategy peer review

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You may wish to consider the implications of the Freedom of Information Act. Comments made in this report reflect the views and perceptions of interviewees, and the commissioning body may consider that it is not appropriate for public dissemination.



3 The interviews

Focus groups

Focus group 1 – Adult and Children's Safeguarding

This group was made up of a mixture of Adult and Children safeguarding managers. Within the group were three front line social workers from both areas. The group started by detailing the governance arrangements for adults and children. There were clear lines of governance within the structure that was outlined and there did appear to be cross-pollination of information between the various boards and functions in relation to wider safeguarding but not necessarily in relation to serious organised crime (SOC) work.

The safeguarding children's partnership had taken significant steps to ensure that workforce development had been addressed in relation to county lines exploitation both in a singular targeted capacity but also embedded into other training events. The group advised that this had been delivered to a range of partners.

The group were less able to articulate the nature of presenting SOC issues for themselves in terms of a profile. They did say that they were an import area, in terms of children being trafficked in but stated that there was NOT current evidence that children were being exploited locally. They did say that they had received information regarding a cohort of ten local children from the newly appointed analyst that is funded via Trusted Relationships.

They were not aware of the number of mapped organised crime groups (OCGs) operating within their local area or what these OCG's were concerned with. They said they knew that there were nominals from Liverpool, Manchester and Sheffield operating locally and that children are trafficked into their area from these urban centres. They considered their response to these children upon detection was good but were concerned that the response from home authorities was, on occasion, less comprehensive.

None of the group were aware of any serious organised crime meeting or organised crime group meetings and none attended any of these. The group advised that the police had not shared a profile of serious organised crime for their area with them. Their working relationships with neighbouring authorities were considered to be an area of strength by the group and they articulated a number of cross border activities in relation to exploited children.

The group were well versed in the national picture in relation to county lines activity and the children's social care managers were able to identify best practice examples in relation to safeguarding of vulnerable children in relation to CSE. Children safeguarding reported positive working relationships at a case level in relation to children with the police, housing and education. They reported regular multi agency exploitation case discussions in relation to children that occur weekly and felt that these added strength to safeguarding arrangements.

In relation to adult safeguarding the members demonstrated an awareness of the complex issues surrounding transition of child to adult services and also the complexities in terms of those adults where safeguarding is identified during adulthood. They advised that a review of transitional arrangements is due to take place to address some of the barriers in relation to this.

Those working with adults articulated that there had been a rise in serious violence perpetrated against adults and spoke of a number of cases where cuckooing had been a

concern. In relation to this they spoke positively in terms of links to police in these instances.

However, one member of the group considered that in relation to housing there was progress to be made in order to support residents in areas where they do not feel able to report concerns for fear of reprisals. One member of the group advised that having a high proportion of Air BNB properties could potentially present a risk for them in terms of not knowing who is in the properties.

Children's social care reported that it does not have a MASH but does operate a co-located arrangement which aids information sharing and decision making. This will be subject to review and potential change in the coming months. The Trusted Relationships project sits within prevention and early help but offers support to children across the full threshold of need. The project seeks to provide mentoring to children at risk of or experiencing exploitation.

All parties were aware of the Multi Agency Child Exploitation Missing Meeting - MACEMM arrangements and considered that this meeting would offer good multi agency solutions and management to children. Missing had been absorbed into MACEMM as well due to recognising the intrinsic links between missing and exploitation.

The group spoke positively about close working relationships with a range of agencies and attributed this to knowing each other due to York being a small authority. They did acknowledge however that relying on individual working relationships as opposed to strong protocols and procedures can lead to a loss of direction should individuals leave. The focus for identification of children at risk of exploitation lay with the local area teams which sit with localities. This did not appear to be co-ordinated or organised in terms of SOC strategy however.

One member of the group clearly identified that the governance and mantra of the partnership was to view individuals as victims and offer support by any means. This view she said had been further cemented by a letter from the chair of the children's safeguarding partnership to the chair of Safer York partnership articulating this point. Screening tools for CSE were well embedded within the partnership and the group spoke of extending this to CCE as well. Advice was given about the possibility of using the county lines victim tracker for this purpose. The group had been unaware of this tool but felt it could be of use.

The group were keen to say that whilst they know that they do not have the difficulties that are present in other areas of the country they are not complacent to the risk that could be present in relation to county lines activity.

Focus group 2 - Police, Community safety, safeguarding, YOS.

This was a managerial group who were aware of the developing and evolving issue of gangs, county lines and the impact it is starting to have in York. The area is clearly seen by some criminal groups from Manchester, Merseyside, Huddersfield and Sheffield as an area with enough demand to make it worth developing county line networks. This is an evolving criminal enterprise with a new type of criminal exploitation emerging. York is by no means unique in this development with many areas around the county starting to see the same thing.

The police reactive response to county lines seems well informed with a regional agreement with some police force areas impacting York to target organised crime individuals from the other force areas. This is good practice and not yet a national response.

There is a force level serious organised crime county lines plan although this does not appear to have been effectively communicated, understood and delivered at a local partnership operational level. This may simply be a communication issue however, it is essential that all police and wider partners are clear on who owns this issue, what their respective roles are and where governance sits.

This group appear well sighted on the issues York needs to address and are starting to put structures and process in place to help address this growing agenda. A good example of this new work included the formation of a new meeting MACEMM to help understand and identify vulnerability linked to county lines.

The group agreed the need for a multi-agency plan to address the issue and that a clearer partnership informed needs assessment was required. The group also recognised that the current front door for referrals needs to be adapted to address the exploitation linked to this agenda. The threshold for vulnerability and need is currently being reviewed.

Project Shield is seen as an effective response and brand to tackling county lines in York, although it is currently very police focused. Broadening Shield to incorporate all partnership activity will help improve communication between York partners and showcase good news to the community. In many other areas around the UK, this tactic has also helped improve and increase the community intelligence reported on the issue. Some training has been delivered on this agenda, but more consistent and regular training is required for all partners who impact the county lines agenda.

Focus group 3 – Community Safety, Police, Fire Service, ASB

This was a practitioner group that was aware of county lines, stating that there seemed to be a couple of lines into the city which the police were “*on top of*”. The group told us that a number of closure orders had been used over the course of the year, including the use of partial closure orders. It was noted that although the use of closure orders

appeared to deal with cuckooing issues in the short term, over time there was an issue around displacement, with vulnerable adults moving from property to property.

The group noted that although initial drug lines seemed to originate from Manchester, there were now lines from Manchester, Liverpool and South Yorkshire coming into the city, along with an increase in incidents of violence, stabbings and perceptions of knife carrying amongst young people. It was also thought that some local young people / adults were connected to this issue, although the group wasn't aware of any profile / assessment setting out the extent or dynamics of this activity.

The three representatives from the Fire Service covered a range of areas across the county, and stated that the service (from their perspective) had no input / information around gangs and cuckooing, and if they did, wouldn't know who to report this to. This perception however was from a county perspective, and did not necessarily reflect the position in York itself.

It wasn't clear from the group how practitioners make referrals to support agencies around criminal exploitation (cuckooing for example), and a number of examples of how training around this issue could be useful were discussed (Fire Service, Housing joiners etc).

The Disruption Panel was raised as a police run panel to tackle organised crime groups, although it was thought to be mainly reactive in nature. The issue of reactive partnerships was something explored further by the focus group, which although enthusiastic and willing to be part of work to tackle criminal exploitation, appeared to operate without the benefit of a clear understanding of the scale of the problem.

Focus group 4 – Education and Schools

The group was made up of two local authority education representatives and the head of the pupil referral unit. The group began by identifying the various elements of workforce development that had gone into educational establishments. This had been heavily supported by a member of the group whose role it was to develop awareness and deliver training to school staff.

Educational establishments have been trained in local and national guidance. She stated there had been a particular focus on CSE and CCE within the offer made to education. Pastoral leads in schools had been trained in county lines. The group also advised that the Safer York partnership fed information into schools, and that the education safeguarding partnership shared information with the police and communication was good.

One member of the group felt she had a good grasp of the local profile in terms of her knowing they were an 'import' area. The group were not able to articulate any greater level of detail than this however in relation to the SOC picture locally.

They did say that there had been spikes in violence that surrounded 'cuckooed' properties. None of the group felt there had been an increase in children carrying weapons and this had not been seen within an education context.

They were well able to identify indicators and risk factors for children at risk but said this was via training as opposed to having victims present within their schools. The head of the pupil referral unit stated that she had many children within her establishment where they had indicators present. The group stated that county lines was *'very much on our radar'* and that intelligence sharing with the police, YOT and other agencies was an area of strength. The group felt they were not 'complacent' to the risk of county lines.

Education were linked into the newly formed MACEMM meeting and hoped this newest variation of the exploitation panel could attract higher referrals for consideration. They articulated that low referrals and identification had previously been a concern. They spoke of an intelligence sharing form that was used for intelligence sharing purposes and of regular use of this document. The group was able to identify the importance of sharing intelligence in order to gain a richer picture of activity in their area. The group felt that those at risk would potentially come from specific areas of the city and that *'children don't move out their area'* and so a child from one area being found in another would immediately flag concerns with professionals.

The group advised that whilst widely academised at both primary and secondary level this did not impact on relationships or an appetite to work together to reduce exclusions. This was potentially attributable to the academies being 'home grown' as opposed to be of the larger national franchises. The group spoke positively about the three independent schools in their area and how they are keen to be aware of potential concerns and risks for their pupils.

The group advised that they have a schools police officer who is actively engaged in a range of areas including the behaviour and attendance partnership. The group also consider that the local areas teams were well placed to support children who may be at risk.

Overall the group considered that there was strong operational practice and appetite to address exploitation of children. However, all the group considered that this was a *'very good bottom up approach'* and that this was not supported via a strategic framework. They said *'it's not strategic its operational'*.

The group were not clear in terms of the layers of policing that supported SOC and said that in their organisation there did not appear to be a clear infrastructure like there is for PREVENT etc. In addition to this they were concerned that the messages were not getting through to parents and that more activity in this area was necessary.

Focus group 5 - Criminal justice

This group was again mainly senior managers within the National Probation Service, Community Rehabilitation Company and YOT, with some front-line practitioners from ASB and YOS.

The group were aware of the growing issue of county lines and the links to violence, vulnerability and exploitation in York and also covered other areas in the region where the same issue was being seen. They have seen a growth in the well-known tactic of cuckooing vulnerable adults.

The early help structure has three local area hubs in vulnerable locations in York and supports families and vulnerable people linked to this agenda. It appears well respected and effective in identifying threat, risk and harm linked to this area, it will take referrals from social care, police and the front door. It has recognised that the current front door, social care and early help risk assessment requires a refocus to incorporate criminal exploitation and this work is ongoing. This group currently appears not to have a tasking or coordinating process for any actions agreed during the hub meetings.

Additional training on the agenda of gangs, county lines and modern slavery is required by front line practitioners who recognised the churn of staff was a barrier to maintaining knowledge and skills in this area.

Some of this group are linked to a strategic response, but recognised that a number of strategic groups are also looking at elements of the agenda in silos, creating the potential for gaps and duplication. There is an ongoing review within Probation/CRC looking at crossovers between various boards on county lines and exploitation and this should be encouraged and supported by an agreed owner within an agreed overall governance board.

Developing closer working relationships with secure estate and establishments like Barton Moss secure children's home and Wetherby young offenders institute would be useful and could help understand this agenda better.

The IOM board has adopted violent offenders as well as acquisitive crime nominals and this should be aligned to the new MACEMM to prevent duplication of partnership effort. It was agreed reviewing meeting structures and terms of references /membership for each meeting may help reduce staff demand and improve

understanding of the interconnectivity of this agenda on the following partnership groups –

- ASB meeting
- Complex case meeting
- MACEMM
- IOM

Focus group 6 – Housing, Public Protection and Licensing

The group were all aware of county lines and criminal exploitation, and could give examples of where housing staff and external workers such as taxi drivers had received training. Regarding cuckooing, it was said that a major issue is around displacement of the problem and proving that someone had been cuckooed. It was also noted that more connectivity between agencies would be helpful around cuckooing and work to tackle the problem – for example police teams were putting in doors of York properties without contacting the housing staff prior to the operation, causing a number of issues with neighbourhoods and costs (it was also noted that in some cases joiners could provide access without the need to break the door down).

Cuckooing was known to be a problem within properties managed by York, but the problem was not known about in private sector housing provision.

The group told us that police via the Disruption Panel were *“quite clear about the need to disrupt cuckooed properties in order to disrupt drug dealing”*. This has to be managed carefully as elsewhere in the country similar disruption activity has simply moved the problem into open street markets, away from cuckooed properties.

It was thought that there could be better join up between agencies (and also between police teams), and Trading Standards staff outlined how although they are often asked to participate in operations to tackle gangs and county lines (amongst other things), national priorities set by the HSE focus on health and hygiene. This makes it difficult for TS to take part in enforcement / joint operations, although they will still consider requests.

Another example of a perceived lack of join up between the police was given involving operations led by the ROCU who didn't always talk to the local neighbourhood police teams. This caused concern as housing and other staff might have cause to visit certain properties and tenancies without knowing the *“risk behind the door”*.

Director, Children, Education and Communities

This was a single interview.

There is a clear commitment and motivation in York to work collaboratively to help understand and tackle this emerging and evolving issue. There is a lot of work currently ongoing to review practice and involve the full range of partners. The police SMT are leading this step change and council SMT appear fully committed.

It is recognised that York's response is a work in progress but there seems a clear direction of travel and a willingness to learn and adapt to this changing model of crime and exploitation. It is recognised that a wider response is needed from all stakeholders including transport police, travel services and night-time economy staff to fully understand and tackle this ever-changing dynamic. Other parts of the county have seen a rise in local universities being targeted by gangs and an increase in health, drug use, violence, damage and debt issues linked to this agenda. This should be considered from a York perspective.

A step change was discussed as a potential process required to help York and its partners understand and tackle this issue in order to maintain York's reputation as a safe city. The step change should begin with the findings of the ongoing reviews being addressed by a local task and finish group supported by all relevant partners. This group could also help introduce and imbed the finding of this locality review, prioritising –

- A consistent and clear awareness and training package.
- A multi-agency needs assessment, to help address information sharing.
- A strategy agreed by all partners.
- A multi-agency operational plan.
- Clear local and county governance group.

Focus group 7 – Health and Substance misuse

This group were very much aware to the problem, although noted that they didn't know the true scale and extent of the problem. It was felt that there had been significant awareness raising of criminal exploitation at a senior level, but perhaps not so much for practitioners. It was also said that although previously there may have been denial that a city such as York would have a problem with criminal exploitation, this was not the case now.

There was strong agreement with the need for a needs assessment in order to properly scope out the nature of the risk, threat and harm inherent within gangs and criminal exploitation. It was accepted that drug markets were responsible for significant rises in violence, and that there was a need locally to better understand drug markets and what this meant for criminal exploitation.

There was discussion about how gangs nationally attempted to distort and alter local drug markets and drug usage, and it was noted that in some parts of the city

substance misuse workers were aware of gangs only selling heroin if the buyer also bought crack cocaine too - *"can't buy brown without buying white"*.

It was felt by the group that senior managers from across a range of agencies needed to drive this agenda by making a series of decisions around the need for a better understanding of the issue and governance arrangements. It was also stated that tackling this problem would require very good links between children and adult safeguarding boards.

Focus group 8 – Voluntary and Community

The group was made up of members of a team that adopts a person centred and placed based approach to building resilience in communities and making places safer. The team is made up of 8 local area co-ordinators. They are a distinct unit of which there are 11 sites nationally. Whilst they work alongside the local area teams they are not part of them. They stated that people often confuse the two different functions.

The group advised that the purpose of their role is to be very neutral, they need to have trust in the communities in which they work and they need to be able to 'walk alongside' those that they support.

They considered that they were integral to increasing the sense of social inclusion in the city and that this was driven by the council's priority for reducing loneliness and social isolation. This has been a priority for a number of years and there has been significant investment in addressing these key concerns. This investment means that whilst historically there was not movement out of these communities then this was no longer the case. One member of the group stated that this was clear in relation to children and that social media and other developments meant that children were now transient across the city regardless of where they lived.

The group spoke of significant investment in empowering the homeless and addiction communities and gave an example of 'postcards from the edge, invisible York and minimum control' which gave opportunities to these communities locally. None of the group were aware of what the SOC profile for the area was and some of the group felt that it would have no bearing on them in any event.

Regular ward meetings are held but SOC was never discussed by the police at these meetings in terms of profile of ward concerns. One member of the group considered that York was not affected by SOC. Several group members recognised 'cuckooing' as a presenting issue in their communities. They stated that housing responses to those individuals was strong. Group members said that they knew where to go for help and support if needed in these circumstances.

Further discussion revealed that they were concerned that having the information regarding SOC activity within their dedicated communities may alter the manner in which they support the community. One example given was that if a community felt unable to use a green space due to antisocial or criminal behaviour taking place there then routinely the action would be to attempt to positively take back that space. If the LAC was aware of OCG activity linked to that it may interfere with that process. Due to needing to have trust in the communities in which they work they considered that sharing intelligence with the police could provide a conflict of interest. One member of the group was aware of the intelligence sharing document created by the police but said that this was due to her previous role and that she had not used it in her current role.

Two members of the group had attended training delivered by the police around SOC activity in their areas. Addresses of concern had been shared as well as nominal details. They considered that whilst interesting they left the meeting not knowing what to do with the information. The group were open minded in terms of their manager having this detail and then providing them with high level detail of activity in their areas. The manager could see the potential benefits of this also.

Another concern was the low level of 'introductions' made by the police to them. All parties felt that an increase in this type of activity by the police could positively impact the communities in which they work. They considered that this could be particularly useful in terms of low level or early concerns.

4 Summary

A desire for change was evident amongst most of those we talked to. A need to better understand the problem was also evident. These are the foundations that we feel any approach needs to initially have in place. We have also particularly emphasised details from focus groups 1 & 4, as although these groups appeared to understand some of the issue and were carrying out work, neither appeared to be well linked into the SOC partnership. This should be a focus and stated desire of more collaborative work.

From those we talked to, there was a sense that various police units are driving this work but the SOC partnership is not succeeding at the moment in getting all partners on board, especially those connected to safeguarding and communities. However, we also were told that there wasn't complacency across York and its partnerships with regards to how this issue is tackled and recognised, so there is a need perhaps for clarity around how criminal exploitation is understood, managed both strategically and operationally.

At the moment no clear multi agency strategy and/or operational delivery plan is in place. If agreed, this could be aligned to the SOC strategy and provide some clarity around the partnership ask of how they support the 4P response, perhaps locally managed by the new MACEMM.

For example, a number of other things were raised consistently by the groups during the day –

- The drug market locally is not really understood and how it is a significant driver of violence.
- The need for a common language around serious youth violence. For example, safeguarding as a term means different things to different staff, dependent on their work and the approach of their particular agency.
- There appears to be (at least from those we talked to) a lack of understanding of the make-up and numbers of the cohort of young people at risk of perpetrating violence or becoming a victim (or both). *This in itself is a key piece of work.*

National practice tells us that these issues should not be led by police, but by health and social care agencies. Senior managers talked about the need for a step change in how this issue is understood and tackled across the city. We believe this is the right thing to do, and there is a need to put a name to and jointly understand what most of the focus groups described to us during the day, especially those with practitioners. The Violence and Vulnerability Unit (VVU) are calling this community harm and exploitation, and it requires new ways of working, thinking and engagement, both with partner agencies and the community.

County lines and gang violence should be understood and placed into a group of exploitative crime types like child sexual abuse and modern slavery. This is a relatively new paradigm of serious crime, whereby groups of offenders (usually men), exploit vulnerable children and adults physically, sexually and financially. Sometimes it looks like CSE, sometimes like modern slavery, knife crime and sometimes like county lines. There is almost always a link and cross over between these crime types and it makes no sense to look at them and attempt to tackle them in silos.

There is no short-term fix to this, and this needs long term commitment above all else, planning and some resources. This long-term approach applies to partnership working just as much as work with vulnerable young people and adults.

Involving communities and young people is part of the answer – although this is the exception in the UK at the moment, and not the norm. At the moment the practitioners and co-ordinators we talked to in group 8 clearly do not see that they have a big role to play here, perhaps for cultural reasons around relationships with communities and enforcement agencies such as police. However, it's everybody's business to tackle criminal exploitation and so perhaps the need for a common language around how York plans to approach and tackle the problem is required, a common language and understanding that all groups and agencies can sign up for.

There is perhaps also a need within the city for the Adult Safeguarding Board to consider its role around vulnerable adults currently exploited by gangs via cuckooing. There is work to tackle the issue ongoing, but a couple of groups we talked to felt that at the moment the problem around cuckooing is being displaced around the city. This may be behind the perception from focus group 2 that street based drug dealing was increasing – this is exactly what you would expect to see as a result of enforcement work to tackle cuckooing, as the shopfront (which is all a cuckooed property is in effect) moves from the private to the public realm (street dealing). We have seen this occur before in other areas of the UK, and any potential cause and effect of actions to tackle county lines and exploitation needs to be carefully considered as a result.

The city clearly has strong and determined leadership, evidenced via our interviews during the day with senior officers, and this was reinforced by the other groups. The need for a step change approach as to how York understands the issue and then collectively tackles the problem is the correct course – together, via the community, health agencies, voluntary sector, police and judicial agencies and of course local authority.

5 Recommendations

The VVU has a range of expertise across the spectrum to support you to implement these recommendations, along with possible match funding from the Home Office.

- **Consider the production of an informed needs assessment** that enables, amongst other things, an understanding of violence and abuse contextualised within the context of drug trade associated violence, gang-based violence, an understanding of county line / drug markets, links to serious youth violence and violence for those aged >25. It should also look at estimating the numbers of young people involved in and around criminal exploitation who are not currently known to services or safeguarding agencies. Public Health have a major role here in terms of understanding the nature of the drug demand locally (and the implications on resources going forward), as do housing agencies, secure estate and local schools etc. We can provide a term of reference for an analysts group and suggested data collection set if required.

This will help address information sharing. A clear information collection plan with all key partners will help identify gaps and barriers to efficient information exchange.

- **Produce a local criminal exploitation delivery plan, along with a strategy** agreed by all partners. One of the main purposes of this should be to ensure that local processes and joint working is as effective as it can be. Make sure that this delivery plan is linked to the SOC plan and any regional strategy. Also develop and expand the brand "Shield" to the wider partnership group. Consider working closely with the CCG in delivering this aim as the vulnerability linked to this type of crime is exploitative and linked to the health of York residents.
- **Clear local and county governance group.** Review the meeting structure and terms of references to support the ambition to de-clutter the number of meetings that look at vulnerability and exploitation. Agree a clear governance structure that informs the other strategic boards. Consider a partnership briefing and case study day to improve local knowledge, communication and clearly define partners ask. This can lead to a day/week of partnership action - supported by the VVU team.
- **If there is evidence of young people locally being recruited / groomed by gangs, consider introducing contextual safeguarding as a shared approach** amongst all partners to protect young people subject or vulnerable to exploitation and abuse in public spaces. Contextual safeguarding is about making people safe in communities, outside of the domestic setting by finding and dealing with abuse in a social or group setting. Consider embedding criminal exploitation within safeguarding at a local level on equivalent status to CSE/familial abuse. This should include the need for clear referral routes enabling frontline staff to respond to young people and adults acting out or who are vulnerable to criminal exploitation. This should lead to a better assessment of vulnerability.
- **Consider the importance of shared language, and shared learning.** Different words around the agenda of criminal exploitation have different meanings for each agency. This will require a common lexicon around what is collectively meant by safeguarding, prevention, enforcement, criminal exploitation, joint working, governance and the involvement of community and VCS groups.
- **A programme of multi-agency training in the area of county lines and the associated vulnerability subjects would be useful and desirable,** in order to ensure that most practitioners across a range of agencies are aware of the problem and how to report it. The Violence and Vulnerability Unit currently offer online training around this matter to build knowledge , identify risk and help address staff churn for a range of practitioners. <http://vvu-online.com/#training>

6 Visits, links and cross over

- Join the Basecamp group and Home Office monthly teleconference to share practice and innovation
- Consider a community asset register -Telford have a good example to learn from
- Review findings from the serious case review in Newcastle (exploitation of adults)
- Consider a visit to the Telford Harm Hub
- Review community engagement via the SOC community coordinators practice - Brighton
- Consider the Northampton area who have rolled out trauma informed training to all police and practitioners - Ealing are also rolling out best practice for a trauma informed model.
- Look at the Telford/Grimsby CE response.
- Croydon have a data analyst who provides a gold standard product on this agenda and is given access to social media and other key data systems. Wandsworth do have a data sharing agreement with police in place so there appears no reason why information sharing can't be extended to analyst role.

7 Ongoing support

Learning from the gang and youth violence programme is shared via the Gang and Youth Violence Special Interest Group and can be access by the Home Office tackling crime unit and Basecamp online site. **The VVU can also provide additional support to assist with the introduction and implementation of our recommendations, funded via the Home office.**

<https://basecamp.com/2308334/projects/12421689>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/county-lines-criminal-exploitation-of-children-and-vulnerable-adults>

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

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or visit <http://vvu-online.com>

In their Pocket

"Once you have started you are in their pocket and lose control over your own life. You become a slave."

